

Ancient Mysteries Of The Bible Solved: Volume 1

By

Don Stewart

Ancient Mysteries of the Bible Solved Volume 1

Ancient Mysteries of the Bible Solved: Volume 1

© 2020 By Don Stewart

Published by EOW (Educating Our World)
All rights reserved

English Versions Cited

The various English versions which we cite, apart from the King James Version, all have copyrights. They are listed as follows.

Verses marked NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version, copyright 1989 by Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved

Verses marked NIV are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, New International Version 2011, Copyright 1973 1978, 1984, 2011 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved

Verses marked ESV are from The Holy Bible English Standard Version™ Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked “NKJV” are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked CEV are taken from the Contemporary English Version (CEV) copyright American Bible Society 1991, 1995

Scripture quoted by permission. Quotations designated NET are from the NET Bible Copyright © 2003 By Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. www.netbible.com All rights reserved.

GOD’S WORD is a copyrighted work of God’s Word to the Nations. Quotations are used by permission. Copyright 1995 by God's Word to the Nations. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked CSB have been taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers

Table of Contents

Introduction

Part 1: Ancient Mysteries Of The Bible Explained

Question 1 Is It Important That The Bible Is Historically Accurate?

Question 2 Did Jesus Have Anything To Say About The Accuracy Of Old Testament History?

The Problem Stated: Ancient Mysteries Of The Bible Were Unsolved

Question 3 Toward A Solution: What Exactly Is Archaeology? What Do Archaeologists Do?

Question 4 What Are Some Important Things To Understand About Archaeology And The Bible?

Question 5 Does Biblical Archaeology Have Limitations?

Part 2 Ancient Mysteries Of The Bible Solved!

Mystery 1: Is The Background Of Abraham And The Patriarchs Consistent With The Evidence?

Mystery 2: Moses, The Sojourn In Egypt, The Exodus, And The Journey To The Promised Land

Mystery 3: Israel's Entrance Into The Promised Land, The Conquest, And The Times Of The Judges

Mystery 4: The United Kingdom: The Beginning of the Hebrew Monarchy. Was King David An Historical Figure?

Mystery 5: King Solomon: His Existence And His Wealth

Mystery 6: The Nation Divides Into Two Kingdoms: The Prophets, Including Elijah and Elisha Arrive

Mystery 7: The Prophet Jonah: Did He Really Exist?

Mystery 8: King Hezekiah And The Prophet Isaiah

Mystery 9: Jeremiah The Prophet: Did He Live At The Time Jerusalem And The First Temple Were Destroyed?

Mystery 10: Is There Evidence Of The Destruction Of The First Temple By The Babylonians?

Ancient Mysteries of the Bible Solved Volume 1

Mystery 11: Daniel The Prophet: Did He Exist When The Bible Said He Did?

Mystery 12: Rounding Out The Old Testament: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

Part 3: Further Evidence: The Minute Accuracy Of The Old Testament

Part 4 The Old Testament Is More Than Merely Historically Accurate: Evidence Of The Supernatural

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Daniel

Summary and Conclusion On Ancient Mysteries Of The Bible

Appendix 1: The Mystery of the Hittites Solved

Appendix 2: The Mystery of the Pim Solved

About The Author

Introduction To Volume 1

Ancient Mysteries of the Bible Solved, Volumes 1 and 2, may be used as companion volumes to our four-book series on Bible prophecy.

In that series, we looked at the claims of the God of the Bible as well as the fulfillment of His claims. In our introductory work *God Wants Us to Know the Future*, we discovered that the Lord claimed to correctly predict future events and that He emphasized that we should consider the evidence of His claims.

Next, *God's Work in History, 50 Biblical Predictions Made and Fulfilled*, we discovered that His claims have been verified by documenting 50 specific predictions that have been fulfilled in history.

We then moved on to the present where we examined *25 Signs We are Near the End*. Not only have His predictions been fulfilled in the past, we discovered that His predictions concerning the “last days” are being fulfilled, right now, in the present!

Finally, we put together a biblical outline of coming events *Look Up: A Timeline of 50 Last Days Events*. These specific events take us to the final event in Scripture: eternity.

In this first Volume, *Ancient Mysteries of the Bible Solved*, we will examine the historical accuracy of people, places, and events mentioned in the Old Testament. Volume 2 of this series will consider the historical accuracy of the New Testament.

To previous generations, the existence of these biblical characters and events were a mystery. In other words, there was no confirming evidence for the claims of Scripture.

With the help of the modern science of archaeology, the discoveries of ancient inscriptions, as well as other technologies, all of this has changed. Indeed, we will discover that the Bible is correct in its historical references based upon the evidence that continues to be discovered.

Consequently, when these volumes are considered together, we will find that God has correctly predicted past events, has correctly predicted what is happening in the present, and the history that is recorded in Scripture is confirmed by the objective evidence.

In other words, everything which the Bible speaks of, the recording of past events or predictions about the future, have all been found to be true!

Part 1

Ancient Mysteries Of The Bible Explained

In this book, *Ancient Mysteries of the Bible, Volume 1*, we will put certain mysteries found in the Old Testament into perspective. As we answer a number of questions about this subject, we will make three major observations.

First, the Old Testament records God's dealing with the human race through a special group of people—the descendants of Abraham. The Bible says that the Lord called Abraham to go to a Promised Land which God would give to him and to his descendants.

The Old Testament chronicles the dealings of the Lord with these chosen people. The people, places and events covered in the Old Testament are all assumed to be true—to be historically accurate.

Furthermore, Jesus Christ, Himself, totally trusted the Old Testament. Indeed, in His public ministry He mentioned many Old Testament characters and some of the important events in their lives. In doing so, Christ always assumed that they were reliably recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures—the people existed, and the events took place.

Second, though the Old Testament, as well as Jesus, consistently affirmed the truthfulness of what was recorded, there was a major problem—there was no confirming evidence! Therefore, it was basically the testimony of the Bible, and it alone, that the world had. Those who believed the accounts in the Old Testament did so “by faith.”

Accordingly, there were a number of ancient mysteries to which there was no answer. Were Moses, Abraham, David, Solomon, etc. actual historical characters? Did the nation of Israel settle into the Promised Land as the Bible says? Were the various episodes about Israel with their antagonistic neighbors genuine? In other words, was the Old Testament historically reliable?

Many unbelieving scholars said, “No.” They believed that these biblical stories were myths which were written long after the alleged events occurred. Consequently, the Old Testament was not considered to be historically trustworthy.

This, of course, would make Jesus either ignorant of the facts, or lying about them. Therefore, the stakes were high since the New Testament claimed that Jesus Christ was God the Son. Was He telling the truth about the Old Testament or was He not? There was no confirming evidence to answer this question.

Our third observation reveals that help eventually arrived to solve these historical mysteries—the new science of biblical archaeology. In the last two hundred years, buried cities have been found, ancient monuments have

been discovered, long-lost writings have been deciphered. All of this has helped us ascertain certain truths about the ancient world as recorded in the Old Testament and affirmed by Jesus.

Therefore, the first section of this book will put the problem of these ancient mysteries of the Bible into proper focus.

Question 1

Is It Important That The Bible Is Historically Accurate?

As we explore the subject of the historical accuracy of Scripture, we will discover it is of vital importance. The Christian faith is an historical faith—it records what God has done in history. This being the case, the historical accuracy of recorded events is of utmost importance. This is true for both the Old and New Testament.

A number of observations need to be made about this crucial topic.

1. The Old Testament Reveals God's Mighty Works

The Lord often reminded the nation of Israel of His mighty power—the deeds which He performed in their history.

Thus, the historical accuracy of the Old Testament is of the utmost importance because the revelation of God to humanity was accomplished through His mighty words and deeds in history.

For example, we read in the Book of Exodus how God emphasized His bringing Israel out of Egypt:

And God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Exodus 20:1,2 ESV).

The Lord is the One who brought Israel out of the slavery of Egypt. He did this through His miraculous power. The nation was continually urged to remember these mighty deeds of God.

In Second Kings, we again read of God reminding the people of how He delivered their nation from slavery. The Bible says:

The Lord made a covenant with them and commanded them, “You shall not fear other gods or bow yourselves to them or serve them or sacrifice to them, but you shall fear the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm. You shall bow yourselves to him, and to him you shall sacrifice” (2 Kings 17:35-36 ESV).

The people were again reminded of this great event God performed in the past—the miraculous exodus from Egypt.

The people were also expected to remember other Old Testament events. The prophet Micah records the Lord saying the following things to the people:

Don't you remember, my people, how King Balak of Moab tried to have you cursed and how Balaam son of Beor blessed you instead?

And remember your journey from Acacia to Gilgal, when I, the LORD, did everything I could to teach you about my faithfulness (Micah 6:5 NLT).

Again, God urged His people to remember His faithfulness in the past.

These passages, along with many others, call attention to the fact that God has intervened in history. This is the claim of the Old Testament—the Living God has worked His plan in our world.

2. The New Testament: God Came To Our World At A Particular Time In History

We find that the historical accuracy of certain events is also important in the New Testament. The Bible says that Jesus Christ, God the Son, came into our world. John wrote:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14 ESV).

The New Living Translation reads as follows:

So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father (John 1:14 NLT).

For a limited period of time, God the Son became a human being in the Person of Jesus Christ. He did this for a number of reasons. One of the reasons was to show humanity what God is like. The Bible says:

No one has ever seen God. The only one himself God, who is in closest fellowship with the Father, has made God known (John 1:18 NET).

The New Testament records the highlights of the life and ministry of Jesus. It assumes that Jesus said the things attributed to Him as well as doing the things the Scripture records. Jesus made God known when He came to earth some two thousand years ago.

Thus, we find the writers of Scripture appealing time and time again to God working in actual historical events to testify to both His existence and His power. In fact, the entire biblical revelation centers on what God has done in history.

However, the truths taught in the Scriptures are only meaningful if the events actually happened. Therefore, the historical accuracy is of utmost importance.

Important Observations On The Historical Accuracy Of Scripture

There are a number of important points that need to be made about the Bible and the subject of historical accuracy.

Observation 1: Historical Accuracy Is Unique To Judaism And Christianity

It must be stressed that historical reliability is unique to Judaism and Christianity. No other religion has any sort of historical base upon which their belief system rests—none of them!

Contrary to all other religions, the events recorded in the Bible happened in real time history. The truth of the Christian faith is based upon the factual occurrence of these events that are recorded.

Therefore, the Scripture is unique in the sense that it is a reliable revelation of God in history.

Observation 2: Many Of The Doctrines Of Scripture Are Based Upon Historical Events

There is something else. Many of the key doctrines of the Bible are based upon certain historical events. These include the virgin conception and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. These events must have literally occurred for the doctrines to be true. If the events did not happen as the Bible says they did, then the teachings that explain the meaning of these events cannot be true.

Observation 3: It Is Important To Understand What The Historical Events Mean

This brings us to our next point. While it is important that the events recorded in the Bible truly occurred as the Scripture said they did, the correct reporting of these events is not enough in-and-of itself. We need more than the mere accurate recording of an event that took place in history—we need its meaning explained.

Indeed, not only do we need to know what took place, we also need to know *what* it means to us. Scripture records the events plus the authoritative interpretation of these events. Events do not always carry their own interpretation with them.

Why, for example, was the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth different from the crucifixion of anyone else? Scripture gives us both the event and the meaning.

Hence, the Scripture contains historical facts plus the theological meaning. Consequently, the facts must be accurate, and the meaning must be true. It is the facts that are revealed, as well as the meaning of these facts, which give us a coherent understanding of God's plan.

The Bible Must Be Able To Withstand Historical Investigation

We again emphasize that if the Bible is the Word of God, then it must be able to withstand the most thorough historical investigation. The Bible claims to be the record of God acting in history. The Scriptures, therefore, must be an accurate historical record of the past.

Thus, the historical accuracy of Scripture is of vital importance, for it is the appeal made by the Bible itself to argue for its truthfulness.

Summary To Question 1:

Is It Important That The Bible Is Historically Accurate?

The idea of the Bible being historically accurate is important for the following reasons:

First, the Scripture itself makes the claim that God has intervened in history. Many of these events have been recorded for us in the Bible.

In addition, the people were urged to remember what God had done for them in the past. They were to call to mind actual historical events that took place and to remember God's power and faithfulness.

Also, the central truth of the Christian faith—that God the Son became a human being—happened in history.

The historical accuracy of these claims demonstrates the truth of the Christian faith and its superiority over other religions that have no such verifiable evidence. This makes the historical accuracy of Scripture something that is of vital importance.

Question 2

Did Jesus Have Anything To Say About The Accuracy Of Old Testament History?

It is clear that the writers of the Old Testament believed that they were accurately recording God's truth to the world. Furthermore, we never find one author doubting or correcting what a previous author wrote. To the contrary, they often cite the words of these other writers as factual.

For example, the prophet Ezekiel cited three Old Testament characters as examples of their faithfulness:

Even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were there, their righteousness would save no one but themselves, says the Sovereign Lord (Ezekiel 14:14 NLT).

Jesus Had Total Trust In The Old Testament

We also discover Jesus' attitude toward the events recorded in the Old Testament. In examining the four gospels we have a great amount of information to work with concerning Jesus' view of the Old Testament. His understanding of Old Testament events can be simply stated in two words, "total trust."

In other words, the people actually existed, and the accounts recorded in the Old Testament literally occurred. This includes some of the most controversial stories recorded in the Old Testament such as Adam and Eve, Noah, and Jonah.

To sum up, Jesus accepted the Old Testament Scriptures as being divinely inspired—He never cast doubt on any of the accounts. Jesus assumed the people were actual people and the events literally occurred. We never find Him giving the slightest hint of anything but the complete acceptance of the Old Testament as the Word of God.

Jesus Believed The People Were Actual People

Jesus confirmed that the people mentioned truly did exist. They were not mythical characters. The evidence is as follows:

Abraham

Jesus confirmed the existence of the patriarch Abraham. He said:

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad (John 8:56 KJV).

Jesus accepted the fact that Abraham was an historical character.

Isaac And Jacob

The patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, were real people according to Jesus. Matthew records Him saying the following:

I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 8:11 NRSV).

According to Jesus, Isaac and Jacob truly existed.

The Queen Of Sheba

The Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon as the Bible says. Scripture records Jesus saying:

The queen of the south will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and look—something greater than Solomon is here! (Matthew 12:42 CSB).

Jesus accepted her existence as factual and her visit to Solomon was an historical event.

Solomon

Solomon himself, the great king of Israel, was an historical person. Jesus said:

Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these! (Matthew 6:29 CSB).

According to Jesus, Solomon did indeed exist.

Elijah

The Old Testament portrays Elijah as a genuine prophet. When asked about Elijah returning to this earth, Jesus clearly said that he was returning. Matthew writes:

Jesus answered, “Elijah is coming and will put everything in order again” (Matthew 17:11 God’s Word).

Elijah existed. Someday, according to the Lord Jesus, he will come back to the earth.

Elisha

Jesus also confirmed the story about Elisha the prophet and Naaman the leper. Luke records Jesus saying:

There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian (Luke 4:27 NRSV).

Elisha the prophet, likewise, existed.

Zechariah

Jesus also acknowledged the historical existence of Zechariah the prophet. He said:

From the murder of Abel to the murder of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, it will surely be charged against you (Luke 11:51 NLT).

Jesus believed that Zechariah truly lived.

Sodom And Gomorrah

Jesus believed that Sodom and Gomorrah were genuine cities that were punished by God. The Lord said:

I can guarantee this truth: Judgment day will be better for Sodom and Gomorrah than for that city (Matthew 10:15 God's Word).

Sodom and Gomorrah were literal cities. They were not mythical places.

Tyre And Sidon

The account of Tyre and Sidon, the cities that were judged in the Old Testament, was confirmed by Jesus:

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you (Matthew 11:21,22 NRSV).

According to Jesus, the cities of Tyre and Sidon were punished by the Lord just as the Old Testament said.

Jesus Believed The Old Testament Accounts Were Factual

As we look at the way Jesus treated the Old Testament, we discover that He assumed the various accounts to be factual.

God Gave The Rite Of Circumcision

Jesus stated that it was God who gave the people the rite of circumcision through Moses. John records Him saying:

Moses gave you circumcision (it is, of course, not from Moses, but from the patriarchs), and you circumcise a man on the sabbath (John 7:22 NRSV).

Circumcision was a God-given commandment.

God Provided The Manna In The Wilderness

The provision of the manna, given to the children of Israel while they were in the wilderness, was confirmed by the Lord Jesus. He said:

Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat' (John 6:31 NKJV).

Therefore, the account of the manna, being given by God to the people, is historical.

David And His Men Ate The Bread Of Presentation

The narrative of David and his men eating the bread of presentation was acknowledged by Jesus. Scripture says:

But He [Jesus] said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?" (Matthew 12:3,4 NKJV).

Jesus accepted this account as historically accurate.

David Was The Writer Of Certain Psalms

Jesus taught that David was the writer of certain Psalms. Matthew records Jesus saying:

How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying (Matthew 22:43 NRSV).

David wrote the Psalms which were attributed to him.

Moses Wrote The Law

According to Jesus, the Law was indeed given by Moses. Jesus said the following to a man whom He healed of leprosy:

See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them (Matthew 8:4 NKJV).

Moses was the writer of the books attributed to him.

The Suffering Of The Prophets

The fact that the prophets suffered was used by Jesus as an example of how His disciples will suffer. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said:

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:12 NKJV).

The various accounts of the suffering of the Old Testament prophets are historically accurate.

The Episode With Lot's Wife

The story of Lot's wife, turning into a pillar of salt, was used by Jesus as an example of not looking back. Luke records Jesus saying:

Remember Lot's wife (Luke 17:32 KJV).

Lot's wife existed.

Jesus Confirmed Some Of The Most Controversial Stories Found In The Old Testament

In addition, Jesus confirmed some of the most ridiculed stories in the Old Testament. It is almost as though He went out of His way to put His approval on them.

Adam And Eve

Jesus believed in the Genesis account of creation—which includes the direct creation of Adam and Eve. Matthew records Him saying:

“Haven't you read the Scriptures?” Jesus replied. “They record that from the beginning ‘God made them male and female.’ And he said, ‘This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one’ (Matthew 19:4-5 NLT).

He used Adam and Eve as an example of God's purpose in marriage.

Cain And Abel

The account of Cain killing Abel is rejected today in many circles, but Jesus believed it occurred. We read of this in Luke's gospel:

From the murder of Abel to the murder of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, it will surely be charged against you (Luke 11:51 NLT).

This early story, recorded in the Book of Genesis, is historically accurate.

The Flood In Noah's Day

Was there really a Flood in the days of Noah, which God sent to destroy all life upon the earth? Jesus assumed there was. He said:

For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man (Matthew 24:37-39 ESV).

Jesus compared the circumstances surrounding Noah's Flood as similar to those at His Second Coming.

Jonah And The Great Sea Creature

Jesus also believed the story of Jonah and the great sea creature as having literally occurred. In fact, He used it as a sign of His resurrection:

But Jesus replied, "Only an evil, faithless generation would ask for a miraculous sign; but the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so I, the Son of Man, will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. The people of Nineveh will rise up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah. And now someone greater than Jonah is here—and you refuse to repent" (Matthew 12:39-41 NLT).

Contrary to the view of many modern skeptics, Jonah actually existed. Jesus testified to this fact.

Daniel

Though the authorship of Daniel is often rejected today, Jesus believed that he was a true prophet. He said:

Therefore, when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand) (Matthew 24:15 NKJV).

All of these disputed and ridiculed accounts of the Old Testament were confirmed by Jesus as literally occurring.

Furthermore, Christ used a number of them to illustrate some of the most important events in His own ministry—including His resurrection and Second Coming. Since He demonstrated Himself to be God's Son, His testimony settles the matter —these biblical accounts did occur.

Jesus Spoke Of Prophecy Being Fulfilled

Jesus also said that certain predictions, recorded in the Old Testament, were fulfilled in His life and ministry. We read the following in the Gospel of Luke:

Then he said to them, “This passage came true today when you heard me read it” (Luke 4:21 God’s Word).

Jesus spoke of John the Baptist as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Matthew records Jesus saying:

John is the man to whom the Scriptures refer when they say, ‘Look, I am sending my messenger before you, and he will prepare your way before you’ (Matthew 11:10 NLT).

Jesus also said what was written about Him must be fulfilled, specifically His suffering. Mark records Jesus saying:

Jesus responded, “Elijah is indeed coming first to get everything ready. Yet why do the Scriptures say that the Son of Man must suffer greatly and be treated with utter contempt? But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they chose to abuse him, just as the Scriptures predicted” (Mark 9:12,13 NLT).

In another example, when predicting judgment on the city of Jerusalem, Jesus said the following:

For those will be days of God’s vengeance, and the prophetic words of the Scriptures will be fulfilled (Luke 21:22 NLT).

Jesus considered the predictions of the Old Testament as being authoritative—He assumed they needed to be fulfilled.

In sum, the record is clear—Jesus Christ had total trust in the Old Testament Scripture.

Summary To Question 2: Did Jesus Have Anything To Say About The Accuracy of Old Testament History?

As we examine the attitude of the Lord Jesus toward the Old Testament, we find Him viewing it as totally trustworthy. Indeed, we discover that Jesus believed the people actually existed and the stories that are recorded literally occurred. This includes some of the most controversial accounts such as Adam and Eve, Noah, and Jonah. He never cast doubt on any part of the Old Testament.

To the contrary, He believed all of it was equally authoritative. Consequently, Christians, to be consistent, should have the same view as Jesus.

The Problem Stated: Ancient Mysteries Of The Bible Were Unsolved

We now come to the heart of the matter. The Old Testament writers certainly believed that they were recording the Word of God.

Add to this, Jesus Himself testified to the truthfulness of the Hebrew Scriptures. He assumed everything written in them was true.

However, herein lies the problem—the “ancient mysteries of the Bible.”

Ancient Mysteries Defined

Mystery: It can be defined as anything that is unexplained or unknown. Up until about 150-200 years, there were many unknowns, many mysteries, when it came to the Bible and ancient history.

In particular, it concerned the events that were recorded in the Old Testament. Questions abounded:

-Was there even writing at the time of Moses?

-Are certain individuals and people groups, mentioned only in the Bible, real people? Did they actually exist?

-Are the geographical and historical references, correct?

In other words, does the Bible accurately record the past? This was a question to where there were no definitive answers.

So, Why Do These Questions Matter?

As we just observed, the entire narrative of the Bible deals with God acting in history. From the creation of the first humans, Adam and Eve, until Jesus returns and sets up His everlasting kingdom, the Bible deals with events that have taken place, or are yet to take place, here upon the earth.

Therefore, for the Bible to be the Word of God, and to be true, then it must speak of the past in a correct manner. In other words, the people must have truly existed, the geographical references are correct, the customs fit the times, and the events recorded could indeed have taken place as the Scripture records. This is foundational for Scripture to be what it claims to be—the Word of the Living God.

Question 3

Toward A Solution: What Exactly Is Archaeology? What Do Archaeologists Do?

How do we find the answers to what took place in the past? We cannot get into a time machine and go back! What can we do to solve these mysteries?

Biblical Archaeology To The Rescue (The Past Has Come To Us)

Until a little over a century and a half ago, almost all the information on the Old Testament came from the Bible. Scholars were unaware of contemporary sources that would either confirm or deny the stories about the people, rulers, cities, and events described by Moses and the other Old Testament authors.

Fortunately, the answer to many of these questions has been solved by the science of archaeology.

What Is Archaeology?

Simply put, archaeology is the study of ancient debris—the things that a civilization leaves behind. Archaeologists, therefore, examine the physical remains that civilizations have left behind.

What Archaeology Does Do and What It Does Not Do

It is important that we understand this. What archaeology can do is solve certain mysteries of the past. In other words, it can tell us that the people existed as recorded in Scripture, that the places mentioned fit the text as it is written, and the events either did happen, or could have happened, as the Bible says they did.

It is like detectives attempting to solve a mystery. What can possibly be confirmed is what Scriptures have said about the “setting” of these events. In other words, does the geography, the historical times, the people, etc. fit the accounts that are recorded in the Bible?

There Are Limitations

We also must appreciate the limitations of archaeology. Indeed, it cannot be expected to prove that every biblical event occurred. In fact, it is unrealistic to expect that. Why? Let's consider the following:

Archaeology is a relatively new science, only operating in the last 150-200 years . . .

Only a small fraction of the ancient world has survived. Perhaps 1/10

Only a small fraction of what has survived has been surveyed. Perhaps 6/10

Only a small fraction of what has been surveyed has been excavated. Less than 2%

For example, the late Yigael Yadin, who excavated the city of Hazor, calculated that it would take about 800 years to fully examine the 200-acre complex!

Finally, only a small fraction of what has been excavated has been published.

In fact, it has been estimated that only .006%, six one thousandths of one percent, of what took place in the ancient world is now available to us to study!

Consequently, we are fortunate to find anything from the Ancient Near East that specifically deals with events recorded in the Bible.

The Bible Records Only Selected Events

This must also be appreciated. Scripture is not a history of the ancient world, rather it is a selective history of God's dealings with the human race. Indeed, the written record contains the names of individuals, events, geographical references, etc. that pertain to the Lord working in history. In other words, it is choosy in what it records.

We have a statement to this effect from the Gospel of John:

Now Jesus performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (John 20:30,31 NET).

Notice the purpose. It was not to record every miraculous sign which Jesus performed but rather to selectively give us sufficient evidence to believe that He was indeed the Christ.

We also read:

There are many other things that Jesus did. If every one of them were written down, I suppose the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written (John 21:25 NET).

Again, John tells us that there were so many other things that Jesus did which were not recorded. In fact, John tells us that he could fill up encyclopedias with all the deeds that Jesus did!

Consequently, everything recorded in Scripture has a specific purpose—to reveal a few of God's dealings with the human race.

Biblical Archaeology Cannot Answer Everything About The Past

In the same manner, biblical archaeology can only answer selective questions about the past. In other words, it cannot deal with every question

that we have about the history that the Scripture records. Indeed, some things will never be known to us.

Recall, archaeology deals with the debris that a civilization has left behind. However, the past plunder of those left-behind valuables, as well as the ravages of time, weather, and vermin, would have its effect upon that which remains to this day.

In sum, we are fortunate to find anything meaningful about these ancient civilizations. Consequently, it is unrealistic for archaeology to answer all of our questions about the biblical past.

Some Important Observations On Archaeology And Archaeologists

There are a number of important points that need to be made about archaeologists and the role of archaeology. They include the following.

Archaeology Is Not The Study Of Written Records

A technical distinction needs to be made between the written records of a civilization, and the debris that they left behind. A study of written records falls under the work of historians, not archaeologists. It is not the same as archaeology.

Archaeology fills in some of the gaps of the written records. The archaeologist literally digs up that which was left behind by a civilization. This sometimes includes written records. However, the archaeologist is interested in more than the written material of a civilization.

The importance of archaeology increases where there are no written records. While written records may be untruthful, the physical evidence does not lie.

There is something else. Ancient writing was often limited to a certain class of people who had their own unique perspective on events. In contrast to the possible bias of some ancient writers, archaeology describes how all ancient people, from the peasant to the king, lived their lives. It fills in the gaps left by written documents.

The Importance Of Inscriptions

Until the 19th century, those who studied the Bible were limited in their research to a small number of books which were found mainly in monasteries and libraries. This includes the writings of the first-century Jewish author Josephus, as well as the early church historian Eusebius.

This has all changed with discovery of many inscriptions from Bible times. Indeed, these inscriptions have revolutionized our knowledge of the biblical background.

Inscriptions are now available from the ancient Near East which contain, among other things, laws, decrees, treaties, private letters, and memorials.

The important thing about inscriptions is that they bring us directly to the ancient setting. In other words, unlike ancient manuscripts which were copied and recopied, these are the original writings from biblical times.

Therefore, in this book, we will highlight the evidence from inscriptions which give further confirmation to the reliability of biblical history.

2. Archaeologists Do Not Spend All Their Time Digging

Those who practice the discipline of archaeology do not spend all their time in the excavation of ancient sites. Indeed, most of their time is spent in planning the dig, analyzing the results of what they found, and then placing it into the larger picture of the time period. The actual excavation is only a small part of their work.

There are two basic parts to the work of the archaeologist. The first is the discovery and collecting of ancient remains and the second part consists of analyzing, interpreting, and publishing that which was collected.

3. Most Archaeologists Become Specialists

Most archaeologists become specialists in a limited part of the world and usually within a limited historical period. This is due to the fact that there is just too much information available to become an expert in more than one limited area and one particular historical period.

Since new information is constantly being gained, archaeologists must limit themselves with respect to the subject matter in which they study. This is true for those who study biblical archaeology.

4. Archaeology Is Not The Same As Geology

Archaeologists are often confused with geologists, or those interested in rock formations. However, the archaeologist is interested in rocks only to the degree that it can give them information about the ancient civilization they are uncovering. When technical issues of geology need to be investigated, the archaeologist will usually employ a trained geologist.

5. Archaeology Is Not The Same As Paleontology

Most archaeologists are not experts in the area of fossils or the bone structure of prehistoric animals. This is the area of study for the paleontologist. When the subject matter of the dig deals with fossils, often a paleontologist will be part of the team to evaluate the finds.

This briefly sums up the science of archaeology as well as those who do this important work.

**Summary To Question 3:
What Is Archaeology? What Do Archaeologists Do?**

Archaeology is the study of ancient debris—the things that a civilization leaves behind.

It is important to have a correct understanding of archaeology and archaeologists because there are a number of misconceptions about what archaeology is and what archaeologists do.

For one thing, archaeology is not the study of written records of the past as much as it studies the material that was left behind. Archaeologists examine the physical remains which a civilization has left behind.

However, in their excavations, archaeologists often find ancient inscriptions. These are different than manuscript evidence because inscriptions were not copied and then recopied. To the contrary, they are firsthand evidence of the laws, decrees and public notices written at a certain time in history. Consequently, they are extremely valuable in giving us insight into the past.

Furthermore, archaeologists do not spend most of their time digging. Indeed, the dig is only a small part of their enterprise.

Since there is so much information that has been left behind by ancient civilizations, most archaeologists have to specialize in a certain historical era. This means that no one archaeologist knows everything about the past.

Finally, archaeologists are neither geologists nor paleontologists. The discipline of archaeology is mainly interested in past civilizations and how the people lived.

This briefly sums up some of the key points about the science of archaeology.

Question 4

What Are Some Important Things To Understand About Archaeology And The Bible?

As we indicated, archaeology is the study of ancient debris. It is a discipline that can help shed light on some of the events covered in the Bible.

Therefore, it is important that we understand the science of archaeology and how it relates to Scripture. The following points need to be emphasized.

1. The Good News! The Evidence Is Accessible To The General Public

Until recently, the problem has been where to find a record of these discoveries. They were mostly found in out-of-print books or technical journals which were not accessible to the general public. Fortunately, a number of publications today document these discoveries.

2. Archaeology Is Not Limited To The Bible

We would be wrong in thinking that archaeology is limited or primarily directed at biblical events. It is not. The discipline of archaeology deals with all ancient civilizations. “Biblical archaeology” is only a small part of this vast field of study. It is limited to the people, places, and events with respect to the Bible.

Biblical archaeology deals with the ancient Middle East, or Near East as it is sometimes called. Therefore, most of the archaeological work that goes on in the world does not, in any way, touch biblical events.

Biblical archaeology arose in the nineteenth-century when a wealth of new information about the ancient Near East began to be discovered. Christians wanted to know how this newly discovered material shed light on the people, places, and events recorded in Scripture. Thus, the search began.

The biblical sites in the Middle East are usually called khirbets, or tells, (also spelled tels). A khirbet is an ancient site where at least some of the ruins are still visible. A tel, or tell, is the term used to designate a city that is completely buried.

“Tel” is the term used of sites with Hebrew names while “tell” is used of sites with Arabic names. It is only since the nineteenth century, that these khirbets and tells have been excavated.

3. Most Books And Articles On Biblical Archaeology Are Written By Non-Believers

It is important to understand that most articles and textbooks that are written on the subject of biblical archaeology are from those who treat the Bible as any other ancient document—they do not accept its supernatural

origin. Sometimes these works view things written on the subject by Bible-believers as shallow and simplistic.

They, on the other hand, see themselves as scientific, truthful, and objective. This, of course, is not always the case.

In fact, there has been some excellent written works on the subject of biblical archaeology which were composed by those who believe the Bible is God's supernatural revelation to humanity. It is to these sources that Bible-believers should pay attention.

4. Discoveries Can Help With Bible Translation And Interpretation

The discoveries of archaeology can be of help with Bible translation and interpretation.

For example, at the time the *King James* Bible was translated in 1611, there were a number of words that were found only in the Hebrew Old Testament but nowhere else. Since these words were not found in any other literature, the translators had to guess at their meaning from the context.

However, this has changed. With the discoveries of archaeology, many of these words have been found in documents in other ancient cultures. This has aided tremendously in Bible translation.

No longer do Bible translators have to make an educated guess about the meaning of these words. This is another important contribution which is made by the discoveries of the archaeologist.

5. Archaeology Makes The Biblical World More Clear

Archaeological discoveries are especially helpful for those of us in the West who are ignorant of the customs of the Ancient Near East. The work of the archaeologist helps to clarify people, places, and events mentioned in the Bible.

Israel, located between Egypt and Mesopotamia, was at the crossroads in the Ancient Near East. Therefore, they were exposed to the culture, laws, politics, and religion of many other nations in the ancient world.

When we understand more about these nations and their customs it sheds light on many of the practices of the biblical characters as well as the motivations of their behavior. The reason, or reasons, as to why the characters of Scripture made certain decisions now becomes clearer when we understand the world in which they lived.

6. We Learn About Daily Life In The Biblical World

Archaeology can shed light on the daily life of those living during biblical times. We can better understand such things as what the ancient peoples

looked like, what was their average height and weight, what they wore, what their dwelling places were like, how they kept warm in the winter and cool in the summer, and how their houses were illuminated with light. These people, as well as the conditions in which they lived, now become more real to us through the discoveries of archaeology.

7. Difficult Biblical Expressions Now Become Understandable

Certain expressions, which were hard to understand, have now become clear because of the work of the archaeologist. For example, the Bible calls the city of Hazor “the head of all the kingdoms.” We read about this in the Book of Joshua:

Joshua turned back at that time and took Hazor, and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor was formerly the head of all those kingdoms (Joshua 11:10 NKJV).

When the city of Hazor was excavated, its size was found to be approximately two hundred acres. Other large cities of the Holy Land were only about twenty acres in size. This helps us understand why Hazor was called the head of all the kingdoms.

8. Biblical Teachings Can Be Better Understood

The results of archaeology can actually help illustrate important biblical teachings. Indeed, we find that if we understand certain things to which the Bible makes reference, it can help us better appreciate what the Bible is attempting to teach us. We will give two illustrations.

The Footstool Illustrates The Complete Victory Of Christ

One such example as to how archaeology has helped us with our understanding of the teachings of Scripture was the discovery of a footstool. The footstool is mentioned a number of times in the Old Testament.

For example, we read the following in the Book of Chronicles of a description of the throne of King Solomon:

The throne had six steps, and a footstool of gold was attached to it. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with a lion standing beside each of them (2 Chronicles 9:18 NIV).

Solomon’s throne had a footstool made of gold!

In the Book of Isaiah, the Lord calls heaven His throne while earth is called His footstool:

This is what the LORD says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Could you ever build me a temple as good as that? Could you build a dwelling place for me?” (Isaiah 66:1 NLT).

In the Book of Psalms. The Lord speaks of making His enemies His footstool:

The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit in honor at my right hand until I humble your enemies, making them a footstool under your feet” (Psalm 110:1 NLT).

This verse speaks of making a footstool of ones enemies. What exactly is it talking about? What was the footstool and why is it used to illustrate victory over enemies?

The footstool was a literal stool in which a king would set his feet upon. We know from archaeological discoveries, such as the tomb of King Tut, that victorious kings actually carved images of their defeated enemies on their footstools.

Thus, when the king was seated upon his throne, he would put his feet upon the stool which had the image of those whom he had defeated. This would signify complete victory over his enemy.

Knowing about the footstool not only helps us better understand certain Old Testament passages, it also helps us to better appreciate the victory which Jesus Christ gained over Satan, sin, death, and hell.

By His death on Calvary’s cross and then His resurrection from the dead, the Lord Jesus defeated these enemies and will make them His footstool. Speaking of Jesus, the writer to the Hebrews said:

But this man, after offering one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God. He is now waiting until His enemies are made His footstool (Hebrews 10:12,13 CSB).

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians he said that Jesus will place all enemies under His feet. He said:

For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; afterward, at His coming, the people of Christ. Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when He abolishes all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He puts all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be abolished is death. For He has put everything under His feet. But when it says “everything” is put under Him, it is obvious that He who puts everything under Him is the exception. And when everything is subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who subjected everything to Him, so that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:2-28 CSB).

Jesus Is Now Exalted

Jesus Christ is now exalted above every power and authority in the universe. Indeed, all things will eventually be placed under His feet.

How was He able to do this? The Bible says that Jesus erased our debt by His death on the cross. The Apostle Paul wrote the following to the Colossians:

He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; He triumphed over them by Him (Colossians 2:14, 15 CSB).

Jesus' death triumphed over all His enemies. However, this did not end the story.

Three days later He rose from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus Christ made it possible for Him to lead away, or take captive, those who had been formerly held captive—those in bondage of sin.

Jesus set free those who had been taken captive by sin. The writer to the Hebrews explained it in this way:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (Hebrews 2:14, 15 NIV).

Jesus Christ gained victory over sin, death, and the devil. He has defeated all of His enemies. They will eventually be made His footstool.

Furthermore, because of His death, He has set free those who were under the power of sin.

Thus, from the historical use of the footstool we can now better understand what the Bible has to say about the victory Jesus Christ gained over His enemies. In addition, we recognize those who have believed in Him are now set free from the slavery of sin. These are indeed wonderful truths illustrated by the footstool!

The Potsherd Illustrates Our Frail Human Condition

While the footstool illustrates the victory of Jesus Christ over His enemies, and the fact that believers are no longer slaves to sin, the Bible also uses the simple potsherd to illustrate our frail human condition. The potsherd is simply a piece of broken pottery.

When archaeological sites are excavated many pieces of broken pottery are usually found. These pieces should serve as a reminder to a number of spiritual truths revealed in Scripture. Indeed, we find the potsherd used in Scripture to illustrate important biblical truths.

It was a potsherd, or a piece of broken pottery, which the patriarch Job used in scraping off the boils that had been sent his way. The Bible says:

So Satan left the LORD's presence and infected Job with incurable boils from the sole of his foot to the top of his head. Then Job took a piece of broken pottery to scrape himself while he sat among the ashes (Job 2:7,8 CSB).

With every scrape of the potsherd, Job would wonder why such terrible things had happened to him. In the same manner, we ourselves wonder why certain horrific things have happened to us. Like Job, we may never get a complete answer.

In another example, the psalmist compares a dead person to a piece of broken pottery:

I am forgotten: gone from memory like a dead person—like broken pottery (Psalm 31:12 CSB).

The broken piece of pottery is no longer remembered because it no longer exists in the condition in which it was originally made. It is broken and its usefulness here on earth is over.

The same is true for those who have died. The dead are no longer able to make any personal impact on other human beings because they are no longer among the living.

We Need To Be Repaired

The broken pieces of pottery can also serve as a reminder of our fallen human condition—we are like broken pieces of pottery which are in need of repair. It is only the Lord, the Master Potter, who can put together the broken pieces of our lives.

In fact, the illustration of the potter and the clay is used in Scripture to show the relationship of the Lord, our Maker, to us, the clay. In the Book of Isaiah, humans are compared to pottery:

“What sorrow awaits those who argue with their Creator. Does a clay pot argue with its maker? Does the clay dispute with the one who shapes it, saying, ‘Stop, you’re doing it wrong!’ Does the pot exclaim, ‘How clumsy can you be?’ How terrible it would be if a newborn baby said to its father, ‘Why was I born?’ or if it said to its mother, ‘Why did you make me this way?’”

This is what the LORD says—the Holy One of Israel and your Creator: “Do you question what I do for my children? Do you give me orders about the work of my hands? I am the one who made the earth and created people to live on it. With my hands I stretched out the heavens. All the stars are at my command (Isaiah 45:9-12 NLT).

As the potter has the right to do what he pleases with the objects he is forming, so the Lord has the right to mold and form those whom He made. He is the Maker of all things. Therefore, none of us are in a position to quarrel with our Maker.

In another place in the Book of Isaiah we have another comparison between the potter and the clay. It says:

You turn things upside down! Is the potter no better than his clay? Can something that has been made say about its maker, “He didn’t make me”? Can a piece of pottery say about the potter, “He doesn’t understand”? (Isaiah 29:16 God’s Word)

The clay is not in a position to say to the potter that he does not understand. In the same way, humans should not accuse God of not understanding our predicament. He does understand.

In the New Testament, our existence is compared to a clay jar. The Apostle Paul wrote:

Now we have this treasure in clay jars, so that this extraordinary power may be from God and not from us (2 Corinthians 4:7 CSB).

We are simple jars of clay. Any greatness that comes from us is ultimately derived from the One who has formed us and filled us with His power—the Living God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, from the simple clay pot, whether broken or intact, we find the Bible giving us a number of valuable spiritual truths.

Thus, whenever an archeological site is excavated the existence of the countless pieces of broken pottery illustrate God’s truth about who He is, the Potter, and who we are, the clay.

9. Archaeology Does Not Prove The Bible

The science of archaeology brings the world of the Bible to life. Indeed, find after find of the archaeologist confirms the biblical record as accurate. While archaeology is a great help to those who study Scripture, it should be emphasized that archaeology does not “prove the Bible.”

All archaeology can do is show that the background of biblical stories is consistent with the facts. It can show that the event could have happened, but it cannot always show that it actually did happen. This is usually beyond the realm of what archaeology can accomplish.

In addition, it can never reveal *why* something happened or the meaning as to why it happened. Thus, archaeology can never be the final standard of whether a biblical story is true or false.

The final standard of what really did happen, as well as the meaning of what happened, is found in the written Word of God.

**Summary To Question 4:
What Are Some Important Things To Understand About
Archaeology And The Bible?**

Archaeology, the study of ancient debris, can be helpful in demonstrating that certain biblical events did actually occur or could have occurred as the Bible says.

The field of archaeology is not limited to the Bible. In fact, biblical archaeology is only a small part of the actual work that goes on.

Unfortunately, most articles and books on biblical archaeology are written by those who view the Bible as a mere human work.

The science of archaeology can be of a tremendous help in our understanding the Bible. For one thing, it can help us in the understanding of the meaning of certain words for which there is some uncertainty of their meaning.

Archaeology can also help the world of the Bible come alive. Indeed, the background of the biblical events can be more understandable through the work of archaeologists.

Difficult expressions found in Scripture can become clear as a result of archaeological discoveries. Confirmation of the historical accuracy of Scripture occurs when truths of the ancient world are uncovered. Archaeology also helps in our understanding of biblical doctrines. In short, archaeology has a number of uses for Bible believers.

With all that archaeology can do, it does not prove the Bible. It can only confirm that the events recorded in Scripture match up to what is known in the past.

However, biblical archaeology can be a tremendous benefit for the believer.

Question 5

Does Archaeology Have Its Limitations?

While the science of archaeology is helpful in providing background information for the Scriptures, it has its limitations. These limitations must be understood and appreciated. They include the following.

1. Archaeology Is Not An Exact Science

Unlike the physics or mathematics, archaeology is not an exact science. There are subjective elements in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Indeed, two people, using the same data, may arrive at different conclusions. In fact, this is exactly what we find with many of the sites that have been excavated.

This should make us cautious about citing what a certain archaeologist concluded since their conclusions can never be placed on the same level as a mathematical certainty.

2. Everything That Has Been Left Behind Has Been Left By Accident

It must be remembered that everything that has survived from the ancient world has survived by accident. The material was not purposely left, or hidden, to be found thousands of years later.

Consequently, what we find on a particular site is only there because it was the last remnants left by the particular peoples. With few exceptions, there was no plan to leave this material behind.

3. Only A Small Amount Of Data From The Past Has Been Recovered

This point cannot be overemphasized. The discipline of biblical archaeology only deals with an extremely small amount of material which is potentially available for study. Our knowledge of the ancient world is tremendously limited. Only a small amount of the material that once existed is presently available for study.

There are a number of points that should be made.

To begin with, very little of what was made or written in the ancient world still survives.

For example, one Roman writer complained that it would take an entire lifetime just to go through the catalogues of books that were available to him! When we compare this statement to the actual fragments of manuscripts of ancient writings that still exist, and we realize how little of what was written has still survived.

The same is true of ancient sites. Most of the major biblical sites have been identified. However, most of the smaller sites mentioned in Scripture have not been found or identified.

Furthermore, less than two per cent of all the known archaeological sites pertaining to the Bible that have been discovered have been excavated in any meaningful way. Of those two percent that have been excavated to any degree, only a small amount of these findings have been published.

Since this is the case, it is not reasonable to expect the events in Scripture to always be confirmed by some secular source—either written or archaeological.

In fact, it is amazing the amount of support for Scripture that has been found in the ancient written records. Consequently, we should not wait for the Bible to be confirmed by some secular source before it can be believed. This is not reasonable.

4. There Were Poor Excavating Techniques In The Beginning

The practice of archaeology involves digging up sites. This involves destruction. Once a site has been excavated it can never be re-excavated.

When the discipline of archaeology was first practiced, the techniques used for excavating sites were poor and much needless destruction took place. Unfortunately, these sites cannot be re-investigated. All the data is forever lost.

5. At Times There Is Conflicting Evidence

There is also the matter of conflicting evidence that is discovered. Sometimes a site will yield evidence which conflicts with other finds that have been made on that site or on another site.

Consequently, more information is needed. This fact should make it plain that all of the evidence needs to be evaluated before authoritative statements can be made. The problem may take decades to clear up, or it may never be cleared up. Such is the nature of archaeological evidence.

6. Some Sites May Be Misidentified

There is also the possibility that a particular site has been misidentified. In fact, we know that this is the case with certain sites.

For example, one ancient mound, Tel Beit Mirsim was once identified with the biblical site of Debir. This identification caused problems because some of the features did not match up with Scripture.

Today this is no longer the case. Debir is now identified with Khirbet Rabud and the topography matches exactly with the biblical description. There is no contradiction.

There are other biblical sites where the exact location is hotly debated. This includes the location of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah where scholars disagree as to whether or not these, as well as other ancient sites, have been properly identified.

7. Some Sites Have Been Destroyed

There is also the fact that a number of biblical sites have been destroyed before any archaeological excavation could take place.

For example, in the city of Jerusalem there are a number of churches that have been built over biblical sites. The biblical site was destroyed in making way for the new structure.

Consequently, much, if not all, of the original site has been forever lost. Indeed, Jerusalem itself has been destroyed and rebuilt some twenty-six times in its history. Obviously such destruction makes it difficult to recover and reconstruct how it looked at a particular time in history.

In other cases, such things as, time, the forces of nature, and the looting by ancient people have removed or destroyed much of what could have been discovered. Therefore, many of the places and events that the Bible talks about have no chance of ever being investigated.

8. There Have Been Changes In Interpretation Of The Evidence

There have been instances where the original interpretation of what was found was later changed. Further investigation has caused a reversal of what was originally thought.

An example of this is the excavations at Jericho. In 1907, when it was first excavated, it was alleged that there was no occupied city at the time of Joshua. This was refuted by later excavations done in the 1930's. However, in the 1950's, further investigation again cast doubt upon the biblical record.

Yet this has again changed. Now, as a result of further study, and the publication of the work done in the 1930's, there are excellent reasons to believe the biblical account is correct in attributing the destruction of the city to the time of Joshua and with the details matching the biblical account.

This is another reason that archaeological data should be used with great caution. This should also give us pause in too readily accepting anyone's findings.

9. There Have Been Hoaxes In Biblical Archaeology

Unfortunately, there have also been a number of hoaxes in the history of archaeological investigation pertaining to the Bible. While hoaxes do not happen that often, they do happen. We should be aware that they have happened in the past, and they can happen again.

Therefore, any announcement of an amazing new discovery that pertains to the world of the Bible should be treated with caution.

Warning: Beware Of Sensationalist Claims!

Indeed, we must be aware that many sensationalist claims have been made that have reached the general public, which have no basis in fact. They include:

Chariot wheels from the Egyptian army, that drowned in the Red Sea, have been found confirming the exodus from Egypt.

Noah's Ark has been discovered on Mount Ararat.

We must be careful not to pass along such incorrect information as factual. These assertions are simply not true.

10. There Are Many Issues Unsettled

There are a number of issues in Biblical research that remain unsettled. Consequently, we await new data.

Sometimes the new data only makes the issue more confusing. This is another limitation of the science of archaeology. Archaeology has yet to give its final word on a number of important matters, and because of the small amount of evidence that has been uncovered or can be uncovered, it will never give us a definite answer on a number of topics.

11. Many Events, By Nature, Are Not Provable

There is something else that needs to be considered. There are a number of biblical events, because of their very nature, that archaeology, or ancient written records, cannot prove. These events would not have left any physical evidence behind. Consequently, there is nothing to be recovered.

Therefore, while the science of archaeology can help with many biblical issues and put the events, places, and people in a historical context, it does have a number of limitations and these limitations need to be appreciated.

In sum, it is important to remember the limitations of the science of archaeology.

**Summary To Question 5:
Does Biblical Archaeology Have Limitations?**

The role of archaeology is limited in a number of ways.

There have been poor techniques used in the past. Once the sites were excavated there is no possible way of re-excavating. Much important material has been forever lost.

In addition, some of the evidence that has been unearthed is conflicting. There is also a great deal of subjectivity in the interpretation of what is found.

Hoaxes have also been an unfortunate part of the story. This is why we should be careful when we hear of some “outstanding discovery.”

Many issues remain unsettled, while others, by their very nature, are non-provable.

Therefore, while archaeology can be a benefit to the study of Scripture, there are a number of limitations to its usefulness.

Part 2

Ancient Mysteries Of The Bible Solved!

In the first section of our book, we have looked at the subject of the “Ancient Mysteries of the Bible” with respect to the Old Testament.

We discovered that the Old Testament, as well as the teachings of Jesus, affirmed the existence of the people, as well as the truthfulness of the events, that Scripture recorded. However, there was no confirming evidence that these accounts in the Old Testament were true. Therefore, the entire subject was a mystery—an ancient mystery.

About two centuries ago, things began to change with the advent of the science of archaeology. The past was now able to be studied from the evidence that was being uncovered from the ancient biblical world.

In other words, we could now begin to know if these peoples, places, and events mentioned in the Old Testament were myth or reality.

In this section of our book, we will discover the overwhelming evidence that archaeology brings to the reliability of the Old Testament. Our examination will center upon some of the major characters in the Hebrew Scriptures along with important events that the Bible records.

The result will be clear: The Old Testament is a trustworthy historical document which was written by people who had firsthand knowledge of the events they recorded!

Mystery 1:

Is The Background Of Abraham And The Patriarchs Consistent With The Evidence?

We begin our study of the historical accuracy of the Bible with this foundational question concerning Abraham and the patriarchs—the stories recorded in the Book of Genesis from Chapters 12-50.

Simply stated, the account of Abram (whose name was later changed to Abraham) and his descendants form the basis of the entire narrative of the Old Testament. The Bible informs us that Abram was called out by God, from his country and from his people, to go to a land of promise. This land would forever belong to him and his descendants—the nation of Israel.

The Lord made a number of special promises to him which serve as the basis for the rest of the Old Testament Scripture.

In fact, the Book of Genesis emphasizes God's dealings with Abraham and his descendants. The first 11 chapters deal with the creation of the world, the fall of humanity, the flood of Noah, the tower of Babel and the dispersion of the nations.

From Chapters 12-50 it deals with the family matters of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore, in the first book of the Bible, the main emphasis is upon Abraham and his family.

Hence the importance of these patriarchs cannot be overestimated. Indeed, if they did not exist, then there is no accurate story of the Bible!

The Claims Of Jesus

There is something else that we must also consider. Jesus Christ confirmed the existence of Abraham. He said the following to the religious leaders of His day:

Your father Abraham was overjoyed to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." Then the Judeans replied, "You are not yet fifty years old! Have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "I tell you the solemn truth, before Abraham came into existence, I am!" (John 8:56-58 NET).

It is clear that Jesus believed that Abraham was an historical character.

The Claims Of Critics

While the Old Testament, as well as Jesus, assumes the truth of the biblical narrative of Abraham, this is not true with respect to critics of the Old Testament.

In fact, it is usually argued that the account of Abraham was written about 700 B.C. some 1,300 years after his supposed existence. Therefore, the Bible is not firsthand evidence of Abraham being an historical character.

Consequently, it has been concluded that the person Abraham never existed but was rather a mythological character who was invented by the later Israelites.

Mystery To Be Solved: Is There Any Evidence For The Patriarchs?

Simply put, is there any evidence for Abraham's existence, as well the other patriarchs, or are we dealing with mythology?

What The Evidence Shows About Abraham

The good news is that there are a number of discoveries that have been made which demonstrate that the account of Abraham fits the historical time that the biblical account places him—about 2000 B.C.

We can make the following observations.

**Fact One: The Name Abraham, As Well As Those Of His
 Relatives, Were Known Names At This Specific
 Time Period**

To begin with, names similar to Abram and Abraham, his father Terah, as well as his grandfather Serug, have been found during this time period in Old Assyrian and Babylonian texts. In other words, these personal names are ones in which males were called during this era—around 2,000 B.C.

For example, a tablet which dates to the time of the patriarchs, was found in the ancient Mesopotamian city of Dilbat. It contains the name Abarama son of Awel-Ishtar.

What this tablet indicates is that the name of Abram was used in the geographical area of Ur at the very time the Bible places the patriarch.

Isaac, Jacob and Joseph

In addition, the biblical names of Abram's sons and grandsons are consistent with that historical time frame but were NOT used later in the history of Israel. Randall Price and Thomas Ice explain:

The names of the patriarchs place them in a cultural setting . . . in the early second millennium BC. Names with an i/y prefix such as *yitsak* (Isaac) *ya'akov* Jacob, *yoseph* (Joseph) and *yishmael* (Ishmael) belong to this type of name, whose appearance diminishes significantly in the first millennium and onward. Therefore, the most appropriate time during which men with these names would have lived would have been the pre-Israelite period, in accordance with the biblical text (Randall Price Thomas Ice, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, p. 76).

This is a very important observation. The given names of Abraham's sons, Ishmael and Isaac, as well as his grandson Jacob, were in use during the historical period in which the Bible portrays them—the pre-Israelite period.

The discoveries of these texts provide further confirmation that the names found in Scripture were used at the time the Bible says they were. In the ancient world, the use and the popularity of certain personal names would be constantly changing.

In other words, certain names were usually restricted to a particular historical time period and even to a particular region.

In the case of the patriarchs, as time went by, these personal names were rarely used. Therefore, the personal names found in Scripture fit the time period that Scripture claims.

So here is the obvious question, “How would that be possible if the accounts were created hundreds of years after the time of Abraham and the patriarchs?”

Further Evidence: The Cursing Texts

There is something else that we can add to this—the “execration texts” or the “cursing texts.” Discoveries have been made of Egyptian texts which were inscribed on bowls and figurines, that mainly date from 2000-1800 B.C.

These ceremonially cursing texts consisted of formal curses pronounced upon the enemies of Egypt as well as upon evil forces. The pottery, with the names of the personages and forces, was shattered. This shattering was thought to break the power of these opponents of Egypt. Interestingly, the surviving texts list a large number of foreigners, including rulers who lived in the area of the Promised Land.

Excavations in Saqqara Egypt have uncovered broken figurines that have the names of more than 60 cities, people and tribes that lived in the Promised Land during the period of 2000-1700 B.C. What has been discovered are the name of cities, tribes and people that are found in the Book of Genesis. These names include the cities Salem (Jerusalem) Shechem, and Laish. The personal names Abraham, Zebulun, and Job were also found.

All of this is further evidence that the Bible puts the patriarchs in the right historical time frame.

Fact Two: Excavations At Ur Reveal A Highly Developed Civilization

The city of Ur, from which Abraham left to go to the Promised Land, is mentioned four times in the Bible. Excavations of Ur, which is in modern day Iraq, have continued off and on since the 1800s.

Interestingly, the excavations show a highly developed civilization. Among other things discovered was a mathematical tablet that was an early form of Pythagoras' theorem.

The famous Royal Tombs at Ur, from around 2500 B.C., have revealed gold and silver objects of great beauty. These discoveries demonstrate that Abraham's hometown had been a powerful city-state before it fell.

In fact, the population of Ur was at least 65,000. This would likely have made it the largest city in the world at that time.

If Ur's decline and eventual fall came during Abraham's time, then the findings of archaeology may have provided us a further clue as to why his father relocated his family to Haran.

Discoveries In Ur Shows A Literate Society

In 1920, in his excavation at the town of Ur, Sir Leonard Woolley discovered that 1/5 of the homes contained writing material. He also found that the people were skilled in algebra, geometry and mathematical equations some 500 years before the time of Abraham!

Therefore, it would certainly have been possible for the life and exploits of this man Abraham to have been written down.

Fact Three: There Is A Connection Between The City Of Haran, And The Patriarchs

There is more evidence of the factual nature of the accounts of the patriarchs. Scripture tells us that Terah moved his family from Ur, in southern Mesopotamia to Haran in the north:

Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot (the son of Haran), and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and with them he set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. When they came to Haran, they settled there (Genesis 11:31 NET).

The ancient city of Haran has also been discovered. A village of Harran (Haran) exists in Turkey today. It stands on top of the ancient one from the Old Testament era. The ancient city was a hub for traffic in all directions.

In addition, near Haran there are villages that still bear the names of Abraham's great-grandfather and grandfather, Serug and Nahor, as mentioned in Genesis 11:22-26!

The ancient cities of Ur and Haran both worshipped the moon god as their main deity. This fits with what the Bible said about the father of Abraham, Terah—he worshiped “other gods:”

Joshua said to the people, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Long ago your ancestors, including Terah, the father of Abraham

and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River, and they worshiped other gods (Joshua 24:2 NLT).

**Fact Four: Ancient Cities Existed Where
 The Bible Said They Did**

The Mari tablets consist of 20,000 ancient tablets from the city of Mari on the Euphrates River. From them, we find the ancient biblical city of Nahor mentioned. Nahor is one of the places Abraham's servant stopped off at on his way to find a bride for Abraham's son Isaac. The Bible says:

Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, for all his master's goods were in his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor (Genesis 24:10 NKJV).

As we will discover, other cities that are mentioned in the Old Testament are in the exact location in which the Bible says they were. Again, there is every reason to believe that these cities mentioned in Scripture truly existed.

**Fact Five: The Background And Condition of These Cities Fits
 The Historical Record**

There is more. The writer of Genesis knew the correct historical background and condition of certain cities at the time of the patriarchs. Randall Price and Thomas Ice also write:

The places mentioned in the patriarchal narratives also reveal an historical consistency when compared to the archaeological evidence from the ruins of Ur, Hebron, Beersheba and Shechem. In particular, the city of Harran in upper Mesopotamia, which in the biblical text seems to have been a commercial center at the time of Abraham, was abandoned after the patriarchal period and remained unoccupied from 1800 to 800 B.C. It is improbable that someone inventing the story later would have chosen Harran as a key location when the town had not existed for hundreds of years. A late composition in the first millennium BC would have no access to such detailed information (Randall Price, Thomas Ice, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, p. 76).

Again, someone living centuries later would not have known the ancient situation of these cities. But the writers of Genesis knew them as they existed from 2000 years to 1700 years before the time of Christ—the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!

Fact Six: Genesis 14 Testifies To Its Ancient Composition

Genesis 14 details an ancient account of a battle between Abraham and his servants against a confederation of four kings who had taken his nephew Lot as prisoner. Earlier these four kings had done battle with five other kings. There are very many specific details in this narrative that

demonstrate its reliability as we compare it to the extrabiblical evidence from this time period. We will only cite a few.

The Names Of The Kings

First, the names of these kings are known names of the people from this region and who lived during this time period (though they are not the same individuals). In other words, the names of these kings reflect an ancient time period.

The Political Situation Was Unique To That Time Period

There is only one time in history when these political alliances could have occurred—about 2000 B.C. at the time of Abraham! Afterwards, the political map of the area changed so drastically that such confederations could not have possibly taken place:

These details in Genesis 14, attested in extrabiblical documents of the time, likely could not have been invented and correctly assigned to their respective nations and geographical settings by a Hebrew writer living at a later time. Thus the antiquity of the account within the larger context of the patriarchal narratives indicates that there is substantial reason to regard the whole as historically accurate (Randall Price, Thomas Ice, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, p. 76)

Well said. Again, we ask the question: If Genesis 14 was composed hundreds of years after the time of Abraham, then how was the writer able to know all of these specific details—details that only fit this one time period in the history of the Ancient Near East, details that changed over the centuries?

The Gate At Tel Dan

One of the most amazing finds in the Middle East has been the gate at the city of Dan in northern Israel. This gate is some four thousand years old and was probably the one that Abraham went through!

Genesis 14 tells us that Abraham and his servants chased these four kings all the way from the Dead Sea area to this city:

When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan (Genesis 14:14 NET).

Archaeological evidence has demonstrated that this particular Canaanite city was thriving at the time of Abraham. This is further evidence that the geographical references found in this passage are historically accurate.

The Horites (Hivites) Were Not A Mythical People

Genesis 14 also speaks of a people called the Horites:

In the fourteenth year, Kedorlaomer and the kings who were his allies came and defeated the Rephaites in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzites in Ham, the Emmites in Shaveh Kiriathaim, and the Horites in their hill country of Seir, as far as El Paran, which is near the desert (Genesis 14:5,6 NET).

The Horites are also called the Hivites in the Bible. Yet until recently, their existence was only known from the Scripture.

It was not until 1995 that their capital city was discovered some 400 miles northeast of Damascus, Syria on the border with Turkey. Again, we know that the Bible has accurately described these people.

Therefore, the political conditions, as well as the geographical references we find in Genesis 14, fit what is known about this particular time period.

Fact Seven: Egypt Was Spoken Of Favorably

When we read the account of Abraham we discover that Egypt is mentioned a number of times. Yet, it is always in a favorable light. This is a very important detail in the understanding of the time period of the patriarchs.

Why? Well, this was certainly not the case later in its history! In fact, after the Egyptian bondage of the nation of Israel and the Exodus from Egypt, we find that Egypt was usually viewed in an unfavorable light in Scripture.

This fact alone makes it hard to reconcile if one would argue for the composition of the story of Abraham to have been written in the seventh century B.C.—long after the Exodus from Egypt.

On the other hand, it is certainly what we would expect if it was written long before the sojourn to Egypt and the bondage of the Israelites under Egyptian rule.

Fact Eight: The Laws And Customs Fit The Time Of Abraham!

A number of laws and customs which are recorded in the Book of Genesis fit the historical time period when Abraham was said to exist. We know this from the discovery of the Nuzi tablets.

The Nuzi Tablets

The Nuzi tablets consist of about 20,000 cuneiform clay tablets written in Akkadian. They were discovered between 1925 and 1931 in the city of Nuzi—a place that is just east of the ancient city Asshur in modern day Iraq.

This was the first written evidence which shed light on the customs and practices around the time of Abraham. These tablets describe life in the 14th and 15th century B.C. in Mesopotamia.

Though they were written a few hundred years after the time of Abraham, they are helpful in understanding the customs of that general time period. Indeed, some of the customs that were recorded in these tablets were unique to that time period.

The Local Laws At The Time Are Correctly Recorded

There are a number of biblical episodes that show intimate understanding of local laws at this particular time in history. The following are examples of this.

The Custom Of Adoption Of Indirect Heirs For Childless Couples

Abram and Sarah were not able to conceive children. Thus, according to the now known custom of the time, Abram followed the custom to have Eliezer of Damascus be his heir:

But Abram replied, “O Sovereign LORD, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son? Since you’ve given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir” (Genesis 15:2-3 NLT).

The Role Of Secondary Wives

When Sarah the wife of Abraham was childless, she suggested that Abraham take Hagar his handmaiden as a secondary wife and raise up an heir through her.

This fits well the practice at that time as recorded in the Eshnunna law code—a law code that dates to about 1900 B.C.

The Nuzi tablets also confirm such customs as the role of secondary wives and their rights of inheritance. Therefore, the episode of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar fits the local laws of the time.

The Selling Of A Birthright Is Allowed

From the Nuzi archives we also find that one brother sold his birthright for three sheep—similar to Esau selling his birthright to his brother Jacob for a bowl of soup. This confirms that the practice was legally binding at that time in history. It also tells us that the price paid for the birthright did not have to be of equal value.

The Engagement And Marriage Of Jacob And Rachel

The unique engagement and marital arrangements in the case of Jacob and Rachel were also followed at Nuzi. This is important because Nuzi was in the same geographical region where Rachel lived—northern Mesopotamia.

Marriages Relationships Were Different Before The Mosaic Law

The marriage relationship we find with Abraham and Sarah, (she was his half-sister), as well as Jacob marrying two sisters, Judah and his brother Simeon marrying Canaanites wives, as well as Joseph marrying an Egyptian woman were all permitted at that time.

However, with the establishment of the Mosaic Law in the 15th century, all these types of marriages were banned. After that time, such practices were severely condemned or not practiced at all.

Rachel Stealing The Family Heirloom

The unusual story of Rachel stealing the teraphim from her sneaky father Laban is now better understood in the light of the discovery of the Nuzi tablets. We find that during that historical period the teraphim were considered sacred objects and family heirlooms.

Usually found in the form of small idols, it was believed that possessing them brought about good fortune and blessings.

From the Nuzi tablets we discover that the teraphim would only be passed down through the son who was the family heir.

In Scripture, we read that Rachel was upset because neither she nor Leah received a dowry from their father. The biblical phrase, that Laban “consumed their money,” has been found in the Nuzi tablets for a father withholding a dowry. Therefore, she stole the teraphim to make up for the lack of a dowry.

The Custom Of Deathbed Blessings

The Nuzi tablets also reveal the custom of deathbed blessings. We find this practice recorded in Scripture in Isaac blessing Jacob, though he thought it was Esau, and of Jacob blessing his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh.

Interestingly, this particular custom of deathbed blessings is not recorded in later historical periods.

All in all, we discover that the various accounts recorded in Genesis correctly reflect the customs of the times.

Fact Nine: Abraham’s Visit To Various Cities Is Historically Accurate

The biblical account of the life of Abraham documents a number of cities that he visited. The location of almost every one of these cities is now known. All of those that have been positively identified were important caravan centers during the time the Bible says that Abraham lived.

However, in later times, not all of these cities were important centers. This is another indication that the travels of Abraham fit exactly into what is known of that historical period but would not fit with a later period.

Fact Ten: Camels Were Domesticated At Abraham's Time

According to some Bible critics, camels were not domesticated at the time Abraham lived. Yet the Bible says that when Abraham came to Egypt he was given gifts that included camels. We read in Genesis:

Then Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts because of her—sheep, cattle, donkeys, male and female servants, and camels (Genesis 12:11 NLT).

While this reference was once considered to be unhistorical, such is not the case any longer. A figurine has been discovered in Egypt dating to 3000 B.C. It pictures a man alongside a kneeling camel.

Another camel figurine, dating to about 2600 B.C., was discovered at Lagash.

Therefore, the story of Abraham receiving the gift of camels from Pharaoh fits into that historical period. Indeed, we now know that camels were domesticated in Egypt some 1,000 years before the time of Abraham

Fact Eleven: The Beni Hasan Tomb Painting Provides Further Evidence Of Semitic People In Egypt

Scripture tells us that Abram went down to Egypt:

There was a famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to stay for a while because the famine was severe (Genesis 12:10 NET).

The Bible informs us that Joseph was sold into slavery to a group of merchants traveling to Egypt:

So when the Midianite merchants passed by, Joseph's brothers pulled him out of the cistern and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. The Ishmaelites then took Joseph to Egypt (Genesis 37:28 NET).

This is consistent with the evidence of this era.

There is an ancient Egyptian tomb painting, which dates close to the time of Abraham—the Beni Hasan tomb painting. The painting pictures a caravan of people from the Holy Land carrying merchandise for trade in Egypt including eye paint to sell. These traders were armed with bows and spears.

Dating to around 1900 B.C., this tomb painting, with words and pictures on it, shows how Old Testament people from the time of Abraham and Sarah looked, how they dressed, their hair styles, and even a musical instrument of the day—lyre. The weapons they used—spear, bow and

arrow, ax, sword—depict some of the armaments available to Abraham. It provides further evidence of travel and trade from the Promised Land to Egypt and vice versa.

Conclusion To The Evidence For Abraham:

As we have documented, the claim that the biblical account of Abraham was written some 1,300 years after he lived does not fit the facts. The background, the personal names, the various laws and customs, that are found in the Bible fit perfectly with what we know of that particular time in history.

Furthermore, the literary ability of people living at the time demonstrates that it was certainly possible to record, in writing, what took place.

To sum up, the evidence shows that story of Abraham was written by someone who had firsthand knowledge of the world that existed two thousand years before the time of Christ.

Therefore, we have every reason to believe that we have an accurate account of what actually took place. Hence, Jesus' belief in the account of Abraham is consistent with the facts!

We now move on to another one of the patriarchs—Joseph.

Is There Any Evidence Of Joseph Being In Egypt?

One of the most important narratives in the Book of Genesis concerns the patriarch Joseph and his journey into Egypt. In fact, Genesis Chapter 37-50 deals extensively with this subject.

While the doubters rejected this biblical account, as we will discover, there is specific evidence that demonstrates the background is consistent with what we know of that part of the world at the time of Joseph.

Fact One: The Price Of A Slave In Joseph's Day Accurately Reflects The Time

The Bible states the Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver. We read in Genesis:

Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt (Genesis 37:28 NKJV).

Although the price paid for Joseph is an incidental detail, it proves to be an exact representation of what slaves were being sold for in that day.

Joseph lived in the eighteenth-century B.C. Before that time the price of slaves was cheaper—ten to fifteen shekels. As time went by, the price of a slave increased. The price of twenty pieces of silver fits into the period

when the Bible says that Joseph lived. After that time the price of a slave increased.

Thus, the recording of Joseph being sold for twenty pieces of silver fits only a limited historical period—the same one in which the Scripture says the episode took place.

Fact Two: The Titles Mentioned Fit The Time Period

In the biblical account of Joseph, there are a number of titles that are mentioned. We are told that Joseph was put in prison with the chief, or royal, baker:

After these things happened, the cupbearer to the king of Egypt and the royal baker offended their master, the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was enraged with his two officials the cupbearer and the baker, Genesis 40:1-2 NET).

While this was once considered to be an incorrect reference, an ancient Egyptian picture recorded acknowledgment of wheat by the royal baker of the Temple of Amun.

Thus, the title “royal baker” or “chief baker” was accurately used. This gives credence to the story as literally occurring instead of being some type of parable or myth.

Fact Three: The Egyptian Names Are Known In Egypt For That Time Period

Names that are found in the Joseph account are also known names in Egypt for that time period. This includes Potiphar, Zaphenath-paneah, Asenath, and Potiphra.

In addition, the phrase “overseer of the house,” recorded in Genesis 39:4, is precisely the phrase used in Egyptian texts at this historical time period.

In sum, the records from Egypt that have survived from this time period of Joseph testify to the accuracy of the biblical details.

Fact Four: There Were State-Run Prisons At The Time

Old Testament scholar Clyde Billington points to an ancient document, the Hayes Papyrus, which gives further evidence of the historical accuracy of the story of Joseph:

The Hayes Papyrus...provides strong support for the various elements found in the Joseph story. The Hayes Papyrus proves that in the Middle Kingdom Period in Egypt there were slaves from Canaan serving on private estates. It also proves that there was a state-run royal prison in Egypt under a warden or keeper. True prisons were very uncommon in the ancient world but the existence of one in Egypt matches the Joseph story perfectly (Clyde Billington, *The Curious*

History of the “Editor” in Biblical Criticism,” Bible and Spade, 2009, p. 115).

The testimony from the past continues to support the people, places, and events recorded in Scripture.

As was true with the accounts of Abraham and his immediate descendants, there is also evidence that the biblical narrative of Joseph fits the ancient historical setting.

In fact, the person who wrote the account was personally familiar with the customs of that particular time in history.

The price of a slave, twenty shekels, fits the historical time frame, but it would not fit at a time either before or after. In other words, only someone there at that time would have known this fact.

In addition, we now know that there were indeed slaves in Egypt from the land of Canaan as well as a state-run prison where the prisoners were under the authority of a warden or keeper. Only someone living during that particular period in history would know this.

These facts give us confidence that the biblical account of Joseph was indeed written by someone who had firsthand knowledge of the times.

In sum, the evidence is clear—the Book of Genesis records historically accurate material.

**Summary To Mystery 1:
Is The Background Of Abraham
And The Patriarchs Consistent With The Evidence?**

While the events recorded in the early chapters of Genesis from the time of Abraham through the time of Joseph, occurred some three thousand seven hundred to four thousand years ago, the specific facts that we do have about this time period, few as they are, fit that which the Scripture records.

This is very important for us to understand. Only someone living at the time would have the specific knowledge that is reflected in these accounts. Later writers would not know the historical situation nor some of the intricacies of life and customs at that time.

Indeed, if these accounts were written long after the events took place we should be able to discover obvious historical inaccuracies, but we do not.

To the contrary, the more we discover about the times of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, the more it verifies Scripture. This fact alone should give us confidence that future discoveries will only further confirm what the evidence already shows.

When all the evidence is considered, the life of Abram, or Abraham, as well as his immediate descendants, as recorded in the Bible, fits perfectly into the time frame where Scripture places it.

Indeed, the names of Abram and his family members are known to have been used at that time, but they were not popular later in the history of Israel.

The skirmish that Abraham was involved in, as recorded in Genesis 14, fits the specific time frame that it took place in but would not have fit later in history.

The route of Abraham's travels is also known to be historically accurate as were the use of camels at his time in history.

The laws and customs fit the time of Abraham but not later times in the history of the Ancient Near East.

We have also found similar evidence that shows that Joseph also lived at that historical time period.

This pattern is something that we will continue to see as we examine each of these biblical mysteries.

Simply put, until recently there was no way of verifying whether certain events, people, and places recorded in Scripture were historically accurate. This led unbelievers to deny the existence of major biblical personages as well as the events associated with them.

However, now that archaeology has begun to have its say, we find a pattern of continual verification of what was once believed to be mythical. In other words, the mysteries associated with the early patriarchs should no longer be considered fables.

Indeed, the evidence continues to reveal that they did indeed live and operate during the time period in which the Bible places them.

Mystery 2:

Moses, The Sojourn In Egypt, The Exodus, And The Journey To The Promised Land

In the Book of Exodus, we are introduced to the character Moses. Scripture tells us that he was the God-ordained leader of the nation of Israel that was miraculously brought out of Egypt in the Exodus and eventually settled in the Promised Land.

Again we stress that his existence and the account of his life, are central to the narrative of the Bible.

Claim: There Was No Writing Before The Time Of Moses

In the nineteenth century, it was believed by biblical critics that even if Moses existed, he could not have written the first five books of the Old Testament.

Why was this so? It was claimed that writing was virtually unknown or, at least, not commonly used at his time in history.

In the early days of the study of the Ancient Near East it was often denied that Moses could have written the first five books of the Bible because writing was not in existence before, or during, the time Moses.

Since there was no writing at the time of Moses, anything recorded in Scripture that dealt with those years was assumed to be mythical.

This is in spite of the fact that the Bible records Moses writing down things on a number of occasions. For example, we read:

Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel (Exodus 24:4 NIV).

Fact One: Writing Was Widely Used At The Time Of Abraham

As we observed in the solving of our first mystery, we now know that writing was in use long before the time of Moses. Indeed, it was widely used before the time of Abraham—hundreds of years before Moses was born!

Therefore, the idea that writing did not exist at the time of Moses, or that it was little used, has been once and for all refuted.

**Claim: The Laws Were Supposedly Too
Advanced For His Time**

There is also the claim that the law codes recorded in Genesis through Deuteronomy were too advanced for this time period. In other words, they must have been written much later in history.

**Fact Two: Law Codes Were In Existence Before
The Time Of Moses**

This mystery of the law codes was solved at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1901-1902, the Code of Hammurabi was discovered at the ancient site of Susa, in what is present-day Iran.

The code was written on a black diorite monument stone called a “stele.” This particular stele was nearly eight feet high.

Commissioned around 1750 B.C. by Hammurapi (Hammurabi) the king of Babylon, it contains 282 laws. The stele was found partially defaced when it had been taken as loot in the 12th century B.C.

In their book, *Archaeology and Bible History*, Joseph Free and Howard Vos explain the significance of the find:

The Code of Hammurabi was written several hundred years before the time of Moses (c. 1500-1400 B.C.) This code, from the period 2000-1700 B.C., contains advanced laws similar to those in the Mosaic laws.... In view of this archaeological evidence, the destructive critic can no longer insist that the laws of Moses are too advanced for his time.

The Code of Hammurabi established beyond doubt that writing was known hundreds of years before Moses as well as sophisticated law codes that predate Moses by hundreds of years.

In fact, there have been numerous archaeological discoveries of the past 100 years have proved once and for all that the art of writing was not only known during Moses’ day, but also long before Moses came on the scene. Indeed, writing goes back at least 2000 years before the time of Moses.

Therefore, for the Bible to claim that Moses wrote down the first five books, about 1400 B.C. is NOT contrary to the evidence (Joseph Free and Howard Vos, *Archaeology and Bible History*, p. 45).

Interestingly, the stele’s epilogue stated that anyone may come up and read it. This indicates that it was placed in a public area. It furthermore shows that literacy was seemingly widespread.

The Laws Are Similar To Those Of Moses

Some of the laws, as well as the way that they are written, are remarkably similar to those found in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. This indicates that a “common law” existed at that time in the ancient Near East.

For example, *lex talionis*, “an eye for an eye,” is found in both the law code of Hammurabi and in Exodus 21:24:

But if there is serious injury, then you will give a life for a life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise (Exodus 21:23-25 NET).

However, unlike Hammurabi’s law, the biblical law is between God and His people.

In fact, there are huge differences between the two:

The laws of Hammurabi address at least nine gods. Moses worships only one.

The exalted reputation and wisdom of Hammurabi is in focus, whereas Moses received no credit for the laws of God.

Hammurabi is the author of his laws. Moses received his as a revelation from God.

The laws of Hammurabi have no reference to the moral qualities of the gods. The Mosaic laws are actually a reflection of the holiness of God.

There are clear rules for the punishment of crimes in the laws of Hammurabi, but there is no provision for forgiveness since the gods have little interest in morality.

In the Mosaic laws, sin is primarily an affront to the character of God, but repentance and sacrifices for forgiveness and reconciliation are inseparable from the law (Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards, *Evidence for the Bible*, Day One Publication, Leominster England, 2014, p. 24).

An Ancient Discovery Of A Part Of The Pentateuch

In 1979, a discovery was made that helped confirm that the first five books of the Bible were written at the time of Moses. A text was discovered with the priestly benediction found in Numbers 6:24–26. It read:

May the Lord bless you, and keep you; may the Lord let his face shine upon you and give you peace.

This was a very important find. Indeed, these few verses, from one of the books which Moses wrote, predate the earliest biblical copies of the Dead Sea Scrolls by some 400 years!

Furthermore, this was composed before the time of the Babylonian captivity.

Consequently, this find certainly refutes those scholars who claim that the books of Moses had not been written until the time of the Babylonian Captivity or later.

For here we find a small portion of the five books of Moses literally quoted, well before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the deportation of the citizens of the Kingdom of Judah to Babylonia.

Thus, we have objective proof of the existence of a part of God's Word in the seventh-sixth century B.C.

There Is New Evidence Of Israel In Egypt Before The Exodus

One of the age-old problems with respect to the Exodus from Egypt is supposedly the lack of evidence that the nation of Israel was even in the land for all of those years. Supposedly, there is no objective evidence of their sojourn in Egypt before the time of the Exodus.

However such is not the case! Archaeologist Bryant Wood has amassed sufficient evidence for Israel being in Egypt before the Lord supernaturally brought them out in the Exodus.

In a lengthy article in Bible and Spade magazine, Winter 2020, titled "New Evidence For Israel's Sojourn in Egypt," he writes the following.

When Jacob's clan leaves Canaan to join Joseph in Egypt, the Bible tells us that the number of Israelites increased and flourished greatly for almost 300 years. But it is silent leading up to their oppression and bondage. Many academics dismiss the events in Genesis and Exodus when it comes to the Israelites migrating to Egypt and then their dramatic delivery led by Moses. The discoveries at Tell el-Dab'a in recent decades should cause them to rethink this position.

He then poses these questions:

Is there archaeological evidence of a large southern Canaan population living in Egypt during this time?

Is there evidence that Joseph and his family were honored and prosperous leaders in the region?

Who were the Hyksos and when was the turning point for the Egyptians to drive them out and feel threatened enough to put Israelites into bondage?

What explains the abrupt abandonment of an important Egyptian city in the middle of the 18th Dynasty?

A Brief Summary Of The Evidence

Wood explains the situation as follows:

The discoveries Tell el-Dab'a in the Eastern Nile Delta in recent decades have been nothing short of spectacular. The site has been identified without question as Ramesses where the Israelites lived during the Sojourn. It was there that Joseph gave his family land: So Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land the district of Rameses (Gen 47:11). Later, when the Israelites were pressed into servitude, they built the store city of Ramesses (Exodus 1:11)

Finally, they departed from Rameses when they left Egypt under the leadership of Moses (Ex. 12:37; Nm 33:3-5).

The Asiatic Community At Tell el-Dab'a

The ancient Egyptians considered the lands east of the Sinai to be "Asia" and therefore the inhabitants thereof to be Asiatics. The Egyptians of course, considered these people to be inferior to themselves, often referring to them as "wretched Asiatics." The excavations at Tell el Dab'a have revealed the presence of an Asiatic community. They first settled as pastoralists, then grew in number as well-to-do entrepreneurs, became subservient to the Egyptians and finally left. This scenario matches what we read in the Bible....The newcomers were clearly non-Egyptians who came from southern Canaan since they used pottery and weapons common to that area...Ramesses was strategically located in the eastern Nile delta on the Pelusiac branch of the Nile River. As such it was a commercial and military hub throughout the period of the Sojourn....

Discoveries at Tell el-Dab'a provide evidence matching the career of Joseph including a palace built in Egyptian style but belonging to a Semitic official. . .

Things began to change in about 1668 BC when the Hyksos Rulers of Foreign Lands from Canaan took control of the country...According to the Turin king list they ruled for 108 years. ...within a short period of time they gained enough wealth and power to wrest control of the country from the native Egyptians. . .

Then in ca. 1560 the bottom fell out. After decades of bloody warfare the native Egyptians overpowered the Hyksos and drove them out. They immediately place the Israelites in bondage. The Bible says:

Eventually, a new king came to power in Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done. He said to his people, "Look, the people of Israel now outnumber us and are stronger than we are. We must make a plan to keep them from growing even more. If we don't, and if war breaks out, they will join our enemies and fight against us. Then they will escape from the country."

So the Egyptians made the Israelites their slaves. They appointed brutal slave drivers over them, hoping to wear them down with crushing labor. They forced them to build the cities of Pithom and Rameses as supply centers for the king (Exodus 1:8-11 NLT).

The lovely Israelite houses and the Hyksos palaces ceased and the Egyptians moved in. After flourishing for over 300 years, the Israelites were now slaves in what had become their homeland. No Israelite or Hyksos architecture was found from the time of the Egyptian takeover in 1560 BC to the Exodus in 1446 BC.

Though oppressed, the Israelites continued to multiply causing additional anxiety among the Egyptian leadership (Ex 1:12). This was indeed a bleak 114 years in the history of God's people:

But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more the Israelites multiplied and spread, and the more alarmed the Egyptians became. So the Egyptians worked the people of Israel without mercy. They made their lives bitter, forcing them to mix mortar and make bricks and do all the work in the fields. They were ruthless in all their demands (Exodus 1:12-14 NLT).

Then God raised up Moses. It is recorded in Exodus 2 that Moses' mother placed the baby Moses in a papyrus basket and set him afloat in the Nile in order to avoid the death decree leveled against male Hebrew babies. An Egyptian princess rescued him and adopted him as her son. It has been argued that this account lacks historical credibility because the capital at that time was far away Thebes in southern Egypt and Pharaoh's palace would have been located there, not at Ramesses. But the Bible tells us that Moses appeared before Pharaoh 14 times in the months leading up to the Exodus. Is the Bible wrong?

Once again, the critics have been proven incorrect with the discovery in the 1990's of not one, not two, but three royal palaces at Tell el-Dab'a! What is more, the royal compound there where the palaces were located was adjacent to the Nile River, allowing easy access to the river by the princess and the Pharaoh.

Following the ten plagues the site was abandoned by the Egyptians. ...The excavators have no explanation for the abrupt departure from this vital commercial and military center. Interestingly, the only possibility that they can come up with is a plague. a veiled reference to the biblical plagues! Israel's exodus brought an end to their 430 year-long Sojourn in Egypt. The Sojourn was an important time in the history of God's people when He demonstrated His awesome power and love and grew his people from a small clan to a mighty nation (Bryant Wood, Bible and Spade, "New Evidence For Israel's Sojourn in Egypt," Winter 2020, pp. 10-15)

Conclusion

This is indeed remarkable! We have evidence of exactly where Israel lived in Egypt during the time of Jacob, Joseph and his family. In addition, we also have the evidence of the continued success of the Israelites in Egypt until the Hyksos arrived and wrested control of the country from the native Egyptians which, of course, led to them being removed.

At the same time, Israel was also seen as a problem for the native Egyptians which caused them to be put under bondage for 100 years. This led to their crying out for a Deliverer whom the Lord sent, Moses.

Therefore, the objective findings from this geographical area explains what happened to Israel, why they stopped thriving, and why they needed to leave Egypt for the Promised Land.

All in all, when the totality of the evidence is considered, a powerful case can be made for the Israel's occupation of Tell el Dab'a during their sojourn in Egypt.

Further Evidence Of Hebrew Servants In Egypt: Papyrus Brooklyn

There is more evidence of Hebrew servants in Egypt before the time of the Exodus. Titus Kennedy explains:

An Egyptian list of domestic servants recorded on a papyrus from about the 17th century BC contains not only Semitic names but even Hebrew names. The period came just after the life of Joseph and preceded the Exodus, which was the time when the Hebrews lived in Egypt as settlers then as slaves.

A section of this papyrus contains a list of 95 servants, many of whom are specified as Asiatic or coming from western Asia (primarily Canaan). The servants with foreign names are given Egyptian names, just as Joseph was after he was promoted from a household servant under Potiphar to the role of vizier over all Egypt. The majority of the names are feminine because domestic servants were typically female.

Approximately, 30 of the servants have names identified as Semitic but more relevant to the Exodus story is that 9 of these servants appear to have specifically Hebrew names. ...

Therefore, this list is a clear attestation of Hebrews living in Egypt prior to the Exodus under Moses, in their earliest period of residence in the country prior to their total enslavement and perhaps shows that a group may have migrated south or was taken south for work (Titus Kennedy, *Unearthing the Bible*, Eugene Oregon, Harvest House, 2020, pp. 48, 49).

The Plagues Of Egypt May Have Been Documented Elsewhere

Scripture speaks of a number of plagues that the Lord sent upon the people of Egypt which eventually led to their Exodus.

A document known as the Ipuwer Papyrus (also called the “Admonitions of an Egyptian sage”) speaks of plagues that devastated Egypt.

Fascinatingly, six of the plagues mentioned are ones found in the Book of Exodus. It is possible that this document is testifying to the biblical plagues that the Lord sent upon the Land of Egypt.

In fact, it speaks of the river that was blood so that nobody could drink from the water. Trees, herbs, crops, grains and fish were destroyed according to this ancient document. It also testified that fire consumed the ground, that cattle wandered, and that darkness was in the land.

Finally, it says that “he that lays his brother in the ground is everywhere. All of Egypt cried out in grief.” This, of course, fits the last of the biblical plagues—the death of the firstborn.

While there are those who see Ipuwer as merely a poem, and not the recording of historical events, the parallels between it and the account in Exodus are unmistakable.

In other words, it may indeed be a non-biblical account of the various plagues that the Lord sent to Egypt that caused Pharaoh to let the people go.

The Pharaoh Of The Exodus? Amenhotep II

There is no consensus as to which Pharaoh was the one described in the Book of Exodus who eventually let the people of Israel leave Egypt. However, a seemingly strong case can be made for Amenhotep II as this Pharaoh. Titus Kennedy writes:

Pharaoh Amenhotep II reigned over Egypt beginning in about 1450 BC during the powerful 18th Dynasty of the New Kingdom. His monuments and inscriptions indicate that he was one of the most boastful Pharaoh's in ancient Egypt, claiming such feats as being able to shoot arrows through a copper target a palm thick, rowing a ship by himself faster and farther than 200 Egyptian sailors, singlehandedly killing 7 prince warriors of Kadesh, having the kings of Babylon, the Hittites, and the Mitanni all come to pay tribute to him and supposedly conducting the largest slave raid in Egyptian history.

According to a match of chronological information from Egyptian king lists and the Bible, Amenhotep II was probably the Pharaoh of the Exodus, which occurred in approximately 1446 BC. One of the most significant artifacts relating to Amenhotep II being the pharaoh of the Exodus is a stele that he commissioned to commemorate one of his campaigns.

While earlier in the 18th Dynasty the Egyptians had a powerful military, especially during the reign of Thutmose III, who conducted 17 known military campaigns after the beginning of the reign of Amenhotep II there is a steep decline. In fact, Amenhotep II had only two confirmed campaigns during his reign—the first took place prior to the Exodus while the second was primarily a slave raid that occurred soon after the Exodus that was recorded on the Elephantine Stele.

This monumental stone inscription with its accompanying artwork was originally erected at the southern city of Elephantine, and it records the campaign of Amenhotep II to Canaan in which he claims to have brought back 101,128 captives to be used as slaves. In comparison, other Egyptian military campaigns of the period brought back nowhere near the amount of captives with the largest being 5,903, and as a result most scholars consider the number of slaves captured by Amenhotep II in this text to be a massive exaggeration. Because this happened right after the Exodus, perhaps it is indicative of an urgent need to replace the lost slave population in Egypt or purely as propaganda making it appear that the pharaoh had recovered or replenished the slaves lost in

the Hebrew Exodus (Titus Kennedy, *Unearthing the Bible*, Eugene Oregon, Harvest House, 2020, pp. 55,56).

The Sphinx And The Death Of The Firstborn Son (Dream Stele)

There may be other confirming evidence of the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Titus Kennedy writes:

The Sphinx Dream Stele was found set between the paws of the Great Sphinx at Giza when the sands were uncovered the whole monument was revealed. When the Egyptian hieroglyphs were translated it was found to be a personal yet official text of Pharaoh Thutmose IV who reigned in the 15th century and was the son of Pharaoh Amenhotep II...

The stone inscription claims that while Thutmose IV was out hunting one day, he rested near the Great Sphinx, fell asleep, and had a dream in which the god of the Sphinx delivered a divine message to him. Allegedly, Thutmose IV was told if he cleared the sand from around the Sphinx, the kingship would be given to him.

The inscription indicates that Thutmose IV did not have a natural claim to the throne forcing him to fabricate a divine promise in order to solidify his legitimacy as the next Pharaoh. Scholars consider this text to demonstrate that Thutmose IV was not the natural heir to the throne, but the death of his older brother, the firstborn and original heir allowed him to eventually become pharaoh.

In fact, Thutmose IV had an older brother named Amenhotep who was the heir but he mysteriously disappeared or died. If Amenhotep II was the pharaoh of the Exodus, then his firstborn son and heir Amenhotep would have died during the final plague, meaning that the next in line would eventually take the throne. The younger brother was Thutmose IV, who appears to have used 'divine' propaganda to claim that the gods would grant the kingship to him as successor to his father Amenhotep II. Because he was not the original heir, this divine invocation would make his kingship more legitimate to the Egyptians (Titus Kennedy *Unearthing the Bible*, Eugene Oregon, Harvest House, 2020, pp. 58,59).

Fact: The Route Of The Exodus Was Not Impossible

The Scripture is very specific as to the route that the nation of Israel took from Egypt on its way to the Promised Land. For example, in Numbers 33, there is a detailed description of where the Israelites camped on their way to Jericho. It says:

They left Iye Abarim and camped at Dibon Gad. They left Dibon Gad and camped at Almon Diblathaim. They left Almon Diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim, near Nebo. They left the mountains of Abarim and camped on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho. There on the plains of Moab they camped along the Jordan from Beth Jeshimoth to Abel Shittim. On the plains of

Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho the LORD said to Moses (Numbers 33:45-50 NIV).

Notice the detail. We are told specifically where the nation camped on their way to Jericho. This route was once considered to be unhistorical.

Yet the discovery of three ancient Egyptian maps, dating from the thirteenth century to the fifteenth century B.C., shows that this was a same heavily traveled route that was taken by travelers in those days.

The cities mentioned in Numbers were also mentioned in the Egyptian maps. Again, the historical details of the Scripture prove to be true.

While the biblical account of the Exodus from Egypt has been questioned by critics of Scripture, the evidence that we have from the past is consistent with what the Bible says.

In sum, we now know that route taken by the children of Israel was a route that was used in those days. The fact that Moses wrote down the specific places where the people camped, and that it fits a known route taken by travelers in the 15th century B.C., gives specific evidence that the writer was a firsthand witness to the events he recorded.

Again, we emphasize, if the writer had been living hundreds of years after the time of Moses, we should expect to find obvious errors in his writings. But we do not.

The Location of Kadesh Barnea Has Been Discovered

One of the most amazing stories in Bible archaeology concerns the discovery of the region where Israel spent forty years in Sinai—specifically at Kadesh Barnea. Scott Stripling explains:

The identification of Kadesh Barnea links to Thomas Edward Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia, 1888-1935) who trained as an archeologist at Jesus College, Oxford. He worked as a foreman for Leonard Woolley, who later discovered Ur of the Chaldees. Lawrence copied inscriptions, photographed finds, catalogued discoveries bought antiquities, and used his mechanical ingenuity to solve small problems that would arise. As an apprentice at Carchemish, Lawrence increased his knowledge of archaeology and made worthy contributions of his own. He also took part in covering up a spying expedition—a precursor of things to come.

When World War I broke out in August of 1914, Lawrence and Woolley were in England. They were told to finish their report on the Wilderness of Zin expedition quickly, to make the survey appear to have been solely archaeological in its intent. While subscribers to the Palestine Exploration Fund publications received Woolley and Lawrence's archaeological report, titled *The Wilderness of Zin*, Newcombe's detailed maps and photos of the area went to the British military. The surprising thing is that the rushed book, designed as a cover for a relatively brief spying survey, remains important in biblical

studies. It identified the northern Sinai site of 'Ain el-Qudeirat, rather than the nearby 'Ain Kadeis (previous proposal) as the site of the biblical Kadesh Barnea where the Hebrews in the Exodus settled and from whence Moses sent out men to spy out the land of Canaan (Deut. 1:2, 19: 2:1; Numbers 13:3-21). The front matter lists Lawrence as the chief author of the chapter on Kadesh Barnea (chapter 4). Even the respected Israeli archaeologist Rudolph Cohen agreed with the arguments of Lawrence and Woolley about the identification of the site (Scott Stripling, *The Trowel and the Truth*, Second Edition, Vision Publishing, Ramona, California, 2017, pp. 173-174).

Israel's Unique Religion

There is something else that needs to be mentioned when dealing with Israel's time in Egypt—its unique religion. Indeed, some explanation must be given for this fact as Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards argue persuasively:

The suggestion that by the 6th century BC Israel's religion has developed from polytheism to monotheism, is entirely without evidence. Contrast the religion of Israel with their neighbours.

Israel holds a clear monotheistic religion [belief in only one God].

Israel's God was just, perfect, wise and kind. The Hittites, for example, considered their gods unreliable and often and often incompetent—which they would point out to them.

Yahweh was frequently described as faithful a concept virtually unknown among the nations since the gods made no covenant promises.

For the nations, holiness is adherence to a cult rather than moral virtue. The gods were limited to their sphere of power (war, fire, fertility etc) whereas Israel's God controlled the entire universe and every sphere of life.

The gods had needs (food, sleep, clothing) which the worshippers must provide.

Israel was forbidden to make images of her God or consult omens, yet idolatry and divination were common among all her neighbors (Deuteronomy 5:7-8 and 18:9-14).

For Israel, people are created to delight in God who provides for them; in paganism they are slaves to provide for the gods.

Israel's unique system of repentance, sacrifice, total forgiveness and reconciliation to God was unknown among the pagans.

There is no reference to the scarab beetle in the Old Testament although its veneration was widespread and especially where Israelites lived for centuries (Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards, *Evidence for the Bible*, Day One Publication, Leominster England, 2014, p. 25).

These facts have to be faced! The religion of Israel was unique, different from all its neighbors. Some explanation must be given as to why this is so.

One Important Question: Why Make Up A Story Like This About Your History?

There is something else that must be taken into account as we consider the biblical account of the Exodus. If the story of the Exodus was not true, then why would ancient Israel invent such an account? Why make up a story that says your ancestors were slaves under one of your bitterest enemies?

Furthermore, the most important festival that Israel celebrated each year was one that commemorated the Exodus from Egypt—the Passover. Why celebrate the Passover if the events surrounding the Exodus never happened?

In point of fact, the account of Israel as slaves in Egypt is a unique story. The Bible says that Jacob brought his family to Egypt because of the famine in Canaan. This eventually led to their slavery when a Pharaoh arose that did not know Joseph. Add to this, the continuous rebellion of this slave nation once they were on the way to the Promised Land.

Why would some later writer in Israel make up historical and cultural details to make this account look authentic? For what purpose?

Again, we ask, why make up all of these stories if they were not true? No other nation has ever done anything remotely like this to explain their past.

The simplest answer is that the account is true.

Indeed, as we continue to document, the evidence from archaeology and from ancient inscriptions supports the narrative of the Bible in the general details as well as in the specific details.

Summary To Mystery 2: Moses, The Sojourn In Egypt, The Exodus, And The Journey To The Promised Land

Sufficient evidence has been discovered that shows that writing was in existence long before the time of Moses. Since he had been trained in all the skills of Egypt, he certainly could have written the parts of Scripture that were attributed to him. Add to this, law codes, like those we find in the Bible, were in existence hundreds of years before the time of Moses.

As we have also documented, recent discoveries have also been made that are consistent with the nation of Israel existing in Egypt at that time, as well as traveling to the Promised Land as the Bible records. In other words, there is sufficient evidence that the account recorded in Scripture fits the facts as we know them.

The pattern continues. The Bible records people, places and events of the distant past and the evidence from these times shows Scripture to be correct over and over again.

Mystery 3:

Israel's Entrance Into The Promised Land, The Conquest And The Times Of The Judges

The entrance into Canaan, the Promised Land, is described in the book of Joshua. From the accounts given, we discover that Israel had numerous conflicts in such places as Jericho, Ai, and Lachish.

Furthermore, from the Book of Judges, we find additional references of Israel settling in the land, being ruled by judges, or chieftains, before they were ruled by a king.

The Mystery Explained: Did These Events Happen As The Bible Said They Did?

As we shall document, there are many specific events that are described in these two biblical books with precise references. So the mystery contained here is simple: Is there any evidence that these biblical reference match up with known reality?

In other words, are we dealing with fact or fiction when Scripture speaks of the time of Joshua and the Judges?

The Merneptah Stele (Also Called The Israel Stele) Shows Israel In The Promised Land In 1230 B.C.

The hieroglyphic text of this stele made in Egypt describes the victories of Pharaoh Merneptah over the Libyans and people of the land of Canaan. The stele stands more than seven feet high.

The Importance Of The Find

To this date, the Merneptah Stele contains the earliest extrabiblical mention of the name "Israel." The Egyptian pharaoh boasted about a victory over Israel around 1230 B.C. The stele also depicts a number of Egyptian gods.

While this particular battle between Egypt and Israel is not recorded in the Old Testament, the stele does show that the Israelites were in fact living in the Promised Land at that time.

Consequently, their entrance into the Holy Land had already taken place sometime *before* 1230 B.C.

The Oldest Picture Of Israelites Discovered

In Egypt, on a long wall of the great Karnak Temple, is a recently identified scene of the aftermath of a battle between the Egyptians and Israelites dating to about 1209 B.C. It contains the oldest picture of the Israelites.

The fact that it shows a battle between these two people groups from over three thousand years ago fits with what the Scripture says about the fighting between these two nations.

Israel Enters The Land, Conquers Jericho

While the Merneptah Stele has Israel in the Promised Land around 1,230 B.C, the traditional date for their entrance into the land is some 170 years earlier—1,400 B.C.

According to Scripture, after entering the land Joshua set his sights on the fortified city of Jericho.

The biblical importance of Jericho is highlighted by the fact that it is referred to more than 50 times in the Old Testament. The most important references are those in the sixth chapter of Joshua. This passage speaks of the Israelite conquest of the city—their first victory in the Promised Land.

Archaeology has shown where the city once stood, and that it guarded the key spot for entering into the Promised Land from the east.

The Fall Of Jericho

Indeed, one of the major events in the Old Testament was the fall of the city of Jericho. The Bible describes the event as follows:

When the trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so every man charged straight in, and they took the city. They devoted the city to the LORD and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys (Joshua 6:20,21 NIV).

The investigation on the site of ancient Jericho has had an interesting history. In the 1930's an English archaeologist by the name of John Garstang investigated the site and concluded the walls fell down as the Bible said.

However, in the 1950's another British archaeologist, Kathleen Kenyon, excavated Jericho and concluded that Garstang was wrong. She said there was no evidence of the destruction of Jericho at the time of Joshua.

Fact: The Evidence Supports The Biblical Account

Recently, there has been a shift back to the findings of Garstang. Archaeologist Bryant Wood, who has done extensive work on this issue, has concluded that Jericho was indeed destroyed in the time frame when the Scripture says it occurred and the walls did fall out. Therefore, the latest archaeological testimony supports the biblical claims.

We not only have the biblical account of the fall of Jericho, the evidence from archaeology also supports the account in Scripture. In fact, we can sum up what was found as follows.

Confirmation 1: Jericho Was Strongly Fortified

Massive ramparts which surrounded the city were discovered. This fits with the biblical description (Joshua 2:5,7,15: 6:5,20).

Confirmation 2: The Wall Collapsed At The Time The City Was Destroyed

The evidence reveals that the wall collapsed at the time Jericho was destroyed. This fits the biblical account (Joshua 6:20).

Confirmation 3: The Destruction Occurred At The Time Of Harvest

Large quantities of stored grain were found in the destroyed city. This indicates the time of the destruction was in the spring. Scripture also indicates this (Joshua 2:6; 3:15: 5:10).

Confirmation 4: The City Was Destroyed By Fire

Fire destroyed this massive city. The is precisely what the Scripture says took place (Joshua 6:24).

Confirmation 5: The Siege Was Short

Since the grain in the city was not eaten by the people this indicates that the siege of Jericho was short-lived (Joshua 6:1,15,20).

Jericho was a well-fortified city stocked with grain. Therefore, any siege would normally have taken months to achieve its results. However, the uneaten, stored grain showed that the siege was indeed short.

Confirmation 6: The Grain Was Not Plundered

Usually, when a city is overtaken, everything is plundered. However, we do not find this to be the case in Jericho. Strangely, the grain was not used by the invaders to feed either their citizens or their army.

This is unique in the ancient world but it accords perfectly with what the Scripture says (Joshua 6:1,17-18).

Again, the facts support the Scripture. What we know about the destruction of Jericho is consistent with the record found in the Bible, is consistent.

The Scarab Of Amenhotep III Confirms The Traditional Date

There is also some thrilling evidence that has come from Jericho that confirms the traditional date of Israel entering the Promised Land around 1400 B.C.

While a number of scarabs have been found in Jericho, there are two in particular that provide far-reaching evidence. Titus Kennedy explains:

The two scarabs of Amenhotep III, however, are also extremely important because they represent the latest Pharaoh attested by artifacts from the Bronze age city of Jericho and as such place the fall of Jericho during his reign.

Along with a 15th century BC cuneiform tablet and distinctive pottery found during investigations, included special painted wares, these scarabs suggest that the walled city of Jericho was inhabited from before 1700 B.C to around 1400 B.C. Then the destruction and the abandonment of the city occurred during the time of Pharaoh Amenhotep III, whose reign bridged the 15th and 14th centuries B.C... Therefore the Amenhotep III scarab found at Jericho would have been contemporary with his reign, indicating that the judgment and abandonment of Jericho occurred around 1400 B.C. which is the approximate date that can be ascertained from a chronological analysis of the books of Numbers, Joshua, Judges and Kings (Titus Kennedy, *Unearthing the Bible*, Eugene Oregon, Harvest House, 2020, pp. 68,69).

Consequently, we have seemingly irrefutable evidence of the timeline of the destruction of Jericho and it fits precisely with the traditional date for Israel entering the land.

When we couple this with the testimony of the Merneptah Stele, that Israel was solidly in the land at 1230 B.C., we have an excellent case for the traditional date of the arrival of the nation.

The Mystery Of Ai

Whenever the subject of the historical accuracy of the Old Testament is under discussion one of the favorite topics of the skeptics is the account in the Book of Joshua about Israel and its battle with the people from Ai.

The biblical account of Ai has been a favorite topic over the years for deniers of the historicity of the Bible. As is always the case, sooner or later, the facts will prove the Bible to be correct. Ai is certainly a case in point.

In the Spring 2018 edition of "Bible and Spade Magazine," we read the following description concerning how the problem of Ai was finally solved.

The authors begin by stating the problem:

The debate over the location of Ai intertwines with the excavation of Jericho. Kathleen Kenyon excavated Jericho from 1952 to 1956. She concluded that the archaeological evidence at Jericho contradicts the

biblical account. In 1961, Joseph Callaway studied with Kenyon in London and three years later on behalf of the Southern Baptist theological seminary, began excavations at Et-Tell, 10 mi. (16km) north of Jerusalem (the city of David). Et-Tell had long prevailed as the leading candidate for Ai because of the endorsement of W.F. Albright, the father of biblical archaeology and one of Callaway's mentors. When Callaway ceased excavations in 1972, he concluded that et-Tell sat unoccupied at the time of the biblical conquest. Together, the interpretation of Kenyon, Callaway and Albright eroded the evangelical belief in the inerrancy of Scripture (The Problem Of Ai Solved After Nearly 40 years of Excavation in the West Bank of Israel, Scott Stripling and Mark Hassler, Bible and Spade Magazine, Spring 2018).

But all was not lost. The writers continue:

In 1994 ... Bryant Wood identified Khirbet el-Maqatir as another candidate for Ai, and the following year he launched an investigation at the new site, 0.6 mi (1km) west of Et-Tell, and 10 mi (16km) north of Jerusalem. Excavations continued at Khirbet el-Maqatir through 2016.

So what was the conclusion?

Various lines of reasoning allow for the possibility that the fortress of Ai in Joshua's day stood at Khirbet el-Maqatir. For one, local tradition in the 1800's equated the sites. Moreover, a monastery from the Byzantine Age once graced the locale. The placement of the monastery seems deliberate, in that monasteries often memorialized biblical events. Unfortunately, the excavation did not yield any mosaics or other clues as to what the monastery may have memorialized. Regardless, the geographical and archaeological indicators in Joshua 7-8 correspond to the evidence unearthed at Khirbet el-Maqatir.

After examining the evidence, they conclude the article as follows:

The geography and archeology of Khirbet el-Maqatir accord with the descriptions of Joshua 7-8. The identification of Khirbet el-Maqatir as the Ai of Joshua's time resolves the problem of chronology and location that ensued from Callaway's excavation at et-Tell. Nearly forty years of excavation in the West Bank of Israel by ABR archaeologists have resulted in a viable solution. The solution squares with the biblical data concerning the exodus and conquest.

Scott Stripling, who directed the final three seasons of the dig, from 2014-2016, had this to say:

This effort proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the remains of Ai of Joshua 7-8 lie at Khirbet el-Maqatir (Scott Stripling, *The Trowel and the Truth*, Second Edition, Vision Publishing, Ramona, California, 2017, p. 91)

This should teach us a valuable lesson. When the Scripture records that something took place, though there does not seem to be any evidence for it, we should not immediately consider the account to be mythical. The hard work of the archaeologists at ABR with respect to the location of Ai is a case in point. Years and years of ridicule by the so-called “experts” have proven to be false.

The minute finds at this ancient site give further evidence that the writers of Scripture knew precisely what they were talking about.

Another Confirmation Of Scripture

Further evidence of the reliability of Joshua has been found. Scott Stripling explains:

Sixty-three ostraca were unearthed in 1910 at Sebaste (Samaria). Most of the ostraca contain receipts for oil and wine. More importantly the ostraca use many of the clan names from the tribe of Manasseh which inherited the territory of Samaria (Josh 17:1-4) Scott Stripling *The Trowel and the Truth*, Second Edition, Vision Publishing, Ramona, California, 2017, p. 111).

Amazingly, in this case, even the smallest of details of Scripture are confirmed by the evidence.

The Times Of The Judges

We also have evidence of the historical accuracy for the period of the Judges, or “Chieftains.”

Dan (Laish)

When we solved our first mystery, we mentioned that Abraham had chased four kings all the way to Dan (Laish). Well, the area of Dan became headlines again in the Book of Judges:

So the men of Dan continued on their way. When Micah saw that there were too many of them for him to attack, he turned around and went home.

Then, with Micah’s idols and his priest, the men of Dan came to the town of Laish, whose people were peaceful and secure. They attacked with swords and burned the town to the ground. There was no one to rescue the people, for they lived a great distance from Sidon and had no allies nearby. This happened in the valley near Beth-rehob.

Then the people of the tribe of Dan rebuilt the town and lived there. They renamed the town Dan after their ancestor, Israel’s son, but it had originally been called Laish (Judges 18:26-29 NLT).

This is a horrible story. The tribe of Dan rejected the region that Joshua had wanted them to settle in. Instead, they went up north to the city of Laish, and, as we read here, destroyed the peaceful city and killed its inhabitants.

Later, King Jeroboam, whom we will meet in mystery six, “The Divided Kingdom,” made the city of Dan the center of pagan worship by installing an idol of a golden calf there.

We will meet this area again in the second volume of our series *Ancient Mysteries of the Bible Solved, Volume Two*, when we look at certain mysteries in the New Testament. Amazingly, we will find the pagan practices of this area continuing during the life and ministry of Jesus.

In fact, Jesus used this area as a backdrop when He asked Peter and the disciples who do people say that I am?

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” (Matthew 16:13 NLT)

As we will document, there were specific reasons as to why Jesus went out of His way to this pagan area to ask the question.

All in all, this area of Dan had a sordid history from the time period of the Judges all the way through the ministry of Christ.

Megiddo

The city of Megiddo is mentioned twice in the Book of Joshua (12:21; 17:11) and twice in the Book of Judges (1:27; 5:1). This indicates that Megiddo was already a sizeable and significant city at the time Israel entered into the Promised Land. Later, at the time of Solomon, the fortifications of the city had been strengthened:

Baana son of Ahilud, in Taanach and Megiddo, all of Beth-shan near Zarethan below Jezreel, and all the territory from Beth-shan to Abel-meholah and over to Jokmeam (1 Kings 4:12 NLT).

Megiddo lies in a strategic position. It guards a major roadway between Egypt and Mesopotamia. Consequently, we should not be surprised to find it often mentioned in the literature of the Ancient Near East.

As an example, in the annals of the Pharaoh Thutmose III (1504-1450 B.C.) inscribed on the walls of a temple at the ancient city of Karnak, there is an entire account of a campaign of a battle fought at the site of Megiddo:

His majesty arrived south of Megiddo...Now orders were given to the entire army to deploy. . . They saw his majesty overpower them. They fled falling headlong toward Megiddo, with fearful faces having abandoned their horses and chariots of gold and silver.

Megiddo came under the control of Assyria after Tiglath-pileser III's campaign against the northern kingdom of Israel in 732 B.C. Therefore, its biblical significance has been there from the very beginning.

Conclusion

The archaeological evidence from the various excavations at Megiddo, along with the frequent mention in ancient Egyptian literature, gives us excellent verification for the testimony that we read in Joshua and Judges. Megiddo was a major city in the region by the time of the conquest.

In our second book in this series, *Ancient Mysteries of the Bible Solved, Volume Two*, we will again visit Megiddo and consider its place in “last days” Bible prophecy. As we shall see, Megiddo has a huge part still to play in the future of our world.

Fact: Ashkelon, A Philistine Seaport, Has Been Discovered

In the book of Joshua we find the city of Ashkelon mentioned. It was one of the five major cities of the Philistines and was part of the land that remained to be conquered:

When Joshua was very old, the LORD told him, “You are very old, and a great deal of land remains to be conquered. This is the land that remains: all the territory of the Philistines and all the Geshurites, from the Shihor River east of Egypt northward to the territory of Ekron (it is regarded as Canaanite territory), including the area belonging to the five Philistine lords who ruled in Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron, as well as Avvite land (Joshua 13:1-3 NET).

Ashkelon was a major seaport that traded with other nations in the Mediterranean. Since 1985, there have been ongoing excavations in Ashkelon. The city was found to be large, about 150 acres, as well as being heavily fortified.

Description Of The Find

A small bull figurine was found, which illustrated the pagan worship that was practiced.

Importance Of The Find

We would expect to find pagan idols because the Bible says that the Israelites did not conquer Ashkelon:

The men of Judah captured Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron, and the territory surrounding each of these cities. The LORD was with the men of Judah. They conquered the hill country, but they could not conquer the people living in the coastal plain, because they had chariots with iron-rimmed wheels. (Judges 1:18-19 NET).

The city was eventually destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 604 B.C. as predicted by the prophet Jeremiah.

In fact, a number of prophets, Amos, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Zechariah, all pronounced condemnation upon the city of Ashkelon as well as the rest of the cities of the Philistines. For example, Amos wrote:

This is what the Lord says: “Because Gaza has committed three crimes -make that four! - I will not revoke my decree of judgment. They deported a whole community and sold them to Edom. So I will set Gaza’s city wall on fire; fire will consume her fortresses. I will remove the ruler from Ashdod, the one who holds the royal scepter from Ashkelon. I will strike Ekron with my hand; the rest of the Philistines will also die.” The sovereign Lord has spoken! (Amos 1:6-8 NET).

As the Bible predicted, Ashkelon was indeed destroyed. Their crime was attempting to thwart the people of God in the Promised Land.

The Truly Amazing Fulfillment

As we study the Old Testament Scriptures, we find the Philistines, along with Moab, Ammon, Edom and Amalek were constant problems to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Indeed, these people groups continually tried to thwart God’s plan through His chosen people.

Thus, we find the Lord pronouncing punishment upon each of these groups. He predicted that they would no longer exist as a distinct people. And that is precisely what we find:

By the time of Roman rule in the Levant around 63 BC, the people of Ammon, Edom and Moab had lost their distinct identities, and were assimilated into Roman culture (LaBianca, Oystein S.; Younker, Randall W. (1995). *The Kingdoms of Ammon, Moab, and Edom: The Archaeology of Society in Late Bronze/Iron Age Transjordan* (Ca. 1400-500 BCE) in Thomas Levy, *The Archaeology of Society In The Holy Land*, Leicester University Press).

In addition, there is no record of the Philistines’ existence after the second century B.C., though the names of their cities remained.

In sum, not only do we find the Bible historically accurate in these circumstances, we also find that the predictions of punishment by Lord, for these certain groups, has been literally fulfilled.

Summary To Mystery 3: Israel’s Entrance Into The Promised Land, The Conquest And The Times Of The Judges

We do know from the Merneptah Stele that Israel was in the Promised Land in the 1230 B.C. The traditional date for the Exodus, 1446 B.C., and the entrance into the land about 1,400 B.C., in the conquering of Jericho is consistent with this time frame.

We discovered that the destruction of Jericho, as revealed in the Bible, fits the facts as we know them. Indeed, we saw a number of confirmations of

the destruction of Jericho with the way in which Scripture describes what took place under Joshua.

There is more. Indeed, as we observed with the discovery of two scarabs with the name of the Pharaoh Amenhotep III, we seem to have a precise timeline as to when the city was destroyed.

As in the previous mysteries that we examined, evidence has been discovered that confirms the biblical accounts.

This includes the biblical account of Ai as well as other references in the books of Joshua and Judges that fit the biblical evidence.

For example, the Philistine city of Ashkelon was destroyed as the Lord had predicted. Like other nations including Ammon, Edom, Moab and Amalek, the Philistines no longer exist as a distinct people. Why? Because the Lord specifically said that this would happen!

So let's consider for a moment what we have already observed. Since we have seen that the Scripture fits the evidence of the various historical periods time after time, it is fair to make the observation that we continue to see this consistent pattern.

This is, of course, what we would expect if the Bible is what it claims to be—the Word of the Living God.

Mystery 4:

The Beginning Of The Hebrew Monarchy: Was King David An Historical Figure?

One of the central figures in the Old Testament was the first rightful king of Israel—David. According to Scripture, David lived about one thousand years before the time of Christ.

However, there were many who have denied his existence, or have claimed that he was a minor chieftain, not a king who ruled over a large thriving empire.

As we will discover, the Bible is correct again with what it says about King David.

Background

The background to this period of Israel's monarchy includes the rule of the person that the people chose to be king, but that the Lord did not—Saul. One problem was that Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin not from the kingly line that was promised to another son of Jacob—Judah.

Saul was from Gibeah—the leading town for the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 19:11-14). As king, he eventually made it his capitol (1 Samuel 10:26; 11:4; and 15:34).

Gibeah, King Saul's Capitol Has Been Discovered

Archaeologists have identified Gibeah with the ancient ruins on a hill known today as Tel el-Ful, about three miles north of Jerusalem.

Excavations have shown that the site of Gibeah was indeed inhabited about 1100 B.C.—the time when Saul ruled. His fortress-palace was discovered in the city.

Excavations also reveal that it was small and modest compared with the later palaces of kings David and Solomon. Therefore, the historicity of Saul is well-established.

The Eshbaal Inscription Khirbet Qeiyafa

In 2012, a jar inscription was found—it is one of only four with names from the early kingdom of Judah. The find comes from the tenth century B.C. and bears a name that is the same as that of King Saul's son:

Ner was the father of Kish, and Kish was the father of Saul. Saul was the father of Jonathan, Malki-Shua, Abinadab, and Eshbaal (1 Chronicles 8:33 NET).

Therefore, the evidence, slight as it is, confirms what Scripture has to say about King Saul.

Claim: King David Was A Legendary Figure

As mentioned, it has been fashionable to deny the existence of one of the greatest biblical figures—King David. Critics have assumed that he never existed, or that he was merely a local chieftain—not the powerful king as the Bible portrays him.

Fact: The Name Of David Appears On An Ancient Text

In 1993,1994, Israeli excavators were working at Tel Dan in the northern part of Israel on the border with Lebanon. They found three fragments of an inscribed stone near a paved area in front of the outer Israelite gate.

It contained a text written in Aramaic from about 850 B.C. This was likely created under the authority of King Hazael of Damascus—well-known in the Bible as one who oppressed Israel.

The inscription describes the “House of David.” This confirms not only the existence of the historical David but also that more than a century after his death he remained an important figure.

Indeed, to have a “house of David,” there certainly has to be a David to have that house!

Therefore, from this one artifact alone, the existence of the first rightful king of Israel, David, has been settled once-and-for all. However, as we shall see, there is so much more.

Fact: The Extent Of David’s Rule Confirmed: The Excavations Of Khirbet Qeiyafa

Not only did David exist, there has been more and more evidence discovered about the extent of his kingdom. The large fortress at Khirbet Qeiyafa demonstrates the centralized planning that took place at the time of David.

In fact, when one finds similar structures, with similar layouts, this show planning. Note the following statement from the Khirbet Qeiyafa archaeological project:

During the past 30 years, the biblical narrative relating to the establishment of a kingdom in Biblical Judah has been much debated. Were David and Solomon historical rulers of an urbanized state-level society in the early 10th century BC, or was this level of social development reached only at the end of the 8th century BC, 300 years later? Recent excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa, the first early Judean city to be dated by 14C, clearly indicates a well-planned fortified city in Judah as early as the late 11th-early 10th centuries BC. This new data has far reaching implication for archaeology, history and biblical studies.

They then explain some of the evidence that they have found:

Khirbet Qeiyafa is located ca. 30 km southwest of Jerusalem, on the summit of a hill that borders the Elah Valley on the north. This is a key strategic location in the biblical Kingdom of Judah, on the main road from Philistia and the Coastal Plain to Jerusalem and Hebron in the hill country. ...

The urban planning of Khirbet Qeiyafa includes the casemate city wall and a belt of houses abutting the casemates, incorporating them as part of the construction. Such urban planning has not been found at any Canaanite or Philistine city, nor in the northern Kingdom of Israel, but is a typical feature of city planning in Judean cities: Beersheba, Tell Beit Mirsim, Tell en-Nasbeh and Tell Beth-Shemesh. Khirbet Qeiyafa is the earliest known example of this city plan and indicates that this pattern had already been developed by the time of King David...

Khirbet Qeiyafa contributes for better understanding major aspects relating to the early 10th century BCE, the time of King David ... The massive construction of Khirbet Qeiyafa and its urban planning clearly indicate central authority in Judah in the early 10th century BC, the time of King David.

This last sentence is key. Indeed, the evidence from Khirbet Qeiyafa shows that there was massive construction and central authority in Judah at the time of David. This is precisely what we would expect from what the Scripture has to say about his kingdom.

There is more. The double casemate walls, its two gates, along with 200,000 tons of boulders, demonstrate that this was indeed a significant fortification. In fact, some of the huge cut out stones of the four-chambered gates weigh almost five tons!

Again, a massive construction like this, so far from Jerusalem, is overwhelming evidence that David was not merely some local chieftain.

More Evidence From Khirbet Qeiyafa

There is more! Indeed, we can add further evidence to what was found in Khirbet Qeiyafa:

Carbon dating places it in the early tenth century BC—that's the time of David!

Only sheep, goat, and cattle bones have been discovered here. Philistine settlements always contain pig and dog bones.

The main entrance faced Jerusalem, not the land of the Philistines

The double casemate walls discovered here were unknown in Philistia. (Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards, *Evidence for the Bible*, Day One Publication, Leominster England, 2014, p. 40).

Again, all of this confirms precisely what the Bible has to say about this period—there was a strong centralized ruler at that time—David.

A Letter Mentioning A King

A letter was found at the site of Khirbet Qeiyafa dating from about 1000 B.C. The letter is from the time of King David and is significant for a couple of reasons. First, it shows the literacy of the early Israelites as well as early usage of written Hebrew. However, for our purposes, it is the content that is the most important factor.

Indeed, the letter mentions serving God and the King! Since the fortress where it was found was Israelite and the language of the letter was an early form of Hebrew, it demonstrates that there was a king in Israel at that time.

Add to this the location of Khirbet Qeiyafa, which is far away from Jerusalem. This gives further evidence that David indeed was a king of a good-sized kingdom that stretched far beyond the environs of Jerusalem.

Gath City Gate Tel es-Safi

In 2015, a monumental city gate of the Philistine city of Gath from the tenth–ninth centuries B.C. was discovered. This site that served as hometown of the biblical figure Goliath. We read the following:

Then a champion came out from the camp of the Philistines. His name was Goliath; he was from Gath. He was close to seven feet tall (1 Samuel 17:4 NET)

The Goliath Inscription Proto-Canaanite Tel es-Safi (Gath) Israel

In 2005, the oldest Philistine inscription with a name similar to the biblical name of Goliath was found. This provides more evidence that Goliath was indeed an historical figure who lived at the same time as David.

Has David's City Been Discovered?

There has also been the claim that David's city has been found south of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Ongoing excavations continue to support this claim.

For example, in 2008, monumental royal buildings from the tenth–ninth centuries B.C. were discovered. It is either the palace of King David or a fortress.

The Pattern Continues

Are we beginning to see a pattern here? Claims that the Scripture is in error, or exaggerating the truth, are found to be incorrect. The Bible continues to be vindicated.

**Summary To Mystery 4:
The Beginning of the Monarchy: Was King
David An Historical Figure?**

The pattern does indeed continue. Scripture records information about a particular character, the critics deny the truthfulness of the biblical account, and then discoveries are made that verify the precision of Scripture.

Therefore, it should not surprise us that evidence continues to come forward to show that David was not only a major historical character in the history of Israel his exploits were accurately recorded.

In fact, the “House of David” was found on an ancient inscription. For one to have a house, a dynasty, he certainly had to exist in the first place!

Furthermore, the city of Khirbet Qeiyafa testifies to the sprawling urban development at the time of David. As we also noted, a letter found at Khirbet Qeiyafa, from about 1000 B.C., written in an ancient form of Hebrew, mentions serving the king. This gives further testimony that Israel did have a king at that time, and given the location of Khirbet Qeiyafa, far from the environs of Jerusalem, the kingdom was sprawling.

In sum, there are many lines of evidence that verifies that David existed and was the king over a mighty kingdom. And, of course, this is precisely how the Bible describes David and his rule.

Mystery 5:

King Solomon: His Existence And His Wealth

Not only has the existence of David, as a king over Israel, been challenged by certain “scholars,” the existence of his son, Solomon, along with the biblical description of his great wealth, has also been contested.

However, as we shall again discover, the claims by those who reject the Bible are refuted by the evidence.

The Bible Describes A Great Kingdom

According to the Bible, Solomon was the richest as well as the wisest king that Israel, or any nation, has ever had:

King Solomon was wealthier and wiser than any of the kings of the earth. Everyone in the world wanted to visit Solomon to see him display his God-given wisdom. Year after year visitors brought their gifts, which included items of silver, items of gold, clothes, perfume, spices, horses, and mules (1 Kings 10:23-24 NET).

There is no doubt that the Bible portrays Solomon as unique in his riches as well as in his wisdom.

The Testimony Of Jesus

Jesus Himself believed in the existence, as well as the great wisdom, of Solomon:

The queen of Sheba will also stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for she came from a distant land to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Now someone greater than Solomon is here—but you refuse to listen (Matthew 12:42 NLT).

The fact that this ancient ruler traveled to Jerusalem to hear the wisdom of Solomon attested to his great kingdom. This testimony comes from the One who is “greater than Solomon.”

The Mystery Solved: Solomon Did Exist And His Wealth Has Been Confirmed

Though it has been fashionable in scholarly circles to deny the wealth of King Solomon, the current evidence speaks otherwise. We can make the following observations.

Fact: The Wealth Of Ophir

The Bible speaks of a place called Ophir which had vast wealth. In the Book of First Kings, the Bible says the following:

And they went to Ophir, and acquired four hundred and twenty talents of gold from there, and brought it to King Solomon (1 Kings 9:28 NKJV)

We also read in the Book of Isaiah about the gold of Ophir:

Few will be left alive when I have finished my work. People will be as scarce as gold—more rare than the gold of Ophir (Isaiah 13:12 NLT).

The wealth of Solomon has been denied, as well as the existence of a place called Ophir.

However, in 1956 a small piece of ostrakon, or pottery, was found north of Tel Aviv in Israel. The inscription was a shipment notice which read, “gold of Ophir, from Beth-Horon, thirty shekels.”

The discovery of this ostrakon not only proved that Ophir was a genuine place but that it was also a source of gold.

Other discoveries have recently been made that further confirm the biblical account of Solomon.

Trade Between Sheba and Judah

While there is no evidence, as of yet, outside of Scripture for the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon, there is evidence of trade between the two countries:

A bronze inscription reveals trade between Sabaea (Sheba) and the towns of Judah. Andre Lemaire has cautiously dated it around 600 B.C. before the fall of Judah in 586 B.C. It is written in South Arabian script and is from ... a messenger of the king of Sabaea. He thanks his gods for safety, to who he dedicates his family and property, and then refers to a trading mission to “Dedan, Gaza, and the towns of Judah.”

Traders from Sheba are also referred to in Job 6:19, Psalm 72:10 (a song of Solomon), Isaiah 60:6 (700 B.C.) and Jeremiah 6:20 and Ezekiel 27:22,23;18:13; 38:1 (both around 600 B.C.) Dedan which is mentioned in the bronze inscription in Ezekiel 27:20 is *en route* from Sheba to Judah.

All of this does not prove the existence of the biblical queen or her visit to Solomon, but it does indicate that trade between the two nations was old and well established. After a careful analysis of the episode, [Kenneth] Kitchen concludes, “The queen of Sheba...belongs firmly to this world...And Lemaire is convinced that the Bible’s reference to trade between southern Arabia and the kingdom of Judah and the southern Levant is no myth (Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards, *Evidence for the Bible*, Day One Publication, Leominster England, 2014, p. 43).

No myth indeed! What we again find is evidence from biblical times that confirms an event like the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon could very well have happened.

As we continue to document, we not only have specific references to a number of biblical characters in secular sources, but we also have many instances of ancient evidence which shows that the biblical event, though not yet confirmed by archaeology, could very well have happened. In other words, we are not believing by “blind faith.” This example of Sheba trading with Israel and Judah from ancient times, is a case in point.

Fact: Harvesting Cedars From Lebanon

The Bible says that King Solomon, in constructing the First Temple, acquired cedars from Lebanon which were shipped to him and used to build both his temple and his palace:

Hiram then sent this message to Solomon: “I received the message you sent to me. I will give you all the cedars and evergreens you need. My servants will bring the timber down from Lebanon to the sea. I will send it by sea in raft-like bundles to the place you designate. There I will separate the logs and you can carry them away. In exchange you will supply the food I need for my royal court” (1 Kings 5:8,9 NET).

These actions of Solomon are certainly not unique to him. Indeed, the cutting down of trees in the mountains of Lebanon, hauling them by sea and then using them in the construction of palaces or temples, are found documented in the records of the Egyptians, Assyrians, and the Babylonians.

We find, for example, a stele of the Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III mentioning a tribute of wood coming from Lebanon.

Another story out of Egypt titled the “The Report of Wenamun” documents an official under Ramesses IX (1090 BC-1080 BC) testifying to a challenging journey he undertook to Lebanon to acquire timber and bring it back. He wrote:

If I shout aloud to the Lebanon, the sky opens and the logs lie here on the shore of the sea! Give me the sails you brought to move your ships loaded with logs for Egypt. Give me the ropes you brought to lash the pines that I am to fell in order to make them for you.

Conclusion

Scripture states that Solomon arranged to have cedar trees cut from the Lebanese mountains and then shipped by sea to Israel. The wood was to be used for the construction of his temple and palace.

As we noted, ancient historical records verify that in constructing their temples and palaces, kings throughout the region often used cedar trees cut in Lebanon and then shipped them by sea. The specific details presented in the biblical records of 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles, which includes the mountains of Lebanon, the cedar trees, the fact that they were shipped by sea, as well as used for temple and palace construction, are confirmed in

the various details that we find in the Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonian records.

Again, we are dealing with verifiable historical realities.

Tel Rehov

We discover further evidence in another well-planned thriving city at that time of Solomon—Tel Rehov. Two archaeologists had this to say:

From all the evidence, it seems clear that during the tenth century B.C.E., the time of the United Monarchy, Rehov was a well-planned, thriving city of about 25 acres, with a material culture that resembles other sites throughout the country that are dated to the tenth century B.C.E., according to the traditional chronology (Amihai Mazar and John Camp, Will Tel Rehov Save the United Monarchy?" BAR 26, no. 2 (2000) p. 51)

Notice that this city reflected other sites of well-planned and thriving cities that are dated to the time of David and Solomon. The discovery of these well-planned and thriving cities is precisely what we would expect from the biblical description of their kingdoms.

Apiary: A Place Where Bees and Beehives Are Kept

One of the unusual finds in Tel Rehov was a large commercial apiary—where bees and beehives were kept. This apiary was estimated to originally contain over 100-200 beehives! Archaeologist Amihai Mazar explains:

If there indeed were at least one hundred active hives, then we can reconstruct the presence of over one million bees. It seems that most likely that only a strong central authority could have established and conducted such a well-planned industrial apiary in the center of a densely settled town. This has implications for our understanding of the social and economic urban system during the period of the Israelite monarchy and the ability of a central authority to carry out broad-scale economic and administrative policy such as would have been required to set up and maintain an apiary.

Again, we find that only a strong central authority could have established and conducted such a well-planned industry.

Possible Inscriptional Evidence Of A Biblical Character

Interestingly, at Tel Rehov, near the apiary, a document was found containing the words in Hebrew "belonging to Nimshi."

This is the name of the father of Jehoshaphat and grandfather of Jehu, who was king of Israel (1 Kings 19:16; 2 Kings 9:2-20; 2 Chronicles 22:7). He lived at the time of Solomon!

Thus, it is possible that this apiary was owned by the family of the Nimshi who is named in Scripture. If so, it is further evidence of the wealth of the kingdom of Israel at the time of Solomon.

The apiary, along with inscriptions at Tel Rehov, supports the biblical narrative of a strong centralized government in Jerusalem during the time of David and Solomon.

Abecedary Uncovered

In 2005, archaeologists uncovered one of the earliest alphabets of 22 letters, also known as an abecedary, dating from the time of David and Solomon—ten centuries before the time of Christ.

The implications of this, as well of other discoveries from the time of these two Israelite kings, were summarized as follows:

If a lowly outpost in the Judean Shephelah (Khirbet Qeiyafa) attests to writing (limited or otherwise) during the period of David and Solomon, then one may assume, with all due caution, that the capital city of Jerusalem would have possessed . . . scribes and priests linked to the palace and temple capable of producing significant literary and administrative texts . . . taken together, the Tel Zayit abecedary, the Khirbet Qeiyafa inscription, and the Gezer Calendar (also from the 10th century) demonstrate that writing was well-established in 10th century Israel [the time of David and Solomon] certainly sufficiently so for some or the many works incorporated into the Hebrew Bible to have been composed at this time (Gary Rendsburg “Review of Literature Culture and Tenth Century Canaan, BASOR, August 2010, p. 91).

Fifty years earlier, the great archaeologist William F. Albright concluded the following about the ancient alphabets:

Since the forms of the letters are very simple, the 22 letter alphabet could be learned in a day or two by a bright student and in a week or two by the dullest; hence it could spread with great rapidity. I do not doubt for a moment that there were many urchins . . . who could read and write as early as the time of the Judges (William F. Albright, *Scribal Concepts of Education*, 1960, p. 123).

As we discovered with Abraham, there was widespread literacy in existence some 500 years before his time.

Thus, we can also conclude that some one thousand five hundred years later, during the time of David and Solomon, that we have sufficient evidence to conclude that certain books of the Old Testament (including Samuel and the early chapters of First Kings) could have easily been written during this period.

In fact, we have this statement written some 3,000 years ago from the Book of Ecclesiastes:

Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. There is no end to the making of many books, and much study is exhausting to the body (Ecclesiastes 12:12 NET).

The fact that there was “no end to the making of many books” has a number of logical conclusions. First, books were indeed made in great number. Second, for there to be so many books made assumes that literacy was widespread! Indeed, why produce countless books if there was nobody who could read them?

The Greatness Of His Kingdom Confirmed

In sum, the greatness of Solomon’s kingdom is certainly in character with the times. Consider the following testimony:

Solomon’s overseas trading may seem extravagant: ‘Hiram’s ships brought gold from Ophir; and from there they brought great cargoes of almug-wood and precious stones . . . The king had a fleet of trading ships at sea along with the ships of Hiram. Once every three years it returned carrying gold, silver and ivory, and apes and baboons’ (1 Kings 10:11,22).

However, the trading of Egyptian Queen Hatsheput, five hundred years earlier, included items similar to Solomon’s including fragrant wood, ebony, ivory, gold, spices, eyepaint, panther skins, apes, monkeys, dogs and native people (AE 192-193). In her case and unknown ‘Punt’ (possibly Somalia or Eritrea) was the trading destination. Are Ophir and Punt the same? (Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards, *Evidence for the Bible*, Day One Publication, Leominster England, 2014, p. 45).

Again, we find that the evidence supports the biblical claim of the wealth and wisdom of Solomon which was confirmed by Jesus.

Indeed, there is every reason to believe that Scripture accurately described this magnificent kingdom that existed some one thousand years before the time of Christ.

The Attack Of Pharaoh Shishak

There is another indirect line of evidence of the greatness of the kingdom that the Bible attributes to Solomon.

Scripture says that Jerusalem was to be judged for not humbling themselves before the Lord. God would use Pharaoh Shishak of Egypt as His avenger. The Bible explains it this way:

Shemaiah the prophet visited Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah who were assembled in Jerusalem because of Shishak. He said to them, “This is what the LORD says: ‘You have rejected me, so I have rejected you and will hand you over to Shishak.’” The leaders of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, “The LORD is just.” When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, he gave this message to

Shemaiah: “They have humbled themselves, so I will not destroy them. I will deliver them soon. My anger will not be unleashed against Jerusalem through Shishak. Yet they will become his subjects, so they can experience how serving me differs from serving the surrounding nations (2 Chronicles 12:5-8 NET).

Scripture, as well as Egyptian records, tell us that Shishak captured the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 12).

Shishak’s Invasion Record

A record of Pharaoh Shishak’s raid of 140 places, including the kingdom of Judah, has been found in Egypt carved on a wall in the Karnak Temple of Amun, god of Thebes (Luxor today).

The Shishak Relief (Sheshonk I) commemorates his victory over Rehoboam when Solomon’s temple was robbed of its riches—probably in 925 B.C. The relief shows that Egypt raided all of Israel, not just Judah.

Stone Seal Of Pharaoh Shishak (Sheshonq) Discovered

A stone seal of this Pharaoh was discovered which provides further evidence of the raid into Judah in 931 B.C. by Shishak, recorded in 2 Chronicles 12:2–9.

The Obvious Question That Needs To Be Answered!

So here is the obvious question, “Why bother invade Israel, if Solomon was some small local tribal chieftain?”

Indeed, Shishak’s invasion was the first known time that an Egyptian army had ever turned inland on its northern march. Again, why take the time to do this if there was no kingdom to plunder? There had to be some reason as to why this Pharaoh entered into the Promised Land to plunder the cities.

The fact that Shishak listed some 140 places that he plundered makes it clear that there was a thriving kingdom there at the time.

As the Scripture informs us, Solomon had built a large and magnificent kingdom with untold wealth.

Archaeologist Scott Stripling agrees:

Evidence of Solomon’s architectural prowess appears throughout Israel. Most notably are the six chambered gates at Hazor, Gezer and Megiddo. First Kings mentioned these three cities having been fortified by Solomon. The existence of almost identical gate complexes at these three sites is another strong convergence of the archeological date and the biblical text (Scott Stripling, *The Trowel and the Truth*, Second Edition, Vision Publishing, Ramona, California, 2017, p. 106).

Discovery Of The Royal Fabric

Another recent discovery adds further confirmation to the biblical account of David and Solomon. We read the following headline:

Historic Discovery Provides Glimpse Into Wardrobe Of King David

For first time, fabric with royal purple from time of Kings David and Solomon found at ancient copper mine.

While examining the colored textiles from Timna Valley - an ancient copper production district in southern Israel - in a study that has lasted several years, the researchers were surprised to find remnants of woven fabric, a tassel and fibers of wool dyed with royal purple. Direct radiocarbon dating confirms that the finds date from approximately 1000 BCE, corresponding to the biblical monarchies of David and Solomon in Jerusalem (Israel National News, January 28, 2021).

In this amazing discovery, the research team found these ancient scraps of fabric which were dyed some 3,000 year ago in the true royal purple!

According to the Song of Solomon, King Solomon had a carriage made with wood from Lebanon and his seat was upholstered with the royal purple cloth:

King Solomon's carriage is built of wood imported from Lebanon. Its posts are silver, its canopy gold; its cushions are purple. It was decorated with love by the young women of Jerusalem (Song of Solomon 3:9,10 NLT).

Now, with this discovery, we have evidence confirming this claim!

Conclusion

The existence, as well as the wealth of King Solomon, has long been a subject of debate. Scripture speaks of the magnificent wealth that this king of Israel possessed. It was a common practice to believe that this was an exaggeration.

Yet, the discoveries in recent years should put to rest the doubts that people had about the truthfulness of the biblical narrative. Indeed, the evidence continues to show that the greatness and wealth of Solomon's kingdom was not a myth but was indeed a reality.

As in the case of Abraham, the patriarchs, the Exodus, and the entering of Israel into the Promised Land, from the accounts of King David and King Solomon, we again find that the evidence demonstrates that the Bible continues to record the historical truth about its characters.

**Summary To Mystery 5:
King Solomon: His Existence And His Wealth**

Again we find the Bible to be correct. Solomon's kingdom and his wealth continue to be verified by the finds of the archaeologists. Indeed, the fact that he was a great builder, that gold was brought to him from Ophir, the apiary and the abecedary, all testify to a large wealthy kingdom.

When we again realize that so much of the ancient world remains to be discovered, we are overwhelmed to find this much evidence to validate the biblical record about King Solomon.

Indeed, we find that the testimony of Scripture, as well as the confirmation by Jesus, about Solomon and his kingdom, is precisely what the facts tell us.

Hence, the pattern continues. The Bible records people, places and events that took place in the past. Though previously denied by critics that these records are true, we constantly discover evidence that substantiates the general history of the Scripture.

As we will also note, there have been findings that confirm the minute testimony of Scripture also.

So, again we pose the question, "If books of the Bible were written hundreds of years after the supposed events took place, then why is it that the various authors continually correctly record the people, places and events from their time period in history?"

Sooner or later we would assume that the legendary nature of their writings would be found out—but they have not been!

Why? It is because they were there and thus the writers give us a firsthand account of what took place. This is precisely what we would expect if the Bible is what it claims to be—the Word of the Living God.

Mystery 6:

The Nation Divides Into Two Kingdoms: The Prophets, Including Elijah And Elisha Arrive

After the time of King Solomon, Israel suffered greatly. In fact, the nation became divided into two kingdoms—the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Scripture describes it in this manner:

The Divided Kingdom

The Bible states that after the death of Solomon disaster struck with the rule of his son Rehoboam. Scripture tells us that the downfall occurred when Rehoboam listened to his younger advisors instead of the older wiser men. This caused a split in the nation.

The Northern Kingdom Of Israel

The Northern Kingdom of Israel, also called Samaria and Ephraim in Scripture, consisted of the ten tribes in the northern part of the country. Every king that ruled over the kingdom was evil. The northern kingdom lasted until 721 B.C. when it the people were taken captive by Assyria.

The Southern Kingdom Of Judah

Judah, the southern kingdom, consisted of the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah. Some of the kings of Judah were good while others were evil.

The Prophets

After the division between the north and south, the Lord raised up a number of prophets to warn the people of the coming judgment. Not only did they have messages for the two kingdoms, some, such as Nahum and Jonah, were sent to warn other nations of their impending judgment.

This summarizes what the Bible teaches that took place during this period of Israel's history.

The Accusation: Biblical Events Of This Period Are Not Historical

Again, we have accusations by unbelievers that the biblical narratives during this period are not historically accurate. Supposedly, they were written hundreds of years after the fact. Thus, we are dealing with legendary figures and events.

The Mystery: Is There Evidence That These Recorded Events Took Place During This Period In History?

As has been true for the earlier people and events that we have examined, there is significant evidence from archaeology, as well as from inscriptions, that verify the biblical history of this period. Indeed, it is so overwhelming

that any objective person should never doubt that we are dealing with genuine history.

Kings And Foreign Leaders Are Mentioned In Ancient Records

There are a number of kings of Israel and Judah that we find mentioned in the ancient records. Add to this the names of a number of pagan leaders that the Bible mentions which have also been discovered.

Furthermore, cities that the Bible talks about during this period have also been excavated and the finds are consistent with the testimony of Scripture.

In sum, the reliability of the Bible is confirmed by the many discoveries that have been made of this historical period. We can cite the following evidence.

The Seal Of Jeroboam I Confirms His Existence

When the nation of Israel became divided between north and south in 931 B.C., the Bible records that Jeroboam was made king over the northern tribes of Israel:

When all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they summoned him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. No one except the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the Davidic dynasty (1 Kings 12:20 NET).

The historical evidence reveals that Jeroboam was indeed an actual personage who ruled over Israel.

A 10th century B.C. seal, discovered around 1905 at the ancient mound of Megiddo in the area of the gatehouse, read “belonging to Shema, servant of Jeroboam.”

Unfortunately, the seal was lost either in Istanbul or on its way to that city. However, a cast was made of the seal, and a photograph was taken before it disappeared.

This seal provides the evidence of the existence, as well as the rule, of this 10th century B.C. biblical figure.

Evidence From Tell Dan

We have other evidence of the existence of Jeroboam from the altar that was found at Tell Dan. Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards explain:

Jeroboam had the best land and the best trading ports of Phoenicia. However, to stop the people from going to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh, he set up two golden calves and built altars for them at Bethel and Dan announcing, ‘Here are your gods O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt,’ so ‘the people went even as far as Dan to worship

out of Egypt, so the people went as far as Dan to worship the one there (1 Kings 12:28-30).

Dan had long been a place for cultic worship by the northern tribes (Judges 18:10). In the 1970s and 80s the cult worship area at Dan (Tell el Qadi) was discovered, including the steps that led up to the altar and one of the horned corners of the altar. The area was rebuilt a number of times over the centuries until probably destroyed by Josiah of Judah after 640 B.C. (2 Kings 2:4). (Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards *Evidence for the Bible*, Day One Publication, Leominster England, 2014, p. 46).

Again, we have this amazing discovery of the steps leading up to the very altar that Jeroboam had constructed as well as one of the horned corners of the altar. Visitors to Israel today are able to see for themselves the ruins of this pagan worship area that was constructed so long ago. Scripture is again verified by the evidence.

Omri

The Bible records that Omri was one of the most powerful kings of ancient Israel. He was not a descendant of a king but rather a military commander who was crowned by the army:

While deployed there, the army received this report: “Zimri has conspired against the king and assassinated him.” So all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that very day in the camp. Omri and all Israel went up from Gibbethon and besieged Tirzah (1 Kings 16:16,17 NET).

Omri Reigned In Tirzah And Moved His Kingdom To Samaria

Scripture says that Omri ruled from Tirzah but then moved his kingdom to Samaria:

In the thirty-first year of Asa’s reign over Judah, Omri became king over Israel. He ruled for twelve years, six of them in Tirzah. He purchased the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver. He launched a construction project there and named the city he built after Shemer, the former owner of the hill of Samaria (1 Kings 16:23-24 NET).

Extra-Biblical Evidence For Omri: The Mesha Stele, The Moabite Stone

Omri’s name was inscribed on an ancient stone victory monument variously known as the “Mesha Stele” or the “Moabite Stone.” This stele, or victory monument, dates from the 9th century B.C.

The stele, which has 34 inscribed lines, was commissioned by the 9th century king of Moab named Mesha. He is also mentioned in Scripture:

Now King Mesha of Moab was a sheep breeder. He would send as tribute to the king of Israel ... When Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel (2 Kings 3:4-5 NET).

The stele gives us the Moabite perspective of their successive rebellion against Israel and Judah, their victory over the two kingdoms, and their refusal to pay tribute.

Lines 5-8 of the stele describes how King Omri of Israel had oppressed Moab and had taken the land of Medebah.

This monument is important for a number of reasons.

First, it is the oldest known Semitic inscription where the name of the Lord, Yahweh, is found.

There also seems to be a reference to King David as the “House of David.” It appears to be mentioned near the end of the text.

In addition, the reference to the Israelite King Omri, as well as to the Moabite King Mesha, gives further testimony of the historical accuracy of Scripture.

Scott Stripling has this to add about the stele:

It documents the existence of the tribe of Gad in the region of Moab. It fits precisely with Numbers 32:34-36, and is an example of synchronism—a convergence of the biblical text and the archaeological data (Scott Stripling, *The Trowel and the Truth*, Second Edition, Vision Publishing, Ramona, California, 2017, p. 29).

Once again, evidence from outside of Scripture confirms its truth.

The Army Of Ahab (The Kurkh Stele Of Shalmaneser III)

The Bible says that the son of Omri, Ahab, was one of Israel’s worst kings. Indeed, he was roundly condemned by the godly prophets. As was true with his father, we find ancient evidence that he too was an historical character.

Ahab’s position as king, as well as his mighty army, was documented in what is known as the “Kurkh Stele Of Shalmaneser III,” which commemorated the military successes of this Assyrian king.

The Battle Of Qarqar

Among the battles mentioned on the stele was that of Qarqar, which took place in approximately 853 B.C. Interestingly, this particular battle is not recorded in Scripture.

According to the stele, Ahab, the king of Israel, is said to have had 2,000 chariots and 12,000 soldiers. This was largest contribution of any army in

the battle. It testifies to Ahab's existence as king, as well as the powerful army that the king of Israel had at that time.

Consequently, the existence of King Ahab, like his father Omri, is beyond all doubt.

The Prophet Elijah And Ahab

In one instance, the Bible says the prophet Elijah was sent to pronounce judgment upon Ahab and his evil wife Jezebel:

Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession. And you shall say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Have you killed and also taken possession?"' And you shall say to him, 'Thus says the LORD: "In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your own blood ... And of Jezebel the LORD also said, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel.' Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat"' (1 Kings 21:17-19,23-24 ESV).

Note the specific predictions of the eventual demise of Ahab and his wife Jezebel.

Ahab, His Demise, And The Ivory House

In his epitaph, we read of the fulfilled prophecy of Elijah as well as the ivory house that Ahab had built in Samaria:

So the king died, and was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria. And they washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood, and the prostitutes washed themselves in it, according to the word of the LORD that he had spoken. Now the rest of the acts of Ahab and all that he did, and the ivory house that he built and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel? (1 Kings 22:39 ESV).

His father Omri had originally built the palace while Ahab made additions to it. This includes what the Scripture calls "the ivory house of Ahab."

Excavations of this 9th century B.C. palace in Samaria uncovered a room, or house, north of the palace in which over 12,000 intricately carved ivory objects, as well as fragments, were discovered. The objects included pagan images of animals, depictions of gods and goddesses, and a winged sphinx.

These pagan ivory images are in keeping with the description that the Scripture gives of the rule of Ahab and his evil wife Jezebel.

Again, this is further confirmation of the historical accuracy of the biblical account, which by extension, confirms the existence of the prophet Elijah who pronounced punishment upon Ahab and his wife.

The Seal Of Jezebel: Queen Jezebel Was Also An Historical Figure

Apart from her evil husband Ahab, there seems to be ancient evidence for the existence of the infamous Phoenician queen Jezebel. A decorated stone seal was discovered, from the 9th century B.C., that was inscribed as “belonging to Jezebel.” The seal was carved from opal which is consistent with the iconography and writing from ancient Phoenicia at that time in history.

Since only one percent of the seals from this historical period and region belonged to women, it seems that the most likely explanation is that this was the seal of evil wife of King Ahab.

Jezebel’s Father’s Name Appears To Be On An Ancient Kings List

Further ancient evidence confirms her existence. The Bible says that she was the daughter of Ethbaal—a 9th century king of Phoenicia:

As if following in the sinful footsteps of Jeroboam son of Nebat were not bad enough, he [Ahab] married Jezebel the daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians. Then he worshiped and bowed to Baal (1 Kings 16:31 NET).

Her father’s name, Ethbaal, has seemingly been preserved in a Tyrian king list which was copied by Menander in the 2nd century before Christ.

Again, we are dealing with genuine people—real history—not legendary figures.

Elisha

Not only do we have inferential testimony to the existence of the prophet Elijah, there is also ancient testimony to his successor—Elisha.

In the ruins of the ancient Israelite city Rehov, a 9th century piece of pottery was discovered. On it were the words “belonging to Elisha.”

These words, written in an ancient Hebrew script on red-dish ink, shows that the name of Elisha was in use in the 9th century B.C.—the era in which the biblical prophet appeared. In fact, Elisha’s ministry was not far from the place where this artifact was discovered.

Since the house in which it was found contained pagan altars and was full of idols, it was obviously not the house of the biblical prophet. However, it does show that, at this particular time in history, the personal name Elisha was in use in the general area where the prophet lived and ministered.

Jeroboam II

In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel became king in Samaria, and he reigned forty-one years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit (2 Kings 14:23-24).

Another historical confirmation of one of the kings of Israel concerns Jeroboam II (a different character than Jeroboam I). He ruled over the northern kingdom of Israel from about 786 to 746 B.C. This evil king is mentioned numerous times in Scripture (2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, Hosea, Amos).

Archeological Evidence For His Existence

In the city of Megiddo, in 1904, a jasper seal was discovered which depicted a roaring lion. The inscription read as follows...

“Belonging to Shema, minister of Jeroboam”

While it is theoretically possible that it referred to the earlier Jeroboam, most scholars understand this to refer to Jeroboam II.

The discovery of this seal, which occurred during an archeological dig, gives verifiable evidence of the historicity of this evil king of Israel.

Jehu

The Bible records that the prophet Elijah was told to anoint Jehu king over Israel:

The LORD said to him, “Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. (1 Kings 19:15-16 NET).

Jehu would be the person who would judge the wicked Israel king Ahab. In fact, when Jehu did become king he destroyed the entire house of Ahab.

Jehu Turns Baals House Into A Latrine

In addition, the Bible tells us that Jehu made a latrine out of the sacred pillar of the temple of Baal:

They hauled out the sacred pillar of the temple of Baal and burned it. They demolished the sacred pillar of Baal and the temple of Baal; it is used as a latrine to this very day. So Jehu eradicated Baal worship from Israel (2 Kings 10:26, 27 NET).

The testimony of Scripture is clear about the existence, as well as the deeds, of Jehu. But that is not all that we have!

Jehu And The Black Obelisk Of Assyrian King Shalmaneser III

An Assyrian king named Shalmaneser III built a commemorative obelisk at the end of his reign known as the “black obelisk of Shalmaneser III.” The obelisk contained documentation of 31 years of his military campaigns as well as the names of some of the foreign kings that he subdued. The obelisk also contains depictions of those kings.

Among those depicted was “Jehu from the house of Omri.” In fact, he is illustrated as bowing down to Shalmaneser III with two Assyrian officials standing beside him.

Not only is this the earliest known depiction of a king of Israel, it is also an independent source confirming the existence of Jehu.

Consequently, the historical evidence substantiates the fact that Jehu was a king of Israel in the 9th century B.C. at the time Assyria dominated this part of the world.

The Latrine Of Desecration

Not only did Jehu exist there is also ancient evidence for this type of dismantling of pagan temples and shrines and turning them into a latrine as the Scripture said that Jehu instituted.

As we noted, the Scripture said that Jehu eradicated the Baal worship and turned a pagan temple into a latrine. The location of the temple of Baal was in Samaria but there have been no excavations undertaken of this temple because a Roman temple was built over the original site.

The Discovery At Lachish

However, other ancient evidence has surfaced at Lachish of this practice, attributed to Jehu, of desecrating a pagan temple, or shrine, and turning it into a latrine.

A religious shrine has been found in one of the chambers of the wall that was originally built by Rehoboam, son of Solomon. This pagan shrine was in use in the 8th century B.C. until King Hezekiah destroyed all the pagan altars. The horns were chipped off of the pagan altar and a stone toilet seat was placed in the shrine which was sealed up and never used again.

Consequently, this practice, recorded in Scripture, of desecrating ancient pagan temples and turning them into latrines has been confirmed by the archaeological evidence.

Jehoash

We next encounter the Israel King Jehoash:

Jehoash son of Jehoahaz began to rule over Israel in the thirty-seventh year of King Joash's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria sixteen years. But he did what was evil in the LORD's sight. He refused to turn from the sins that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit (2 Kings 13:10-11 NLT).

King Jehoash was one of the many evil kings who ruled Israel. Scripture tells us that he invaded Judah and attacked Jerusalem. He is frequently mentioned in Scripture.

The Evidence

On a royal monument discovered near the Iraqi city of Mosul, known as the Tell al-Rinah Stela, the Assyrian king Adad-nerari III describes a campaign he undertook to the regions west and south of Assyria. In doing so, he mentions King Jehoash referring to him as Joash.

The inscription reads:

“He received tribute of Joash of Samaria.”

Conclusion

This stela provides excellent historical evidence that verifies the existence of Jehoash who ruled from Samaria. Furthermore, the dates of Jehoash's rule line up with the reign of Adad-nerari III.

Jehoash Takes Back Cities From Ben-hadad King of Syria

Scripture tells us about the recovery of certain Israelite cities under Jehoash:

When King Hazael of Syria died, his son Ben Hadad replaced him as king. Jehoahaz's son Jehoash took back from Ben Hadad son of Hazael the cities that he had taken from his father Jehoahaz in war. Joash defeated him three times and recovered the Israelite cities (2 Kings 13:24-25 NET).

In Scripture there are three Syrian kings with the name of Ben-hadad. This would have been the last of the three; he is known as the son of Hazael.

Archaeological Confirmation

A basalt stela that was discovered in modern Syria has the following inscription:

Then Ben-hadad son of Hazel king of Aram (Syria) united against me seventeen kings.

Note the historical confirmation. Ben-hadad is listed as king of Aram, as well as being the son of Hazel, both in the Bible as well as on the monument. A clear confirmation of the historical accuracy of Scripture.

King Hoshea Of Israel

Scripture also documents the exploits of an evil king called Hoshea, the last king of Israel:

During Pekah's reign, King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria attacked Israel again, and he captured the towns of Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, and Hazor. He also conquered the regions of Gilead, Galilee, and all of Naphtali, and he took the people to Assyria as captives. Then Hoshea son of Elah conspired against Pekah and assassinated him. He began to rule over Israel in the twentieth year of Jotham son of Uzziah. (2 Kings 15:29-30 NLT).

The Biblical Background

This passage describes how Hoshea came to power in Israel. Like his predecessor King Pekah, Hoshea did not inherit the throne through his family line but rather took the throne by force. The Bible also connects his ascension with the invasion of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser.

The Evidence

An Assyrian inscription found on a pavement slab in the ancient city of Nimrud describes Tiglath-pileser's successful campaign into Israel during the reign of King Pekah. The text states that Hoshea replaced Pekah at that time, which, of course, matches the biblical account:

I carried off to Assyria the land of Bit-Humria (Israel)...its auxiliary army... all its people...I/they killed Pekah their king and I installed Hoshea as king over them. I received from them 10 talents of gold.

Not only does this particular Assyrian inscription confirm the historical existence of King Hoshea of Israel, it also supports several details found in the biblical account.

First, Hoshea became king only after the assassination of King Pekah.

Second, this change of leadership took place during the time of the invasion by the Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser.

The northern kingdom of Israel eventually fell to Sargon II and Assyria in 722 B.C.

In the annals of Sargon we read:

I besieged and conquered Samaria, and carried away 22,290 inhabitants.

With the Assyrian captivity of the people of Israel in 721 B.C., the northern kingdom came to an inglorious end.

Why Are These Pagan Rulers Recorded In Scripture?

We will see this time and time again in Scripture—the naming of regional leaders who had something to do with Israel or Judah. It's important that we understand why the Bible lists them.

It is not because Scripture is attempting to give us a history of the Ancient Near East. In fact, the only reason that these rulers, kings, battles, etc. are mentioned is because they have something to do with the chosen people and their position in the Promised Land.

It may be the Lord judging these pagan nations because of their treatment of His people. It may be something else. Whatever the case may be, they are always listed for a specific reason or purpose as the program of the Lord moves forward.

The Testimony About Pagan Rulers During The Divided Monarchy

Not only do we have evidence of the deeds of the two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, during this period, there is much evidence from Scripture of the surrounding nations and how they interacted with the people during this time.

For example, Scripture gives us an account of Hazael, king of Aram, killing King Ben-hadad:

He left Elisha and went to his master. Ben Hadad asked him, “What did Elisha tell you?” Hazael replied, “He told me you would surely recover.” The next day Hazael took a piece of cloth, dipped it in water, and spread it over Ben Hadad’s face until he died. Then Hazael replaced him as king.... But King Joram had returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds he received from the Syrians when he fought against King Hazael of Syria (2 Kings 8:14,15, 9:15 NET).

The Historical Evidence

The name of Hazael king of Aram (Syria) as well as the capital city of Damascus appear numerous times in ancient inscriptions. For example, the Black Obelisk, which was a royal stele erected by Shalmaneser III, an Assyrian King, mentions Hazael in one of his campaigns:

In the eighteenth year of my reign, I crossed the Euphrates for the sixteenth time. Hazael of Damascus attacked for battle. I took, 1,121 of his chariots, 470 of his riding horses, together with his camp. In the twenty-first year of my reign I crossed the Euphrates for the twenty-first time. I marched to the cities of Hazael of Damascus; I captured four of his centers.

The fact that the name Hazael appears numerous times in inscriptions from both Assyria and Syria gives us clear verification of the historicity of this pagan king and as well as matching the historical setting which the Bible places him.

Confirmation of Pagan Worship Alongside Worship Of The Lord During This Period

The Bible also records the Israelites simultaneously worshipping both the Lord as well as pagan gods. There are a number of inscriptions that have been found that verify, during the time when the kingdoms were divided, that some of the people worshipped the Lord while others were involved in pagan religious practices.

King Uzziah And King Hezekiah Destroyed The High Places

The Bible refers some 100 times to the “high places.” The phrase eventually became synonymous with idolatry.

Later in history, the evil King Manasseh would rebuild the high places that were previously destroyed by Uzziah and Manasseh’s father, Hezekiah:

He rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he set up altars for Baal and made an Asherah pole just like King Ahab of Israel had done. He bowed down to all the stars in the sky and worshiped them (2 Kings 21:3 NET).

This tells us that these good kings did indeed destroy the high places which, sadly, were later rebuilt.

Uzziah The King Of Judah

Next we encounter Uzziah, who was also called Azariah, the son of Amaziah, king of Judah:

All the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in his father Amaziah’s place. Uzziah built up Elat and restored it to Judah after King Amaziah had passed away (2 Chronicles 26:1,2 NET).

Uzziah was one of the good kings who ruled over Judah. He is also called Azariah:

All the people of Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in his father Amaziah’s place. Azariah built up Elat and restored it to Judah after the king had passed away (2 Kings 14:21,22 NET).

The Historical Evidence

We find a couple of instances where Uzziah is verified by secular history. His name appears on two personal seal stamps from the 8th century B.C.

“Belonging to Shebanyau servant of Uzziyau (Uzziah)”

A second seal reads:

“Belonging to Abiyau servant of Uzziyau”

Interestingly, these seals were acquired and published in 1858 and 1863.

Conclusion

These two ancient seals provide concrete historical verification for the rule of good King Uzziah over Judah.

So, the evidence continues, Scripture lists a specific event that took place at a definite time in history, records the names of the leaders involved, and again we discover that these episodes recorded in Scripture continue to be verified by the secular evidence.

Menahem

We next look at the rule of King Menahem of Israel:

In the thirty-ninth year of King Azariah’s reign over Judah, Menahem son of Gadi became king over Israel. He reigned for twelve years in Samaria. He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not repudiate the sinful ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat who encouraged Israel to sin.

During his reign, Pul king of Assyria invaded the land, and Menahem paid him a thousand talents of silver to gain his support and to solidify his control of the kingdom. Menahem got this silver by taxing all the wealthy men in Israel; he took fifty shekels of silver from each one of them and paid it to the king of Assyria. Then the king of Assyria left; he did not stay there in the land.

The rest of the events of Menahem’s reign, including all his accomplishments, are recorded in the scroll called the Annals of the Kings of Israel. Menahem passed away and his son Pekahiah replaced him as king (2 Kings 15:17-22 NET).

The Historical And Archaeological Evidence

The Assyrian inscriptions in the Calah Annals, that originally decorated the walls of Tiglath-pileser’s palace at Calah (Nimrud), include a description of the invasion of Israel at the time of Menahem and mention the tribute paid by the Israelite king:

I received the tribute of Kustaspi, the Kummuhite, Rezin the Damascene, Menahem the Samarian, Hiram the Tryian

Although Scripture only mentions him briefly, the fact of Menahem’s existence is confirmed by two separate Assyrian inscriptions.

Indeed, he is mentioned in the only known monument of King Tiglath-pileser, the Iran Stele, which likewise mentions tribute from this Israelite king:

The kings of Israel, the land of Hatti and of Aram and the western seashore and the land of Qedar Rezin the Damascene, Menahem the Samarian...I imposed upon them tribute of silver, gold, tin and iron.

In the same manner, when the Bible discusses King Menahem it states that Tiglath-pileser III invaded the land and Menahem paid him tribute. Again, we find the Bible being verified by the secular records.

The Five Kings Of Assyria

The confirmation of Old Testament history continues. The Hebrew Scriptures lists five major kings of Assyria. Amazingly, all have sufficient documentation outside of Scripture of their historical existence.

Here is what the Scripture has to say about them.

Tiglath-pileser

During Pekah's reign over Israel, King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria came and captured Ijon, Abel Beth Maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, including all the territory of Naphtali. He deported the people to Assyria (2 Kings 15:29 NET).

King Shalmaneser

King Shalmaneser of Assyria threatened him; Hoshea became his subject and paid him tribute (2 Kings 17:3 NET)

King Sargon

The LORD revealed the following message during the year in which King Sargon of Assyria sent his commanding general to Ashdod, and he fought against it and captured it (Isaiah 20:1 NET)

King Sennacherib

In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, King Sennacherib of Assyria marched up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them (2 Kings 18:13 NET).

King Esarhaddon

So King Sennacherib of Assyria broke camp and went on his way. He went home and stayed in Nineveh. One day, as he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword. They escaped to the land of Ararat; his son Esarhaddon replaced him as king (2 Kings 19:36-37 NET).

There Are Existing Major Monuments For Each of These Kings

Tiglath-pileser III: the Iran Stela and Summary Inscription

Shalmaneser V: Assyrian Lion weights, clay cones, the Banitu inscriptions and Chronicle 1 in the Neo Babylonia Chronicle Series

Sargon II: Khorsabad Summary Inscription, Calah Summary Inscription, Khorsabad annals, Ashur charter

Sennacherib: Prism of Sennacherib, Rassam Cylinder, Lachish Relief Inscriptions and Bull Colossi

Esharhaddon: Prism Nineveh A, Zenzilrli Stela of Eshar Haddon, Nahr El-kelp Inscription and Chronicle 14 in the Esharhaddon Chronicle

Conclusion

Amazingly, each of these five Assyrian kings mentioned in the Scripture have been verified from evidence outside of the Bible.

Furthermore, we now know that these particular kings were among the most highly documented people in the ancient Near East. And there is this, these five kings of Assyria appear in history in the same order and same contexts as presented in Scripture! What a testimony to the trustworthiness of the Bible!

Rezin Of Damascus

In another instance, we have the record of a Syrian king, Rezin, along with a king from Israel, Pekah, attacking Jerusalem:

At that time King Rezin of Syria and King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel attacked Jerusalem. They besieged Ahaz, but were unable to conquer him. (At that time King Rezin of Syria recovered Elat for Syria; he drove the Judahites from there. Syrians arrived in Elat and live there to this very day.) Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your dependent. March up and rescue me from the power of the king of Syria and the king of Israel, who have attacked me." Then Ahaz took the silver and gold that were in the LORD's temple and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it as tribute to the king of Assyria. The king of Assyria responded favorably to his request; he attacked Damascus and captured it. He deported the people to Kir and executed Rezin (2 Kings 16:5-9 NET).

King Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Syria had formed an alliance. Ahaz, the King of Judah, then formed an alliance with Assyria against these two nations.

We read the following Assyrian inscription:

I received the payment of Kustaspi of the land Kummuhu, Rahianu, Rezin of the land of Damascus, Menaheme of the city, Samaria, Hiram of Tyre...ivory, multi-colored garments.. horses mules

In the Assyrian inscriptions describing the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, both King Rezin of Damascus and his various conflicts with the Assyrians are mentioned often.

In addition, these conflicts are also mentioned in three different books of the Bible. Since Rezin is also named on twelve different occasions in the Assyrian records, there is no doubt that he is indeed an historical character. Furthermore, the Assyrian inscriptions confirm the biblical account of his rule.

In this instance, this King Rezin is mentioned because of his alliance with an evil king of Israel. Recall, that all the kings of the northern kingdom were evil while some in the southern kingdom of Judah were righteous.

The episode of his demise is correctly recorded in Scripture.

And so it goes, confirmation after confirmation of the historical accuracy of the various biblical accounts during this period of the divided kingdom.

**Summary To Mystery 6:
The Nation Divides Into Two Kingdoms: The Prophets,
Including Elijah and Elisha Arrive**

Scripture tells us that the nation was divided into two kingdoms, the north (Israel) and the south (Judah), after the death of Solomon. The Bible records numerous events that took place during that period involving not only Israel and Judah but also a number of other nations who aligned with these kingdoms. Indeed, many specific names are mentioned.

As we have again documented, the mystery about the existence of these historical personages who have lived during this period has been solved.

In fact, evidence has been discovered of people from Israel such as Jeroboam I, Omri, Ahab, his wife Jezebel, Elisha, Jeroboam II, Jehu, Hoshea, Pekah, as well as those from the southern kingdom of Judah including Jehoash and Uzziah.

Add to this the existence of non-Israelite people mentioned in Scripture including Mesha, Tiglath Pileser III, Rezin, Shalmaneser, etc.

Again we stress, that these non-Israel rulers are always mentioned because of some distinct purpose they had with these two kingdoms. Often it was forming an alliance against them with the goal of their destruction.

As we have documented, these unholy alliances have also been recorded in the annals of these pagan rulers. The abundance of evidence should put the historical accuracy of the Bible during this particular period beyond all doubt.

All in all, we again need to ponder the following question: If the Scripture were only a compilation of myths and legends, then why do we find, over and over again, minute testimony as to its trustworthiness?

It would seem logical to assume that sooner or later, with all of these different biblical authors writing of the people and these events, that the non-historical, legendary character, would reveal itself.

But as we continue to document, it has not. Instead we find confirmation after confirmation of the truth of Scripture. The ancient mysteries of the Bible continue to be solved!

**Mystery 7:
The Prophet Jonah:
Did He Really Exist?**

While there are many accounts in Scripture that are ridiculed by unbelievers probably, none is more mocked than the story of Jonah and the great sea creature. It is customary to reject the idea that Jonah even existed—not to mention the events that Scripture says took place in his life.

This includes: the storm at sea, living for a period of time in the belly of a sea creature that swallowed him, making the trek to Nineveh, preaching judgment, and then, to his horror, witnessing that the people of Nineveh had repented, and then God sparing His punishment on the city.

Can anyone truly believe that these events happened?

Well, we know from Scripture that Jonah was a genuine prophet. The Bible describes his ministry in this manner:

He [Jeroboam II] did evil in the sight of the Lord; he did not repudiate the sinful ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat who encouraged Israel to sin. He restored the border of Israel from Lebo Hamath in the north to the sea of the Arabah in the south, in accordance with the word of the Lord God of Israel announced through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hepher (2 Kings 14:24,25 NIV)

This reference connects him with the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel, who reigned from 793–753 B.C. This puts Jonah in the generation after Elisha and immediately prior to the beginning of the great era of prophecy that began with the minor prophets Amos and Hosea, as well as with the major prophet Isaiah.

The Bible Calls Him A Prophet

A prophet had to predict something in his own lifetime that would come to pass. We read in Deuteronomy:

Now if you say to yourselves, ‘How can we tell that a message is not from the Lord?’ Whenever a prophet speaks in my name and the prediction is not fulfilled, then I have not spoken it; the prophet has presumed to speak it, so you need not fear him (Deuteronomy 18:21 NET).

Hence, Jonah was an historical character who proved he was a divinely inspired prophet of the Lord. Indeed, according to this passage in 2 Kings, he predicted something that came to pass in his own lifetime.

The Testimony Of Jesus

Furthermore, the Lord Jesus certainly believed the Old Testament account of Jonah:

Then some of the experts in the law along with some Pharisees answered him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.” But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. The people of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented when Jonah preached to them - and now, something greater than Jonah is here! The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon - and now, something greater than Solomon is here! (Matthew 12:38-42 NIV).

From Jesus’ statement we learn a number of things.

First, Jonah existed. Indeed, he is compared with two other historical figures—Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

In addition, he was swallowed by a sea creature, spent three days and three nights in its belly, survived, and then he preached to the people of Nineveh who repented of their sins.

Hence, according to our Lord, the account which is recorded in the Book of Jonah is true.

Fascinatingly, we have circumstantial evidence for the truthfulness of the biblical account.

Evidence Of Why The People Of Nineveh’s Repented

The prophet Jonah would have likely been operating during the first half of the eighth century B.C.—793-750. There is evidence that has been discovered that seemingly provides a reasonable scenario of the chronology of the ministry of Jonah. We can summarize this as follows:

The Plague 765 B.C.

First, there was a plague that hit Nineveh in 765 B.C. This was the start of their woes.

The Total Eclipse Of The Sun 763 B.C.

The plague was the first of three signs. During this time, the Assyrian Eponym Canon records a total eclipse of the sun that centered some four miles north of Nineveh.

To the ancients, a total eclipse was a portent—a sign of evil events on the horizon.

The Revolts

Finally, revolts occurred after the eclipse.

The eclipse in Nineveh at this time in history, coupled with the plagues, as well as a revolt in the city, would have caused the people of Nineveh to be concerned about divine displeasure.

Therefore, when Jonah entered the city and predicted that in forty days the city would be destroyed, the people were already primed for such an event to take place.

The People Of Nineveh Repented At The Preaching Of Jonah

Scripture tells us that the people repented at the preaching of Jonah. Therefore, the Lord did not bring the promised punishment upon them:

The people of Nineveh believed in God, and they declared a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, took off his royal robe, put on sackcloth, and sat on ashes. He issued a proclamation and said, "In Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles: No human or animal, cattle or sheep, is to taste anything; they must not eat and they must not drink water. Every person and animal must put on sackcloth and must cry earnestly to God, and everyone must turn from their evil way of living and from the violence that they do. Who knows? Perhaps God might be willing to change his mind and relent and turn from his fierce anger so that we might not die." When God saw their actions - they turned from their evil way of living! - God relented concerning the judgment he had threatened them with and he did not destroy them (Jonah 3:5-10 NET).

The punishment that Nineveh so richly deserved was stayed.

There Was Peace For A Number Of Years

What we do know from history, it that there was peace in Nineveh from 758 to 746 B.C.

It is certainly tempting to think that the "year of peace" starting in 758, and the lack of rebellions and plagues for the next 11 years, were a consequence of God's mercy to the people of Nineveh because of their repentance. If so, Jonah's appearance was either in 759 or 758 B.C.

All in all, there is some very interesting circumstantial evidence for the ministry of Jonah when we compare it with the ancient Assyrian records.

While the account of Jonah is one of the most ridiculed stories in the Bible, we now find that the evidence from this particular time in history fits with that which the Scripture said took place.

Indeed, there are several lines of evidence that put Jonah in the precise historical era as the Scripture puts him.

Furthermore, we have the testimony of Jesus who used Jonah as a sign of His resurrection from the dead.

In sum, there is no reason whatsoever to deny the historical existence of Jonah or the fact that he was sent to Nineveh by the Lord.

Mystery 8

King Hezekiah And The Prophet Isaiah

The existence and ministry of the prophet Isaiah is a crucial issue as far as the message of the Bible is concerned. In fact, as we shall later explain, it has far-reaching implications.

Connected with the existence of Isaiah the prophet is also the existence of his contemporary—Hezekiah, King of Judah. Consequently, we will examine the biblical, archaeological and inscriptional evidence for each of them.

The Historical Background

Before we get to the lives of Hezekiah and Isaiah it is important that we understand the background to this time in history.

Ahaz, Father of Hezekiah

The father of Hezekiah was a king named Ahaz. He was king of Judah during the time of the prophets Isaiah and Micah. Unfortunately, he was not a godly king. Scripture describes him in this manner:

In the seventeenth year of the reign of Pekah son of Remaliah, Jotham's son Ahaz became king over Judah. Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do what pleased the LORD his God, in contrast to his ancestor David (2 Kings 16:1-2 NET).

Historical And Archaeological Evidence

There are several references to Ahaz, king of Judah, apart from the Bible. A large stone tablet was discovered in the Assyrian city of Nimrud. It contains a list of kings, countries, as well as cities that were paying tribute to Tiglath Pileser III, an Assyrian king. We find King Ahaz of Judah recorded on this list by his full name, "Jehoahaz the Judahite." The inscription reads:

"I received tribute of Jehoahaz the Judahite"

King Ahaz also shows up on two ancient clay impressions, called bullae. One reads as follows:

"Belonging to Ahaz son of Yehotam King of Judah"

This seal impression not only records the name of Ahaz it also has the name of his father.

A second one has the name of his son Hezekiah. It reads:

“Belonging to Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz king of Judah”

From the evidence, biblical and secular, it is clear that Ahaz was an historical person.

King Hezekiah

Contrary to his father, the son of Ahaz, King Hezekiah, is described favorably in the Bible in the three places where he is mentioned (II Kings, Isaiah, II Chronicles). In fact, the Bible says the following about him:

There was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those before him (II Kings 18:5 NET).

In other words, he was a major godly character as far as Scripture is concerned. At the time that Hezekiah assumed the throne at age 25, Judah was a vassal-state of the enormous Assyrian empire. Like other nations, Judah was forced to pay tribute to Assyria on a regular basis.

Although Judah was a vassal of the Assyrian empire at the time, Hezekiah successfully managed to maintain the independence of both Judah and Jerusalem. Indeed, the southern kingdom flourished under his rule.

Hezekiah Stopped Paying Tribute To Assyria

While Hezekiah continued doing this for many years, eventually he rebelled and stopped sending Assyria tribute. This caused the king to anticipate a coming Assyrian attack. Consequently, Hezekiah refortified Jerusalem.

The Bible explains it this way:

When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had invaded and intended to attack Jerusalem, he consulted with his advisers and military officers about stopping up the springs outside the city, and they supported him. A large number of people gathered together and stopped up all the springs and the stream that flowed through the district. They reasoned, “Why should the kings of Assyria come and find plenty of water?” Hezekiah energetically rebuilt every broken wall. He erected towers and an outer wall, and fortified the terrace of the City of David. He made many weapons and shields (2 Chronicles 32:2–5 NET).

In 2012, a water cistern was discovered beneath Robinson’s Arch on the Temple Mount. Amazingly, it held 66,000 gallons of water!

It was constructed from 727–698 B.C. and it attests to the building activity at the First Temple during the reign of King Hezekiah. It is evidence of the fortification of the city under his rule.

Hezekiah’s Tunnel

The Bible says that Hezekiah strengthened the walls of the city and, also carved a 1,750-foot-long water tunnel from solid rock. This water tunnel

would make certain that the inhabitants of Jerusalem would not be without water during a siege. This is known as “Hezekiah’s Tunnel.”

We read about its construction in both Kings and Chronicles:

As for the other events of Hezekiah’s reign, all his achievements and how he made the pool and the tunnel by which he brought water into the city (2 Kings 20:20 NIV).

It was Hezekiah who blocked the upper outlet of the Gihon spring and channeled the water down to the west side of the City of David (2 Chronicles 32:30 NIV).

The historical situation can be described as follows: When the inhabitants of Jerusalem were preparing defenses against the oncoming Assyrian army, King Hezekiah and his engineers came up with an ingenious plan to protect the water supply. They did so by diverting its flow deep into the holy city. He did this by having his engineers build an impressive tunnel system.

This marvelous engineering feat was accomplished by digging a 1,750-foot tunnel into the mountain. Furthermore, an ancient stone carving was found near the entrance which described this amazing operation. It is known as the “Siloam Inscription.”

The Siloam Inscription was discovered in 1880 about 20 feet from the southern end of the tunnel. The inscription was removed and taken to Turkey where it remains today. The English translation of the inscription follows:

(Behold) the excavation. Now this is the history of the breaking through. While the workmen were still lifting up the pickaxe, each toward his neighbor, and while three cubits yet remained to (cut through, each heard) the voice of the other calling to his neighbor, for there was an excess in the rock on the right... And on the day of the breaking through, the excavators struck, each to meet the other, pickaxe against pickaxe; and there flowed the water from the spring to the pool over (a space of) one thousand and two hundred cubits. And ... of a cubit was the height of the rock above the heads of the excavators.

Hezekiah Is An Historical Figure

There is no question that King Hezekiah of Judah is a well-known historical figure. In fact, apart from the Bible there is much other ancient evidence that proves his existence beyond any doubt. We can list the following examples.

The Reforms Under Hezekiah

Scripture relates the reforms of King Hezekiah:

When all this was over, the Israelites who were in the cities of Judah went out and smashed the sacred pillars, cut down the Asherah poles, and demolished all the high places and altars throughout Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh. Then all the Israelites returned to their own homes in their cities (2 Chronicles 31:1 NET).

There have been a number of discoveries which confirm the reforms that took place under this good king.

Idols Broken And Then Reused

Scripture tells us that Hezekiah destroyed the pagan idols. Found in Beersheba, from the time of Hezekiah, is a striking example of the reuse of these broken idols. A horned altar which featured an engraved image of a twisting serpent has recently been discovered. This pagan idol had been broken, dismantled, and then used as building stones in the wall of a storehouse. This illustrates the reforms that took place under his rule.

Lachish Gate Cultic Shrine Desecrated

In 2016, in the ruins of Lachish, further evidence of Hezekiah's reforms against cultic shrines from 715 B.C. has been discovered. Uncovered was a six-chambered gate with a rival sanctuary. The excavations found horns cut off of an altar, as well as a toilet deposited in the holy of holies as an example of ritual desecration.

This is another illustration of the religious reforms of Hezekiah during his reign (2 Kings 18:4, 22; 2 Chronicles 29:3).

Sennacherib's Siege Of Jerusalem

One specific example of the accuracy of the Bible with respect to Hezekiah is the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian King Sennacherib. This siege is mentioned in three different places in the Old Testament (2 Kings 18:13-24; 2 Chronicles 32:1-23; Isaiah 36:1-37:38).

All three biblical accounts agree that Sennacherib put the city under siege, but the Lord miraculously delivered the people. The Bible tells us that the "angel of the Lord" killed a large portion of the Assyrian army who had surrounded the city. Hence, the Assyrian army then left the region without capturing the holy city.

Isaiah the prophet, who was an eyewitness to this event, agreed with the details that we find in Chronicles and Kings.

The Secular Evidence: Sennacherib's Prisms

Sennacherib's version of the attack on Jerusalem has been recorded on the three different cuneiform prisms—the Taylor Prism, the Oriental Institute Prism, and the Jerusalem Prism, plus eight additional fragments from other prisms which have not survived intact. It seems that many copies were

made of his exploits as king and distributed throughout the Assyrian empire.

Although each of these prisms most like originated in Nineveh, the only one that was discovered in the ancient city was the Taylor Prism—unearthed around 1830. This inscription contains the annals of Sennacherib from 691 B.C.

Column 3 of the Taylor Prism recalls the military campaign against the southern kingdom of Judah around 701 B.C. It brags about him taking 46 fortified cities and capturing over 200,000 people.

When we compare this with the biblical account, we find that there are some remarkable parallels between the two.

In this inscription, Sennacherib brags that he made other cities in Israel surrender to him.

Sennacherib Did Not Capture Jerusalem

However, when he described his campaign against Jerusalem, he did not claim to have captured the city. In fact, he said of King Hezekiah:

As for himself, like a bird in a cage in his royal city Jerusalem, I shut him up.

Consequently, his hasty retreat from the city speaks volumes of his humiliating setback:

Unless the biblical record is true, why did Sennacherib return home without attempting to break into the capital? Babylonian records and the Greek historian Herodotus (Histories 2:141) agree that a great multitude of Assyrian died although they offer a different explanation (Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards, *Evidence for the Bible*, Day One Publication, Leominster England, 2014, p. 45).

It is from the Bible alone that we discover what happened to his army, as well as the reason as to why he left without entering into Jerusalem:

That night the angel of the LORD went out to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. When the surviving Assyrians woke up the next morning, they found corpses everywhere. Then King Sennacherib of Assyria broke camp and returned to his own land. He went home to his capital of Nineveh and stayed there (2 Kings 19:35-36 NLT).

In sum, these ancient Assyrian documents confirms what the Bible has to say about this event. Obviously, Sennacherib was trying to cover up what really happened!

Later, Sennacherib met his demise:

One day while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with their swords. They then escaped to the land of Ararat, and another son, Esarhaddon, became the next king of Assyria (2 Kings 19:37 NLT).

King Hezekiah's Royal Seal

The royal seal, or insignia, of Hezekiah from about 727 B.C. was discovered in 2009 in the Ophel in Jerusalem. This clay bulla had the following inscription:

Belonging to Hezekiah [son of] Ahaz king of Judah.

This was the only royal seal of King Hezekiah of Judah that has been found thus far by archaeologists.

All in all, there is no question whatsoever, that Hezekiah was an historical figure who lived precisely at the time that the Bible says that he lived.

The Battle Between The Cushites And Assyrians

Scripture lists a campaign that took place during the reign of Hezekiah:

When the chief adviser heard the king of Assyria had departed from Lachish, he left and went to Libnah, where the king was campaigning. The king heard that King Tirhakah of Ethiopia was marching out to fight him. He again sent messengers to Hezekiah, ordering them (Isaiah 37:8-9 NET).

This is recorded twice for us in Scripture. The Assyrian King Sennacherib invaded Judah and captured all the fortified cities except Jerusalem. He then set up camp at Lachish.

Then, King Tirhakah of Cush marched north from Egypt to challenge Sennacherib. At that time, the Cushites controlled Egypt.

Sennacherib sent messengers to Hezekiah warning him that this foreign army from Egypt would not deliver him from the hands of the Assyrians.

The ancient records from Assyria confirm the biblical account. The Rassam cylinder reads:

The officials, the nobles, the people from Ekron who had thrown Padi their king who was under oath and obligation to Assyria, into iron fetters and handed him over in a hostile manner to Hezekiah the Judean took fright because of the offense they had committed. The kings of Egypt and the bowmen, chariot corps and calvary of the kings of Cush assembled as a countless force and came to their [the Ekronites] aid. In the plain of Eltekeh they drew up their ranks against me and sharpened their weapons. Trusting in the god Ashur, my Lord, I fought with them and inflicted a defeat upon them. The Egyptian

charioteers and princes together with the charioteers of the Cushites, I personally took alive in the midst of the battle.

From these annals of the Assyrian King Sennacherib, we have the biblical account verified on two main issues.

First, both record the invasion into Judah when Hezekiah was king. Also, during this military campaign an army from Egypt comprised of Egyptians and Cushites marched out of Egypt to challenge the mighty Assyrians. However, they were defeated.

The Assyrian Siege And The Capture of Lachish

In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, King Sennacherib of Assyria came to attack the fortified towns of Judah and conquered them. King Hezekiah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: "I have done wrong. I will pay whatever tribute money you demand if you will only withdraw." The king of Assyria then demanded a settlement of more than eleven tons of silver and one ton of gold (2 Kings 18:13-14 NLT)

This particular event is recorded three times in Scripture. (2 Kings 18:13-14; 2 Chronicles 32:9 and Isaiah 36:2). The Assyrian king Sennacherib invaded Judah during the reign of Hezekiah. He bypassed Jerusalem to first capture the fortified cities.

After he captured Lachish he sent up a temporary headquarters. From Lachish, he sent a field commander and an army to Jerusalem to have the city surrender.

The Historical Evidence

This particular invasion by Sennacherib of Assyria took place in 701 BC and is recorded in his royal annals. In fact, the siege of Lachish was commemorated with stone wall panels. These panels were installed in Sennacherib's south-west palace in Nineveh. Titus Kennedy explains:

The reliefs are one of the greatest pieces of historical art from the ancient world, and not only tell the story visually but show the armor and weaponry of soldiers, siege tactics walls and tower of Lachish and the extreme violence of the Assyrians. Archaeological excavations at Lachish corroborate that the Assyrians used a siege ramp their prolific use of arrows, the fall of the city, and the brutality of the Assyrians (Titus Kennedy, *Unearthing the Bible*, Eugene Oregon, Harvest House, 2020, p. 137).

Archaeologist William Dever commented on the amazing correlation between the reliefs and what archaeologists have discovered:

Virtually all of the details of the Assyrian reliefs have been confirmed by archaeology, even the hill top vantage point from which Sennacherib must have watched the battle and from which the

Assyrian artists made their original sketches. Also brought to light by the excavators were the double city walls, the complex siege ramp, embedded with hundreds of iron arrowheads and stone ballistae, the counter ramp inside the city, the destroyed gate...some 1500 skeletons...thrown into a deep-water shaft, well-preserved Assyrian helmets (William Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, pp. 168, 169).

We can conclude that the evidence for the siege of Lachish is extensive and gives us decisive verification of the biblical account as recorded in Isaiah 36, 2 Kings 18, and 2 Chronicles 32.

In sum, we are blessed with a number of remarkable secular testimonies that minutely confirm what the Bible says about the life and times of King Hezekiah. In other words, we are dealing with reality, not legend.

The rule of Hezekiah sets the stage for our next biblical character. His supernatural prophetic ministry will give us incontrovertible evidence that there is a God who exists, who knows the future, who controls the future, and has predicted a number of events long before they happen.

The Prophet Isaiah

As is true for the secular evidence that proves the existence of King Hezekiah beyond any doubt, we find similar evidence for the man who prophesied alongside the King, the prophet Isaiah. We can provide a number of examples.

The Assyrian Ruler Sargon Was Unknown Except In The Bible

For many years, the name Sargon, the king of Assyria, was only found in Scripture. We read about him in the Book of Isaiah:

The Lord revealed the following message during the year in which King Sargon of Assyria sent his commanding general to Ashdod, and he fought against it and captured it (Isaiah 20:1 NET).

Because the only historical reference to a king named Sargon was found in the Bible, it was assumed that he was not an historical personage. In fact, biblical critics used the lack of confirming evidence to claim an obvious error in the Bible and in the writings of Isaiah.

However, this is no longer the case. In 1843, the palace of Sargon was discovered! Today Sargon is one of the best-known of all Assyrian rulers. Yet, until the middle of the nineteenth century, his name was only found in the writings of Isaiah.

Clearly, for someone to know that Sargon was the ruler of Assyria at this particular time in history, indicates that the person who wrote about him, Isaiah, had firsthand knowledge of the situation. As we will note, this will have far-reaching implications.

The Assyrian Campaign Against Ashdod

As we just noted, Isaiah the prophet recorded the fact that Assyrian King Sargon attacked the city of Ashdod and captured it. We also discover the reason for the attack:

The LORD revealed the following message during the year in which King Sargon of Assyria sent his commanding general to Ashdod, and he fought against it and captured it... Later the LORD explained, "In the same way that my servant Isaiah has walked around in undergarments and barefoot for the past three years, as an object lesson and omen pertaining to Egypt and Cush, so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, both young and old. They will be in undergarments and barefoot, with the buttocks exposed; the Egyptians will be publicly humiliated. Those who put their hope in Cush and took pride in Egypt will be afraid and embarrassed (Isaiah 20:1,3-5 NET).

According to the prophet, it was the Philistine city of Ashdod that put their hope in Cush and Egypt that caused the Assyrians to capture the city.

The Historical Evidence

The fact that Sargon captured the city of Ashdod is firmly documented in the Assyrian records. Sargon's palace in the city of Khorsabad reveals inscriptions on the walls that describe his campaigns. Among these inscriptions are two texts that not only refer to the capture of Ashdod but also imply the alliance of Ashdod with Egypt and Cush:

Azuri, king of Ashdod, plotted not to deliver tribute and sent seditious words concerning Assyria to the kings in his neighborhood. ...I marched to Ashdod, and he, Yamani (the man made king) heard from afar the approach of my campaign, and fled to the border of Egypt in the district of Meluhha (Cush)...I besieged Ashdod, Gath, and Ashdod-yam and captured them.

Other accounts of this incident have been found in the Assyrian records. One describes the capture of Ashdod and the alliance they had with the Egyptians.

Amazingly, there are at least six ancient documents from Assyria that confirm what we read in Isaiah. As Isaiah stated, Assyria captured Ashdod due to its alliances with Egypt and Cush. These extrabiblical sources not only confirm what Isaiah wrote, they demonstrate that Isaiah had to have been on the scene at that particular time in history to know what took place.

To sum up, the prophet tells us that Assyria captured Ashdod because they aligned with Egypt and Cush. So we have four different nations involved and Isaiah was correct in listing the part that each one played. Assyria was the aggressor, Ashdod the recipient of the aggression, and Egypt and Cush were the cause of that aggression.

Therefore, Isaiah the prophet placed each of these four nations in their proper place in this episode. Only someone who was living there at the time, and had firsthand knowledge of the events, would be in a position to do this. This, of course, means Isaiah lived precisely when the Bible said he did.

The Story Of Shebna

Isaiah also records the name Shebna—a royal steward and a man who supervised the palace during the reign of Hezekiah:

This is what the sovereign master, the LORD who commands armies, says: “Go visit this administrator, Shebna, who supervises the palace, and tell him ‘What right do you have to be here? What relatives do you have buried here? Why do you chisel out a tomb for yourself here? He chisels out his burial site in an elevated place, he carves out his tomb on a cliff (Isaiah 22:15-16 NET).

Notice the specifics. Shebna had chiseled out a tomb for himself in an elevated place. In other words, he had attempted to have his tomb in a place restricted for kings and rulers. Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards explain:

Only royalty could be buried within the city and Isaiah warned that Shebna would be stripped of his high position and Eliakim would take his place. In Isaiah 22:15 Shebna is described as “in charge of the palace.”... but significantly by 36:3, at the time of Sennacherib’s invasion, Shebna is only a secretary—an official scribe and it is Eliakim who is “the palace administrator” A trivial domestic issue in the court of Hezekiah? Perhaps, but in 1870 an inscription was discovered in Jerusalem on the lintel of what had been a tomb cut into the rock (Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards, *Evidence for the Bible*, Day One Publication, Leominster England, 2014, p. 68).

The Tomb Of Shebna Seemingly Has Been Found

In the Siloam area of Jerusalem, a tomb from that time period has been found. Though the inscription is incomplete it refers to a man who held the title of the royal steward.

The first part of the name is missing but the last four Hebrew letters *yahu* was precisely how Sheba’s name would have been spelled out.

Furthermore, the missing space on the inscription leaves room for the first part of his name.

Consequently, there are excellent reasons to believe that this was the tomb of the man who was overseer of the palace at the time of Hezekiah.

If so, it brings up an interesting question. How would someone, living hundreds of years later, know the identity of this royal steward as well as

the fact that he had a tomb chiseled out for himself? Obviously, he would not.

Therefore, this is further evidence of the prophet Isaiah living at that time and recording the details of Shebna and the tomb that he had chiseled out. Unfortunately, Shebna never got to use the tomb:

The ancient Hebrew script and the evidence from the lintel date to the time of Hezekiah. If this was his tomb lintel, and this is widely accepted, Shebna never used it because he died in exile (Isaiah 22:18) (Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards, *Evidence For The Bible*, Day One Publication, Leominster England, 2014, p. 68).

The Seal Impression Of Shebna Has Been Found

There is one more thing that should be mentioned about Shebna—his own seal impression has been found at Lachish. It reads:

“Belonging to Shebnayahu, servant of the king”

Consequently, there is no doubt that we are dealing with an historical character, one who turned out to be the “bad boy” in the palace of Hezekiah.

Isaiah’s Signature Is Uncovered In Jerusalem

There is still more. Recent excavations in the city of Jerusalem have unearthed what seems to be the first extra-Biblical evidence of the prophet Isaiah.

Archaeologist Eilat Mazar and her team have discovered a 2,700-year-old stamped clay artifact during excavations at the foot of the southern wall of Jerusalem’s Temple Mount.

In ancient times, a seal stamp, or bulla as it is also called, was used to authenticate documents or items. This particular seal stamp reads as follows:

“[belonging] to Isaiah *my*”

It is inscribed with the name Yesha’yah[u], Isaiah, in ancient Hebrew script. The upper portion of the impression is missing, and its left side is damaged. Reconstructing a few Hebrew letters in this damaged area would cause the impression to read, “[belonging] to Isaiah the prophet.”

If the Hebrew letter *aleph* were added to the end of the word *my*, it would then become the word *myy* (“*navy*”), which means “prophet” in Hebrew. If the reconstruction proves to be correct, then we have the signature of the Biblical prophet Isaiah.

Mazar explained it this way:

We found the eight-century B.C.E. seal mark that may have been made by the prophet Isaiah himself only 10 feet away from where we earlier discovered the highly-publicized bulla of King Hezekiah of Judah.

What makes this conclusion likely is that the seal of King Hezekiah was found just a few feet away from this discovery. Since Hezekiah and Isaiah are closely linked together in the biblical account it seems almost certain that we have here the seal of the prophet.

Only Important Figures Would Have Their Own Seal

While there were other men named Isaiah who lived in Judah at the time of Hezekiah, it was rare for an individual to have his own seal. Indeed, only important figures such as royalty, high officials, priests and prophets would have had their own unique seal impression.

Therefore, whoever this particular Isaiah was, obviously he was a very important figure at this time in history.

Furthermore, since this particular seal was found only ten feet away from the seal of King Hezekiah, it is highly unlikely, if not impossible, that it belonged to anyone but the biblical prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz.

In sum, we find sufficient evidence that two major characters of the Bible, Hezekiah and Isaiah, did indeed live at the time the Scripture said they lived.

We will later explain the far-reaching implications of this evidence.

Summary To Mystery 8 King Hezekiah And The Prophet Isaiah

One of the most important of all of the biblical prophets was a man named Isaiah. The Bible records that he lived and ministered at a crucial time in the history of Israel.

Along with his contemporary, King Hezekiah, the Scriptures devotes much space to these two individuals. Therefore, it is important to discover if the biblical account has any archaeological facts, or inscriptions, to support it.

As we have noted, there is no question whatsoever about the existence of King Hezekiah of Judah. Not only has his name been found in the ancient Assyrian records, the campaign of Sennacherib against Jerusalem, which the Bible records, it is also documented in the annals of the Assyrians.

The ancient evidence agrees with the Bible that the Assyrians did not conquer the city of Jerusalem. In fact, it was the prophet Isaiah who told Hezekiah that the Lord would keep the city from falling to the Assyrians.

As far as Isaiah is concerned, there is his testimony of an Assyrian king named Sargon that had been lost from history. In fact, for a long time, the

only ancient source of his existence was found in the writings of Isaiah. Today, there is no question whatsoever that Sargon was an historical figure. Indeed, he is one of the most well-known Assyrian kings.

Add to this, the recent inscription on an ancient seal that was found in the old city of Jerusalem, with seemingly his name on, it gives further proof to his existence.

In sum, the evidence is striking, and the implications are far-reaching as we will emphasize in our last section of this book.

Mystery 9:

Jeremiah The Prophet: Did He Live At The Time Jerusalem And The First Temple Were Destroyed?

The Bible says that Jeremiah the prophet preached a message to the people of Judah warning them that the southern kingdom was to be taken into captivity by the Babylonians. He also predicted that the city of Jerusalem and the Temple were to be destroyed.

In doing so, Jeremiah said that Babylon would be God's instruments to perform this necessary punishment for the sins of the people.

The Mystery Explained

We can simply sum up this mystery as follows: Did Jeremiah live and preach at the time the Bible said that he did? Is he an historical figure?

Before we look at the evidence for the existence of Jeremiah, it is necessary to fill in the time gap between his arrival and the previous ministry of Isaiah the prophet.

Background

In our last solved mystery we found that both King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah were historical figures. They lived approximately 100 years before the time of Jeremiah.

Scripture records that a number of kings ruled during this time and the evidence is clear that the Bible is indeed correct.

Manasseh

The son of Hezekiah, Manasseh, who was also the father of King Josiah, turned out to be the worst king in the history of the southern kingdom of Judah:

So the LORD announced through his servants the prophets: "King Manasseh of Judah has committed horrible sins. He has sinned more than the Amorites before him and has encouraged Judah to sin by worshiping his disgusting idols. So this is what the LORD God of Israel says, 'I am about to bring disaster on Jerusalem and Judah. The news will reverberate in the ears of those who hear about it. I will destroy Jerusalem the same way I did Samaria and the dynasty of Ahab. I will wipe Jerusalem clean, just as one wipes a plate on both sides (2 Kings 21:10-14 NET).

The royal annals of Assyria mention Manasseh three times, twice in the records of King Esarhaddon and once in the records of Ashurbanipal.

On a six-sided prism, describing the campaigns of Esarhaddon, we find the following inscription:

I mobilized the kings of Hatti and Beyond-the-River. Baal king of Tyre and Manasseh king of Judah.

Something similar is found in the annals of King Ashurbanipal.

In sum, the royal annals of the Assyrians confirm the existence of this particular evil king of Judah.

The Capture And Exile Of The Egyptian City Of Thebes By The Assyrians

Before the Babylonians could come to Jerusalem, destroy the city and the temple, a world power had to be removed from the stage of history. That would be Assyria.

The prophet Nahum predicted the overthrow and destruction of the mighty capital city of the Assyrians, Nineveh.

In this passage, Nahum sarcastically asks if they are any better, stronger, or somehow less likely to be conquered like Thebes, a city in Egypt that the Assyrians themselves had recently devastated:

You are no more secure than Thebes—she was located on the banks of the Nile; the waters surrounded her, her rampart was the sea, the water was her wall. Cush and Egypt had limitless strength; Put and the Libyans were among her allies. Yet she went into captivity as an exile; even her infants were smashed to pieces at the head of every street. They cast lots for her nobility; all her dignitaries were bound with chains (Nahum 3:8-10 NLT).

The Historical Evidence

As we have consistently observed, the historical and archaeological evidence verifies what is recorded in Scripture. This previous campaign to destroy Thebes is recorded in the annals of King Ashurbanipal on the Rassam Cylinder:

In my second campaign I made straight for Egypt and Cush. Tanutamon, the Cushite king, heard of my campaign and that I had crossed the border of Egypt. He abandoned Memphis and in order to save his life, he fled to Thebes. . . I set out after Tanutamon and marched as far as Thebes, his fortress. That city, Thebes, and its environs I myself captured with the support of Ashur and Ishtar. Silver, gold, precious stones, the property of the palace ...large horses, the people male and female I uprooted from their position and took them to Assyria.

Nahum alluded to the destruction of Thebes by the Assyrians and the ancient testimony supports that. In fact, the annals of Ashurbanipal

confirm this military campaign, the capture of Thebes and the exile of its inhabitants.

In the same manner, Nineveh itself was to be destroyed by the judgment of the Lord. Scripture and history tell us this is precisely what took place.

The Fall Of Nineveh

As we mentioned, a number of biblical prophets, Nahum, Jeremiah and Zephaniah, predicted the destruction of Nineveh. For example, we read.

The LORD will attack the north and destroy Assyria. He will make Nineveh a heap of ruins; it will be as barren as the desert (Zephaniah 2:13 NET).

As the biblical prophets predicted, the great city of Nineveh was destroyed.

The destruction of Nineveh is documented in what is known as the Nineveh Chronicle. It was composed about 550 B.C. as part of a series of historical records that were brought together and saved for posterity by the Babylonians. The tablet, written in ancient cuneiform text, originated from official government documents which recounted the major events in the fall of this great city and empire.

In sum, it states that in 612 B.C. the King of Babylon, Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, with help from the Medes, destroyed the Assyrian capital after a three-month siege.

The tablet reads: “They encamped against Nineveh...for three months they subjected the city to a heavy siege...they inflicted a major defeat upon a great people...they carried off vast booty of the city and the temple and turned the city into a ruined heap” (Nineveh Chronicle ABC 3).

There seemed to be no limit as to the treasures of Nineveh. The Babylonian Chronicle described the spoils taken in the sacking of Nineveh as “a quantity beyond counting.”

In fact, “no other land seems to have been sacked and pillaged so completely as was Assyria” (Cambridge Ancient History (3:130–31).

History tells us that the destruction was indeed complete. In fact, Nineveh was unrecognized by Xenophon and his retreating Greeks when they passed by it in 401 B.C. He stated that he could not even find the city!

The Divine Justice Of Nineveh’s Destruction

The southern kingdom of Judah had suffered tremendously at the hands of the Assyrians. It was divine justice that this evil empire had finally been destroyed.

However, all was not well for the southern kingdom. Indeed, only a few short years after this destruction Judah was forced into becoming a vassal

state of the Babylonians. This would eventually lead to the destruction of the city, the Temple and the deportation of the people.

Hilkiah

There were a number of things that would occur that set the stage for the monumental events that would soon take place.

One of these took place under the reign of good King Josiah. We are introduced to the High Priest Hilkiah, the father of Azariah:

In the eighteenth year of King Josiah's reign, the king sent the scribe Shaphan son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, to the LORD's temple with these orders: "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest and have him melt down the silver that has been brought by the people to the LORD's temple and has been collected by the guards at the door (2 Kings 22:3-4 NET).

Shallum was the father of Hilkiah, and Hilkiah was the father of Azariah. Azariah was the father of Seraiah, and Seraiah was the father of Jehozadak. Jehozadak went into exile when the LORD sent the people of Judah and Jerusalem into exile by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (1 Chronicles 6:13-15 NET).

While there are several people named Hilkiah in the Old Testament there is only one father/son combination who were also priests. We also read about this later in the Book of Ezra:

Now after these things had happened, during the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, Ezra came up from Babylon. Ezra was the son of Seraiah, who was the son of Azariah, who was the son of Hilkiah (Ezra 7:1-2 NET).

Hilkiah was the High Priest at the time of King Josiah. After the king had put him in charge of repairing the temple, the Book of the Law was discovered. This led to numerous religious reforms under Josiah.

The Historical Evidence

Over 50 bullae have been discovered in the excavations of the city of David area in Jerusalem just south of the Temple Mount.

One of the seal impressions reads as follows.

"Belonging to Azaryahu, son of Hilqiyahu"

Translated into English it would read"

"Azariah, son of Hilkiah"

Since the seal impression belonging to Azariah, son of Hilkiah, mentions both father and son and was discovered during a controlled archaeological

excavation in a stratum that can be dated, it provides very strong evidence that it did belong to the biblical character Azariah son of Hilkiah. This verifies the historicity of not only Azariah but also Hilkiah, the high priest during the reign of King Josiah.

Again we find further specific confirmation of the biblical accounts. It is nothing short of amazing that evidence like this continues to be discovered.

Jehoiachin

With Assyria out of the way, the stage was set for the Babylonians to be the instruments of God's judgment against the southern kingdom of Judah.

The Bible says that Jehoiachin was 18 years of age when he became king of Judah. He reigned only three months before being deported to Babylon, where he lived out the rest of his life (2 Kings 24:8, 12, 15; 25:27–30).

Evidence For Jehoiachin's Existence

There is evidence, apart from the Bible, that this king did indeed exist. Interestingly, a ration record from Babylon mentioned King Jehoiachin. During excavations at Babylon by Robert Koldewey, at the turn of the 20th century, he discovered what archaeologists designate as the "Northern Palace." This was most likely the royal residence of the king of Babylon.

Koldewey discovered a number of cuneiform-inscribed clay tablets which dated from the years 594–569 B.C. These tablets listed the various kings that had been captured by the Babylonians from throughout the ancient Near East. These kings were then living in the palace and they were receiving rations of grain and oil from the king of Babylon.

Four of the tablets list rations for "Jehoiachin, king of Judah" as well as for his family. These ancient tablets are today located in the Pergamum Museum in Berlin, Germany.

Therefore, we have continuous testimony in the years following Isaiah and Hezekiah up to the time of Jeremiah.

Nebuchadnezzar's Son Evil-merodach (Awel-Marduk)

Scripture also tells us this:

In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the year Awel-Marduk became king of Babylon, he released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. He did this on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month. He spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat of honor higher than those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes and for the rest of his life ate regularly at the king's table. Day by day the king gave Jehoiachin a regular allowance as long as he lived (2 Kings 25:27-30 NET).

This passage, along with Jeremiah 52:31-34, documents the release from prison of Jehoiachin king of Judah.

In doing so, Scripture is uniting the date of the ascension to the throne of Babylon of the son of Nebuchadnezzar (Evil-merodach or Awel-Marduk) in 562 B.C., with the 37th year of the exile. From the Babylonian Chronicle we know that his son replaced him as king when Nebuchadnezzar died.

Prisoners Together?

Another fascinating aspect of this account has to do with Evil-merodach in prison. A cuneiform tablet found in southern Mesopotamia contains a prayer, or lament of Evil-merodach while in prison. Exactly why he was put in prison is unknown. After he was freed and became king of Babylon, as we just mentioned, he freed Jehoiachin king of Judah. It has been speculated that they were prisoners together under King Nebuchadnezzar and became friends.

Another Amazing Confirmation Of Scripture

Again, we have a number of fascinating details that are recorded in Scripture and confirmed by the Babylonian records. This includes Nebuchadnezzar's original banishment of King Jehoiachin to Babylon, the ascension to the throne by his son Awel-Marduk in 562 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar died, the food allowance given to this former king of Judah and then the release from prison of Jehoiachin.

Evil-merodach ruled for only two years. The fact that the Bible, as well as the Babylonian records, mentions his short rule is all the more remarkable. Again, what we have here is God's Word minutely verified from secular sources.

Gemariah Son Of Shaphan

We also have the historical confirmation of the existence of a little-known hero. Gemariah, son of Shaphan, was a high ranking official in the administration of King Jehoiakim of Judah (609-598 B.C.). This particular individual is mentioned four times in Jeremiah 36:9-32.

This is the account of King Jehoiakim burning the scroll that was dictated by Jeremiah the prophet.

Gemariah, as well as a few others, advised the king against burning the scroll:

The king did not even listen to Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah, who had urged him not to burn the scroll (Jeremiah 36:25 NET).

Shaphan, the father of Gemariah, is referred to as the "scribe" or royal secretary.

At that time Baruch went into the temple of the LORD. He stood in the entrance of the room of Gemariah the son of Shaphan who had been the royal secretary. That room was in the upper court near the entrance of the New Gate. There, where all the people could hear him, he read from the scroll what Jeremiah had said (Jeremiah 36:10 NLT)

He is likely the same “court secretary” during the rule of the good King Josiah (2 Kings 22:3-14; 2 Chronicles 34:8-14).

The Evidence Discovered

Israeli archaeologists, in the summer of 1982, were working on excavations of the City of David area in Jerusalem south of the Temple Mount. At that time they made an exciting discovery; fifty-one clay seal impressions, many with written inscriptions. Among them was the following...

“Belonging to Gemaryahu son of Shaphan”

Translated into English it reads:

“Gemariah son of Shaphan.”

Providentially, this clay seal was discovered in an ancient public archive within about 250 meters where Scripture places the official activities at that time in history. Furthermore, the ground that was excavated dates to the time of King Jehoiakim just prior to the time when Jerusalem was destroyed. A truly amazing discovery!

The Obvious Conclusion

While Gemariah and Shaphan are common Hebrew names, a bullae with the name of a biblical father/son combination can be firmly dated to the same time period as the biblical characters. Furthermore, this artifact was discovered as part of a controlled archaeological investigation. This, of course, provides verification of the historicity of both persons.

Again, we are amazed that a discovery like this was made. Here is the name of an official who stood up to the King Jehoiakim when he was burning the scroll of Jeremiah. His name is not only forever recorded in Scripture for this deed but was also confirmed by the archaeological evidence that had been sitting there for some 2,600 years! He was a true hero!

The Mystery Of Jeremiah Solved:

Incredibly, we have an abundance of evidence that the Book of Jeremiah is an authentic document written by someone who was living at Jerusalem at that particular time in history! We can cite the following facts:

The Royal Seal Of The Man Who Tossed Jeremiah Into A Well

In recent years, archaeologists in Israel have unearthed the royal seal of an Old Testament personage—the same person who the Bible says threw the prophet Jeremiah down into a well.

The stamped engraving, known as a “bullā,” was discovered about 600 feet south of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The leader of the team who found it, Dr. Eilat Mazar, says the imprint was astonishingly well-preserved. What is amazing about this is that it bore the name of Gedaliah, the son of Pashur. She exclaimed:

How absolutely fantastic and special this find is can only be realized when you hold in your hand this magnificent one-centimeter piece of clay and know that it survived 2,600 years in the debris of the destruction, and came to us complete and in perfect condition.

The person, Gedaliah, is mentioned by name in the book of Jeremiah:

Now Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jehucal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malkijah had heard the things that Jeremiah had been telling the people (Jeremiah 38:1 NET).

This man, Gedaliah, served King Zedekiah of Judah in the final days before Jerusalem was conquered by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 586 B.C.

Jeremiah records the actions of Gedaliah, and his fellow royal officials, who put the prophet in a cistern filled with mud:

So the officials took Jeremiah and put him in the cistern of Malkijah, one of the royal princes, that was in the courtyard of the guardhouse. There was no water in the cistern, only mud. So when they lowered Jeremiah into the cistern with ropes he sank in the mud (Jeremiah 38:6 NET).

The prophet was rescued through the intervention of an Ethiopian eunuch who pleaded with the king on behalf of the prophet. He said:

Your royal Majesty, those men have been very wicked in all that they have done to the prophet Jeremiah. They have thrown him into a cistern and he is sure to die of starvation there because there is no food left in the city (Jeremiah 38:9 NET).

The king then ordered 30 men to hoist up the prophet. This occurred before the city fell to the Babylonians:

Then the king gave Ebed Melech the Ethiopian the following order: “Take thirty men with you from here and go pull the prophet Jeremiah out of the cistern before he dies” (Jeremiah 38:10 NET).

In fact, this bullā is actually the third recent discovery of an ancient seal from the time of Jeremiah!

The Seal Of Jehucal

In 2005, Mazar found another seal with the name of “Jehucal the son of Shelemiah.” He is mentioned twice in the book of Jeremiah. That particular artifact was found in a stone structure which Mazar believes was part of the ancient palace of David, the first king of Israel.

Fascinatingly, he is mentioned in the same verse as the other official whom we just mentioned—Gedaliah son of Pashhur:

Now Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jehucal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malkijah had heard the things that Jeremiah had been telling the people (Jeremiah 38:1 NET).

In sum, three different clay seal impressions have been recently found in the city of David in Jerusalem and each independently testifies to the existence of three obscure biblical figures, two of them were involved throwing the prophet Jeremiah into a pit while the other protested the King destroying the writings of Jeremiah. Amazing indeed!

Jerusalem Falls To The Babylonians

The Bible says that on the ninth day of the fourth month of the 11th year of the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah, the city of Jerusalem and the southern kingdom of Judah fell into the hands of the Babylonians.

After a two and one half year siege the city was finally lost. Scripture explains it in this manner:

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came against Jerusalem with his whole army and laid siege to it. The siege began in the tenth month of the ninth year that Zedekiah ruled over Judah. It lasted until the ninth day of the fourth month of Zedekiah’s eleventh year. On that day they broke through the city walls (Jeremiah 39:1,2 NET).

When the wall of the city was broken through, all the officials of the king of Babylon came and took seats in the Middle Gate:

Then Nergal-Sharezer of Samgar, Nebo-Sarsekim, who was a chief officer, Nergal-Sharezer, who was a high official, and all the other officers of the king of Babylon came and set up quarters in the Middle Gate (Jeremiah 39:3 NET).

As we will discover, amazingly, the names of these two Babylonian officials have been also found in the historical record.

The Names Of Babylonian Officials Are Confirmed

There are actually a number of Babylonians that are mentioned in Scripture whose names have been found in ancient cuneiform sources. They include the following:

Nebuchadnezzar

The famous King Nebuchadnezzar, who figured so prominently in the biblical record, is indeed an historical figure. This is confirmed by ancient records from Babylon.

The Babylonian Chronicle records the last year of the reign of Nabopolassar, his father, and the first 11 years of his son Nebuchadnezzar.

Among Nebuchadnezzar's accomplishments was the capture of Jerusalem, dated precisely to March 16, 597 B.C. This document is presently on display in the British Museum in London, England.

Scripture describes the same events in much detail. When Nebuchadnezzar besieged and captured Jerusalem in 597 B.C., we are told that King Jehoiachin was ruling Judah at that time. Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin, the royal family, as well as important men in Judah, to his kingdom to Babylon. As we noted earlier, the ration record found in the northern palace at Babylon confirms this.

The Bible then says that Jehoiachin's uncle, a man named Mattaniah, was then placed upon the throne of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar then changed his name to Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:11–17).

Nebo-Sarsekim

Nebo-Sarsekim is referred to only once in the Old Testament. He was a high Babylonian official named in Jeremiah 39:3. The mention of this obscure individual in the Hebrew Bible is yet another example of a minute detail which clearly demonstrates the historical accuracy and eyewitness nature of the Biblical record. As mentioned, his name is also found in ancient cuneiform sources.

Nergal-Sharezer

Add to this, we find another official named in Jeremiah 39:3 who is also known from cuneiform sources as Nergal-Sharezer.

Jeremiah 39:13–14 informs us that this man was instrumental in releasing Jeremiah from the Courtyard of the Guard where he was being held as prisoner.

Interestingly, Nergal-Sharezer was married to Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, Kashshaia, and he himself later became king of Babylon (559–556 B.C.).

Nebuzaradan

There is another official who Scripture names. Nebuzaradan was a high-ranking military official called "Captain of the Guard" in the Book of Jeremiah. According to the Bible, he played a significant role in the events of 587 B.C.

Indeed, Scripture informs us that Nebuzaradan was responsible for a number of things having to do with the fall of Jerusalem. This includes the supervision of the burning of the Holy City (2 Kings 25:8–9; Jeremiah 39:8a 52:12–13), the tearing down of Jerusalem’s defenses (2 Kings 25:10; Jeremiah 39:8b 52:14), the deportation of 832 captives to Babylon (2 Kings 25:11; Jeremiah 39:9; 52:15, 29), as well as the plundering of the Holy Temple (2 Kings 25:15; Jeremiah 52:17–19).

Add to this, the Bible informs us that this man rounded up Judean officials to appear before King Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:18–21; Jeremiah 52:24–27).

Nebuchadnezzar gave Nebuzaradan specific instructions to deal kindly with Jeremiah:

Now King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had issued orders concerning Jeremiah. He had passed them on through Nebuzaradan, the captain of his royal guard, “Find Jeremiah and look out for him. Do not do anything to harm him, but do with him whatever he tells you (Jeremiah 39:11–12 NET).

Jeremiah was released and gave him a choice of either going to Babylon or remaining in Judah (Jeremiah 40:2–4). The prophet chose to remain in Judah where he joined the newly appointed leader, Gedaliah, at the city of Mizpah (Jeremiah 39:14; 40:5–6).

We are also told that five years later, Nebuzaradan returned to Jerusalem and deported another 745 people to Babylon (Jeremiah 52:30).

Testimony To The Existence Of Nebuzaradan Outside Of The Bible

This man, Nebuzaradan, who had so much to do with the Babylonian takeover of Jerusalem, was indeed an historical character. In fact, a clay prism that was found in the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar, which dates to approximately the year 570 B.C., testifies to his existence.

The prism contains a list of Babylonian court officials, among whom is Nebuzaradan, who has the title “Chancellor.”

God Shows Us The Minute Accuracy Of Scripture

We should not miss the import of all of these minute discoveries. People often wonder when they read the Bible, why we find these small everyday details recorded. This would include the names of certain Babylonian officials, as well as certain obscure officials of Judah. Why should the writers of Scripture take the time to record such seemingly insignificant details?

Well, it is these non-essential details that clearly demonstrate the historical accuracy of the text of the Bible, as well as how this accuracy has been preserved for us for thousands of years.

Indeed, if the writer, Jeremiah, can accurately record the names of secondary officials in Judah as well as minor officials in Babylon, this gives us complete confidence that everything else he recorded was historically accurate.

In other words, it provides minute testimony to the accuracy of Scripture as well as to the fact that we are dealing with eyewitness testimony.

Another Amazing Confirmation Of Scripture

There has been another amazing discovery about events that took place at this time. We can sum it up as follows:

In his campaign against the city of Jerusalem, from 589–587 B.C, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon laid waste to all of the fortified cities of Judah.

While Jerusalem was being besieged, Jeremiah delivered a message to king Zedekiah concerning the fate that awaited him (Jeremiah 34:1–7). The passage ends with the statement that the only fortified cities that were still holding out, apart from Jerusalem, were Lachish and Azekah. Scripture says:

He did this while the army of the king of Babylon was attacking Jerusalem and the cities of Lachish and Azekah. He was attacking these cities because they were the only fortified cities of Judah which were still holding out (Jeremiah 34:7 NET).

The Lachish Letters

A British expedition to Lachish, under the direction of James Starkey in the 1930s, discovered 21 letters in a chamber of the city gate written on flat, broken pieces of pottery, also known as ostraca. They are known as the “Lachish letters.”

The area where the letters were found, as well as the shape of the ancient script, indicates that they date from around the time of the Babylonian invasion of Judah, 589–587 B.C. In fact, the content of these letters reflects the turmoil that was taking place in Judah at that time.

The letters seem to be military communiqués sent to the military commander at Lachish from another outpost.

Fascinatingly, the final words of Letter 4 echo those of Jeremiah 34:7: “we are watching the fire signals of Lachish according to the code that my lord gave us, for we cannot see Azekah.”

These words confirm the Scripture in the smallest details. Lachish and Azekah, the fortified cities, were under attack but still holding out against the mighty Babylonian army. Though Lachish was still standing, the fortified city of Azekah had fallen for no signals were coming from them.

Again, we have another ancient confirmation of the words of Jeremiah from outside of the Bible. As we have witnessed over and over again, the historical and archaeological evidence lines up remarkably well with the biblical account of what took place at the city of Azekah.

Further Fulfillments After The People Were Taken To Babylon

The fulfillment of the predictions of Jeremiah did not end with the destruction of the city, the Temple, and the deportation of the people to Babylon:

An inscription in the British Museum archives refers to a raid into Egypt during the time of Pharaoh Amasis by Nebuchadnezzar in the years 568/567. Jeremiah warned of this to the disobedient remnant who fled to Egypt (Jeremiah 43:813). Ezekiel gave the same prophecy in 596 B.C (29:17-20) (Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards, *Evidence For The Bible*, Day One Publication, Leominster England, 2014, p. 86).

In sum, the evidence speaks loud and clear—Jeremiah the prophet did indeed live and minister during the era of the deportation of the people to Babylon as well as the destruction of the city and the Temple.

Jeremiah's Prediction Of The Three Generations Of Babylonian Rule

There is one last thing that we should mention as we close out our section on Jeremiah the prophet. He made the following prediction:

All nations must serve him and his son and grandson until the time comes for his own nation to fall. Then many nations and great kings will in turn subjugate Babylon (Jeremiah 27:7 NLT).

Jeremiah specifically predicted that the rule of Babylon would only last three generations. After that time was completed, Babylon itself would be made subject by other nations.

This was fulfilled precisely as Jeremiah gave it. Nebuchadnezzar ruled from 606 to 562 B.C. His son Amel-Marduk ruled for only two years 562-560 B.C.

Finally, the Kingdom of Babylon fell during the third generation of its rulers in 539 B.C. as is documented with the famous handwriting on the wall episode recorded in Daniel 5.

As Jeremiah specifically prophesied, another empire did indeed overthrow Babylon in the third generation, Media/Persia. Once again, Jeremiah demonstrates that he was indeed a biblical prophet who wrote and spoke under the divine inspiration of the God of Scripture.

Summary To Mystery 9
Jeremiah: Did He Live At The Time Jerusalem
And The First Temple Were Destroyed?

According to Scripture, the prophet Jeremiah was active at a crucial time in the history of the southern kingdom of Judah.

Evidence of the reliability of the book of Jeremiah is overwhelming. In fact, we have minute testimony to the accuracy of Jeremiah's writings.

Indeed, evidence has been found, outside of Scripture, of three unimportant officials of Judah whose names are recorded in the Book of Jeremiah.

Add to this, the names of a number of Babylonian officials, also recorded in the Book of Jeremiah. They too have also been found in secular records.

Not only do these facts demonstrate that Jeremiah lived and wrote at this time in history the implications of this are stunning. We will develop this later in the book.

Mystery 10

Is There Evidence Of The Destruction Of The First Temple By The Babylonians?

One of the monumental events recorded in the Old Testament is the destruction of the First Temple by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

While the Old Testament has numerous references to the construction of the Temple, its upkeep, etc., there is very little secular evidence of its existence before its destruction. But there is some. It comes from the ancient city of Arad.

Eliashib Of Arad

A number of letters were written about 600 B.C to Eliashib son of Esiyahu. He seemed to be either the commander of the fortress at Arad or perhaps the quartermaster.

One of the letters ends by stating that everything is well for an unnamed man who “is in the House of Yahweh.” The phrase House of Yahweh is used in many of the Old Testament books for the Temple in Jerusalem. The letter seems to indicate that this unnamed individual, for some unknown reason, was seeking refuge in the Temple.

Seeking refuge at the Temple is something that is mentioned numerous times in the Old Testament.

In 1 Kings 1:50 we are told that Adonijah held on to the horns of the altar in the Temple when he begged for mercy from Solomon to spare his life:

But Adonijah, in fear of Solomon, went and took hold of the horns of the altar (1 Kings 1:50 NIV).

In 1 Kings 2 we find the military leader Joab doing the same thing though his life was not spared:

When the news reached Joab, who had conspired with Adonijah though not with Absalom, he fled to the tent of the LORD and took hold of the horns of the altar. King Solomon was told that Joab had fled to the tent of the LORD and was beside the altar. Then Solomon ordered Benaiah son of Jehoiada, “Go, strike him down!” (1 Kings 2:28-29 NIV).

Therefore, this idea of going to the Temple to seek refuge is certainly consistent of what others had done.

What is important for our purposes is that this is the earliest known reference outside of the Bible to the Temple at Jerusalem. Since it was written about 600 B.C. the Temple would have been still standing.

The Destruction Of The Temple

According to Scripture, the eventual destruction of the Temple happened in three stages.

606 B.C. The First Deportation

In about 606 B.C. the first deportation of some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem took place. We read about this in the first chapter of Daniel:

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god (Daniel 1:1-2 NIV).

Among those brought to Babylon was a young man named Daniel as well as his three friends:

Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego (Daniel 1:6-7 NIV)

The 597 B.C. Deportation

The books of 2 Kings, Chronicles and Jeremiah document the 597 B.C. deportation. We read the following:

At that time the officers of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem and laid siege to it... Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. He also took from Jerusalem to Babylon the king's mother, his wives, his officials and the prominent people of the land. The king of Babylon also deported to Babylon the entire force of seven thousand fighting men, strong and fit for war, and a thousand skilled workers and artisans. He made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:10, 15-17 NIV).

The Nebuchadnezzar (Jerusalem) Chronicle And The 597 B.C. Deportation

These second round of attacks are documented in the Nebuchadnezzar, or Jerusalem, Chronicle as it is variously called. This is part of the greater Babylonia Chronicles which records information of the first 11 years of the reign Nebuchadnezzar (605-594 B.C).

It goes on to recount that in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, 597 B.C, he attacked Jerusalem and captured it, and appointed Zedekiah king.

The king of Babylonia called out his army and marched to Hattu. He set up his camp against the city of Judah (Jerusalem) and on the 2nd of Adar he took the city and captured the king [Jehoiachin] He appointed a king of his choosing there [Zedekiah] took heavy tribute and returned to Babylon.

Therefore these specific historical events recorded in Scripture are verified by this Babylonian account.

There Were Jews In Babylon

According to the Scripture, Nebuchadnezzar deported a large number of Jews to Babylon. The archeological record backs up this claim as Scott Stripling explains:

The archeological record also testifies of Jews in Babylon. In 2016, one hundred cuneiform tablets dating from about 550 BC to 498 BC went on display at the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem. The tablets refer to non-native groups living in Babylon at the time. And they use names such as al yahudu, meaning, in essence, the “New Jerusalem.” The tablets document many aspects of daily life for the exiles in Babylon, including matters of commerce and romance. Other groups, such as the Philistines, who were deported at the same time as the Israelites, are mentioned in similar texts by the names of their cities (e.g., Ashkelon and Gaza). Unlike the Israelites, the Philistines did not survive the Babylonian captivity as an identifiable ethnic group, although many Palestinians today believe that they descend from this ancient people (Scott Stripling, *The Trowel and the Truth*, Second Edition, Vision Publishing, Ramona, California, 2017, pp. 120-121).

From this, we learn a couple of important things. First, as the Bible says, the Jews were brought to Babylon. However, contrary to what happened to the Philistines, they also returned to their ancient homeland.

As we mentioned earlier, the Philistines had judgment pronounced on them by the Lord. Among other things, they, like Ammon, Edom, Moab, and Amalek, would lose their national identity. Again, this is precisely what took place. The Scriptures again show themselves to be minutely accurate.

The Destruction of Jerusalem 586/587 B.C.

On the third trip by the Babylonians, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple were both destroyed. The 70 year captivity was now in full force:

He [Nebuchadnezzar] carried away to Babylon all the items in God’s temple, whether large or small, as well as what was in the treasuries of the LORD’s temple and in the treasuries of the king and his officials. They burned down the LORD’s temple and tore down the wall of Jerusalem. They burned all its fortified buildings and destroyed all its valuable items. He deported to Babylon all who escaped the sword. They served him and his sons until the Persian kingdom rose to power. This took place to fulfill the LORD’s message delivered through

Jeremiah. The land experienced its sabbatical years; it remained desolate for seventy years, as prophesied (2 Chronicles 36:18-21 NET).

The consistent teaching of Scripture is that the First Temple was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon around 587/586 B.C. As we just noted, the Nebuchadnezzar Chronicles confirms the second deportation of the people.

This Is Denied By Many

Even though we have the ancient testimony from Arad, as well as ancient testimony from Babylon, as has been true with our other “mysteries,” this has been denied by some.

Islam, for example, claims that there never were temples in Jerusalem that were built by the Jewish people. Consequently, if there were no temples, there certainly could not have been the destruction of the temples.

The Mystery Is Solved

Not only is there ancient material evidence of the destruction of the First Temple, we also find modern evidence that confirms this fact.

The mystery has indeed been once and for all solved as the following story indicates:

Found in Jerusalem: Remains of the Babylonian Siege

ON THE last day of his 1975 season Professor Nachman Avigad, of Hebrew University, digging in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, discovered four arrowheads buried in ashes at the base of a massive stone defense tower. The tower was built by the Israelites more than 2,600 years ago— before the Babylonian destruction of the city in 586 B.C. It had been constructed to protect Jerusalem’s vulnerable northern perimeter. The four arrowheads had fallen short of their mark, apparently hitting the outside wall of the tower. They came to rest in the ashes of the burning city probably when soldiers of the Babylonian leader Nebuchadnezzar “came and burnt down the House of the Lord and the Royal palace and all the houses in Jerusalem . . . and the walls around Jerusalem were torn down” (2 Kings 25: 9-10)

The four arrowheads, one iron and three bronze, are thought to be the first remains ever recovered of the two-year Babylonian siege, which finally broke the defenses of the starving city. (In the 1960’s British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon found several Israelite homes on the Ophel which had been burned during the Babylonian destruction of the city.) Susan Singer, *Biblical Archaeological Review*, November, 1976).

In sum, the First Temple did exist, and was destroyed by the Babylonians just as the Bible says! Archaeology has had its say!

Babylonian arrowheads confirm the biblical account of the destruction of Jerusalem as well as the First Temple in 587 B.C.

The Location Has Also Been Confirmed

Not only were both Temples destroyed as the Bible says they were, it is an undisputed fact by archaeologists that the location of these two buildings was indeed on the Temple Mount in the city of Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, there have been some unqualified people in recent years who have claimed that the Temples did exist, but they were not located on the Temple Mount. Instead, it is argued that they stood about 100 yards to the south of the Temple Mount.

This theory was originally put forward by a man named Ernest Martin in a 1994 book titled, *The Temples that Jerusalem forgot*. Martin actually sent me a copy of his book in that year. After reading it, and then consulting with experts, it became clear that there was no evidence whatsoever to his claim.

Unhappily, in recent years, this unfounded theory has been resurrected. To combat this, we will merely list a few of many lines of evidence of the traditional view that the Temple did stand on the Temple Mount.

To The Place of the Trumpeting

At the southwest corner of the Temple Mount a stone was discovered with the words “to the place of the trumpeting.” We know from Josephus that the place of trumpeting was at the Temple. The trumpet would blow to signal the beginning and the end of the Sabbath. This stone had been discovered from where it had fallen in A.D. 70 on the Temple Mount.

Beams From The Temple Discovered

Another discovery that confirms the Temple Mount as the site of the Temples was made recently. Beams have been taken from the Al Aksa Mosque that are 2-3 thousand years of age. An Arabic description on them testified that they came from the Temple.

From October 27, 2016, we read the following article from the Times of Israel.

Archaeologists spotlight first Solomon’s Temple-era artifacts ever found on Temple Mount

Carried out in rare cooperation with Muslim authorities, series of digs in recent years at flashpoint site yielded unprecedented proof of biblical-time activity, scholars say.

Israeli archaeologists on Thursday presented new details of what they said were the first tiny artifacts, unearthed *in situ* on the Temple Mount, ever conclusively dated to the time of the First Temple over 2,600 years ago. . .

The artifacts excavated from the mount, detailed in a paper and presentations at a conference at Hebrew University, are said to include olive pits, animal bones and pottery fragments dating to the time of the First Temple, between the 8th and 6th Centuries BCE.

Archaeologists have previously found a limited number of artifacts from First-Temple-period Jerusalem, but none of those finds were uncovered atop the mount itself. Rather, they were recovered from the Ophel excavations to the south of the Mount, and from the Temple Mount Sifting Project, which examines rubble credibly believed to have been removed from the holy site and dumped in the nearby Kidron Valley.

“It’s the first time that we’ve found artifacts from this period in situ on the Temple Mount,” Yuval Baruch, the head of the Israel Antiquities Authority Jerusalem region, said Thursday of the discoveries. “As far as the biblical period is concerned, the Temple Mount is a *tabula rasa*, nobody knows anything.” . . . It’s still “very limited,” but the tiny fragments of clay and bone are at least something . . .

The finds on the Temple Mount itself range from a previously undocumented monumental structure believed to be from the 11th and 12th centuries — the period preceding and including the Crusades — to artifacts from Roman times and, unprecedentedly in situ, finds from as far back as the First Temple period. . .

Among the most significant of those finds, dug up during the laying of the power cable approximately 400 feet southeast of the Dome of the Rock, was a jumble of remains dating to the First Temple period.

“This layer included pottery fragments characterized in the 8th and 7th centuries BCE, as well as animal bones and charred olive pits,” Baruch, Ronny Reich and Deborah Sandhaus, authors of the accompanying paper on the discoveries, wrote. “Carbon 14 dating of the olives yielded dates from the 6th to 8th centuries BCE. This date is confirmed by the dates of the pottery.”

Another segment of the same trench turned up a Roman coin dating to 383 CE, and iron arrowheads, which the authors said could be “rare evidence of activity in the Roman period in the courtyard between the raised part of the Temple Mount and the Al-Aqsa Mosque.”

Additional findings from the work carried out on the Temple Mount by the IAA have yet to be published (*Times of Israel*, October 27, 2016).

Therefore, we have objective evidence of the existence of the First Temple, as well as its destruction, just as the Bible said.

There is also physical evidence of the existence of the Second Temple. Temple Mount architect Leen Ritmeyer writes:

As it was found lying directly on the street and underneath other fallen Herodian stones, it must originally have been located at the top of the southwest corner whence it was the first stone to have been thrown down. . . Why was this find so important?

There are people, mainly in America, such as the ones mentioned in a previous blog, that deny that the Temple Mount is the place where the Jewish Temple once stood. They suggest, based on the misreading of certain Scripture passages, that it stood in the City of David.

The problem for people like that is that the Temple Mount walls are still standing, so they identify the Temple Mount with the Antonia Fortress, being apparently ignorant of the fact that Josephus wrote: "Titus now ordered the troops that were with him to raze the foundations of Antonia ..." (War 6.93). Indeed, as I will point out in a future blog, archaeology has proved this to be a true statement.

This Hebrew inscription therefore disproves the idea that the Temple Mount was somewhere else. Another Hebrew inscription found near the same place reads "korban", which means sacrifice. Just below the inscription are two doves or pigeons inscribed upside down. This inscription vividly illuminates the event when Jesus drove out the money changers and those that sold doves out of the Temple ... It is impossible to suggest that Hebrew inscriptions of this kind once belonged to a Roman fortress (Leen Ritmeyer, Trumpeting on the Temple Mount, ritmeyer.com).

The physical evidence has spoken loud and clear. Two ancient Jewish temples did indeed exist upon the Temple Mount. The first one was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. while the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70.

Any theory to the contrary is not supported by the facts. This ancient mystery has been once-and-for all solved.

In our companion book, *Ancient Mysteries of the Bible Solved, Volume 2*, we will look at the evidence for the destruction of the Second Temple as predicted by Jesus in gospels.

Summary To Mystery 10: Is There Evidence Of The Destruction Of The First Temple By The Babylonians?

While there have been those who have denied that there ever was a Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem we have evidence from the Bible as well as two sources outside of Scripture that testifies to its existence.

From ancient Arad, a letter written to the quartermaster or the commander of the fortress was discovered that mentions a person who is now safe because he is in "the house if Yahweh." Evidently, the man was seeking refuge in the Temple. This episode from about 600 B.C. gives testimony to the Temple still standing in Jerusalem.

There is also verification of the second deportation of the people in 597 B.C. by the Babylon document called the Chronicles of Nebuchadnezzar or the Chronicles of Jerusalem. It mentions taking the king to Babylon (Jehoiachin) as well as replacing him. This is precisely what the Scripture tells us happened.

So, from these two non-biblical references, it is clear that there was a Temple in Jerusalem which was still standing in 597 B.C. One would think that this would be enough to convince skeptics. Unhappily this is not the

case as many still deny a Jewish Temple even stood on the Temple Mount let alone it being destroyed by the Babylonians.

The Bible makes it clear that the city of Jerusalem, as well as the First Temple, were destroyed by the Babylonians in 586/587 B.C.

Though the First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C., some 2,600 years ago, amazingly, there is evidence that it occurred just as the Bible said. We can sum up the facts as follows:

First, there is much physical evidence left behind of the Temple. This includes, but is not limited to the following.

Beams, from the time of David and Solomon, have been found on the Temple Mount.

Babylonian arrowheads which were used in the destruction of the First Temple have been found.

In addition, many tiny artifacts associated with the Temple have also been discovered.

In sum, the evidence is clear that Bible is correct in saying that a Temple built by Solomon once existed on the Temple Mount and that it was destroyed by the Babylonians, just as the Scripture records! Those who continue to deny this are simply not facing the facts.

Mystery 11:

Daniel The Prophet: Did He Exist When The Bible Said He Did?

The Book of Daniel claims to cover events in the 5th and 6th century B.C. According to its testimony, the young man Daniel was brought to Babylon in the first deportation from Jerusalem around 606 B.C. He lived his entire life as a captive in Babylon. It was there he wrote the biblical book that is named after him.

The Mystery: Was The Book Written By Daniel?

About one hundred years ago, Charles Boutflower explained the mystery that we are now examining. First, he describes the orthodox view of Daniel:

According to the orthodox view, the Book of Daniel is a narrative of some surprising events that happened in the life of a saintly Jewish captive, holding a very high position at the courts of Babylon and of Persia, a fragmentary biography of one who was a special favourite of heaven, including visions such as have been granted to no other man, except possibly the beloved apostle visions reaching to the end of time. Thus viewed, this Book occupies a unique position in the Old Testament, and as such it was treated by the Founder of Christianity, for there is no other Book of the Old Testament to which Christ pays greater honour than to this Book of Daniel (Charles Boutflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel*, 1923, p. 1).

However, not everyone believed this claim. Boutflower then listed the critical view:

The critics look upon the Book of Daniel as a religious novel, resting upon a shadowy back-ground of history, written about 164 B.C. in the troublous days of the Maccabees, and written with this noble intention, viz. to encourage the faithful in a time of persecution and to support them under very severe trials. Accordingly they see much in this Book that meets with their approval, and are fully awake to its literary beauties. But, all the same, it is in their eyes a mere work of the imagination, cleverly put together, but containing not a few historical inaccuracies, owing to its having been written some three or four hundred years after the times which it describes, To them, therefore, its great facts are pure fancies; its mighty miracles, mere feats of the imagination; its so-called prophecies, past history clothed with the garb of prophecy a favourite practice in the apocalypses of the Pseudepigrapha. If this view of the matter be the correct one, the puzzle is, How did this Book of Daniel come to be included in the sacred Canon of the Old Testament? and how came it to be treated by our Lord Jesus Christ with such special honour? (Boutflower p. 2).

How indeed? If it is only a religious novel, then why did the Jews include it in their canon of Scripture, and why did the Lord Jesus treat it honorably?

Jewish And Christian Tradition

We can also add that Jewish tradition holds that the Book of Daniel was a genuine sixth century B.C. document written by the prophet Daniel during the exile of Judah in Babylon. Consequently, the book was included in the Hebrew Canon of Scripture.

Christianity, from the very beginning, has also assumed that the Book of Daniel was a first-hand account of the life and ministry of the prophet while he was living in exile in Babylon.

The Importance Of Daniel

The Bible says that Daniel was given the supernatural gift of prophecy. As Boutflower noted, with the possible exception of John who wrote the Book of Revelation, no human being has been given more prophetic insight than the prophet Daniel. Therefore, the importance of Daniel cannot be overestimated!

Ezekiel's Testimony

We also have the testimony of the prophet Ezekiel who a contemporary of Daniel. Ezekiel testified to his existence as well as to his notoriety. In fact, he quoted the Lord as twice emphasizing the existence and righteousness of Daniel:

Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would save only their own lives by their righteousness, declares the sovereign LORD ... Even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as surely as I live, declares the sovereign LORD, they could not save their own son or daughter; they would save only their own lives by their righteousness. (Ezekiel 14:14, 20 NET).

Later, in a taunt to the Prince of Tyre, the Lord said this:

Look, you are wiser than Daniel; no secret is hidden from you (Ezekiel 28:3 NET).

Ezekiel was a contemporary witness to the existence of Daniel. He left no doubt that he believed that Daniel was an historical character.

The Testimony Of Jesus

Finally, and most important, the New Testament also cites Daniel as a prophet. In fact, the Lord Jesus Christ, when asked a number of questions about the "last days," claimed that a certain prediction about the abomination that causes desolation came through the agency of Daniel the prophet:

So when you see the abomination of desolation-spoken about by Daniel the prophet-standing in the holy place (let the reader understand) (Matthew 24:15 NET).

Therefore, we have the consistent testimony of history, as well as in Scripture, of the righteousness, the notoriety, and the prophetic gift given to this man Daniel.

In other words, according to the Bible, and those who believe it, there is no doubt whatsoever that Daniel existed in the sixth century B.C., and prophesied while a captive in Babylon.

This Is Still Denied By Critics

As was true one hundred years ago, today, the majority of modern biblical critics deny this truth. They believe the book was composed at some time in the second century B.C. They explain the historically accurate predictions that are found in the book were actually written after the fact.

This would make the Book of Daniel a fraud and it would also make the Lord Jesus ignorant of the fact that the historical person Daniel did not exist.

Of course, if Daniel existed in the 6th to 5th century B.C., and truly predicted the sort of things the Bible records, then the supernatural character of the Bible is clearly proven. In other words, the stakes could not be higher!

The Arguments Against Daniel's Authenticity

There are a number of "historical arguments" that have been brought forward that supposedly proved the "late date." As we shall see, none of these claims hold up to the evidence.

The Idea Of Supernatural Prophecy Is Denied

While hardly ever stated, one of the main reasons as to why the Book of Daniel is placed around 168 B.C., rather than in the 6th to 5th century B.C., has to do with the predictions found in the book.

Since a number of prophecies recorded in the book of Daniel were literally fulfilled after his time, critics assume that they had to have been written "after the fact."

In other words, they rule out the possibility of supernatural prophecy before even examining the evidence! While this is not the only reason that Daniel continues to be rejected by unbelievers, it is still a very important one.

Specific Accusations Made Against Daniel

Apart from that presupposition, there are certain reasons given as to why Daniel is considered to be a forgery. They include the following:

Accusation: Belshazzar Was A Legendary Figure

Daniel was assumed to be in error in the two places where it referred to Belshazzar as the “King” of Babylon. Scripture says:

King Belshazzar prepared a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in front of them all ... Then King Belshazzar was very terrified, and he was visibly shaken. His nobles were completely dumbfounded (Daniel 5:1,9 NET).

For one thing, there was no extrabiblical evidence that placed Belshazzar on the list of Babylonian kings. Indeed, he was not listed on any known Babylonian “kings list.”

Ancient historians such as Berossus, Alexander, and Polyhistor listed Nabonidus as the last king of Babylon with no mention of Belshazzar.

Until the last half of the nineteenth century the name Belshazzar was unattested except for the Book of Daniel and works dependent upon it, such as the apocryphal book of Baruch and the writings of first century Jewish author Josephus. Yet, Belshazzar is the central character in Daniel chapter five with the famous handwriting on the wall episode.

Since Nabonidus was known to have been the last king of Babylon, many commentators declared Belshazzar to be a fictional character invented by the author of the book.

Consequently, for a long time, it was assumed that the Bible was in error and thus this was used as an argument for the late date of the Book of Daniel.

Add to this, this supposedly “mythical figure” Belshazzar offered Daniel to be the third ruler in the kingdom for his interpretation of the handwriting on the wall. If Belshazzar was king, then why not offer him to become the “second ruler?”

This Ancient Mystery Has Been Solved

This mystery was solved in the 19th century. Indeed, the unbelievers had scoffed at Daniel because no available historical and archaeological records identified Nabonidus as the last king of the Babylonian Empire. This all changed with the excavation of the Nabonidus Cylinder.

The Nabonidus Cylinder

A tablet was found that has the name Nabonidus on the top along with his son Belshazzar. It stated that Nabonidus was away from Babylon for about ten years. During his absence, he appointed his son, Belshazzar, to rule in his place.

The fact that Belshazzar could offer only the “third highest position in the kingdom” (5:16,29) is evidence that the author of Daniel had precise knowledge of Nabonidus.

Indeed, Nabonidus was first in rank, followed by his son Belshazzar, and then Daniel, who deciphered the handwriting, would be have been made third in rank had he accepted the offer of Belshazzar.

This discovery also solves another problem, namely, how Belshazzar could be called the “son” of Nebuchadnezzar. The word “son” was used in the ancient Near East to speak of an actual son, a grandson, and even other relatives. Nitocris, the mother of Belshazzar, was apparently the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, which again supports the tradition contained in Daniel.

In sum, Belshazzar could rightly be called Nebuchadnezzar’s “son.”

Since that initial discovery, some 37 separate archival texts have been discovered, documenting the existence of Belshazzar as the crown prince. These texts confirm that Nabonidus spent much of his reign in Arabia, leaving Belshazzar in Babylon to rule the empire as coregent.

The Obvious Question

So, here’s the obvious question: How would someone living at least 400 years after these events know this? How would the author of Daniel know that Belshazzar ruled in his father’s place when his name is never found in any known Babylonian “kings list?”

Indeed, how would someone living in the 2nd century before Christ know to list him as a king in the 6th century? And how could this supposed second century writer of Daniel know that the prophet could only be offered the third highest office in the kingdom?

There is a very simple answer—they would not. Only someone who was living in Babylon at the time would know this.

Hence, the most logical explanation is that the author of Daniel knew about Belshazzar because he, in fact, lived in Babylon during the 6th century B.C.—just as the Bible says!

Another Confirmation, The Nabonidus Chronicle: The Capture Of Babylon By The Medes And The Persians

A second ancient text, which has been discovered called the “Nabonidus Chronicle,” further confirms what is written in the Book of Daniel.

Daniel records that the night of the great feast, when the handwriting appeared on the wall, was the time that the city of Babylon fell to the Medes and the Persians. There is no mention of any battle for the city, no siege. According to Daniel, Babylon simply fell that night.

The Nabonidus Chronicle confirms this. It makes it clear that the city fell without a fight as well as indicating that King Cyrus of Persia was not leading the army. The text read of the ancient document reads:

The army of Cyrus entered Babylon without battle. Afterwards Nabonidus was arrested in Babylon when he returned there....[later] Cyrus entered Babylon green twigs were spread in front of him.

As Daniel tells us, a personage named Darius the Mede ruled as governor:

That very night Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, was killed. And Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at the age of sixty-two (Daniel 5:30-31 NLT).

In sum, the Nabonidus Cylinder as well as the Nabonidus Chronicle confirms Daniel in the following five ways:

Belshazzar existed and was ruler of Babylon at the time of its fall.

His father Nabonidus was away from Babylon at that time.

This is why Belshazzar could only offer Daniel to be the “third ruler.”

The city of Babylon fell without a fight.

Cyrus the King did not lead the invading army.

Only someone who was there at the time would have known these facts. Some “historical novel” written four centuries later would not have had this firsthand information. There is no doubt whatsoever that we are dealing with genuine people who existed at a particular time in history.

Accusation: The Aramaic Of Daniel Shows A Later Time

There is another line of evidence that supposedly showed that Daniel was written some four hundred years after the events recorded in the book with his name. This would be Aramaic—the language in which portions of the Book of Daniel was written.

One of the arguments for the late date of Daniel (168 B.C.) is that these Aramaic portions of the Book of Daniel (Chapter 2:4-7) reflected a later time than when the book was written. It was argued that the form of the language that is found in the book was not current at the time Daniel was supposedly written.

It would be like someone claiming to live at the time the *King James* Bible was translated but their language and grammar reflected words and sayings from 2011 instead of 1611!

For example, they write: As I was strolling by Wembley Stadium I saw a surreal sight that freaked me out!

Wembley Stadium was originally built in 1923, the word stroll wasn't introduced into the English language until the beginning of the 17th century. Of course, "surreal" and "freak out" are 20th century terms!

Supposedly, this similar type of language betrayed the fact that Daniel was actually written centuries later.

Mystery Solved: The Aramaic Does Reflect Daniel's Time

This argument has backfired on the biblical critics. The Aramaic portions of Daniel are actually from an earlier form of the language—not the late date for which critics argue.

Old Testament scholar Gerhard Hasel made the following observation:

The Aramaic documents from Qumran push the date of composition into a period earlier than the Maccabean date allows. Thus the alternative early date for Daniel in the sixth or fifth century BC has more in its favor today from the point of view of language alone than ever before. (Gerhard Hasel, *Is the Aramaic of Daniel Early or Late?* Ministry, (January 1980), p. 13).

Again, the Bible was NOT wrong! The evidence shows that the author of Daniel wrote in the form of Aramaic that was used in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.

Accusation: Persian Loan Words Show Daniel Was Written Later

One of the classical arguments against Daniel being written by the prophet in the sixth century B.C. is the existence of Persian loan words. The Persian words found in the text supposedly indicate a late date for Daniel.

Persians Expressions Show The Antiquity Of Daniel

However, Old Testament scholar Stephen Miller, citing another Old Testament authority, Kenneth Kitchen, makes the following observation concerning Persian expressions found in Daniel:

Actually, the Persian expressions in the book would seem to be rather strong evidence for an early time of composition. Kitchen points out that "the Persian words in Daniel are specifically, Old Persian words." Old Persian gave way to Middle Persian ca. 300 B.C., so these terms must have come from an era before Persia fell to the Greeks since the Middle Persian period began at that time and there are no Middle Persian expressions in the book.

According to the majority of critical scholars, the Old Greek (Septuagint) translation was made only thirty years (ca. 130 B.C.) after the time Daniel allegedly was written (164 B.C.).

Kitchen points out that renderings of four Persian loan words in the Greek version of Daniel "are hopelessly inexact—mere guesswork," which suggests that the terms were so ancient that "their meaning was

already lost and forgotten (or, at the least, drastically changed) long before he [the translator] set to work.” Thus Kitchen concludes that the “facts suggest an origin for the Persian words in the Aramaic of Daniel before ca. 300 B.C.” (Stephen Miller, *The New American Commentary*, Volume 18, Daniel, Nashville, Broadman and Holman Publishing Company, 1994).

Simply put, the Persian expressions in Daniel reflect “Old Persian” which was replaced by “Middle Persian” around 300 B.C.

Therefore, the Persian expressions provide further evidence for the antiquity of the Book of Daniel.

Accusation: Lions In Nineveh And Babylon Did Not Exist At That Time

The Bible speaks of lions existing in Nineveh as well as in Babylon. Nahum the prophet, who spoke the Lord’s judgment against Nineveh, made the following statement:

Nineveh is doomed! Destroyed! Her people tremble with fear; their faces turn pale. What happened to this city? They were safer there than powerful lions in a den, with no one to disturb them. These are the same lions that ferociously attacked their victims, then dragged away the flesh to feed their young (Nahum 2:10-12 CEV).

There is also the famous story of Daniel being thrown into the den of lions in Babylon. The Bible says:

So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, “Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you” (Daniel 6:16 NKJV).

Critics of Scripture denied this could be literally true since lions were not native to this part of the world at that particular time in history. Supposedly this was a “sure sign” of the late date of the book.

Mystery Solved: Ancient Pictures Of Lions Have Been Found In Nineveh And Babylon

However, there has been a discovery of a picture of a wounded lion on the palace walls of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal—a king who lived *before* the time of Daniel!

There is also a statue in Babylon of a lion. It seems that lions were brought into Nineveh and Babylon for the sport of the kings.

Again, the details of the Bible are proven to be correct.

From Fire To The Lions

Though it is not a major detail, we find that Daniel was accurate in his recording the change from punishment by fire under the Babylonians (Daniel 3:11) to punishment by being thrown to lions under the Persian regime (Daniel 6:7).

Since fire was sacred to the Zoroastrians of Persia, punishment by fire would not have been practiced.

Again, we have another incidental detail that perfectly reflects the times in which the events in Daniel occurred.

Other Incidental Details That Show Daniel's Historical Accuracy

We find the author of Daniel knew the correct details of the time. The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible notes:

As far as incidental historical accuracy is concerned, the author was sufficiently well informed about 6th-cent. B.C. life in Babylonia to represent Nebuchadnezzar as being able to formulate and change Babylonian law with absolute sovereignty (Dan. 2:12–13, 46), while showing that Darius the Mede was powerless to alter the rigid laws of the Medes and Persians (6:8–9). (*Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*).

Again, only someone living at that time would be aware of the difference between the absolute ruler of Babylon, and the inflexible laws that literally handcuffed the rulers of the Medes and Persians who were unable to change them.

How Did Daniel Know That Nebuchadnezzar Had Founded The New Babylon?

There is another historical note in the book that shows its authenticity. The historical record shows that it was founded by Nebuchadnezzar. The Book of Daniel also indicates this:

The king uttered these words: “Is this not the great Babylon that I have built for a royal residence by my own mighty strength and for my majestic honor?” (Daniel 4:30 NET).

So the question is this: How did the writer of Daniel, if he was living around 168 B.C., know that it was indeed Nebuchadnezzar who founded the neo-Babylonian Empire?

The Manuscripts From The Dead Sea Scrolls Do Not Allow For A 168 B.C. Date

One other line of evidence concerns manuscripts of the Book of Daniel that were found among the “Dead Sea Scrolls.” The dating of these manuscripts should deliver the “death blow” to those who argue the book was composed in 168 B.C.

Indeed, there are physical manuscripts of the Book of Daniel that date from about 125 B.C. This is about 40 years after the book was supposedly composed!

This creates a huge problem for those who late-date the book.

Indeed, if the book was written somewhere around 168 B.C., then there is not enough time for it to have been composed, circulated, accepted as Holy Scripture, and then copied as Holy Scripture by 125 B.C.

This is especially the case if it had been an obvious forgery.

The Testimony Of Josephus: Alexander The Great And Daniel

The first-century Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, in his work *Antiquities of the Jews*, records what happened when Alexander the Great's campaign reached the city of Jerusalem around the year 332 B.C.

Now Alexander, when he reached Gaza, made haste to go up to Jerusalem; and Jaddua the high priest, when he heard that, was in an agony, and under terror, as not knowing how he should meet the Macedonians, since the king was displeased at his foregoing disobedience.

Jaddua offered sacrifices and sought the help of the Lord. The Lord then appeared to Jaddua in a dream and urged him to be courageous. He was commanded to open the gates of the city while dressed in his white priestly garments and then to go out to meet Alexander the Great.

According to Josephus, Alexander responded positively to the high priest and offered a sacrifice to the Lord at the Temple in Jerusalem.

Josephus then recorded the following:

When the book of Daniel was shown him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended.

It is obvious that Josephus believed that the Book of Daniel was in existence before the time Alexander the Great arrived in Jerusalem around 332 B.C.

An Indisputable Truth: How Did Daniel Know The Temple Would Be Destroyed Again?

There is one final point that we would like to make that is beyond dispute. In the 9th chapter of Daniel, we read the following prediction:

After this period of sixty-two sets of seven, the Anointed One will be killed, appearing to have accomplished nothing, and a ruler will arise whose armies will destroy the city and the Temple (Daniel 9:26 NLT).

The prediction was made that at an appointed time, in distant future, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed for a second time. At the time this prediction was made, Jerusalem, as well as the Temple, had been destroyed and the people were still in exile in Babylon.

For this prediction to be fulfilled, they would have to return to their homeland, something that had never happened to any people group in history, build again the city and the Temple only to see it destroyed again.

As we know from history, this is precisely what took place. The people returned from Babylon, the Temple and city were eventually rebuilt, but they were again destroyed in A.D. 70.

Even if one argues for a 168 B.C. date for the Book of Daniel, we still have the prediction that the city, as well as the Temple, will again be destroyed.

So the question arises, “How did the author of Daniel know that this would happen?” How could he predict a second destruction of the city and the Temple no matter when he lived?

The Implications Of An Early Date Of Daniel

If the Book of Daniel was written at the time when Scripture claims—at the end of Daniel’s life in the fifth century B.C.—then there are huge implications. This book gives numerous specific predictions about the future that were literally fulfilled centuries later!

In other words, it predicts things that no human being would be able to know. Hence, the evidence of a fifth century composition of Daniel is evidence of a supernatural God behind the writing of the Book.

Unbelief Is Never Satisfied

While the evidence is there for all to see, unbelief is never satisfied. Jesus made this clear at His First Coming when He compared Himself to John the Baptist:

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds (Matthew 11:18-19 ESV).

Unbelief will always try to find a way to explain away the facts. Indeed, it is never satisfied.

Finally, there are two other facts that need to be mentioned.

Ezekiel’s Testimony Must Be Accounted For

Stephen Miller emphasizes the written evidence for the existence of the prophet Daniel living in Babylon at the time of the captivity of Judah:

Ezekiel's references to Daniel must be considered one of the strongest arguments for a sixth-century date. No satisfactory explanation exists for the use of the name Daniel by the prophet Ezekiel other than that he and Daniel were contemporaries and that Daniel had already gained notoriety throughout the Babylonian Empire by the time of Ezekiel's ministry (Stephen Miller, *The New American Commentary*, Volume 18, Daniel, Nashville, Broadman and Holman Publishing Company, 1994).

Indeed, we have the firsthand evidence of a contemporary of Daniel—Ezekiel. This prophet testified that Daniel was indeed a well-known figure to the people of Judah at that time in history.

The Testimony Of The Lord Jesus

Most important of all, we have the testimony of the Lord Jesus. As previously mentioned, He called Daniel a prophet:

So when you see the abomination of desolation - spoken about by Daniel the prophet-standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains (Matthew 24:15 NET).

If Jesus is the One whom He claimed to be, God the Son, then He is the last Word on all matters. Daniel did indeed exist, and recorded the warning of the “abomination of desolation” which would be a sign that the coming of Christ to the earth would be near at hand.

The Pattern Of The Bible Being Confirmed Continues

As has been true with the previous ten mysteries, the evidence has clearly spoken—Daniel the prophet did indeed live in Babylon during the time of the Babylonian captivity.

The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible puts it this way:

From the foregoing evidence it can be stated that a Maccabean date for the book of Daniel as a whole is now precluded by the evidence.

Indeed it is. Daniel was written by Daniel about 530 years before the time of Christ.

As we will observe, this has tremendous implications with respect to the idea that there is a supernatural God who exists and who is indeed controlling history.

Summary To Mystery 11:

Daniel The Prophet: Did He Exist When The Bible Said He Did?

The Book of Daniel has always been controversial in the eyes of scholars. In fact, if written by Daniel in the 6th century B.C., then it demonstrates, beyond any doubt, the existence of the God of the Bible. Indeed He

predicted, through the prophet Daniel, many specific events that were fulfilled later in history.

Consequently, unbelievers have claimed that the writer was not Daniel living in the 6th century B.C., but rather some pious Jew writing hundreds of years later during the time of the Maccabees (around 168 B.C.).

Yet the objective evidence has solved this biblical mystery for anyone who will seriously consider the facts. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

First, we have a contemporary, Ezekiel, who mentions Daniel by name three times in his book.

Flavius Josephus, the first-century Jewish writer, records that Alexander the Great, when he came to Jerusalem, was shown the writings of Daniel which predicted his defeat of the Persians. This was about 330 B.C.

The language of parts of Daniel, Aramaic, has been demonstrated to be the type that was used in the sixth century B.C. Like all languages, Aramaic changed and developed throughout its history. The fact that the Aramaic of Daniel fits the biblical time period is strong evidence that the book was composed during this time.

Furthermore, the author knew that Belshazzar, who had been unknown in history until the middle of the 19th century, could only offer Daniel the third place in the kingdom. A person living hundreds of years later would not have been aware of this fact.

The physical manuscripts of the Book of Daniel that have been discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls gives further proof the early date of Daniel. Indeed, they were copied about the time that, according to the critics, the Book of Daniel was supposedly written. This does not allow for any time for Daniel to be circulated, copied and recognized as Holy Scripture.

To any objective person, the evidence is overwhelming.

We add to this that the Lord Jesus Christ called Daniel “a prophet” and the religious leaders, the scholars of His day, “hypocrites.” It seems nothing really changes.

The evidence is clear for all who desire to see it. Indeed, those who deny it will someday have to stand before the One who called Daniel a prophet!

Mystery 12

Rounding Out The Old Testament: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

As we come to the end of Old Testament history, there are a number of other personages mentioned in these latter books which likewise have archaeological and historical confirmation.

Again, it shows us that the entire Old Testament history is reliable. We will also discover a couple of examples of obscure people who are mentioned in Scripture whose identity is confirmed by non-biblical evidence.

Darius I And Cyrus

Two major figures that Scripture mentions during this time period are King Darius I of Persia along with King Cyrus of Persia. We read in Ezra:

Then the local people began to discourage the people of Judah and to dishearten them from building. They were hiring advisers to oppose them, so as to frustrate their plans, throughout the time of King Cyrus of Persia until the reign of King Darius of Persia (Ezra 4:4,5 NET)

On a high cliff in Persia, in modern day Iran, there is a famous rock carving known as the Behistun inscription. It depicts king Darius with his foot on the head of his rival. The inscription, written in three languages, explains how Darius I came to power as well as describing the broad extent of his empire.

Here is the kingdom I possess from the Sakas (Scythians) who are beyond Sogdiani to the land of Cush from India to Sardis.

There is no doubt whatsoever that Cyrus and Darius I were historical people. Indeed, the references in Scripture to these Persian kings, as well as to the political situation during their reigns, line up precisely with what is known from history and archaeology. We will give some examples.

Accusation: Cyrus Would Have Never Allowed The Jews To Return To Their Land

The Scriptures testify that King Cyrus of Persia gave a decree that allowed the Jews to return to their homeland. However, a number of early scholars thought it would not be likely that a king such as Cyrus would allow his subjects to leave.

This all changed with the discovery of the Cyrus Cylinder.

The Cyrus Cylinder

Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards explain:

Evidence of Cyrus' enlightened policy is found on the Cyrus Cylinder which was discovered in the ruins of ancient Babylon in 1879. Two fragments of the same text indicate that, in addition, a large tablet was produced for the whole community to read.

The Cylinder ordered that exiled nations could return to their homes, rebuild their temples and take their gods with them: 'I returned them unharmed to their cells, in the sanctuaries that make them happy. May all the gods that I returned to their sanctuaries ...ask for a long life for me and mention my good deeds.

There is no reference to the Jews on the Cylinder, but it confirms 2 Chronicles 36:23. The similarity with Ezra 1:2-4 (written in Hebrew) and 6:2-5 (written in Aramaic) shows them to be an accurate historical record of official documents (Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards, *Evidence for the Bible*, Day One Publication, Leominster England, 2014, p. 97).

So here we go again. The Bible mentions a decree made by a pagan king and, of course, it is considered suspect by the "experts." Time and time again we have seen these people refuted when they doubt what is recorded in Scripture.

Further Evidence For The Historical Accuracy Of Scripture

The evidence continues to mount up:

The official correspondence with the court of Darius recorded in the Book of Ezra between the returned exiles in Judah and their opponents is paralleled from the Persian archives. The names of the people and places in Ezra, as well as the subject of their correspondence, fit the period. Even such details as the search in the archives of the citadel of Ecbatana (Ezra 6:1-2) confirms what is known about the storing of official documents in the fortress of the archives. The fact that the search was made from Babylon and then in Ecbatana verifies what we know about the movements of Cyrus who left Babylon in the spring of 538 for Ecbatana (Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards, *Evidence for the Bible*, Day One Publication, Leominster England, 2014, p. 98).

There is no doubt about the existence of these two kings, Cyrus and Darius, and there is no doubt that the Bible correctly chronicled their lives as they dealt with the Jews who left Babylon and went back to the Promised Land.

Xerxes And Artaxerxes, Persian Kings

Not only are Darius and Cyrus historical figures we also find two other Persian kings mentioned in Scripture, Xerxes and Artaxerxes, who likewise ruled in the past, and had dealings with those who had returned from Babylon back to Judah.

The Bible records a conflict between the king of Persia and the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. In doing so, it mentions both Ahasuerus [Xerxes] as well as King Artaxerxes:

At the beginning of the reign of Ahasuerus [Xerxes] they filed an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. And during the reign of Artaxerxes, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their colleagues wrote to King Artaxerxes of Persia. This letter was first written in Aramaic but then translated (Ezra 4:6,7 NET).

During the 5th century B.C., the Persian Empire ruled by Xerxes and Artaxerxes controlled most of the Ancient Near East. These two Persian kings are mentioned over and over again in the biblical writings of this era: Ezra 4-8, Nehemiah 2-13, Esther 1-10 and Daniel 9. Their names appear frequently in the secular records at that time.

In fact, the Greek historian Herodotus wrote voluminously about the wars between the Greeks and the Persians. This included the attempted Persian invasion of Greece. Herodotus mentioned Xerxes constantly:

Xerxes, having at sunrise offered libations, waited till the hour of marketing and then made his assault, having been so advised by Epialtes; for the descent from the mountain is more direct and the way is much shorter. So the foreigners that were with Xerxes attacked.

Artaxerxes is also mentioned in the fifth century B.C. letters written in Aramaic by Jews who occupied an Egyptian outpost on the Nile. These letters are known as the Elephantine papyri. In one of them we read the following:

On the 20th of Silwan the year 38 of King Artaxerxes

In addition, the tombs of both Artaxerxes and Xerxes have been found.

Conclusion

These two fifth century B.C. Persian kings Artaxerxes and Xerxes can be, without any doubt, verified by the archaeological evidence as two kings who ruled over the Persian Empire. These facts corroborate the biblical testimony found in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Daniel.

Esther

The Book of Esther purports to be an account of what happened in Persia in the 7th century B.C. when a Jewish woman named Esther, not only became the wife of the king, but also saved her people from destruction. Of course, the main question is simply this: is there evidence that the story is true? Again, we find that the evidence speaks loud and clear:

It is now almost universally agreed that in the Book of Esther, the language the law, palace protocol, court intrigues, names with exact spelling and chronology accurately reflect a 7th century Persian setting and it was likely written in Susa one of the capital cities of Persia and where Esther herself lived (Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards *Evidence For The Bible*, Day One Publication, Leominster England, 2014, p. 101).

The Moody Bible Commentary on Esther concurs:

Several facts show that the book was compiled or written during the Persian period (559–330 BC) . . . (1) The writer-compiler(s) clearly had intimate knowledge of administrative practice and life in the Persian court. (2) The Hebrew of Esther is similar to that of the other Persian-period narratives in Ezra-Nehemiah (originally one book) and Chronicles. (3) More Persian loan-words are in Esther than in any other Bible book (i.e., about 60 Persian words for the book's 165 verses) (*Moody Bible Commentary Online*, Esther).

Not only is the Book of Esther consistent with what we know about life in Persia in the 7th century B.C., there is also evidence for the existence of one of the main characters in the story, her cousin Mordecai:

Mordecai's name came from the Babylonian god Marduk...A tablet in the British Museum and published in 1942, lists a Marduk as an accountant during the last years of Darius or early years of Xerxes. This may not be the Mordecai of the Bible, but it reveals that the name was common at that time and is therefore strong evidence for the historical character of the book. Since then, at least four more individuals with the name Mordecai have come to light. His position 'sitting at the king's gate (Esther 2:21) was the place someone in high office would occupy—which is what so incensed Haman (Clive Anderson and Brian Edwards *Evidence For The Bible*, Day One Publication, Leominster England, 2014, p. 101).

In sum, there is every reason to believe that the story recorded in the Book of Esther is true.

Sanballat

We again have an example of the verification of another biblical character from this period, Sanballat. The Bible says:

When Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the people of Ashdod heard that the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem had moved ahead and that the breaches had begun to be closed, they were very angry. All of them conspired together to move with armed forces against Jerusalem and to create a disturbance in it (Nehemiah 4:7,8 NET)

Within the context of the powerful Persian Empire and its kings Artaxerxes and Darius, Sanballat is a fairly minor character. Thus, to find his name verified outside of the Bible in the Elephantine correspondence is remarkable.

The letter from Elephantine actually corroborates the Bible on several points: (1) The name Sanballat, (2) The fact that he was an official in a region near Jerusalem, and (3) the date (Nehemiah's first encounters Sanballat in 445 B.C.).

Scott Stripling expands on the evidence:

The book of Nehemiah describes three principal adversaries that Nehemiah faced in his attempt to rebuild Jerusalem's walls: Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem (2:19). These three men also appear in extrabiblical sources from the fifth to the second centuries BC.

A papyrus letter from Elephantine, Egypt names Sanballat the governor of Samaria. It dates from around 407 BC. Other sources indicate that Sanballat's son and grandson bore the same name and also ruled the region of Samaria as a type of dynasty. Tobiah hailed from the Transjordan region. The Tobiah or Tobias appears in papyrus from the third century BC and in an inscription at their second century BC family estate west of Amman at Iraq al-Amir. Geshem hailed from Arabia. An inscription from Nehemiah's time mentions Geshem.

Geshem son of Sahr and Abd, governor of Dedan

The archaeology of the fifth century BC illuminates the biblical text. These three adversaries—Sanballat, Tobias, and Geshem—were not petty local chieftains...rather they were powerful and influential regional leaders who posed a serious threat to the rebuilding process of Jerusalem. Indeed, Nehemiah had his hands full and he needed divine grace and intervention (Scott Stripling, *The Trowel and the Truth*, Second Edition, Vision Publishing, Ramona, California, 2017, p 122).

Once again the Scripture is confirmed by the secular evidence.

Tattenai “Across The River”

There is more. We read in Ezra about a man named Tattenai who questioned the rebuilding of the temple:

So the work on the temple of God in Jerusalem came to a halt. It remained halted until the second year of the reign of King Darius of Persia ... At that time Tattenai governor of Trans-Euphrates, Shethar-Bozenai, and their colleagues came to them and asked, “Who gave you authority to rebuild this temple and to complete this structure?” (Ezra 5:3 NET).

Tattenai is introduced as the governor of the Trans-Euphrates or “across the river.” For the Persians “across the river” would mean across the Euphrates River from them, or south and west of the Euphrates.

Tattenai and his associates sent a letter to Darius asking whether the rebuilding program of the Jews was legal (Ezra 5:6-17).

Searching an earlier decree from the archives, Darius discovered an earlier decree of King Cyrus. Thus, he notified Tattenai not to interfere with the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem. In fact, he was to assist in the financing of it.

The Historical Evidence

A group of about 70 clay tablets, dating to the Persian era, which largely deal with economic transactions, can now be found in museums such as Harvard, Berlin, Yale and London.

One of the texts identifies a certain witness to a transaction as a servant of Tattanu, governor of “across the river.”

This historical reference to this personage is a highly significant verification. Why? It is because Tattenai was not a well-known king but merely a regional governor.

The specificity of both his name, as well as his office which is mentioned in the Bible, is matched by the same name and specific office in these extrabiblical documents. All in all, it presents a strong case for a historical account written during the same time period when Tattenai lived.

Here again we find a relatively minor official in the Bible, compared with rulers and kings, that is verified as an actual historical character.

And so it goes. The absolutely remarkable verification of so many biblical figures, both the famous and the obscure, demonstrates beyond any doubt that the Old Testament is a trustworthy historical source in everything that it teaches.

Summary To Mystery 12: Rounding Out The Old Testament: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

As we have seen throughout our journey, over and over again, the Bible records various pagan kings, rulers of Israel, court officials, etc. In each of these instances we find historical confirmation outside of Scripture for each of them. The same holds true for the testimony in the concluding books of the Old Testament.

Furthermore, as we have continued to note, they are always in the correct chronological order with the precise titles that the Scripture gives.

We should not miss how remarkable this is. The Bible, with its various authors, in recording the exploits of these other nations, correctly labels each of these rulers along with their title and their father/son relationship.

The fact that Scripture is so precise should give us complete confidence that we are reading and studying the trustworthy Word of God.

Indeed, if the Bible were merely a compilation of a number of writers with various abilities then we would expect mistakes, contradictions and confusion. But we find none of this.

In fact, as we have noted, many of the personages mentioned were not high profile. Yet the Bible correctly explains who they were, the offices, and the titles that they held.

A stronger confirmation could not be found. We are dealing with God's Word. And we should honor it accordingly.

Summary To The Historical Accuracy Of The Old Testament

We have examined twelve specific mysteries regarding people, places, and events recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures—the Old Testament. In each case, we have found that the evidence from archaeology, inscriptions and the historical testimony is more than sufficient to demonstrate that we are dealing with reality, not mythology.

These are some of the many confirmations of Old Testament Scripture that were once originally thought to be incorrect.

Thus, we find that archaeological, inscriptional evidence, as well as other discoveries, have confirmed some of the specific details of Old Testament history. While there are still a number of things contained in the Old Testament that have not yet been confirmed outside of Scripture, these examples, beyond any doubt, demonstrate its basic reliability.

Consequently, when something is recorded in Scripture, it should be taken seriously and not rejected because of lack of confirmation in secular historical sources. The Bible, sooner or later, will be confirmed as being trustworthy.

Part 3

The Evidence Of The Precision Of The Old Testament Writers

In the previous section of our book, we found a consistent pattern of evidence that demonstrated that the Old Testament was a reliable witness to events which took place in the past. Indeed, from the facts available to us, it is clear that the Hebrew Scriptures amazingly matches up with the known history of the ancient world.

There is something else which we need to appreciate—the minute accuracy of the Old Testament writers. Indeed, discoveries have been made that demonstrate that the authors were not only accurate, they were minutely accurate. This provides further evidence for the reliability of the Scriptures as it reveals to us what has taken place in the past.

This section will briefly look at some of the many examples of the minuteness of the accuracy of the people, places, and events recorded in the Bible.

The Old Testament Matches Up With Known History

The claim that God has acted in history is backed up by the evidence. The archaeologist, John Elder, who spent over thirty years working in the Middle East, offers a fitting summary of the issue of the Old Testament's historical reliability. He wrote:

It is not too much to say that it was the rise of the science of archeology that broke the deadlock between historians and the orthodox Christian. Little by little, one city after another, one civilization after another, one culture after another, whose memories were enshrined only in the Bible, were restored to their proper places in ancient history by the studies of archaeologists . . . The over-all result is indisputable. Forgotten cities have been found, the handiwork of vanished peoples has reappeared, contemporary records of Biblical events have been unearthed and the uniqueness of biblical revelation has been emphasized by contrast and comparison to the newly understood religions of ancient peoples. Nowhere has archeological discovery refuted the Bible as history (John Elder, *Prophets, Idols, and Diggers*, Bobbs-Merrill, Co. 1960, p. 18).

Although written long ago, as we have observed, it is even more true today.

The Old Testament Is Chronologically Correct and Inerrant

In another example, chronology specialist Rodger Young wrote the following in an article titled *Evidence for Inerrancy from an Unexpected Source: OT Chronology*:

Theories of an errant Scripture cannot explain the accuracy of the OT chronologies. The authenticity of approximately 124 statistics in six major books of the Bible, covering more than four hundred years of history is exactly what would be expected if the doctrine of inerrancy is true and all doctrines of limited inspiration that assume errors in the historical statements of the Scripture are false . . .

From the beginning of the Davidic dynasty to the release of Jehoiachin from prison mentioned at the end of 2 Kings, represents a period of about four and a half centuries. For this time period the books of Kings, Chronicles, Jeremiah, provide over 120 dates, lengths of reign, and synchronisms, that form the raw material for the chronology of these times (Rodger Young, *Evidence for Inerrancy from an Unexpected Source: OT Chronology*, August 15, 2008, www.biblearchaeology.org)

Young then shows that each of these specific references which are recorded in Scripture are minutely correct.

The Old Testament Is Accurate In Its Incidental Details

Again, we stress, that the Old Testament is not only accurate in its main outline, it is also accurate in the incidental details. This is important because it shows an intimate familiarity with people, places, and customs of that time.

Scholar Walter Kaiser makes this conclusion about the historical accuracy of Scripture:

The evidence for the truthfulness and historicity of the Bible continues to mount as never before . . . Never has any previous generation seen the amount and significance of evidences that are now available to us today (Walter Kaiser, Foreword, *The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*, p. 13).

A Number of Biblical Figures Are Now Confirmed By The Discoveries Of Archaeology

We also discover that a number of people whose names are recorded in Scripture have been confirmed in the archaeological record.

Purdue University scholar Lawrence Mykytiuk listed 50 figures from the Hebrew Bible who have been confirmed archaeologically in his article “Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible” in the March/April 2014 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*.

Three years later, in the May/June 2017 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, he wrote a follow-up article where he added three more people to the list, “Archaeology Confirms 3 More Bible People.”

Mykytiuk stated that these people “mentioned in the Bible have been identified in the archaeological record. Their names appear in inscriptions written during the period described by the Bible and in most instances during or quite close to the lifetime of the person identified.”

This is further evidence that we are dealing with real people who lived in history.

The List Of Pagan Kings Is Amazingly Accurate

The Bible lists a number of kings who ruled countries other than Israel. Although they were not the main characters in the story, they are always recorded in an accurate manner.

Indeed, the writers of Scripture placed these kings in the exact chronological order in which they ruled. This is in contrast to some of the historians from these countries.

This has been documented in the work of the great Old Testament scholar Robert Dick Wilson. In examining the Old Testament Scripture, Wilson noted that there are twenty-six pagan kings of various nations that are mentioned. The names of these rulers are also found on the monuments of these kings as well as in documents of their own times. Wilson found that all of these names of the pagan kings are spelled correctly in the Hebrew text.

In contrast to the accuracy of the Bible, in the secular literature of the same period, the names of those rulers are frequently garbled. Indeed, there are times when it is hard to identify the person.

An example of this is Ptolemy, an ancient writer who drew up a list of eighteen Babylonian kings. However, on his list none of the names of these eighteen kings are spelled correctly.

On the other hand, the biblical writers were always precise in the spelling of the names of their enemies.

So here is an obvious question: If they took this much concern to spell the names of the pagan kings correctly, then how much more concerned would they have given to spell the names of their own people correctly as well as to accurately record the events connected with their rule?

This is a further testimony of the complete reliability and trustworthiness of the Old Testament.

Details Of The Biblical Accounts Are Continually Being Confirmed

Many more examples could be given. The point is that the writers of the Old Testament showed intimate knowledge of the times.

While these examples do not prove that the events recorded in the Old Testament actually occurred, they do demonstrate that the writers were living at the time of the events they recorded and knew the local laws, customs, geography, titles, and names of the pagan kings.

Consequently, it gives undeniable evidence to the reliability of what was written.

Observations On The Historical Accuracy Of The Old Testament

The fact that the main outline, as well as many of the incidental historical details, of the Old Testament, has been confirmed by archaeological, inscriptional evidence, and with historical sources, is important for a number of reasons.

1. We Are Not Dealing With Mythology

First, it tells us that we are dealing with genuine history, not mythology. The accounts recorded actually took place in the ancient world. The nations were real nations, the individuals were real people, the cities existed in the exact location that the Bible said they existed, and the customs and laws were those which we practiced at that time in history.

2. The Writings Should Be Dated To The Time Of The Events Recorded

Second, the authors are not only accurate, they are meticulously accurate. In other words, the writers of the Old Testament must have been eyewitnesses to the events they recorded.

Consequently, there is every reason to believe in the traditional authorship of the biblical books. Instead of dating much of the Old Testament writings to the time of Ezra, as liberal critics do, they should be dated hundreds of years earlier to the time when the events were claimed to have literally occurred.

Therefore, the trustworthiness of the Old Testament record is borne out by the evidence.

Part 4

The Old Testament Is More Than Mere History: Evidence Of The Supernatural

Thus far we have seen that the Old Testament matches up with what we know about past history. Indeed, it has consistently shown itself to be a remarkably reliable guide which accurately records what took place during biblical times. Therefore, we can acknowledge the following facts.

Fact: The world of the Bible is the world that did indeed exist in the past.

Fact: The historical record confirms the general outline of Scripture.

Fact: More than that, the writers of the Bible are found to be meticulously correct in their historical references.

Conclusion: Therefore, we have every reason to trust what the Bible says about the past.

There Needs To Be More Than Mere Historical Exactness

This brings us to our next point. Even though the writers give evidence of knowing and understanding intimate details of the times and circumstances of the lives of the biblical characters, there has to be more than this if we are to believe that the Bible is the Word of the Living God.

Indeed, there has to be evidence of a supernatural God who knows the future, who controls the future, and who predicts certain events that will take place in the future.

This is precisely what we have. As we will show, the fact that certain Old Testament writers, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, lived during the times which the Bible claims they did, demonstrates that the predictions contained in their writings are something that no human being could imagine.

Indeed, humanly speaking, it is impossible to correctly make the sort of predictions that these authors made.

Simply put, if these three prophets lived and wrote at the time that the Scripture says that they did, then this is overwhelming evidence as to the supernatural character of the Bible.

In examining this issue, we will review the historical evidence for each prophet, discover predictions that came to pass in their own lifetime, and then document the specific predictions that were fulfilled after their lifetime.

Example 1: The Prophet Isaiah

The Bible says that Isaiah the prophet lived at the same time as King Hezekiah. We found the evidence to be sufficient to back up the biblical claim.

Among other things, Isaiah knew the existence of the Assyrian king Sargon II when history did not have any inkling of his existence. Add to this, he knew that Assyria conquered the Philistine city of Ashdod because the people were putting their trust in Cush and Egypt. Again, only someone living at that time would know these specific details.

He also knew the name of an obscure figure, Shebna, who was the keeper of the temple, and who carved out a tomb for himself where only kings and rulers were to be buried.

There is also a physical discovery that has his name on a clay seal, a bullae, that has been found in the 21st century.

The existence of his contemporary, King Hezekiah, is beyond all doubt.

Since they are often linked together in Scripture, the fact that there was a prophet named Isaiah who lived around 700 B.C. is supported by the evidence.

A Prophet Must Predict Something That Comes To Pass In Their Lifetime

According to Deuteronomy 18, a genuine prophet of God must first predict something to take place in their own lifetime before they can be considered a prophet:

You may say to yourselves, “How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?” If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed (Deuteronomy 18:21-22 NET).

In other words, they cannot merely predict events beyond their lifetime to be considered a prophet of God. Evidence must be given while they are still alive to prove their prophetic calling.

Isaiah did indeed demonstrate that he was a genuine prophet of the Lord

The Prediction About Jerusalem And The Assyrian Army

Isaiah the prophet told King Hezekiah not to worry about the surrounding Assyrian army:

Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning the king of Assyria: “He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. By the way that he

came he will return; he will not enter this city, declares the LORD. I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant.””

That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies! So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there (2 Kings 19:32-36 NET)

Hezekiah was told not to worry because the Lord would protect the city of Jerusalem. This prophecy of Isaiah, which was literally fulfilled, demonstrated that he was indeed sent by the living God.

Isaiah's Miraculous Predictions Of Cyrus

Twice is it recorded in the Book of Isaiah that the Lord had called Cyrus “by name.” This underlines the importance of the naming of Cyrus as an act of predictive prophecy.

Old Testament scholar John Oswalt makes the following assessment about Isaiah specifically naming Cyrus as the future deliverer of the people:

His ability to name the deliverer far in advance is the climactic demonstration of this fact. If we deny the obvious predictive claim that Isaiah of Jerusalem is making and instead posit some unknown person simply declaring after the fact that Cyrus was God's man, we have made this unknown prophet deny the very thing he claims. God has, then, not named the deliverer in advance and the prophet knows it. That is not great theology; it is misrepresentation of the facts (John Oswalt, Isaiah).

Jesus certainly believed that Isaiah was a genuine prophet. Indeed, He made it abundantly clear:

You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ““These people honor me with their lips but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules (Matthew 15:7-9 NIV).

If Jesus is the One whom He claims to be, then He would be in a position to know whether or not Isaiah was an Old Testament prophet. The Lord said that He indeed was.

Isaiah's Prediction Of The Rise Of King Cyrus And His Decree

The southern kingdom of Judah had been sent into captivity for seventy years. This exile had been predicted by the prophets, including Jeremiah.

However, just as the prophets predicted the coming captivity, they also predicted the return from captivity. In one remarkable prophecy, Isaiah the prophet predicted the specific person who would give the command for the Jews to return to their homeland. His name was Cyrus.

King Cyrus is an important figure in biblical history. In fact, he fulfilled the prediction of the Lord with respect to the end of the Babylonian Empire. This destruction of the empire ended the seventy-year captivity of the Jews. In addition, it allowed the people to return to the land of promise.

The prophecy about Cyrus is truly astounding! About one hundred and fifty years before Cyrus was born, the prophet Isaiah recorded the Lord making the following prediction concerning the rise and rule of Cyrus as well as one of the commandments He would give. Isaiah wrote:

This is what the Lord, your Redeemer who formed you from the womb, says: I am the Lord, who made everything; who stretched out the heavens by myself; who alone spread out the earth; who destroys the omens of the false prophets and makes fools of diviners; who confounds the wise and makes their knowledge foolishness; who confirms the message of his servant and fulfills the counsel of his messengers; who says to Jerusalem, "She will be inhabited," and to the cities of Judah, "They will be rebuilt," and I will restore her ruins; who says to the depths of the sea, "Be dry," and I will dry up your rivers; who says to Cyrus, "My shepherd, he will fulfill all my pleasure" and says to Jerusalem, "She will be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Its foundation will be laid" (Isaiah 44:24-28 CSB).

Before his birth, King Cyrus of Persia was foreordained by the living God to carry out a number of specific tasks. In fact, he would be the person who would give the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem and to lay the foundation of the destroyed temple.

There are further predictions of the Lord concerning Cyrus:

The Lord says this to Cyrus, his anointed, whose right hand I have grasped to subdue nations before him and disarm kings, to open doors before him, and even city gates will not be shut: "I will go before you and level the uneven places; I will shatter the bronze doors and cut the iron bars in two. I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches from secret places, so that you may know that I am the Lord. I am the God of Israel, who calls you by your name. I call you by your name, for the sake my servant Jacob and Israel my chosen one. I give a name to you, though you do not know me. I am the Lord, and there is no other; there is no God but me. I will strengthen you, though you do not know me, so that all may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is no one but me. I am the Lord, and there is no other (Isaiah 45:1-5 CSB).

The Specifics Of The Predictions

With respect to the predictions made by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, we can note a number of things.

1. The Kingdom Of Judah Would Be In Captivity

The first thing that this passage assumes is that the people of Judah and Jerusalem would be exiled from their land. This assumes that some foreign invader would remove them from their homeland. This, of course, had not happened when Isaiah made the prediction.

2. The City Of Jerusalem Would Be Destroyed

Not only would the people be removed from the land the Holy City of Jerusalem would be destroyed in the process.

3. The Temple Would Be Destroyed

The city would not be the only thing to be destroyed. The Bible predicted that the First Temple would also be destroyed along with the city.

4. A Command Would Be Given To Release The People From Captivity

The exile would not last forever. At a particular time, a commandment would be given to release the people from this captivity.

5. This Commandment Would Be Given By A Man Named Cyrus

The person who would make this commandment would be named Cyrus. Cyrus is specified as the one who would allow the people to come back to their homeland, rebuild their city and the temple.

The amazing thing about this prophecy is that it was made about 100 years before Cyrus was born! Isaiah wrote this about 700 B.C., the captivity would not fully be fulfilled until 586 B.C. with the destruction of the city and the Temple.

In fact, this prophecy of Isaiah predicted a return from a captivity that the Jews would not experience for about 170 years after the prediction!

In sum, the Lord predicted that the nation would be taken captive and then they would eventually be allowed to return to their land.

6. Though Cyrus Did Not Know The Lord, He Was Still Used By Him To Carry This Out

The prophet Isaiah made another important point. Cyrus was the human instrument who would be used by the Lord to carry out His purposes. This was in spite of the fact that Cyrus did not personally know the God of Israel!

All of these things were specifically predicted by Isaiah the prophet.

The Predictions Were Fulfilled

Each of these predictions have been literally fulfilled. We can note them as follows.

1. Jerusalem Went Into Captivity 100 Years After Isaiah's Prophecy

As predicted, in three stages, the nation was taken into captivity to the city of Babylon. Despite repeated warnings, the people did not turn to the Lord. Therefore, they went into a seventy-year captivity as was stated by God's prophets.

2. The City And Temple Were Both Destroyed

The Babylonians not only took the people away from their land they also destroyed both the city of Jerusalem and the temple. Again, the prophecies were literally fulfilled just as the Lord had predicted.

3. Cyrus Gave The Command For The Return

After the captivity was over, miraculously the commandment to allow the people to return to their land and build the city and the temple was given by a Persian King named Cyrus—a king who had no personal relationship with the Lord, the God of Israel, and, as we mentioned, was not even born when the prediction was given by Isaiah.

In sum, these predictions, as well as their fulfillments, are further proof that the God of the Bible knows the end from the beginning—the things that have not yet come to pass! In fact, that same prophet Isaiah recorded the Lord saying such a thing:

I announced events beforehand, I issued the decrees and made the predictions; suddenly I acted and they came to pass. I did this because I know how stubborn you are. Your neck muscles are like iron and your forehead like bronze. I announced them to you beforehand; before they happened, I predicted them for you, so you could never say, 'My image did these things, my idol, my cast image, decreed them.' You have heard; now look at all the evidence! Will you not admit that what I say is true? (Isaiah 48:3-6 NET).

This entire episode points out the supernatural testimony of Scripture. As we have documented, Cyrus was indeed an historical figure, who allowed the Jews to return to their ancient homeland. There is no doubt about this.

Example 2: What The Prophet Jeremiah Knew

Next we come to the prophet Jeremiah. We have documented that Jeremiah listed a number of officials, both Babylonian and from the Kingdom of Judah, by name. Each of them has been verified by various non-biblical sources as having lived at that time.

If Jeremiah was minutely accurate to that degree in these details, then how much more should we believe what he wrote in the main events?

We have shown that a number of lines of evidence that Jeremiah the prophet existed at the time of the Babylonian captivity. Consequently, there is every reason to trust the writings that Jeremiah has given to us.

Jeremiah's Prediction Of Hananiah

In addition, Jeremiah predicted something specific in his own lifetime that showed that he was a true prophet of God.

The predictions of Jeremiah about the coming exile to Babylon incensed the people and angered the false prophets. Jeremiah himself was actually put on trial for being a false prophet.

Ironically, one particular false prophet named Hananiah was singled out by Jeremiah. In fact, he made a specific prediction about the death of this false prophet. We can sum up what took place as follows:

Recall that the people of Judah were warned through Jeremiah the prophet that Babylon was God's instrument to take them captive. In fact, in 606 B.C. the deportation to Babylon had already begun. The King of Judah, Jehoiachin, had been deported to Babylon, along with some of the people, as well as with some of the vessels of the temple.

At this time, a false prophet named Hananiah arose and publicly contradicted Jeremiah's prophetic message to the people of Judah. We read about it as follows:

In the fifth month of that same year, the fourth year, early in the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, the prophet Hananiah son of Azzur, who was from Gibeon, said to me in the house of the Lord in the presence of the priests and all the people: "This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two years I will bring back to this place all the articles of the Lord's house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon removed from here and took to Babylon. I will also bring back to this place Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah and all the other exiles from Judah who went to Babylon,' declares the Lord, 'for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon' (Jeremiah 28:1-4 NIV).

Note the specifics of the predictions of this false prophet. Within two years the articles of the temple would be brought back to Judah, and Jehoiachin, the king, would return from Babylon along with the captives that had already been taken.

Clearly, this so-called "prophet," this *false* prophet, contradicted the message of the genuine prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah responded in this manner:

Then the prophet Jeremiah responded to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people who were standing in the Lord's temple. The prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! May the Lord do all this! May the Lord make your prophecy come true! May he bring back to this place from Babylon all the valuable articles taken from the Lord's temple and the people who were carried into exile. But listen to what I say to you and to all these people. From earliest times, the prophets who preceded you and me invariably prophesied war, disaster, and plagues against many countries and great kingdoms. So if a prophet prophesied peace and prosperity, it was only known that the Lord truly sent him when what he prophesied came true (Jeremiah 28: 5-9 NIV).

We should note well what Jeremiah said. Previously, the prophets that arose would pronounce judgment upon the people for their sins against the Lord. If indeed someone prophesied peace and prosperity, then this person would not be considered a genuine prophet of the Lord unless his prediction came true.

This rebuke of Jeremiah caused Hananiah to do the following:

The prophet Hananiah then took the yoke off the prophet Jeremiah's neck and broke it. Then he spoke up in the presence of all the people. "The Lord says, 'In the same way I will break the yoke of servitude of all the nations to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon before two years are over.'" After he heard this, the prophet Jeremiah departed and went on his way (Jeremiah 28:10-11 NIV).

Hananiah "doubled-down" on his previous predictions. He claimed the Lord would take away the yoke of servitude of all nations to King Nebuchadnezzar, and He would do it within two years.

Obviously the Lord was not pleased with these false predictions of Hananiah. Indeed, he was giving deceitful comfort to the sinful inhabitants of Jerusalem. Soon all of them would be deported to Babylon.

In fact, the Lord had made it abundantly clear that King Nebuchadnezzar was God's instrument of judgment upon the people of Judah.

The Prediction Of The Death Of Hananiah

Jeremiah would not let this false prophesy stand. Note the specific prediction that Jeremiah gave toward this evil man Hananiah:

Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, "Listen, Hananiah! The Lord has not sent you, yet you have persuaded this nation to trust in lies. Therefore this is what the Lord says: 'I am about to remove you from the face of the earth. This very year you are going to die, because you have preached rebellion against the Lord (Jeremiah 28:15-16 NIV).

While Hananiah predicted the return of the exiles, the return of the king, and the return of the temple vessels within two years, Jeremiah gave his own prediction of an event that would take place within one year—Hananiah, the false prophet, would die. As Jeremiah predicted, Hananiah died within one year:

Two months later the prophet Hananiah died (Jeremiah 28:17 NLT).

Hence, Jeremiah showed himself to be a genuine biblical prophet who predicted something to come to pass in his own lifetime.

The Supernatural Predictions Of Jeremiah

Not only did Jeremiah exist at the time the southern kingdom of Judah went into Babylonian captivity, when we examine his writings, we find a number of predictions made about the future that were supernaturally fulfilled *after* he had made them. We can list some of them as follows:

Prediction 1: The City Of Jerusalem Would Be Destroyed

First and foremost, because of the sin of the people of Judah, Jeremiah predicted that the holy city of Jerusalem would be destroyed. He recorded these words of the Lord:

Run for safety, people of Benjamin! Get out of Jerusalem! Sound the trumpet in Tekoa! Light the signal fires at Beth Hakkerem! For disaster lurks out of the north; it will bring great destruction. I will destroy Daughter Zion, who is as delicate and defenseless as a young maiden . . . So take warning, Jerusalem, or I will abandon you in disgust and make you desolate, a place where no one can live (Jeremiah 6:1-2,8 NET).

The prediction was clear: Disaster was coming to Jerusalem if they did not heed the warning of the Lord.

Sadly, they did not.

Prediction 2 The Entire Promised Land Would Be In Ruins

Furthermore, the Lord also predicted that the entire Promised Land itself, like the city of Jerusalem, would also be in ruins:

The Lord said, “I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins. Jackals will make their home there. I will destroy the towns of Judah so that no one will be able to live in them” (Jeremiah 9:11 NET).

The towns of Judah, the entire country, would not be livable.

Prediction 3 Babylon Would Be The Instrument Of God’s Judgment

The Lord stated that Babylon would be His instrument in judging the people of Judah:

Therefore, the Lord who rules over all says, ‘You have not listened to what I said. So I, the Lord, affirm that I will send for all the peoples of the north and my servant, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and all the nations that surround it. I will utterly destroy this land, its inhabitants, and all the nations that surround it and make them everlasting ruins. I will make them objects of horror and hissing scorn. I will put an end to the sounds of joy and gladness, to the glad celebration of brides and grooms in these lands. I will put an end to the sound of people grinding meal. I will put an end to lamps shining in their houses. This whole area will become a desolate wasteland (Jeremiah 25:8-11 NET).

In sum the Lord specifically predicted that the entire area would be a desolate wasteland.

Prediction 4 The Temple Would Also Be Destroyed

Since everything was to be destroyed in the Promised Land, this would also include the Temple in Jerusalem. In fact, the Lord gave this warning:

If you do not obey me, then I will do to this temple what I did to Shiloh. And I will make this city an example to be used in curses by people from all the nations on the earth (Jeremiah 26:6 NET)

The Lord gave the reason for the destruction:

They have turned away from me instead of turning to me. I tried over and over again to instruct them, but they did not listen and respond to correction. They set up their disgusting idols in the temple which I have claimed for my own and defiled it. They built places of worship for the god Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom so that they could sacrifice their sons and daughters to the god Molech. Such a disgusting practice was not something I commanded them to do! It never even entered my mind to command them to do such a thing! So Judah is certainly liable for punishment (Jeremiah 32:33-35 NET).

The result of this sinful behavior would be the destruction of the temple along with everything else.

Each Prediction Was Literally Fulfilled

The record shows that each and every prediction of Jeremiah came to pass. Indeed, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed, the entire Promised Land was made desolate, and it was the Babylonians who accomplished this.

Conclusion On The Prophet Jeremiah

As is true with the prophet Isaiah, the prophet Jeremiah existed at the time the Bible said that he did, and he made predictions about the future that

only an all-knowing God could know. Each of these predictions was miraculously fulfilled.

Therefore, the logical conclusion is that Jeremiah was a spokesman for the Living God. His testimony provides further evidence that there is a God who exists, who knows the future, and is in control of the future.

Example 3: The Prophet Daniel

There is evidence that Daniel the prophet did indeed live in the sixth century before Christ, precisely as the book that bears his name claims. On the night of the famous episode of the handwriting on the wall, Daniel recorded that he was offered the “third ruler of the kingdom.” Only someone living at that time would realize that Belshazzar could not offer him second place because he himself was subordinate to his father Nabonidus.

Daniel also knew that it was Nebuchadnezzar who founded the neo-Babylonian Empire. He also correctly recorded the differences between the rule of the Babylonians and that of their conquerors Media/Persia. In other words, Daniel knew things that only someone living in Babylon at that time would know.

Daniel’s Supernatural Knowledge of Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream And Meaning

As was the case with Isaiah and Jeremiah, Daniel showed supernatural ability in his own lifetime. Indeed, in this particular case, he did something that no human being could do. He told King Nebuchadnezzar precisely what he had dreamed as well as the meaning of the dream.

Three Successive Kingdoms Would Arise After Babylon

In interpreting the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, and the three successive kingdoms that would come after him before the kingdom of God comes to the earth, Daniel showed supernatural ability to predict the future that would take place beyond his lifetime.

In the Book of Daniel, the specific kingdoms are all documented for us.

There will be four successive empires that will rule. Each one will be, in some sense, inferior to the previous one which is represented by the metals on this great image. Indeed, starting with the head of gold, they will become increasingly inferior as we reach the feet and toes—silver, bronze, iron, iron mixed with clay.

On the other hand, while the material of each section of the statue decreases in value, it increases in strength. As we will see, this perfectly predicted the rule of each of these four kingdoms.

As predicted, each of these kingdoms destroyed the previous ones.

Babylon

The first kingdom, Babylon, was ruling at this time. Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold in the dream. He was an absolute ruler. Whatever he decreed was the law. In other words, he did not answer to anyone.

Medo-Persia

Medo-Persia conquered Babylon. Interestingly, Daniel himself records the night Babylon fell (Daniel 5). The rule of the Medes and the Persians was inferior to that of Babylon because the Medo-Persian kings could not annul a law once it went into effect. Hence, the absolute authority of the king was restricted as opposed to the unrestricted rule of Nebuchadnezzar.

However, the Medo-Persian kingdom covered a larger geographical area than Babylon, as well as lasting longer (539 B.C.-331 B.C., 208 years).

Greece

The next world kingdom was Greece, led by Alexander the Great. Its territory was even larger than that of Medo-Persia. Furthermore, it lasted longer (331 B.C. to 31 B.C.) than either Babylonia or Medo-Persia—some 300 years.

However, it was an inferior type of rule. After the death of Alexander in 323 B.C., the empire split into four parts, where each of Alexander's four generals ruled one part.

Rome

The fourth Gentile world kingdom was Rome. In 31 B.C., Rome defeated the last remnant of the Greek Empire. The Roman Empire ruled longer than any of the previous three—until A.D. 476 in the West and until A.D. 1453 in the East.

In addition, the Roman Empire was larger than any of the three previous kingdoms. In fact, it encompassed almost all of Europe, including Spain, the British Isles, as well as India. Rome crushed all opposition with a brutality that surpassed any of the previous empires.

Yet, in terms of ruling authority, Rome was indeed inferior to the previous three kingdoms. The people, as well as the Roman senate, played significant roles in setting its policies. Consequently, they controlled the emperors much more than had been true in these three preceding empires.

King Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute monarch. However, the rulers who followed him in the next three kingdoms, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, were each increasingly less powerful personally than the previous rulers.

To sum up, Daniel's interpretation perfectly predicted the continual inferiority of the rulers of these kingdoms as the metals, starting with the head of gold Nebuchadnezzar, decreased in value.

On the other hand, he also correctly predicted the increasing strength of each kingdom, as the metals increased in strength. And as we observed, in the sense of geographical territory, and time ruling, each kingdom would become greater than the previous.

Again, we find another illustration of the infallibility of the Word of God when it comes to predicting the future!

Conclusion To Isaiah, Jeremiah, And Daniel

Three things must be understood with respect to these three men and the predictions that they made.

First, each of these prophets gives us indisputable evidence that they were living at the time the Scripture says they were. In other words, they lived before these prophecies were fulfilled, not after the fact.

Isaiah knew Sargon II was the king of Assyria, something lost in history for a long time. He also knew about Shebna and the tomb that he carved out for himself. To know these things, he had to be living at the time the Bible says he lived.

Jeremiah lists the name of three minor officials in Israel. Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jehucal son of Shelemiah, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan.

They have all been confirmed with the discovery of the 2,600 year old clay pacts, or bullas, that have their name, and the name of their father.

In addition, Jeremiah lists three officials of Babylon who were instrumental in the destruction of Jerusalem: Nergal-Sharezzer of Samgar, Nebo-Sarsekim, who was a chief officer, and Nebuzaradan. Their names have also been found in Babylonian records.

Daniel knew that Nebuchadnezzar was the one who founded the Babylonian Empire. He also knew that Belshazzar could only offer him “third” rule in the kingdom since he was the son of the king Nabonidus.

Therefore, without doubt, each of these men were on the scene when the Bible says they were.

Second, each of them predicted something supernatural to come to pass in their own life time, the sign of a genuine prophet.

Isaiah told Hezekiah that the Assyrians would not siege Jerusalem. They did not as the Lord destroyed a large portion of their army.

Jeremiah predicted that the false prophet Hananiah would die within a year because of his many false prophecies. This is precisely what happened.

Daniel was able to supernaturally know the content of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. In addition, he correctly predicted in the handwriting on the wall

episode that Belshazzar would die that night and that the kingdom would now be in the hands of the Medes and the Persians.

Third, each of them supernaturally predicted things that would take place in the distant future.

Isaiah predicted the rise of a Persian King named Cyrus who would release the nation from a captivity that would not even take place for one hundred years.

Jeremiah predicted a seventy year captivity in Babylon, then the return. Babylon, the nation the Lord used to judge His people, would themselves be judged. Scripture testifies that this is precisely what happened.

Daniel predicted the rise of three Gentile kingdoms after Babylon. He named two of them, the Medes and the Persians, and then Greece. Each prediction was literally fulfilled with Greece coming into power about two hundred years after the predictions.

All in all, we see the supernatural hand of God in this. Nobody, on a human level, could do what these three prophets did. Each of them testified that the power to do this was from God and Him alone.

In sum, the Bible not only shows itself to be a reliable historical document, it also gives us evidence of its supernatural knowledge of what will take place in the future.

Part 5

Summary and Conclusion On The Ancient Mysteries of the Bible Found in the Old Testament

In this book, we have considered the subject of ancient mysteries of the Bible—in particular, in the Old Testament. We can summarize our findings as we make the following observations:

Observation 1: The Bible Records Many Specific Things About The Ancient World

First, simply put, the Bible records many people, places, and events that took place in the ancient world. Lest we forget, these events have been recorded by a number of different authors living at different times in Old Testament history. Moses, for example, wrote about 1440 B.C. while Ezra, and Nehemiah about 400 B.C. In other words, we have many things recorded by a number of different authors.

Observation 2: Jesus Christ Trusted The Biblical Record

Second, Jesus Christ had total trust with respect to what was written in the Old Testament. He believed that everything which was written was true. If He is the One whom He claimed to be, God the Son, then He would have the last word on all matters.

Observation 3: Until A Few Hundred Years Ago, There Was No Outside Evidence For The Truthfulness Of The Claims

Third, the problem was that there was no objective evidence to back up these claims. In other words, the existence of the characters and events mentioned in the Old Testament was an ancient mystery.

Observation 4: Unbelievers Rejected The Historical Accuracy Of The Old Testament

Fourth, many unbelievers rejected the idea of the historical accuracy of the Old Testament, as well as the teachings of Jesus concerning it. With no confirming evidence, believers could only embrace the claims “by faith.”

Observation 5: With The Rise Of The Science Of Archaeology, Things Began To Change

Fifth, this all began to change a few hundred years ago with the rise of the science of archaeology. Indeed, evidence began to be unearthed that testified directly to certain people, places, and events recorded in the Old Testament.

Observation 6: The Evidence Shows A Consistent Pattern

Sixth, though the evidence is relatively scarce, in comparison to what actually took place in the ancient world, we have seen a consistent pattern

occurring. Indeed, over and over again, the evidence that has been discovered supports the testimony of the Hebrew Scriptures. Again, we emphasize, it is not merely one author recording these events. Numerous biblical authors have been shown to be correct in their historical references.

Observation 7: We Have Every Right To Assume That Future Discoveries Will Further Confirm The Account

Seventh, from this, we can make some observations and conclusions. Since we continue to see the Old Testament verified by the discoveries that have been made in the past we have every right to assume that this will continue in the future.

Observation 8: Minute Details Continue To Be Confirmed

Eighth, add to this, not only does the general pattern of Old Testament history continues to be confirmed many specific details have also been verified. This is important for us to understand.

If the writers show consistency in the recording of the minutest of details, this should give us further confidence that the basic account they record is also true. In other words, those who are precise in their minute documentation are not going to miss “the big picture.”

Observation 9: If The Accounts Of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel Were Written By These Authors, Then An All-Powerful God Does Exist!

Finally, if the accounts of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, were written by these authors, in the historical period the Old Testament says that they lived, then there is objective evidence for the existence of an all-powerful God who knows the future, has predicted the future, and who controls the future. This is the God of the Bible!

Appendix 1:

The Mystery Of The Hittites Solved

One of the most famous events in the history of Old Testament study revolves around an ancient people known as the Hittites.

For many years, the only known reference to the Hittites were their frequent mention in Scripture:

That day the LORD made a covenant with Abram: “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River—the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites (Genesis 15:18-20 NET).

The Bible listed them as a powerful, feared, as well as an important people group in the ancient world. In fact, they were used in one biblical illustration as having a huge army:

The LORD had caused the Syrian camp to hear the sound of chariots and horses and a large army. Then they said to one another, “Look, the king of Israel has paid the kings of the Hittites and Egypt to attack us!” (2 Kings 7:6 NET).

However, a number of scholars doubted their existence.

This all changed when the ancient capital of the Hittites, Hattusas, was uncovered in 1906 in what is now Boghazkoy in Turkey. We now know that the Hittites were an educated people whose empire was founded about 1700 B.C. Furthermore, from the 1400's they had become one of the great powers in diplomatic and trade contact with other kings.

The Kheta

Pharaoh Ramesses II of Egypt knew them by the name Kheta. They fought one another at the battle of Kadesh in 1274 which led to the world's first known peace treaty in 1259 B.C.

Yet they were not to last. About 1,200 B.C. the power of their empire was broken.

The lesson in all of this is simple: if the Bible mentions a large, powerful people group who had influence over the world for a time, we should not reject what it says merely because confirming testimony has yet to be found.

Appendix 2: The Mystery Of The Pym Solved

One of the more interesting biblical mysteries that has eventually been solved, has to do with the “PYM.” We read about this in Samuel:

So all Israel went down to the Philistines to have their plow points, mattocks, axes and sickles sharpened. The price was a PYM for sharpening plow points and mattocks, and for sharpening forks and axes and for repointing goads (1 Samuel 13:21).

This passage described how there were no blacksmiths in Israel at that time so the people went to the Philistine country to have their tools sharpened. The price for sharpening was called a PYM.

Nobody had the slightest idea what this Hebrew word meant. What was a PYM? The word appeared nowhere else in the Hebrew Scripture and there were no ancient lexicons or dictionaries that translated its meaning. Therefore, translators had to venture a guess as to exactly what the word meant.

This confusion went on for centuries until archaeological excavations in the city of Gezer, in the early 1900's, uncovered a stone weight inscribed in ancient Hebrew script with the word PYM. The mystery was finally solved.

When it was analyzed it was discovered that the PYM weight was an ancient stone weight denomination equivalent to 2/3 of a shekel or 7.6 grams. This was the price in silver for those who had their tools sharpened by the Philistines.

Numerous examples of the PYM weight have now been discovered in the area of ancient Israel. While this weight was apparently common at one time in its history, it fell out of use during the period of the divided kingdom of Israel and Judah. By the time between the testaments came around, the meaning was completely unknown.

Since the Book of Samuel used this ancient word that was lost to history, it demonstrates that the author did indeed live at the time of the early days of the nation.

About The Author

Don Stewart is a graduate of Biola University and Talbot Theological Seminary (with the highest honors).

Don is a best-selling and award-winning author having authored, or co-authored, over seventy books. This includes the best-selling *Answers to Tough Questions*, with Josh McDowell, as well as the award-winning book *Family Handbook of Christian Knowledge: The Bible*. His various writings have been translated into over thirty different languages and have sold over a million copies. His available books can be found on his website www.educatingourworld.com.

Don is now a full-time missionary with GoinChrist Ministries. His website educatingourworld.com provides free resources for those wanting to know what Christians believe, as well as why we believe. Currently there are 61 books on the site in PDF form, totaling about 13,000 pages of material while answering over 1,900 questions. Eventually we hope to record all the books, as well as translating the material in other languages.