THE HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THE BIBLE

Proven by Archaeology And other Sources

G. Michael Cocoris

© 2012, 2026 by G. Michael Cocoris

All rights reserved. This publication may not be reproduced (in whole or in part, edited, or revised) in any way, form, or means, including, but not limited to electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or any kind of storage and retrieval system for sale, except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the written permission of G. Michael Cocoris, 2016 Euclid #20, Santa Monica, CA 90405, michaelcocoris@gmail.com, or his appointed representatives. Permission is hereby granted, however, for the reproduction of the whole or parts of the whole without changing the content in any way for free distribution, provided all copies contain this copyright notice in its entirety. Permission is also granted to charge for the cost of copying.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version ®, Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Internal and external design by John T. Cocoris and G. Michael Cocoris.

Table Of Content

Preface

Chapter	1	Introduction	1
Chapter	2	The Bible and History	5
Chapter	3	The Bible and Its Critics	11
Chapter	4	Primeval	27
Chapter	5	Patriarchs	53
Chapter	6	Exodus	67
Chapter	7	Conquest	79
Chapter	8	Judges	97
Chapter	9	United Kingdom	105
Chapter	10	Divided Kingdom	117
Chapter	11	Captivity	135
Chapter	12	Restoration	139
Chapter	13	The Story of an Old Testament Scholar	143
Chapter	14	The Ministry of Christ	149
Chapter	15	The Acts of The Apostles	165
Chapter	16	The Story of a New Testament Scholar	169
Chapter	17	Conclusion	175

Appendix 185
Bibliography 195
About The Author 207

PREFACE

As I was preparing a series of studies on the ten historical periods in the Scripture, I decided that since I was dealing with the *history* in the Bible, I ought to address the question, "Is the Bible historically accurate?" That led me to look at archaeology.

Although I have spent my entire adult life studying the Bible, I had never before dug into archaeology. One of my seminary professors was Dr. Merrill Unger, who received his Ph.D. in archaeology from Johns Hopkins University when William Albright taught there. Unger wrote several books on archaeology, but I did not read them while in seminary or after graduating. As a Bible teacher, I had examined in detail and taught many Bible books, and expounded various topics in the Scriptures, but I had never explored archaeology.

So, I had to start from scratch. I read articles and a few books, including one by my old prof. Dr. Unger. As a result, I incorporated material from archaeology in my series on the overview of the Bible to demonstrate that the Bible was historically correct.

In the middle of teaching that material, I discovered that Dr. William G. Dever (Harvard Ph.D.) was to deliver a lecture on "The 'Age of Solomon:' Myth or History?" for the California Museum of Ancient Art. Attending that lecture allowed me to hear one of the leading archaeologists in America speaking on one of the most debated topics in biblical archaeology today. Dr.

Dever delivered a superb lecture, including a great set of slides. He demonstrated that the revisionists (more about them later) are wrong in saying Solomon's age was a myth.

Toward the end of my series on the ten historical periods in the Bible, Kathleen McCray, a lady in my church, asked me if I could summarize the archaeological data for each period. Knowing that I had only touched on the major archaeological issues in the overview of the Bible series, I decided to dig a little deeper into archaeology to satisfy some of my unanswered questions, as well as to provide her and others with a summary and a simple explanation of the complex subject of archaeology and the Bible.

That decision turned out to be more time-consuming than I would ever have imagined. I spent hours and hours reading, writing, and rewriting. I attended various lectures at the California Museum of Ancient Art, the Bowers Museum of Cultural Art, and the University of Judaism. These lectures allowed me to hear Dr. Dever, Hershel Shanks, James Hoffmeier, and others.

Years after this material was initially written, in 2012, it was proofread, and minor changes were made. In March 2017, a few observations were added due to attending the Biblical Archaeology class taught by Dr. Titus Kennedy at Biola University.

I wish to thank Teresa Rogers for proofreading the material. I trust that this material will help you think through the critical issue of the historical accuracy of the Bible and, as a result, you will even more confidently trust the Lord and His Word.

G. Michael Cocoris
Santa Monica, CA

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps before plunging into this subject, the question that should be asked and answered is, "Why is the *historical* accuracy of the Bible important?" There are several answers to that question.

The Essence of Christianity

Historical accuracy is essential to Christianity. Christianity claims that a man named Jesus lived, worked miracles, was crucified, and rose from the dead. Those core elements of Christianity are historical events. If those events actually took place, Christianity is true. If those events are not historical, Christianity is false. So, it is essential to Christianity that those elements be historically correct. They are the essence of Christianity.

Religions Philosophies and religions are not dependent on the historical accuracy of their founder. Moses' injunctions in Judaism do not depend on how he lived and died. The insights of Confucius are not based on his personal life but on his teachings. Plato's ideas have nothing to do with his life and death. Bruce argues that the philosophy of Plato can be considered on its own

merits, "quite apart from the traditions that have come down to us about the life of Plato and the question of the extent of his indebtedness to Socrates" and it might be held that "the ethics of Confucianism have an independent value quite apart from the story of the life of Confucius himself" (F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are they Reliable?*, p. 7).

Christianity The essence of Christianity, however, rests on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The gospel is the good news that Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:1-8). Christianity is not just a metaphysical system or a code of ethics. It is a message of the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life based on Jesus actually dying and actually being resurrected. If Jesus did not die for our sins, Christianity would be reduced to ideas, insights, and instructions. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, Christianity is just another religion. C. S. Lewis says, "All the essentials of Hinduism would, I think, remain unimpaired if you subtracted the miraculous, and the same is almost true of Mohammedism, but you cannot do that with Christianity. It is precisely the story of a great miracle; a naturalistic Christianity leaves out all that is specifically Christian" (C. S. Lewis, *Miracles*, p. 69).

The Truthfulness of Jesus

The historical accuracy of events other than the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is not essential to the gospel of Christ and His crucifixion. So why bother with the historical accuracy of the rest of the Bible?

Jesus In His teachings, Jesus spoke about events recorded in the Scripture as if they actually happened. For example, Jesus Himself spoke of Adam and Eve as if they were real people God created (Mt. 19:4). He referred to Noah's flood as a historical event (Lk. 17:27). The same could be said of Moses' miracles in the wilderness (Jn. 3:14; 6:32), Elijah's miracles (Lk. 4:25), Jonah and the Great Fish (Mt. 12:40), plus many other people and events.

Authors of the New Testament Taking the total testimony of not only Jesus but also the New Testament writers, it is possible to virtually reconstruct the main events of the Old Testament, including creation (Jn. 1:3), the fall of man (Rom. 5:12), the murder of Abel (1 Jn. 3: 12), the flood of Noah's day (Lk. 17:27), Abraham and the patriarchs (Heb. 11:8 ff.), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Lk. 17:29), the offering of Isaac (Heb. 11:17), Moses and the burning bush (Lk. 20:32), the exodus from Egypt (1 Cor. 10:1-2), miraculous provision of the manna (1 Cor. 10:3-5), lifting of the brazen serpent (Jn. 3:14), etc.

If these events are not historical realities, the truthfulness of Jesus and the writers of the New Testament could be called into question.

The Trustworthiness of God

In the final analysis, this issue comes down to a matter of trust. The Bible claims to be the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16). It contends that the God of the Word cannot lie (Titus 1:2). It contains material that is presented as actual history. If we cannot trust that the

history in the Bible is true, how can we trust anything else? If the Bible lies to us about history, can we trust what it says about theology? On the other hand, if what it says about history can be independently verified, that is a good reason to trust what cannot be historically or theologically verified.

Summary: The historical accuracy of the Bible is critical because the essence of Christianity consists of historical events, and the truthfulness of the Bible is at stake, as well as the trustworthiness of God Himself.

To insist that the Bible is historically accurate does not mean that every last detail has to be verified. Admittedly, that cannot be done, but enough can be verified to demonstrate that the Bible is historically accurate. It would not be necessary to demonstrate that every drop of liquid in a cup is coffee. A few sips would be sufficient—to a reasonable person.

Besides, God wants us to trust Him. So, He always leaves enough room for faith. He gives us evidence (Rom. 1:20) and insists that if we are to have a relationship with Him, we must believe Him (Heb. 11:6). What follows is evidence. Not all of it is conclusive proof. Some of it is circumstantial evidence. To me, the cumulative effect is convincing. Nevertheless, I realize God has left room for faith.

Chapter 2

THE BIBLE AND HISTORY

Is the "history" in the Bible accurate? Were places such as Ur, Jericho, Jerusalem, and Samaria real locations, or were they fanciful places like Gotham City? Did the people in the Bible actually live? Were people such as Abraham, Moses, David, Omri, Jehu, Hezekiah, John the Baptist, Jesus, Pilate, and Paul real people, or were they fake figures like Santa Claus? Were events such as the Exodus, the fall of Samaria, the siege of Jerusalem, and the crucifixion of Christ factual, or are they fiction, like Jack climbing the beanstalk? Is the time frame reflected in the Scripture correct? Are dates in the Bible accurate, or are they fabricated? Is there confirmation of this historical data outside the Bible? In short, is the Bible historically accurate, or is it a myth?

What determines whether or not the Bible is fact or fable? For believers, it is enough that the Bible says something happened. After all, if, as it claims, it is inspired by God, and since He cannot lie (Titus 1:2), the Scriptures He inspired do not lie. Thus, the biblical record is assumed to be true and without error.

That does not satisfy everyone. Some want evidence outside the Bible. Is there evidence outside the Bible that demonstrates that the Bible is historically accurate?

History in the Bible

The first step in examining the historical accuracy of the Bible is to determine exactly what the Bible claims concerning history.

Bible History From the historical material in the Bible, ten major historical periods emerge. Those ten historical periods are:

Origins	Genesis 1-11
1. Patriarchs	Genesis 12-50
2. Exodus	Exodus-Deuteronomy
3. The Conquest	Joshua
4. The Judges	Judges – I Samuel 8
5. The United Kingdom	1 Samuel 9:1 - 1 Kings 11:43
6. The Divided Kingdom	1 Kings 12:1 - 2 Kings 16
7. The Captivity	2 Kings 17-25
8. The Restoration	Ezra-Esther
9. Life of Christ	Matthew-John
10. Acts of the Apostles	Acts

Bible Chronology The Bible also contains chronological data. According to the chronology present in the Bible, the primeval (first ages) period began with creation and extended to Abraham, who was born in 2167 BC. The period of the Patriarchs extended from 2167 BC (the birth of Abraham) to 1806 BC (the death of Joseph). The Exodus occurred in 1447 BC. The Conquest began in 1407 BC. The period of the Judges began about 1375 BC and

stretched to 1043 BC. The United Kingdom of Israel started with the inauguration of Saul in 1043 BC and ended with the division of the Kingdom in 931 BC. The Divided Kingdom began in 931 BC with the death of Solomon. Assyria conquered the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC. Babylon defeated the Southern Kingdom in 605 BC. The captivity lasted for 70 years until 536 BC. As a result of the decree of Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, Israel was allowed to return to Palestine in 536 BC, and the restoration ended around 400 BC.

1. Patriarchs	2167-1860 BC
2. Exodus	1527-1407 BC
3. The Conquest	1407-1400 BC
4. The Judges	1375-1043 BC
5. The United Kingdom	1043-931 BC
6. The Divided Kingdom	931-605 BC
7. The Captivity	605-536 BC
8. The Restoration	536-400 BC
9. Life of Christ	6/5 BC-30 AD
10. Acts of the Apostles	30-95 AD

Secular sources have confirmed the dates to about 1000 BC (see Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*). The dates before 1000 BC are based on 1 Kings 6:1 and the time frame given in Exodus and Genesis 12-50. (For an explanation of the chronology in the Bible, see G. Michael Cocoris, *The Bible: Its Chronology*. It is available at Amazon.com and at my website www.insightsfromtheword.com.)

History outside the Bible

The second step in evaluating the historical accuracy of the Bible is to determine what is historical apart from the Bible. There are several sources of information.

Ancient Authors Before about 1800, all that was known concerning biblical times was what was recorded in the Bible and the writings of a few ancient authors. These sources provided considerable information about the New Testament era, but virtually nothing was known of Old Testament times before 400 BC.

Archaeology Fortunately, because of the advent of archaeology, extra-biblical data before 400 BC are now available. Archaeology is the study of the past based on excavations of cities and the evaluation of newly discovered written material.

Modern archaeology began in 1798 with Napoleon's expedition to Egypt. He took 175 scholars with him, who opened the antiquities of the Nile Valley to scientific study. Later, deciphering the Rosetta Stone unlocked Egyptian hieroglyphics. Assyrian and Babylonian discoveries were made around the middle of the nineteenth century. The Behistun Inscription, found in 1835, was the key to understanding Assyrian/Babylonian cuneiform. In 1868, the discovery of the Moabite Stone connected ancient secular history and the biblical record. It was not until the twentieth century, however, that major discoveries relating to the Bible were made, including the Code of Hammurabi (1901), the Elephantine Papyri (1903), the Mari Letters (1933), the Lachish Ostraca (1935), and the Dead Sea Scrolls (1947). For an explanation of archaeology,

see the appendix.

Ancient authors and archaeologists now provide much information concerning secular history. During biblical times, six nations dominated the then-known world.

Egypt	1600-1200 BC
Assyria	910-612 BC
Babylon	612-539 BC
Persia	539-330 BC
Greece	330-146 BC
Rome	146 BC-476 AD

Secular sources, ancient authors, and archaeology not only provide information about the ancient world, but they also supply direct and indirect evidence of the historical accuracy of the Bible.

Scripture and Secular Sources

The final step in determining the historical correctness of the Bible is to compare what the Bible says with the information from secular sources. Sounds simple, doesn't it? The Bible contains historical data. Information outside the Bible exists. So, just comparing the two will demonstrate whether or not the Bible is historically accurate.

In some cases, it is just that simple. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Why not? The short answer is that scholars sometimes differ greatly in interpreting the available data. They disagree on the interpretation of the historical data in the Bible, some going so far as to say that virtually nothing in the Bible

is historical. According to these extreme critics, the Bible is tradition and legend. Moreover, archaeologists hold opposing views concerning the archaeological data!

The result of all of this is a complicated mess. One scholar looks at the Bible and the archaeological discoveries and concludes that the Bible is, in fact, historically accurate. Another expert compares the two sources of information but determines that some things in the Bible can be proven to be historical and others cannot. Another "authority" says that the archaeological findings differ from those depicted in the Scripture. Then, there are those extreme critics who reject nearly everything in the Bible.

If the scholars disagree, how do we, who are not scholars, answer the question, "Is the Bible historically accurate?" First, it is imperative to see exactly what the Bible says. It is also critical to understand the basis on which the critics challenge the historical validity of the Bible. Only then can a fair evaluation of the extra-biblical evidence be made.

Summary: To decide if the Bible is historically accurate, the historical claims of the Bible must be determined and compared to the information from secular sources.

To a careful observer of the text, what the Bible says is self-evident. What the critics base their opinions on is not always so obvious. So, let's first consider what the Bible says. Then, let's compare the Scripture with the scholars. Going through that process will put the issues into perspective and give you the information you need to decide if you think the Bible is historically reliable.

Chapter 3

THE BIBLE AND ITS CRITICS

Until a few hundred years ago, virtually everyone who called themselves Christians believed that the Bible was a historically reliable document. Then, over the last several hundred years, critics began to deny the historical accuracy of the Scripture. Actually, there are several different types of critics.

Philosophical Critics

The philosophical critics of the Bible arose out of the Enlightenment of the 18th century. Scientific discoveries that produced great confidence in human reason and the development of the philosophy of rationalism led to the Age of Enlightenment.

Scientific Discoveries Before modern science, the prevailing view was that the flat earth was the center of the universe and the sun revolved around it.

Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) taught that the sun is the center of the universe and was the first to say that the earth moves

around it. He did not publish his views until the end of his life. He is said to have received a copy of his printed book for the first time on his deathbed in 1543.

Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) was the first astronomer to defend Copernican cosmology openly. He also made discoveries that were an advance on Copernican concepts (the orbits of the planets are ellipses, not circular) and proposed that the star of Bethlehem was the unusual conjunction of Mars, Saturn, and Jupiter in 6 BC. His principal works were published between 1597 and 1618.

Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) said the *planets* circled the sun. In 1616, he was censured by the Catholic Church for teaching Copernican astronomy and admonished not to teach it. In 1633, he was summoned to Rome again, and when it was found that he had contravened the 1616 decree, he recanted.

Philosophical Development In the Middle Ages, metaphysical perceptions were determined by the church's interpretation of the Bible. Then came modern philosophy.

René Descartes (1596-1650), called the father of modern philosophy, began his philosophical views by setting aside all traditional metaphysical assumptions and resolving to doubt everything. His importance as a philosopher lies in developing doubt in philosophical inquiry. He was a rationalist who maintained that human reason, not religious faith, was the only dependable key to the knowledge of the universe. He concluded that he existed ("I think, therefore, I am") and that God existed.

Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) was drawn to the rationalism of Descartes. In 1656, he was excommunicated from his synagogue

for atheism. He spent his life making a living grinding optical lenses, refusing a professorship at the University of Heidelberg for fear that it might cramp his freedom of thought. He even declined a pension from Louis XIV for a similar reason. In 1663, he published his first book, *The Principles of Cartesian Philosophy* (Cartesian is the adjectival form of "Descartes"). He rejected all dictates of church and state, insisting that reason alone was the final authority in science, politics, and religion.

The Enlightenment In reaction to the "superstitions" of the Dark Ages, the Age of Enlightenment, an intellectual movement of the 18th century before the French Revolution, focused on a new age enlightened by science, reason, and respect for humanity. Beliefs were accepted based on reason, not traditional or priestly authority. Deism was the theological view of God. God existed, but He was not involved in the universe nor did He reveal Himself.

As a result of these developments in general and the Age of Enlightenment in particular, the philosophical critics of the Bible began with a denial of the supernatural. Assuming that there is no such thing as the supernatural, they attacked the Bible as being unhistorical and unreliable.

Needless to say, if one begins with the assumption that there is no such thing as the supernatural, including supernatural revelation, any objective consideration of the evidence for the supernatural is impossible. Since the Bible contains supernatural elements, it will be prejudged as not historical, and it becomes necessary to find rational explanations of the miraculous in Scripture. An "antisupernaturalistic bias" has been likened to color-blind people attempting to judge art (Archer, p. 97).

Literary Critics

Though its roots go back further, literary criticism of the Bible was developed in the 19th century.

The Old Testament Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) did not originate the Documentary Hypothesis, but he produced the classic expression of it (for a history of the development of the theory, see Archer, pp.73-82). Wellhausen acknowledged his indebtedness to Karl Heinrich Graf. In fact, the Documentary Hypothesis is sometimes called the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis. Wellhausen restated the theory with "skill and persuasiveness," supporting it with an evolutionary basis (Archer, p. 79; see also Breese, pp. 89-104).

According to the Documentary Hypothesis, the Hebrew religion evolved. Before the reforms of Josiah, there was no monotheism or central sanctuary. The prophets, however, preached monotheism, which led to the centralization of worship in Jerusalem. Therefore, the sources that describe the Patriarchs as monotheistic are unhistorical.

Furthermore, the Documentary Hypothesis, also known as the JEDP theory, says that the material in the Pentateuch originated with four different authors. About 850 BC, an unknown author in the Southern Kingdom (J) wrote the narrative sections that call God "Jehovah." An unknown author in the Northern Kingdom, about 750 BC (E), wrote the narrative portions and employed "Elohim," the Hebrew word for God. About 650 BC, an unknown editor, called a redactor, combined J and E into a single document. Then, another unknown author called the Deuteronomist (D)

wrote during the reforms of Josiah about 621 BC to compel the people in the Southern Kingdom to abandon their local "high places" and bring their sacrifices to the Temple in Jerusalem. Finally, the priestly portions (P) were composed from about 570 BC to the Exile. The Pentateuch was edited and revised from these documents as late as 200 BC.

If the Documentary Hypothesis is correct, Moses did not write the Pentateuch, nor was it written in the second millennium BC. It was compiled late in the first millennium BC. In short, the Old Testament is "late" (first millennium, not second millennium) and, therefore, is not historically correct.

The Documentary Hypothesis is bogus. In the first place, there is no documentary evidence. No J, E, D, or P documents have ever been discovered. They only exist in the minds of critics. This hypothesis has been called "purely theoretical speculations" (R. K. Harrison, p. 59).

The literary notions of the Documentary Hypothesis are based on fallacies. The whole assumption is that the supposed author "J" only knew God by the one name "Jehovah," etc. Israel's contemporaries had more than one name for their gods; why not Israel? The watertight compartments of different names leak. The name "Jehovah" occurs in "E" passages (Gen. 22:11; etc.) and "God" (Elohim) appears in "J" passages (Gen. 3:1-5; etc.).

A more logical explanation for the different names for God is the purpose of the author. The name "God" (*Elohim*) means "powerful" and, therefore, refers to God as the Almighty Creator of the universe. On the other hand, "Jehovah" is the covenant name for God and is used in passages where He is engaged in a

covenant relationship.

Specific claims based on the Documentary Hypothesis have been proven false. For example, Graf and Wellhausen advanced the view that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because writing was not practiced when Moses lived. The spade of archaeology buried that theory. It is now well-known that writing existed long before Moses' time.

In 1799, Napoleon's soldiers found an inscribed stone at Rashid (Rosetta), Egypt, at the westernmost mouth of the Nile. This black granite stone is about four feet high and two and a half feet wide. The text on the stone is a decree of Ptolemy V Epiphanes from about 200 BC. The stone contains one inscription in three languages, one above the other, in Egyptian hieroglyphics (picture writing using a symbol for each word), Egyptian Demotic (closer to alphabetic writing), and Greek. In 1822, French linguist Jean-Francois Champollion used the Greek portion to decipher the two Egyptian scripts, finally making it possible to read Egyptian hieroglyphics.

The Rosetta Stone demonstrates that, since Moses was educated in Egypt, he could have written in Egyptian hieroglyphics. In fact, archaeologists have uncovered writings from this period in many different languages. Moses could have written in Sumerian, Babylonian, Akkadian, etc. He wrote the Pentateuch in Hebrew.

In the final analysis, the Documentary Hypothesis is incredibly subjective. Horn points out that "one prominent scholar attributes a certain passage to one source, another equally eminent scholar attributes the same passage to another source, and a third scholar to a third source." His example is Exodus 33:7-11, which is

attributed to E by Walter Beyerlin, J by Murray Newman, and D by Martin Noth (Horn, p. 23).

For a more detailed analysis of the Documentary Hypothesis, see Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 73-165, R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 19-133, and Merrill F. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, pp. 213-276.

Even though no documentary, literary, or historical evidence supports the Documentary Hypothesis, it is widely accepted, especially in academic circles. Many still take the basic idea and claim that the Old Testament is late and not historically correct. Today, virtually all Old Testament scholars in the academic world accept the Documentary Hypothesis as fact. It is not only "widely accepted by modern critics" (Davis, p. 54), but it is "well-nigh a badge of intellectual respectability" (Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, p. 214). "Despite the overwhelming nature of much of the evidence," some still "prefer subjective speculations" (R. K. Harrison, p. 61).

The New Testament If the Book of Acts is accepted as it is presented, it was written in the first century AD. In the nineteenth century, the Tübingen School concluded that the book of Acts was not written until late in the second century AD; therefore, it was not historically accurate.

The Tübingen approach was built on Hegel's theories. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), a German philosopher, taught that "history is a dialectical movement" (Durant, p. 297). History is a process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. For example, appreciation for classical forms in art (thesis)

gives way to admiration for the romantic spirit (antithesis), and these are then assimilated into an art form that harmonizes both (MacGregor, p. 301).

F. C. Baur of Tübingen, Germany, applied Hegel's theory of history to Acts, a view known as the Tübingen School. It claims that there were two opposing elements (thesis and antithesis) in the early church represented by Peter and Paul; in Acts, they found the reconciliation (synthesis) of these two parties in the church of the second century. This approach demands a late date for most New Testament writings, especially Acts.

Because archaeological evidence requires that Acts be dated no later than about the end of the first century, "it has been necessary to abandon this view" (R. K. Harrison, p. 205; see also the story of William Ramsay in the chapter on "The Acts of the Apostles"). Nevertheless, the authorship of Acts is still disputed "by many of those who maintain a naturalistic view of the origin of Christianity" (Thiessen, p. 177).

Thus, literary theories of both the Old Testament and the New Testament have been used to say that the Bible is not historically accurate. These theories have been disproved. Nevertheless, the conclusion based on them, namely that the Bible is not historically reliable, persists.

Archaeological Critics

In the twentieth century, archaeological discoveries have been used to support and reject the Bible's historical accuracy.

Biblical Archaeology Showing that archaeological findings

supported the historicity of the Bible became known as "Biblical Archaeology." Biblical Archaeology was the prevailing view for roughly fifty years (1920-1970).

William F. Albright (Yale Ph.D.) was reputedly "familiar with over twenty-five languages and dialects" (R. K. Harrison, p. 60). He was a professor at Johns Hopkins University from 1929-1958, director of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, and author of more than 1,000 publications on archaeological subjects.

In 1920, he characterized his theological position as "extreme radicalism." He shared Wellhausen's dismissal of any historical content in the Pentateuch. Later, due to his work as an archeologist in Palestine, Albright changed his view (Davis, p. 54). He became one of the most outspoken critics of literary critics and a distinguished proponent of the historicity of the patriarchal narratives.

Albright's disciple was G. Ernest Wright (Johns Hopkins Ph.D.). He was a professor at Harvard from 1959 to 1974, a prominent archeologist leading the Shechem and Gezer excavations, president of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, and founder and editor of *The Biblical Archaeologist*.

The Albrightean synthesis, as it came to be called, is that a place (Mesopotamia) and a time (early second millennium BC) fit the patriarchal narratives [see insert in *Biblical Archaeology Review* (hereafter *BAR*), March/April 2000, p. 26]. Albright wrote article after article arguing for the basic historical accuracy of the Bible.

Interestingly, Albright initially accepted the Documentary Hypothesis's conclusion that the Bible was written in the first millennium BC. He wrote, "I adhere to the standard critical position with regard to the order and chronology" of the Documentary Hypothesis (Albright, "The Ancient Near East and The Religion of Israel," p. 95, footnote 13). Nevertheless, based on archaeological discoveries, he decided that the period of the patriarchs was historically true to the early second millennium BC. According to Albright, the problem with the critics is not history but their "philosophy of history" (Albright, "The Ancient Near East and The Religion of Israel," p. 111). In other words, "Although Albright strongly supported the basic historicity of the Bible, he did not draw any theological lessons from this" (Davis, p. 55); his "archaeological stance lacked an explicit theological base" (Davis, p. 58).

Syro-Palestinian Archaeology William G. Dever (Harvard Ph.D.) is the former director of the William F. Albright School of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem and a former Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology at the University of Arizona. Then, he was Distinguished Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology at Lycoming College in Pennsylvania. He is considered one of America's premier archaeologists of ancient Israel.

In 1977, Dever wrote an article using the term "minimalist" to describe himself. Later, he called for a "new Biblical archaeology." He prefers "Syro-Palestinian archaeology" (Shanks, "Dever's 'Sermon on the Mound,'" p. 54).

To begin with, Dever accepts the Documentary Hypothesis, including the editing of the text in the second century BC (Shanks,

"Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers Face to Face," p. 28). As for the archaeological evidence, this approach is built on the premise that biblical archaeologists were biased toward the Bible and that all an archeologist can say is what archaeological evidence dictates.

Dever says, "The theological bias of the Biblical archaeologists fatally flawed their work" (Shanks, "Dever's 'Sermon on the Mound,'" p. 54). Epstein declares that the earlier archaeologists, like Albright, "stressed every possible link to the Biblical record" (Claire Epstein, in "Scholars Speak Out," ed. Hershel Shanks, p. 25). According to this position, archaeologists should not be trying to prove whether or not the Bible is accurate.

Based solely on what they say archaeology can prove, this approach concludes that the Patriarchs, the Exodus, and the Conquest are not historical, but there is archaeological evidence for the period of the Judges, the United Monarchy, and later.

Hoffmeier says that the difference between a maximalist and a minimalist is that a historical maximalist accepts what appears to be a historical statement in an ancient text unless there is evidence to prove otherwise. The text is innocent until proven guilty. On the other hand, the historical minimalist insists that all ancient texts must be verified before being considered fact. The text is guilty until proven innocent. Hoffmeier explains that the minimalist commits what historian David Hackett Fisher calls a "fallacy of presumptive proof," that is, they advance a proposition. Then, they shift the burden of proof or disproof to others. Furthermore, most minimalists tend to be minimalists with the Bible and maximalists with ancient secular texts (Hoffmeier,

"Queries and Comments," p. 22). Dever, for example, insists that the archaeological data are "a more objective witness" and "primary" over the biblical text (Shanks, "Dever's "Sermon on the Mound,'" p. 55).

Dever has been said to have "an anti-Bible bias," perhaps finding "some special delight in knocking the Bible, in demonstrating that it is wrong." His conclusions have been called "simplistic." He is said to ignore data that "do not fit his thesis" and draw conclusions that go "far beyond the evidence" (Shanks, "Dever's 'Sermon on the Mound,'" p. 56).

At the end of the twentieth century, virtually all archaeologists were in one of these two camps. Either they concluded that the archaeological evidence supports the historicity of the Scripture back to the Patriarchs, or they argued that the data is only clear as far back as the period of the Judges. Most "mainstream" archaeologists take the latter position.

Revisionists There is another school of thought among archaeologists. It has only a handful of adherents and is rejected by mainline archaeologists, yet it gets quoted in the press. It started taking shape in the 1970s and became a movement in the 1990s. This new crowd of critics is called by various names, such as the Copenhagen School, Biblical revisionists, Biblical minimalists, and Biblical nihilists.

This position includes such men as Thomas L. Thompson, who dug at Gezer under Dever in 1967 and wrote *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives* (1974) and *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* (1999), Niels Peter Lemche, author of *Early Israel: Anthropological and Historical Studies*

on Israelite Society and *The Israelites in History and Tradition* (1998), both of the University of Copenhagen, Philip Davies, and Israel Finkelstein.

The revisionists claim that Albright and those who agreed with him were trying to prove that the Bible was historically accurate. Wright, the Harvard professor, is cited as an archeologist who "had an obvious theological basis," which was "dangerously close to fundamentalism" (Davies, "What Separates a Minimalist from a Maximalist? Not Much," p. 27). The "old Biblical archaeologist" roamed the Middle East "with a spade in one hand and the Scripture in the other," desperately attempting to prove that the Bible was correct. The revisionists proclaim that they are free of "text bias" and have been "liberated from text (biblical) abuse" (Israel Finkelstein, in "Scholars Speak Out," ed. Hershel Shanks, p. 26).

Thus, the revisionists insist that all biblical stories must be verified before being considered fact. As Thompson says, "We work only with evidence." "If we don't have (archaeological) evidence, we don't have any history" (Shanks, "Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers Face to Face," pp. 35-36). Thompson has also said, "We don't find the Bible to be a historical record" (Shanks, "Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers Face to Face," p. 28).

According to this approach, the Old Testament was composed late in the sixth to fourth or even in the fourth to second centuries BC (the Documentary Hypothesis). Since there is no archaeological evidence for the narratives of the Patriarchs, the Exodus, and the kind of destruction described in Joshua (Hazor and a "couple" of other cities are "exceptions"), etc., it is automatically assumed that they are fiction.

Furthermore, revisionists believe that the Israelites did not come from Egypt; they were indigenous Canaanites! There is a huge gap between biblical Israel and historical Israel derived from archaeology. Biblical Israel is "fiction," including Abraham, Moses, Ruth, David, Jonah, Daniel, et al. (Davies, "What Separates a Minimalist from a Maximalist? Not Much," pp. 24-27, 72-73).

The Syro-Palestinian archaeologists and the revisionists both begin with the premise that since the Bible was written centuries after it claims (second century BC), it is not a reliable record of the past. Only what is known from archaeology is actual history. The difference between them is that the revisionists are much more radical in what they concede is known from archaeology; they reject evidence mainline archaeologists accept.

For example, the Syro-Palestinian archaeologists believe that, even though the Old Testament was written in 200 BC, archaeology has shown that some of the material in the Old Testament is historical; that is, there are places where archaeology and the Bible do converge. The revisionists insist that the Old Testament reflects the time it was "finished" (200 BC). The authors were not writing history but "making it (the Old Testament) up." What they wrote "has nothing to do with history" tradition, maybe, but not much history. The area of heated debate (Dever told Thompson to his face, "Many of your facts are wrong") between the two sides is over the United Kingdom (Shanks, "Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers Face to Face").

Summary: The critics of the Bible have charged that the Bible is not historically accurate based on philosophical grounds (there

is no such thing as the supernatural), on literary grounds (the Old Testament was written late in the first millennium BC, hundreds of years after it says the events took place), and archaeological grounds (if there is no archaeological evidence, it is not historical).

Well, who is right? The next step is to observe what the Bible is claiming. Then, consider the evidence. In doing that, keep several things in mind.

First, *facts* and *interpretations* must be distinguished. For example, a building is discovered at the site of an ancient city. Based on a number of observations, usually including pottery (see the Appendix), the conclusion is that it was the palace of King X, who lived in year Y. The *fact* is that a building was found. The *interpretation* is that it was a palace that belonged to King X and was built in year Y. All or part of that interpretation may be debated among the experts. One may conclude that the whole explanation is correct, while another argues that it is a palace all right, but it existed 100 years after King X, and still another will say it is not even a palace!

Secondly, assuming an interpretation is correct, the kind of evidence it provides must be determined. Is it *conclusive* evidence or *circumstantial* evidence?

Conclusive evidence is direct evidence, such as an inscription, document, place, etc., corroborating a biblical statement. The Bible says that Pontius Pilate lived and ruled in Palestine during the time of Christ, and an inscription from that period verifies that. The writing on that stone is corroborating evidence. It confirms what the Bible says at that point. It is not too much to say that it is *conclusive* proof that the Bible is historically accurate concerning

the existence of a man named Pontius Pilate.

Circumstantial evidence is archaeological data that implies proof. The suspect possessed stolen property. It can be proven that the property was stolen, but the possession of stolen property is not conclusive proof of theft. It is circumstantial evidence. In other words, although not direct evidence, the circumstances are what would be expected if what is claimed to be true actually happened.

With that in mind, let us consider biblical statements and the evidence that supports them; that is, the evidence for the historical accuracy of the Bible. The material is arranged chronologically under the Bible's historical periods. In each of these historical periods, first, the name of the biblical data appears, immediately followed by the name of the extra-biblical evidence that supports it. Both are in italics. Then, an explanation is given. The documentation is in parentheses. An evaluation of the evidence is given at the end of each period.

Some of the interpretations of the data are controversial. In critical cases, the evidence for the opposing conclusions must be examined to see who has the most convincing case. It should be noted that when an authority is used to support a particular position, that does not mean that he or she would agree with positions taken on other issues. As with most subjects, there is no unanimous agreement on this subject.

What follows is a simple (versus technical) presentation of the evidence so that "laypeople" can see for themselves the comparison between what the Bible says and the evidence (or lack of evidence).

Chapter 4

PRIMEVAL

The primeval (first ages) period includes the account of creation, the story of the Garden of Eden, the record of humans living hundreds of years, the narrative of a universal flood, and the building of a tower to the heavens. It begins with creation and extends to Abraham, who was born, according to the time frame reflected in the Bible, in 2167 BC.

Before the Flood

Creation (Enuma Elish) The Bible begins with the creation of the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1). At first, the earth was a watery chaos (Gen. 1:2). A series of divine acts climaxes in the creation of man, who is formed from dust (Gen. 1:3-31; 2:7).

In 1974–75, in the ancient city of Ebla, Syria, Italian archaeologist Paolo Matthiae discovered the Ebla tablets, a collection of as many as 1800 complete clay tablets, 4700 fragments, and many thousands of minor chips. All are dated between ca. 2500 BC and the destruction of the city ca. 2250 BC. The Ebla tablets contain the earliest creation story (Kennedy).

The "Creation Hymn" in the Ebla tablets says:

> Lord of heaven and earth:
> The earth was not; you created it,
> The light of day was not; you created it,
> The morning light you had not yet made exist.

The parallel between the biblical account of creation and the "Creation Hymn" found at Ebla is remarkable.

In 1853, at the site of ancient Nineveh, Hormuzd Rassam found the library of Ashurbanipal (669-626 BC), who had amassed 24,000 clay tablets from all over Mesopotamia (Tigris-Euphrates valley). Among them was an Assyrian translation of a Babylonian account of creation known as *Enuma Elish,* which means "when from above" (the first two words of the Epic). It was composed during the reign of Hammurabi (1728-1686 BC).

The point of *Enuma Elish* is that the city of Babylon was the home of the god Marduk. It contains a perverted polytheistic version of creation and absurdities like the Tigris and Euphrates rivers flowing through the eyes of the goddess Tiamat. The polytheism consists of barbaric and immoral gods.

While there are more differences than similarities between the Babylonian version and the biblical account of creation, the similarities are striking. Both begin with a watery chaos, have a similar order of events, and end with the Lord or gods at rest. In the Babylonian account, the creation of the firmament, the dry land, the celestial luminaries, and man are identical to those in Genesis. There are other similarities. For example, clay is associated with the creation of man in both cases. Of course, the Genesis account

is monotheistic and the Babylonian account is polytheistic (Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, pp. 31-35).

Since the Babylonian account predates the biblical account, some automatically assume that Genesis is based on the *Enuma Elish*. Moses "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22), and in Moses' day, Mesopotamian commerce had widely disseminated Babylonian writings. So, it is possible that Moses knew of *Enuma Elish* (Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament,* p. 36). There are other ancient accounts of creation. There is even another Babylonian account of creation called "The Epic of Atra-Hasis." Also, biblical writers did use oral and written sources (Lk. 1:1-3). Nevertheless, while Moses might have known about the traditions of creation, it is not likely that he depended on *Enuma Elish* or any of the others because there are more differences than similarities.

It is just as logical to suggest that the similarities imply a common source. Unger says both accounts "are traditions common to all civilized nations of antiquity." He suggests that people "modified" the traditions and that, over time, modifications resulted in "the corruption of the original pure tradition. The Genesis account is not only the purest but everywhere bears the unmistakable impress of divine inspiration when compared with the extravagances and corruptions of other accounts" (Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament,* p. 37).

No one suggests that ancient creation accounts are proof of the biblical account, but they are circumstantial evidence. If the biblical account is what actually happened, it would be expected that the most ancient extra-biblical accounts of creation would

be at least similar. By the way, no *historical* records say people came from lower life forms.

The Garden of Eden (Ancient Records) Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden in the Tigris-Euphrates valley (Gen. 2:10-14). The exact location of Eden cannot be determined because the flood changed the landscape. Rimmer wrote, "*All* of the records of antiquity begin with the history of man in a garden" (Rimmer, p. 57, italics his).

The Tree of Life (*The Myth of Adapa)* Genesis says that if Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of Life, they would live forever (Gen. 3:22). Ancient inscriptions speak of a sacred garden with a tree of life, and ancient seals frequently contain a "sacred tree" (Price, p. 111).

The Myth of Adapa was found on three clay tablets in Ashurbanipal's library (a fourth tablet was found at Amarna, Egypt, in the archives of the Egyptian kings Amenhotep III and IV, who lived in the fourteenth century BC). It, too, contains absurdities, like Adapa breaking the wing of the south wind of the Persian Gulf, pictured as a birdlike creature. In the story, Adapa is offered the chance to eat the "food of life" and live forever. He does not do it, and as a result, mankind is affected by disease and death.

While there are many differences between the Myth of Adapa and the account of Adam in the Garden of Eden, there are also similarities. Unger calls the similarities "striking" (Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament,* p. 42). Price, a professor at the University of Chicago, called it "a remarkable story" (Price, p. 111). The biblical account and the Myth of Adapa portray the possibility of obtaining eternal life by eating something.

The Temptation (*The Temptation Seal)* Adam and Eve were told not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17, 3:3). Satan, in the form of a serpent, tempted Eve (Gen. 3:1-5; 2 Cor. 11:3). The Temptation Seal, found at Nineveh, portrays a man and a woman sitting on either side of a fruit tree. Both are reaching for fruit. Behind the woman is a serpent, apparently speaking to her (Boyd, p. 70). It dates to the third millennium BC and is in the British Museum.

The Fall (The Adam and Eve Seal) As a result of their disobedience, Adam and Eve were sent out of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:23-24). In 1932, Dr. E. A. Speiser found a Sumerian seal, the Adam and Eve Seal, near the bottom of the Tepe Gawra Mound, 12 miles north of Nineveh. He dated it to about 3500 BC. It depicts a naked man and a naked woman walking as if utterly downcast and brokenhearted, followed by a serpent. It is in the University of Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia. Dr. Speiser said it is "strongly suggestive of the Adam and Eve story" (Boyd, p. 71).

These stories and seals do not correspond exactly to the biblical record of the Garden of Eden. At best, they are corruptions of the biblical account, but at the dawn of history, in the cradle of civilization, distinct evidence of the main features of the Genesis account is known outside the Bible. Now, isn't that interesting?

Civilization (Modern Theory) According to Genesis, civilization began in the Tigris-Euphrates valley. Human beings were created there, first lived there, and civilization began there. Apart from Genesis, the "Cradle of Civilization" has long been placed in the lower Tigris-Euphrates valley.

Years ago, at a symposium of the American Oriental Society, four scholars, three of whom were professors from the University of Pennsylvania, presented papers on "The Beginnings of Civilization in the Orient." The expert on China said, "Civilization appeared earliest in the Near East." The specialist on India showed India's debt to Mesopotamia, even tracing the writing of India to the Near East. Likewise, the authorities in Egypt and Assyria gave evidence that Mesopotamia was the cradle of civilization (Free, "Archaeology and Neo-Orthodoxy," pp. 126-127). Albright concluded, "Archaeological research has thus established beyond doubt that there is no focus of civilization on the earth that can begin to compete in antiquity and activity with the basin of the Eastern Mediterranean and the region immediately to the east of it—Breasted's Fertile Crescents" (Albright, p. 6).

Moreover, civilization is said to have begun when people started farming and raising cattle. According to Genesis, those were the occupations of Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:2; see also 4:20 and 10:9-10). Other features of civilization are music and the rise of urban life. Both are mentioned in the opening chapters of Genesis (Gen. 4:21; 10:9-12) and are evident in many archaeological sites in the Tigris-Euphrates valley, including places like Nineveh, where Genesis says civilization began (Gen. 10:12). Archaeological activity has "now demonstrated conclusively" that culture originated in the land of the Tigris and Euphrates (Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 96).

Longevity (*Numerous Ancient Records)* The opening chapters of Genesis portray people living hundreds of years before the Flood and after the Flood living much shorter lives. Ancient records

support the biblical assertion that before the Flood, people lived longer than after the Flood.

The Sumerian King List (ca. 2000 BC), preserved on the Weld-Blundell prism, tells of kings who lived before the Flood. The shortest reign is 18,600 years, and the longest is 43,200 years. The total is 241,200 years (Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament,* p. 46). The list's end says, "Then the Flood swept over the earth" (Boyd, p. 75).

In the Babylonian list, the first king ruled 36,000 years, and the oldest, 64,800 years. These figures come from Berossus, an ancient historian (third century BC) whose chronological unit is the *sarus*. Among the Babylonians, there were two values assigned to a *sarus*: 3,600 years and 18½ years. If the later measurement is taken, the ages in the Babylonian list become almost identical to the biblical record (for the calculations, see Rehwinkel, pp. 166-167).

The Egyptians and Chinese also speak of kings who lived thousands of years. Even the Greeks and the Romans suggested people lived for 800 to 1000 years. Josephus, a historian who lived in the first century AD, accepted these traditions.

Besides longevity, other parallels exist between the biblical account and ancient records. Genesis lists ten patriarchs who lived before the Flood. Rehwinkel remarks, "With a strange persistence, this same number reappears in the legends of a great number of nations, especially among those whose history dates back to the very beginning of the human race, as that of Egypt, Babylon, China, and India" (Rehwinkel, p. 168).

Furthermore, at the end of these lists, the Flood occurs.

Rehwinkel concludes, "Here, then, is another interesting and stubborn fact which must be met honestly, for all these ever-recurring incidents found with so many peoples so widely separated with respect to both time and place cannot be accounted for as mere accident. These traditions, differing in some of their details, evidently have a common source in the same historical facts" (Rehwinkel, pp. 168-169).

After the Flood, the reigns of the kings are much shorter. Berossus, the third-century BC historian, gives the names of ten kings who reigned for thousands of years before the Flood and says that this was reduced to 100 years after the Flood.

Longevity alone does not prove that the record is not historical. Citing "proof positive" from inscriptions that a king mentioned on the Sumerian King List was a "historical ruler," Kitchen points out that the Sumerian King List credits him with a reign of 900 years and concludes, "Incredibly high numbers of years (whether reigns or lifespans) attached to a name in later documents do *not* prove that the person concerned was unhistorical." He adds that even though we might not be able to account for the high numbers, "they constitute in themselves *no* adequate reason for rejecting the possible historicity of Abraham's remote ancestors" (Kitchen, *The Bible in its World*, p. 32).

There may be an explanation for the longevity of people before the Flood. Some, even some trained in science, say that the explanation is that there was a canopy of water above the earth before the Flood (see the discussion on the Flood below) and that it filtered out radiation from the sun, making much longer life possible on the earth (Whitcomb and Morris, pp. 399-405).

The Flood

The Flood (The Gilgamesh Epic) Genesis describes a flood that covered "all the high hills under the whole heaven" (Gen. 7:19) and "the mountains" (Gen. 7:20). The idea of a flood covering the whole earth sounds unusual and unlikely. Such a notion provokes several questions.

The first and foremost question about the Flood of Genesis is, "If the Flood covered the entire earth, where did all that water come from?" Genesis says, "All the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights" (Gen. 7:11-12). The water for the Flood came from *above* and *below* the earth.

Before the Flood, there was water *above* the earth like there has not been since the Flood. According to Genesis, the entire earth was originally covered with water (Gen. 1:2). The atmosphere consisted of water! Then, "God divided the waters from the waters" (Gen. 1:6), that is, "God made the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament" (Gen. 1:7) and He "called the firmament heaven" (Gen. 1:8). In other words, at that point, the entire surface of the earth was covered with water, above the watery surface of the earth was the firmament (the sky, the atmosphere) and above the firmament (sky) was another body of water. Dillow called this heavenly body of water a "vast reservoir," a "literal liquid celestial ocean" (Dillow, 1981, p. 51).

Later, when the Flood came, "the windows of heaven were opened," and it rained for forty days and nights (Gen. 7:11-12).

"The windows of heaven were opened" is a figurative expression for the torrential downpour that fell from heaven. The ocean of water *above* the earth, mentioned in Genesis 1, fell to the earth. It is possible that there was enough water above the earth in that canopy of water to cover the face of the earth (for calculations, see Dillow, pp. 65-75).

The Bible is not alone in saying there was much water above the earth before the Flood. As Dillow demonstrates, there are "widespread accounts of an ancient water heaven" (Dillow, pp. 113-134). He observes, "If there were a water heaven that condensed and resulted in a global deluge, we would expect to find a universal flood and water heaven traditions—and this is exactly what we do find. This tends to supply circumstantial evidence for a universal flood" (Dillow, p. 129).

The water for the Flood did not just come from above; it also came from *below*. Genesis says, "On that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up" (Gen. 7:11). The Hebrew word translated "deep" is used for subterranean waters in Genesis 49:25 and Deuteronomy 33:13. It has been suggested that the expression "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up" refers to "great volcanic explosions and eruptions," resulting in the whole surface of the earth being changed during the flood (Whitcomb and Morris, p. 122).

If the seabeds rose and the continents sank, the water in the oceans alone would cover the earth. In fact, if the oceans were filled with material (by volcanic activity?) to a mean depth and the land were leveled down to an average level, water would cover the entire earth to a depth of a mile and a half (Rehwinkel, pp. 123-124).

At any rate, the water for the Flood came from the large body of water *above* the earth and the subterranean waters *below* the earth.

The next question is, "Where did all the water go?" After the Flood, "God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided" (Gen. 8:1), "the waters receded" (Gen. 8:3), they "decreased continually" (Gen. 8:5), the waters "dried up from the earth" (Gen. 8:13). These verses describe the water evaporating into the atmosphere and receding back under the earth.

Perhaps God caused the ocean floors to sink, drawing the water off the landmasses. Psalm 104 says, "The waters stood above the mountains. At Your rebuke, they fled; at the voice of Your thunder, they hastened away. They went up over the mountains; they went down into the valleys, to the place, which You founded for them" (Ps. 104:6-8). This passage is usually taken as a reference to the Creation, but some claim it refers to the Flood and that verse 8 could be translated "the mountains rose, and the valleys sank" (Whitcomb and Morris, p. 122).

Is there evidence for a universal flood in geology? Some say, "Yes." The very presence of a fossil argues forcefully for a catastrophe. If an animal dies and its carcass lies on the ground, it simply deteriorates until it disintegrates and disappears. A fossil can only be formed by some catastrophe whereby an animal suddenly dies and is preserved. As Whitcomb and Morris explain, "Preservation of organic materials, *by whatever means,* requires some sort of catastrophic condition, some kind of quick burial by engulfing sediments, usually followed by some abnormal chemical means of rapid solidification" (Whitcomb and Morris, p. 168).

Virtually the entire earth is covered with fossil graveyards containing fossils of thousands of plants, animals, fish, and birds. They are found in the mountains (the Rockies, the Himalayas, the Alps, etc.), in plains and prairies, in the desert, and even in Siberia (Rehwinkel, pp. 210-211; for more details, see Rehwinkel, pp. 210-254; Whitcomb and Morris, pp. 154-169). Perhaps a local flood could explain some of these cases, but many of them are scattered worldwide, including on the tops of mountains. A universal flood is the most logical explanation of such fossil graveyards.

For example, take the mammoth found in the tundra of northern Siberia. The mammoth is a much larger member of the elephant family. The tusk of a modern African elephant weighs about forty to fifty pounds. The tusk of a mammoth weighs between 180 and 200 pounds. Remains of these extinct animals have been found in various locations worldwide, but they have been found in the greatest abundance in Siberia.

Mammoth carcasses found in Siberia were in a standing, upright position in the ground as if they had sunk down and had been frozen in that position. Their long hair was intact. The food found in their mouths and stomachs was not of the kind from the region. They perished suddenly in some great catastrophe.

As if all that is not amazing enough, the numbers found are astonishing. Since about AD 900, men have sold these ivory tusks in Arabia, China, and Europe. In twenty years in the nineteenth century, at least twenty thousand mammoths were taken from one Siberian "mine" (for details and documentation, see Rehwinkel, pp. 238-254 and Dillow, pp. 311-353).

Commenting on the Siberian mammoth beds, Whitcomb and Morris wrote, "It is transparently obvious that catastrophism of a very high order is alone sufficient to account for such things as these" (Whitcomb and Morris, p. 291).

There is more. Two distinguished geophysicists claim they discovered evidence of a flood 7,500 years ago in the Black Sea (William Ryan and Walter Pitman, *Noah's Flood: The New Scientific Discoveries About the Event that Changed the World*). Ryan was trained at the Lamont-Doherty Geological Observatory of Columbia University in New York.

Is there evidence for a universal flood in ancient literature? Yes, there is a worldwide tradition of a worldwide flood. Some of the accounts date as far back as the early second millennium BC. Hundreds of traditions of a universal flood have been found in every part of the world, including both eastern and western hemispheres, traditions from Europe, Asia, Australia, the East Indies, Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia, South America, Central America, North America, and East Africa. The traditions of a universal flood vary in detail, but common to most is a flood that covered the earth and destroyed all but a few of the human race. Many include the story of an ark that finally landed on a mountain.

Albright speaks of "the extraordinary diffusion of deluge stories over the earth" (Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, p. 30). Stories about a flood have been found in 80,000 works in 72 languages (Keller, p. 38).

The oldest mention of the Flood is in the Sumerian King List (ca. 2000 BC). The fact that it is in the King's List and not merely in their epic tales indicates that they thought it was a

historical occurrence. The fullest Babylonian account of the Flood is in the Semitic Old-Babylonian Epic of Atra-Hasis (ca. 1600 BC). The Babylonian Epic Gilgamesh is "attested by copies of the early 2nd millennium, but for Tablet XI (the flood) only the 7th-century copies are known as yet" (Kitchen, *The Bible in its World*, pp. 28, 30). The affinities among these "agree well with the thesis of a common literary heritage, formulated in each case in Mesopotamia in the early 2nd millennium BC" (Kitchen, *The Bible in its World*, p. 32).

In an Egyptian legend reported by Plato and Manetho, only Toth was saved from the Flood. There are similar traditions from Asia Minor (in Apamea, there was an ark on some of their coins) and Greece. According to a legend from India, Manu and seven others were saved in a ship from a worldwide flood. In a Chinese version, Fah-he, his wife, their three sons, and three daughters were spared. Nu-u survived among the Hawaiians, Manabozho among the Algonquins, and the Tezpi among the Mexican Indians.

From ancient Mesopotamia, the Sumerian Tablets contain an account of the flood. The Gilgamesh Epic, recorded on clay tablets found in the library of Ashurbanipal and translated by George Smith of the British Museum in 1872, narrates the Flood account from the perspective of the ancient Babylonians. Kitchen states that there is "proof positive" that Gilgamesh "was clearly a historical ruler" (Kitchen, *The Bible in its World*, p. 33).

No less an archeologist than the famous F. W. Albright said that the biblical and Babylonian accounts of the Flood have "remarkably close parallels" (Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, p. 29). Rimmer explains the similarities: "In the

Babylonian account of the deluge, every major premise of the Mosaic record is sustained in its entirety. The Gilgamesh account tells of the heavenly warning. It depicts the gathering of materials and the building of an ark. The ark safely carried the hero, his wife, his family, and certain beasts of the earth. The ark of the Gilgamesh episode was made watertight with bitumen, exactly as was the ark of Noah in the record in the Book of Genesis. After entering this ark, the Babylonian account tells how the boat came under the direct supervision of the gods. On the same night, a mighty torrent fell out of the skies. The cloudburst continued for six days and nights until the tops of the mountains were covered. The sea arose out of its banks and helped to overflow the land. After the seventh day, the storm abated, and the sea decreased. By that time, however, the whole human race had been destroyed with the exception of the little company that had been within the Babylonian ark. The ark of Babylon was grounded in that portion of the ancient world known as Armenia, the Hebrew name of which is Ararat. Seven days after the landing of the ark, the imprisoned remnant sent forth a dove. When she found no place to light and rest, the dove returned to the ship. They waited a short while and then sent forth a swallow. The swallow also returned, wearied from a long flight, and several more days were allowed to elapse. The next attempt to discover the condition of the earth by the imprisoned remnant resulted in the sending forth of a raven. The bird returned and approached the ark but refused to re-enter the ship. The remnant knew then that the flood was ended. They accordingly went forth with all the redeemed life, and celebrated their preservation by offering up sacrifices to the

gods upon the mountains. The goddess Ishtar was so pleased with the sacrifice of the godly remnant that she hung in the heavens a great bow, which Anu, the father of the gods, had made for the occasion. She swore by the sacred ornaments that hung about her neck that mankind should not again be destroyed by a flood, and this heavenly bow was the sign of that covenant. The incidental details which are found in this hoary manuscript coincide too closely with the record of Genesis to admit of coincidence" (Rimmer, pp. 59-61).

The presence of so many fossils scattered over the entire earth, combined with Flood traditions from all over the world and the biblical data, makes a persuasive case of circumstantial evidence for a universal Flood.

The Ark (Sightings, etc.) The biblical story of the Ark provokes several questions.

Could the Ark hold all the species of animals? According to Genesis 6:15, the Ark was 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high. It had three decks (Gen. 6:16). A cubit was the arm's length from the elbow to the end of the middle finger. There were several cubits, a standard one (Deut. 3:11; 2 Chron. 3:3) and one that was a handbreadth longer (Ez. 40:5; 43:13). One was about eighteen inches, and the other was about twenty-four.

Assuming a twenty-four-inch cubit, the Ark was 600 feet long (the Queen Mary is 1,018 feet long), 100 feet wide, and 60 feet deep. If Genesis refers to an eighteen-inch cubit, the Ark was 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 40 feet high (analogous to a four-story building). Many have concluded that it was not shaped like a ship but like a barge. In 1609-21, Peter Jansen, a

Dutchman, built a vessel the size of the ark to satisfy himself concerning its trustworthiness and storage capacity. "Dr. Henry Morris, a former professor of hydraulic engineering at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, says the proportions of the Ark in length, breadth, and depth have been proven to be hydrodynamically sound" (Balsiger and Sellier, p. 115).

Assuming a cubit of 17.5 inches, the Ark had a capacity of 522 standard railroad stock cars or *eight* freight trains of 65 cars each (Whitcomb and Morris, pp. 67-68). Based on the size of the Ark and the number of species of animals (17,600), there would have been room for two of each species (35,000), especially if only young ones were aboard, and even more, plus room for food, Noah and his family. In fact, it would only have taken *two* trains hauling 73 cars each! (For the calculations, see Whitcomb and Morris, pp. 65-79, esp. p. 69.)

How much food was needed? The flood lasted more than a year. How could Noah store food for a year for all the animals? For one thing, animals adapt their food supply to their needs. When they have no physical exercise, they cut down promptly on the amount of food they consume. It is also possible that the animals hibernated while on the Ark. In such a state, the animals could have survived in confined quarters with little or no food or bodily excretion. If that were the case, perhaps Noah stored food for one good meal when entering the Ark and one good meal when they exited the Ark (see Whitcomb and Morris, pp. 70-75).

Is there any evidence that the Ark's remains might still exist? Here is the situation. Granted, the "evidence" is circumstantial at best, but it is interesting, to say the least.

According to Genesis, the Ark came to rest on "the mountains of Ararat" (Gen. 8:4). Mount Ararat, located in Eastern Turkey, has two summits: one at 16,984 feet and another at 12,806 feet. Climbing this mountain is exceedingly difficult. The higher summit is permanently covered with glacial ice and snow, beginning about 13,000 feet. The ice is very hard, steep, and slippery. From the main glacier, there extend twelve finger glaciers containing 100-foot crevasses. Climbers there have been known to set off avalanches just by talking to each other. Winds blow at more than 100 miles per hour. Most of the year, it is also covered with clouds that obscure visibility. During the past 200 years, many have perished attempting to reach the site of the Ark.

A major hindrance to expeditions is the Kurds, the local residents of the villages around Ararat. Most expeditions must depend on them to be their guides and porters, but the Kurdish guides are usually unreliable because they fear that the summit is a place of sure destruction. They often refuse to go beyond the lower snow levels. They have been known to desert expeditions during the night.

Two men who have done extensive research on Noah's Ark say their research indicates that since 1856, 200 people in 23 separate sightings have seen Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat (Balsiger and Sellier Jr., p. 203).

Numerous "sightings" of "the Ark" on Mount Ararat have been reported during ancient, medieval, and modern times. Reports of people visiting the Ark date to 700 BC. Berossus, a Babylonian historian who lived around 300 BC, said the remains of the Ark could still be seen. In his *Antiquities of the Jews,* Josephus, the

famous Jewish historian, wrote (ca. AD 100), "They show the relics of it (the Ark) even today." In 180 AD, Theophilus of Antioch wrote, "And of the Ark, the remains are to this day to be seen in the Arabian Mountains" (Balsiger and Sellier, pp. 74-76).

The only coin that bears a biblical scene is one depicting Noah's Ark. The coin pictures the Ark as a box with an open lid floating on water, while its lid shelters Noah and his wife from the rain. On the side of the Ark is inscribed "Noah" in Greek. Above the Ark is a dove with an olive spray in its beak. It also contains the inscription "of the people of Apameia." On the other side, Trebonianus Gallus, Roman Emperor, is portrayed. It was struck around AD 300 at Apameia (Kibotos), in modern Turkey near Mount Ararat (Meshorer, pp. 38-39).

Isidore of Seville (AD 560-636), who wrote one of the first encyclopedias and was one of the most learned men of his age, said, "Even to this day, wood remains of it (the Ark) are to be seen there (Ararat)." Jehan Haithon, an Armenian prince who became a monk, said he saw the Ark in 1254. In his book *The Travels*, the explorer Marco Polo (AD 1234-1324) said, "The Ark of Noah still rests on top of a certain great mountain where the snow stays so long that no one can climb it" (Balsiger and Sellier, p. 77).

In June of 1670, Jans Janszoon Struys, a Dutch adventurer, met a monk in the Ararat region who gave him a small wooden cross carved from wood taken from Noah's Ark. When the monk asked Struys to take it to St. Peter's in Rome, Struys requested a written testimony from the monk. In it, the monk says, "I myself entered the Ark and with my own hands cut from the wood of one of the compartments the fragments from which that cross

is made." It is dated July 22, 1670, and signed by Domingo Allesandro (Balsiger and Sellier, pp. 78-79).

Beyond these "sightings" recorded throughout history, major expeditions to Ararat began in the nineteenth century. In 1829, Dr. Friedrich W. Parrot conducted the first historically recorded expedition. He ascended to the summit but apparently did not see the Ark. He concluded that, unlike most of the world's mountains, Ararat has a level plateau just below its summit that is large enough to hold a vessel the size of the Ark, as described in Genesis. He said it "would not have occupied a tenth part of the surface of the depression" (Balsiger and Sellier, pp. 84-86).

During the 1800s, other expeditions followed, some reaching the summit and others failing to complete the trip to the top. Some saw the Ark; some did not (was it covered with snow?). On September 12, 1876, at the 13,000-foot level of Mount Ararat, Sir James Bryce, a respected British statesman, jurist, and author, found a piece of wood "four feet long and five inches thick, evidently cut by some tool and so far above the limit of trees that it could not possibly be a natural fragment of one." When he brought the wood back to London, newspapers hailed the event, but scientists scoffed at it (Balsiger and Sellier, pp. 91-92).

The first official comment by the Turkish government was made in August 1883 when they announced the discovery of Noah's Ark. The story was reported in leading American newspapers. For example, on August 10, 1883, an article appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, which said: "A paper at Constantinople announces the discovery of Noah's Ark. It appears that some Turkish commissioners appointed to investigate the question

of an avalanche on Mt. Ararat suddenly came upon a gigantic structure of very dark wood protruding from a glacier." The article went on to say that men entered the Ark and "the interior was divided into partitions fifteen feet high." They could only enter three rooms because the others were filled with ice. Because of the treatment, the report received in the newspapers, and by scientists, the government did not conduct another expedition (Balsiger and Sellier, pp. 94-95).

Prince John Joseph Nouri of India said that on April 25, 1887, he "found the ark wedged in the rocks and half-filled with snow and ice" and that it was made of dark beams of very thick wood (Balsiger and Sellier, pp. 95).

Around the turn of the 20th century, when George Hagopian was a boy, his uncle took him to see Noah's Ark. In 1970, he told researchers his story. According to George, his uncle helped him climb on top of the Ark, and the shepherd boy who looked after sheep on the nearby slopes not only walked on top of the Ark, but he looked inside through a hole on top of the Ark. All he saw inside was darkness (Balsiger and Sellier, pp. 99-102).

In 1916, Vladimir Roskovitsky, a Russian pilot stationed about 25 miles northeast of Mount Ararat, saw the Ark from his plane. He reported that to his captain, who sent the information to the Russian government. The czar sent soldiers to investigate. They found the Ark, measured it, and even took pictures. A few days after the czar received their report, the Bolsheviks overthrew the Russian government. Years later, Col. Alexander A. Koor, an officer in the czar's White Russian Army, wrote a detailed article on this story. He gave names, dates, and places. The article appeared in

Rosseya in November of 1945. Others have reported talking to the soldiers about their experience with the Ark (Balsiger and Sellier, pp. 102-109).

There have been reports of World War II sightings from planes, but no hard evidence, like a photo, has survived. The experience of the French explorer Fernand Navarra, however, was different. He conducted four expeditions on Mount Ararat in search of the Ark (1952, 1953, 1955, and 1969). On August 17, 1952, he saw a patch of blackness in the ice but lacked the necessary equipment to go down to the site. In July 1953, he got closer but returned empty-handed without a fragment or a photograph. When he returned to the site in 1955, he discovered that "at least one-third of the ice had thawed." The object was still buried in ice, but this time, Navarra and his 11-year-old son, Raphael, were able to cut off a piece of wood. On July 6, 1955, this man and his son retrieved a piece of wood about five feet long from Mount Ararat. They found it at slightly less than 13,000 feet. Based on earlier sightings, the intact Ark had been thought to be at about 14,000 feet. Many have concluded that the Ark was broken during an earthquake. Thus, the main part rests at over 14,000 feet, and smaller parts are scattered below.

On July 31, 1969, Navarra and the search team returned to the site and, this time, found five pieces of wood, the longest being nearly seventeen inches. The wood samples are hand-hewed and squared, impregnated with bituminous pitch. Tests indicate that the wood is a variety of white oak.

Navarra had the wood tested using the same methods as those used to date ancient artifacts, including King Tut's coffin. F.

Nasera, the head of the Forestry Section at the Forestry Institute of Research and Experiments in Madrid, Spain, concluded, "One can suppose the age of the wood sample given varies around 5,000 years." The Center of Forestry Research and Analysis in Paris said the wood was about 4,500 years old.

Carbon-14 tests conducted at Geochron Laboratories in Cambridge, MA, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of California concluded that the wood dates between 1250 and 1700 years old, but after W. B. Libby introduced radiocarbon dating, Dr. Melvin A. Cook, the 1968 Nitro-Nobel Gold Medal winner, proved major discrepancies in the method. Dr. Cook specifically said that the assumptions on which Carbon-14 is based do not apply to Navarra's samples because of the carbonate-ion exchange in freshwater lakes (for details and documentation of the story, see Balsiger and Sellier, pp. 167-191).

Because Ararat is in a restricted military zone on the Turkish-Russian border, the Turkish government has refused to grant permits for planes to fly over the area. There are "rumors" that spy planes have photographed the Ark, but the military is not willing to release them, probably because Ararat is in a military zone, making any photos of the area classified. A Russian missile fuel depot and launching pad are less than forty miles from Ararat (Balsiger and Sellier, p. 9).

In 1974, Bart La Rue, president of Janus Pictures in Hollywood, made an illegal expedition up Mount Ararat. Perhaps because of that publicized incident, in April 1974, the Turkish government officially banned travel by foreigners to Ararat (*Christianity Today*, May 24, 1974, p. 57). There are a number of possible reasons for

such an action, including 1) fear of possible CIA involvement in an expedition (such fears were expressed in Soviet and Turkish newspapers), 2) fear of possible foreign involvement with Kurds who live in the vicinity of Mount Ararat, and 3) fear of smuggling ancient treasures out of the country. Also, opium growers use the road at the base of Mount Ararat. It is a major drug smuggling route. In their half-hearted effort to control opium smuggling, the Turks want to keep foreigners out of the area. Another factor is the Muslim tradition that the Ark landed on another mountain in Turkey (Balsiger and Sellier, pp. 204-207).

After studying the situation from a geological point of view, Dr. Andrew A. Snelling (PhD in geology from the University of Sydney) concluded, "**Based on the fact that Mount Ararat rests upon volcanic strata on top of sediments laid down by the Flood, we can be rather confident that the Ark will never be found on this mountain"** (bold print his; see the article at https://answersingenesis.org/noahs-ark/noahs-ark-found/noahs-ark-mount-ararat).

After the Flood

The Table of Nations (Ancient Inscriptions) The Table of Nations in Genesis 10 is amazingly accurate. Most of the nations listed in Genesis 10 are founded in the ancient inscriptions of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Ur, and Kish. Monuments have confirmed the fact that the rulers of Babylon established Nineveh. (The Kish kings list, which dates to 2200 BC, confirms Genesis 11:1 that all spoke one language.) Albright calls the Table of Nations "an

astonishingly accurate document." He says, "It stands absolutely alone in ancient literature without a remote parallel even among the Greeks" (Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, p. 30).

Tower of Babel (Ziggurat) According to Genesis, a "tower whose top is in the heavens" (Gen. 11:4) was built at Babel (Gen. 11:9) in the land of Shinar (Gen. 11:2).

Many ziggurats have been discovered in Mesopotamia, the best-preserved being at Ur. The word "ziggurat" means "peak, mountain top." A ziggurat is a temple tower in the form of a terraced pyramid, with each story smaller than the one below it and a temple on top.

Several ancient sources describe the temple towers at Babylon, including the Esagil Tablet and Herodotus, the historian who visited Babylon about 460 BC. In 1913, Robert Koldewey uncovered the ground plan for the ziggurat at Babylon. His excavations "reveal the remarkable accuracy of the Esagil Tablet as well as Herodotus' account" (Pinches, *ISBE*, vol. 1, pp. 383-384).

At Ur, a ten-foot-high, five-foot-wide stele (a stele is a stone slab engraved with a commemorative inscription, usually used as a victory monument) was found with a picture of King Ur-Nammu (2044-2007 BC) setting out to begin construction with a compass, pick, and trowel, and mortar baskets. A symbol for the moon god Nannar is above his head. To the right are figures of angels with vases from which flow the streams of life (these are the earliest known pictures of angels). The reverse side depicts a commemorative feast.

A clay tablet gives this account of the ziggurat: "The erection (building) of this tower (temple) highly offended all the gods. In a night, they (threw down) what man had built and impeded

their progress. They were scattered abroad, and their speech was strange" (Boyd, p. 78)

Genesis does not say that the tower of Babel was a temple tower, but it is at least of interest that towers were used for religious purposes in the ancient world.

Summary: While there is no direct "proof" of the people and events of the Primeval Period, there is circumstantial evidence.

This circumstantial evidence dates back to the early second millennium BC. The principal sources and examples from this period—the Sumerian King List, the Sumerian "flood story," the Epic of Atakhasis, and the major part of Gilgamesh- come from the early 2nd millennium BC (c. 2000-1600 BC)" (Kitchen, *The Bible in its World*, p. 34). Kitchen concludes, "These peoples firmly believed in divine creation and in divine punishment expressed in a particular Flood as a distant historical event, distinct from the ordinary, habitual inundations known in Mesopotamia. It is possible to prove the historicity of some early figures (Enmebaragisi; Tudiya) and to postulate it purely rationally for others (e.g., Gilgamesh), regardless of 'problem elements' such as long reigns or lifespans" (Kitchen, *The Bible in its World*, p. 36).

Granted, none of the ancient written material concerning the Primeval period constitutes conclusive proof that Genesis 1-11 is historically accurate. Nevertheless, if the biblical record in Genesis is correct, the type of material that has survived from ancient times is what would be expected. The fact that this material exists is at least circumstantial evidence that the Bible accurately reported what happened before Abraham's time.

Chapter 5

PATRIARCHS

The Patriarchs were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Their story is recorded in Genesis, which also includes the life of Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob. Hence, the *Patriarchal period begins with Abraham's birth and concludes with Joseph's deat*h. According to the chronology presented in the biblical record, this period extends from 2167 C (the birth of Abraham) to 1806 BC (the death of Joseph).

Places

Ur (Excavation) Abram (later called Abraham) was from Ur (Gen. 11:28). In 1854, J. E. Taylor identified Ur as a place in southern Mesopotamia, 220 miles southeast of modern Baghdad in Iraq. The ancient city there gradually disappeared from history after about the sixth century BC because of a change in the Euphrates River that left the area without an adequate water supply for irrigation. Taylor found an inscription identifying the site as Ur (Meinhardt, p. 22). Sir Leonard Woolley excavated the site extensively from 1922 to 1934. As a result of his work, he was made a knight.

Woodley found that the wall around the city was 2½ miles in circumference and 77 feet thick and estimated the population of the city and its suburbs to be about 250,000. When Abram lived in Ur, it was at its height. It was a highly civilized (by this time, the pyramids of Egypt had been built!) and prosperous city (Vos, *IBSE*, vol. 1, p. 270).

Woolley said that the architects of Ur were familiar with all the basic principles of construction known to us today. Houses had from ten to twenty rooms and, in some cases, a lavatory adjoined the guestroom. Education included reading, writing, mathematics, multiplication and division tables, square and cube roots, and practical geometry. Merchants conducted business and recorded their transactions in writing.

Ur had great temples, commercial activity, and literary works. Tax records, letters of credit, court cases, invoices, artistic vessels, and beautiful jewelry have been unearthed. For example, at one gravesite, archaeologists found inlaid harps and two statues of goats standing erect before a bush, and in another, a helmet fashioned from solid gold in the form of a wig with locks of hair hammered in relief and engraved in a delicate symmetrical form.

Terah, Abram's father, was, at least at one point in his life, an idolater (Josh. 24:2). Ur was an idolatrous and immoral city. In 1922, Woolley excavated a ziggurat built during the Third Dynasty of Ur (ca. 2060-1950 BC). It was two hundred feet in length, one hundred fifty feet in width, and seventy feet in height. Excavations indicate that the worship of the Moon God Nannar prevailed there (Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, pp. 107-112).

Cyrus Gordon challenged Taylor and Woodley's conclusion concerning the location of Ur (called "Southern Ur"). Gordon suggested that it was near Haran (called "Northern Ur") (Gordon, pp. 20-21, 52; see Shanks, "Abraham's Ur: Is the Pope Going to the Wrong Place?"). The objections have answers (Millard, "Where Was Abraham's Ur?"), but scholars are divided. No one doubts that Ur existed in Abraham's time. If Southern Ur is not the Ur of Abraham, it still indicates what some cities were like at the time of Abraham.

Haran (Continuous Occupation) Traveling from Ur, Abram stopped at Haran (Gen. 11:31; 12:4-5). Haran, located in northern Mesopotamia on the Belikh River, sixty miles from the Euphrates River, has been "continuously occupied" since the third millennium BC (Hughes, *ISBE*, vol. 2, p. 614). The location of Haran is not disputed, but it has never been excavated (Shanks, "Abraham's Ur: Is the Pope Going to the Wrong Place?" p. 62). When the Bible says that Abraham lived, Haran was on a trade route, which fits what Genesis says. It was a "natural stopping-off place" for him and his family in their trek to Palestine (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 455).

Shechem (Inscription) The city of Shechem is mentioned in connection with the Patriarchs (Gen. 12:6; see chapters 33-35, 37). A "sizable village" existed in the fourth millennium BC before the Patriarchs. The Khu-Sebek Inscription, a stele from Abydos in Egypt, refers to a conquest of "the foreign country" of Shechem by Pharaoh Sesostris III (1878-1843 BC) (Wright and Campbell, *ISBE*, vol. 4, p. 459).

Bethel (Excavation) According to Genesis, Abraham visited

Bethel (Gen. 12:8; 13:3; see chapters 28, 31, 35). Bethel has been found and excavated. It was "well established by the time it was mentioned in the patriarchal narratives" (Ewing and Harrison, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 465).

Five Cities of the Valley (Letters of Mari, Excavation) Genesis contains the story of a war between four kings of Mesopotamia and five kings of Canaan "in the Valley of Siddim" (that is, the Salt Sea). One of the kings of Mesopotamia is Chedorlaomer. The five cities in Canaan are Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela, that is, Zoar (Gen. 14:1-3). Today, the Salt Sea is called the Dead Sea.

The events of Genesis 14 have been called "unhistorical" and "simply impossible." In 1918, Albright wrote that the historical view of this chapter "has no foundation" (Free, "Archaeology and the Historical Accuracy of Scripture," pp. 216-219). Later, the Archaeological evidence, some of which was discovered by Albright himself, caused Albright to change his mind. In 1955, he wrote, "Genesis 14 can no longer be considered as unhistorical, because of the many confirmations of details which we do owe to recent finds." He mentions several discoveries, including that such names as Chedorlaomer have been found in Mari sources from the Patriarchal Age (Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, p. 32).

Furthermore, on the Lisan peninsula of the Dead Sea, a 10-acre town from the Early Bronze Age (3200-2000 BC) has been excavated. A cemetery containing an estimated 500,000 individual burials was found. In 1973, surveys in the area indicated that there were four other Early Bronze Age settlements in an area "which was noted in the OT for its five cities of the valley (Gen. 14:2)" (Yamauchi, "Archaeology of Palestine and Syria," *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 276).

In fact, there are "five and only five sites located in the Dead Sea area." All five date to the same period, and there is no other evidence of occupation in the area until the Roman period (146 BC-AD 476). An hour's drive away, a mosaic map found on the floor of a 6th-century AD church designates one of these cities as Zoar, which the Bible says was another name for one of the five cities. Without excavation, it is evident that several of the cities were burned. Spongy charcoal was found on the top of the ground! Excavations of one of the cities revealed that it was "consumed in a fiery destruction." The two archaeologists, Walter E. Rast and R. Thomas Schaub, excavating two of the sites, believe that they have found the five cities mentioned in Genesis, including Sodom and Gomorrah (Shanks, "Have Sodom and Gomorrah Been Found?" pp. 27-36).

Tablets uncovered in Tell-Mardiolph in Syria say the Eblaites traded with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Nahor (The Mari Tablets) Isaac's wife, Rebecca, was from Nahor (Gen. 24:10). When Parrot excavated Mari, he found tablets (The Mari Tablets) that mention Nahor. The Mari Tablets belong to the eighteenth century BC (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 455).

Dothan (Similar Pits) Joseph's brothers placed him in a pit (Gen. 37:24). Rectangular cisterns ten feet deep have been found at Dothan that may be the type of pit into which Joseph was placed (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 275).

Other Cities (Excavation) Virtually all of the towns mentioned in connection with the Patriarchs have been shown to date back to the time of the Patriarchs, including Shechem, Bethel, Jericho, Salem, Gerar, Dothan, and Beersheba (Free, "Archaeology and

Liberalism," p. 329; Free, Director of the Near East School of Archaeology and Biblical studies in Jerusalem, excavated at Dothan).

The Hittites

The Old Testament refers to the Hittites repeatedly. The first reference to them is in Genesis 15:20, indicating that they existed at the time of Abraham.

Years ago, there was no known reference to the Hittites outside the Bible. Skeptics scoffed, claiming the Hittites were fictitious people. Rimmer explains that the Scripture portrays the Hittites as a powerful people extending over a wide empire. To the critics, it seemed inconceivable that there was not a single word concerning this mighty race in the voluminous records of antiquity. They felt a world empire couldn't disappear from history without leaving a single trace (Rimmer, pp. 195-197).

Even when traces of the Hittites were found, it was hard for the critics to concede what the Bible said about them. In an article on the Canaanites in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, T. K. Cheyne, a professor at Oxford University, wrote, "Historical evidence proves convincingly that they (the Hittites) dwelt beyond the borders of Canaan," that is, they were limited to Syria and had no place in Palestine (Rimmer, pp. 211-213).

Working independently, William Wright and A. H. Sayce deciphered Hittite hieroglyphics (Rimmer, p. 220). Then, in 1906-1907 and 1911-1912, Professor Hugo Winckler discovered about ten thousand Hittite clay tablets. They revealed that the Hittites

were not only an important people but a people of an extended empire (Unger, *Archaeology of the Old Testament*, p. 92).

In his later writings, Dr. Cheyne repudiated his earlier position (Rimmer, p. 213). Concerning the Hittites, the integrity of Genesis and other references to them in the Old Testament have been vindicated.

Customs

The city of Mari is not mentioned in the Bible, but it was on the trade route between Ur and Haran. In 1933, Parrot excavated Mari for the Louvre. A large number of letters written on tablets were discovered, including administrative records and correspondence. (Over a thousand of them have been published.) Nuzi, another place not mentioned in the Scripture, was a small town in Assyria southeast of Nineveh. During excavation between 1925-31, more than twenty thousand clay tablets were found, including administrative records, business records, lawsuits, marriage contracts, private correspondence, wills, etc. The Mari texts and the Tablets of Nuzi reveal the customs during the Patriarchs' time. Here are a few samples:

A Son by a Handmaid (Tablets of Nuzi) Sarah suggested that Abram have a son by her handmaiden, Hagar (Gen. 16:3). In Nuzi, the marriage contract stated that if the wife was barren, she could provide a slave girl for her husband, which is what Sarah did (Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, p. 122).

Birthright (Tablets of Nuzi) Esau sold his birthright to Jacob (Gen. 25:29-34). According to the Tablets of Nuzi, that was

a custom of the patriarchal period. In one case, a man named Tupkitilla sold his inheritance rights to a grove to his brother, Kurpazah, for three sheep (Free, "Archaeology and Liberalism," p. 328). Again, the practices of the Patriarchs reflect Mesopotamia of the second millennium BC.

The Price of a Slave (Various Records) What is known from outside the Scriptures fits what is said in the Scripture. From various sources, the price of a slave from 2400 BC to 400 BC is known. The documents of Mari and the Code of Hammurabi reveal that at the time of the Patriarchs, the price of a slave was 20 shekels. Joseph was sold as a slave for 20 shekels (Gen. 37:28). Several hundred years later, when Moses wrote the Law, the price was 30 shekels (Ex. 21:32). Five hundred years after that, slaves were sold for 50 to 60 shekels (2 Kings 15:20). By the fifth and fourth centuries BC, the price soared to 90 to 120 shekels. In each case, the price of a slave in the Scripture fits the historical period in which it occurred (Kitchen, "*The Patriarchal Age: Myth or History?*" p. 52).

Wine Drinking in Egypt (Egyptian Frescoes) According to Genesis, an Egyptian butler had a dream in which he saw himself pressing grapes into Pharaoh's cup (Gen. 40:9-11). Herodotus, the Father of History (5th century BC), wrote that the Egyptians did not grow grapes or drink wine. Rimmer wrote, "Critics fell upon this discrepancy with considerable glee" (Rimmer, p. 23). Then, he points out that Egyptian frescoes show that they "engaged in the art of viticulture," that they drank "juice that was fermented," and that they got drunk (Rimmer, pp. 23-24). Rimmer concludes, "Since Archaeology has accredited the accuracy of Moses, this

argument is no longer heard in the halls of learning" (Rimmer, p. 25).

Names (The Mari Letters) The Mari Letters contain such names as Abamram (Abraham), Jacob-el, and Benjamites. These are not the people mentioned in Genesis, but this shows that these names were in use at the time of the Patriarchs. References to the Patriarchs have not been found outside the Bible, but the names of later biblical individuals have.

Summary: While there is no independent evidence apart from Genesis that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Joseph lived, there is plenty of proof that the places and practices and even the peoples of the Patriarchal period existed in the second millennium BC.

So, is the narrative of the Patriarchal period in the book of Genesis historically accurate? Here is a brief summary of the various answers given to that question.

For most of history, most scholars have said, "Yes." Then, the literary critics rejected the historical accuracy of the Genesis account of the Patriarchs based on the late-date theory of the composition of the Old Testament. They claimed that since it was not written until late in the first millennium BC, it is not an accurate reflection of the historical setting of the early second millennium BC.

More specifically, based on the JEDP theory, critics claim that Moses did not write Genesis in the fifteenth century BC. It is ninth and eighth-century BC material, edited in the fourth or third century BC or later. Therefore, the account of the Patriarchs is unhistorical. In his book *Prolegomena*, Julius Wellhausen says

that these stories were written much later and projected back to the time of the Patriarchs. He wrote, "We attain to no historical knowledge of the patriarchs, but only of the time when the stories about arose in the Israelite people; this later age is here unconsciously projected, in its inner and outward features, into hoary antiquity, and is reflected there like a glorified image" (Wellhausen, p. 318) and, "From the patriarchal narratives it is impossible to obtain any historical information with regard to the Patriarchs" (Wellhausen, p. 331, cited by Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*, p. 129).

After Wellhausen, what is now called Biblical Archaeology rose. It began with William Albright. He published his first book on archaeology in 1932. In it, he pointed out that the Patriarchs have the same names, visit the same places and practices, and have the same customs as their contemporaries. Thus, the Patriarchal accounts in Genesis reflect the early second millennium BC (Albright, *Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*, pp. 129-151).

Twenty years later, he wrote an article entitled "The Bible after Twenty Years of Archaeology" (*Religion in Life*, vol. XXI, #4, Autumn, 1952, pp. 537-550). In it, he says the advances made since he wrote his first book were "almost incredible" (Albright, p. 537). He writes that because of the wealth of new material, he could speak "even more emphatically" (Albright, p. 541). Among other things, he points to the fact that the cities of Nahor (Gen. 24:10) and Haran are mentioned "frequently" in the Mari documents, which had been discovered since his first article (Albright, pp. 541-542). He concludes, "In no case" are the Patriarchal stories "mere reflections" from a much later time,

"as used to be held by most literary critics," but are from the time of the Patriarchs themselves (Albright, p. 542).

The famous archeologist and Harvard professor G. E. Wright put it like this: "The Nuzi tablets elucidate many a custom typical of the patriarchal age in the second millennium, but not of Israelite life in the first" (Wright, "The Present State of Biblical Archaeology," p. 87). After thirty-three pages of discussion, Wright concludes, "The Bible's picture of the patriarchs is deeply rooted in history" (Wright, p. 102). Kitchen insists that what is recorded concerning the Patriarchs is historical in that it fits what is known about the time they lived and *not later*. Their customs "would hardly be known to someone writing in the sixth or fifth centuries B.C." (Kitchen, "*The Patriarchal Age: Myth or History?*" p. 90).

Therefore, the late-date theory is just that: a theory that has been proven wrong. Albright wrote, "The theory of Wellhausen will not bear the test of archaeological examination" (Albright, *Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*, p. 129). Years later, he spoke of the "total breakdown of Wellhausenism under the impact of our new knowledge of antiquity" (Albright, "The Bible After Twenty Years of Archaeology," p. 545). In the words of Kitchen, "Wellhausen's enterprise was an appalling bungle" (Kitchen, "*The Patriarchal Age: Myth or History?*" p. 94).

Then came more critics. For example, in his book *Abraham in History and Tradition* (1975), John Van Seters claimed that the supposed parallels between the Genesis narrative of the Patriarchs and the second millennium BC do not prove that Genesis is historically accurate because these parallels were widespread through Mesopotamia over a long period and were not unique

to the second millennium.

In the first place, his argument works both ways. The fact that some of the parallels existed in the first millennium does not prove that they did not exist in the second millennium. Secondly, some of his conclusions were simply wrong. For example, he asserted that "Canaan" was entirely unknown until the early 15th century BC. References to Canaan have now been found in the *third*-millennium text from Ebla (Sarna, p. 8).

The revisionists reject the historical accuracy of this period because there is no direct evidence for the Patriarchs or the events in their lives. According to them, if there is no direct Archaeological evidence for the Patriarchs, this part of the Bible is fiction, legend, or tradition, not a reliable historical record.

Granted, no specific references to the Patriarchs have been found, but that sword also cuts both ways. As Professor Kitchen points out, "We possess neither proof nor disproof, at first hand, of the historical existence of the patriarchs or the narrations about them" (Kitchen, *The Bible in Its World,* p. 61).

Actually, the absence of proof of the Patriarchs is not surprising because they were nomads who did not build pyramids or anything that could have survived. As one scholar said, one would not expect to find an obscure nomad's name or names in the kings' official archives (Sheler, p. 53).

The fact that there is no direct evidence of the Patriarchs proves nothing. It is a lack of evidence. That's all it is. All a lack of evidence proves is that there is no evidence! As one Egyptologist put it, "Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence" (Kitchen, "*The Patriarchal Age: Myth or History?*" p. 50).

A lack of evidence does not prove that something did not happen. Until recently, there was no indication outside the Bible that David lived. Now there is. Before that discovery, there was no direct extra-biblical evidence that David lived. Did that *prove* that David never existed? Of course not! It simply meant that there was no proof apart from the Bible that he lived. In 1994, "The House of David Inscription" was found. So, the silence and lack of evidence proved nothing one way or the other about David's existence.

Kitchen insists, "It is entirely premature to dismiss on purely negative grounds the possible existence of biblical characters such as Abraham or Joseph." He points out that before 1975, if anyone had said that the city of Ebla was the center of a vast economic empire under the dynasty of six kings, he or she would have been dismissed with derision. History knew of no such line of kings. Then, the ancient city of Ebla was discovered in northern Syria, and 15,000 written documents were found there. More specifically, although the name of the Assyrian King Tudiya was found at the head of the Assyrian Kings List composed about 1000 BC, he was dismissed as an invention or corruption, but the records discovered at Ebla indicate that "the name is real, the man is real, he was indeed (an) Assyrian king as the List records, and as such signed a treaty with Ebrum king of Ebla" (Kitchen, *The Bible in Its World*, pp. 39, 48). Just because direct evidence for Abraham has not been found, it by no means proves he did not exist.

In the meantime, archaeological discoveries demonstrate that the patriarchal narrative is true to the early second millennium BC history, but critics brush that aside. Thompson, a revisionist,

says that the parallels between Genesis and early second-century Mesopotamia are "vague and unconvincing" (Davies, "What Separates a Minimalist from a Maximalist? Not Much," p. 26). Given his presumptions that the Old Testament was not written until late in the second millennium BC and that direct archaeological evidence is necessary before something can be declared historical, it is no wonder he says the indirect evidence is "unconvincing."

Except for a theory that has no basis in fact, either literary or archaeological, there is no good reason not to accept the material pertaining to the Patriarchs as historical and there are sound reasons for the conclusion that it is. Granted, there is no direct evidence for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Joseph, which is understandable because they were nomads, but there is proof, yes, proof, for places, practices, and peoples mentioned in the Bible during this period.

Cities mentioned in connection with the Patriarchs have been excavated. In fact, from literary or archaeological evidence, almost every city in the narrative about Abraham is known. Even people's names like Abram, Isaac, Jacob, Laban, and Joseph have been found to be common by the beginning of the second millennium BC. The Mari Letters and the Tablets of Nuzi show that the account of the Patriarchs fits the history of the second millennium BC.

Who knows? Someday, proof of the Patriarchs may be found. Remember the Hittites, the city of Ebla, and the Assyrian King Tudiya!

Chapter 6

EXODUS

The Period of the Exodus from Egypt and the wanderings in the wilderness is found in four books of the Bible: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It extends over the lifetime of Moses. He was born in 1527 BC and died in 1407 BC. During most of this period, the Children of Israel were nomads wandering from place to place like the patriarchs before them.

In Egypt

Names (Egyptian Names) Albright calls it a "remarkable fact" that many of the personal names of the Levites and the Aaronites are of Egyptian origin, including the name Moses (Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, pp. 34-35).

Pithom (Uncertain) Exodus 1:11, the only biblical reference to Pithom, says that the children of Israel built a supply city named Pithom for Pharaoh. The location of Pithom is debated; its location remains "uncertain" (Brisco, *ISBE*, vol. 3, p. 876).

Raamses (Disputed) Genesis 47:11 speaks of the "land of Raamses." The city of Raamses is mentioned in Exodus 1:11,

12:37, and Numbers 33:3, 5. The exact location of Raamses is "disputed" (Cole, p. 54).

The cities of Pithom and Raamses enter into the debate over the date of the Exodus (see below), but the location of both cities is in doubt. So, a case based on the location of these cities is only an opinion and not a strong argument.

Semitics making Bricks "Ruins of great brick buildings are found in all parts of Egypt" (JFB). "The tomb of Vizier Rekhmire at Thebes shows Semitic slaves making and transporting bricks" (Constable, on Exodus 1:14).

The Plagues (The Egyptian gods) According to the book of Exodus, there were ten plagues on Egypt: 1) changing the Nile into blood, 2) frogs, 3) lice, 4) flies, 5) death of livestock, 6) boils, 7) hail, 8) locusts, 9) darkness, 10) death of the firstborn (Ex. 7:14- 11:10).

Archaeologists have found over 2,200 different gods and goddesses of the ancient Egyptians (Rimmer, p. 100). The plagues of Egypt were against the gods of Egypt.

The Nile River was worshipped as a god (Cole, p. 90). In the British Museum is an Egyptian hymn to the Nile, which says, "You are the Lord of the poor and needy" (Rimmer, p. 102). Frogs were the theophany of the goddess Heqt; she was called the "frog-goddess" (Rimmer, pp. 104-105). No connection between lice and Egyptian deities has been found, but statues and papyri indicate that a fly symbolized the god Uatchit (Rimmer, p. 106). As in India today, cows were sacred in ancient Egypt. Hathor, the cow goddess, was universally worshipped (Rimmer, p. 108). Thus, the fifth plague was a "direct blow at Egypt's gods" (Cole, p. 95).

Boils and hail were an attack on Imhotep, the god of medicine. People prayed to him for protection and cures (Rimmer, p. 111). After the hail hammered the crops flat on the ground, the locusts ate them, which was another assault on the Egyptian deities to whom the Egyptians ascribed an abundant harvest (Rimmer, p. 113). Darkness, of course, was a demonstration of power over the gods Thoth and Ra. Thoth had worked out the placing of the sun, moon, and stars (Rimmer, p. 114-115). Ra was the god of the noontime sun (Rimmer, p. 117). He had many names. In Moses' day, he was Amon-Ra, the chief form of deity, the creator of heaven and earth (Rimmer, p. 118). The death of the firstborn was also aimed at Ra and other lesser deities (Rimmer, p. 120-121).

The Date of the Exodus

The Early Date According to the chronology present in the Bible, the Exodus occurred in 1447 BC. First Kings 6:1 says Solomon began to build the Temple in the fourth year of his reign, 480 years after the Exodus. Thiele, a scholar who has solved many of the chronological problems in the Old Testament (Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*), puts the fourth year of Solomon's reign at 967 BC. Therefore, assuming Thiele's date for the fourth year of Solomon's reign, 1 Kings 6:1 indicates that the Exodus occurred in 1447 BC.

A verse in Judges supports that time frame. Jephthah says the Israelites had been in the land for 300 years (Judges 11:26). The wilderness wanderings lasted forty years (Ex. 16:35). According to Caleb, the conquest took seven years (Judges 14:7, 10). Hence,

the Israelites occupied the land beginning in 1400 BC. Three hundred years later would have been 1107 BC, which fits the time frame for Jephthah's statement about being in the land for 300 years (Jephthah preceded Saul by several decades and Saul reigned in the latter part of the 11th century).

Dever, who thinks that the Exodus, Wilderness, and Conquest read "much better as folktale—i.e., as myth, rather than history," concedes that the 15th century BC date goes back to the Jewish historian Josephus and "seems to make sense of the Biblical text, when read simply at face value" (Dever, "Posing the Problem: The Literary and Historical Issues," p. 69).

If the date of the Exodus is 1447 BC, the pharaoh of the oppression who died before the Exodus (Ex. 1:11-14) was probably Thutmose III, and the pharaoh of the Exodus was possibly his successor Amenhotep II, although other scenarios are conceivable because more than one dating scheme is possible for this time in Egyptian history.

While there is no direct evidence for the date of the Exodus, there is corroborating evidence, including the Amarna Letters from Canaan (ca. 1400-1350 BC) asking Egyptian leaders for help against the Habiru invaders (see the discussion of the Amarna Letters in the section on the Conquest) and Garstang's dating of the fall of Jericho at about 1400 BC (see the discussion concerning Jericho in the section on the Conquest).

The Late Date Critics, however, argue for a later date, ca. 1290 BC or later, after Raamses II began to reign. They use several arguments to support a date later than the Bible indicates.

For example, they argue there is no archaeological evidence

that Thutmose III built the cities of Pithom and Raamses in the Delta region (Ex. 1:11). This is an argument from silence at best. In the first place, as has been pointed out, the very location of both cities is in doubt. The lack of evidence that Thutmose III built in the Delta region does not prove he didn't. Since he had fourteen or more military campaigns in Syria, he likely built barracks for his troops in the Delta region. The tomb of his vizier, Rekhmire, at Thebes, shows Semitic slaves making and transporting bricks (Baikie, vol. II, p. 1929).

Critics say the Jews built the cities of Pithom and Raamses (Ex. 1:11), but since Raamses II did not reign until 1290 BC, they could not have built a city named after him until he reigned. That theory is built on the assumption that the city of Raamses must have derived its name from Raamses II. A city may be named after a king, a king may be named after a city, or both king and city may be named after some other person or object bearing a familiar name (Leupold, vol. II, p. 1131). Raamses and other pharaohs of the 19th dynasty used names employed by the Hyksos kings (ca. 1760-1580). So, the Hyksos kings could have built a city named Raamses. Raamses II could have merely "rebuilt or enlarged" these cities (R. K. Harrison, p. 321). After all, the archaeological data reveal that Raamses II took credit for the achievements of his predecessors.

All of that is speculation, but the fact is that hundreds of years before either 1290 BC or 1447 BC, there was a "land of Raamses" (Gen. 47:11). So, as Shea concludes, "The mere presence of the name of Raamses in Exodus 1:11 cannot be the final arbiter of the date of the Exodus" (Shea, *ISBE*, vol. II, p. 232).

Critics use other arguments to support a late date, such as the Amarna letters, a late date for the destruction of Jericho, and the conclusion of some archaeologists that cities such as Lachish, Debir, Hazor, and Bethel were not destroyed until the thirteenth century (see the comments on these issues in the section on the Conquest).

Most archaeologists and not a few Old Testament scholars accept the late date for the Exodus. The late date is the generally accepted date. Nevertheless, there are reasons for accepting the earlier date.

After trying to make the late date fit *Egyptian* history, Shea concludes, "There is no satisfactory way to harmonize" the pharaohs of the time of the late date "with all that is stated or implied in the Bible about the pharaohs of the oppression and the Exodus" (Shea, *ISBE*, vol. 2, p. 233). Besides, the Merneptah Stele (1224 BC) depicts the Hebrews as being settled in Canaan, which fits the earlier date for the Exodus, not the late date (see the discussion on the Merneptah Stele in the chapter on the Judges).

A late date for the Exodus makes nonsense out of biblical chronology, not only 1 Kings 6:1 but also for the whole period of the Judges. As for the late dating of the Conquest, a slight adjustment of the dates archaeologists have accepted for this period creates "an almost perfect match between the archaeological evidence and the Biblical account" (Bimsom and Livingston, p. 51).

In the Wilderness

The Route of the Exodus (Egyptian Maps) The route of the Exodus has been challenged geographically (Free, "Archaeology

and the Historical Accuracy of Scripture," p. 220). Later, based on topography and Archaeology, Albright concluded that many "pieces of evidence for the substantial historicity of the account of the Exodus and the wandering in the regions of Sinai, Midian, and Kadesh can easily be given." He said, "There is no longer any room for the still dominant attitude of hypercriticism toward the early historical traditions of Israel" (Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, p. 194).

Nevertheless, years later, some archaeologists were (and still are) insistent that the route of the Exodus is a fabrication, not fact. They point to the fact that cities on the route, such as Dibon (Num. 33:45), have been excavated, and nothing was found at the time of the Exodus. They conclude that these cities did not exist at that time. Therefore, they say, the Bible is not historically accurate.

Charles R. Krahmalkow (Harvard Ph.D.), a professor at the University of Michigan, suggests that the failure of archaeologists to find ruins may mean that Dibon "has not been found" (Krahmalkow, p. 57). He goes on to say that Egyptian maps at the time included Dibon. He states, "We have irrefutable primary historical evidence for the existence of the city of Dibon" at the time of the Exodus (Krahmalkow, p. 58).

The Writing of Moses (*Rosetta Stone)* Several hundred years ago, some critics of the Bible claimed that Moses did not write the Pentateuch because neither Moses nor anyone else living at the time the Bible says he lived could write.

In 1799, Napoleon's soldiers found an inscribed stone at Rashid (Rosetta), Egypt, at the westernmost mouth of the Nile. This black granite stone is about four feet high and two and a

half feet wide. The text on the stone is a decree of Ptolemy V Epiphanes about 200 BC. The stone contains one inscription in three languages, one above the other: Egyptian Hieroglyphics (picture writing using a symbol for each word), Egyptian Demotic (closer to alphabetic writing), and Greek. In 1822, a French linguist named Francois Champollion used the Greek portion to decipher the two Egyptian scripts, finally making it possible to read Egyptian hieroglyphics.

The Rosetta Stone demonstrates that, since Moses was educated in Egypt, he could have written in Egyptian hieroglyphics (first used in about 3000 BC). In fact, archaeologists have uncovered writings from this period in many different languages. Moses could have written in Sumerian, Babylonian, Akkadian, etc. He wrote the Pentateuch in Hebrew.

The Law of Moses (Code of Hammurabi) Once critics said that the Mosaic legislation contained too high a moral standard for his day. Therefore, it was written centuries later. Then, in 1901, the Code of Hammurabi was discovered in Susa.

Hammurabi was a king who reigned for 43 years in Mesopotamia. This land stretched from the Persian Gulf, along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, to and including Assyrian cities in the North. His timeframe has been debated and revised several times. Most now date him about 1728-1686 BC. Toward the end of his life, he inscribed a legal code in a stone, 7.4 feet high and 5.4 feet wide at the top, tapering out to 6.4 feet wide at the bottom. This stele contains 282 laws (Hayden, *ISBE*, vol. II, pp. 604-08).

The parallels between the Law of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi include capital punishment for kidnapping and

selling a person (Ex. 21:16; Section 14 of the Code), the death penalty for both offenders in adultery (Lev. 20:10 and Section 129), the principle of retaliation (Ex. 21:23ff.; Deut. 19:21, and Sections 197, 210, 230), etc. The parallels prove that the Mosaic legislation is not of late origin.

At the same time, there are also differences. Hammurabi does not emphasize spiritual principles as Moses does. In general, the Code places an inferior value on human life as compared to the Mosaic Law. In some cases, the Laws of Moses do not demand as severe a punishment as the Code of Hammurabi. For example, Hammurabi requires a tenfold restoration for theft and if the thief cannot pay, he is to be put to death. Moses requires a five-fold restoration with no death penalty (Hayden; see also Unger, *Archaeology of the Old Testament*, pp. 153-57).

Summary: There is no direct archaeological evidence that the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, that Moses lived, or that there was an Exodus, but there is circumstantial evidence that supports the biblical account of the period.

There was a time when the biblical record concerning the period of the Exodus was questioned based on the assumption that Moses could not write and that his Law reflected too high a moral standard for the time. The Rosetta Stone and other discoveries prove that Moses could have written the Pentateuch in one of several languages. The Code of Hammurabi, written before Moses wrote, contains high moral standards.

Critics still reject the historical nature of the Bible's account of the Exodus period, again, based on the late-date theory and/or a

lack of direct evidence. After speaking of "extensive explorations of the entire Sinai" that didn't turn up any "presence" in central or southern Sinai "whatsoever," Dever remarks, "Our current, detailed knowledge" of the area "calls into question the biblical tradition" (Dever, "Posing the Problem: The Literary and Historical Issues," p. 72). He has been known to say, "There was no real Exodus, there was no real wilderness wandering, and there was no sojourn at Kadesh-Barnea'' before the Israelites entered the land of Canaan. As far as he is concerned, the Bible is wrong on these issues (Shanks, "Dever's Sermon on the Mound," p. 64).

The Israelites were *nomads* wandering in the wilderness. What are archaeologists supposed to find, tent pegs? Dever argues that the "barren terrain" could not have supported such a large number, but the Bible clearly indicates that they did not live off the land; they were supernaturally fed (Ex. 16:12-14).

While it might seem strange that there is no proof outside the Bible of the children of Israel being in Egypt or exiting from Egypt, it is reasonable. The pharaohs did not record their defeats. Someone has offered a humorous translation of what this chronicle of defeat would have said: "Raamses the Great ... before whom all tremble in awe ... announced that the man Moses had kicked his royal [seat] for all the world to see, thus proving that God is Yahweh and the 2000-year-old culture of Egypt is a lie" (source unknown). Furthermore, as even Dever has admitted, "Slaves, serfs, and nomads leave few traces in the archaeological record" (Sheler, p. 54).

Then there is this thought: Nahum Sarna of Brandeis University argues that the Exodus story—tracing, as it does, a nation's origins

to slavery and oppression—"cannot possibly be fictional. No nation would be likely to invent for itself … an inglorious and inconvenient tradition of this nature," unless it had an authentic core. Richard Elliott Friedman, a professor at the University of California, San Diego, put it like this: "lf you're making up history, it's that you were descended from gods or kings, not slaves" (Sheler, p. 54).

While there is no direct evidence for Moses or the Exodus, which can be explained, there is historical, archaeological, and rational evidence for other details of this period.

In his book *Israel in Egypt*, James K. Hoffmeier (University of Toronto Ph.D. in Egyptian Archaeology) gives evidence for the authenticity of the Exodus story. He points out that the picture portrayed in Genesis 39 through Exodus 15 is compatible with what is known from Egyptian history. Semitic-speaking peoples from western Asia came to Egypt for relief during drought and famine. A Semite like Joseph could have been elevated to such a position as reported in Genesis 45. Egyptians pressed foreigners into hard labor projects, as portrayed in Exodus. Many foreign princes were reared and schooled in the Egyptian court. So, a non-Egyptian like Moses could have been raised in the court. The first six plagues fit neatly in the setting of the Nile's annual inundation season, and the seventh through ninth plagues are not out of place in the Nile valley. Despite not being able to plot it on a map with absolute certainty, a coherent and singular route is described in Exodus and Numbers 33 for the departure from Egypt to Sinai (James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Egyptian inscriptions contain the names of cities on the Exodus route. There is also corroborating evidence, which will be examined in the next chapter.

Maybe someday, direct evidence will be discovered. It has been reported that "the coral-encrusted remains of what they believe are chariot wheels of a pharaoh's vanquished army in the Red Sea" have been found ("A Battle of Biblical Proportions," Teresa Watanabe, *The Los Angeles Times*, May 11, 2001, p. E-3). In the meantime, remember: years ago, the critics said Moses could not write. Then, the Rosetta Stone was found.

Chapter 7

CONQUEST

The Conquest began in 1407 BC. According to Joshua 14:7, 10, it was completed in seven years. Thus, this period ended in 1400 BC, although it probably extended a few years beyond that. For a few years, elders ruled in Israel. After that, God raised up Judges.

The Amarna Letters

There is extra-biblical evidence that the children of Israel invaded Palestine during the fifteenth century BC. In 1886, peasant women accidentally discovered about 370 clay tablets in Amarna, Egypt, about 200 miles south of Cairo. About 150 of these tablets, known as the Amarna Letters, contain diplomatic correspondence between vassal governors in Canaan and their Egyptian lords, Amenophis III and Amenophis IV, from ca. 1400 BC to 1370 BC (R. K. Harrison, p. 318).

The Habiru These letters report an invasion from the Habiru, a word that means "one who passes through" (the land). Since the discovery of the Amarna Letters, the name "Habiru" has been

found in other places. Scholars generally agree that Habiru (an Egyptian word) is the same as Apiru (Semitic) and "SA.GAZ" (a Sumerian logogram, a visual symbol that represents words). Other references to the Habiru/Apiru/SA.GAZ has been found from Egypt to Mesopotamia, dating back hundreds of years. From all these references, it is apparent that the term Habiru is used in a variety of ways, including being used of nomads, soldiers, servants, or foreigners. It came to be used generally of enemies or simply in a pejorative sense of people the writer did not like ("a bad name to call one's enemies").

While there is no consensus among scholars, some have concluded that the Habiru of the Amarna Letters are Hebrews. Habiru may be the linguistic equivalent of Hebrew. The word "Hebrew" is not widely used in the Old Testament, but in several places, it is used by foreigners to refer to the Israelites (Ex. 2:6; 1 Sam. 13:19).

The Situation Beyond the linguistic issue, there is evidence in the Amarna Letters that the Habiru were the Hebrews of the conquest. There is no communication from the first conquered cities, like Jericho, Bethel, Beersheba, Gibeon, and Hebron. The correspondence from Megiddo indicates that the towns in the region of Arad in the south had already fallen, which agrees with Numbers 21:1-3. Gezer, Ashkelon, and Lachish are other cities listed as already fallen, which were captured early in the conquest. In general, these letters picture disunity among the kings of Canaan, with some forsaking their allegiance to Egypt for an alliance with the invader.

One author put it like this: Most of the texts from Palestine

picture the Habiru as "overrunning the territory and occupying several cities in southern Canaan." One letter reads, "The Habiru are capturing the fortresses of the king … the Habiru are taking the cities of the king" (R. K. Harrison, p. 319).

Another letter says, "The Habiru plunder all the lands of the king. If there are archers in this year, the lands of the king, my lord, will remain, but if there are no archers, the land of the king, my lord, will be lost." In the letter from the Jerusalem king, he accuses Shechem of defecting to the Habiru cause, saying, "Or shall we do like Labayu, who gave the land of Shechem to the Habiru?" According to the book of Joshua, the Israelites assembled between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim near Shechem (Josh. 8:30-35). In other words, Canaanite kings at the time of Joshua were pleading with the king of Egypt to send troops (archers), or all would be lost because of the Habiru invaders. That was exactly the situation when Joshua was subduing the central portion of Canaan. The Egyptian Pharaoh could not send help because his army had been destroyed in the Exodus.

Kings In the book of Joshua, the rulers of the cities of Canaan are called kings (Josh. 12:9-24). In the Amarna Tablets, autonomous rulers in Canaan are called "kings" (Free, "Archaeology and the Historical Accuracy of Scripture," p. 220).

Jerusalem Critics have interpreted the Amarna Letters to argue for a late date of the Exodus. For example, the letters from King Abdi-Heba of Jerusalem indicate that his city is in danger of capture, but the critics argue that 2 Samuel 5:6-7 shows that the Israelites did not capture Jerusalem until David's time. Therefore, the Habiru could not have been the Israelites.

The problem with that interpretation is that neither the Amarna Letters nor the book of Joshua states that Jerusalem itself was captured or destroyed. According to Scripture, Joshua defeated the Jerusalemite troops along with their allies from Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon at the battle of Gibeon. Adoni-Zedek, the king of Jerusalem, was killed (Josh. 10:1-27). Jerusalem itself was not captured until after Joshua's death (Judges 1:8) and even then, not all the Jebusites were killed (Judges 1:21). Much later, David conquered Jerusalem.

Conclusion The Amarna Letters, from the Canaanites themselves, record the conquest of Canaan ca. 1400 BC. This confirms the biblical account of the conquest under Joshua. Nothing in the Amarna account cannot be reconciled with the Joshua record.

Jericho

The children of Israel entered the land from the east, crossing the Jordan River "opposite Jericho" (Josh. 3:16). Hence, the first city they encountered was Jericho. Following God's instructions, when they marched around the city seven times and shouted, "The wall fell down flat" (Josh. 6:20). Then they "went up into the city" (Josh. 6:20), and they "burned" it (Josh. 6:24).

The site of ancient Jericho has been excavated several times by several archaeologists. The first thing that should be noted is that when entering the land from the east at that point on the Jordan, the first city is Jericho. In other words, Jericho is exactly where the Bible says it is. No one doubts or debates the location

of Jericho.

Garstang When John Garstang excavated Jericho from 1930 to 1936, he identified different archaeological levels built on the site over several centuries. He named these alphabetically, beginning with a level he dated to about 3000 BC, and said city "D," constructed ca. 1500 BC, was destroyed by an earthquake ca. 1400 BC (earthquakes are called "acts of God"). He concluded that an earthquake destroyed it because the walls fell outward. He said it was around 1400 BC because out of the 150,000 pieces of pottery found there, only one was of the Mycenaean type, which began to be imported into Palestine in abundance from 1400 BC onward. Moreover, numerous scarabs (small Egyptian amulets shaped like a beetle with an inscription, sometimes the name of a pharaoh, on the bottom) were found in the burial grounds, but none were later than the two of Amenhotep III, and there was no evidence from the reign of his successor, Amenhotep IV (Garstang, *The Foundations of Bible History; Joshua, Judges*).

Kenyon Garstang's dating of the destruction of Jericho has been debated. Kathleen M. Kenyon concluded that the walls of city "D" should be dated to about 2300 BC and that either the Hyksos or the Egyptians destroyed the city about 1550 BC.

Garstang's conclusion supports the biblical account of the fall of Jericho. The Exodus occurred before 1400 BC, and the conquest occurred around 1400 BC. Kenyon's conclusion does not support the biblical record. So, who is to be believed, Garstang or Kenyon?

Those who believe in the Bible side with Garstang because his conclusions support the Scripture. The critics claim that Kenyon

proved Garstang was wrong; therefore, the Bible is not historically accurate. The question becomes, "What is the evidence and which position does it support?"

Wood Bryant Wood, who, after a career as a nuclear engineer, became an archeologist (Ph.D. in archaeology from the University of Toronto), examined and evaluated the work of both Garstang and Kenyon. Here is a summary of what he found (Wood, "Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho?" pp. 44-59): Garstang excavated a collapsed double wall on the summit of the mound and a residential area on the southeast slope, which he believed was within the wall. This city had been "thoroughly destroyed in a violent conflagration" about 1400 BC (Wood, p. 49). He based his conclusion on the pottery found in the destruction debris, scarabs from nearby tombs, and the absence of Mycenaean ware. He concluded that "in all material details and the date of the fall of Jericho took place as described in the Biblical narrative" (Garstang, "Jericho and the Biblical Story," p. 1222, cited by Wood).

Garstang's conclusions provoked "considerable controversy among his colleagues." So, he asked Kenyon to review and update his findings. She concluded that Jericho was destroyed in the middle of the 16th century BC, and after that, except for a small area occupied for a short time in the 14th century BC, it was unoccupied. Later, she excavated the site and again concluded that the destruction of Garstang, dated about 1400 BC, took place about 1550 BC. In other words, according to Kenyon, Joshua did not conquer Jericho; there was no Jericho to conquer. It had been destroyed! The archaeological evidence disproved the biblical account (Wood, p. 49).

Wood points out that Kenyon died in 1978 before the details of her excavation were published, which makes it possible "to perform an independent assessment of Kenyon's conclusions." With the details of both archaeologists available, it is possible to compare them to each other. After looking at their evidence, Wood concluded that Kenyon and Garstang were wrong in dating the double wall. It is earlier than Garstang thought, but Garstang was right, and Kenyon was wrong about the dating of the destruction of the residential area at 1400 BC (Wood, p. 50).

The fact that there is evidence of earlier occupation (the double wall) is not a problem for dating the conquest of Jericho by the Israelites. The critical issue is the dating of the destruction of the residential area at 1400 BC. How did Kenyon reach her conclusion that this destruction was about 1550 BC?

She "based her opinion almost exclusively on the *absence* of pottery imported from Cyprus," common between 1550 and 1400 BC (Wood, p. 50). She mentions local pottery but "paid little attention" to it. So, based on the absence of imported pottery, Kenyon concluded that there was "a complete gap" between about 1550 BC and about 1400 BC. (She found other material that she dated to about 1324 BC.)

Wood states, "Dating habitation levels at Jericho on the *absence* of exotic imported wares—which were found primarily in tombs in large urban centers—is methodologically unsound and indeed unacceptable" (Wood, p. 50). He goes on to explain that she based this theory on what was found in large cities like Megiddo, which was on a trade route, but Jericho, by comparison, was small and not on a major trade route. Furthermore, both Garstang and Kenyon

dug in a poor quarter of the city where there were only "humble domestic dwellings." Even Kenyon said, "It is quite possible that Jericho at this time was something of a backwater away from the contacts with richer areas provided by the coastal route." Hence, Wood logically asked, "Why would anyone expect to find exotic imported ceramics in this type of cultural milieu?"

There is more. Kenyon excavated a "very limited" area—two 26-foot by 26-foot squares. Wood sums up, "She based her dating on the fact that she failed to find expensive, imported pottery in a small excavation area in an impoverished part of a city located far from major trade routes" (Wood, p. 50).

Kenyon also connected Jericho's destruction with the Hyksos' expulsion from Egypt in about 1570 BC. She contended that the Hyksos either destroyed Jericho after they fled Egypt, or the Egyptians did as they pursued the fleeing Hyksos (Wood, p. 50-51). Wood responds that it does not make sense that the Hyksos would destroy the cities to which they were fleeing.

There is no support in Egyptian literature that the Egyptians went beyond Sharuhen in southwest Canaan to pursue the Hyksos. Furthermore, both Garstang and Kenyon found "many store jars full of grain," indicating that when Jericho fell, there was an ample food supply, which indicates that Jericho fell quickly (not after a long siege) after harvest time. This "flies in the face" of Egyptian military tactics. The Egyptians customarily began a siege of a city just before harvest, which lasted a long time. By doing that, they used to plant crops in the fields to feed themselves, and the city's food supply would be low (Wood, p. 51).

Wood concludes that Kenyon did not demonstrate that Jericho

fell in 1550 BC or that the Hyksos or the Egyptians destroyed it. On the other hand, there is evidence that Jericho was destroyed about 1400 BC. Wood gives four lines of evidence.

First, pottery excavated by Kenyon is found only in the latter half of the 15th century BC (Wood, p. 52). Moreover, there was a "considerable" amount of pottery excavated by Garstang dating from ca. 1550-1400 BC (Wood, p. 49). Second, all the activities that Kenyon found cannot reasonably be "squeezed" into the time frame required for a 1550 date (Wood, p. 52). Third, Garstang found a continuous series of Egyptian scarabs dating from the 18th century BC to the early 14th century BC (Wood, p. 52). The continuous nature of the series suggests that the cemetery was active during this period. Finally, a piece of charcoal found in the destruction debris was dated by a Carbon-14 test to 1410 BC, plus or minus 40 years (Wood, p. 53).

Wood also compares the archaeological evidence with the biblical narrative, demonstrating a "quite remarkable agreement" (Wood, pp. 53-57), but the point is that there is archaeological evidence that Jericho fell when the Scripture indicates and in a sudden manner that it describes.

The Altar on Mount Ebal

Moses commanded that when the Israelites entered the land, they were to build an altar on Mount Ebal (Deut. 27:4-7). Joshua built an altar on Mount Ebal (Josh. 8:30-31).

Zertal On April 6, 1980, while doing an archaeological survey, Adam Zertal found a rectangular, nearly square structure, about

25 feet by 25 feet and almost nine feet high, on Mount Ebal. It was dated to the early Iron Age I (1220-1000 BC). It was initially thought to be a farmhouse or a watchtower. A farmhouse was ruled out because there was no floor or entrance. Nor was there a road for a watchtower to observe or an Iron Age settlement nearby.

The structure was filled with ash from burnt wood and animal bones. The bones were of young male bulls, sheep, goats, and fallow deer. Most had been burnt in open-flame fires of low temperatures. This matches closely with the description of animal sacrifice given in Leviticus 1 (fallow deer are not mentioned in Leviticus, but they could have been eaten—Deut. 27:7—or could have served as an acceptable sacrifice). Furthermore, a ramp was also discovered. Altars found outside Israel are stepped. Exodus 20:26 requires a ramp rather than steps.

As a scientist, Zertal "must say that the case has not been proven." Nevertheless, he concludes, "Where Biblical tradition and concrete archaeological evidence coincide (it) cannot be ignored. We have on Mt. Ebal not only the complete prototype of an Israelite altar, but moreover a site that might prove to be directly related to the Biblical traditions concerning Joshua's building of an altar on Mt. Ebal (Zertal, "Has Joshua's Altar Been Found?" p. 42).

Kempinski Aharon Kempinski disagrees, contending the structure is a watchtower. He accuses Zertal of "mistaken identification" because he "accepted literally" the passages in Deuteronomy 27 and Joshua 8. Kaminski claims that Joshua was written in the seventh century BC, and therefore, the Samaritan Pentateuch is earlier, and it places the altar near Mt. Gerizim

(Kempinski, p. 48). (For Zertal's reply, see "How Can Kempinski Be So Wrong?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, January/February 1986, pp. 43, 49-53).

Other Cities

Besides Jericho, archaeologists have excavated other cities of the Conquest, including Lachish (Josh. 10:1-35, 12:11, 15:39), Debir (Josh. 10:1-39, etc.), Hazor (Josh. 11:11), and Bethel (Josh. 12:9). Critics have used the interpretation of the data from these and other cities to reject the accuracy of the Bible record concerning the Exodus and the Conquest. They claim that excavations indicate these cities were destroyed much later than the Bible indicates. For example, they say that Lachish was destroyed by fire around 1230 BC (or later). Therefore, that proves the Exodus and the subsequent Conquest must have been in the thirteenth century BC, not the fifteenth.

Lachish (The Ebla Tablets and Excavation) The book of Joshua says that the Israelites "took" and "struck" Lachish (Josh. 10:30-31). The Ebla Tablets mentioned Lachish as early as ca. 2400 BC and the Amarna Letters do so at the time of Joshua. J. K. Starkey began excavating Lachish in 1932 and continued until bandits murdered him in 1938 (Gold and Schoville, *ISBE*, vol. II, pp. 55-58). There is no question that the city existed at the time of Joshua.

The "ashes of a mighty conflagration" were found at Lachish (Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, p. 20). Albright dated the destruction of Lachish to about 1230 BC and attributed

it to the Israelites.

In 1973, David Ussishkin began excavating Lachish. He concludes that the city was suddenly destroyed, but dates the destruction to 1150 BC. It is interesting to note that he admits: 1) this is "a period where history is less certain and scholars themselves are often in disagreement about major points" (Ussishkin, p. 20), and 2) the evidence for dating the destruction of Lachish at 1150 BC is "negative" (Ussishkin, p. 37); that is, there is a lack of Philistine painted pottery. He says the evidence "is so absolutely negative that it provides a sound basis." (Is that like saying a person's feet are firmly planted in mid-air?)

Thus, the critics use the late date for the destruction of Lachish to say that the biblical chronology for the Exodus and the Conquest is wrong. The account in Joshua does not say that the Israelites completely destroyed all the cities they conquered. For example, in the case of Lachish, the biblical text does *not* say that the Israelites burned or destroyed the city. It is possible that Joshua *defeated* Lachish. Then, later, it was repopulated and still later (1230 BC?), it was *destroyed*.

If that is the case, the dating of the destruction is immaterial. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that these assumed dates may be wrong for any reason. Albright, who accepted a late date for the Exodus, admitted, "Excavations in Palestine have been slow to yield any decisive evidence for the date of the Conquest. This is partly due to the excavators themselves, who have sometimes, because of arbitrary assumptions, so confused the chronological situation that no conclusion has been possible, but it is often due to the stratification or the uncertainty of the identification of the

site" (Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, p. 36).

More recently, it has been argued that a slight adjustment of the dates archaeologists have accepted for this period creates "an almost perfect match between the archaeological evidence and the Biblical account" (Bimsom and Livingston, p. 51).

Debir (Debated) Joshua conquered Debir (Josh. 10:38-39). At one time or another, several sites have been thought to be Debir (Rainey, *ISBE*, vol. 1, pp. 901-04). The one that is now identified as Debir has no evidence of a 13th-century BC conquest, but there has been "very limited excavation" at that site (Bimsom and Livingston, p. 41, 46).

Hazor (Excavated) Joshua not only conquered Hazor, but he also "burned it with fire" (Josh. 11:11). In the 20th century BC, there is a reference to Hazor in the Egyptian Execration Texts' list of enemies to be cursed. It appears in the archives of Mari and in a list in the reign of Amenhotep II (*ca*. 1430). In one of the Amarna Letters, Abimilki, king of Tyre, charged that the king of Hazor had aligned himself with the Habiru (Rainey, *ISBE*, vol. II, p. 637).

Yigael Yadin excavated Hazor for four seasons between 1955 and 1958. He returned in 1968 for a final season (Ben-Tor, p. 26). He concluded that Joshua destroyed Hazor and, based on pottery, he dated the destruction to the end of the last quarter of the 13th century BC, approximately 1230 BC. Both the destroyers' identity and the destruction date have been "hotly debated," even among Yadin's own staff (Ben-Tor, p. 28).

In 1990, Amnon Ben-Tor renewed excavations at Hazor to resolve the date of the destruction of Hazor, etc. He thinks that

the evidence for Yadin's date was "not as clear-cut as he believed" (Ben-Tor and Rubiato, p. 24). Ben-Tor and Rubiato, who have since excavated Hazor for nine seasons, say that Yadin's date was "based on rather meager evidence" (Ben-Tor and Rubiato, p. 27). At the time of the writing of their article (1999), they had not determined a precise date (Ben-Tor and Rubiato, p. 36), but they do argue that the Israelites are "the most likely candidate for the violent destruction of Canaanite Hazor" (Ben-Tor and Rubiato, pp. 38-39).

By the way, Ben-Tor and Rubiato refer to a book published in 1979, in which Yadin (who died in 1984) observed that scholars are sometimes averse to substantiating the Bible. They quote him as saying, "Everyone is a potential destroyer of Hazor, even if not mentioned in any document, except those specifically mentioned in the Bible as having done so" (Ben-Tor and Rubiato, p. 39). Interesting, isn't it?

At any rate, the date for the destruction of Hazor is debated, but there is evidence that Hazor was burned. Across the site is "a thick layer of ashes and charred wood—in places 3 feet deep" (Ben-Tor and Rubiato, p. 22). Evidence indicates that the fire was fierce. Of all the cities conquered by Joshua, only three were destroyed by fire: Jericho (Josh. 6:24), Ai (Josh. 8:19), and Hazor (Josh. 11:13). Archaeology has verified that Hazor was torched.

Gezer (Excavation) Joshua 16:10 says that the Israelites "did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer, but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites to this day and have become forced laborers." From 1902 to 1909, A. S. Macalister of Ireland excavated Gezer. The Gezer Calendar (10th cent. BC), the

oldest Hebrew text yet discovered, was found there (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 274). Evidence of the devastation by Thutmose III's campaign in 1468 BC has been found at Gezer (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 278).

Bethel (Excavation) The destruction of Bethel is not specifically mentioned in the book of Joshua, but it does say that the king of Bethel was killed (Josh. 12:9). Excavations have uncovered a city that was founded before 2000 BC, which was established during the time of the Patriarchs when they visited it and that was destroyed in the 13th century BC (R. K. Harrison, *ISBE*, vol. 1, pp.465-467).

After summarizing the archaeological data for more of the cities conquered by Joshua than is considered here, Shea concludes that the archaeological evidence "does not seem to support a thirteenth-century Exodus and Conquest; rather, much of it points to a fifteenth-century date" (Shea, *ISBE*, vol. II, p. 238).

Also, although he considers the biblical account of the Conquest "highly hypothetical," Malamat contends that the inferior Israelite forces conquered fortified Canaanite cities. He points out that the Amarna Letters demonstrate the absence of political cohesion, which means the Canaanites lacked a broad territorial defense system.

Moreover, the Israelites utilized a variety of military strategies. In the early wars of Israel, there was not a single instance of a direct assault. Instead, the Israelites resorted to tactics based on deception, decoys, ambushes, diversionary maneuvers, covert infiltration, enticement—drawing the city defenders into the open, surprise (*cf*. "suddenly" in Josh. 10:9). He states, "No other

literature of the ancient Near East equals the books of Joshua and Judges in number and variety of battle stratagems described" (Malamat, p. 32).

Summary: There is extra-biblical evidence that the cities of the Conquest did exist at the time, that the children of Israel invaded Palestine during the fifteenth century BC, that Jericho was defeated at the time and in the manner as indicated in the Scriptures, that an altar was built on Mount Ebal, and that Hazor was destroyed as the Bible says.

There is a debate among archaeologists concerning the emergence of Israel in Canaan. There are three proposed "models."

The conquest view claims that the Israelites took possession of the land by conquering major fortified cities. The biblical account pictures them as immigrants who came as conquerors. Albright and others concluded that the archaeological evidence supports that.

The "peaceful infiltration" model contends that the Israelites came into the land and peacefully settled unoccupied sites.

The peasants' revolt theory proposes an internal revolt of peasants against the feudal Canaanites (Norman Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible—A Socio-Literary Introduction*). In other words, the Israelites were Indigenous people who emerged from the Canaanites (Davies, "What Separates a Minimalist from a Maximalist? Not Much," p. 27ff). Based on the interpretation that the ceramics from 1200 BC to 1000 BC are a continuation of the period from 1550 BC to 1200 BC, Norman Gottwald, George Mendenhall, Philip Davis, and William Dever claim

that the Israelites were former Canaanite peasants who fled to the hill country, became tribalized, and in the process discovered monotheism.

Anson F. Rainey calls the peasant revolt theory the "revolting peasant theory" because "there is not one scrap of documentary evidence" to support it; it is a "figment of their imagination." He says this is an example of archaeologists building a historical construct from a study of ceramics and calling it "Archaeological fact" (Rainey, "Rainey's Challenge," p. 60).

Shanks says this is a case of conclusions going "far beyond the evidence." The evidence is that the Israelites established a number of new present hilltop villages during the period of the Judges. There is no evidence that they originated from within the land; they could have come from outside the land. There is no evidence of a "revolt." It could have been peaceful. Besides, how did "Canaanites become Israelites?" (Shanks, "Dever's Sermon on the Mound," p. 56). "Some scholars have difficulty accepting an Israel invasion despite the very considerable evidence for it" (Shanks, "Dever's Sermon on the Mound," p. 57).

So, critics continue to reject the biblical record of the Conquest as correct, either because of the late-date theory, their interpretation of the archaeological evidence, or the new view that the Israelites did not come as conquerors but were Canaanites who headed for the hills.

Admittedly, there is no direct evidence for Joshua, but there is evidence for the Conquest. If nothing else, remember the pile of ashes at Hazor.

Chapter 8

JUDGES

This extended period, about a third of the time from Moses to Malachi, begins about 1375 BC and stretches to 1043 BC. Except for Gideon and Samuel, the judges did not rule over all twelve tribes or govern one right after the other, like the Presidents of the United States. They served over different locations, and most had overlapping years of service, like the governors of the United States. Thus, it is impossible to divide this time into successive periods.

Places

Taanach (Excavation) Deborah conquered Taanach (Judges 5:19). Excavations indicated that Taanach fell about 1125 BC. Thus, excavations "confirm the Biblical record" (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 278).

Krahmalkow (remember him?), the Harvard Ph.D. and professor at the University of Michigan, writes, "Accounts in Judges 4 and 5 thus contain specific historical and geographical

information about the Late Bronze Age whose accuracy is dramatically validated by an Egyptian document of that time. There, indeed, was a king named Jabin. The places mentioned in the biblical accounts did, in fact, exist at the time. None of these pieces of information was fabricated" (Krahmalkow, p. 62).

Shechem (Excavation) The biblical account, which indicates that Shechem passed peacefully into Israelite hands, is "confirmed" by its transition without major destruction from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 278). The devastation of Shechem in the 12th century BC is "attributed to Abimelech" (Judges 9; Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 278).

Samson (Philistine Temple) In 1971-1972, Amihai Mazar uncovered a "unique Philistine temple with two-column bases" that is "reminiscent of the temple destroyed by Samson" (Judges 16:29; Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 278).

Dan (Excavation) Avraham Biran believed that the destruction found at Dan was from the 12th century BC and was from the invasion of the tribe of Dan (Josh. 18:29, 19:47; (Yamauchi, *ISBE,* vol. 1, p. 278).

Gibeah (Excavation) There were seven hundred select men of Gibeah "who were left-handed; everyone could sling a stone at a hair's breadth and not miss" (Judges 20:15-16). When Gibeah was excavated, it was discovered that slingshots were one of the primary weapons of the day (McDowell, p. 95). Albright dug at Gibeah (1922, 1933) and claims he found Saul's "fortress-residence at Gibeah." He also said that the site "showed traces of destruction by fire before the time of Saul; this destruction probably is the one described in Judges 20:40" (Albright, *Recent*

Discoveries in Bible Lands, p. 37).

Villages Archaeologists have discovered "a flock of new peasant hilltop villages" that was "established" by the Israelites, "just as is indicated in the book of Judges" (Shanks, "Dever's Sermon on the Mound," p. 56). The contrast with the preceding period is "striking." At one point, the count from the previous period was 27 sites in the central hill country and 211 in the same territory during the period of the Judges, "nearly an eightfold increase." Moreover, of the 211, 85% were newly-founded settlements; most early Israelite villages were established on previously unoccupied sites. Such a dramatic increase "can hardly be ascribed to natural growth … natural growth would be doubling of the population…. Obviously, a new population has moved into the central hill-country…. This is entirely consistent with the Biblical record" (Stager, p. 54; see *Israel in Palestine* in the next section). For the identification of these settlers, see *Israel in Palestine* in the next section.

Peoples

The Philistines (Egyptian Records) Since the name "Philistines" does not appear in ancient non-biblical records before 1200 BC, some revisionists claim that priestly scribes in the middle of the first millennium BC invented them to dramatize the military prowess of the mystical Davidic dynasty. However, archaeological evidence has uncovered a wealth of information concerning "Sea People" (the Philistines), which is thoroughly consistent with their portrayal in the Bible (Sheler, p. 58).

Egyptian records tell of "Sea Peoples" attacking by land and by sea. In an Egyptian text, Papyrus Harris 1, Ramesses III says, "The Philistines were made ashes." The standard archaeological interpretation is that these "Sea People" are the biblical Philistines, that the Egyptians defeated them, and that they settled in the Coastal Plain of Palestine with the permission of the Egyptians. (For an explanation and history of this interpretation, see Bryant G. Wood, "The Philistines Enter Canaan," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, November/December 1991, pp. 44-46.)

Wood interprets the data differently. He contends that the Philistines entered the land as conquerors. The ones who attacked Egypt were made into ashes, not captives (Wood, "The Philistines Enter Canaan," pp. 44-52). Regardless of how they got there, the Philistines were in the land during this period, just as the Bible says (Raban and Stieglitz, pp. 34-42).

Israel in Palestine (Excavations) Archaeologists have discovered that Israel was in the land during the period of the Judges (see *Villages* in the previous section). Here is a brief explanation of the evidence given by Dever, a leading American archeologist.

An extensive surface survey by archaeologists has revealed about three hundred small agricultural villages in the heartland of ancient Israel in the thirteenth through eleventh centuries. These small hilltop villages are almost always unwalled and are characterized by U-shaped courtyard houses called "four-room houses," which have virtually no precedents in Canaan. Lawrence Stager, a professor of Archaeology at Harvard, has demonstrated that these unique houses and the overall layout of these villages

correspond closely with the biblical narrative in the period of the Judges. An anthropologist named Marshall Sahlins has concluded that these conditions depict a "society without a sovereign," which is what the Bible says happened during the time of the Judges (Judges 17:6; 21:25). Throughout all these villages, there is a constant absence of pig bones, also common in prior times. This is an "ethnic marker, consistent with the Biblical prohibition of pork." Archaeologists suggest that this distinguishes these villages as Israelite rather than Canaanite. Dever says that, politically, there seems to be no central authority. Religiously, there is a complete absence of temples.

Dever calls all this evidence together an "assemblage," which is "an assortment of contemporaneous archaeological artifacts and their context, found together in a consistent pattern of association and distributed over a well-defined geographic region." He goes on to point out that in other cases, archaeologists attribute an assemblage to an ethnic group, which is done concerning the Philistines, the Phoenicians, the Aramaeans, the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Edomites. So "why not the Israelites?" (Dever, "Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey," pp. 32-35).

Israel in Palestine (Merneptah Stele) The most significant archaeological discovery pertaining to this period was found in Egypt. In 1895, Flinders Petrie discovered the Merneptah Stele at Thebes, Egypt. It consists of a poem describing the victories of Merneptah (ca. 1224-1216 BC) over Libya and other lands, including Palestine. It contains the lines:

> Canaan is plundered with every evil;
> Askalon is conquered; Gezer is held;
> Yenoan is made a thing of naught;
> Israel is destroyed; it has no seed-corn;
> Palestine has become a widow of Egypt.
> All lands are united in peace ….

Because the reign of this Egyptian pharaoh can be pinpointed, "All scholars would agree that the date is fixed within a margin of five years (at most)." All also agree that "Israel" is followed by an Egyptian sign for "people (rather than the sign for a kingdom, city-state or the like)" and, therefore, it designates an ethic group (Dever, "Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey," p. 35). The symbol denoting "people" rather than "land" implies the sedentary occupation of western Palestine (Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 323). The Scripture does not mention this raid. This is the oldest occurrence of the word "Israel" and it demonstrates that Israel was settled in the land around 1220 BC.

The combination of the assemblage and the Merneptah Stele is conclusive proof that Israel was in the land during the period of the Judges. Dever says, "The Merneptah Stele supplies a non-biblical *textual* reference that affixes an ethic label to this Archaeological assemblage group" (Dever, "Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey," p. 68, italics his).

Summary: Cities of the period of the Judges have been discovered, and circumstantial evidence has been found, but there is proof that the Philistines were in the land, and the Merneptah Stele provides definite proof that Israel was settled in the land

around 1220 BC, as the Scripture says.

Speaking of the period of the Judges and the United Monarchy, Albright said, "There can be no doubt that we are here on solid historical ground almost throughout" (Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, p. 36).

How do the current critics answer the evidence for this period? Dever says that the revisionists "have turned somersaults to avoid the obvious implications," saying things like the Merneptah Stele is the only known reference, but he adds, "One unimpeachable witness in a court of law is sufficient." He goes on to say that the Merneptah Stele demonstrates that at this time, there was a group of people in Canaan who called themselves "Israel" and were called "Israel" by the Egyptians "who, after all, are hardly Biblically biased." "The sensible conclusion is that there *was* an early Israel present in Canaan just before 1200 BC" (Dever, "Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey," p. 68, italics his).

Since I was teaching this material on the historical accuracy of the Bible on Wednesday night, I announced the Wednesday night topic on Sunday. One Sunday, I mentioned that I was teaching the historical accuracy of the period of the Judges. A man in the congregation suggested I look at a website before speaking on that subject. Here is what I found.

In seven short videos, archaeologist Bryant Wood describes some of the archaeological findings pertaining to the period of the judges. He points out that all of the craftsmen and artisans who came out of Egypt died in the wilderness and that when the Israelites first came to Canaan, they were still nomads living in tents. They were not great builders, but they occupied cities

discovered by archaeologists.

Judges 3:12-14 says that Eglon (1356-1339, Wood's dates), king of Moab, defeated Israel, took possession of the city of palms, which is another name for Jericho, and forced the Israelites to pay tribute to him for 18 years. (After Joshua defeated Jericho, it was rebuilt and called the City of Palms.) Wood says that when Garstang excavated Jericho, he found a house with pottery from Cyprus, which indicates that its owner was wealthy. Furthermore, there was a room set aside for the official written record. This fits the story of Judges 3:12-14. In other words, they found Eglon's palace.

In those videos, Wood reminded me of the Amarna letters (see the discussion of these letters in the chapter on the Conquest), which he dated to about 1350 BC. There were 300 letters in all and about 100 of them were letters from Canaanite kings talking about the invasion of the Habiru (Wood called them the Apiru), which fits the description of the invasion of the Israelites.

Chapter 9

UNITED KINGDOM

The period of the United Kingdom of Israel begins with Saul's inauguration in 1043 BC. It concludes with the division of the Kingdom in 931 BC.

Some critics (for example, Thomas Thompson of the University of Copenhagen) claim that David and Solomon never existed and that there was no United Monarchy; he says it was all made up several centuries later and that David and Solomon were fictitious characters. Others contend that David and Solomon were only local chiefs (see Ben-Tor, p. 32). What evidence is there of David and Solomon?

Saul

Gibeah (Excavation) In 1922-23, W. F. Albright excavated a site he concluded was Gibeah, Saul's capital. Early Iron Age materials that he discovered strongly support its identification (Yamauchi, *IBSE*, vol. 1, p. 274).

In 1964, Lapp re-excavated Gibeah. The discovery of an iron

plow in Saul's palace "illustrates" the mastery of iron smelting, which gave the Philistines an upper hand until the reign of Saul" (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 278).

Pim (Inscription) The Israelites paid the Philistines to sharpen their tools, "and the charge for a sharpening was a pim for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to set the points of the goads" (1 Sam. 13:21).

William Dever says, "The text says the price for the service was one *pym*. That word occurs only there in the Hebrew Bible; it was never understood before this century, when archaeologists discovered small dome-shaped shekel weights inscribed in Hebrew, *pym*. We know exactly what the word *pym* means now. It's a fraction of a shekel in weight. We even know how many grams it weighed, and we know a *pym* was a balance weight used to weigh out silver." He adds, "Is it possible that a writer in the second century B.C.E. could have known of the existence of these *pym* weights which occur only in the ninth to the seventh century B.C.E. and would have disappeared for five centuries before time? It is not possible" (Shank, "Is the Bible Right After All?" p. 36).

David

David (Inscriptions) In 1993, Avraham Biran, the archeologist excavating the city of Dan, discovered a ninth-century BC victory stele of an Aramean king that contains the phrases "House of David" and "King of Israel." There is no exact fit between what is described in the Stele and any episode in the Bible, but the Dan inscription demonstrates that David lived and that both Israel

and Judah "were important kingdoms at the time" (Biran, p. 26).

The translation "House of David" has been challenged on the basis that the words "house" and "David" in this inscription appear as one word and places are written as one word (Davies, "House of David Built on Sand," pp. 54-55). That objection has been called "speculation." It is simply not true. Bethlehem is written as two words in the Bible (Freedman and Geoghegan, pp. 78-79; for other speculations and rebuttals to them, see Shanks, "Has David Been Found in Egypt?" footnote #2, p. 35).

It is possible that the phrase "House of David" appears on the famous Moabite Stone, also dated in the ninth century BC. Amazingly, even though the Moabite Stone was discovered in 1868, its complete edited translation has never been published. A scholar who worked on such a project for seven years has concluded that the Moabite Stone does indeed contain the expression "House of David" (Lemaire, "'House of David' Restored in Moabite Inscription," pp. 31-37).

There is also the possibility that the name of Israel's King David appears in a tenth-century BC Egyptian inscription. If that is correct, it is one hundred years earlier than the appearance on the inscription at Dan and a mere 50 years after David's death (Shanks, "Has David Been Found in Egypt?").

David's Conquest of Jerusalem (Warren's Shaft) David captured Zion (Jerusalem) when Joab climbed up a "water shaft" (2 Sam. 5:6-9; 1 Chron. 11:4-7). In 1867, Charles Warren and his assistant discovered and explored a shaft named "Warren's Shaft" (Gill, pp. 21-33).

The Hebrew word translated "water shaft" is a rare word whose meaning has been debated. The use of this word in the only other passage where it appears in the Old Testament ("waterfalls" in Ps. 42:6) and the use of a related word ("pipes" in Zech. 4:12) support the rendering "water shaft" in 2 Samuel 5:8 (Kleven, pp. 34-35). For a different explanation of the shaft, see Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron, "Light at the End of the Tunnel," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, January/February 1999.

The discovery of not only David's name but also "House of David" and "king of Israel" demonstrates that David was not a fictitious character or a local chief.

Solomon

Solomon's Cities (The Gates) Solomon refortified the cities of "Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer" (1 Kings 9:15). Knowing that earlier excavation at Megiddo had uncovered a gate with three chambers on each side, Yadin anticipated the discovery of a similar gate at Hazor. He found it. Then, the reexamination of Macalister's report on Gezer led to the discovery of an identical gate there (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 278). Yadin attributed all three to Solomon. Hence, was born "the archaeology of the United Monarchy" (Ben-Tor, p. 32).

These six-chambered city gates connected to a double (or casemate) wall have been called "strikingly similar" (Rainey, *ISBE*, vol. 3, p. 311) and "nearly identical" (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 278); they all have "similar dimensions and are all built on the same plan" (Schoville, *ISBE,* vol. 2, p. 352; for a detailed

explanation, including a diagram and a picture, see *ISBE*, vol. 2, pp. 349, 351-352).

In 1990, Amnon Ben-Tor renewed excavations at Hazor. He concluded that the gate, wall and the earliest phase of a building were from the tenth century BC (Ben-Tor, p. 35), about 950 BC (Ben-Tor, p. 36). While Ben-Tor himself does not want to attribute the gate and wall to Solomon (he says that is not an archaeological conclusion but the job for a historian or Bible scholar), he does say, "There is no reason why the gate and the casemate wall could not be attributed to King Solomon." He even calls it "likely" (Ben-Tor, p. 38).

Dever, who excavated at Gezer, argues that someone built the three gates at Gezer, Megiddo, and Hazor "in a government that was highly centralized," and that "means statehood." He dates the gates in the tenth century BC and adds, "If Solomon hadn't lived, we would have to invent a Solomon by another name to account for the Archaeological evidence" (Shanks, "Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers Face to Face," p. 40). I heard Dr. Dever lecture and show slides on the identical design of the gates, indicating that there was central control, a state. It was impressive ("The 'Age of Solomon': Myth or History?" a lecture by Dr. Dever for the California Museum of Ancient Art, May 14, 2001).

Jerusalem (Millo) First Kings 9:15 says that Solomon built the "house of the Lord, his own house, Millo, the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer." The Hebrew word translated "Millo" means "fill" or "filling" and is said by some to refer to a "citadel" (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old*

Testament, p. 571) or "tower" (Keil and Delitzsch, pp. 317-318).

Others claim that it refers to "supporting terraces" (NIV), explained as "probably large level areas between hills made by filling in the land" (Constable, p. 506). If that is the case, a possible Solomonic structure, a fragmentary casemate wall, has been found. Kenyon believes that the "enigmatic Millo, 'filling,' which was repaired by David (2 S. 5:9) and by Solomon (1 K. 9:15), referred to the massive platforms on the eastern edge of Ophel, which were in constant need of repair" (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 278).

Gezer (Excavation) First Kings says, "Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and taken Gezer and burned it with fire, had killed the Canaanites who dwelt in the city, and had given it as a dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife" (1 Kings 9:16). At Gezer, archaeologists found a massive layer of ash that covered most of the mound. In it were Hebrew, Egyptian, and Philistine artifacts, indicating that all three cultures had been there at the same time, which is exactly what the Bible says (Geisler, pp. 51-52).

Solomon's Chariot Cities (Excavation) The book of 1 Kings says that Solomon collected thousands of horses, "whom he stationed in the chariot cities" (1 Kings 10:26-29). First Kings 7:12 says Solomon used a construction consisting of "three rows of hewn stone and a row of cedar beams." This type of construction is found in Megiddo. Excavations at Megiddo also uncovered two stable compounds holding about 450 horses. Some say these are from Solomon's time, although others contend that they were from the period of Ahab (9th cent. BC). Also, J. Pritchard has argued that these structures are storehouses, but Y. Yadin would still

maintain that they are stables (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 274).

Milcom (Amman Inscription) First Kings 11:5 refers to the god Milcom. In 1961, a stone slab with eight lines referencing the god Milcom was discovered at Amman. F. Cross dated it to the 9th century BC and S. Horn to the 8th century BC (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 279).

Summary: There is direct proof that David lived, that there was a house (kingdom) of David, and that corroborating bits of evidence demonstrate the historical accuracy of this period.

Critics have charged that David and Solomon did not exist and that there was no kingdom; or, if these men did exist, there certainly was not the extent of the kingdom as described in the Bible. Critics have used a lack of evidence to claim that what the Bible says about this period is not historical (Davies, "What Separates a Minimalist from a Maximalist? Not Much," p. 72).

For the first time in Israel's history, buildings other than houses (for example, Solomon's Temple) were constructed. If, during this period, Israel was as great as the Scripture says, why has more evidence of it not been found? Carol Meyers, professor of Archaeology at Duke University, answers, "A political vacuum existed in the eastern Mediterranean." She explains that from 1069 BC to around 945 BC in Egypt, there was a "relative paucity of monumental inscriptions. The kings had nothing to boast about." Likewise, during this period, the Assyrian Empire was unusually silent. For centuries following 1081 BC, it seldom ventured beyond its own borders, and "thus its records would hardly have mentioned a new dynastic state to the west." Babylonia was also

uncharacteristically quiet (Sheler, p. 56).

Na'aman of Tel Aviv University points out several reasons for the lack of archaeological evidence. The most likely place to find an important monument is under the Temple Mount, which cannot be excavated for obvious reasons. The next most likely fertile field would be David's Jerusalem, the city of David, but it was continuously occupied, and destruction, not continuous occupation, leaves distinct marks. Hence, it is "dangerous" to draw negative conclusions from a lack of archaeological evidence (Na'aman, p. 44).

Na'aman goes on to point out that from the archaeological evidence alone, scholars had not known about the size and importance of Jerusalem before David lived. The Amarna letters, however, show that in the 14th century BC (hundreds of years before David), Jerusalem was a capital city from which a considerable territory was ruled. It had a palace, a court with servants, and a temple; the king was the head of state (Na'aman, pp. 44-45).

Moreover, there is evidence. The stele from Dan that contains the words "House of David" indicates a kingdom, as is known from similar designations from David's time (Na'aman, pp. 46-47). As for the kingdom's size, archaeological surveys show about 255 settlements in the central country of Canaan between 1200 BC and 1000 BC (before David's time). Even a modest increase during the United Monarchy would mean 300 to 350 settlements in the central country alone (Na'aman, p. 47).

P. Kyle McCarter of Johns Hopkins University argues that the kings of Israel and Judah, as far back as the middle of the ninth century, can be corroborated from Assyrian records and elsewhere.

That goes back almost to the time of David and Solomon. Therefore, it is reasonable to "postulate a historical Solomon at that time," who is "responsible for the fortification of those cities" (Shanks, "Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers Face to Face," p. 42).

Yet Thompson says there is little basis for saying there was a kingdom in the south at the time of the division of the kingdom. According to him, there was not a sufficient density of population. After pointing out that there were more sites at the time of the divided kingdom than before the time of David in the kingdoms of Shechem and Jerusalem combined, Na'aman says that Thompson "unfortunately neither takes into account all of the available evidence nor does justice to the complexity of the problem" (Na'aman, p. 47). Na'aman concludes, "There is nothing impossible about the extent of David's kingdom" (Na'aman, p. 67).

Another critic of the historical accuracy of this period is Israel Finkelstein, an archeologist at Tel Aviv University. Based on pottery, he wants to lower the dating of this period by eighty years, forcing material dated during the time of Solomon to the time of Ahaz (Mazar and Camp, p. 47). This dating down strips the archaeological evidence for monumental buildings from the United Kingdom.

In the first place, except for a very few, Finkelstein has failed to convince his fellow archaeologists of this new chronology. Israeli archaeologists Amnon Ben-Tor and Amihai Mazar, as well as American archaeologists Lawrence Stager (Professor at Harvard) and William Dever, have rejected it (Shanks, "Where

Is the Tenth Century," p. 60).

In the second place, the six-chambered gates, the casemate wall, the palace, and the stables at Megiddo all date to Solomon's time and indicate a grand city, and are identical to the six-chambered gates at Hazor and Gezer, which demonstrate a central administration.

On top of that, the pottery from Rehov, a city not mentioned in the Bible but in a list of cities conquered by Pharaoh Shishak in 935 BC, demonstrates that it is impossible to date the pottery in question "*always* and *only* to the ninth century" (Mazar and Camp, pp. 47-49). In other words, "all the evidence" indicates that Rehov was a large, thriving city resembling other sites of the tenth century BC (Mazar and Camp, p. 51), which supports the biblical picture of the United Kingdom.

Finkelstein himself admits that he cannot prove his theory and if the "traditional dating" is correct, there is "no difficulty in demonstrating that in the tenth century there was a strong, well-developed and well-organized state stretching over most of the territory of western Palestine" and that this state had "an advanced administration and a sophisticated system of management of manpower" (Shanks, "Where Is the Tenth Century?" pp. 56-57, 60). Dever says that the evidence of the existence of Israel in the ninth to the seventh centuries BC is "overwhelming" (Dever, "Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey," p. 68).

The Wall Street Journal reports that those who "deny the historicity to the kingdoms of David and Solomon" have been "largely dismissed as eccentrics" (*Wall Street Journal*, December 31, 1997).

An article in *U. S. News & World Report* sums up the situation. It says that it was once "fashionable in some academic circles to dismiss the David stories as an invention of priestly propagandists who were trying to dignify Israel's past after the Babylonian exile. It then quotes no less a critic than Israel Finkelstein, Tel Aviv University archeologist, as saying, 'Biblical Nihilism collapsed overnight with the discovery of the David inscription ' (Sheler, p. 56).

So, while some critics continue to question the biblical record concerning the United Kingdom, there is direct evidence that David lived in a dynasty and that there was a centralized government at the time of Solomon.

Chapter 10

DIVIDED KINGDOM

The period of the Divided Kingdom began in 931 BC with the death of Solomon and the division of the kingdom. For 259 years, the two kingdoms stood side by side. In 722 BC, Assyria conquered the Northern Kingdom. The Southern Kingdom existed alone until 605 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated Jerusalem.

Places

Hazor (Excavation) A large pillared hall and an impressive water system have been uncovered at Hazor. The water tunnel descends 130 feet to a spring. These have been credited to Ahaz (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 278).

Ahab's Palace (Ivory and Masonry) First Kings 22:39 says Ahab built an ivory house. Amos prophesied that the houses of ivory in Samaria would perish (Amos 3:15; see also 6:4). As predicted, Samaria was destroyed. Thousands of fragments of ivory have been found in the ruins of Ahab's place. Some pieces preserved

in excellent condition are in museums in Jerusalem, London, and the Fogg Museum of Art at Harvard (Owen, p. 291-92).

Ahab married the Phoenician princess Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31). Phoenician masonry has been found at Samaria (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 278).

Tirzah (Excavation) Omri transferred his capital from Tirzah to Samaria (1 Kings 16:23-24.). Archaeologists discovered unfinished buildings at Tirzah at the time of Omri. This transfer has been said to be "confirmed" by this discovery (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 278).

Hezekiah's Tunnel (The Tunnel and an Inscription) Second Kings 20:20 (see also 2 Chron. 32:30) says Hezekiah "made a pool and a tunnel and brought water into the city." This tunnel, called "Hezekiah's Tunnel," still exists today. It is 1748 feet long and extends from Gihon Spring outside the wall of Jerusalem to the Pool of Siloam inside Jerusalem. In 1880, an inscription was found in the tunnel about nineteen feet from the Pool of Siloam.

The inscription, now in an archaeological museum in Istanbul, Turkey, contains six lines written in Hebrew and tells how the tunnel was constructed. It says: "Now, this is the story of the boring through; while the excavators were still lifting up their picks, each towards his fellow, and while there were yet three cubits to excavate, there was heard the voice of one calling to another, for there was a crevice in the rock on the right hand. And on the day they completed the boring-through, the stonecutters struck pick against pick, one against the other, and the waters flowed from the spring to the pool, a distance of 100 cubits. And a hundred cubits was the height of the rock above the heads of

the stonecutters."

Albright says this inscription "undoubtedly comes from the reign of Hezekiah" (Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, p. 39). I have personally walked through this tunnel, and I have seen the inscription in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul.

Hezekiah's Wall (The Wall) When Hezekiah realized that Sennacherib was coming to attack Jerusalem, he "built up all the wall that was broken, raised it up to the towers, and built another wall outside; also he repaired the Millo in the City of David and made weapons and shields in abundance" (2 Chron. 32:5). Isaiah says that Hezekiah tore down houses "to fortify the wall" (Isa. 22:10). Archaeologists have uncovered a 130-foot section of wall 23 feet wide and probably originally 27 feet high. They date it to between the eighth and seventh centuries BC and discovered that part of it was built "directly on bedrock and part of it on top of what had been recently erected houses" (Rosovsky, pp. 26-27).

High Places (Standing Stones) The Old Testament repeatedly refers to "high places" where idols were worshipped. In some cases, these high places were located near the city gate. Josiah "broke down the high places at the gates which were at the entrance of the gate" (2 Kings 23:8). There is "archaeological evidence of this practice." Standing stones have been found beside the gates at Dan, Bethsaida, Hazor, and other sites (Ben-Tor and Rubiato, p. 33).

Edom (Ruins) The Bible frequently speaks of Edom and the Edomites. The Edomites descended from Esau (Gen. 36:1) and lived in the highlands south of the Dead Sea. This rugged territory, containing red sandstone cliffs, was easily fortified in ancient

times and thus inaccessible. In the middle of these highlands was the ancient city of Sela, a Hebrew word for "rock," or Petra, a Greek word that also means "rock." Petra was the capital city of the nation of Edom.

Obadiah prophesied against Edom (Obad. 1). From a military point of view, in Obadiah's day, Petra did seem secure. The entrance to the city was a narrow ravine a mile in length. The ravine was so narrow that, in places, only one horse could get by at a time. The walls sheltering the ravine were 700 feet high. The city was clearly able to repel any invasion. It was virtually impregnable. A direct attack, even by a superior force, was easily stopped.

In such a fortress, Edom considered herself secure, even from God, but Obadiah predicted that Edom and Petra would be destroyed (Obad. 3-4), nothing would be left (Obad. 5), and everyone would be killed (Obad. 9), forever (Obad. 10).

This prediction of Obadiah was literally fulfilled. In 582 BC, Edom was raided and desolated by the Babylonians. The few Edomites that were left were confined to a region in southern Judea, where, for four centuries, they continued to exist as active enemies of the Jews. In 126 BC, they were subdued by John Hyrcanus, one of the Maccabean rulers, and were compelled to be circumcised. They were thus absorbed into the Jewish state. With the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, they disappeared from history.

For more than a thousand years, the name of the people and their city disappeared from the stage of history. The critics concluded that these people never existed since there was no secular record of their existence. Based on the fact that the word

"Edom" means "red," they concocted the theory that the Edomites were any people with a red complexion (Rimmer, pp. 234-235).

Then archaeologists found the records of Raamses the Third of Egypt and Tiglath-Pileser and Esarhaddon of Assyria, all of whom claimed to have conquered the Edomites (Rimmer, p. 235-36). Finally, Petra was found (Rimmer, pp. 236-244). Rimmer observed that, in this instance, the defeat of the critics was complete (Rimmer, p. 244).

People from outside Israel

Shishak (The Triumphal Relief and the Stele of Shishak) The Scripture says that Shishak of Egypt conquered Jerusalem in the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign (1 Kings 14:25). Shishak is the first pharaoh mentioned in the Bible by name. He is Sheshonk I, the founder of the XXII Dynasty.

His triumphal relief at Karnak (ancient Thebes) depicts 154 captives. On the body of each captive appears the name of a place he conquered. About 120 names are legible, but not all of those are identifiable. Among those that can be identified are Megiddo and Gibeon. One is labeled "The King of the Jews." This indicates that he invaded the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom and "explicitly confirms" the biblical statement 1 Kings 14:25 (Robinson, pp. 65-66).

The Stele of Shishak found at Megiddo shows that he captured and occupied that city and excavations at other sites indicate destruction levels corresponding to his time (*ISBE*, vol. 4, p. 489).

Ben-Hadad (An Ivory Inscription) The Bible speaks of "Ben-

Hadad king of Syria" (2 Kings 8:8). An ivory inscription found at Khadatu in northwestern Mesopotamia contains his name (Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, p. 39).

Pul (Assyrian Records) Second Kings 15:19 says, "Pul, king of Assyria, came against the land; and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to strengthen the kingdom under his control." This is a classic illustration of critics arguing that archaeology proved that the Bible is wrong, only to have archaeology later demonstrate that the Bible is absolutely right.

When Assyrian inscriptions were first discovered, the names of Sennacherib, Shalmaneser, Tiglath-Pileser, and other Assyrian kings were found, but the name of Pul was not. More serious was the fact that his name did not appear in the list of kings and there was no gap in any of the list for his name to be inserted. The critics used the absence of Pul's name to say that the Bible was historically wrong.

Later, however, it was discovered that on one list appears the name Tiglath-Pileser, whereas on another, in the same year, the name Pul stands written Pulu. All Assyriologists are now agreed that Tiglath-Pileser and Pul are the same individuals. When the Assyrian Tiglath-Pileser became king of Babylon, to avoid offending them, he took the Babylonian name, Pulu. By the way, 1 Chronicles says, "So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, that is, Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria" (1 Chron. 5:26). This is another illustration of the historical accuracy of the Bible (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 900).

This event is mentioned in the annals of Tiglath-Pileser III

(Pul), which says, "As for Menahem, terror overwhelmed him like a bird. Alone, he fled and submitted to me. To his palace, I brought him back and silver, colored woolen garments, linen garments … I received as his tribute" (Unger, *Archaeology of the Old Testament*, p. 254).

Sargon (Palace and Stele) Isaiah 20:1 speaks of "Sargon the king of Assyria," sending Tartan against Ashdod. This is the only reference to Sargon in the Bible. For years, critics argued that this was a mistake because no Assyrian king named Sargon was known.

Sargon's palace at Khorsabad has now been excavated. It contains over a hundred rooms. Furthermore, his records have also been discovered. In them, he says, "I besieged … (and) conquered the cities Ashdod, Gath, Asdu-dimmu." On top of that, archaeologist Moshe Dothan discovered a fragment of an Assyrian Stele at Ashdod that says Sargon of Assyria conquered Ashdod (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 279). Isaiah has been vindicated!

People from Israel

Omri (The Moabite Stone) Omri was a king of the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 16:23). In 1868, F.A. Klein, a German missionary, discovered a stone inscribed in Moab. Hence its name, Moabite Stone. It is about four feet high and two feet wide with a rounded top. It contains thirty-four lines of text describing the successful revolt of Mesha, King of Moab, over Israel. It was made ca. 850 BC and mentions Omri by name.

In the spring of 1879, Charles Simon Clermont–Ganneau, a

Frenchman who wanted the stone for France, had a paper-mâché impression made and offered a large sum for the stone itself. The local Governor demanded an even higher price for it. Rather than fight over who owned it, the native Arabs broke it into pieces and distributed it among different families. Later, many of the pieces were collected, and the stone was pieced back together, but without the impression taken before the stone was broken into pieces, restoring it would have been impossible.

Today, the restored Moabite stone is in the Louvre in Paris. Based on the fact that the form of the letters of the Moabite Stone is consistent with other inscriptions of the 9th century BC, archaeologists have concluded that it is from that period. Linguistic peculiarities of the period confirm this conclusion.

The Moabite Stone says that Israel conquered and maintained control of the land of Medeba during Omri's reign and half of his son's reign, that is, for 40 years. Then King Mesha revolted, and his god, Chemosh, gave him the victory. There are two possible conflicts with that account and the biblical record: 1) the forty years extend beyond Ahab's death, and 2) Second Kings 3:4-27 says Mesha's revolt was after the death of Ahab. The word translated "son," however, can mean "grandson" or even "descendant." Therefore, there is no conflict between the two accounts. At any rate, the Moabite Stone "gives the Moabite king's version of his conflict with the Israelites in the 9th cent. (2 K. 3:4-27)" (Yamauchi, *IBSE*, vol. 1, p. 279).

The Moabite Stone is an extra-biblical confirmation of the existence of Omri. It mentions him by name. From this time on, in Assyrian records, Israel is mentioned as the "house of

Omri" (Unger, *Archaeology in the Old Testament*, p. 257). The Moabite Stone also contains one of the oldest extant extra-biblical occurrences of Yahweh as the name of Israel's God. Thus, this stone demonstrates the historical accuracy of the Old Testament.

Ahab (*The Monolith Inscription and Bulla)* Ahab, the son of Omri, became king of Israel (1 Kings 16:29). Shalmaneser III, one of the greatest Assyrian kings, left detailed records of his conquest. Several well-preserved monuments have been found. The Monolith Inscription is a large slab with a near-life-size portrait of the king covered with two columns of writing. It gives an account of the battle of Karkar on the Orontes in 853 BC, a battle not mentioned in the Bible. The inscription credits "Ahab, the Israelite" with having the most powerful military elements in a twelve-state coalition. So, there is direct evidence that Ahab lived (Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, p. 244).

Papyrus documents were sealed with a lump of clay called a bulla. Then, a seal was used to make an impression on the clay (a signet). Hundreds of seals and bullae of the servants of Israelite kings have been discovered, including a seal from Ushna, a servant of Ahab. Recently, a bulla of Ahaz was found. It reads, "Belonging to Ahaz (son of) Yehotam, King of Judah." It also contains a fingerprint "that may well be that of King Ahaz himself!" (Robert Deutsch, "First Impression," *Biblical Archaeology Review,* May/June 1998).

Jehu (*The Black Obelisk)* Jehu was king in Israel (2 Kings 9:1-6). The Black Obelisk, another of Shalmaneser III's monuments, is a solid block of basalt over six feet high with text and pictures scripted on all four sides. It was found in 1846 and is now in the

British Museum. The Black Obelisk contains a picture of Jehu or his ambassador bowing at Shalmaneser's feet and presenting him with gifts. The inscription speaks of tribute from "Jehu, son of Omri." Actually, Jehu was only a successor with no lineal relationship to Omri. Thus, "son" is used as a successor. The Scripture does not record Jehu paying tribute to Shalmaneser, but there is no reason to say he did not. At any rate, this is archaeological proof of the existence of Jehu (Schneider, pp. 26-33).

Jeroboam (Seal) Jeroboam was a king in Israel for forty-one years (2 Kings 14:23). The lion seal from Megiddo is inscribed "Shema, servant of Jeroboam." The title "servant" indicates a god, a king, or a high-ranking official (Lemaire, "Name of Israel's Last King Surfaces in a Private Collection," p. 50).

Uzziah (Seals) Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:3), a. k. a. Azariah (2 Kings 15:21), reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. Seals of two of his servants have been found. The two servants are Abyaw and Shebanyaw (Lemaire, "Name of Israel's Last King Surfaces in a Private Collection," p. 50).

Pekah (*Ostracon and Assyrian Records)* The Bible says, "In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abel Beth Maachah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria" (2 Kings 15:29). In other words, Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul) invaded Galilee and took captives to Assyria.

This aspect of history in the Bible can be documented apart from the Bible. An ostracon with Pekah's name on it was found in the burned debris of Hazor, one of the cities Tiglath-Pileser conquered (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 279). Moreover, Assyrian

records say that Tiglath-Pileser defeated Pekah's army and banished the Israelites from Galilee; Archaeological evidence confirms this (Gal, p. 50).

Hoshea (*Seal and Khorsabad Annals)* Hoshea was the last king of Israel (2 Kings 17:1-41). A seal that reads "belonging to Abdi, servant of Hoshea" has been found. Based on the form of the letters, it can be dated to the late eighth century BC. Thus, Abdi was a high-ranking minister of Hoshea. Since the seal was apparently engaged during Hoshea's reign, it can be dated "precisely to ten years from 732-722 B.C.E.." (Lemaire, "Name of Israel's Last King Surfaces in a Private Collection," p. 51).

The Assyrian forces, first under Shalmaneser and later under Sargon, laid siege to Samaria, the capital of Israel. After a three-year struggle, the city was taken in 722 BC. Hoshea and his people were taken captive to Assyria. Second Kings 17:6 says, "The king of Assyria took Samaria" and carried captives to Assyria. In his Khorsabad Annals, Sargon says, "I besieged and captured Samaria, carrying off 27,290 of the people who dwelt therein. Fifty chariots I gathered from among them" (Unger, *Archaeology of the Old Testament*, p. 260).

Hezekiah (Hezekiah's Bulla) Of the more than twelve hundred west Semitic bullae now published, only two are the seals of the kings of Judah, one belonging to Ahaz and another from Hezekiah. The one from Hezekiah reads, "Belonging to Hezekiah (son of) Ahaz, King of Judah." On the back of it, the impression of the string that tied the roll of the papyrus can be seen. The script is similar to the inscription found in Hezekiah's Tunnel (Cross, pp. 42-45).

Hezekiah (Annals of Sennacherib) According to the Scripture, Sennacherib attacked but failed to take Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:13-19:37; 2 Chron. 32:1-12; Isa. 36:1-37:38). This took place in 701 BC. The annals of Sennacherib preserved on the Taylor Cylinder, now in the British Museum, say, "As for Hezekiah, the Jew, who did not submit to my yoke, forty-six of his strong-walled cities as well as the small cities in their neighborhood … I besieged and took … himself, like a caged bird, I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city." In other words, Sennacherib plays up his successes, but his statement proves that he did not capture Jerusalem (for the full text of the statement, see Unger, *Archaeology of the Old Testament*, pp. 267-268).

Others (Assyrian Records) Other people mentioned in this section of 2 Kings are named in Assyrian records, including Azariah of Judah (2 Kings 15:1-7), Hoshea (2 Kings 15:30), Rezin (Rasunna) of Aram (2 Kings 15:37, 16:5, 6, 9), and Ahaz of Judah (2 Kings 16:7-8 (see Unger, *Archaeology of the Old Testament*, pp. 253-258).

The Conquest of Lachish (Palace Relief) Second Kings 18:13 says that Sennacherib conquered all the "fortified cities of Judah," which would include Lachish. A relief found in Sennacherib's palace tells of his conquest of Lachish. Moreover, the remains of fifteen hundred victims desecrated by a layer of pig bones and an Assyrian helmet, arms and arrows were found (Yamauchi, *ISBE,* vol. 1, p. 275).

The Accuracy of Isaiah (Writings of Esarhaddon) Isaiah says that Sennacherib's sons, Adrammelech and Sharezer, killed Sennacherib and that Esarhaddon, his son, reigned in

his place (Isa. 37:37-38). Archaeologists have found writings of Esarhaddon, which "confirm and supplement the Biblical record" (Owen, p. 100). Esarhaddon said, "A firm determination fell upon my brothers. They forsook the gods and turned to their deeds of violence, plotting evil…. They revolted. To gain the kingship, they slew Sennacherib, their father" (Owen, p. 100-101). Ashurbanipal, Esarhaddon's son, also wrote about the assassination of Sennacherib, his grandfather (Unger, *Archaeology of the Old Testament*, p. 270).

Manasseh (Assyrian Records) The Bible states, "The captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters and carried him off to Babylon" (2 Chron. 33:11), but later he was allowed to return (2 Chron. 33:13). The critics once claimed that this was a mistake because the inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria, specifically says that twenty kings, including "Manasseh, king of Judah," were in *Nineveh*, not Babylon, and were forced to provide materials for the palace of Esarhaddon.

Then, it was discovered that Esarhaddon also rebuilt Babylon. It is not "unlikely" that since Esarhaddon summoned a score of kings to Nineveh, he would have done the same when he finished the rebuilding at Babylon. Moreover, in "the Senjirli Stele of Esarhaddon, Baalu, king of Tyre, is shown lifting manacled hands in supplication to Assyria and beside him, Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, is portrayed with a hook through his lips and tied by a rope to Esarhaddon's hands" (Unger, *Archaeology of the Old Testament*, pp. 280-281).

The point is that there is enough information from archaeology to indicate that what the Bible says about Manasseh being taken to *Babylon* with *hooks* and *fetters* and then being allowed to *return* is feasible. As compared to others, the Bible only briefly mentions Manasseh. It certainly does not record all that happened to him, but it does say that what the king of Assyria did to him is the same thing the king of Assyria did to others.

Also, note that archaeology verifies that Manasseh lived and was a king in Judah. He is listed as one of the kings who paid tribute to Ashurbanipal, Esarhaddon's son. (LaSor, *ISBE*, vol. 1, pp., 321-22).

Necho (Saqqarah Papyrus) An Egyptian Pharaoh named Necho is mentioned eight times in the Old Testament (2 Kings 23:29, 33, 34, 35; 2 Chron. 35:20, 22; Jer. 46:2). He killed Josiah (2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chron. 35:20-24) and later put Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, in prison (2 Kings 23:33; 2 Chron. 36:4). Necho also made another son of Josiah, Eliakim, king and changed his name to Jehoiakim. (2 Kings 23:34). Jehoiakim paid tribute to Necho (2 Kings 23:35). Nebuchadnezzar defeated Necho "by the River Euphrates in Carchemish" (Jer. 46:2).

In 1942, an Aramaic papyrus was found at Saqqarah, Egypt. It is a letter from King Adon to Pharaoh Necho. Adon, probably the king of Ashkelon, was asking for help against the invading forces of Nebuchadnezzar (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 280).

Eliakim (Seal of Eliakim) Eliakim was the steward of Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:6). From 1926 to 1932, F. Albright and M. G. Kyle excavated Tell Beit Mirsim. They found a seal of Eliakim (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 274).

Jehoiachin a. k. a. Jeconiah and Coniah (Babylonian Records). Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, was king on Saturday, March 16th, 597 BC (Thiele's date), when Nebuchadnezzar again captured Jerusalem and carried another group captive to Babylon, including Ezekiel and Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:15). Archaeology has provided "remarkable minute corroboration of the Biblical notices of Jehoiachin's captivity" (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 560).

The Babylonian records say Nebuchadnezzar "seized the city and captured the king. He appointed there a king of his own heart (see Zedekiah below), received its heavy tribute, and sent them to Babylon."

Tablets found near the famous Ishtar Gate in Babylon, dating between 595-570 BC, list recipients of rations from various conquered nations. This list includes "Jehoiachin, king of Judah," as well as many Jewish names similar to those in the Old Testament, verifying that Jehoiachin was in exile in Babylon (Unger, *Archaeology of the Old Testament*, pp. 296-297). The list even includes the names of Jehoiachin's five sons and their Jewish attendant, Kenaiah (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 560).

Three identical inscriptions that read "Eliakim, steward of Jehoiachin" have been found in two locations (Owen, p. 75).

Gedaliah (Seal of Gedaliah) Second Kings 25:23 says that the king of Babylon made Gedaliah governor. A seal impression found at Lachish in 1935 has an inscription that reads, "Gedaliah, who is over the household." The title "who is over the house" means "Lord Chamberlain" (Owen, p. 75). It was used by the chief administrative official next in rank to the king (Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, p. 178).

Jaazaniah (The Seal of Jaazaniah) Jaazaniah was a captain in the army who came to see Gedaliah (2 Kings 25:23). From 1926 to 1935, E. Bade excavated Mizpah (1 Kings 15:21*ff.*). He found a Jaazaniah seal dated 600 BC (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 274). The seal says, "Belonging to Jaazaniah, an officer of the King" (Owen, p. 75).

Jeremiah (Lachish Letters) A number of ostraca, pieces of pottery inscribed with a message, have been found at Lachish. Hoshaiah (Jer. 42:1), a military officer stationed near Jerusalem, wrote Joash, the commanding officer at Lachish, just before Lachish fell, about 588 BC. They are known as "The Lachish Letters" (Owen, p. 306).

Letter III speaks of a "prophet" some scholars claim is a reference to Jeremiah (see Owen, p. 307). Letter IV refers to "watching for the signals of Lachish" (Owen, p. 307). Jeremiah mentions such a "signal-fire" (Jer. 6:1). Letter VI complains about a prince "weakening the hands of men of war" (Owen, p. 308), the very charge leveled at Jeremiah (Jer. 38:4). These letters are exactly the age of Jeremiah and they have the same social and political conditions as pictured in the book of Jeremiah (see, Owen, p. 309).

Baruch (Bulla) Baruch, the son of Neriah, transcribed Jeremiah's words (Jer. 36:4). A bulla that reads "belonging to Berekhyahu, son of Nerryahu" is in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. Berekhyahu is the original of Baruch, and Nerryahu is another form of Neriah.

A private individual owns another Baruch bulla. Both were impressed with the same seal. The second one contains a

fingerprint, presumably of Baruch, "the scribe who wrote and sealed the document to which it was attached" (Shank, "Fingerprint of Jeremiah's Scribe," p. 37).

Summary: People, places, and events from this period can be directly verified from sources outside the Bible.

For this biblical period, there is not only proof, but there is overwhelming proof of people and events. The names of people such as Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Pekah, Azariah, Hoshea, Rezin, Jehoiachin, et al., have been found outside the Bible. In fact, "all told, some two-score biblical personalities from the kingdom period" have been found in contemporary sources outside the Bible (Bryant G. Wood in "Scholars Speak Out," ed. Hershel Shanks, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June 1995, p. 35). "Every reference in the Old Testament to an Assyrian king has been correct" (McDowell, p. 111).

Specific places (not just cities) like Ahab's Palace, Hezekiah's Tunnel, and Hezekiah's Wall have been discovered. Even events, including major events like the capture of Samaria and the siege of Jerusalem, are documented in secular sources.

The reason this period is more verifiable than others is mainly because of Babylonian-Assyrian records. People did not boast in monuments in previous periods, like the Assyrians. For example, as has been pointed out, the Egyptians did not record their defeats, which is what the period of the Exodus was for them. As for Israel, the Bible is their record, but because of critical theories (biases?) against it, it is deemed not to be an accurate historical record. Well, remember Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Hezekiah's Tunnel, and the fall of Samaria!

Chapter 11

CAPTIVITY

As prophesied by Jeremiah, the Captivity lasted for 70 years (Jer. 25:12, 29:10), beginning with the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC and ending with the beginning of the rebuilding of the Temple under Zerubbabel in 536 BC.

The Captivity

Among other things, the Bible says of this period that Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:11) "carried Jehoiachin captive to Babylon" (2 Kings 24:15).

Jehoiachin (Ishtar Gate Tablets) Tablets found near the famous Ishtar Gate in Babylon, dating between 595-570 BC, include the name of Jehoiachin (see comment on Jehoiachin in the previous chapter). One tablet lists the payment of rations of oil, barley, and other food to political prisoners and workmen. They list Jehoiachin as one of the recipients of these rations (Albright, "King Jehoiachin in Exile," p. 51). This is extra-biblical confirmation of the existence of Jehoiachin and his exile to Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar's Boast (Excavation) Daniel says Nebuchadnezzar boasted about his building in Babylon (Dan. 4:30). R. Koldewey's excavations, begun in 1899, uncovered the splendor of the ancient city of Babylon, including the Ishtar Gate, the Ziggurat, the Marduk Temple, the palace, and the hanging gardens. Nebuchadnezzar's name has even been found on bricks (Unger, *Archaeology of the Old Testament*, pp. 294-296).

The Defeat of Babylon

The Defeat of Babylon (*Herodotus and Xenophon)* According to Daniel, Babylon fell in one night during a drinking party (Dan. 5:1-4, 30-31). Babylon was the strongest city in the ancient world at the time. A moat and two walls surrounded the city. There was enough food and water inside the city to last for years. No one had ever defeated it, and no one believed that it could be defeated. How, then, did Babylon fall?

Two ancient authors, Herodotus and Xenophon, report that the conquering troops entered the city by diverting the Euphrates River, which ran through the city and entered the opening. They found the people in a drunken festival, just like Daniel 5 says.

Belshazzar (Inscriptions) Babylon fell on October 12, 539 BC. According to Daniel 5, "Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans" (Dan. 5:30) was killed the night Babylon fell to "Darius the Mede."

Critics once claimed that the Scripture is in error in saying Belshazzar succeeded Nebuchadnezzar as king because there was no mention of Belshazzar in Babylonian records, and Babylonian records indicate that Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon.

Then, other inscriptions were found. In one, Nabonidus calls Belshazzar "my oldest son." The inscriptions indicated that on Belshazzar's thirteenth birthday, Nabonidus, his father, made him regent. Also, Nabonidus was away in Arabia the night Babylon fell, and he "entrusted the kingship" to Belshazzar before he left. This confirms Daniel 5:30; 7:1, etc. (Owen, pp. 141-142).

Darius (*Nabonidus Chronicle)* The identity of Darius the Mede is uncertain. No one by that name is known from secular history. Also, it is well established that Cyrus captured Babylon and ruled for nine years.

Several possible solutions have been suggested. Darius the Mede was Cyrus (Wiseman, pp. 9-16), Gubaru (see Whitcomb, *Darius, The Mede*), or Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, who served under his father as ruler over Babylon and later succeeded him as emperor (Boutflower, pp. 142-167). According to the Nabonidus Chronicle, Cyrus himself was not with the army the night Babylon fell. He did not arrive until 18 days later. He had appointed Gubaru to rule in his absence. This is evidence that Darius was Gubaru.

Summary: There is direct proof in Babylonian records that the Israelites were taken captive to Babylon. While there are several problems, there are also plausible solutions.

The names of some people of this period have been found outside the Bible. Jehoiachin's name not only appears but also appears in Babylon! Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon and the fall of Babylon are established historical facts.

Years ago, critics attacked the period of the captivity, going so far as to say there was no "real Exile" (see Albright's

comments about C. C. Torrey in "The Bible After Twenty Years of Archaeology," p. 545).

In 1924, Albright wrote, "There is an interesting fact which came home to me more vividly this trip than ever before: many of the towns in southern Judah and Simeon were not occupied after the Exile. This process was quite as disastrous as it is portrayed in the Old Testament and the view that the drastic sweep made of the population of Judah at this time was a fancy of post-exilic scribes must be rejected. The present writer once subscribed to this view but has since been forced to abandon it because of the pressure of archaeological facts" (Albright, cited by Davis, "Faith and Archaeology," p. 54).

In 1952, after mentioning the views of critics about this period, Albright wrote, "The views of these scholars have been categorically disproved by the archaeological discoveries of the past twenty years" (Albright, "The Bible After Twenty Years of Archaeology," p. 546). He concludes that the attempt of C. C. Torrey and others "to show that there was no Jewish dispersion in Babylonia" has "collapsed entirely."

Chapter 12

RESTORATION

The restoration of the children of Israel to their homeland began in 536 BC with the beginning of the rebuilding of the Temple as a result of the decree of Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, and ended around 400 BC.

The Restoration

Cyrus (The Cyrus Cylinder) The predecessors of Cyrus had sought to remove conquered people from their country. Cyrus allowed the children of Israel to return to the land (Ezra 1:1-3). The Cyrus Cylinder, discovered by Hormuzd Rassam, tells of Cyrus' restoration policy. One line states, "All their inhabitants I collected and restored them to their dwelling places" (Unger, *The Archaeology of the Old Testament*, p. 304).

People

Osnapper (Palace and Library of Ashurbanipal) Ezra 4:10

speaks of a Persian king named Osnapper who completed the transplanting begun by Esarhaddon (Ezra 4:1-2). Osnapper is the biblical name for Ashurbanipal (668-626 BC).

Between 1848 and 1876, Austen H. Layard, Hormuzd Rassam, and George Smith discovered the library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh (Unger, *Archaeology of the Old Testament*, p. 27). His library of 24,000 clay tablets from all over Mesopotamia included the famous Babylonian account of creation known as *Enuma Elish and* flood epics. His palace has also been found.

Jehohanan (The Elephantine Papyri) Jehohanan is mentioned in Ezra 10:6 and Nehemiah 12:23. He was a High Priest of Jerusalem.

In 1895, the Elephantine papyri were discovered on an island near Aswan in Upper Egypt. They are from 494-400 BC. These papyri contain legal contracts, deeds, private letters, etc. One was a letter by a Jewish priest at Elephantine to Bagohi, the governor of Judah, requesting financial aid to rebuild the Temple on their island. It mentions Jehohanan, the High Priest of Jerusalem (Robinson, pp. 68-69).

Sanballat (The Elephantine Papyri) Nehemiah was opposed by Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem (Neh. 2:19). Sanballat is mentioned in the Elephantine Papyri in the same letter that refers to Jehohanan (Robinson, pp. 68-69). The Jews in Elephantine, Egypt, appealed to Sanballat for help. The date is 408 BC (Kitchen, *The Bible and its World*, p. 125). In 1962, papyri containing the name of Saballat were discovered in a cave northwest of Jericho. Archaeologists have concluded that perhaps this is a reference to the grandson of the governor of Samaria in Nehemiah's day

(Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 280).

Tobiah (Inscription at Araq el-Emir) Tobiah is mentioned in Nehemiah 2:19. On the face of a cliff in Araq el-Amir, Jordan (Tobiah was an Ammonite!) is an inscription with the name Tobiah. B. Mazar dates the inscription to the 6th or 5th century BC, Albright to the 3rd century BC (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 280).

Geshem (An Inscribed Vessel) Eight silver vessels from the Persian period were found in the east Delta of Egypt. Three were inscribed. One dish contains the inscription, "What Qaynu son of Geshem, King of Qedar, brought (as an offering) to (the goddess) Han-Ilat" (Kitchen, *The Bible and its World*, p. 125).

Summary: There is extra-biblical proof for this period, including the return itself and even the existence of people mentioned in the Bible.

Referring to a critic who rejects this biblical period as historical, Albright concluded, "Archaeological data have thus demonstrated the substantial originality of the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Ezra and Nehemiah, beyond doubt; they have confirmed the traditional picture of events, as well as their order" (Albright, "The Bible After Twenty Years of Archaeology," p. 547).

Chapter 13

THE STORY OF AN OLD TESTAMENT SCHOLAR

Robert Dick Wilson (1856-1930), the famous Princeton professor, spent a lifetime studying the Scripture. It is said that he mastered forty-five languages and dialects. Here is his story in his words.

"When I was in the Seminary, I used to read my New Testament in nine different languages. I learned my Hebrew by heart so that I could recite it without the intermission of a syllable, and the same with David, Isaiah, and other parts of Scripture. As soon as I graduated from the Seminary, I became a teacher of Hebrew for a year, and then I went to Germany. When I got to Heidelberg, I made a decision. I decided—and I did it with prayer—to consecrate my life to the study of the Old Testament. I was twenty-five then, and I judged from the life of my ancestors that I should live to be seventy, so that 1 should have forty-five years to work. I divided the period into three parts. The first fifteen years I would devote to the study of the necessary languages. For the second fifteen, I was going to devote myself to the study of the text of the Old

Testament, and I reserved the last fifteen years for the work of writing the results of my previous studies and investigations so as to give them to the world. And the Lord has enabled me to carry out that plan for almost a year.

"Now, I consider that what was necessary in order to investigate the evidence was, first of all, to know the language in which the evidence was given. So I went to Berlin and devoted myself almost entirely to the study of the languages bearing upon the Bible, and determined that I would learn all the languages that throw light on the Hebrew, all the cognate languages, and also all the languages into which the Bible had been translated down to AD 600, so that I could investigate the text myself.

"After I had learned the necessary languages, I set about the investigation of every consonant in the Hebrew Old Testament. There are about a million and a quarter of these, and it took me many years to achieve my task. I had to read the Old Testament through and look at every consonant in it; I had also to observe the variations of the text, as far as they were to be found in the manuscripts or in the notes of the Massoretes [the Massoretes were a body of Jewish scholars who made it their business to hand down what they believed to be the true text of the Old Testament] or in the various versions, or in the parallel passages, or in the conjectural emendations of critics; and then I had to classify the results. I prize this form of textual research very highly, for *my plan has been to reduce the Old Testament criticism to an absolutely objective science, something which is based on evidence and not on opinion.* I scarcely ever make a statement which rests merely on my own subjective belief.

"In order to be a textual expert of this kind, it is necessary to be a master of paleography (the science which deals with ancient writings) and of philology; to have an exact knowledge of a dozen languages at least, so that every word may be thoroughly sifted. To ascertain the true text of the Old Testament is fundamental to everything concerning Bible history and Bible doctrine.

"The result of those thirty years' study which I have given to the text has been this: I can affirm that there is not a page of the Old Testament concerning which we need have any doubt. We can be absolutely certain that, substantially, we have the text of the Old Testament that Christ and the Apostles had, and which was in existence from the beginning. [The scroll of Isaiah among the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were found after this was written, supports this statement.]

"I would like to give a few other examples of true biblical criticism. I can remember when it was thought very unprofitable to read the long genealogies found in the first chapters of First Chronicles—nine chapters of proper names. But today, in the scientific criticism of the Old Testament, proper names are of the profoundest importance. The way in which they are written—indeed, all that is connected with them has come to be one of the very foundations upon which scientific criticism of the Old Testament is built.

"Take the following case. There are twenty-nine ancient kings whose names are mentioned not only in the Bible but also on monuments of their own time, many of them under their own supervision. There are one hundred and ninety-five consonants in these twenty-nine proper names. Yet we find that in the documents

of the Hebrew Old Testament, there are only two or three out of the entire hundred and ninety-five about which there can be any question of their being written in exactly the same way as they were inscribed on their own monuments. Some of these go back for two thousand years, some for four thousand, and are so written that every letter is clear and correct. This is surely a wonder.

"Compare this accuracy with that of other writings. I have been blamed for not referring to the classical writings more frequently in my book on Daniel. Here is the reason. Take the list made by the greatest scholar of his age, the librarian at Alexandria in 200 B.C. He compiled a catalogue of the kings of Egypt, thirty-eight in all; of the entire number, only three or four of them are recognizable. He also made a list of the kings of Assyria; in only one case can we tell who is meant, and that one is not spelt correctly. Or take Ptolemy, who drew up a register of eighteen of the kings of Babylon. Not one of them is properly spelt; you could not make them out at all if you did not know from other sources to what he is referring. If anyone talks against the Bible, ask him about the kings mentioned in it. There are twenty-nine kings of Egypt, Israel, Moab, Damascus, Tyre, Babylon, Assyria, and Persia, referred to, and ten different countries among these twenty-nine; all of which are included in the Bible accounts and those of the monuments. Every one of these is given his right name in the Bible, his right country, and placed in the correct chronological order. Think what that means!" (From a lecture "What is an Expert?" by Robert Dick Wilson, published in *Bible League Quarterly*, 1955 and quoted in *Which Bible?*, edited by David Otis Fuller, Grand Rapids: International Publications, 1971, pp. 39-48.)

The acclaimed scholar also wrote, "The Hebrew Scriptures contain the names of 26 or more foreign kings whose names have been found on documents contemporary with the kings. Names of most of these kings were found to be spelled on their own monuments or in documents from the time in which they resigned in the same manner that they are spelled in the documents of the Old Testament. The changes in the spelling of others in accordance with the laws of phonetic change as those laws were in operation at the time when the Hebrew documents claimed to have been written. In the case of two or three names only, there are letters or spellings that cannot as yet be explained with certainty, but even in these few cases, it cannot be shown that spelling in the Hebrew text is wrong. Contrariwise, the names of many of the kings of Judah and Israel are found on the Assyrian contemporary documents with the same spelling as that which we find in the present Hebrew text."

In 144 cases of transliteration from Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, and Moabite into Hebrew and in 40 cases of the opposite, or 184 in all, the evidence shows that for 2300 to 3900 years, the text of the proper names in the Hebrew Bible has been transmitted with the most minute accuracy. That the original scribes should have written them with such close conformity to correct philological principles is a wonderful proof of their thorough care and scholarship; further, that the Hebrew text should have been transmitted by copyists through so many centuries is a phenomenon unequaled in the history of literature (Robert Dick Wilson, *A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament*. London: Marshall Brothers Limited, 1926; cited by McDowell, p. 70).

At one point, Wilson wrote about "26 or more foreign kings whose names have been found on documents contemporary with the kings" (Wilson, *A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament*). Later, he said, "There are twenty-nine ancient kings whose names are mentioned not only in the Bible but also on monuments of their own time." He died in 1930.

In a book published in 1954, Harry Rimmer wrote, "The historical sections of the Old Testament contain the names of forty-seven kings, aside from the rulers of Israel and Judah" (Rimmer, p. 21). "Now all forty-seven of these presumably fabulous characters have been transferred from the columns of 'mythology' to the accepted records of established history" (Rimmer, p. 22). "Thus, in this sample, there are forty-seven definite and specific evidences of the complete historicity of the text" (Rimmer, p. 22).

In other words, there is circumstantial and conclusive evidence for the historical accuracy of the Old Testament, and that body of evidence is growing. Remember, the name of David was not found outside the Bible until 1993!

Chapter 14

THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST

The period of the ministry of Christ begins with His birth and concludes with His ascension.

Bertrand Russell wrote, "Historically, it is quite doubtful whether Christ ever existed at all, and if He did, we do not know anything about Him" (Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*, edited by Paul Edwards. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957, p. 16). Is there evidence outside the New Testament that Christ or others of this period lived, and if there is, what is known from those sources?

The New Testament Documents

Before specific people and places are discussed, a word about the reliability of the New Testament documents is appropriate.

The Number Compared to other ancient documents, there are vastly more extant (still in existence) manuscripts (handwritten copies) of the New Testament. According to the Institute of New

Testament Studies in Münster, Germany, as of August 1998, there were 5,686 extant manuscripts of the New Testament (McDowell, p. 36; as of 2026 over six thousands). To that number can be added over 19,000 manuscripts of ancient translations of the New Testament, such as the Latin (over 10,000), Ethiopic (over 2,000), Slavic (4,101), Armenian (2,587), Syriac Peshitta (over 350), etc. (McDowell, p. 34). McDowell concludes, "We have close to, if not more than, 25,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament in existence today (McDowell, p. 34).

No other ancient document even begins to come close to the number of surviving manuscripts of the New Testament. Homer's *Iliad*, written about 800 BC, is second, with only 643 extant manuscripts. The earliest completely preserved text of the *Iliad* dates from the thirteenth century (McDowell, p. 34). Livy (59 BC-AD 17) wrote books on Roman history. Only 35 copies of his works survive, and only one is as old as the fourth century (McDowell, pp. 36-37). Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, written between 50 and 58 BC, has ten extant manuscripts, the earliest from about AD 900 (McDowell, p. 34). The History of Thucydides *(*ca. 460-400 BC) is known to us from a few papyrus scraps and eight manuscripts. The same is true of the History of Herodotus (488-428 BC) (McDowell, p. 37).

Metzger writes, "The *Annals* of the famous historian Tacitus is extant, so far as the first six books are concerned, in but a single manuscript, dating from the ninth century. In 1870, the only known manuscript of the *Epistle to Diognetus,* an early Christian composition that editors usually include in the corpus of Apostolic Fathers, perished in a fire at the municipal library in Strasbourg. In

contrast with these figures, the textual critic of the New Testament is embarrassed by the wealth of his material" (Metzger, p. 34). Bruce says, "There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament" (Bruce, *The Book and the Parchments*, p. 178).

The Date There is also an important difference between the copies of the New Testament and the copies of other ancient books in the time between the original manuscript and the oldest surviving copy. Greenlee writes, "The oldest known MSS of most of the Greek classical authors are dated a thousand years or more after the author's death. The time interval for the Latin authors is somewhat less, varying down to a minimum of three centuries in the case of Virgil. In the case of the N.T., however, two of the most important MSS were written within 300 years after the N.T. was completed, and some virtually complete N.T. books, as well as extensive fragmentary MSS of many parts of the N.T., date back to one century from the original writings." Greenlee adds, "Since scholars accept as generally trustworthy the writings of the ancient classics even though the earliest MSS were written so long after the original writings and the number of extant MSS is in many instances so small, it is clear that the reliability of the text of the N.T. is likewise assured" (Greenlee, p. 16).

Zacharias concludes, "In real terms, the New Testament is easily the best attested ancient writing in terms of the sheer number of documents, the time span between the events and the documents, and the variety of documents available to sustain or contradict it" (Zacharias, p. 167).

Geisler, a philosophy professor, says, "There is more abundant

and accurate manuscript evidence for the New Testament than for any other book from the ancient world. There are more manuscripts copied with greater accuracy and earlier dating than any other secular classic from antiquity." Geisler also says, "No other book from antiquity possesses anything like this abundance in manuscripts," and "The New Testament has vastly superior evidence to that of any other book from the ancient world" (Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, pp. 306-307).

The point is that ancient people and events are accepted as historically factual based on a few extant manuscripts. The New Testament's overwhelming "mountain of manuscripts" (Lee Strobel) is more evident than any other ancient book. Therefore, the New Testament should be accepted as historically accurate.

The Copies It should also be noted that scholars have concluded we have accurate copies of the New Testament. Sir Frederic Kenyon, the former director of the British Museum, said, "The last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament can be regarded as finally established" (Kenyon, p. 288).

People

John the Baptist (Josephus) The New Testament says Herod killed John the Baptist (Mt. 14:1-11). Josephus ben Matthias (ca. 37-AD 100) was a first-century Jewish historian. In 67 AD, he was captured by Vespasian. He served as an interpreter and was

later brought to Rome, where he became part of the emperor's inner circle. In fact, he was given the emperor's name, Flavius, and is known today as Flavius Josephus or simply as Josephus. He wrote a number of books, including *The Jewish Wars* (AD 77-78*), Antiquities of the Jews* (AD 94*)*, and *Against Apion*.

Josephus confirms that Herod killed John the Baptist. He says, "Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, who was called the Baptist; for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism" (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.5.2).

Jesus Christ (*Josephus, Tacitus*, *Pliny the Younger*, *Suetonius*, *Babylonian Talmud*) In *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus writes, "Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man *if it be lawful to call him a man,* for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. *He was the Christ,* and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; *for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him.* And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day" *(*Josephus, *Antiquities,* 18.3.3, italics added).

This passage exists in all extant copies of this text (McDowell, p. 57). Eusebius (ca. AD 325) cites the passage as it appears in

Josephus (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.11). Nevertheless, the words in italics have created heated debate among scholars (for details, see Josh McDowell and Bill Wilson, *He Walked Among Us,* pp. 37-45). Critics claim that it is not likely that Josephus, a Jew, would say that Jesus was the Messiah or that He was raised from the dead. Origen (ca. 185-254) says in one place that Josephus did not believe in "Jesus as the Christ" (Origen, *Contra Celsus*, 2.47) and in another, he speaks of "Jesus who was called Christ" (Origen, *Contra Celsus*, 2.13). So, say the critics and Christians, edited and added to this passage.

Perhaps Josephus only referred to the Christian claim that Jesus is the Messiah and that He rose from the dead. In another book, Josephus says that James was "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ" (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.9.1). Also, in the tenth century, a fourth-century Arabic manuscript of Josephus was found that reads, "At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good and [he] was known to be virtuous. Many people from among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, he was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders" (*Kitab AI-Unwan Al-Mukallal Bi-Fadail Al-Hikma Al-Mutawwaj Bi-Anwa Al-Falsafa Al-Manduh Bi-Haqaq Al-Marifa*, cited by McDowell, p. 57).

So, Josephus himself may not have believed that Jesus was the Messiah and was only reporting what Christians said, but there

is no doubt that Josephus at least believed that Jesus was a real person who lived in the first century because, in another passage in *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus refers to James, the brother of Jesus: "He (Ananus) assembled a council of judges and brought before it the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ, whose name was James, together with some others, and having accused them as lawbreakers, he delivered them over to be stoned" (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20.9.1). Feldman, professor of classics at Yeshiva University and translator of *Antiquities,* states, "Few have doubted the genuineness of this passage" (Louis Feldman, *Josephus*: *Antiquities,* Loeb, p. 496). McDowell argues, "The passing reference to Jesus as the "so-called Christ" does not make sense unless Josephus has provided a longer discussion about Jesus earlier in his *Antiquities.* This is yet another indication that the earlier and more extensive treatment in *Antiquities* is genuine, excluding the obvious Christian interpolations" (McDowell, p. 126).

Thus, Josephus verifies that Jesus lived, did wonderful works, died on the cross, and was, at least, called the Messiah. It is even possible that he, at least, knew about the resurrection.

Cornelius Tacitus (ca AD 55-117), considered one of the more accurate historians of the ancient world (McDowell, p. 55), has been called "the dean of Roman historians" (Cairns, p. 45) and the "greatest historian" of ancient Rome. His work, Annals, covers the period from Augustus's death (AD 14) to Nero's death (AD 68). His book, entitled *Histories*, begins after Nero's death and proceeds to that of Domitian (AD 96).

Tacitus writes, "But not all the relief that could come from man, not all the bounties that the prince could bestow, nor all

the atonements which could be presented to the gods, availed to relieve Nero from the infamy of being believed to have ordered the conflagration, the fire of Rome. Hence, to suppress the rumor (that he had set the fire that burned Rome), he was falsely charged with the guilt and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius, but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated but through the city of Rome also."

The greatest Roman historian verifies that Jesus lived and was put to death by Pontius Pilate! Furthermore, Anderson observes, "It is distinctly possible that when he adds that 'A most mischievous superstition,' thus checked for the moment, again broke out: he is bearing indirect and unconscious testimony to the conviction of the early church that the Christ who had been crucified had risen from the grave" (Norman Anderson, *Jesus Christ: the Witness of History*, p. 20). If that is the case, the greatest Roman historian confirms the life, death, and *resurrection* of Jesus.

Pliny the Younger (ca. AD 112) wrote a letter to Emperor Trajan about AD 112, describing the practice of Christians. He says, "They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not do any wicked deeds, but never to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom

to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food-but food of an ordinary and innocent kind" (Pliny the Younger, 10:96). An early source outside of the New Testament indicates that Jesus lived and that He was worshipped as God.

The Babylonian Talmud (ca. AD 70-200) says, "On the eve of Passover, Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favor, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.' But since nothing was brought forward in his favor, he was hanged on the eve of the Passover!" (*Babylonian Talmud*, Sanhedrin 43a).

Suetonius, the Roman historian, speaking of the aftermath of the burning of Rome, wrote, "Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a body of people addicted to a novel and mischievous superstition" (Suetonius, *The Life of Nero*, 16). The "mischievous superstition" is "most likely" the resurrection of Christ (McDowell, p. 55).

Other early authors could be cited. In his book, *The Verdict of History*, historian Gary Habermas details thirty-nine ancient sources from which he enumerates more than one hundred reported acts concerning Jesus' life, teachings, crucifixion, and resurrection.

Michael Wilkins and J. P. Moreland conclude that from non-Christian writings such as Josephus, the *Talmud*, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger, it would be possible to know that 1) Jesus was a Jewish teacher. 2) Many believed that he performed healings and exorcisms. 3) The Jewish Leaders rejected him. 4) He was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius. 5)

His followers believed he was still alive and had spread beyond Palestine, so there were multitudes of them in Rome by AD 64. 6) By the beginning of the second century, "all kinds of people from the cities and countryside—men and women, slave and free- worshiped him as God" (Wilkins and Moreland, p. 222).

There are other ancient references to Jesus apart from the New Testament. Kee, professor emeritus at Boston University, concludes, "The result of the examination of the sources outside the New Testament that bear directly or indirectly on our knowledge of Jesus is to confirm his historical existence, his unusual powers, the devotion of his followers, the continued existence of the movement after his death at the hands of the Roman governor in Jerusalem, and the penetration of Christianity into the upper strata of society in Rome itself by the later first century" (Howard Clark Kee, *What Can We Know About Jesus?*, p. 19).

Stein, a New Testament professor, states: "The non-Christian sources establish beyond a reasonable doubt the following minimum: (1) Jesus was truly a historical person. This may seem silly to stress, but through the years, some have denied that Jesus ever lived. The non-biblical sources put such nonsense to rest. (2) Jesus lived in Palestine in the first century of our era. (3) The Jewish leadership was involved in the death of Jesus. (4) the Romans crucified Jesus under the governorship of Pontius Pilate. (5) Jesus' ministry was associated with wonder/sorcery" (Robert Stein, *Jesus the Messiah*, p. 49).

Yamauchi, professor of history at Miami University, asserts, "Even if we did not have the New Testament of Christian writings, we would be able to conclude from such non-Christian writings

as Josephus, the Talmud, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger that: (1) Jesus was a Jewish teacher; (2) many people believed that he performed healings and exorcisms; (3) the Jewish leaders rejected him; (4) he was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius; (5) despite this shameful death, his followers, who believed that he was still alive, spread beyond Palestine so that there were multitudes of them in Rome by A.D. 64; (6) all kinds of people from the cities and countryside-men and women, slave and free-worshipped him as God by the beginning of the second century" (Erwin Yamauchi, *Jesus Under Fire*, pp. 221-222).

Concerning the many secular accounts of Jesus, the author of the article on Jesus in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* says, "These independent accounts prove that in ancient times even the opponents of Christianity never doubted the historicity of Jesus, which was disputed for the first time and on inadequate grounds by several authors at the end of the 18th, during the 19th, and at the beginning of the 20th centuries" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1974, p. 145).

McDowell declares, "The evidence is conclusive. Jesus really lived among us and accomplished powerful works that even hostile, non-Christian sources do not fail to confirm. The skepticism about Jesus' historicity is simply wrong" (McDowell, p. 136).

Caiaphas (Ossuaries) Caiaphas was the high priest who presided at Jesus' Jewish trial (Jn. 18:24). Josephus mentions him (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.2.2 and 18.4.3) as a form of the name "Caiaphas" has been found on two ossuaries (bone boxes) in a burial cave in Jerusalem. An inscription on ossuaries was used to identify people whose bones were inside. A coin found in one of the other

ossuaries in the burial cave was minted by Herod Agrippa (AD 37-44). This reference to Caiaphas is "in all probability, the high priest who presided at Jesus' trial—or at least a member of the family" (Reich, "Caiaphas' Name Inscribed on Bone Boxes," p. 38).

Pontius Pilate (Inscription at Caesarea) Jesus was tried before Pontius Pilate (Jn. 18:33). Josephus mentions him twice (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.2.2 and 18.3.0). In 1961, an Italian archaeologist named Antonio Frova discovered an inscription in Latin containing four lines at Caesarea. Three of the lines are partially readable. Those lines say: "Tiberium, Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea" (McDowell, p. 67). In other words, at the ancient seat of the Roman government in Judea, a first-century inscription confirms that Pilate was the Roman ruler of the region at the time of Jesus' crucifixion.

An article in *U.S. News & World Report* entitled "Is the Bible True?" says this discovery "has been widely acclaimed as a significant affirmation of biblical history because, in short, it confirms that the man depicted in the Gospels as Judea's Roman governor had precisely the responsibilities and authority that Gospel writers ascribed to him" (Sheler, p. 59).

Crucifixion (Jerusalem Ossuary) In 1968, physical evidence of a crucifixion was found in an ossuary (a container of bones) at Jerusalem. The ossuary dates between AD 6 and 66. A crease in the radial bone indicates a nail had been driven through the forearm, not the palm. An iron nail still transfixed the heel bones. The calf bones had been shattered (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 281). These remains "dramatically corroborated the Bible's description of the Roman method of execution" (Sheler, p. 58).

The Tomb of Jesus (Ancient Records and Tradition) The New Testament says that Jesus was crucified "near the city" (Jn. 19:20) in a place called "Golgotha" (Jn. 19:17) in a "garden," which contained His tomb (Jn. 19:41). The name Golgotha has not been found in any ancient secular source.

Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70 and again by Hadrian in AD 135. The historian Eusebius (AD 263-339) said that Hadrian built a temple to Aphrodite on the site where Jesus was buried. When Helena, Constantine's mother, visited Jerusalem in 326, she was shown that site, and Constantine built the Church of the Holy Sepulchre there.

In 614, Constantine's basilica was damaged, but not destroyed, by the Persian invasion. It was immediately rebuilt, destroyed again in 1009, and again restored on a much-reduced scale. The deterioration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre under Muslim rule was the rallying battle cry for the armies of the Crusaders at the end of the eleventh century. When they conquered Jerusalem, they set out to restore and beautify it. The church today is basically the work of the Crusaders.

Archaeological exploration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre indicates that it was used as a quarry until the first century, when it became a garden. At the same time, the site also became a cemetery. Thus, there is "no reason to reject the authenticity of the site" (Bahat, pp. 30, 38).

In 1867, a peasant discovered a burial cave just outside of Jerusalem. When he arrived in Jerusalem in 1883, General Charles Gordon immediately identified the hill on which the cave is located as Golgotha. He based this identification on his notion

that Jerusalem is the shape of a human skeleton. He imagined that the skull of the skeleton was in the north (Golgotha means "the skull" in Aramaic), the pelvis of the skeleton was at the Dome of the Rock, the legs extended southward on the ridge of the City of David and the feet were at the Pool of Siloam. Since the hill north of the Damascus Gate formed the skull of the skeleton, Gordon identified the hill as Golgotha. In his writings, he does not mention the burial cave. The archaeological evidence indicates that this burial cave was *not* a burial site at the time of Christ (Barkay, p. 40 ff). Hence, there is no ground for accepting "Gordon's Calvary" as the site of the burial of Jesus ("Golgotha," Payne, *ISBE*, vol. 4, p. 524).

Places

Bethlehem, Nazareth, Capernaum, Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea Philippi, the Sea of Galilee, and other locations are mentioned in the record of the ministry of Christ in the New Testament. There is no question that these places existed during the life of Christ. For example, John 6:23 mentions Tiberias. Excavations begun by G. Foerster in 1973 uncovered a gated complex at Tiberias dated to the reign of Herod Antipas, who founded the city and named it in honor of the emperor Tiberius (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 281).

Bethlehem (Ancient Records and Tradition) In his writings, Justin Martyr (d. AD 165) mentions the tradition that Jesus was born in a cave in Bethlehem. In AD 325, Helena, the mother of Constantine, had a church built over the traditional site. In 1934,

W. Harvey proved that the present Church of the Nativity dates only to the 6th century AD, but he uncovered remains of the Constantinian structure 4 feet below the present floor (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 281).

Nazareth (Inscription) An inscription mentioning Nazareth, the only occurrence of its name on an inscription, was found at Caesarea (Yamauchi, *IBSE*, vol. 1, p. 275).

Jerusalem (Ruins) Any tourist to Jerusalem can see the Pool of Bethesda (Jn. 5:2) and the Pool of Siloam (Jn. 9:7).

Herod's Temple (Inscription) The Temple Herod rebuilt and in which Jesus taught had an inscription forbidding Gentiles to enter certain parts of it. One of these famous notices was discovered in perfect condition by Clermont-Ganneau in 1871. It is in the Istanbul Museum. It says, "No Gentile may enter inside the enclosing screen around the Temple. Whoever is caught (entering) is alone responsible for the death (penalty) which follows." Albright says these inscriptions were "probably set up by Herod the Great, and were thus standing in the time of Christ and the apostles" (Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, p. 44).

The Pavement (Existing Stones) In the 1930s, L. H. Vincent found under the building of the Sisters of Zion near the Ecce Homo Arch what he interpreted to be the remains of the Herodian fortress Antonia. P. Benoit has argued that the striated flagstones are not part of the Lithostroton where Jesus was tried (Jn. 19:13), but the eastern forum of Hadrian's Aelia Capitolina (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 275).

Summary: People from this period, including Jesus Himself, as well as places, have confirmation outside the New Testament.

Literary evidence for Jesus is abundant. Except for a tiny group of uninformed skeptics, it is universally recognized that Jesus lived.

Compared to the Old Testament, which spans 1500 years from Abraham to Malachi, the public career of Jesus, lasting only a few years, is a "dauntingly narrow target for archaeological exploration" (Sheler, p. 58). As an illustration of the difficulty for archaeology, consider: the Romans crucified thousands of criminals for two centuries, but not until 1968 were the skeletal remains of a crucified man found. Yet archaeology has confirmed the existence of Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, and crucifixion.

The conclusion is that the essential elements of Christianity are proven historical. Even the most radical critics of the New Testament accept the fact that there was a man named Jesus who actually lived and was crucified. To deny those facts is like denying the Holocaust.

Chapter 15

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The historical period called "the Acts of the Apostles" begins with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (AD 30) and ends with the death of the apostle John (ca.AD 95). Although it does not cover the entire time, Acts is this period's main source of information.

Places

Cities (Ruins, Excavations) The cities mentioned in Acts are real cities that existed during the time of the Apostles. These include Samaria, Damascus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Caesarea, Rome, etc. Luke "names thirty countries, fifty-four cities, and nine islands without an error" (Geisler, p. 47).

Amphitheater at Caesarea (Ruins Restored) The amphitheater that was the scene of Herod Agrippa's fatal stroke (Acts 12:23) has been found and restored (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 275).

Amphitheater at Ephesus (Ruins) Acts 19:29 says the people of Ephesus went into a theater, a reference to the Roman amphitheater at the time. The ruins of that amphitheater can be seen to this day (I have seen them). The amphitheater would hold "nearly 25,000 people" (Bruce).

People

James' Martyrdom (Josephus) The book of Acts includes references to James, the brother (half-brother) of Jesus (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18). This James also wrote the book of James in the New Testament. Josephus writes, "He (Ananias, the High Priest) assembled the Sanhedrin of the judges and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned" (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.9,1).

Claudius' Command (Suetonius) Luke says, "Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome" (Acts 18:2). Suetonius, chief secretary to Hadrian, who reigned from AD 117-138, "confirms" (McDowell, p. 55) Luke's statements. Suetonius writes, "As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he (Claudius) expelled them from Rome" (Suetonius, *The Life of Claudius*, Suetonius, 25.4).

Paul (Inscription) According to the book of Acts, Paul visited the island of Cyprus (Acts 13:4-6). In 2000, it was reported that an inscription reading "Paul Apostle" and dated to the first or second century AD was found on that island (Harris, p. 14).

Sergius Paulus (Inscription) Luke mentions a proconsul named Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7). General Cesnola discovered an inscription dated in the proconsulship of Paulus (Rackham; see also Bruce; Marshall, who lists B. van Eldersen, "Some Archaeological Observations on Paul's First Missionary Journey" in *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, ed. W. W. Gasque and R. P. Martin. Exeter, 1970).

Gallio (*The Delphi Inscription)* Paul spent 18 months in Corinth (Acts 18:11), during which time he appeared before the proconsul Gallio (Acts 18:12). An inscription from Delphi, Greece, containing the twenty-sixth acclamation of Emperor Claudius as imperator (that is, the twenty-sixth time Claudius named himself imperator) mentions that Gallio was "proconsul of Achaia." Dating from the twenty-sixth acclamation of Claudius, the inscription is placed between January and August of AD 52. Since Gallio had to have been in office long enough to have made a report and received this commendation, he probably took office in the spring or summer of AD 51. Paul was in Corinth during that time. This is direct proof of the mention of Gallio in Acts (Armstrong and Finegan, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 690; Everett Harrison, p. 249).

Summary: Places, people, events, etc., from this period have been proven to be historically accurate.

Years ago, critics concluded that the material in Acts is not historically accurate. That notion is based on the assumption that Acts was written in the second century AD, not the first (see the chapter entitled "The Bible and its Critics"). That theory has been proven inaccurate, not the book of Acts.

Albright says, "A surprising number of details mentioned in the narrative of Paul's missionary career in the eastern Mediterranean basin have been confirmed by the inscriptions. For instance, the titles 'asiarch,' applied to Ephesian officials (Acts 19:31), and 'politarch,' given to Thessalonian officials (Acts 17:6*ff*.), are both repeatedly attested on inscriptions" (Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, p. 46).

Critics have flatly denied the historical accuracy of Acts, but its historical trustworthiness has been demonstrated in many ways, including its detailed accuracy concerning the exact titles of government officials, identification of army units, and information about major travel routes. Concerning this period, the critics have been embarrassingly wrong!

Chapter 16

THE STORY OF A NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLAR

As far as the historical accuracy of Acts is concerned, consider the story of Sir William Ramsay.

His Credentials Sir William Mitchell Ramsay (1851-1939) was a classical scholar and archaeologist. He spent many years studying Asia Minor firsthand (Roman provinces of Phrygia, Lycaonia, Cappadocia, and Galatia—modern Turkey). He was a Classical Art and Archaeology professor at Oxford (1885) and, from 1886 to 1911, Professor of Humanity (Latin professorship) at the University of Aberdeen. Nine universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, honored him with doctorates. In 1906, he was knighted for his distinguished service to the scholarly world (Gasque, pp. 13-15). He is regarded as "one of the greatest archaeologists" (McDowell, p. 62).

His Story As a university student, Ramsay was taught the Tübingen School approach to the New Testament. When he first began his work in Asia Minor, Ramsay said that he "dutifully

accepted the current opinion that it (Acts) was written in the second half of the second century by an author who wished to influence the minds of people in his own time by a highly wrought and imaginative description of the early Church. His object was not to present a trustworthy picture of facts in the period of about A.D. 50, but to produce a certain effect on his own time by setting forth a careful account of events and persons of that older period. He wrote for his contemporaries, not for truth. He cared naught for the geographical or historical surroundings of A.D. 30 to 60. He thought only the period A.D. 160-180" (Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, pp 37-38).

In short, anything related to religion belonged to the realm of the theologians, not that of the historians. Ramsay considered Acts, thinking he would find material bearing upon the second century AD. He certainly did not expect to find any information of value regarding the condition in Asia Minor in the time of Paul.

As Ramsay tells the story, he began to doubt his assumptions when he studied Acts 14:5-12. Luke says that Paul and Barnabas fled from Iconium (Acts 14:1) "to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region" (Acts 14:6). At the time, it was thought that this passage was a typical example of the lack of accuracy by the author of Acts because based on the writings of Romans such Cicero, it was assumed that Iconium was a city of Lycaonia. So to say that Paul and Barnabas went from Iconium to Lycaonia is like saying someone today went "from Chicago into Illinois, from London to England" (Gasque, p. 25). Ramsay found, however, that Luke was "meticulously

accurate" (Gasque, p. 26). In 1910, he discovered a monument showing that Iconium was in Phrygia (Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, pp. 53-78). Later discoveries confirmed this. Ramsay's attitude towards the Book of Acts was "radically changed" (Gasque, p. 26). He said of Acts, "Here was nothing else like it. No other ancient traveler has left an account of the journeys which he made across Asia Minor [Xenophon gives little more than names and distances]: and if the narrative of Paul's travels rests on first-class authority, it placed in my hands a document of unique and exceptional value to guide nay investigations" (Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, pp. 81-82).

Over the years, Ramsay concluded that Luke's history was "unsurpassed for its accuracy" (Gasque, p. 27). He wrote, "Starting with the confident assumption that the book (Acts) was fabricated in the middle of the second century and studying it to see what light it could throw on the state of society in Asia Minor, (I) was gradually driven to the conclusion that it must have been written in the first century with admirable knowledge. It plunges one into the atmosphere and the circumstances of the first century; it is out of harmony with the circumstances and spirit of the second century" (Ramsay, *Pauline and Other Studies*, p. 199).

After thirty years of study, Ramsay wrote, "Further study of Acts XIII.-XXI showed that the book could bear the most minute scrutiny of authority for the facts of the Aegean world, that it was written with such judgment, skill, art, and. perception of the truth as to be a model of historical statement" (Ramsay, *The Bearing*

of Recent Discovery of the Trustworthiness of the New Testament, p. 85). "You may press the words of Luke in a degree beyond any other historians, and they stand keenest scrutiny and the hardest treatment, provided always that the critic knows the subject and does not go beyond the limits of science and justice" (Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery of the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, p. 89).

Ramsay felt that Luke "should be placed along with the very greatest of historians" (Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery of the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, p. 222). He did not study the Book of Acts to prove a certain point view. He simply examined the facts of history, geography, and archaeology. His biographer wrote, "Throughout the whole of his life, he never held any theory as to the inerrancy of the Bible as a result of its special inspiration" (Gasque, p. 28). Ramsay reached his conclusions as "a scientific archaeologist and student of ancient classical history and literature" (Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable*, p. 90).

The Tubingen School to which Ramsay subscribed early in his life, taught that only four of Paul's epistles are genuine (Galatians, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians). After years of investigations in Asia Minor and study of the New Testament, Ramsay concluded that all thirteen of Paul's letters are genuine (Gasque, p. 40).

Sir William M. Ramsay established "the accuracy and reliability of the Lukan writings." Nevertheless, "There is still a group of scholars, especially in Germany, who persist in ignoring the strong evidence in favor of the value of the book of Acts as a piece of historical writing. Some few even continue to hold

the untenable position that it was actually written in the second century." Why? "Many New Testament scholars are not aware of what has been done in the area of archaeological studies; fewer still have had first-hand experience in archaeological work." As Ramsay and others have pointed out, "Historians have generally maintained a much higher estimate of Luke as a historian than many theologians." Also, "almost every New Testament critic who has had a background in classical studies and a familiarity with archaeological work takes a very high view of Acts" (Gasque, pp. 61-62). No one since Ramsay "has done extensive work in Asia Minor and then brought the knowledge gained in experience to the study of the New Testament." No one "who has had a first-hand acquaintance with archaeological research has yet brought this to an extensive study of the early Christian writings" (Gasque, pp. 63-64). Yet, Ramsay is still "stigmatized as partisan" by some (Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 233), but the fact speaks for themselves if anyone bothers to consider them.

Chapter 17

CONCLUSION

The narratives of the Bible are presented as if they are historical. The places, the people, and events are recorded as if they existed and accurately happened at a specific time. The critics, however, claim that much of the Bible is not historically accurate. According to them, the Old Testament Scripture was written late in the first millennium BC, and if something in the Scripture is not verifiable outside the Bible, there is no proof that it happened; it is a myth.

So, what is the answer? Is the Bible historically accurate?

The Case for Historical Accuracy

Concerning the evidence for the historical accuracy of the Scripture, several statements summarize the situation.

1. Direct evidence, conclusive proof, exists for many details in the Bible. Time and time again, archaeological discoveries and inscriptions have verified the accuracy of the Scripture. The cumulative impact of the findings is overwhelming evidence that the biblical record is historically accurate.

Most of the major *cities* mentioned in the Bible can be identified by preserving the ancient name among the local people (for example, Damascus), tradition, general geographical considerations, or digging into their ruins. Archaeologists have excavated such cities as Ur, Jericho, Samaria, Jerusalem, and many more. Furthermore, they have found tables with the names of *people,* including Omri, Jehu, Hezekiah, Pilate, and many others. They have also found proof, yes, proof, of such *events* as the fall of Samaria and the siege of Jerusalem. Thus, the historicity of many of the places, people, and events of the Bible can be demonstrated outside the Scripture.

In the words of Free, "In summary, archaeological discoveries show at point after point that the biblical record is confirmed and commended as trustworthy. This confirmation is not confined to a few general instances but applies to biblical events in every period, whether the Table of the Nations in the early chapters of Genesis or the record of the invasion of the four kings in the days of the Patriarchs (Gen. 14), and many of its details, the route of the Exodus, the historicity of the Conquest, the extent of the Davidic Empire, the greatness of the reign of Solomon, or the historicity of the invasion of the Babylonians and the actuality of the Exile and the Desolation of Judah. In all of these and many more, the biblical record stands out as historical and trustworthy" (Free, "Archaeology and the Historical Accuracy of Scripture," pp. 216-219). "Archaeological discoveries show point after point how the biblical record is confirmed and commended as trustworthy. This confirmation is not confined to a few general instances but applies to biblical events in every period" (Free, "Archaeology

and the Historical Accuracy of Scripture," p. 225). "Archaeology has confirmed countless passages which have been rejected by critics as unhistorical or contradictory to known facts" (Free, *Archaeology and Bible History*, p. 1).

Kitchen agrees. He says, "There is quietly mounting evidence that the basic inherited outline—from the patriarchs through the Exodus to the Israelites' entry into Canaan, the united monarchy and then the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and the Exile and return-is essentially sound" (Kitchen, "The Patriarchal Age: Myth or History?" p. 50).

McDowell says, "Whole books are not large enough to contain all the finds that have bolstered confidence in the historical reliability of the Bible" (McDowell, p. 61). Later, he adds that if the Bible is discarded as being unreliable, then almost all literature of antiquity must be discarded (McDowell, p. 68).

Dever says that there are "dozens of places where little snippets in the Hebrew Bible fit exactly with what we know of the monarchical period" and "there are hundreds of places in the Hebrew Bible where there are little descriptions … of a past reality that could not have been invented later" (Shank, "Is the Bible Right After All?" p. 36).

2. Circumstantial evidence supports much of the biblical record. As Morris says, there is a "great mass of corroborative evidence regarding the biblical history" (Morris, *The Bible and Modern Science*, p. 95).

3. No undisputed finding refutes the Scripture. Morris put it like this: "Problems still exist, of course, in the complete harmonization of archaeological material with the Bible, but none

so serious as not to bear the real promise of imminent solution through further investigation. It must be extremely significant that, in view of the great mass of corroborative evidence regarding the biblical history of these periods, there exists today not one unquestionable find of archaeology that proves the Bible to be in error at any point" (Morris, *The Bible and Modern Science*, p. 95).

Reformed Jewish scholar Nelson Glueck wrote, "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference" (Glueck, p. 31).

Therefore, it is not too much to say that the Bible has been "firmly fixed in a context of knowable history linked to the present by footprints across the archaeological record" (Sheler, p. 59).

Admittedly, the name of every major person in the Bible has not been found outside Scripture, but if so much in the Bible has been proven historically accurate, even much of the material that has been specifically challenged, does it not stand to reason that the remainder of the data is also historically correct? Given the history of the critics, who have been proven wrong over and over again, is it not reasonable to assume that if so much has been proven historically accurate, the rest is? At least, it is reasonable to conclude that since so much of the Bible has been proven historically accurate, the rest could be.

That is even more reasonable in light of the fact that information from outside the Bible is by no means complete. Archaeology is a recent endeavor that began about two hundred years ago. Our knowledge is *fragmentary* and *minuscule* at best. In 1963, it was estimated that there were 5000 sites in Palestine. At that time,

only about 150 had been excavated, and since then, thousands more have been found (Yamauchi, *ISBE*, vol. 1, p. 276). Most of the 25,000 texts from Mari await "fuller publication" (Yamauchi in "Scholars Speak Out," ed. Hershel Shanks, p. 35). The ancient city of Ashdod comprises about 90 areas, but only 1½ acres, less than 2%, have been excavated (Kitchen, *The Bible and its World*, p. 12). As Shanks says, "There is simply so much we don't know" (Shank, "Dever's Sermon on the Mound," p. 56).

The Continuing Challenge

While the historical accuracy of the Bible can be directly and indirectly demonstrated, and no undisputed fact has disproved any statement of Scripture, there are still those who challenge the historical correctness of the Bible. Why do critics continue to challenge the historical accuracy of the Bible?

First, the Bible contains a historical timeframe that critics of the Bible reject. Their "basic claim" is that "everything is late and fictional" (Ronald S. Hendel, "Finding Historical Memories in the Patriarchal Narratives." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 1995, p. 53). Wellhausen popularized the idea that the Old Testament was not written until late in the first century BC; therefore, it is not historically correct. As pointed out, Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis was proven wrong years ago. Nevertheless, as late as 1995, revisionist Israel Finkelstein complained, "Conservative Biblical archaeology … pushed aside the correct notions of great German Biblical scholars—such as Julius Wellhausen" (Shank, "Scholars Speak Out," p. 27).

Dever has observed that one revisionist says that "not a single sherd (sic) belongs to the tenth century; that's because he dates all of it to the ninth century" (Shank, "Biblical Minimalists Meet their Challengers Face to Face," p. 35).

Niels Peter Lemche and Thomas L. Thompson claim that the histories of David and Solomon were written hundreds of years after they died. Therefore, only non-biblical sources and archaeological evidence can be used to write a history, and there is not enough material to write such a history (Na'aman, p. 43).

Thompson believes the biblical books were formed in the fifth and fourth centuries BC or "later." The Bible is a "collection of traditions" (Shanks, "Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers Face to Face," p. 32). In his book, *In Search of Ancient Israel*, Philip Davies contends that most of Israel's history before the Babylonian Exile is fiction because it was written between the sixth and fourth centuries BC.

Their claim that the Bible is not historically reliable is based on the *assumption*, which has no support, that it was written late and, therefore, is not historical. No wonder they conclude that the Bible is not historically accurate! If you begin with an assumption that the historical timeframe of the Bible is not historically reliable, that will be your conclusion.

Second, evidence from archaeology is sometimes simply ignored. Years ago, Albright wrote that Wellhausen "neglected the new material from the ancient Orient with a disdain as arrogant as it was complete" (Albright, "The Ancient Near East and The Religion of Israel," p. 92). A few years later, Free wrote that there are areas where the critics have "not taken the evidence,

archaeological and otherwise, sufficiently into account" (Free, "Archaeology and Higher Criticism," p. 31).

More recently, the revisionists have done the same thing. Their position is "an argument from silence," which Thompson would readily admit (Shanks, "Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers Face to Face," p. 35). As Dever says, "It is not that the archaeological record is silent. It is that some are deaf" (Dever, "Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey," p. 35). Dever concludes, "The revisionists generally ignore or discredit archaeology" (Dever, "Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey," p. 28).

Na'aman complained that Thompson "unfortunately neither takes into account all of the available evidence nor does justice to the complexity of the problem" (Na'aman, p. 47). Dever told Thompson to his face, "No Israeli archaeologist has bothered to answer you—Tom, I'm sorry to say this—because none takes you seriously. Not a single one. They have not answered you because you get your facts wrong, Tom" (Shanks, "Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers Face to Face," p. 35).

Speaking about what some have said about the period of the Patriarchs, Kitchen said, "These scholars failed to deal with the full weight of the evidence" (Kitchen, "The Patriarchal Age: Myth or History," p. 48).

Dever says, "In my view, most of the revisionists are no longer honest scholars, weighing all the evidence, attempting to be objective and fair-minded historians, seeking the truth" (Dever, "Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey," p. 68).

Rather than concede that the Stele of Dan, the one that contains the phrase "The House of David," is evidence that David actually

existed, Lemche, without providing any evidence, says it is a fake! (Shanks, "Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers Face to Face," p. 34; for the evidence of its genuineness, see McCarter's comments on p. 38).

To be more specific, "He dismisses the archaeological evidence that does exist, which tends to confirm, in considerable detail as well as a broad outline, Israel's pre-Exilic history. Assyrian and Babylonian records confirm the existence of the following kings of Israel and Judah: Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Pekah, Hosea, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, and most probably Uzziah. These records are more than just king lists; often, they describe specific historical events, such as the siege of Jerusalem during Hezekiah's reign and the tribute he paid. The Moabite Stone mentions Omri, Israel, and Gad. The Lachish ostraca give details about Babylonian troops in Palestine. The Samaria ostraca make reference to territory of Manasseh. The inscription at Hezekiah's Tunnel, while not mentioning his name, is farther evidence for Biblical narratives" (Freedman and Geoghegan, p. 79).

Dever says that revisionism is "lacking in support," "absurd," has a "hostile assessment" of the Bible, and, "Most Biblical scholars and virtually all archaeologists have tended to dismiss revisionism as a passing fad, not worthy of being addressed seriously" (Dever, "Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey," pp. 28-30). Dever's opinion is that "most of the revisionists are no longer honest scholars, weighing all the evidence, attempting to be objective and fair-minded historians, seeking the truth."

Critics, Be Careful

At one point, based on a theory (JEDP), not facts, critics claimed that the Bible was not historically accurate. Then, archaeologists made discoveries demonstrating that the theories about Genesis in particular and the Bible, in general, were false and the Bible was historically accurate. William F. Albright and his students, including G. Ernest Wright, Nelson Glueck, etc., did spadework (pardon the pun) and produced books that documented the evidence.

Yet today, many "mainstream" professors are again challenging the accuracy of the Scripture. They say that those earlier archaeologists were too optimistic in making connections between archaeology and the biblical data.

Now, think about that. Not too long ago, very little was known about history before the time of Christ. Skepticism flourished. Then, archaeology demonstrated that much of the historical material in the Bible dated back to about 1000 BC and was indeed correct. Now, the skeptics are challenging the biblical data again. Remember: 1) There is direct, conclusive proof of much of the biblical material back to about 1000 BC. 2) There is circumstantial evidence of events prior to 1000 BC. 3) Not one uncontested discovery has ever proven that the Bible is historically incorrect. 4) Our knowledge is *minuscule* at best. 5) Critics challenge the Bible based on theories and they simply ignore facts.

Perhaps all should be careful. In 1999, an article in the *U. S. News & World Report* said, "In extraordinary ways, modern archaeology has affirmed the historical core of the Old and New

Testaments—corroborating key portions of the stories of Israel's patriarchs, the Exodus, the Davidic monarchy, and the life and times of Jesus. Where it has faced its toughest task has been in primordial history" (Sheler, p. 52).

In 1996, James A. Sauer wrote, "I speak as a former skeptic." Then, he said, "Now I am recanting. My current work on climate change had (sic) led me to conclude that Albright and his students were clearly correct to look for connections between the archaeological evidence and early Biblical traditions" (Sauer, p. 52).

As Sheler has written, "Scholars are convinced there is much more out there waiting to be found. It's just a matter of time" (Sheler, p. 59).

Critics should exercise caution in drawing conclusions that are contrary to the clear statements of Scripture. In the meantime, until more data is dug up, there is enough evidence for reasonable people to conclude that the Bible is historically accurate and the Lord is trustworthy.

My conclusion is that despite its critics, archaeology has demonstrated that *many details in the Bible are historically correct*. Granted, not everything in the Bible has independent verification, but an amazing amount of material in the Bible can be said to be historically reliable based on discoveries outside the Scripture.

APPENDIX

ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology is the study of the past based on evaluating written materials and interpreting the remains of ancient civilizations. These two sources of information have yielded a great deal of information about ancient history.

Written Material

Writing began to be used about 3000 BC. Some say writing was first invented in Mesopotamia before 3100 BC and appeared soon thereafter in Egypt. Others claim that the earliest known form of writing is Egyptian Hieroglyphics, which was first used about 3000 BC. In either case, the first form of writing was pictures representing objects or ideas (a bird for a bird). Later, Mesopotamian writing took the form of a wedge-shaped script called cuneiform. Eventually, a single symbol was used for each consonant; an alphabet was developed in the second millennium BC.

The ancient Egyptians wrote on walls in the tombs of the pharaohs and later on papyrus. The Babylonians wrote on clay tablets. So did the Assyrians. Inscriptions were carved in stone. Later, leather and paper were used. Some of these walls, tablets, and stones have survived. Because the conditions were right,

even some of the papyri are still extant. Thousands of records from Egypt, Babylon, and Assyria are available today. Few documents, however, exist from countries such as Palestine, Syria, and Greece, where paper and leather were used. Their documents simply decayed.

Modern archaeology began with the discovery of the Rosetta Stone found in a village near Rosetta, Egypt, in 1799. It was written in three columns: Egyptian hieroglyphics, Egyptian demotic, and Greek. Several deciphered a few words of the Rosetta Stone, but it was Jean-Francois Champollion who, after fourteen years of work, deciphered the writing, making it possible to understand Egyptian hieroglyphics.

In 1811, Claude Rich found dozens of baked clay tablets written in cuneiform, a wedge-shaped script, at Babylon. In 1835, Sir Henry Crewicke Rawlinson deciphered a cuneiform inscription that Darius had made on a cliff near Behistun in western Persia. It, too, was written in three languages: Akkadian, Elamite, and Old Persian. A decade later, Sir Austen Henry Layard discovered cuneiform tablets in such great Assyrian cities as Nineveh, Ashur, and Calah. These discoveries made reading about the history, culture and religion of the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, and Assyrians possible.

Ancient Ruins

Archaeologists have not only found written material, but they have also found the sites of ancient cities. Cities had to have a water supply. Hence, many were built on rivers like the Tigris,

the Euphrates, the Nile, and the Jordan. Since the site of the original city was already ideal, when it was destroyed, another city was built on it, which was possible by the way cities were built. In some places, stones were rare. So mud or clay was used to make sun-dried bricks. In other places, buildings were built on brick-on-stone foundations. Such construction was not very permanent, usually lasting only 20 to 30 years. Unusual amounts of rain, fires, earthquakes, and war left whole towns in ruins. The inhabitants often leveled the debris and built on top of it. Over many years, this process was repeated, creating mounds of perhaps 15 to 30 levels of occupation and rising to heights of 70 feet or more (Josh. 11:13). If the site was not reused, wind and rain eroded the upper levels. These mounds of debris can be seen all over the Near East. The Arabic word for "hill" is "tell." Hence, mounds are named "Tell-so-and-so."

Dating what is found in a tell is based on two procedures: stratigraphy (the study of various layers of occupation) and typology (the study of different types of pottery). Sir W.M. Flinders Petrie (1853-1943) was the first to recognize the significance of a stratum (Latin for "layer") and the pottery in it. A stratum can be detected by differences in soil color or compactness, a thick layer of ash, or other destruction debris. The various strata determine the sequence. Pottery has varied from time to time and from place to place. Some pieces can be dated by inscriptions found nearby at the same level or by the dating of the same type at other locations.

Archaeology has developed a detailed description of the characteristics of pottery from various periods. From 1926 to

1932, W. F. Albright established the sequence of Palestinian pottery, which scholars now accept. Dating is determined by the pottery in the stratum. This type of dating is called "Sequence Dating," and it is the arrangement of different styles of pottery in accordance with the sequence of their appearance at various levels at different sites. Sequence Dating is "relative dating." ("Absolute dating" is a term used of a calendar date.) Sequence Dating is considered to be accurate within at least half a century. The further back in time, the greater the margin of error.

Other dating methods have been developed, such as radiocarbon dating, but the most basic form of dating at archaeological sites is still pottery typology. The margin of error is considered to be greater with other procedures. Some scientists still question the accuracy of Carbon-14 testing, partly because it is based on the assumption that Carbon-14 disintegrates at a constant rate.

In the early nineteenth century, when archaeology was still in its infancy, archaeologists arranged the earliest historical periods into a three-period system based on the most vital metal of the time (stone, bronze, or iron), followed by political periods (Hellenistic and Roman). Archaeologists agree that a more satisfactory system is needed, but no other system has replaced the traditional arrangement.

The dates for the archaeological periods are approximate. The extremely early dates some give for the Old Stone Age are based more on the theory of evolution than on archaeological data. Everything before about 3000 BC is considered prehistory, that is, before recorded history. Even with the beginning of recorded history, the available information is scratchy. It is not until the

Middle Bronze Age (around 2300 BC) that fairly firm facts can be established.

If the biblical data is accepted as accurate, dates for biblical events can be determined from the birth of Terah forward. Based on the biblical information, Terah was born in 2295 BC and Abraham was born in 2165 BC. To confirm biblical dates from outside the Bible, absolute certainty cannot be established until about 931 BC. After 931 BC, some events are recorded in biblical and secular history. Therefore, since the date for the event can be firmly fixed from secular sources, the date for the biblical event can be established as certain.

From an archaeological point of view, ancient history is often divided into six periods:

The Stone Age (use of stone tools)	? to 4000 BC
The Chalcolithic Age (introduction of copper tools)	4000-3200 BC
The Bronze Age	3200-1000 BC
The Iron Age (introduction of iron tools)	1200-330 BC
The Hellenistic Period	330-63 BC
The Roman Period	63 BC-AD 330

Over the last 200 years, archaeology has provided a wealth of information. That knowledge has confirmed and vindicated the accuracy of the Scripture in many places as well as provided additional insight and illustrations of events recorded in the Scripture.

Nevertheless, archaeology has limitations, resulting in incomplete data. There are problems with the sites themselves. After a town has been deserted by its inhabitants, wind, sand, and rain erode the site. Foundations and rubbish pits dug by people

on one level of a tell can mix up the remains, putting later pottery at an earlier level.

Then, there is "site–shift." Towns were not always built precisely on top of each other. The rebuilt town was constructed adjoining the old site or even a little distance from it for several reasons. This shift sometimes happened more than once. If the top of the original mound was rebuilt later, it would appear to archaeologists that an ancient city had not been occupied for a specific period when it had. The people had just moved to the "suburbs" and then back again. For example, there are three sites for Jericho.

There are also problems with the practice of archaeology. In the first place, thousands of sites have not been excavated (see the "Conclusion" above). Furthermore, because of the expense involved, when a site is excavated, the entire site is rarely completely excavated. For example, only 1½ acres of the 90 acres (less than 2%) of ancient Ashdod have been excavated. Hence, the information from a site can be very incomplete.

So, someone's perception based on archaeological "facts" may be defective due to erosion, the mixing of material, site shift, incomplete excavation, etc.

Unfortunately, erroneous conclusions can be drawn based on incomplete data. For example, the excavation of the ancient town of Dibon produced evidence of a town in the third millennium BC and the first millennium BC, but practically nothing was found from the entire second millennium BC. That could lead to the conclusion that the biblical mention of Dibon in the thirteenth century BC (Num. 21:30, 34; Josh. 13:9, 17) is incorrect. That

would be a mistake because Raamses conquered Dibon a few decades before the Israelites reached it and recorded his victory in sculptured reliefs in his temple at Luxor. Thus, an inscription in Egypt helps complete the incomplete archaeological information obtained from an excavation of a town in Moab.

Misinterpretation and misapplication of archaeological data are still used to discount the historical validity of some scriptural statements, but archaeology is not an exact science. New discoveries have forced a re-assessment of former theories again and again. Granted, there is still work to be done. Complete harmonization between the Scripture and secular history has not been done to everyone's satisfaction, but archaeology has over and over demonstrated the historical accuracy of the Scripture and *not one unquestioned archaeological discovery has proven that the Bible is in error at any point.*

In other words, archaeology has produced a vast but fragmentary mass of knowledge that needs to be interpreted with care, considering all the data.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albright, William Foxwell. *Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1935.

Albright, William F. *From the Stone Age to Christianity*. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1940.

_____ "King Jehoiachin in Exile," *Biblical Archaeologist*, 1942.

_____ *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1955.

Albright, W. F. "The Ancient Near East and The Religion of Israel." *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. LIX, 1940.

Albright, William F. "The Bible After Twenty Years of Archaeology," *Religion in Life*, vol. XXI, #4, Autumn 1952.

Anderson, Norman. *Jesus Christ: The Witness of History*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985.

Archer, Gleason L. Jr. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction.* Chicago: Moody Press, 1965.

Armstrong, W. P. and J. Finegan. "Chronology of the New Testament," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.

Bahat, Dan. "Does the Holy Sepulchre Church Mark the Burial of Jesus?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June 1986.

Baikie, James. *A History of Egypt*. London: A. & C. Black, 1929, vol. II.

Balsiger, Dave and Charles E. Sellier Jr. *In Search of Noah's Ark*. Los Angeles: Sun Classic Books, 1976.

Barkay, Gabriel. "The Garden Tomb: Was Jesus Buried Here?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1986.

Ben-Tor, Amnon. "Excavating Hazor-Part I: Solomon's City Rises from the Ashes," *Biblical Archaeology Review,* March/April 1999.

Ben-Tor, Amnon and Maria Teresa Rubiato. "Excavating Hazor-Part II: Did the Israelites Destroy the Canaanite City?" *Biblical Archaeology Review,* May/June 1999.

Bimsom, John J. and David Livingston, "Redating the Exodus." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, September/October 1987.

Biran, Avraham. "David Found at Dan" (edited from material supplied by Biran), *Biblical Archaeological Review*, March/April 1994.

Boutflower, Charles. *In and Around The Book of Daniel.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963.

Boyd, Robert T. *Tells, Tombs and Treasures*: *A Pictorial Guide to Biblical Archaeology.* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969.

Breese, Dave. *Seven Men Who Ruled the World from the Grave*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1990.

Bright, John. *A History of Israel*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959.

Brisco, T. V. "Pithom," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.

Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.* London: Oxford, 1962.

Bruce, F. F. *The Books and the Parchments*. London: Pickering & Inglis, revised edition 1971.

_____ *The Book of Acts. The New International Commentaries on the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdman, 1989.

_____ *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable*? Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960.

Cairns, Earle E. *Christianity Through the Centuries.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. 1981.

Cole, R. Alan. *Exodus*. The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1985.

Constable, Thomas L. "Dr. Constable's Expository Notes." His commentary on Exodus is at http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm.

_____ "1 Kings." *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, *The Old Testament,* John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, ed. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985.

Cross, Frank Moore. "King Hezekiah's Seal Bears Phoenician Imagery." *Biblical Archaeology Review,* March/April 1999.

Davies, Philip R. "House of David Built on Sand." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 1994.

_____ "What Separates a Minimalist from a Maximalist? Not Much." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 2000.

Davis, Thomas W. "Faith and Archaeology." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1993.

Deutsch, Robert. "First Impression." *Biblical Archaeology Review,* May/June 1998.

Dever, William G. "The 'Age of Solomon': Myth or History?" a lecture for the California Museum of Ancient Art, May 14,

_____"Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 2000.

_____ "Posing the Problem: The Literary and Historical Issues." *Exodus: The Egyptian Evidence*, eds. Ernest S. Frerichs and Leonard H. Lesko. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1997.

Dillow, Joseph C. *The Waters Above: Earth's Pre-Flood Vapor Canopy.* Chicago: Moody Press, 1981.

Durant, Will. *The Story of Philosophy*. New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1960.

Ewing, W. and R. K. Harrison, "Bethel," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.

Free, Joseph P. *Archaeology and Bible History*. Wheaton: Scripture Press, 1969.

_____ "Archaeology and Higher Criticism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 114, January 1957.

_____ "Archaeology and the Historical Accuracy of Scripture," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 113, July 1956.

_____ "Archaeology and Liberalism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 113, October 1956.

_____ "Archaeology and Neo-Orthodoxy," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 114, April 1957.

Freedman, David Noel and Jeffery C. Geoghegan. "'House of David' Is There!" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1995.

Fuller David Otis, ed. *Which Bible?* Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids International Publications, 1971.

Gal, Zvi. "Israel in Exile." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June 1998.

Garstang, John. *The Foundations of Bible History; Joshua Judges*. New York: R. R. Smith, Inc., 1931.

_____ "Jericho and the Biblical Story," *Wonders of the Past*, ed. J. A. Hammerton. New York: Wise, 1937.

Gasque W. Ward. *Sir William M. Ramsey, Archaeologist and New Testament Scholar*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966.

Geisler, Norman L. *Christian Apologetics*. Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 2002.

_____ and William E. Nix. *A General Introduction to the Bible.* Chicago: Moody Press, 1986.

_____ *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

Gill, Dan. "How They Met." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 1994.

Glueck, Nelson. *Rivers in the Desert: History of Negev*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959.

Gold, V. R. and K. N. Schoville. "Lachish." *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.

Gordon, Cyrus, H. "Where Is Abraham's Ur? *Biblical Archaeology Review*, June 1977.

Gottwald, Norman. *The Hebrew Bible—A Socio-Literary Introduction*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985.

Greenlee, Harold J. *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964.

Habermas, Gary R. *The Verdict of History*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988.

Harris, Judith. "Putting Paul on the Map." *Biblical Archaeological Review*, January/February 2000.

Harrison, Everett F. *Introduction to the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968.

Harrison, R. K. "Bethel" *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.

Harrison, R. K. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1969.

Hayden, R. E. "Hammurabi." *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1987.

Hendel, Ronald S. "Finding Historical Memories in the Patriarchal Narratives." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 1995.

Hoffmeier, James K. *Israel in Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

_____ "Queries and Comments." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1995.

Horn, Siegfried H. "What We Don't Know About Moses and the Exodus." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, June 1977.

Hughes III, R. J. "Haran." *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.

Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown. *Commentary Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible.* e-sword.net.

Kee, Howard Clark. *What Can We Know About Jesus*? *Understanding Jesus Today.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Keil, C. F., and F. Delitzsch. *Biblical Commentary on the Books of Samuel.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1950.

Keller, Werner, trans. by William Neil. *The Bible as History*. New York: William and Company, 1956.

Kempinski, Aharon. "Joshua's Altar—An Iron Age I Watchtower." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, January/February 1986.

Kennedy, Titus. Biblical Archaeology, a class taught at BIOLA University, March 3-4, 2017.

Kitchen, K. A. "Shishak." *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.

Kitchen, Kenneth A. *The Bible and its World*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1977.

_____ "*The Patriarchal Age: Myth or History?*" *Biblical Archaeology Review,* March/April 1995.

Kleven, Terence. "Up the Waterspout: How David's General Joab Got Inside Jerusalem." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 1994.

Krahmalkow, Charles R. "Exodus Itinerary Confirmed by Egyptian Evidence." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, September/October 1994.

Kenyon, Frederic. *The Bible and Archaeology.* New York: Harper and Bros., 1940.

LaSor, W. S. "Ashurbanipal." *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.

Lemaire, Andre. "'House of David' Restored in Moabite Inscription," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June 1994

Lemaire, Andre. "Name of Israel's Last King Surfaces in a Private Collection." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, November/December 1995.

Leupold, H. C. *Exposition of Genesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963.

MacGregor, Geddes. *Dictionary of Religion and Philosophy*. New York: Paragon House, 1991.

Malamat, Abraham. "How Inferior Israelite Forces Conquered Fortified Canaanite Cities." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1982.

Mazar, Amihai and John Camp. "Will Tel Rehov Save the United Monarchy?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 2000.

McDowell, Josh. *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999.

McDowell, Josh and Bill Wilson. *He Walked Among Us*. San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1988.

Meinhardt, Molly Dewsnap. "Did Woodley Excavate the Wrong Place?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, January/February 2000.

Meshorer, Yaakov, "An Ancient Coin Depicts Noah's Ark." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, September/October 1981.

Metzger, Bruce M. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.

Millard, Alan R. "Where Was Abraham's Ur?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June 2001.

Moreland, J. P. and M. J. Wilkins, eds. *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.

Morris, Henry M. *The Bible and Modern Science*. Rev. ed. Chicago: Moody Press, 1956.

Na'aman, Nadav. "Cow Town or Royal Capital." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 1997.

Owen, G. Frederick. *Archaeology and The Bible.* Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1961.

Parker, Simon B. "Siloam Inscription Memorializes Engineering Achievement." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 1994.

Payne, D. F. "Golgotha." *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.

Pinches, T. G. "Babel." *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.

Price, Ira Maurice. *The Monuments and the Old Testament.* Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1925.

Raban, Aver and Robert R. Stieglitz. "The Sea Peoples and their Contributions to Civilization," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, November/December 1991.

Rainey, A. F. "Hazor." *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.

_____ "Megiddo" *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.

Rainey, Anson F. "Rainey's Challenge." *Biblical Archaeology Review,* November/December 1991.

Ramsay, W. M. *Bearing of Recent Discovery in the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953.

_____ *Pauline and Other Studies*. New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908.

Reich, Ronny and Shukron, Eli. "Light at the End of the Tunnel," *Biblical Archaeology Review*. January/February 1999.

_____ "Caiaphas' Name Inscribed on Bone Boxes." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, September/October 1992.

Rehwinkel, Alfred M. *The Flood, In Light of the Bible, Geology and Archaeology*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951.

Rimmer, Harry. *Dead Men Tell Tales*. Berne, Indiana: The Berne Witness Company, 1954.

Robinson, George Livingstone. *The Bearing of Archaeology on the Old Testament.* New York: American Tract Society, 1941.

Rosovsky, Nitza. "A Thousand Years of History in Jerusalem's Jewish Quarter," *Biblical Archaeology Review*. May/June 1992.

Russell, Bertrand. *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*, ed. by Paul Edwards. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957.

Ryan, William and Walter Pitman. *Noah's Flood: The New Scientific Discoveries about the Event that Changed the World.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998.

Sarna, Nahum. "Abraham in History." *The Biblical Archaeological Review*, December 1977.

Sauer, James A. "The River Runs Dry." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 1996.

Schneider, Tammi. "Did Jehu Kill His Own Family?" *Biblical Archaeology Review,* January/February 1995.

Schoville, K. N. "Fortification." *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.

Shanks, Hershel. "Abraham's Ur: Is the Pope Going to the Wrong Place?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, January/February 2000.

_____ "Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers Face to Face," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 1997.

_____ "Dever's Sermon on the Mound," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1997.

_____ "Fingerprint of Jeremiah's Scribe," *Biblical Archaeology Review,* March/April 1996.

_____. "Has David Been Found in Egypt?" Hershel Shanks. *Biblical Archaeology Review*, January/February 1999.

_____ "Have Sodom and Gomorrah Been Found?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, September/October 1980.

_____ "Is the Bible Right After All?" Interview with William Dever, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, September/ October 1996.

_____ "Scholars Speak Out," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June, 1995.

_____ "Where Is the Tenth Century?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1998.

Shea, W. H. "The Date of the Exodus." *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* Ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.

Sheler, Jeffery L. "Is The Bible True?" *U. S. News & World Report*, October 25, 1999.

Stager, Lawrence E. "The Song of Deborah." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, January/February 1989.

Stein, Robert, *Jesus the Messiah*: *A Survey of the Life of Christ.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996.

Thiele, Edwin. *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983.

Thiessen, Henry Clarence. *Introduction to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962.

Unger, Merrill F. *Archaeology of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963.

_____ *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1956.

_____ *Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1960.

About The Author

G. Michael Cocoris is a gifted communicator. He can make even complicated subjects simple, clear, and practical. His breadth of experience has allowed him to relate to a wide range of audiences.

Michael received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Tennessee Temple University, a Master of Theology degree from Dallas Seminary, and a Doctorate of Divinity from Biola University. He traveled the United States for over a dozen years as a speaker. He has also been a seminary professor, visiting lecturer, and world traveler, including hosting tours to Israel and China.

Michael has pastored three churches, including a rural church when he was in seminary, an urban church, the historic Church of the Open Door, first in downtown Los Angeles and later in Glendora, California, and a suburban church, the Lindley Church in Tarzana California, a suburb of Los Angeles. While at the Church of Open Door, he had a daily radio broadcast.

Michael has written numerous magazine articles, mainly for *Biblical Research Monthly*. He has authored a number of books, including *Seventy Years on Hope Street, A History of the Church of the Open Door*; *How To Live A Biblical Spiritual Life, Clarifying the Confusion; Repentance, The Most Misunderstood Word in the Bible; Evangelism: A Biblical Approach; The Salvation Controversy; Lordship Salvation: Is It Biblical?; The Books of the Bible, the Subject, Structure, Situation, and Significant Verses of Each Book; Psalms, A Song for Every Situation, Each Summarized on One Page; and Counseling Theories, A Biblical Evaluation.* In addition, he was a contributor to The *NKJV Study Bible* and *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*.

Michael is the pastor of the Lindley Church in Tarzana, California. He and his wife, Patricia, live in Santa Monica, California.