

# Archaeology

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# ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

compiled by Dr. Dennis Ingolfsland

NOTE: This work is also found in the "Evidence for Christianity" section of this disk

## a. Archaeology thru the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC

- According to Joshua 2:15, Rahab "dwelt in the wall." From the ruins of ancient cities the fact that people sometimes built their homes into the city walls has been verified (*Archaeological*).
- Most of the cities mentioned in the Hexateuch have been discovered: Ur, Erech (Gen 10:10), Shechem (Gen 12:6); Gerar (Gen 20:1); Pithom and Raamsees (Ex 1:11); Arad, Jericho, Lachish, Bethel, Gezer, Ashdod, Bethshan, Megiddo, Hazor, Eglon (Josh 10:34-35), Shiloah, Joppa, Hammath (Josh 19:35).
- [King] Merneptah stela found at Thebes in 1896 dates back to 1229 BC and refers specifically to Israel. This destroys Noth and Vonrod's theory which denied the existence of Israel at all prior to 1300 BC (*Old Testament*, 137-138; *Introduction*, 323).
- Amarna texts contain correspondence from Palestinian chieftains to the Egyptian Pharaoh pleading for help because the Habiru (or Apiru) are attacking. Some once identified these linguistically with Hebrews but the contexts prove that the two are not the same. Habiru seems to be a general term for wandering mercenaries or marauders. While the term Habiru does not mean Hebrew...it is certainly possible that the Hebrews were viewed by the Canaanites as marauders or Habiru.
- The fortress of Ramoth-negeb (Josh 19:8; 1 Sam 30:27) is mentioned in the Arad Ostraca (*Old Testament*, 137-138).

## b. Archaeology: 10<sup>th</sup> century BC

- Some of the building projects of Solomon have been unearthed at Megiddo and Gezer. At 10<sup>th</sup> century Megiddo levels there was a palace fortified by massive wall and defensive towers, as well as stables (*Introduction*, 125).
- Stone found with the inscription of King David in the gate to the city of Dan, now housed in the Jerusalem Archeological Museum.
- The nature of Hebrew poetry often didn't make sense to the literary critics so they frequently postulated glosses and dislocations of the text. They would then engage in wholesale rearrangement of the text. The discovery of Ugaritic texts showed that the text of Psalms was by no means as faulty or corrupt as critics had thought (*Introduction*, 974).
- A jasper seal was found at Megiddo dating from the time of Jeroboam of Israel, belonging to "Shema, servant of Jeroboam." (Jeroboam I or II???)

## c. Archaeology: 9<sup>th</sup> century BC

- The Monolith Inscription of Shalmaneser mentions "Ahab the Israelite" as having the most powerful military elements in the Israelite and Syrian coalition (*Introduction*, 127).
- The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser records the subjugation of Jehu, son of Omri and tells the amount of tribute he had to pay (*Introduction*, 127; *Old Testament*, 137-138).
- Between 840-820 BC, Mesha, King of Moab commissioned a memorial celebrating the accomplishments of his reign. It mentions Omri, king of Israel and his son Ahab (*Old Testament*, 137-138).

## d. Archaeology: 8<sup>th</sup> century BC

- The Assyrian annals of Tiglath pileser III restored the nature of the tribute Menahem of Israel (1 Kings 15:19ff) had to pay.
- The Khorsabad Annals give the account of Sargon II captivity of Samaria in 722: "I besieges and captured Samaria, carrying off 27,290 of the people who dwelt therein..." (*Introduction*, 128; *Old Testament*, 137-138).

## e. Archaeology: 7<sup>th</sup> century BC

- In the Khorsabad annals, Esarhaddon of Babylon mentions Manasseh, king of Judah by name (*Introduction*, 338).
- The tunnel Hezekiah built to bring water into Jerusalem has been found (2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chr. 32:30). It even had an inscription written in 8th century script. See 2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chr. 32:30. (*Introduction*, 128; *Old Testament*, 137-138).
- The Annals of Sennacherib refer to Hezekiah of Judah and speak of the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian forces of Sennacherib (2 Kings 18-19) (*Old Testament*, 137-138).

## f. Archaeology: 6<sup>th</sup> century BC

- The Annals of Nebuchadnezzar II mention the taking of "the city of Judah" (Jerusalem) by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:10). It says that he appointed a new king (2 Kings 24:17) and that he carried great amounts of booty from Jerusalem to Babylon (2 Kings 24:13-16) (*Old Testament*, 141-143).
- The Babylonian Chronicle confirms the biblical tradition that Jerusalem fell under Babylonian attacks of 597 and 587 BC (*Introduction*, 130).
- Several tablets discovered near the Ishtar gate of Ancient Babylon listed rations of grain and oil allotted to captives in Babylon between 595 and 570 BC. They even mentioned Jehoiakim (2 Kings 25:27), (Yaukin, King of the land of

Yahud) (*Introduction*, 130).

- A seal was discovered in Lachish which probably belonged to Gedaliah, the governor of Judah appointed by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:23) (*Introduction*, 131).
- The Cylinder of Cyrus says that "Marduk" allowed Cyrus to enter Babylon without a battle and to deliver Nabonidus into Cyrus's hands (see Daniel). It also tells how he allowed foreign peoples to return to their homes and to repair the dwelling places of their gods (see Isaiah 45:1; Ezra 1:1-4, 6:1-15) (*Old Testament*, 147-150).

**g. Archaeology: 500 to 400 BC**

- Critics once denied many aspects of the book of Ezra on the basis that the Aramaic was late. They dated it to the third century BC, after the time of Alexander the Great. The discovery of the Elephantine papyri (legal contracts, deeds, official documents, agreements, diplomatic texts, private letters) show that Aramaic was the language of trade and diplomacy in the time of Ezra and that the Aramaic used in the book of Ezra was characteristic of the 5th century BC.
- An undated cuneiform text has been discovered in which there is a reference to a certain Mordecai who had lived during the Persian period and was apparently a high official in the royal court at Susa during the reign of Xerxes I (*Introduction*, 1097).
- Archaeological excavations show that the author of Esther showed an intimate acquaintance with the royal palace at Susa (Shushan)...even down to the game area for casting lots (*Introduction*, 1097).
- The palace mentioned in Esther has been uncovered. It covered 123 acres and consisted of a throne room, the house of the king, and the house of women along with numerous courts, stairways, arches and terraces. They also discovered a place with numbers on it for casting lots (cf Haman) (*Introduction*, 133).
- Critics once argued that there was no evidence that Cyrus ever made the kind of decree mentioned in Ezra (1:2ff; 6:3). The discovery of the Nabonidus Chronicle and Cyrus Cylinder shows that one method Cyrus used for personal advancement was restoring national deities and proclaiming amnesty for political prisoners in Babylon (*Introduction*, 1140).
- The Elephantine papyri mention Sanballat as governor of Samaria in 407 BC (*Introduction*, 222).

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## **BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY**

by Doug Sanders, Summit Ministries, 2002

**To one who believes in the historical mission of Palestine, its archaeology possesses a value which raises it far above the level of the artifacts with which it must continually deal, into a region where history and theology share a common faith in the eternal realities of existence.**

**William F. Albright  
The Archaeology of Palestine**

**His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"**

**King Nebuchadnezzar  
Daniel 4:34b-35**

### **Introduction**

The suffix "ology" is from the Greek word *logos*, which is "speech," or THE WORD in John 1:1. When we talk about something we have to think at least a little bit, hence "logic" is part of the story. So theology is God-talk. *Theos* in Greek means "God." Geology (*Gea* is the Greek word for Mother Earth) is earth-talk, Biology (*bios*) is life-of-the-flesh talk, and Cosmology. is *kosmos* talk. The ancient past in Greek was called *arche*, hence Archaeology - talk about things that are anciently old.

We seldom think of Archaeology as a working branch of science along with Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, and the like, but without Archaeology there would be no great museums like The British Museum in London, The Louvre in Paris, and the Pergamon in Berlin, and our own Smithsonian in Washington and many other smaller collections of ancient artifacts all over the world.

At the Pergamon museum in Berlin you can walk right through the great Ishtar Gate of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon and poke your head into the great King's throne room where Daniel took his final exams in all things Babylonian before he was promoted to the King's cabinet of advisors and his National Security Agency. And reading Archaeology can be great fun. You meet all kinds of interesting people, all the way from the most sober and careful scholars right on down to colorful swash-buckling charlatans, bandits, and thieves.

The science of Archaeology is especially helpful to Bible scholars in three ways: first, it helps in the corroboration of the geographical and historical accuracy of the text; second, Archaeology is indispensable in Textual Criticism, the art and science of deciding which reconstruction of the text from thousands of ancient manuscripts is the best one, and third; the discovery of the ancient roots of "New Age" anti-Christian ideas. The new age is not new at all. It is a revival of attitudes toward God that were old already in Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon and Moses' Egypt, long before ancient Greece and Rome ever came upon the scene of history.

### **Corroboration of the Biblical Text**

Let's begin with the corroboration of the geographical and historical accuracy of the Biblical text by turning to the Archaeology and the Bible section of the student handbook. There are eighty-five examples of historically confirmable biblical events in these brief notes alone. A typical textbook or encyclopedia of Bible Archaeology would contain hundreds more. One or more archeologists may have spent his or her entire professional life on researching just one of these examples. The last citation, #6, under the book of Joshua is a case in point. It represents the life work of two famous archeologist, Dr. John Garstang and Dame Kathleen Kenyon, with contributions from others along the way. Drs. John Garstang and Ernst Sellin were early twentieth century remnants of a group of late nineteenth-century men who had sought to reenforce our confidence in scripture through the science of Archaeology, but although they enjoyed considerable success in supporting the accuracy of the text from the time of Solomon's reign over Israel on through the New Testament, the conquest of Canaan remained a critical problem.

In the nineteen-thirties, Garstang had identified a red-brick wall deep in the excavation at Jericho as having been a part of the city of Joshua's conquest, but by 1950 Dame Kathleen Kenyon had convinced almost everyone that Garstang's wall was much too old and far too deep into the excavation to be attributed to Joshua's conquest of the city and that the ruins that conservative scholars thought they had found had lain instead at the top of the dig and had been lost to later occupants, weather, and the wind. Joshua's wall, according to Ms. Kenyon, was literally gone with the wind and the story of the conquest of Canaan was a garbled myth, but in 1978 archeologist John Bimson published Re-dating the Exodus and the Conquest and biblical Archaeology came alive again, and David Rohl's Pharaohs and Kings excited a new phase of public interest in Middle Eastern Archaeology in 1995. Rohl's case was presented in a television series on the Learning Channel at about the same time that Arts and Entertainment's Secrets of the Bible series began, so biblical Archaeology has become big business again, hence the video presentation on Jericho that you saw in class. Then, there are hundreds of exhibits of archeological artifacts to be found all over Europe, America, and the Middle East, all of which vividly illustrate the lives of God's people as recorded in scripture.

N.B. Dating the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan divides biblical archeologists into two camps, "the early daters" (ca 1440 B.C.E.), and the "late daters" (ca 1230). The early date seems to fit Bible chronology better than the later date does.

### **Textual Criticism**

The word "criticism" in the context of this paper is not supposed to mean carping at and complaining about the text of Scripture, although it sometimes works out that way! The term "Textual Criticism" is supposed to describe the work of scholars who are making an earnest attempt to arrive at the best translation possible from a whole library of ancient manuscripts. If you have ever read the controversy over who William Shakespeare really was, you have read textual criticism. Some critics think that we do not know who William Shakespeare was, but I am comfortable with the notion that he might have been William Shakespeare. And so it goes sometimes with Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and the books of the Bible, which is not just a book, but rather a small library of books written over a period of at least twenty-five-hundred years by a number of different authors. Although too many (one is too many) critics do suspect the authenticity of the Bible, its witness in ancient manuscripts is overwhelming when compared with other ancient textual material. There are only ten copies of the "original" works of Julius Caesar available to scholars, and they are dated from the tenth century A.D. at the earliest. The same thing is true of the works of Homer, but there are over six thousand witnesses to the text of the Bible, about four hundred of which are dated between the first and third centuries A.D, and the variant readings are not all that different, one from the other. There are over sixty thousand words in the Bible. Less than four hundred of these are contested - less than one percent - and in no case is cardinal doctrine involved. The perceived differences are more in literary style than in doctrinal content, but literary style is important, as I shall attempt to demonstrate in the following brief discussion of the way that textual criticism has developed in the twentieth century.

Until the late nineteen-forties the earliest manuscripts of the Old Testament dated from about 500 A.D. These were the work of a group of Hebrew scholars called "Massorettes," hence the Massoretic Text. Most Old Testament scholars agree that these men were so very careful that we need not concern ourselves with the preservation of the accuracy of the text. This favorable view has been confirmed by the discovery of more ancient copies dating from the second century A.D. in the cave of Qumran in the 1940's. There are other extant ancient versions of the Old Testament, namely the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the last two centuries B.C., and the Samaritan Pentateuch, of which we have only an eighth century A.D. copy. Although most scholars believe that our Lord Jesus and the apostles used the Septuagint extensively, for technical reasons well beyond the reach of this little paper the Septuagint does not enjoy the same respect that the Massoretic text does.

We are in a much better position with regard to the volume of material that we have to work with in the New Testament. There are roughly three families of texts involved, the Western family of uncertain geographical origin, but associated with the early church fathers from Antioch to Rome; the Byzantine family represented by the vast majority of Greek texts from an area identified with modern Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, and Yugoslavia, and the Alexandrine family from across the northern coast of Africa. The Western and Byzantine body of texts are generally regarded as more conservative and literal than the Alexandrine group. There are two reasons for this: first, the Western and Byzantine texts are much later versions written on perishable animal hide, and their conservators had time through many cycles of copying and revision to filter out differences that may have been contained in earlier documents with which they had to deal. Second, the western fathers tended to take a more literal stance than did their allegorizing brothers in Egypt did. It may be too that the discovery of the more ancient papyri from ultra-dry Egypt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century sent scholars scurrying back over old cold trails that the Western fathers had explored already. In any case, here is a list of authors worth reading.

David Allen Black's New Testament Textual Criticism is a neat little (70pp) handbook for beginners. He divides critical scholars into four schools: Radical Eclecticism, Reasoned Eclecticism, Reasoned Conservatism, and Radical Conservatism. An eclectic person is "picky" and highly selective in his choice of data to support his position. The book is clear and concise and can be used in Sunday School. The Text of the New Testament by reasoned eclectics Kurt and Barbara Aland contains a good inventory of the papyri and other mss. that are used in modern translations of the New Testament. Anything by Dr. Bruce Metzger will give you a reliable overview of New Testament scholarship, and P.W. Comfort's Early manuscripts and Modern Translations of the New Testament contains many specific examples of phrases, sentences, and whole verses and passages whose translations have been influenced by discoveries in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Reasoned conservatives Farstad and Hodges' The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text takes a far more conservative stance and offers a strong argument for the superiority of the Byzantine family over the others, and the names J.P. Green and Peter S. Ruckman, both of whom are radical conservatives, are worth remembering for the record. Green's interlinear New Testament is based on the Textus Receptus used by translators of the King James Bible.

If you should care to get into the science of Linguistics as applied to biblical scholarship, Wycliffe Bible Translators' standard text, Translating the Word of God, will take you directly to the essential heart of the matter and is, I believe, the best choice of all. Wycliffe missionaries have translated the New Testament into more than a thousand languages and dialects and have, I believe, learned in the process to cope with all of the nit-picking objections raised by all of the above. One of my missionary in-laws, Mr. John Banker, is a veteran translator and editor-in-chief of Wycliffe publications on the art and science of linguistics as applied to various selected books of the Bible. He and most of his colleagues regard the N.I.V. with great respect.

Biblical textual criticism is a controversial and highly technical subject. It generates just as much scholarly friction and heat as the more well-known creation/evolution debate does. In The Romance of Bible Scripts and Scholars, (Prentice-Hall, 1965) John H.P. Reuman writes that:

Translation is likewise an art and a science that we may take too much for granted. Any translator is faced with an enormous challenge in transferring words and thoughts from one language to another. In the case of the Bible, he is taking up the most intensely studied body of literature in history, the world's most frequently translated book - over 1,250 languages and dialects currently.<sup>1</sup> He handles the sacred book of Jews (of varying shades of thought) and of Christians (who are of even more diverse views denominationally). He must make decisions and put them down tersely in black and white about matters fraught with centuries of dispute.

Feelings can run high about a Bible rendering. A new translation is likely to be "glouted upon by every evil eye" and "gored by every sharp tongue" - the preface to the King James version of the Bible used these very words in 1611 to describe the experience of its translators. "He that meddleth with men's religion in any part meddleth with their custom, nay their freehold." Hence the outcry. What these Jacobean scholars discovered in the seventeenth century has held true at other times. A Jewish proverb recorded in the Babylonian Talmud (Kiddushin 49a) sums up the translators dilemma. "He lies who renders a verse as it reads, with a strict literalness; He blasphemes who makes additions." Literalness is wrong because it does not transfer the thought of the original; paraphrase is wrong because it reads in other meanings .

The translation of I John 5:5-9 in the King James is a case in point. In later versions, there are two sets of three witnesses in this passage, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost in heaven, and the spirit, the water, and the blood on earth. Scholars call the heavenly trinity the *Comma Johanium*, "the Johanne clause." Since it is not in the Greek text, later translations of the New Testament omit the clause, but so does Martin Luther's Old Prague Deutch translation of 1522. This is puzzling to scholars since both Luther and the committee of the Authorized Version of 1611, the King James, both translated from Erasmus' Greek "Textus Receptus." In this case the answer does not lie in the theological bias of the translators, but rather in the history of composition of the T.R. itself. The clause does not

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<sup>1</sup> 1965

appear in the first two editions of Erasmus' work (1516 and 1519), but it is found in his third edition of 1522. A Father Stunica, a member of the translation committee of the Complutensian Polyglot in Alcalá (Spain) persuaded Erasmus that it should have been in his text, so it was inserted after Luther had done his translation, but in time for the A.V. committee to include it in the King James version. This is a good example of the many little literary rabbit trails that often appear in the history of Bible translations, so remember, translating the Bible is just as much a subjective art as it is an objective science, and it is, in the end, God the Holy Spirit operating in the hearts of believers down through the ages that ensures the future of good translations and lets the weaker ones pass into historical oblivion.

### **Checking Out the "New Age Through Archaeology"**

Finally, the science of Archaeology yields insights into the ancient roots of "New Age" ideas. For instance, the theory of evolution was born in Greece ca 750 B.C. and its elementary outline appears in II Peter 3: with

1. The idea of uniformitarianism (verse 3).
2. Denial of special creation (verse 5)
3. Denial of judgment to come (verses 5-7)

Ancient Phoenicians regarded the idea that life came in from space two thousand years before Christ. Today the same notion is called the Panspermia theory (seeds of life are everywhere in the universe).

In David Foster's The Philosophical Scientist, the author credits the sun with power to create life in inert matter on the earth. This might have earned him the Egyptian equivalent of our Nobel Prize in Moses' day. There is absolutely nothing new under the sun.

### **A Few Good Books**

John Argubright, Bible Believers Archaeology

Richard A. Batey, Jesus and the Forgotten City

John McRay, Archaeology and the New Testament

Randall Price, The Stones Cry Out

Leon J. Wood, A Survey of Israel's History

Yahoo/Social Science/Archaeology/Biblical Archaeology is a good place to begin an Internet search for interesting archaeological web sites.

## **RESOURCES**

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