

“Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

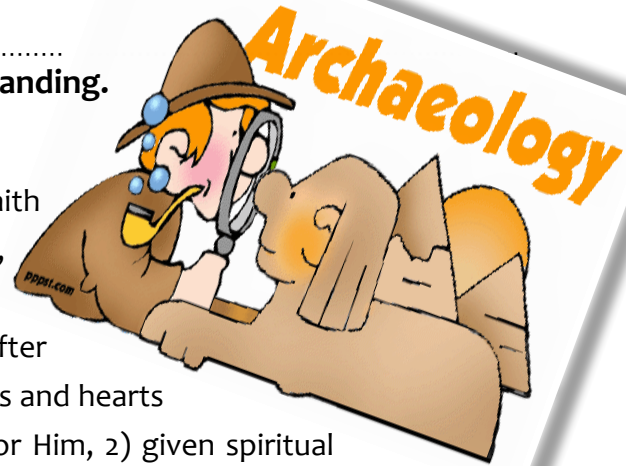
Joshua 1:9b

Biblical Archaeology (part 1)

Theme: Archaeology is exciting and enhances biblical understanding.

Review of Lesson 23

God dispenses (gives) His grace in our Age based upon one thing, faith in Jesus Christ. No special prayer, church ceremony, confession, etc., are needed to be saved; just faith. When God dispenses His grace, it first saves us and then works in our lives to change us from within. After saving us, grace has a divine influence upon us by molding our minds and hearts according to His will. By His grace we are: 1) taught how to live for Him, 2) given spiritual blessings and a position in Heaven, and 3) kept secure so we cannot lose our salvation.



Introduction

Archaeology is the scientific study of the material remains of human life and activities. The material remains (pottery, bones, buildings, tools, documents, weapons, etc.) that archaeologists find help them piece together the past. Knowing the past increases our understanding of biblical events. Thus, archaeology helps us grasp the wealth of God's Word through better understanding. Since archaeology is about human material remains, it cannot tell us about the earth's age, dinosaurs, or the origin of humans.

Biblical archaeology began slowly about 400 years ago in the regions the Bible discusses, i.e., the Mideast (present-day Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, etc.). Most of these countries are prominent in today's news for various reasons.

Many people wonder if the events recorded in the Bible are true, especially those recorded thousands of years before Christ. Archaeology can help clarify such matters. At *Grace 4 You*, we believe when archaeological evidence is correctly interpreted it

confirms the Bible is true in every detail. Unfortunately, archeology is hampered by people who make fake artifacts, those who wish to disprove the Bible, and even Christians who have strongly held beliefs that are sincere but not true to the Word.

We can view archaeological findings as a history book written in the soil of the earth. The history it records adds to our understanding and increases our appreciation for the Bible. However, science and archeology have limitations. Archaeologist have not discovered all there is to be found, so we cannot expect archaeology to answer all our questions. Archeology may be able to prove there were Hebrews living in Egypt during the time of Moses, but it cannot tell us about the existence of God, faith, miracles, or forgiveness. Science can tell us about the material world, but it cannot tell us about spiritual matters. What archaeology can do is tell us about events, societies, and places that existed during Biblical times, so that we can better understand the Bible.

Discussion Question: Archaeologists have found no strong evidence that the Children of Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years before entering the Promised Land. Does this lack of evidence suggest the Bible is wrong? (Answer: No, remnants from a wandering people, with no cities or permanent dwellings, are very rare or nonexistent.)

What are Tells

The ground levels of ancient cities tended to rise with time. People lived in houses with thick walls made of sun-dried clay brick (baked bricks were more durable but they were costly and their use was generally reserved for special people and places). The common sun-dried clay brick structures required constant maintenance and every year it was necessary to put a new layer of clay on certain parts to replace what was washed into the street by rain. Wind routinely blew sand and soil into the cities. In addition, rubbish was simply thrown into the street (much of it, like broken pottery, did not deteriorate). So, the street level gradually rose above the floor level of the houses. Occasionally the floors (and ceilings) of buildings had to be raised to adjust to the rising ground level.

There often were fires or wars which partially or completely destroyed cities. In these cases, the people of the city may have rebuilt or the conquering people often leveled all buildings and started a new city on top of the same site. After thousands of years, the cities would slowly rise above the original ground level. Eventually the cities existed on mounds (called “tells” in Arabic), much of which was their own rubble. Today many biblical sites are given the prefix Tell, e.g., Tell Dan (the mound of the city Dan in northern Israel). A city on a mound (tell) was advantageous militarily because it provided a natural defense against warring groups.

Tells are important because the remnants of consecutive societies are preserved for investigation. People living in tents and as nomadic herdsman (like Abraham and Moses) were not likely to leave a record since their possessions rapidly decomposed and would not be preserved. Archaeologists are motivated to investigate these tells in the Middle East since they are so rich in history, Picture 1. Since each newer city rests on the residue of former civilizations, tells reveal a story that gets older and older as archaeologists dig deeper. Even if archaeologists are uncertain about the date of one level, they can be certain of the relative dates, with lower levels being older and upper levels more recent. Pottery shapes, types, style, and decorations have proven to be valuable for establishing dates. The use of copper, bronze, and iron are also very important in dating sites. Written documents are always very helpful in dating sites, as are other reliable dating techniques.

Rosetta Stone

Some of the early archaeological finds unearthed ancient scripts that no one could read. Then in 1799 a special stone was found, the Rosetta Stone, Picture 2. This stone really helped advance biblical archaeology because it unlocked the key to ancient languages. The Rosetta stone weighs about 1700 pounds and was written around 200 years before Christ. The Rosetta Stone, now in the British Museum, is special because it contains one edict written in three distinct languages. The three languages are: ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs (a pictorial language), Demotic (an ancient Egyptian written language), and Ancient Greek. Since the writing was in stone it was well preserved. Comparing the three languages resulted in a tremendous contribution for how to interpret ancient languages.

Bible Truth

Jericho and Hazor

According to Joshua 6, Jericho was the first place the children of Israel attacked after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. This is the city you may have sung about as a child; clapping your hands together as you sang, "...and the walls came tumbling down." This is the city in which Rahab lived, and, because she helped the Israeli spies, her family was kept safe when the city was destroyed. Jericho was located just north of the Dead Sea, less than five miles West of the Jordan River. It is an ancient city that has been destroyed and rebuilt many times (Tell es-Sultan). The defeat of this city by the Israelites, along with the toppled walls, has long been an interest for Bible students and archaeologists, Picture 3. Joshua 1:9b, given at the top of this lesson, is a command given by God to Joshua--a wonderful verse to memorize.

Excavations in the 1930's offered great hope for firmly substantiating this conquest by the Israelites (they found a severely demolished and burnt city, with a section of mud-brick wall that was toppled). The evidence of a destruction and burning was then seen as "proof" the Bible was correct; but, doubt arose as more evidence was discovered. What was originally seen as a destruction and burning were later thought to not be in the supposed time period recorded in Joshua 6. Remember, there are many levels of civilization, but one level has to correctly correspond to what is recorded in the Bible in Joshua's time period. These more recent findings implied that when the Israelites got to Jericho either the destruction had already taken place and the city had been abandoned for many years, or the city had continued to flourish without interruption. This implied there had been no destruction in Joshua's day. This controversy caused

some archaeologists to conclude that Joshua was not a real person, just a legend.

The problem revolves around the date of Jericho's destruction, commonly proposed as dating from 1210-1550 BC. However, the earlier dates (1500's) and latter dates (1200's) do not fit the facts (based upon the Bible, archeology, and ancient writings). It seems the most reliable time period for the conquest of Jericho was around 1400 BC. The momentous events of Joshua's conquest of Jericho, as recorded in the Bible, perfectly fit the actual archaeological findings when the more reliable date (~1400 BC) is used.

Discussion: Considering the dating issue above, what should our attitude be on archeological findings that do not agree with our beliefs? (Thoughts: Dates are not given in the Bible and any dates in the margin are only estimations. Do not get upset, truth often takes time to be fully revealed. The Bible is always correct, but we must also be willing to examine our beliefs and allow archeology time to get its findings correct.)

There is one piece of evidence that seems to very clearly show that the destruction of Jericho fits the Biblical narrative. Excavations show that Jericho was abandoned and in ruins (with minor exceptions) for many years. Then it was rebuilt (in the 9th century BC). This is important because after Jericho was destroyed, Joshua pronounced this solemn oath: **"Cursed be the man before the LORD who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates"** (Joshua 6:26b). This oath explains why Jericho was not built for generations, because the firstborn and youngest sons' lives of the rebuilder would be required. Indeed that is exactly what

happened. I Kings 16:34 reports the death of the two sons of Hiel who rebuilt Jericho. The rebuilding date is established based upon the pottery found in the new Jericho; the truth prevails.

A careful reading of Joshua reveals that not every conquered city was destroyed, only three cities were demolished and burnt with fire; they are Jericho (Joshua 6:24), Ai (Joshua 8:19-21), and Hazor (Joshua 11:13). The location of Ai is not known for sure. Hazor (Tell Hazor) began to be excavated in the 1950's and work continues to this day. It is a very large site and several impressive destruction levels have been uncovered at Hazor. The palace shows signs of a great fire, such that the mud-brick walls turned orange from the heat and rock walls cracked, Picture 4.

Another factor to consider is that at the palace of Hazor (north of the Sea of Galilee) a couple of statues were discovered that had been deliberately decapitated and the hands had been severed. This practice has not been seen elsewhere in the archaeological record. Why were the holy places of Hazor deliberately attacked and defiled? Deuteronomy 7:2,5 says, **"... and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them.... you shall destroy their alters, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire."** The destruction at Hazer shows the Deuteronomy text was followed and the date nicely fits the conquest by Joshua. It now is clear that Jericho and Hazor were destroyed, exactly as recorded in the Bible.

Discussion: Suppose you were an archaeologist working at a dig site, would you try to discover all the facts even if they do not relate to the Bible, or just try to find things that prove the Bible? (Thoughts: In the

1970's biblical scholars, with no archaeological training, ignored facts that did not pertain to the Bible. It is best to get all the facts, they add to our understanding and may be found important at a later date.)

Hezekiah's Tunnel

One of Judah's great kings was Hezekiah (715-686 BC), who lived in troubled times. In order to keep his powerful neighbor, Assyria, from attacking, he was required to pay large annual taxes. When the taxation became too extreme he could no longer bear it and stopped making payments to Assyria, knowing it would result in an attack upon Jerusalem. The Bible describes his preparations for the inevitable attack in 2 Kings 18-19, 2 Chronicles 32, and Isaiah 36-37. Jerusalem's water supply came from the Gihon Springs which lay outside the city walls. So, he hid the source of these springs and rerouted the water into Jerusalem through an underground tunnel, chiseled in solid rock. Thus, his city could withstand a long siege by having a constant supply of good water, Pictures 5-6. The Assyrian attack failed due to the hand of the Lord, and Hezekiah's preparations helped.

In the 19th century, the water tunnel that was identified as Hezekiah's tunnel was investigated. Cut through a limestone hill, the tunnel is about 1800 feet long and meanders underground. In the middle of the tunnel an inscription was carved into the wall to record its completion. The script used is exactly that used in Hezekiah's day. The tunnel was cut from the east and the west, that is, from two fronts at the same time; the workers met in the middle. This was done before surveying equipment existed and is an extraordinary accomplishment. A person can still walk through this tunnel.

Discussion: Would you like to visit Hezekiah's tunnel?

Hezekiah also stored food in large baked clay vessels for the Assyrian siege, Picture 7, and placed them in various cities. Over 1200 large vessels, or parts of them, have been found with an impression, “for the

king.” One vessel has an impression, made in the clay before it was baked, that actually names Hezekiah as the King of Judah.

Take 2 Heart

Summary

Archaeologists have discovered many things about cultures that existed in Biblical times and about the Bible itself. Whereas we do not need proof that the Bible is true and accurate, it is sometimes good to know that true science and the Bible agree. The unearthing of the Rosetta Stone, the tells at Hazor and Jericho, and the rediscovery of Hezekiah’s tunnel, are but a few examples of how archaeology has helped broaden our understanding of His Word. The study of archaeology enriches our understanding and is a noble profession for young Christians to pursue.

Gospel

The Bible is true and accurate in all ways. Archaeology verifies what the Bible teaches about rulers,

kingdoms, and ancient cultures. However, it is the spiritual aspects of the Bible that are the most important. It teaches that each of us needs to be redeemed and forgiven, **“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7).**

Encouragement

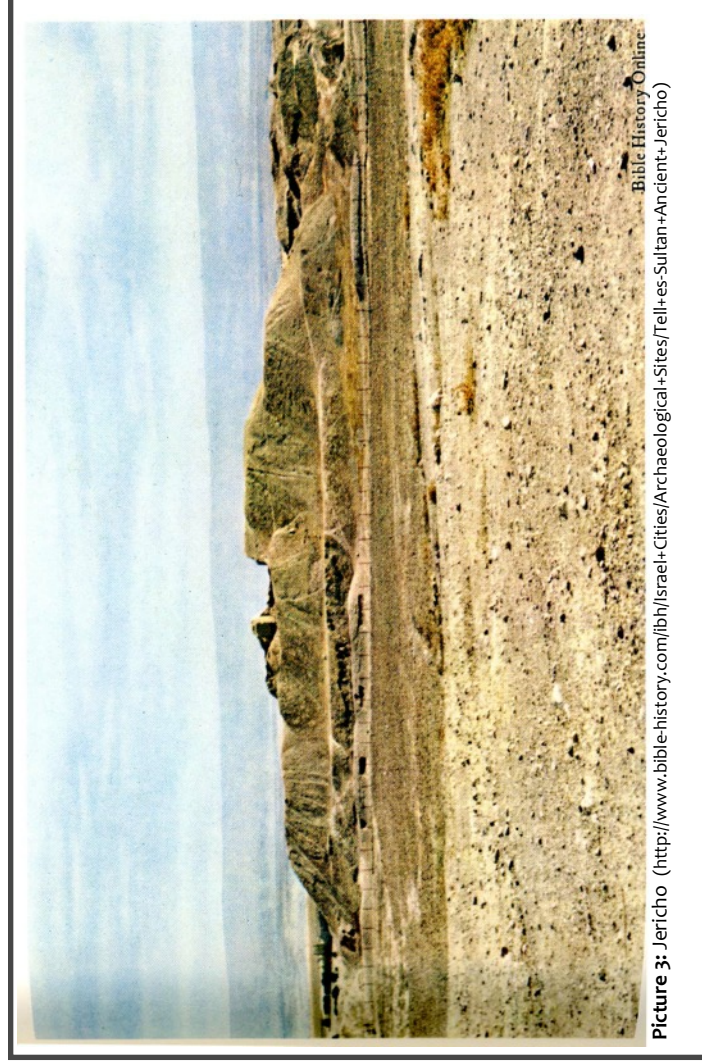
Your faith is something no one can take from you. You know deep inside that God will always provide for you, even in the darkest times. It is not easy to be a teen today, there are many temptations and challenges. Your faith is more precious than gold and your life is a treasure far richer than anything in this world. May the Lord encourage you and lift you up in ways you never dreamed possible.

Lesson 24 Pictures

Biblical Archaeology (part 1)

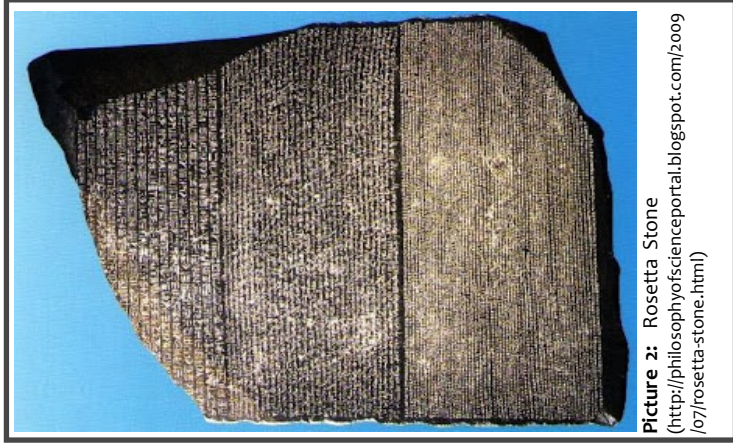


Picture 1: Tell



Picture 3: Jericho (<http://www.bible-history.com/ibh/Israel+Cities/Archaeological+Sites/Tell+es-Sultan+Ancient+Jericho>)

Bible History Online



Picture 2: Rosetta Stone

(<http://philosophyofscienceportal.blogspot.com/2009/07/rosetta-stone.html>)



Picture 4: Destruction layers of Hazor

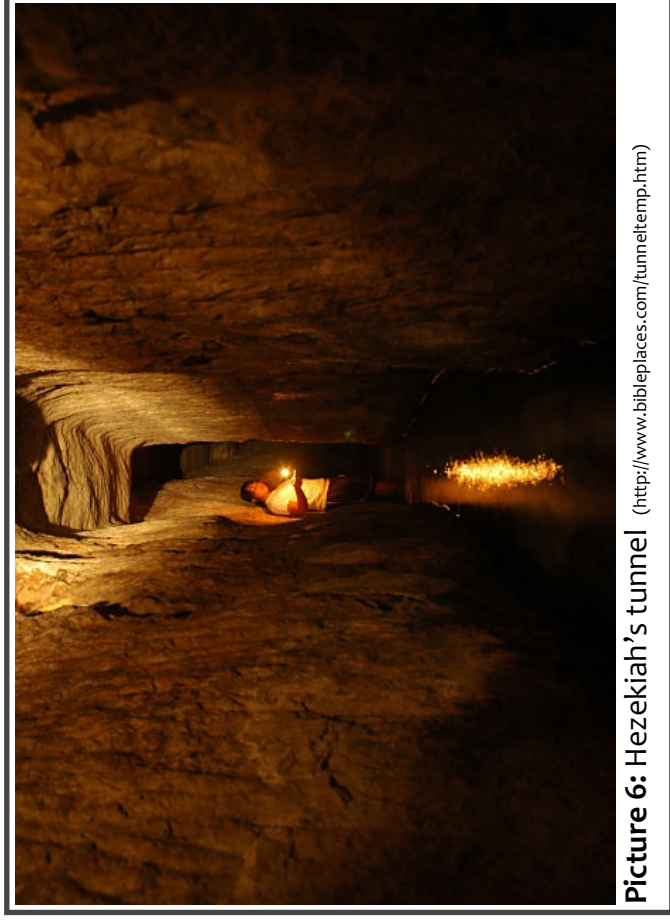


Picture 4: Apparent fire damage to Hazor

(<http://www.worldviewimages.com/>)



Picture 5: Steps leading down to Hezekiah's tunnel
(<http://www.ebibleteacher.com/node/92>)



Picture 6: Hezekiah's tunnel
(<http://www.bibleplaces.com/tunneltemp.htm>)



Picture 7: Grain jars used in Hezekiah's day
(<http://randomthoughtsfrommidlife.wordpress.com/tag/dead-sea-scrolls/>)