

Whitehead's
44
Archaeological
Reasons
To Believe the
Bible

By David Whitehead Jr.

44

*Archaeological
Reasons
to Believe the
Bible*

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**Prevailing Publications
P.O. Box 141873
Austin, TX 78714-1873**

www.PrecinctPowerSolutions.com

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to a person who has been one of the best friends anyone could ever have. He has stood by me for many years, and has been there through thick and thin; in the good times and in the bad.

Through all of my endeavors He has been one of my strongest supporters.

In my successes he has been one of the loudest applauders, and in my failures he has been one of my kindest encouragers.

Above all, he has constantly and consistently led me to a closer walk with my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

*To my Friend, my Mentor, and my Pastor: **Steve Young**.*

Steve and Rachel, thank you for ALWAYS being there.

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Introduction

For hundreds of years critics have successfully attacked and brought into question the accuracy and reliability of the Bible. They have effectively presented the Bible as a collection of myths and legends, and have persuaded many to doubt its validity.

Bertrand Russell called the Bible, “A comfortable myth.” Richard Dawkins likens the Bible to “A story about leprechauns.” Even Mark Twain said the Bible contains “...some clever myths...and upwards of a thousand lies.” Men like Voltaire, Hume, Kant and Hegel; all respected thinkers in their time, have stood against the validity of the Bible.

Such critics established an entire anti Biblical philosophy called “Higher Criticism” and for many generations led millions to doubt the Bible’s claims.

Then the Science of Archaeology stepped in.

Archaeological discoveries of the last century have confirmed thousands of Biblical passages, places, personalities, and events.¹

Today, one could turn to almost any chapter of the Bible and find that it’s been confirmed in one way or another by archaeological discovery.² What’s more, Archaeology has proven many times over, that the “Higher Criticism” of the Bible of the last 200 years has been nothing but theories and suppositions presented to the public as fact. As British Assyriologist A.H. Sayce has said, as soon as the theories of the critics could be “tested by solid fact, they crumbled into dust.”³ Not one artifact has ever been found confirming any criticism of the Bible.

In contrast, Archaeology confirms that **what** the Bible claims happened, really did happen, to the **people** it claims it happened to; in the **places** it claimed it happened, at the **time** it says it happened to them.

Even incidental details recorded in the Bible have been found to be accurate, and this is important, because if the details of a story check out, we know the

¹ Grant R. Jeffrey, *The Signature of God* (Word Publishing, 1998) p. 22

² Josh McDowell, *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Thomas Nelson, 1999) p. 371

³ *Ibid.*, p. 431

story is legitimate, or at the very least, is far more credible than if the details did not check out.⁴

Archaeology has gone on to explain obscure Bible passages, uncover cultural peculiarities and clarify idiomatic themes. It has also greatly enriched the understanding of the Bible student, and in so doing, has confounded the critics that much more.

Archaeology has set the Bible apart from myths and fables.

Archaeology has set the Bible apart from religious invention.

Archaeology has set the Bible apart from its critics, its detractors, and its competitors.

Archaeology has shown the Bible to be true.

⁴ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Zondervan, 1998) p. 96

Chapter One – The Dead Sea Scrolls

If you had been a detractor of the Bible in the last few centuries, you would have said that there existed no ancient texts of the Bible; that the Bible had been changed so often that it could not even resemble the originals, (if there had actually even been any originals,) and you would have said it had been written by the Catholic Church Fathers in order to control the people. You would even say the Old Testament prophecies that had been fulfilled later were really written after the fact, and were added in.

But in 1947 you would have had to eat your words.

You see, from about 150 B.C. to 70 A.D. there lived a number of Essene Jewish Monks in a place called “Qumran” near the Dead Sea. These monks devoted their lives to copying Scripture and other inspirational writings. But when the Romans invaded in a spree of destruction in 70 A.D., the Essene Monks placed their scrolls and copies in sealed jars and hid them in small caves.⁵

Many years later, three Bedouin boys discovered one of the caves, but the true importance of the find wasn’t realized until E.L. Sukenik and Yigal Yadin realized what had been found.⁶ Then from 1947 to 1956, over 600 scrolls and thousands of fragments were recovered from twelve different caves in the area.⁷

Most importantly, among the scrolls an entire copy of the Old Testament, (except the book of Esther) dated to 200 B.C. was found.⁸

Multiple copies of Genesis, Deuteronomy and Isaiah were also found.⁹ Essene literature was also discovered that used a vernacular and phraseology very close to that of the New Testament, and particularly the Gospel of John. One of the scrolls, Scroll 4Q246, also called the “Son of God Scroll” contained the words, “He shall be called the Son of God, and they shall call Him Son of the Most High.”¹⁰

⁵ Paul E. Little, *Know Why You Believe* (InterVarsity Press, 2000) p. 75

⁶ Harry Thomas Frank, *How the Dead Sea Scrolls Were Found* (Biblical Archaeology Review, December 1975)

⁷ Josh McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity* (Thomas Nelson, 2006) p. 107

⁸ Grant R. Jeffrey, *The Signature of God* (Word Publishing, 1998) pp. 114, 115

⁹ Josh McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity* (Thomas Nelson, 2006) pp. 116, 117

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 98

Why is this important?

- The oldest text of the Old Testament before the Dead Sea Scrolls were found was the “Masoretic Text” from 916 A.D. That’s nearly a thousand years after Christ was born. But the Old Testament from the Essenes was 200 years older than Christ. Now here is the rub: After centuries of Bible critics telling us the text we possessed was not trustworthy, **the Essene Old Testament and the Masoretic Text were found to be virtually identical!**¹¹
- The Essene Old Testament was also found to be virtually identical to the “Received Text” from 1100 A.D. which was used for the King James English Version in 1611.¹²
- The fact that the versions were so close to being identical lends strong credibility to the meticulous copying methods that were employed in copying Scripture.
- The age of the Essene Old Testament confirms that the prophecies written therein were most certainly not added after the fact!
- The fact that the Essene phraseology and vernacular were so close to that of the New Testament is very strong evidence that the New Testament was written very shortly after those things it records happened, and not centuries later as Bible detractors insist.
- The Son of God Scroll confirms that the concept of the “Trinity” was a first century concept; again, confounding the critics and their claims.¹³
- Critics long pointed to Matthew 11:4, 5, as a contradiction or mistake, in which Jesus responds to the disciples of John the Baptist with a quote from Isaiah 61, including the words, “the dead are raised.” These last words are not found in the Masoretic or Received texts. But Scroll 4Q521 written long before Jesus was born does indeed contain the full phrase as Jesus quoted it.¹⁴

Another interesting fact is the timing of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovery; it couldn’t have been timelier. Within a year the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, once again became the home of the Israelites after many hundreds of years.

¹¹ Paul E. Little, *Know Why You Believe* (InterVarsity Press, 2000) pp. 75, 76

¹² Grant R. Jeffrey, *The Signature of God* (Word Publishing, 1998) pp. 114, 115

¹³ Grant R. Jeffrey, *Jesus – The Great Debate* (Frontier Research Publications, 1999) pp. 64, 65

¹⁴ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Zondervan, 1998) p. 106

Chapter Two: The Tablets of Ebla

If the adversaries of the Bible were not silenced by the Scrolls of the Dead Sea, perhaps they needed something written on a more permanent substance. I mean it's not like the Essenes had written on tablets made of baked clay or anything. Critics continued to teach that the story of Moses and the law could never be true, because writing had not yet been invented in ancient Biblical times, and all such Bible stories had been passed down by mouth, and therefore were totally unreliable, especially those of the Old Testament.

But then in 1974, an Italian Archaeologist by the name of Paolo Matthiae, and his team found an ancient palace while digging at Tell Mardikh.¹⁵ There they found one of the most prolific finds of history – The Royal Archives of Ebla. Over the next two years, they would find and catalogue over 1700 intact clay tablets, and another 4700 broken and fragmented tablets.

These tablets were dated to 2300 B.C., and were deciphered by Professor Giovanni Pettinato. They were written in an early phonetic logogram script, in a Semitic language very close to Hebrew that Professor Pettinato dubbed “Eblaite.”¹⁶

The tablets were a great collection of historical record; records of laws, transactions, pronouncements and legal deeds, as well as whole collections of cultural and religious rituals. There were even textbooks for learning and primers to teach reading and writing.

The tablets listed many places and cities, like Jerusalem, Sodom and Gomorrah.¹⁷ They listed kings, such as Eber of Ebla. They contained an account of a flood, and speak of the belief in one God. The tablets provided a wealth of insight into the people of 2300 B.C.; how they lived and what they believed.

Why is this important?

¹⁵ Josh McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity* (Thomas Nelson, 2006) pp. 144, 145

¹⁶ *Ancient Royal Library Found* (Biblical Archaeology Review, June, 1976)

¹⁷ Robert W. Faid, *A Scientific Approach to Biblical Mysteries* (New Leaf Press, 1993) p. 153

- The very existence of the Tablets of Ebla proves that reading and writing in a sophisticated script was already an established practice more than eight hundred years before Moses! Not only that, it demonstrates that the practice of reading and writing was common enough to be used in transactions between buyers and sellers, (though opponents of the Bible insisted that detailed legislation was never even recorded until the Persian Period between 538 and 331 B.C.) and that **it was both established and common in the geographical area where Bible History was happening!**¹⁸
- The tablets mention one of their major kings – Eber, who is also mentioned in Genesis 10:24, 25, and again in Genesis 11:14-17. This would not be so interesting, except the tablets place him in the exact same place and period that the Bible does!¹⁹
- Not only do the tablets mention Sodom and Gomorrah, two cities that critics claimed never existed and were simply fables of the Bible, it mentions them along with the other cities of the Siddim Vale, Adma, Zeboiim, and Zoar, and lists them in the very same order as Genesis 14: 2, 3.²⁰
- Other Biblical cities are also confirmed in the tablets such as Hazor, Megiddo, Jerusalem, Lachish, Dor, and Gaza. Again, these cities appeared in ancient days, in the very times and places the Bible portrays them.
- Foes of the Bible have long held that the Genesis story of the Flood was a retelling of the Babylonian account of the Flood, and came along much later. However, the Tablets of Ebla also have an account of the Flood that is much closer to the Genesis account, and it predates the Babylonian account by six hundred years!²¹
- Higher Critics such as Charles Darwin and Julius Wellhausen touted their ideas of the “Evolution of Religion” in which monotheism, the belief in one God, evolved from polytheism, the belief in many gods. This idea is trounced upon by the Ebla Tablets, which demonstrate that the belief in one God originated far, far earlier.²²

Again the suppositions of scoffers were silenced...somewhat.

¹⁸ Paul E. Little, *Know Why You Believe* (InterVarsity Press, 2000) p.92

¹⁹ Robert W. Faid, *A Scientific Approach to Biblical Mysteries* (New Leaf Press, 1993) p. 153

²⁰ Josh McDowell, *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Thomas Nelson, 1999) p. 376

²¹ Josh McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity* (Thomas Nelson, 2006) pp. 144, 145

²² Josh McDowell, *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Thomas Nelson, 1999) p. 376

Chapter Three: The Jericho Excavations

In early 1997 Lorenzo Nigro and Nicolo Marchetti, a couple of Italian Archaeologists, were commissioned by the Palestinian Authority to conduct a limited excavation at Jericho. After one month, they promptly came back and announced to the world that there was no evidence to support the Biblical account of the siege of Jericho.

The secular media of course picked up on this immediately, and once again proclaimed the Bible to be untrustworthy. After all, these two men had worked for an entire month, having been sent to Jericho by the Palestinian Government, which surely desired nothing other than to employ good scientific methods and to publish the truth about what was found, whether it supported Biblical claims or not.

Fortunately, earlier excavations at Jericho went on for many years at a time, and a great deal more was found by them than these two found on their month long trip.

Jericho was discovered by Carl Watzinger in 1907, and he and his team worked the site for the next two years. Later John Garstang and his group excavated the site for six long years, beginning in 1930. Then from 1952 to 1958 Kathleen Kenyon and her team put in six more years. That's a total of fourteen years of excavations at Jericho.²³

During the fourteen years of serious excavation, a number of things were unearthed. Remains of an inner wall and an outer wall were found. A large pile of collapsed brick was uncovered, as well as a thick layer of soot over the entire city. Large amounts of grain were found stored, with debris mixed with charcoal throughout. Not only this, but pottery dated to the fifteenth century B. C. was found, and Egyptian amulets with inscriptions dated to the same period were found.²⁴

Why is this important?

²³ Patrick Y. Zukeran, *Unless I See* (Brown Books, 2001) pp. 24, 25

²⁴ Ibid.

- Most of the outer wall had fallen, and had fallen outward, which is atypical of the way a wall under siege from the outside would fall. This confirms Joshua 6:20.²⁵
- The fact that part of the wall remained intact also validates Joshua 6:23, because Rahab was spared, though she lived in a part of the wall. It had long been argued that the Bible had contradicted itself, telling us the wall fell, and yet Rahab, who lived in the wall, had survived. But this demonstrates that both passages are true.
- The thick layer of soot over the city is proof that it was burned just as Joshua 6:24 tells us.²⁶
- The large amount of grain remaining illustrates the short duration of the siege, and also confirms Joshua 6:18, in that the Israelites did not take any of the grain for themselves.²⁷
- The pottery found was dated to the fifteenth century B.C., and inscriptions on Egyptian amulets found also date to the fifteenth century, placing the siege exactly at the time the Bible does.²⁸
- Charcoal from the debris was also dated to the early fifteenth century B.C.²⁹
- The evidence such as the type of the grain found shows that the siege occurred in the early spring, confirming Joshua 2:6, 3:15, and 5:10.³⁰

Incidentally, Dr. Bryant Wood, a leading expert on Jericho archaeology, visited the site of the month long excavation of the Italian team in September of 1997. According to Wood, the Italian team DID find the very same evidence of a collapsed wall that the others had found, and simply reported that they did not find it.³¹

²⁵Robert W. Faid, *A Scientific Approach to Biblical Mysteries* (New Leaf Press, 1993) p. 140

²⁶Patrick Y. Zukeran, *Unless I See* (Brown Books, 2001) pp. 24, 25

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Robert W. Faid, *A Scientific Approach to Biblical Mysteries* (New Leaf Press, 1993) p. 140

³¹Patrick Y. Zukeran, *Unless I See* (Brown Books, 2001) pp. 24, 25

Chapter Four: The Tablets of Nuzi

One of the favorite claims of some of the Higher Critics is that most of the Old Testament was written around the fifth century B.C., but after archaeology proved that writing had existed far earlier, critics still claimed that just because it *could* have been written in the days it happened, that doesn't mean it was. They maintained that there was no evidence to prove that the practices and customs the Old Testament records ever really existed.

The excavation of Jericho certainly helped to make them think again, but perhaps no other find did as much to bolster the believers of the Old Testament, as far as its record of the practices and customs of early civilization, as much as the Tablets of Nuzi.

The Tablets of Nuzi were discovered at Yorghon Tepe by Gertrude Bell in 1925, and the actual excavation was carried out by Edward Chiera from 1925 to 1933. Over 4000 separate family records were uncovered on over 5000 clay tablets. The tablets were mostly from 1450 to 1350 B.C., but a few of the tablets were found to be as old as 2300 B.C.

Why is this important?

- The Tablets of Nuzi confirm many customs we find recorded in the Old Testament, but they also explain many of the stories that we didn't quite understand, and what's more, they provide insight into those stories we *thought* we understood, but didn't.
- The tablets confirm that in the days of the Patriarchs it was customary for a man with no son to adopt an heir, (as Abraham did with Eliezer,) alluded to in Genesis 15:2.³²
- When Sarah was barren, she gave her handmaiden Hagar to Abraham to provide them with a child in Genesis 16:1-16. This practice is also established in the Tablets of Nuzi.³³
- The tablets indicate that it was customary for the first born son to be heir to his father's property; this was called a "birthright" and it could be sold or even used as a type of collateral. In Genesis 25: 29-34, we see just such a

³² Werner Keller, *The Bible as History* (Bantam Books, 1980) p.52

³³ Josh McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity* (Thomas Nelson, 2006) p. 571

transaction played out, even though Essau proved to be quite foolish, selling his birthright for a bowl of lentil stew.

- In the period of the Patriarchs a man could adopt his wife as his sister in order to elevate her station, her inheritance, and her security according to the records found in Nuzi. This not only confirms Genesis 12:10, 20:1, and 27: 7, it proves that our Patriarchs were not telling a lie when they called their wives their sisters, as it appears at first glance.
- According to the Nuzi Tablets an oral deathbed will was legally binding, validating Genesis 27, when Isaac gave Jacob the blessing; believing him to be Essau.³⁴ Genesis 28:1-5 shows how a father generally chose the bride for his son in those days, also attested to in the Nuzi records.³⁵
- The Nuzi Tablets record the practice of men working for their Father in Law as payment for their bride in place of a dowry. This very custom is also depicted exactly the same way in Genesis 29:13-21, when Jacob works for Laban for fourteen years after being given both Leah and Rachel as his wives.³⁶
- Genesis 29 goes on to tell that Laban gave his handmaidens to his two daughters as wedding presents in verses 24, and 29. Again, the Tablets of Nuzi make it clear that this was indeed a custom in those days.³⁷
- Chapter 31 in the book of Genesis can be rather confusing, and it can be confusing on several levels. It is not quite clear why Rachel took her father's Teraphim, (small statues depicting gods) why they were important enough for Laban and his entourage to pursue Jacob and Rachel in order to get them back, and why Jacob promised Laban whoever took them would be put to death. **The Tablets of Nuzi clear all this up for us.** According to the tablets, the possessor of the Family Teraphim held the right of inheritance. Because Laban now had sons, Rachel took the Teraphim because she believed Jacob should have the right of inheritance. We also learn from the tablets that to steal the Teraphim, was an act punishable by death, which was well known to Jacob.³⁸
- Another custom the tablets shine light upon is the practice of "Levirate Marriage." In the days of the Patriarchs, when a man died and left a widow, it was customary for his brother to take her as his wife, and provide for her.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Josh McDowell, *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Thomas Nelson, 1999) p.110

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Stephen M. Miller, *The Complete Guide to the Bible* (Barbour Publishing, 2007) pp. 30, 31

This explains the story of Tamar in Genesis 38, and later it sheds light on the book of Ruth.³⁹

Chapter Five: The Cylinder of Sennacherib

Sometimes it's nice to have a hostile witness. When an enemy offers corroborative testimony, it lends much more credibility than the testimony of a friend. Therefore the Defense calls Sennacherib, King of the impressive Assyrian Empire, to the stand.

Sennacherib was the son of Sargon II, and he ascended to the throne of Assyria around 701 B.C. He spent the better part of his reign attacking anyone and everyone who existed outside his kingdom, and he apparently liked to brag about it. Let's be glad he did like to brag about it, because he left a record of his exploits.

In 1830 a hexagonal prism made of baked clay was found by Colonel R. Taylor in Nineveh. This prism was inscribed with 500 lines in six columns with cuneiform writing in the Akkadian language. Later the writing was translated by Sir Henry Rawlingson and was found to be the Annals of Sennacherib; a narration of his military conquests.⁴⁰

Among the exploits recorded is found this passage:

“As for Hezekiah the Judahite, who did not submit to my yoke: forty-six of his strong, walled cities, as well as the small towns in their area, which were without number, by leveling with battering-rams and by bringing up siege-engines, and by attacking and storming on foot, by mines, tunnels, and breeches, I besieged and took them. 200,150 people, great and small, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, cattle and sheep without number, I brought away from them and counted as spoil. (Hezekiah) himself, like a caged bird I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city.”

³⁹ Josh McDowell, *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Thomas Nelson, 1999) p. 110

⁴⁰ John Argubright, *Bible Believer's Archaeology* (Xulon Press, 2003) pp. 80, 81

Why is this important?

- This passage from the cylinder confirms II Kings 18:13, in that Sennacherib did indeed come against Judah, and did take all the walled and fenced cities.
- The cylinder also confirms that Sennacherib did **not** take Jerusalem, but withdrew without taking the city just as II Kings 19:7 tells us.
- Among other passages, the cylinder also confirms II Chronicles 32: 21, 22, and Isaiah 36 and 37.

One last note about the cylinder – did you notice that Sennacherib claimed to have found **camels** among the other domesticated animals in Judah though critics have long held that the Bible is wrong about the dating of domesticated camels in the Bible? Hostile witnesses can sometimes shut many mouths.

Chapter Six: The Camel of Byblos

Lately just about every secular news source has jumped on the band wagon of Biblical Criticism, especially since the announcement that a couple of Tel Aviv archaeologists couldn't find domesticated camel bones older than 1000 B.C., and announced to the world this must mean there aren't any, and therefore the Bible is wrong when it says that camels were used by man in Bible lands before this date; specifically, in the Book of Genesis.

Unfortunately for the secular press this demonstrates what fools they can be, especially when anyone with half a brain knows you can't prove a negative or make an argument from silence. In other words, it is impossible to use the "lack of" evidence as proof. But when it comes to the rabid need of certain individuals to prove the Bible inaccurate, no argument is too ridiculous. Especially when you realize just how narrow the search of these particular archaeologists was, and how scanty their research turned out to be.

There is more to archaeology than bones; much more.

As it turns out, there are no less than eight archaeological finds that directly lend evidence to the early domestication of camels, and even more that are less direct.

One of these finds is the Camel of Byblos.⁴¹ Byblos is in present day Lebanon, north of Israel.

Why is this important?

- The Camel of Byblos is dated to 2000 B.C., the exact time in history when the Bible first mentions domesticated camels.
- The Camel of Byblos is a figurine of a kneeling camel with a pack on his back, indicating that as far back as Abraham's time, camels did indeed carry loads.

I have seen many, many articles citing the Camel of Byblos in answer to the swarm of secular reports against the Bible, but I have yet to see any of the secularists pay any attention or give any rebuttal. There will be much more about this later.

Chapter Seven: The Camels of Turkmenia

Admittedly, ancient Turkmenia is not considered to be a traditional Bible land like Palestine. But it was not cut off from the traditional Biblical lands by oceans or any other geographical obstruction except for desert, and we all know that camels are not daunted by desert living or travel. What's more, it isn't so far from Abraham's original home town, and the Bible only claims Abraham, his family, and his extended family had domesticated camels in Canaan, not the Canaanites themselves.

Therefore it is more than a little puzzling that secularists would cling so doggedly to the notion that camels could not have possibly been domesticated at the early date the Bible claims when an excavation in Turkmenia found such an abundance of evidence to the contrary.

⁴¹ Robert J. Hutchinson, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to the Bible* (Regnery Publishing, 2007) p. 55

In Turkmenia, which is present day Turkmenistan, a number of terra cotta camel figurines were unearthed. Some of these figurines depicted camels pulling wheeled carts, and others depicted camels carrying burdens such as large baskets. Camel remains were found in human encampments as well – bones, woven hair, and dung.⁴²

Why is this important?

- The camel remains were found in great quantities in places where humans lived and camped, which lends strong credibility to the idea that these camels were domesticated, and were even domestically raised and bred as stock.
- Both the terra cotta figurines and the camel remains were discovered in deep strata dated at 2700 B.C. This is 1700 years earlier than Bible skeptics have claimed camels were domesticated, and found only 600 miles from Old Testament lands.

One must also wonder what was in the mind of these Bible skeptics that strained at a gnat in the segregated vacuum of their own study, and swallowed the...camel of the obvious – they had only to look at a map of the lands in Biblical times to see how silly their claim really was. They admitted that, yes, there were domesticated camels in those days in Egypt, Syria, Turkey and Arabia; just not in Bible lands.

There were two main highways that joined those four ancient civilizations in Abraham's time, and both highways came together and crossed in a certain geographical area. (I am sure you can guess where it was.)

The ***Via Maris*** ran right through Canaan, and the ***King's Highway*** through the Trans-Jordan. Not only this, but they also connected with a route that began in Damascus with the Kings Highway, and ended in the Southern Galilee, crossing through the Valley of Megiddo and right by Nazareth before joining the Via Maris. In other words, they intersected right smack in the center of the Promised Land.

⁴² Ibid.

Too bad Bible scoffers would not let these ancient civilizations travel these highways with their domesticated camels.

Chapter Eight: The Library of Boghazkoy

Genesis chapter 23 is a sad chapter of the Bible. It opens with the death of Abraham's wife Sarah, and Abraham mourning for her. In the midst of his mourning he realizes he has no cave to bury her in, and he purchases a field with a cave located on it from Ephron the Hittite. The narration of this transaction seems a bit tedious and drawn out, and finally the chapter closes with Abraham burying Sarah in the cave.

This chapter served us for many centuries until Bible detractors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reared their heads once again and informed us that the chapter was total fiction. It was bogus, they informed us, because there was never any such thing as a Hittite.⁴³

But the Hittite deniers were wrong.

In 1832 a man by the name of Charles Texier found what appeared to be underground vaults of cuneiform tablets, but it wasn't until many years later they were excavated. An excavation led by Dr. H. Winckler from 1906 to 1912 uncovered more than ten thousand cuneiform tablets.⁴⁴

Among these tablets the history and archives of the Hittites was found, dated back to the 16th century B.C.⁴⁵

Why is this important?

- The existence of these archives and the distant place in which they were found is testimony to the fact that evidence for Biblical claims is not always apparent, or found where one would expect. It also illustrates how often

⁴³ Josh McDowell, *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Thomas Nelson, 1999) p. 94

⁴⁴ Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Harvest House, 1997) pp. 66, 67

⁴⁵ Ibid.

detractors of the Bible will claim that something that simply hasn't been found yet, does not exist, in order to proclaim the Bible invalid.

- These Hittite archives have also produced very powerful evidence for the Bible's credibility. Not only do they confirm the existence of the Hittites, but they confirm their practice of using and selling caves as burial grounds, and of their practice of negotiating the sale of the land around the cave as part of the bargain.⁴⁶

Now aren't we glad the narration of the cave transaction was so drawn out? Of course in modern times to deny the existence of the Hittites is silly, especially since the Treaty of Kadesh was found, (a treaty between Egypt and the Hittite Empire,) and yet, many Bible detractors still insist they didn't exist in Canaan, though they obviously lived just north of Canaan, and entire Hittite armies and caravans traveled through Canaan often.

Chapter Nine: The Tablets of Mari

This time it wasn't 4000 or 7000 or even 10,000 ancient tablets that were found. It was a whopping 20,000 separate tablets that were found in Mari along the Euphrates River.⁴⁷ The actual discovery was made by Andre Parrot at Tel Hariri in 1933.⁴⁸

The tablets were mostly diplomatic correspondence and imperial records of King Zimri, and the tablets were dated to 1800 B.C.⁴⁹ The tablets mention a great number of ancient cities and communities in the correspondence, as well as rulers and kings of other lands. Mari was about to muzzle the mouths of mockers once again.

Why is this important?

⁴⁶ Josh McDowell, *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Thomas Nelson, 1999) p. 437

⁴⁷ Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Harvest House, 1997) p. 68

⁴⁸ Werner Keller, *The Bible as History* (Bantam Books, 1980) p. 50

⁴⁹ Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Harvest House, 1997) p. 68

- The Mari Tablets validate Genesis 24:10 which names the cities of Nahor and Harran. The very same two cities are named in the King's correspondence.⁵⁰
- The Tablets name King Arioch of Ellasar, confirming Genesis chapter 14:1.⁵¹
- Genesis 14 goes on to tell of a battle between several of the kings. King Amarphel of Shinar, King Arioch of Ellasar, King Chedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of many nations, fought against the Kings of the Vale of Siddim, King Bara of Sodom, King Bersha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the King of Bella – four kings against five. Of course, skeptics of the Bible claimed none of these kings or their lands ever existed, and that this was all a work of fiction. Again, the Mari Tablets settled the issue. All five of the five Kings of the Siddim Vale are named in the Tablets.⁵²
- In addition to all this, the time period of these kings and cities coincides with the time period the Tablets are dated to – 1800 B.C.

One last note – Did you happen to notice when the author of Genesis chapter 14 names the five Kings of the Siddim Vale, he does not give the actual name of the fifth King? Even if the Mari Tablets had never been found, wouldn't critics have realized that fiction writers always know the names of their characters?

Chapter Ten: The Elaphantine Papyri

Once again Archaeology proves that evidence for Biblical facts is not always to be found where one would expect. This time we find the evidence in a number of documents originating from an island in the Nile close to the Nubian border called the "Elaphantine Papyri."

The papyri contain documents of all kinds in many languages from a Jewish community that lived on the island, but most of the documents are written in Aramaic, and date back to the early fifth century B.C. during the reign of the Persian King Artaxerxes. Most of the documents are simple contracts and deeds,

⁵⁰ Josh McDowell, *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Thomas Nelson, 1999) p. 446

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

but some of the correspondence relates facts about places and people of the period. Most notably, the papyri shed light on the return from the exile.

Why is this important?

- The Elaphantine Papyri confirms the people and places covered in the book of Nehemiah.
- The doings of Nehemiah as ordered and blessed by King Artaxerxes is fully confirmed, as well as the existence of places and people mentioned in Nehemiah, such as Johanon and Sanballat the Governor of Samaria.⁵³
- The papyri directly confirm Nehemiah 2:1, 2:10, 2:19, 4:1-3, 4:7, 8, 6:1, and 12:23.⁵⁴

The papyri also contain several interesting documents that shed light on ancient Jewish Holy Days, such as the famous “Passover Letter” that contains a rather detailed list of instructions concerning the keeping of the Passover.

Chapter Eleven: The Drachmas of Beth-Zur

Let’s face it; there are people who do not want to believe the Bible no matter how many facts come to light. They will stubbornly label the stories of the Bible as fables and myths, and will even go so far as to make up their own fables so as to mislead as many people as they can. What’s worse, they actually believe their own fables to be highly reasonable and logical assumptions.

One such fable the Bible detractors attempt to pass off on unsuspecting inquirers is “**The Chronicler.**”

The Chronicler is a man who lived in the second century A.D. and collected a number of religious stories and put them all together, arranged them in order, edited them, and then proudly presented them to the world, calling them “The Old Testament.”

⁵³ Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* Revised and Expanded by Howard F. Vos (Zondervan, 1992) p. 211

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 206

Some detractors of the Bible even claim that this Chronicler took many of the facts about the life of Christ and edited them into the Old Testament so as to appear to be fulfilled prophecies.

To this very day enemies of the Bible push this Chronicler myth.

And to this day the ignorant fall for it.

One of the more common arguments these Chronicler believers like to fall back on is the use of the term “Drachma” in I Chronicles 29:7, Ezra 2:69, 8:27 and Nehemiah 7:70-72. The “Drachma” was a Greek coin made of gold, and the critics argued that Greek coins were not yet used widely and that they could not possibly have made it to Bible lands in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, and that the Chronicler made a mistake by assuming these coins were in wide circulation in those days.

But Archaeology was about to stand the Chronicler on his head.

In 1931 an excavation was proceeding at Beth-Zur under the direction of O.R. Sellers. At the “Persian level” six golden drachmas were found.⁵⁵

Why is this important?

- This find proves that Greek Drachmas were used by the Jews at the time and place the Bible claims they were, though detractors insisted both the time and place were far too remote for the coins to exist there.
- This is also indicative of how Archaeology not only silences the critics of the Bible, but demonstrates how unreasonable and illogical their assumptions and theories really are, and how they will go to any length to attack Scripture.

By the way, the critic’s Chronicler should not be confused with the real Chronicler, that is, the individual or individuals who wrote both First and Second Chronicles, and probably did some editing and arranging of the Bible stories

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 263

according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Many believe this to be someone in Ezra's time, and some even believe it to be Ezra himself.

Chapter Twelve: The Papyrus of Anastasi

In Exodus Chapter Five we find Moses and Aaron confronting Pharaoh for the first time and telling him to let the Hebrews go. But Pharaoh refuses, and as a punishment for their audacity, he commands that the Hebrew slaves must now make their bricks without supplying them straw.

“And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying, Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves. And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish ought thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God.” Exodus 5:6-8 KJV

If only Pharaoh and the Hebrew slaves had listened to Bible critics, they would have known that they didn't use straw to make bricks at this point in history, and the problem would have solved itself. Foes of the Bible often make this claim when it comes to this passage of Scripture, and claim their vaunted Chronicler made another historical mistake, that the technology of strengthening bricks with straw had not yet been discovered.

However, the Anastasi Papyrus takes great exception to this unfounded and unsubstantiated claim. Found in the late 1800s, (Higher Critics really need to catch up on their reading,) the papyrus contains a satirical account of slaves in Egypt, and has been dated to 1200 B.C., close to the very time the Exodus occurred.⁵⁶ An excerpt from the papyrus reads, “There was no one to mould bricks, and there was no straw in the neighborhood.”

Why is this important?

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 82

- Written shortly before the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh, this quote directly proves that straw was indeed used to make brick at the time Exodus chapter five claims.
- The Anastasi Papyrus is also an Egyptian document, proving that not only was brick being made with straw at the time the Bible claims, but in the very spot it claims the bricks were made.

I was sorely tempted to name this chapter: “The Straw Man Argument”, but I overcame the temptation.

Chapter Thirteen: The Tablets of Ras Shamra

Have you ever wondered why God told the Israelites not to boil a kid in its mother’s milk in Exodus 23:19?

I did.

I wondered about this for many years until I began studying Biblical Archaeology and learned about the Tablets of Ras Shamra. In fact, during my studies I got excited every time I read about a large library of tablets having been found at some point in history because the “tablet” discoveries seemed to always dispel so many of the Bible critics claims and would usually shed light on a great number of Biblical mysteries.

In this the Tablets of Ras Shamra did not disappoint.

Ras Shamra is a mound in Northern Syria covering the ancient city where certain Canaanites once lived and where the Ugarit Archives were found. These archives were uncovered by a French Archaeologist by the name of F.A. Schaeffer, from 1929 to 1937. The tablets were dated back to 1500 B.C., that is, to the time of Moses.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Harvest House, 1997) p. 69

The tablets were written in a Semitic language very close to Hebrew, using an alphabet nearly exact to that of Hebrew and Aramaic. Many words and phrases found in the Old Testament were found in the tablets.⁵⁸

Why is this important?

- The tablets confirm the names of many people and places the Bible mentions, for example, they name Ahiman and Talmai, also named in Judges 1:10, and it places them in the same time and place the Bible does.⁵⁹
- The Philistine god “Dagon” is mentioned in the Bible several times: Judges 16:23, I Samuel 5:2-7, and in I Chronicles 10:10. The tablets also reference this god many times and confirm those passages.⁶⁰
- The tablets literally contain hundreds of words and phrases found in the Bible, many of which the foes of the Bible insisted did not appear in history until many centuries later. Men like Thomas Hobbes, Karl Heinrich Graf, and Julius Wellhausen taught that the first five books of the Bible were not written until many years later, and that they were all written by different people, based on the belief that so many of the words used in them were not in use at the time. But the tablets proved this entire popular theory to be nothing more than an ignorant conjecture.⁶¹
- More than this, the Bible skeptics even told us there was no advanced alphabet script at this point in history. The tablets put those assertions to shame as well.⁶²
- Critics have claimed that most of the Psalms were not even written at the time they were supposed to have been written, but that they were written after the Exile, long after the Exile in some cases, saying that such advanced poetry and verse could not possibly have been written so early. But as Merrill Unger has pointed out in his *Bible Dictionary*, the Ras Shamra

⁵⁸ Robert W. Faid, *A Scientific Approach to Biblical Mysteries* (New Leaf Press, 1993) p. 154

⁵⁹ Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* Revised and Expanded by Howard F. Vos (Zondervan, 1992) p. 119

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 124

⁶¹ Robert W. Faid, *A Scientific Approach to Biblical Mysteries* (New Leaf Press, 1993) p. 194

⁶² Siegfried Horn, *Records of the Past Illuminate the Bible* (1963) p. 19

Tablets contain a number of odes and verses containing much of the same forms and styles as the Psalms.⁶³

- To this very day, mockers of the Bible have attempted to demonstrate that one of the Old Testament Messianic Prophecies could not actually be a prophecy at all, and that Believers were reading something into the text that was never there. The text in question is Isaiah 7:14, “Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” Of course the name “Immanuel” should have been a tip off for them, but the detractors claim the word “virgin” here should simply be translated as “young woman” and not “virgin” at all. They argued that the Hebrew word never carried the idea of an unmarried, unspoiled girl, but simply meant a “young” female. However, the Ras Shamra Tablets come to the rescue, by employing the word, and by employing it in the truest sense of the word VIRGIN. A tablet seven hundred years before Isaiah used the very same word, “almah” found in Isaiah 7:14, when describing the virgin goddess who would bear a son. (Strangely, opponents of the Bible use the same goddess story to attempt to prove that the Bible story of the Virgin Birth is simply an evolved version of the same myth.) Isn’t it fun using their own arguments against them?⁶⁴

Oh yes, the tablets DO explain why God told the Israelites not to boil a kid (a baby goat) in its mother’s milk. It was the practice of the Canaanites to offer a kid boiled in his own mother’s milk to their gods. One of the tablets states, “Over the fire seven times the sacrificers cook a kid in milk...”

⁶³ Merrill Unger, *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (1974) p. 899

⁶⁴ Edward Young, *Contemporary Evangelical Thought* (1968) p. 38

Chapter Fourteen: The Stele of Mesha

Can you imagine discovering an undocumented stone monument that had been standing since the ninth century B.C.? That is exactly what happened to an Anglican Missionary named Frederick Augustus Klein in 1868.

He was led to it by a local Bedouin in present day Jordan, where it was found completely intact. Unfortunately it was broken later, but most of the pieces were recovered and reassembled.

The stele tells of how Mesha, King of Moab, fought to free his kingdom from the subjugation of the King of Israel.⁶⁵

Why is this important?

- Much like the Cylinder of Sennacherib, this stele confirms a story from the Bible, from the point of view of an enemy. When an opponent corroborates a story, it carries much more weight.
- The stele corroborates II Kings 3:1-26, in which Mesha goes up against the Kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom. The stele confirms the names of the King of Israel, Jehoram, and the King of Judah, Jehoshaphat.
- **The stele is also perhaps the oldest non Biblical source to mention the name of the Israelite God, YAHWEH.**

It sure is nice of the old enemies of Israel to brag on themselves in such a lasting way.

⁶⁵ John Argubright, *Bible Believer's Archaeology* (Xulon Press, 2003) pp. 66, 67

Chapter Fifteen: The Tobias Tombs of Araq El Emir

Just east of Amman in Transjordan stands the ruins of the Castle Tobias. Nearby are the tombs of the family Tobias, and the name Tobiah is cut into one of the walls in ancient Aramaic, dating back to 400 B.C.

Why is this important?

- In 400 B.C. there was indeed a man named Tobiah, in the very area his name was found. This is none other than the ancient adversary of Nehemiah.
- This confirms Nehemiah 2:10, 2:19, and 4:1-3 in that Tobiah really did exist, at the time and place the Bible claims.

The funny thing is, the Castle Tobias was never, ever, completed. I guess once the part of confirming God's Word was done, the rest wasn't important.

Chapter Sixteen: The Monuments of Lystra

There is probably no book of the Bible attacked more often and more viciously by its enemies than the Book of Acts. Fortunately, there is probably also no book of the Bible more exonerated by archaeology and by historical evidence.

The Book of Acts was written by Luke and is often considered to be a sequel to his Gospel. As a master historian and scholar, he included many dozens of minute details in the Book of Acts; details that skeptics challenged, disputed, and disparaged for many years.

But over the last century, so many proofs of those details have been...dug up, it is truly amazing that the skeptics and detractors have not shut their mouths and hidden in shame.

One such passage in question is Acts 14:1-18:

“And it came to pass in Iconium that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them, they were aware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about: and there they preached the gospel. and there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: the same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked. And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter who was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates and would have done sacrifice with the people. Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did well, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. And with these sayings scarce restrained them the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.”

The critics told us this passage was pure fiction, and that the Book of Acts was not actually written by Luke at all, but by someone much, much later in history who didn't know the geography of the times. Cicero, they explained, placed Iconium in Lycaonia in his writings, and therefore the writer of the Book of Acts was wrong in implying Iconium was rather a Phrygian city. Further, they insisted there was no evidence to support that Jupiter and Mercury were of special significance in Lystra over any other Roman gods.

However, a monument found by Sir William Ramsey in 1910, and dated back to New Testament times, depicts Iconium as a Phrygian city after all.⁶⁶

Not only this, but other monuments were found in Lystra only a year earlier in 1909 that confirmed their devotion to Jupiter and Mercury. One of these monuments had an inscription dedicating it to their “Priests of Zeus”, (Zeus was the Greek name for Jupiter) and the other memorialized the men who had paid for and erected the statue to Hermes (Mercury.)

Why is this important?

- These archaeological finds demonstrate the absolute infallibility of Scripture, in that even when the Bible contradicts respected and established ancient secular historians and writers; the Bible wins out.
- It lends credibility to Luke’s accuracy as a historian, and helps to establish his testimony and that his narrative is true.
- This sheds light on why Paul and Barnabas were compared to these particular gods; not because they resembled these gods in any way, but because these were the gods the citizens of Lystra revered.

In later chapters, we will come to know and respect Luke as a first rate historian. We will find that the sequel to his Gospel is a light post in many ways, and archaeologically and historically speaking, is the key to establishing the Bible as fact.

Chapter Seventeen: The Documents of Macedonia

If there is anything I do not understand it’s an Unbeliever desiring to be a Theologian. Why would someone become a Bible scholar, an author, translator, and Bible teacher if they do not even believe it’s the Word of God in the first place? Unfortunately there are those that do, and even more unfortunately, the adversaries of the Bible love to seize upon their liberal viewpoints, and quote them. An unbelieving Theologian is heralded as someone who has seen the light, and is used as a pawn in the hands of those who would do great harm. They

⁶⁶ Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* Revised and Expanded by Howard F. Vos (Zondervan, 1992) p. 271

create a two front battle for the true defenders of the Bible, and those that hold to its infallibility.

One such man was Fenton Hort, a late nineteenth century Theologian whose influence was so great its far reaching effects continue to this very day. He often did the work of Higher Critics for them, and challenged the authenticity of Bible passages and particular phrases or choices of words within them.

One of his challenges was a particular word that Luke chose to use in Acts 16:12. *“And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.”*

Hort contended that the word “part” in this passage, is the Greek word “meris” and that it means: to denote a part as in “a portion; that is, something portioned out” rather than the use Luke intended it for, which is a part as in a “district.” Luke was calling Philippi the main city of a “district” of Macedonia, and Hort claimed the usage was wrong. **By extension, Hort was making the larger point that nobody living in that actual time period would have made that mistake, and therefore the writer of Acts must have written the book much later in history.**

However, certain documents uncovered in Fayum, Egypt clear this up for us. It seems that three hundred years before the events in the Book of Acts, Ptolemy II allowed a large number of Macedonians to relocate to Fayum, and form their own colony. In the documents they left behind, the Greek word “meris” was used exactly and precisely the same way Luke had used it; to denote a district, not a portion.⁶⁷

Why is this important?

- This point demonstrates the **precision** with which the Bible is written. It may well be that Hort was correct about the word “meris” in a general sense, and that on the whole the word was used to describe a personal portion. The key lies in the fact that they were in Macedonia, and that’s not how the MACEDONIANS used the word. **This is precision of the highest historical order.**
- This also confirms that the Book of Acts was written by someone who was **THERE**. How could anyone centuries later know that the Macedonians

⁶⁷ Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* Revised and Expanded by Howard F. Vos (Zondervan, 1992) p. 272

alone used this word as a slang term amongst themselves, when even a Greek scholar such as Hort did not?

- This also demonstrates the dangers of approaching the Bible from a liberal point of view; if for no other reason than at some point the liberal critic will be proven wrong by the Scriptures themselves.

Unfortunately Hort was a victim of the Higher Criticism Movement, which was in full swing in his day. The same movement is again in full swing today; stronger, louder, and more pervasive. Fortunately there is far more evidence in our hands now than in Hort's day. We have the advantage.

Chapter Eighteen: The Obelisk of Shalmaneser

I must admit for years when I read my Bible I was always a tad bit upset when I would read about the Israelites and their Kings being forced to pay tribute to ungodly rulers and conquerors in the Bible. It just made me feel uneasy to know God's chosen people behaved in ways that caused them to live in servitude.

Then I began to study Biblical Archaeology, and I saw this in a whole new light.

It occurred to me just how often our archaeological evidence is based upon the boastings of those ungodly conquerors and their penchant for erecting monuments to proclaim and preserve their self aggrandizement. If not for the swelled heads of men like Sennacherib and his Cylinder and Mesha and his Stele, our hard evidence for Biblical facts might be greatly diminished.

Another such swelled head was King Shalmaneser III, who reigned over Assyria from 858 to 824 B.C. He had an obelisk erected made from black limestone in order to commemorate the tribute he exacted from several kings that he conquered and/or threatened to conquer. This obelisk was uncovered by Austen Henry Layard in 1846 in the Palace of Shalmaneser, at the excavation of Kalhu, which was the ancient Assyrian Capital.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* Revised and Expanded by Howard F. Vos (Zondervan, 1992) p. 163

One of the Kings depicted as giving tribute, was Jehu, King of Israel, an otherwise minor character of the times. The text of the depiction was written in cuneiform, and it says:

"The tribute of Jehu, son of Omri: I received from him silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden vase with pointed bottom, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king and spears."

Jehu is a minor character in the Bible as well as the times, and he is mentioned in II Kings 9, 10.

Why is this important?

- The obelisk places Jehu in the same area and time as the Bible does, and the depiction even dresses him correctly.
- Jehu was a minor character, and new on the scene; he represented the first in a new line of Kings and was not known or famous even to the Israelites.

One might expect for major characters of the Bible to receive extra Biblical mentions now and then, but when minor characters such as Jehu appear outside the Bible, especially when they appear in the right place, the right time, and the right accoutrements, even critics of the Bible should take notice.

Chapter Nineteen: The Shards of Saqqara

If you had lived in ancient Egypt around the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries B.C., you might have indulged in the common practice of cursing your enemies and even placing curses on people you didn't like very much. But if you truly hated someone and wished them great harm or even death, you would go to a bit more trouble to make sure the curse worked. What you would do is, you would take a vase or pitcher and write the name of the person you wanted to curse on it. If you were really serious, you would purchase a statuette, and write their name on that. Then you would take the vase or statuette, declare your curse over your enemy, and then smash it into pieces. In fact, if you were *really* into doing them all the harm you could, you would write the names of their family members and even the name of the city where they lived on the vase or statuette

before smashing it. Then, you would keep the shards, that is, the smashed pieces, as a memorial of the curse you invoked.

This was a common practice, and many of these shards have been uncovered. Excavations were performed up and down the Nile in the 1920s, and thousands of such shards were found, especially in Saqqara. These shards were taken to museums in Cairo, Brussels, and Berlin, where they were reassembled by archaeologists.⁶⁹

Why is this important?

- These shards, once reassembled, inadvertently provided a magnificent testimony to Biblical claims of existing cities, since many of the vessels had the names of those cities written on them before they were shattered.
- Many cities and communities named in the Book of Joshua are confirmed; among them: Achshaph and Hazor from Joshua 11, Aphek from Joshua 12, and Beth Shemesh from Joshua 15.
- Again, as with all other archaeological finds, the shards provide strong evidence to support the Bible, since not only do they confirm the existence of these cities, but they confirm the general era and place the Bible places them.⁷⁰

Sometimes even angry, cursing Egyptians can lend a hand in confirming Bible facts. One might even say the ancient Egyptians shattered the claims of critics into shards...

⁶⁹ Werner Keller, *The Bible as History* (Bantam Books, 1980) p. 64, 65

⁷⁰ Oded Borowski, *Sherds, Sherds, Sherds*, (Biblical Archaeology Report, July/August 1982)

Chapter Twenty: The Tablets of Amarna

Can you imagine what it would be like if our postal service had to deliver letters written on clay tablets back and forth instead of paper letters and packages? I would feel very sorry for the mailman that had to deliver such correspondence, but back in the fourteenth century B.C., that is exactly what they did, at least, if they were vassals of Egypt.

At the time of Pharaoh Amenhotep IV's reign in Egypt, (later known as Akhenaton) Egyptian rule had spread far, and received tribute from vassals beyond count. (A "vassal" is a subject who has either been conquered or placed over a city, community, or land that must render homage and fealty, and usually military service.) Amenhotep corresponded with all his vassals using clay tablets as letters.

These letters were uncovered in the year 1887 in an excavation about 200 miles south of Cairo, at an ancient site called, "Amarna" a city built by Amenhotep. There were 380 tablets in all, written in a cuneiform script, in the Akkadian language. Among them, a number of tablets were actual letters from Canaanite vassals that had been set by Egypt as rulers over various Canaanite cities and communities. Some of them address their problems with the invading "Apiru", that is, the Hebrews; Joshua and the Israelites.⁷¹

Why is this important?

- The Amarna Tablets serve as further proof that a full system of reading, writing, and correspondence was in full use long before Bible detractors claim. The Tablets prove that writing had become common enough by this time to warrant delivery of written messages in an advanced script, and was not used merely to archive or commemorate.⁷²
- One of the letters was from the Governor of Gath, named Shuwardata, in which he specifically asks Pharaoh for help against the invading Hebrews.⁷³

⁷¹ Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Harvest House, 1997) pp. 158, 159

⁷² Josh McDowell, *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Thomas Nelson, 1999) p. 433

⁷³ John Argubright, *Bible Believer's Archaeology* (Xulon Press, 2003) p. 57

- Another letter directly confirms Joshua 11:22; that Gath was spared by Israel and was not destroyed.⁷⁴
- Even the vassal King of Jerusalem, Abdi-Heba, mentions the presence of the Hebrews in his letters. He also uses a more sophisticated dialect than other vassals, lending further confirmation that Jerusalem was a greater cultural center than other cities of Canaan.
- The Tablets also confirm dozens of places mentioned in the Bible, including Bethlehem.

Who would have thought we would ever have to thank an Egyptian Pharaoh for being so organized? Somehow though, I think his mailmen didn't appreciate it so much.

Chapter Twenty One: The Silver Scrolls

The Dead Sea Scrolls may be the oldest full texts of most of the books of the Old Testament, but they are not the oldest evidence of the Scriptures. In 1979 in a tomb overlooking the Hinnom Valley,⁷⁵ two amulets were found by Gabriel Barkay.⁷⁶ When the amulets were opened, it was found that both of them contained small silver scrolls, that is, actual scrolls made of silver.

These scrolls were carefully and painstakingly unrolled, and to the astonishment of many, they contained a passage of Scripture:

“May God bless you and keep you; may God cause His face to shine upon you and grant you peace.”

This is the greater part of the *Priestly Benediction* in Numbers 6:24-26.

Why is this important?

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 58

⁷⁵ Robert J. Morgan, *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* (Evangelical Training Association, 1997) p. 71

⁷⁶ Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Harvest House, 1997) p. 67

- The scrolls were dated to the seventh century BC, making them 2600 years old, and the oldest copy of any Scripture portion; even predating the Dead Sea Scrolls by almost 500 years!⁷⁷
- These scrolls are also the second oldest reference to God as YHWH, (Yahweh.)
- Use of better technology in 1994 also revealed marks in the inscriptions proving they were written in a form of Hebrew used during the period they had been dated to, closing the mouths of detractors who claimed they were dated wrong and had been made much later.
- The scrolls lend even stronger evidence to the authenticity of Scripture in that they demonstrate that Scripture passages were being copied and put to personal use long before skeptics allowed for the Bible to even exist as a manuscript.

Incidentally, even Time Magazine reported that the Silver Scrolls suggested that at least some of the Bible must have been written at the time of the events it records - a stunning admission at the time.

Chapter Twenty Two: The Ipuwer Papyrus

If there is anything we know about Egyptian governments and dynasties, it's that they sure aren't into Biblical Archaeology. Present day Egypt rarely allows archaeological digs that might unearth Biblical evidence of any kind, and the ancient Egyptians were really big on revising history; so much so that they would even destroy evidence of events they were ashamed of, such as losing battles or being brought low by the God of their slaves. It would seem though, that a few hints of evidence for the plagues and the exodus have still found their way up to the surface.

One such bit of evidence for the plagues and the exodus might be the Ipuwer Papyrus, a poetic treatise written by an ancient Egyptian priest called, "**The**

⁷⁷ Robert J. Morgan, *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* (Evangelical Training Association, 1997) p. 71

Admonitions of Ipuwer.⁷⁸ Discovered in Memphis, Egypt, this document has been dated to within a few decades after the exodus, and now resides in the National Archaeological Museum in Leiden, Netherlands.

In this treatise Ipuwer gives proverbial advice to would be rulers and leaders, bemoans the after effects of several cataclysmic events, and makes a number of life observations.

Why is this important?

- Many of the cataclysmic events that Ipuwer bemoans seem to be strikingly similar to the events of Exodus chapters 7 through 12.
- This might seem more like convenient correlation than confirming evidence, except that Ipuwer's name was popular at that time and place in history, the Papyrus was found there, and the Papyrus is dated to that very time.
- The Plague of Blood in which the Nile river ran as blood or as red as blood in Exodus 7:14-25 seems to be mentioned by Ipuwer: *"The river is blood; men shrink and thirst after water..."*
- The Plague of Hail and Fire in which hail mixed with fire fell on the Egyptians in Exodus 9:22-26 certainly seems to be directly addressed by Ipuwer: *"The fire ran along the ground. There was hail, and there was fire mingled with the hail."*
- The final freeing of the Hebrew slaves and their pillage of Egypt in Exodus 12:31-36 also seems to be bemoaned by Ipuwer: *"The plunderer is everywhere and the slave takes what he finds...Gold, silver, and jewels are fastened to the necks of female slaves...The King's storehouse has now become common property."*

Many more examples of this have been cited by scholars and can be applied to every one of the plagues. However, they are a little obscure and can apply to things other than the plagues and the exodus; therefore I am slow to include them here. We must all remember to be careful not to cherry pick or be reaching in our desire to make a case for the Bible. Truth can always make an excellent case for itself.

⁷⁸ Norman Geisler and Ron Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask* (Baker Books, 1996) p. 192

Chapter Twenty Three: The Pools of Bethesda and Siloam

Public Pools were nothing new in New Testament times. Public pools were used for bathing, swimming, socializing, and even religious ceremonies. They came in all shapes and sizes. They were found in all metropolitan areas. One must truly wonder then, why Bible critics would cast doubt on the existence of both pools mentioned in the Book of John. Even so-called Bible scholars said for centuries that the pools never actually existed, that they were probably metaphorical, and that the Book of John could not have been written by anyone who had actually been to Jerusalem at that period in history.

Why would they make such a silly assertion?

Because John claimed the Pool of Bethesda had five porches, meaning it had five sides to it, instead of four.

I am serious, that is all the excuse these people needed to condemn the Book of John. One can only imagine what kind of doubting heart would doubt so easily and so quickly, and what kind of person would then teach others to doubt the Word of God based on such scanty, circumstantial assumptions. One can also only imagine what such people thought when the so-called *metaphorical* pools were actually found.

The Pool of Bethesda was found in East Jerusalem in 1903⁷⁹ and the Pool of Siloam was discovered in 1897 close to the southern end of Hezekiah's Tunnel. The Bethesda Pool was found forty feet underground⁸⁰ and was dated to the third century B.C.

Why is this important?

- The Pool of Bethesda fit John's description exactly in John 5:15, and had five porches exactly as he had claimed.
- Since in later years the Pool had been covered, it would have been very unlikely the Book of John could have been written by someone who was

⁷⁹ Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Harvest House, 1997) p. 317

⁸⁰ Patrick Y. Zukeran, *Unless I See* (Brown Books, 2001) pp. 28, 29

not there at the time it claims. The description of the Pool in fact, virtually proves that John was there, and wrote the book himself.

- This also demonstrates once again how closed minded detractors of the Bible really are as they dismiss a story out of hand based on how many sides a pool is purported to have. Even more so, when we learn WHY the Pool of Bethesda had five sides; it actually had two levels, one for bathing, and a slightly higher level that was not bathed in, but dripped fresher, cleaner water into the lower end, for sanitary purposes – certainly not an unheard of idea for a pool.
- The Pool of Siloam in like manner, verifies John 9:7, when Jesus sent a blind man there to wash the mud off his eyes.⁸¹

You just have to wonder why some folks want so badly for the Bible to be wrong. I thought about calling this chapter, “*No Pools for Fools*,” but never mind.

Chapter Twenty Four: The Inscriptions of Serabit El Khadim

The Hebrew slaves in Egypt weren’t all brick makers. The Egyptians enslaved them for many different kinds of tasks, and used them to do the hardest, most arduous work. One of the most laborious jobs a slave could pull was that of a miner. The Egyptians mined gold, silver, copper, salt, and precious stones, among other things, and they yoked both domestic slaves and slaves taken as prisoners of war to do their mining. Many of their mines were located in Egypt, but many more were located in other lands they had subjugated and controlled. One such mine was a Turquoise mine located in the Sinai Peninsula at Serabit El Khadim. The Egyptians loved their turquoise, and this particular mine had an abundance of the precious stone.⁸²

Many of the enslaved miners that worked the mine were undoubtedly of Hebrew descent. We know this because there are many inscriptions on the walls of the mines using a Semitic alphabet, in which the slaves kept their records and wrote such prayers as, “El, save me!”⁸³

⁸¹ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Zondervan, 1998) p. 99

⁸² Gleason L. Archer Jr., *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Zondervan, 1982) p. 52

⁸³ Josh McDowell, *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Thomas Nelson, 1999) p. 457

Why is this important?

- The inscriptions are dated to about 1500 B.C., which puts the slaves in the exact time period the Bible does.
- The use of the name “El”, that of the Hebrew God, indicates that at least some of these mining slaves were Hebrews who worshipped the “One” God, at a time when the Egyptians and other civilizations were worshipping many gods.
- The inscriptions also prove reading and writing in a sophisticated script and language was present in ancient days, so much so, that even slaves knew how to read and write.

Who ever thought the Egyptian’s greedy love for turquoise would one day serve to shut the mouths of the critics who claim the Hebrews were never enslaved by the Egyptians?

Chapter Twenty Five: The Palace of Tirzah

“In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned in Tirzah seven days. The army was encamped near Gibbethon, a Philistine town. When the Israelites in the camp heard that Zimri had plotted against the king and murdered him, they proclaimed Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that very day there in the camp. Then Omri and all the Israelites with him withdrew from Gibbethon and laid siege to Tirzah. When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the royal palace and set the palace on fire around him. So he died, because of the sins he had committed, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD and following the ways of Jeroboam and committing the same sin Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit.” I Kings 16:15-19

Seven days isn’t a very long time to be king, but Zimri didn’t deserve any better, since he had murdered Elah, the previous King of Israel. Even more fitting, he died by setting fire to the royal palace of Tirzah; effectively committing suicide.

The story seems almost too dramatic to be true - except that the very ruins of the palace he died in have been found.

Archaeological digs at Tell El-Far'ah North led by Roland de Vaux from 1946 to 1960 have uncovered the ancient city of Tirzah and the palace rubble there. In the seventh stratum, a layer of charred remains were indeed found.

Why is this important?

- The charred remains of the seventh stratum are dated to the exact time in which Zimri would have been King in Israel – 900 to 850 B.C.⁸⁴
- This directly confirms 1 Kings 16:18, that there was a fire in the exact geographical location the Bible says there was a fire, and at the exact time in history the Bible places it.
- Archaeologists also discovered that there was an attempt to rebuild on top of the charred remains of the palace and city, but that the work was abandoned before completion. This also tends to confirm 1 Kings 16:23, that Omri spent the first six years of his reign in Tirzah, but then moved away to the Hill of Samaria instead.

Incidentally, the Book of 1 Kings goes on to tell us that Omri built a fortress city on that Hill of Samaria, and it has now been found too.

Chapter Twenty Six: The Camels of Egypt and Nippur

“There are too many camels in the Bible, out of time and out of place.”

Thus began the infamous New York Times article by John Noble Wilford, appearing February 10, 2014, titled, “*Camels had no Business in Genesis.*” This article was cited and repeated by many other media sources and began a feeding frenzy of attacks on the Bible from its adversaries.

⁸⁴ Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* Revised and Expanded by Howard F. Vos (Zondervan, 1992) p. 154

The article briefly describes an archaeological project conducted at the site of an ancient copper smelting camp in the Aravah Valley, in which two archaeologists from Tel Aviv University, Lidar Sapir-Hen and Erez Ben-Yosef, dug for evidence of domesticated camels, and for signs that might shed light on when they first arrived in Bible lands.

According to their findings they announced that domesticated camels were not introduced to Bible lands before the tenth century B.C., roughly 1100 years after the Bible places them there.

To explain this discrepancy, the article quotes a Doctor of Hebrew Culture Studies from Tel Aviv University, Dr. Noam Mizrahi. He said, “[The camel stories in Genesis] do not encapsulate memories from the second millennium, but should be viewed as back-projections from a much later period.”

He went on to make the point that it was back projected from a time when camels had become domesticated, which he claimed happened to be the time the patriarchal stories of Genesis were finally committed to writing.

Obviously, this article was written to make the point that the Bible is “unreliable as verifiable history”, and it makes that very claim. However, there are some glaring problems with the story, the scientific findings, and most importantly, the **unscriptural assumptions**.

First, the article makes a stunning admission, that Sapir-Hen and Ben-Yosef **did in fact find camel bones at lower levels of the dig, that is, deeper than the tenth century level!** However, they dismissed them as belonging to “wild camels probably hunted for their meat.” How did they arrive at this conclusion? The article tells us they differentiated between domesticated and wild camels by signs in their leg bones that indicated whether or not they had carried heavy loads. In other words, it was not a matter of what they found, but how they interpreted it.

Second, the article goes on to admit that both the Arabians and the Egyptians “exploited the copper resources” there at that location; two known civilizations with early domesticated camels.

Third, anyone can see that the angle the narrative is presenting is a purposefully anti Bible point of view. The skeptics of the Bible have long maintained in the face of all evidence that the Old Testament wasn't written down until sometime after the fifth century B.C., (if not after the time of Christ,) that the contents of the Bible reflect this fact, and therefore the evidence found will always be interpreted to match this narrative.

Fourth, the article, the archaeologists featured therein, and the case they present completely ignore and disregard all other evidence concerning the timing of the first domestication of camels. We discussed the Camel of Byblos and the Camels of Turkmenia in prior chapters, but there is a great deal *more* evidence for the early domestication of camels, most especially in Nippur and Egypt.

According to an ancient Sumerian text dated to 2000 B.C. found in Nippur, camels were being kept and milked.⁸⁵ A Sumerian Lexicon mentions camels as a domesticated animal dated to the same period.⁸⁶

Evidence for domestication of camels in Egypt comes from three hundred years *before* Abraham. These finds include a rock carving found near Geziroh in northern Egypt of a man leading domesticated camels by a rope,⁸⁷ a small limestone container carved into a sitting camel carrying a large basket,⁸⁸ and a terra cotta tablet depicting several men both leading and riding camels.⁸⁹

Why is this important?

- The establishment of the existence of domesticated camels in Egypt in Abraham's time is the key to the entire "Camels in Genesis" question. At no time does the Bible claim that Abraham brought camels with him from Haran, nor does it claim that he obtained them in Canaan. The Bible does not claim that camels had been domesticated in Bible lands during that time period, or make any allusion to it. That is simply an assumption made by Bible skeptics who have not taken the time to actually read the Bible. In fact, the Bible tells us exactly where Abraham obtained domesticated

⁸⁵ Gleason Archer, *Old Testament History and Recent Archaeology from Abraham to Moses*, (1970) pp. 3-25

⁸⁶ John Davis, *The Camel in Biblical Narratives*, (1986) pp. 141, 150

⁸⁷ Michael Ripinsky, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, (1985) p. 138

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* p. 136

⁸⁹ Joseph Free, *Abraham's Camels* (1944) pp.189, 190

camels – in Egypt! The very first mention of camels in the Bible answers the question for us in Genesis 12:16, “*And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.*” Pharaoh ***gave the camels*** to Abraham!

- Abraham and his descendants are the only individuals named in the entire book of Genesis and in the entire land of Canaan with camels. (The latter part of Genesis mentions a caravan of Ishmaelites with camels, but of course Ishmael was a son of Abraham.)
- This demonstrates the unfortunate predilection many learned scholars have for making horrific assumptions concerning the content of the Bible, and how their neglect and failure to study it carefully before publicly attacking it sways the opinions of millions away from the truth, all while appearing to apply scientific method and rigor.

Let’s face it; this entire argument concerning domesticated camels would have been totally unnecessary if it weren’t for the poor research and scholarship of Bible critics.

Chapter Twenty Seven: The Inscription of Pilate

Would you believe skeptics once actually questioned the existence of Pontius Pilate simply because the Bible claims he existed, though he was mentioned by not one, not two, but by three ancient historians? They argued that the accounts of Josephus and Philo were questionable and that Tacitus was merely parroting what the followers of “Christus” believed happened to their leader.

Fortunately, even the most dogmatic Bible opponents must now acknowledge that Pontius Pilate existed, and for this we have a group of industrious Italian archaeologists led by Dr. Antonio Frova to thank.

These archaeologists were excavating the Roman amphitheater just outside Caesarea Maritima in 1961, where they uncovered the building dedication

inscribed in Latin on a block of limestone.⁹⁰ It said, ***“Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea, has dedicated to the people of Caesarea a temple in honor of Tiberius.”***⁹¹

Why is this important?

- The block of limestone was dated to about 36 A.D., exactly the time the Bible places Pilate in the region.⁹²
- The inscription itself confirms the Bible in four ways: that Pilate existed, that he was a Prefect, that he was a Prefect under the Emperor Tiberius in the time of Tiberius, and that he was the Prefect in Judea.
- Until this discovery the only mentions of Pilate were literary mentions.⁹³

With a handful of Latin words on a limestone block, four major Bible claims are confirmed at one time. Sometimes it doesn't take much to out the Truth.

Chapter Twenty Eight: The Lysanias Inscription

About two hundred and fifty years ago there lived a man by the name of Richard Pococke. Growing up in England, he became a man of many parts as a Clergyman attaining the level of Bishop in the Church of Ireland, as a scholar earning a degree in Law, and as a traveling Anthropologist. He made several long trips covering Europe, the Near East, and the Middle East; all the while keeping detailed journals of everything he observed and did. He has become known to historians and scientists alike as the very first Egyptologist, and most of his journals have become published. One such journal of his was published in 1745, titled *“A Description of the East.”* One can even see and read an original copy of the book page by page on Archive.Org – a fun and fascinating read of an old manuscript if you can stand to wade through the old English type and penchant for using an “f” in place of “s” throughout the entire book.

⁹⁰ Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Harvest House, 1997) p. 316

⁹¹ Patrick Y. Zukeran, *Unless I See* (Brown Books, 2001) p.28

⁹² Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Harvest House, 1997) p.316

⁹³ Josh McDowell, *The Resurrection Factor* (Here's Life Publishers, 1981) p. 38

One of the things Bible believers will find interesting that Pococke mentioned in his journals is a reference to an inscription he found on his travels to Bible lands: “...about two miles from the bridge and twelve from Damascus, we saw to the right a mountain which is very high and steep; there is a ruined church on the top of it, the place is called Nebi-Abel...I went to see this place and found a most beautiful church uncovered...I hoped for some light as to the founder of it from a Greek inscription which I saw on a stone about four feet wide fixed on the inside of the church...it seems to consist of verses in honor of the builder, and to run in the first person, beginning with the year, and afterwards makes mention of Lysanias, tetrarch of Abilene.”⁹⁴

Why is this important?

- In Luke 3:1, Luke tells us the general time in which John the Baptist begins his ministry: “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and **Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene**, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”
- Bible critics once again rabidly attacked Luke, saying he was completely mistaken, and that Lysanias was never a tetrarch in Abilene, but that he had been the Ruler of Chalcis fifty years earlier. They claimed that someone much later had written the book of Luke and simply got his history of times and places wrong.⁹⁵
- Pococke’s discovery adds great weight to Luke’s narrative, and places Lysanias in the very geographical spot that Luke does.

The name of Richard Pococke may not be a household name today, but his travels and his history have been most effective at demonstrating for us how Bible critics must grasp at straws in order to argue against the Bible, so much so, that they will madly assume no two people in Bible times could have had the same name. Thank you, Richard Pococke.

⁹⁴ Richard Pococke, *A Description of the East and Some Other Countries, Volume 2, Part 1*, (W. Boyer, London, 1745)

⁹⁵ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Zondervan, 1998) p. 97

Chapter Twenty Nine: The Inscription of Nebuchadnezzar

Unfortunately for Biblical Archaeology, many of the most important ancient sites are in an area of the world where war seems to be a continual thing. Not only does this greatly hinder the work of archaeologists, but it constantly endangers the very sites themselves. In fact, since the Desert Storm Gulf War and the Iraq War, many of the archaeological sites in Iraq have been vandalized, and many artifacts have been stolen and carried away. Worse than that, the terrorist organization ISIS has destroyed some of the most important and ancient sites and artifacts in Babylon and Borsippa, including structures from the kingdom and era of Nebuchadnezzar.

We must thank the Lord then, that over the last 150 years we have found and preserved many important artifacts from the area, and have documented and catalogued many more. Many bricks and stones and tablets have been found in the ruins of Babylon, many bearing various inscriptions, and many bearing proclamations and declarations from the time of Nebuchadnezzar; even from Nebuchadnezzar himself.

One of the inscriptions has become well known, and has become known to many as *THE* Inscription of Nebuchadnezzar. A French Professor, M. Oppert, translated the inscription thus:

*"Nebuchodonosor King of Babylon shepherd of peoples,
who attests the immutable affection of Merodach ruler
exalting Nebo the saviour who lends his ears to the orders of
the highest god without reproach
the repairer of the Pyramid and the the Tower,
the eldest son of Nabopolassar King...
The tower, the eternal house, which I founded and built,
I have completed its magnificence with silver, gold,
other metals, stone, enameled bricks, fir and pine.
The first which is the house of the earth's base,
the most ancient monument of Babylon;
I built and finished it.
I have highly exalted its head with bricks covered with copper.
We say for the other, that is, this edifice, the house of the*

*seven lights of the earth,
the most ancient monument of Borsippa.
A former king built it, but he did not
complete its head.
Since a remote time, people had abandoned it,
without order expressing their words.
Since that time the earthquake and the thunder had
dispersed the sun-dried clay.
The bricks of the casing had been split,
and the earth of the interior had been scattered in heaps."*

Why is this important?

- The geographical area, in which the inscription was found, along with the time it was dated, proves that the Biblical Nebuchadnezzar really did exist.
- The portion of the inscription that reads: *"the most ancient monument of Borsippa. A former king built it, but he did not complete its head. Since a remote time, people had abandoned it, without order expressing their words"*, also lends strong evidence to the fact that Nebuchadnezzar was actually rebuilding the Tower of Babel that Nimrod had built, and was rebuilding it on the very spot it had first been built 1600 years earlier.
- Not only that, it attests to the fact that Nebuchadnezzar himself believed the Tower of Babel had existed, and believed it to be in the very area that the Bible claimed it had been.

Once again the boastings of wicked men inadvertently confirms Scripture, but one must wonder with all the war in the area, if God is not making sure the Tower of Babel remains unbuilt permanently.

Chapter Thirty: Monuments of the Nations

When it comes to the claims of ancient writings and confirming evidence, the Bible literally stands alone. What other collection of stories can produce corroborating validations from as long ago as 4500 years? In Genesis chapter 10, the Bible lists dozens of ancient peoples and lands, almost all of which have been found, commemorated on ancient monuments, or alluded to in ancient documents that have been found elsewhere. In fact, as long ago as 1955, W. F. Albright stated that most of these had already been attested to in one way or another.⁹⁶ Just some of the peoples and lands mentioned in Genesis chapter 10 confirmed by his time were:

- Accad
- Ashkenaz
- Cush
- Dedan
- Elishah
- Meshech
- Phut
- Shinar
- Tarshish
- Togarmah
- Tubal

Why is this important? This is important because it addresses Bible stories from a very early time, a time in which Bible critics tell us the Biblical narrative is pure fiction, based on absolutely no facts or concrete claims. Scholars tell us that anything in the Bible prior to Genesis chapter 12 is a fabrication; a collection of fables. Even Bible believing professors now teach the same in our seminaries and Bible colleges; dutifully conceding that the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis *must* be allegory.

Archaeology presents a problem for these doubters – **allegory doesn't leave evidence.**

⁹⁶ Josh McDowell, *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Thomas Nelson, 1999) p. 441

Chapter Thirty One: The Inscription of Erastus

When I was young I would wonder why the Bible contained so many obscure and seemingly unimportant facts; mentions of small irrelevant details, asides, and descriptions of things that didn't seem to me to have anything to do with the point of the passage, or the subject at hand. Though I understood how it brought a human touch to God's Word, it all added a sort of tedium to the text I didn't like. After I matured a bit though, I understood.

The point of all the obscure detail was so the Word would be verifiable; then, and now.

God verifies His own Word Himself, however, He made certain that doubters who questioned the spiritual and supernatural aspects of His Word would still have to admit the physical and historical assertions are spot on, that is, if they are honest with themselves and have intellectual integrity, and therefore have no excuse in themselves to doubt the former. The details provided thousands of proofs of obscure people and events that have been dug up and verified.

The Biblical *Erastus* was one of these.

He was only mentioned two or three times in the Bible, and we know very little about him. However, in 1929 an inscription was uncovered in an excavation in Corinth that said: "*ERASTUS PRO AEDILITATE SUA PECUNIA STRAVIT*", which is Latin for: "Erastus, Commissioner (or Curator) of Public Buildings (or Public Works) laid this pavement at his own expense."⁹⁷

Why is this important?

- Paul mentions Erastus in Romans 16:23, "*Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you and Quartus a brother.*" The inscription confirms this passage, and also confirms he was indeed a steward of the civic government concerning construction. This passage does not however, confirm that Erastus was in Corinth, though all scholars agree that Paul wrote Romans from Corinth.

⁹⁷ Josh McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity* (Thomas Nelson, 2006) p. 100

- Another passage however, confirms exactly where Erastus lived: *“Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.”* 2 Timothy 4:20
- The pavement was also dated (according to the layer it was found) to the first century A.D., placing Erastus not only in the right place, but at the right moment in history. The Bible wins out again.

I must confess I no longer question the inclusion of the obscure details in the Bible, in fact, now I **look** for them!

Chapter Thirty Two: The Stele of Mesha 2

There are a great many people named in the Bible that we know very little about. There are those who are named without any other information given, and there are those who have ancestors and descendants we are told a lot about though we know nothing of the person named.

Moab was one of these. We know the entire story leading up to his birth, and his descendants (both as a nation and as individuals) are mentioned many times, but we know nothing else about him.

In Genesis 19 Lot and his daughters escaped the dramatic destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and his daughters seemed to think the entire world had been destroyed, and that there were no men left to marry. They got their father drunk, and became pregnant by him. The elder daughter had a son and named him Moab.

The Bible mentions his descendants, the Moabites, many times in Judges, Kings, Chronicles, and in the Prophets. King Saul and the Israelites fought against them as did later kings, and David’s great grandmother Ruth was from the land of Moab. King Solomon sinned against the Lord by taking Moabite women into his harem. It would seem that though we knew little of Moab personally, he was certainly established as a real person with a real legacy.

Therefore critics of the Bible zealously chimed in to tell us that he and his descendants never existed.

You know what happened next of course – Archaeology stepped in and proved them wrong.

In August of 1868 a German Missionary, Reverend V.F. Klein, discovered a monument made of black basalt in Dibon, Moab.⁹⁸ It had been erected by Mesha, the King of Moab in order to commemorate his revolt against Israel. This “Stele of Mesha”, also called the “**Moabite Stone**”, was broken into pieces at one time,⁹⁹ but almost all of the pieces were recovered, and the stone was dated to around 850 to 830 B.C.; the very era in which Mesha was mentioned in the Bible.

“And Mesha king of Moab was a sheepmaster, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool. But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.” 2 Kings 3:4, 5

Why is this important?

- Ahab died in about 852 B.C., confirming that the timing of Mesha and his commemoration coincide with the Bible exactly.
- One of the verses from the stele proves that Moab had been under tribute to Omri, king of Israel, also named in the Bible in 1 Kings 16.
- The stele mentions the name of YAHWEH, confirming the name was known even to the enemies of Israel.
- The Moabite god, Chemosh, is mentioned several times throughout the commemoration, confirming many Old Testament passages that also name him: Judges 11:24, 1 Kings 11:33, and Jeremiah 48:46 among them. The Bible tells us that when Solomon fell away from the Lord, he set up a high place to the god Chemosh.

⁹⁸ John Argubright, *Bible Believer's Archaeology* (Xulon Press, 2003) pp. 66, 67

⁹⁹ Siegfried Horn, *Why the Moabite Stone was Blown to Pieces*, (Biblical Archaeology Review May/June, 1986)

- The stele also makes mention of “The House of David”, testifying to the existence of David, and the fact that surrounding kingdoms considered Israel and Judah to be of David’s heritage and their kings to be extensions of David’s dynasty.
- The commemoration on the stele revealed the Moabite language was simply a dialect of Hebrew – not some foreign language the Israelites could not understand, lending strong testimony to the claim in Genesis 9 that the Israelites and the Moabites came from the same family.
- Mount Nebo is named on the Mesha Stele, confirming several Bible passages including Deuteronomy 32:49 and 34:1, Isaiah 46:1, and Jeremiah 48:1.

Among the many archaeological artifacts that validate Biblical references, it’s notable that the Mesha Stele confirms so many Biblical characters, places and events all by itself. In this case, Archaeology has killed many birds with one stone...

Chapter Thirty Three: The Letters of Lachish

One of my favorite scenes in Peter Jackson’s *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* is the scene where Gandalf has Pippin light a signal fire in order to summon faraway allies to battle, and the scene goes on and on, rolling over entire mountain ranges as the signal fires light one by one, covering vast distances, so that allies hundreds of miles away finally get the signal.

This very technique has been used in various ways all through history of course, but imagine my surprise when I discovered it was used in Bible lands and in Bible times, even by Israel and Judah.

Most of the ancient Bible kingdoms were used to being attacked and having to defend themselves, so they built fortifications and fortified cities made to withstand the sieges of their enemies. Signal fires were used to let other cities know if they were under attack.

Though Jerusalem itself was a fortified city, the Israelites built cities even stronger and more fortified on its outskirts, to stand as outer defenses. Two such fortified cities that stood between Jerusalem and its enemies were Lachish and Azekah.¹⁰⁰

Lachish was mentioned many times in the Bible. Israel first conquered Lachish in the book of Joshua, with it eventually being given to the Tribe of Judah. Rehoboam later fortified Lachish greatly, but under Hezekiah's reign the city was all but destroyed by Sennacherib. It was again rebuilt, only to again be destroyed a few hundred years later; this time by the forces of Nebuchadnezzar.

Lachish was found again in 1932; the site of the excavation known as Tell ed-Duweir. It was found by a team led by J. L. Starkey. Though he believed he had found Lachish, Starkey wasn't certain until twenty one ostraca letters were found in the gate tower, that is, correspondence written on pottery shards which confirmed he had indeed found the ancient fortified city of Lachish.

Why is this important?

- The letters apparently were written during the final battles with the forces of Nebuchadnezzar, and they confirm the names of several people named in the Bible during this time, Jucal and Shelemiah who are both named in Jeremiah 38:1, and Hoshai, mentioned in Jeremiah 42:1, 2. This places these men in the same geographical area and time the Bible does.
- The urgency of the letters show that Lachish was falling by that time, and that Azekah had just fallen, and that there was no hope of standing against the enemy forces - confirming Jeremiah 34:7 which may have been written only hours before the particular Lachish Letter that conveys this message.
- The shards the letters were written on were dated to the time just before the Babylonian exile, about 585 to 590 B.C., also placing them at the correct place and time the Bible does.
- Nearly every letter mentions the name of YAHWEH.
- One of the letters confirms the use of signal fires just as the Bible does in Jeremiah 6:1.

¹⁰⁰ Rodney Wright, *Lachish and Azekah*, (Biblical Archaeology Review, Nov/Dec, 1982)

I wonder if J.R.R. Tolkien was thinking of Lachish when he wrote about signal fires in *Lord of the Rings*.

Chapter Thirty Four: The Papyri of Zeno

It's great when an obscure character in the Bible is mentioned outside the Scriptures, but when a second mention of him or his family is found in an entirely different place, that much more credibility is added; in fact, one might say the credibility of Scriptures is multiplied.

The Zeno Papyri offer just such a credibility booster. Found in a fertile area of Egypt known as the "Fayum", and dated to 300 to 250 B.C., they contain correspondence between Zeno, his master Apollonius, and correspondence and memoranda between Ptolemy and Tobias the Ammonite.¹⁰¹

This is not the original Tobias mentioned in Nehemiah chapter four, but is a descendant of his, probably a son or grandson, living in the exact same area in the Trans Jordan as the original Tobias.

Why is this important?

- In Nehemiah chapter four we are introduced to the original Tobias, and we find he is not a peasant, but a person of relative power and influence. As we discussed in a previous chapter, the ruins of his castle and family tombs were found – proving he had a family of stature. His namesake descendant, who was the author of some of the correspondence mentioned here, was actually corresponding back and forth with Ptolemy, the King of Egypt, one of the most powerful men of the period. There is strong evidence that the Tobias family were themselves rulers, and governors in Ammon.
- The fact that Tobias was corresponding with Ptolemy, also verifies the dating of the papyri, as Ptolemy lived and reigned during those exact years.

¹⁰¹ Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* Revised and Expanded by Howard F. Vos (Zondervan, 1992) p. 211

Like the pieces of a puzzle, obscure evidence from obscure places can prove the existence of obscure people, and effectively confirm obscure Scripture references.

Chapter Thirty Five: The Inscription of Delphi

Once again Luke is on the hot seat as the doubting scholars assume he is less than accurate in the way he uses titles of leaders and office holders. It seems that critics of the Bible always demand extra Biblical evidence to corroborate any Scriptural claim in advance of that claim, or they will not believe.

This time though, not only will the critics be stood on their head, the entire Biblical timeline they have so constantly challenged, disputed, and disparaged, will be set in stone...so to speak.

In 1905, in Delphi, Greece, near the temple of Apollo, several fragments were found of an inscription in stone, written on behalf of the Roman Emperor Claudius, to a proconsul named Gallio.

The inscription is fairly long, but certain words stand out very clearly, “As *Lucius Junius Gallio, my friend and proconsul of Achaia...*”¹⁰²

Why is this important?

- In Acts chapter 18 verse 12, Luke refers to Gallio as a proconsul, which many critics and scholars scoffed at, but the Delphi inscription confirms that Gallio was indeed called a proconsul at the time.
- The Delphi Inscription also tells us which year of the reign of Claudius the inscription was made, pinpointing the very time that Gallio was a proconsul - the year 52 A.D.
- The Delphi Inscription is also dated from about April, to July, 52 A.D. - the very year the inscription claims to be made, and therefore the time Gallio would have been the proconsul is doubly confirmed. (Not only this, but

¹⁰² Josh McDowell, *The Resurrection Factor* (Here's Life Publishers, 1981) p. 34

proconsuls generally served for one year, beginning on July 1st, and ending the following July 1st.)¹⁰³

- This gives us one of the best, if not **the best** point of reference in the entire Bible. From this point, the timeline of the Book of Acts can be back referenced, and to a lesser degree the entire New Testament including the Gospels.

Wasn't it nice of the Roman Emperor Claudius to set our Bible chronometers for us?

Chapter Thirty Six: The Excavations of Nubia

Sometimes the critics are right.

Not when they criticize the Bible, but when they question certain assumptions Believers make when interpreting the Bible, and when applying some of the Bible's assertions.

Often to the critics this is all the same. They attack God's Word based upon the faulty assumptions of many Believers, and when Believers collectively believe and teach a certain passage of Scripture in the light of faulty assumptions, lazy interpretations, and yes, even upon inaccurate translations, then the criticism is at least somewhat justified.

Let's face it, when we don't do our homework when it comes to representing the Word of God, we invite Bible critics, and make our own job of sharing the Gospel that much more difficult.

In our defense however, let me point out that there are many historical facts that we simply do not know, and it can be all too easy to make certain assumptions based upon the text, especially when it comes to historical people, places, and events.

¹⁰³ Josh McDowell, *New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Thomas Nelson, 1999) p. 65

One such person in the Bible is named (or so we thought) in Acts 8:26-29:

“And the Angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the South, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose, and went: and behold, a man of Ethiopia, an Eunuch of great authority under Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot, read Esaias the Prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.”

For centuries it was assumed that “Candace” was a proper name of an individual, and that “Ethiopians” referred to the nation of Ethiopia, rather than the general area settled by the descendants of Cush. Critics were quick to assert that Ethiopia never had a queen named Candace – and they were right.

The assumption that Candace was a name turned out to be wrong.

In 1905 Sir Ernest Alfred Thompson Wallis Budge led an archaeological team to Meroe, Nubia, also known as the ancient kingdom of Kush, and began digs around the Nubian pyramids. The team found that under the pyramids, were ancient tombs. The tombs had reliefs carved into their walls, depicting the images, titles and names of their past queens, called “Candaces” (Pronounced “Kandakes.”)¹⁰⁴

As it turns out, “Candace” was not a name at all, but a **title**; and the word translated “Ethiopia” in the Bible, referred to the ancient land of the Cushites, including present day Sudan - not merely to the nation of Ethiopia. A good present day example of this would be that we tend to refer to the nation of the United States as “America”, though one could call Canada “America” and still be absolutely accurate.

Why is this important?

- This demonstrates that even when critics of the Bible are correct about the inaccurate assumptions of Believers, they are STILL wrong when it

¹⁰⁴ Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* Revised and Expanded by Howard F. Vos (Zondervan, 1992) p. 263

comes to their attacks on the Bible itself. The Bible will stand up to scrutiny even when the interpretations of Believers do not.

- Luke is again exonerated, proving his accuracy was and is beyond reproach.
- Later, David Randall MacIver dated some of the excavation findings back to 3100 B.C., demonstrating that the land and culture descended from the days of Cush.

Interestingly, in 1910 John Garstang discovered a relief in the ruins of an ancient palace in Meroe, depicting a large, overweight Candace, which was dated to around 30 A.D. - the very time of Christ and the Apostles, and to the time Luke claims that Philip baptized the Eunuch.

Chapter Thirty Seven: The Seal of Gemariah

In Jeremiah chapter 36 we are told a story about God commanding Jeremiah to prophesy to King Jehoiakim and all of Judah about His coming judgment upon them, and to have his servant Baruch write down the words of the prophecy on a scroll. Jehoiakim obviously didn't like the prophecy, and cut it into pieces and burned it.

One of the principal characters of this account is a nobleman of Judah by the name of Gemariah, son of Shapan, who was a Temple Secretary. Gemariah's secretarial chambers were in the upper courtyard at the new gate at the temple that looked out over the courtyard, and he allowed Baruch to read the words of the prophecy from there to all the people.

He and his son then had Baruch go to the office of the King's Secretary in the palace, and read it again before him and several other officials. They sent Baruch into hiding for fear of the king, and took the scroll to be read before the king. The king rejected the prophecy and cut it up and burned it in a fire, though Gemariah and the other officials begged him not to do so. After that we heard and saw nothing more about Gemariah, son of Shapan.

Nothing more that is, until 1982.

In an official archaeological dig near the old temple mound in Jerusalem under the supervision of David Tarler and Jane Cahill, an archaeologist by the name of Yagil Shiloh found a large number of clay seals; the seals having been preserved by fire. On one of the seals a name is clearly written: "*Gemariah ben Shapan.*"¹⁰⁵

Why is this important?

- This seal, the type of seal found on documents and scrolls, is a direct confirmation of the existence of Gemariah son of Shapan mentioned in Jeremiah 36.¹⁰⁶
- This seal also confirms by the location in which it was found that this Gemariah, son of Shapan, was indeed a temple official, with an office at the temple courtyard, just as the Bible indicates.
- The fact that his seal would be in a place where temple documents were found also attests to his position and authority as a temple secretary.
- The seal was found at exactly the correct level; that of the 587 B.C. destruction level, again placing Gemariah at the time the Bible places him.
- The time period was also confirmed by the architecture, pottery, and other ceramics at that level; effectively providing a triple confirmation of the exact period.

One must wonder what it takes to get Bible critics to come to their senses. Here we have evidence of a minor character that the Bible claims existed, found in the **right geographical area**, to the **exact building**, to the **exact place within that building**, at the **correct level**, and which places him in the **correct time frame**, confirmed by the **destruction**, the **depth**, the **architecture**, and the **ceramics**, and then finally even confirming his **occupation!**

No one is so blind as he who WILL NOT see.

¹⁰⁵ Robert J. Morgan, *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* (Evangelical Training Association, 1997) p. 76

¹⁰⁶ John Argubright, *Bible Believer's Archaeology* (Xulon Press, 2003) p. 88

Chapter Thirty Eight: The Scrolls of Murabba'at

After the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947, a race was on to locate and search any and all caves throughout the land to see if more ancient documents could be found. The competition did not disappoint, and more ancient documents were indeed found, this time, in the area of the Wadi Murabba'at and Nahal Hever.

In 1951 discoveries in this area included 170 ancient manuscripts, mostly dated to the time of the Bar Kokhba Revolt of 132 A.D. The notable exceptions though, were the Scrolls of the Minor Prophets from Joel to Haggai in Greek, and a Semitic papyrus dated to about 800 B.C., one of the oldest found to date.¹⁰⁷

Why is this important?

- This find demonstrates something we don't normally consider. God's Word has turned up everywhere. Whether in whole manuscripts, or in pieces and fragments, His written Word turns up in the unlikeliest of places. When people have had to flee enemies throughout history, they have taken their Scriptures with them. At times Believers have hidden the Scriptures from those who would destroy them, and they have survived through time. There will be plenty more ancient copies of Scripture found in the future, and they will continue to confirm our modern versions, just as they always have.

God is watching over His Word to perform It. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His Word shall never pass away.

¹⁰⁷ Josh McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity* (Thomas Nelson, 2006) p. 117

Chapter Thirty Nine: The Inscription of Balaam

Most of us know the story of Balaam, son of Beor, from the Book of Numbers chapters 22-24. Balak the king of Moab attempted several times to get the prophet Balaam to curse the Israelites, but the Israelites could not be cursed, because God had already blessed them, and was with them. The story is mocked and ridiculed by scoffers of the Bible because in the story Balaam's jackass speaks to Balaam, and those scoffers use this story as a "go to" text to attempt to illustrate how the Bible is full of fairy tales; saying that we all know that animals can't speak.

However, though we have not found evidence that a jackass can speak, (except in Congress,) we *have* found evidence that Balaam was a real person.

In an archaeological dig in 1967 in present day Deir Alla, Jordan, the remains of a plastered wall with an inscription were found. 119 plaster fragments, that when reassembled formed an inscription written with red and black ink entitled: *"The Warning of the Book of Balaam, Son of Beor, Who Was a Seer of the gods."*¹⁰⁸

Why is this important?

- The inscription was from at least as ancient a time as 760 B.C., since the breaking up of this wall was dated to 760 B.C. which just happened to be the date of the earthquake mentioned in Amos 1:1 and Zechariah 14:5, but could have been inscribed much earlier.
- The name "Balaam, Son of Beor" appears three times in the first four lines of the inscription, leaving no doubt as to whom the warning is from.
- Though God is referred to as plural in the title, throughout the inscription He is named as "El" and "Shaddai"; both common names used for God during the time of Balaam.

I was sorely tempted to end this chapter with a comparison between Balaam's animal and Bible critics, but they tend to do a pretty good job of that themselves.

¹⁰⁸ John Argubright, *Bible Believer's Archaeology* (Xulon Press, 2003) p. 52

Chapter Forty: The Seals of Tepe Gawra

One of the main pillars of the arguments that detractors of the Bible hold stubbornly to, is the idea that many of the customs, stories, and people of the Bible were actually written about much later than the Bible claims, and were simply “back written” into the ancient times. We have already discussed several archaeological finds which disprove many of their uses of this argument, and thrash the critics with truth.

However, few discoveries take the thrashing so far back in time perhaps, as the Seals of Tepe Gawra, both in antiquity, *and* in the Bible.

From 1931 to 1938, archaeologists from the University of Pennsylvania conducted a dig at the mound of Tepe Gawra, twelve miles away from the ancient city of Nineveh. In 1932, E.A. Speiser found a 3000 year old seal depicting the Garden of Eden story.¹⁰⁹

Later, another seal was found, also depicting the Garden of Eden story.

This is very important because it demonstrates just how old the Garden of Eden story is, and validates the earliest chapters of Scripture, and proving these stories were not back written by a future fiction writer.

Chapter Forty One: The Fragment of Relocation

Foes of the Bible aren't content with simply telling us there was no such person as Jesus of Nazareth. They are rabidly compelled to go on to tell us there was never even a place called Nazareth. Once again though, they find themselves behind the curve of archaeological discoveries.

When Jerusalem fell during the Bar Kokhba revolt in 132 A.D., many of the priestly families were out of a job, so they were relocated to other villages and

¹⁰⁹ Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* Revised and Expanded by Howard F. Vos (Zondervan, 1992) p. 33

communities. A list of these families and the places they were relocated to written in Aramaic was found on a fragment of a marble tablet, dated to that period. It lists one of the families as relocated to a village named Nazareth.¹¹⁰

Not only this, but another tablet was found **at** Nazareth in 1878, depicting an ordinance from Caesar himself, describing the penalty for anyone who desecrated any of the tombs or graves there. It seems the story of Christ's resurrection had made its way to Caesar. The tablet was dated to 50 A.D., the very time one would expect if the Bible was true.

If this wasn't enough, many years later, in 2009, the remains of a house in Nazareth was dug up by archaeologist Yardenna Alexandre, dated to the time of Christ, proving that the village of Nazareth did indeed exist at the time of Christ.^{111 112}

Though Nazareth was a tiny community, perhaps no more than 80 families, it was not isolated. In fact, it was very significantly located, just overlooking the Valley of Megiddo, where the two main roads, the Via Maris and the Kings Highway, intersected. Armies, merchant caravans, and travelers from all over the known world would travel through this intersection.

What an astonishingly strategic spot for the future King of Kings to grow up.

Chapter Forty Two: The Mural at Beni Hassan

In Genesis chapter 12 the Bible tells us that Abraham went to Egypt because of a famine. We learn there that Pharaoh blessed him with servants and cattle, including camels. Later we are told that his descendant, Joseph, went to Egypt, and became a ruler there.

¹¹⁰ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Zondervan, 1998) p. 103

¹¹¹ *House from Jesus' Time Excavated* (Israel Innovation News Service, December 23, 2009)

¹¹² *For the very First Time: A Residential Building from the Time of Jesus was Exposed in the Heart of Nazareth*, (Israel Antiquities Authority, 12/21/09)

Critics of the Bible tell us this could not be so, and that Egypt did not allow visitors until much, much later in history, and that even the story of the Exodus was terribly flawed, since Egypt had always been closed to visitors.

This time though, critics had a credible source for their assertions; in fact, they had two credible sources: The Greek Historian and Geographer **Strabo**, and the famous Greek Historian **Diodorus**.

Though Diodorus Siculus was famous for his massive historical work: **"Biblethica Historica"**, in forty volumes, there is little else known about him, except that he wrote it during the first century B.C.

On the other hand, we know a bit more about Strabo; he was born about 63 B.C., died in 24 A.D., and therefore was alive during the childhood of Christ, and saw the days of Julius Caesar, Caesar Augustus, and Tiberius. He was a true traveler and geographer, and wrote the classic: **"Geographica"**, an historical and geographic account of many lands, which he apparently continued to write, edit, and revise till the very day he died.

The critics site this passage in Geographica to support their claim, *"Now the earlier kings of the Aegyptians, being content with what they had and not wanting foreign imports at all...set a guard over this region and ordered it to keep away any who should approach."*¹¹³

They also quote Diodorus: *"Psammetichus...was the first Egyptian king to open [Egypt] to other nations...For his predecessors in power had consistently closed Egypt to strangers, either killing or enslaving any who touched it shores."*¹¹⁴

Unfortunately for the critics, the way in which they apply these quotes is in direct conflict with the findings of archaeology.

In the mid nineteenth century at the tombs of Beni Hassan, the tomb of Khnumhotep III was discovered. Many murals were painted on the walls of the main chamber, and one of them depicts the Egyptians trading with a group of

¹¹³ *The Geography of Strabo, Volume 8, Book 17*, Edited by Horace L. Jones (London: Heinemann, 1932)

¹¹⁴ *Diodorus of Sicily, Volume 10, Book 1, 67:9, 10*, Edited by C.H. Oldfather, (London: Heinemann; New York: Putnam, 1933.)

Asiatic Semites, and the mural is dated to the very time of the Patriarchs – 1950 B.C.¹¹⁵

Why is this important?

- This is proof that the Egyptians were not always as closed to visitors on a consistent basis through the centuries as historians and critics might have thought, and that the Bible is correct when It displays the Patriarchs dealing with the Egyptians.
- It is also important because several other Biblical claims depend on the accuracy of the narrative with Egypt, such as Abraham acquiring domesticated camels from Pharaoh, and Joseph rising to power there.

The histories of Diodorus and Strabo make for very interesting reading, (though I have certainly not read the entirety of their work by any means,) and I don't doubt that most of their claims are accurate. In fact, I believe their quotes listed here to be accurate!

It's really not what these histories claim that is in question, but the way critics have interpreted them and applied them to the Bible. Critics have simply once again demonstrated their shoddy historical research and above all their failure to read what the Bible actually SAYS.

At no time does the Bible claim that Egypt was fully open to any visitor at any and all times and for any and all reasons! Nor does it claim that our Patriarchs and their descendants had full freedom and favor to visit and make themselves at home there.¹¹⁶

Strabo and Diodorus make it plain that the Egyptians needed little in the way of resources from outsiders, and that they generally killed or enslaved those who would encroach upon their land. Does the Bible contradict their claim in any way?

When first Abraham and Sarah make their way to Egypt, it is clear that Abraham **fears for his life**. He actually uses the fact that Sarah is still a looker in

¹¹⁵ J. H. Breasted, *A History of Egypt*, (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1908) p. 158

¹¹⁶ Nahum M. Sama, *Abraham in History*, (Biblical Archaeology Review, December, 1977)

her old age in order to survive. Only after God Himself intervenes does Abraham win favor with Pharaoh, and even then only because Pharaoh feared God.

It also seems to have slipped the critic's minds that Joseph didn't enter Egypt as a favored prince. He spent many years in Egypt as a slave and a prisoner. Only when he was able to tell Pharaoh his dream and interpret it did he win favor, and exalted status. Then once Joseph had passed away it took little time for the Israelites and other Hebrews living there to become fully enslaved by the Egyptians.

The Bible wins again, and this time I think Strabo and Diodorus would agree.

Chapter Forty Three: The Inscription of Paulus

In Acts chapter 13 Luke treats us to an interesting little drama involving Paul and Barnabas:

“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister. And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him. And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou

not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.

And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.” Acts 13:1-12

Of course the chorus of fanatical skeptics had to raise their voices once again, and claim that Luke was once more mistaken concerning the proper title of an historic figure. They argued that Sergius Paulus would have had to be a Governor, and not a Deputy. (The position of Deputy was also called “Proconsul”, and is so used in this passage in most Bible versions.)

Archaeology set the skeptics straight when in 1877 an inscription was found in the city of Silo just north of Paphos, Cyprus, dated to the year 54 A.D.,¹¹⁷ which read as follows:

“Apollonius to his father...consecrated this enclosure and monument according to his family’s wishes...having filled the offices of clerk of the market, prefect, town-clerk, high priest, and having been in charge as manager of the records office; erected on the 25th of the month Demarchexusius in the 13th year of Claudius. (54 A.D.) He also altered the senate by means of assessors during the time of the Proconsul Paulus.”¹¹⁸

Skeptics should have also paid closer attention to the details of history; in 22 B.C. Caesar Augustus had transferred the rule of Cyprus over to the Senate, thereby switching the ruling administration duties to proconsuls, and not governors. When will Bible skeptics ever learn?

¹¹⁷ C.M. Kerr, *Paulus Sergius* (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 1929 Edition; J.J. Hughes)

¹¹⁸ T.B. Mitford, *Annual of British School at Athens*, (1947) p. 201

Chapter Forty Four: The Manuscripts of Oxyrhynchus

One of the most magnificent archaeological discoveries rivaling even the Dead Sea Scrolls was the uncovering of the Oxyrhynchus Manuscripts in Egypt.

In 1896 Arthur Hunt and Bernard Grenfell while excavating in Oxyrhynchus, dug up a huge assortment of papyrus and vellum manuscripts, including a great number of portions of both the Old and New Testaments.¹¹⁹

Included in the find were sections of almost every book of the Bible, and a nearly complete manuscript of the Book of Revelations, dating to the fourth century. Many of the New Testament sections were dated to as early as 150 A.D., and the find provided nearly twice as many ancient New Testament manuscripts as had been found up to that time.

To this day this stands as one of the most prolific discoveries in history.

Conclusion

By now you have probably noticed that there are actually many more archaeological reasons to believe the Bible provided here than just 44. Each and every one of the 155 bullets provided were all reasons that stand on their own, and many more were given that were not bulleted.

The 44 examples of archaeological discoveries covered herein absolutely devastate almost every argument from antiquity that the skeptics, critics, and mockers of the Bible have been able to muster.

Some of the best arguments and challenges the foes of the Bible can throw at it dwindle to dust when the science of archaeology is brought to bear. Here are just some of the disputes of the deniers that are destroyed by archaeology:

¹¹⁹ Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* Revised and Expanded by Howard F. Vos (Zondervan, 1992) p.289

- Writing and keeping records did not begin until around 400 B.C., and therefore the Bible had to be passed down by word of mouth, and is therefore terribly inaccurate
- Later versions of the Bible barely resemble earlier versions
- Prophecies were “back written” into the text
- The concept of the Trinity didn’t come along until centuries later
- The Bible inaccurately places people, locations, customs, and things
- Monotheism evolved from Polytheism
- The books of the Bible, including those of the New Testament were written centuries after the events they record

Archaeology has proven what we knew all along:

THE BIBLE IS TRUE.

If this book has helped to open your eyes to the inaccuracy of the criticisms of the Bible, and you find yourself realizing that the Bible is the Word of God, then I challenge you to read it, especially the New Testament.

John 3:16 tells us, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever would believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Romans 10:9 says, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

If you will, say a prayer to God right now. Tell Him you believe that Jesus is Lord, and that you believe He died for you. Tell him you repent of sin, and accept His gift of salvation.

Find a good Bible believing church to attend, get baptized, and study your Bible, especially your New Testament every day.

Welcome to the family!

Coming Soon

44 MORE Archaeological Reasons to Believe the Bible

44 Historical Reasons to Believe the Bible

44 Things Evolutionists Don't Want You to Know

