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Biblical Archaeology I

Radically Biblical, Apostolic, Christianity



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BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY - THE BEGINNINGS

Someone forgot to shut the door, and changed the history of Europe. The Turks were attacking Constantinople in May 1453. Its walls were strong, its defenders brave. Some had crept out through a little door for a hit-and-run raid and failed to bar it when they came back. A group of Turks broke through, then a stream. Elsewhere they beat down the defenders, and soon the city was theirs.

Many citizens had already left, fearing a Turkish victory. Others, who could, fled afterward. They were Greeks and they were Christians. The only places where they could hope to find shelter were in Italy and France. Some of those who settled there were scholars who brought with them their inheritance from classical Greece. Under the influence of ancient Greek philosophy, coupled with other changes, the Renaissance flowered.

As interest in ancient Greece and Rome grew, rich men began to collect statues and coins found in the ruined cities. Scholars began to study and write about them. In a few cases, connections could be made with the Bible, especially with the New Testament. People began to see that knowing about the ancient world and the way people lived could help them to understand ancient writings better.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries wealthy, adventurous, young men traveled to Italy, Greece, and Turkey exploring, describing, and collecting from the remains of Greek and Roman cities.

A few went further, to Syria and Palestine. There they found the spectacular ruins of Baalbek, Palmyra, and Petra, Roman cities with architecture derived from the Greeks.

Of course, pilgrims had been visiting the holy places for hundreds of years, but few

had taken any interest in them as historical sites or studied the ruins visible.

Ancient Egypt had drawn a few adventurers who brought back accounts of the enormous temples, painted tombs, and the pyramids. Beside straightforward travelers' reports, these journeys also brought ancient Egypt into the scope of fantasy-writers. They thought they could tell the future or learn some other secrets from the design of the pyramids - a false idea that is still current.

But if anything was known about ancient Egypt, it was the subject of mummies, the bodies of Egyptians carefully bandaged and preserved with natural chemicals. Powdered mummy was reckoned a powerful medicine!

With the opening of the nineteenth century, a new era dawned in the study of the ancient world. Exploration began in earnest in the lands where civilizations grew up before the time of classical Greece - in Assyria and Babylonia, and in Egypt. At first, those cultures themselves were the objects of study. But when inscriptions were read which named kings known from the Old Testament a new interest was stirred, and the studies attracted a much wider audience.

Some books were written to apply the new discoveries to the Bible. Suddenly names that had been almost meaningless became real. The Assyrian tyrants actually appeared, carved on palace walls, with their armies and their miserable captives. The great kings of Persia spoke through their own writings, and the pharaohs of Egypt could be identified.

All this gave a rich background for biblical history, the setting for the story of ancient Israel.

At the same time, views about the Old Testament were gaining ground which seemed to deny what the Hebrew books themselves said. Stories of Abraham and his family came, it was argued, from the times of the kings of Israel or later. Many of the

laws attached to Moses' name grew up over a long period of time, some of them being the ideals of priests in the time of the exile. These, and related views, became very popular. They still are.

Some writers believed archaeology to 'prove' the Bible. But to do that, as some continue to do, is to ask archaeology to do more than it can.

Archaeology can neither prove the Bible nor disprove its major claims, for they are about God. There is no way archaeology could bring evidence to show that God spoke through Moses, for example, or that God sent Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem. It is unlikely that anyone will ever find anything to do with, or written by, Moses.

Where archaeology can be helpful is over questions of human history and customs. If the Bible, or any other old book, says that people followed certain patterns of behavior at a certain time, archaeological discovery may reveal whether or not they did.

If the results of archaeological discovery agree with the reports of ancient writers about an ancient practice, they still cannot prove that a particular instance mentioned in a text did take place. That would require independent written evidence about that occasion. But the fact that what the Bible states often agrees with ancient practices is a good basis for a positive approach to the biblical records (see, for example, "A Golden Temple," From Persian Postbags).

Placing those records in their ancient setting is a major service of archaeology. It allows modern readers to appreciate them better on historical and cultural levels. Rarer discoveries, relating directly to passages in the Old or New Testaments, can give support to the witness of those passages, and add to them (see, for example, "No Hidden Treasure," "The Assyrian Came Down...").

As all these discoveries increase our knowledge of the world in which the Bible was written, so do they enable its distinctive religious message to stand out more boldly.

ENTREPRENEURS IN EGYPT

Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt in 1798 and the team of scientists he took with him virtually founded modern Egyptology (see “The Mystery of Egyptian Hieroglyphs”).

Ancient Egypt became fashionable. The leaders of society bought furniture decorated in Egyptian style, and some imported ancient carvings from Egypt itself. Museum keepers, too, wanted fine objects, so people went to Egypt to bring back whatever they could.

One of the most unusual men involved was an Italian who had worked in a circus in London as a strong man, ‘the Italian giant.’ This man, Belzoni, had brains as well as brawn and invented a water-wheel much better, (according to him), than any used in Egypt. In 1815, he displayed it in Cairo, but no one wanted it. He turned, instead, to transporting stone monuments from Egypt to England.

Belzoni’s actions, breaking open tomb sand and ransacking temples were deplorable when judged by later standards, yet he made many important discoveries and helped ancient Egypt to gain the hold on the public imagination, which it has never lost.

A number of other collectors and dealers in antiquities followed Belzoni’s example, but there were scholars who worked more methodically. A German team directed by Richard Lepsius worked from 1843 to 1845 investigating and making exact records of the tombs and monuments, at the same time collecting exhibits for the museum in Berlin. Lepsius edited twelve volumes of drawings and descriptions, “Denkmaler Aus Agypten,” which remains a basic source of knowledge.

Three Englishmen did a valuable job making copies of paintings and inscriptions which have since been destroyed or damaged. Some of their discoveries produced

material for a famous book which one of them, Sir John Wilkinson, wrote: "The Manners and Customs of The Ancient Egyptians" (first published in 1837).

Bringing some order to archaeology in Egypt was the job a young Frenchman took on himself after a few years in the country. He was Auguste Mariette, who initiated the Cairo Museum in 1858, set up a local antiquities service and introduced laws to control the export of antiquities from Egypt. Mariette made a number of careful and important excavations.

Later in the nineteenth century, excavation in Egypt was put on to a regular scientific basis by the energetic British archaeologist, Sir Flinders Petrie. Petrie was born in 1853 and educated by his parents and his own passion for collecting and arranging things. His father was a civil engineer who taught him the elements of surveying, which he then applied to ancient monuments in Britain.

In 1880, he went to Egypt in order to survey the pyramids, a task which took him the best part of two years. Tradition has it that he worked with only a walking-stick and a visiting-card, yet obtained very accurate results. Certainly, he was a Spartan, living on the barest necessities.

In 1883, the Egypt Exploration Fund founded the year before, employed him to excavate in Egypt. Working there for most winters until 1926, he dug at about thirty different sites, making it a habit to publish a report of his work within a year of its completion.

Where earlier diggers had been seeking big buildings and objects for museums, Petrie gave his attention to the precise noting and comparison of small details. He was able to put earlier discoveries into their historical context, to rescue important evidence ignored by others, and make an orderly study of the amazingly varied things found in ancient Egypt.

When Petrie left Egypt, in 1926, there was no longer any room for archaeologists who ignored the humble potsherds or discarded animal bones. Archaeology had become a proper, scientific study.

IN THE LAND OF THE BIBLE

An American, Edward Robinson, stands at the beginning of archaeology in Palestine, although he never dug into an ancient site, and even thought that the mounds of earth (tells) which mask them were natural hills.

In two journeys to Palestine, in 1848 and 1852, Robinson and his friend Eli Smith explored the country and by careful study of the landscape, identified a hundred places named in the Bible which had not been properly located before. This basic work, together with a description of the country, was published as "Biblical Researches in Palestine" (1841) and "Later Biblical Researches" (1856).

Mapping the land accurately was a major task. Another American, W.F. Lynch, made an essential contribution when he and his men sailed from the Sea of Galilee down the River Jordan in two prefabricated metal boats. The journey took them a week, 10-18 April 1848. He made the first detailed map of the river's twisting course and found out that the Dead Sea's surface lies 1,300 feet below sea level.

The major work, the geographical survey of western Palestine, was done by the Palestine Exploration Fund founded in London in 1865. British army officers were sent by the Fund to map Jerusalem and the countryside.

Between 1872 and 1878 C.R. Conder and H.H. Kitchener (later Lord Kitchener of Khartoum) surveyed over 6,000 square miles of country, marking more than 10,000 sites. Their maps, although replaced in recent years, underlie all others.

The Palestine Exploration Fund, also made some excavations, especially around

the edge of Herod's Temple in Jerusalem (see "Herod the Great Builder"). Not much productive digging was done; however, until 1890, when Flinders Petrie made a short visit from Egypt.

For six weeks, he worked at a mound called Tell el-Hesi. There he saw the importance of relating the pottery, commonly lying on ancient sites, to the different levels of earth in which it was found. From the relative positions of the pieces, he was able to work out which types were the oldest and so classify the pottery by age. Thus he set the pattern for all later work in Palestine, Where there are no inscriptions or coins, the pottery offers some clues about the date of the building in which it lies.

In Palestine, there are none of the enormous stone temples or brick palaces of Egypt and Assyria. The Palestinian mounds demand much more attention from the archaeologist for fewer spectacular rewards. Observing and recording are vital. After Petrie's new approach, others gradually realized this.

An American expedition began to explore the site of Samaria in 1909 and 1910. King Herod's builders had destroyed much of the Israelite palace when they built a new temple (see "Herod, the Great Builder"), so it was very hard to trace the plan of the palace and its history. Happily, G.A. Reisner, the director, was a meticulous and sharp-eyed excavator with experience in Egypt. He noted the layers of soil with care so that he could unravel the story. Reisner did not dig anymore in Palestine and his methods were ignored by other excavators.

W.F. Albright, the leading American archaeologist, began to excavate in 1922 and refined the dating of pottery by comparing pieces from one site with pieces from all the sites, through his own unrivaled knowledge of them.

One of the most influential archaeologists to work in Palestine in the past fifty years was Dame Kathleen Kenyon (1906-1978). When she joined an expedition at Samaria in 1931, she used a technique of excavation she had learned working in Britain with Sir

Mortimer Wheeler. In her own excavations at Jericho (1952-1958), she applied this stratigraphic method of digging and recording with brilliant results, even though they proved disappointing for biblical studies (see “And the Walls Came Tumbling Down”).

The Kenyon excavations at Jericho, and her later series at Jerusalem (1961-1967), trained or influenced many of the archaeologists who have worked in Palestine since. Although some Israeli scholars follow slightly different procedures, all are concerned to learn as much as possible from an excavation, aiming first to learn about the whole history of a place and then looking at its value for interpreting the Bible.

DIGGING UP THE PAST

Stories of buried treasure are common all over the world. For as long as people have built houses and lived in towns and villages, they have been finding things their forebearers lost or buried.

Usually, these things are found by accident, and most of them are so uninteresting, they have simply been thrown away. The only things people have kept are objects of gold and silver or things which they can admire.

This is still true today. Farmers plowing fields will keep anything they think is valuable that their plows turn up, and throw away the rest. People combing the beach or countryside with metal-detectors hope to find money or valuables. They leave behind the nails and other odds and ends their machines locate.

Archaeologists are scientific treasure-hunters. When they find gold and silver, or beautiful works of art, they are pleased. But everything people have used is valuable to them.

In certain circumstances, a single piece of broken pottery may tell the archaeologist more than a gold ring. If, for example, the pottery was marked as an

import from a country overseas, it could be a sign of foreign relations through trade or warfare.

Equally important are the ruined buildings, houses, temples, palaces, and fortresses that people have built in the past, and the tombs they dug for their dead.

Digging ancient remains out of the ground can be exciting and rewarding. But simply pulling a jar or a jewel out of the earth or clearing the rubbish down to the floor of a building, destroys valuable evidence.

Observing exactly where the things lie, the different colors and textures of the soil, and how they are arranged in the ground, can reveal a great deal.

Was this pot underneath the earth floor or on it, or in the rubbish lying on it? If the first, it is older than the floor. If the second or third, it is likely it belonged to the people who used the building. If it was on top of rubble fallen into the house, it could belong to a much later date. Even if it was below the level of the floor, a careful inspection might discover that it lay in a pit dug from a higher level long after the building was forgotten.

In the same way, following the layers or strata of earth may show that one wall was built earlier than another if the layer of soil running up to the first wall was cut through by the foundations of the second.

It is as vital for the archaeologist to observe and record all of these matters in notes, photographs, and drawings as it is for him to describe the objects and the building he finds.

All excavation is destructive; disturb the soil and it is impossible to replace it as it was before, what the archaeologist's eye misses is lost.

These essential facts have gradually become obvious over the last century and a half. In recent years, all sorts of refinements have developed and a wide range of techniques have entered archaeology from physics and chemistry all aimed at extracting as much information as possible from what is found. In the end, the observant eye of the archaeologist is still the most vital tool.

In the lands of the Near East, where most of the Bible was written, people have been building their houses of stone and brick for more than 7,000 years. The stones may have fallen from their places, but they often survive. Bricks; however, were made of mud, dried in the sun not baked in a kiln and so they usually disintegrate quite quickly unless they are buried in the ground.

The life of a simple mud-brick building, therefore, might span only thirty years or so before the walls started to give way. Where this was the normal building material, repairs and total rebuilding were frequent.

That is the process that built up the great mounds of ruined towns and villages visible all over the Near East, one house rising upon the remains of the earlier one. (The same process can be seen in many other lands; in cities of Europe, for example, streets of the Roman period lie 3-7 meters/10-20 feet below the modern roads. The stumps of walls and the debris of medieval and later times make up the difference).

The need to observe all the time digging is in progress and the need to record all that is found makes excavation a slow and demanding task. Consequently, the excavation of an entire town is very rare. Expeditions may concentrate on the buildings of one period or, more commonly, dig in selected areas.

The archaeologist may choose to dig where a farmer has uncovered a carved stone or explorers have noted the lines of walls or large quantities of pottery. He may hit a part that has always been important, perhaps as the highest quarter of the town, or the best situation for sun and wind. On the

other hand, he may miss the chief buildings, learning much about the houses of the poorer people.

So the restricted areas cleared, as well as the amount of destruction worked on the ruins over the course of centuries by mankind and the elements, mean that the complete history of a site is beyond recovery. What is found can never be more than a part; a sample of what once existed.

This is an important condition to keep in mind when reading any study based on archaeological discoveries. Unless the evidence is very soundly established and is evaluated in the light of other knowledge of the time and region, it may be misleading. And what applies to archaeological discoveries also applies to written documents. They too, are only a sample of all that was written in ancient times. Although thousands of them lie in modern museums, many thousands more have been lost.

Few buildings, few texts, and few objects were made in order that they should last for distant generations to read. The majority survive by accident and are found by accident. Indeed, some things found may not even be typical of their kind. This means that a new discovery can force scholars to change their accepted positions completely, or to revise them.

To take just one example, the recent finding, a palace at Ebla in northern Syria with thousands of clay tablets written about 2300 B.C., is opening new areas of study in history and language (see "Headline News: The Lost City of Ebla").

As farming and towns spread across parts of the Near East where no one has lived for centuries, ancient sites risk destruction. Excavating these places has priority, but others can be studied at leisure. There is much work yet to be done, and many more discoveries to be made.

'OF COURSE, IT'S THE FLOOD!'

Leonard Wooley, the archaeologist in charge at Ur, instructed his workman to dig a small pit, to find the ground surface on which the first settlers had built their reed huts. That would mark the birthplace of the great city, Ur of the Chaldees.

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The workman dug down to a clean bed of clay, with no broken fragments of pottery. 'That's the bottom sir,' he shouted. But Wooley was not so sure.

The workman was still standing more than 2 meters/6 feet above sea level and Wooley reckoned that was also the original level. Unwillingly, the man agreed to dig deeper. He dug and dug, through 2.5 meters/8 feet of clean soil, and then more pottery began to appear. At last he hit true virgin soil, 1 meter/3 feet below modern sea level, and about 19 meters/62 feet from the surface of the ruin mound.

What was this thick layer of sterile soil?

Wooley thought he knew, and when two assistants could give no answer, he turned to his wife.

'Well, of course, it's the flood,' she remarked.

When the soil was analyzed, it was shown to be silt deposited by water. On the basis of that and related discoveries, Leonard Wooley claimed he had found physical evidence of the great flood which Sumerian, Babylonian, and Hebrew stories recall.

All sorts of writers took up Wooley's discovery. Some seized on it as proof of the biblical story of Noah. Others saw it simply as the remains of one of the many floods that overwhelmed the cities of Babylonia.

News of the flood-level at Ur had hardly broken before another excavator claimed

he had found a layer of silt left by the flood. He was working at Kish, 220 km/137 miles north of Ur.

Now the debate began.

The Ur layer, deposited about 4000 B.C., was much older than the one at Kish. Did either represent the flood?

Excavations at other places in Babylonia produced clean levels like those at Kish, and belonging to roughly the same date, about 2800 B.C.

None of the levels at other sites belonged to the same time as the level at Ur. Many scholars now argue that some of those later deposits mark the time of the flood.

They argue this because the date fits information preserved in Babylonian traditions. Some of the lists of early kings begin with the gods setting up kingship. After a few reigns the sequence is broken - 'Then came the flood' - and a fresh start follows. Other lists begin with the first king after the flood. Not so very long after that king, and within his line of succession, we meet a ruler whose own inscriptions survive. Since they have an archaeological date of about 2600 B.C., the floods can be set a century or two earlier.

There is no doubt the flood was a catastrophic event that stayed in human memory as long as Babylonian civilization lasted. A variety of writings refer to it as a point in time. It was evidently more than a small local flood, the sort of thing most of the low-lying riverside towns of Babylonia could expect. Yet we are still not sure that these deposits of silt and clay are traces of it.

At Ur, Wooley admitted, the silt did not cover the whole site. The great depth of clean soil he dug through appeared to be the result of water running against part of the ruin mound, perhaps over a long period of time. Some of the other deposits

too, seem not to have destroyed or drowned the buildings where they are found. Perhaps Mrs. Wooley was wrong after all, and it was only a flood, not THE flood.

Another exciting discovery about the flood was made long before the excavations at Ur. In the 1850's, Sir Henry Layard dug out of the ruins of Nineveh, thousands of pieces of clay tablets. They were once the library of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, and were left lying broken and forgotten when his palace was destroyed in 612 B.C. Layard brought the tablets to the British Museum in London. Over the years, scholars catalogued and identified the pieces, making their work known in books and learned journals.

In 1872, George Smith was busy at this task when he realized the fragments on his desk belonged to a story of the flood. It had striking resemblances to the story of Noah in the biblical book of Genesis.

Smith described his discovery to a meeting of the Society for Biblical Archaeology and it created a sensation.

The Babylonian story and the biblical one clearly shared so much that there could be no doubt there was a strong connection between them. But what was it? Did the Hebrew story derive from the Babylonian or the Hebrew, or did both have a common source?

Ever since the discovery was announced, the first possibility has won greatest support. The second is held to be unlikely because the Babylonian account dates back to at least 1600 B.C., well before the Hebrew one was written.

A small number of scholars have always taken the third position, that the stories have a common origin. Abraham's migration from Ur to Canaan could have carried the story westward; many scholars think the Israelites learned it from the Canaanites.

What is the Babylonian Flood Story? Chapters 6-9 of Genesis tell of the flood as part of the continuing story of God's relations with mankind. The story George Smith found is also part of a longer tale. It is in the eleventh, and last, tablet of the Epic of Gilgamesh.

This epic tells how the ancient king Gilgamesh, tried to win immortality. After many adventures, he reached a distant land where lived the only man who had become immortal, a man named Ut-napishtim, the Babylonian Noah. He told Gilgamesh about the flood, to explain why the gods gave him his eternal life. After the story was told, he showed Gilgamesh that he could not hope to become immortal, and sent him home.

Several details and oddities suggested that the Babylonian Flood Story did not begin as part of the Gilgamesh Epic. Thanks to the discovery of another poem, known as the Atrakhasis Epic, the story can now be seen in its proper setting.

Like Genesis, the Atrakhasis Epic tells of the creation of man and his history to the time of the flood and the new society which was set up after it. Here the reason for the flood is clear, which it is not in the Gilgamesh Epic. Mankind made so much noise that the chief god on earth could not sleep. The gods, having failed to solve the problem in other ways; therefore, sent the flood to destroy these troublesome humans and silence them forever.

The similarities between the Babylonian and the Hebrew stories are easy to see, but there are notable differences which should not be overlooked. The basic one lies in the monotheism of the Hebrew account contrasted with the many gods acting in the Babylonian story. Equally different is the moral attitude. Details differ too, about the form and size of the ark (the Babylonian one, a cube, would be unlikely to float on the water), the duration of the flood, and the sending out of the birds.

The similarities in the stories and the recognizably Mesopotamian background

imply that they had a common origin. The archaeological evidence for floods in Babylonia and the strong tradition of one major disastrous flood, taken with the stories about it, point to a catastrophic event early in history. When it comes to the interpretation of the event, the biblical record clearly stands apart from the others supporting its own claim to be not just a human tale, but the revelation of God.

THE PALACE OF THE KINGS OF MARI

Nomads leave very little evidence of their existence for archaeologists. Once they have pulled up their tent-pegs and moved away, a few stones in a circle blackened by fire, may be all they leave. So, it is only from contacts with settled farmers and town-dwellers that something can be learned about the nomads, and their opinions may be rather biased. However, there is one discovery which is giving direct information about the nomads in Mesopotamia about 1800 B.C.

In 1933, a party of Arabs dug into a hill by the River Euphrates in order to make a grave and dug out a stone statue. They reported their find and before the end of the year a team of French archaeologists began work. They soon dug out more statues, and read the name of the city of Mari inscribed on one of them in Babylonian. Other records showed that Mari was an important place, but it had not been found until this moment. Excavations have continued in the ruins, with some interruptions, to the present time.

Temples, a palace, statues, inscriptions, and a jar of buried treasure all dating from about 2500 B.C., are signs of Mari's importance at the time when the kings of Ur were buried with such magnificence. Long after that flowering, Mari had another short spell of power. About 1850 B.C., an Amorite chieftain took over the city and made it the center of a kingdom controlling trade along the River Euphrates between Babylonia and Syria. With the income from taxes on this trade and from other business and farming, the kings of Mari were able to build themselves a huge palace. This ranks as one of the major discoveries in the Near East.

The palace of Mari covered more than 2.5 hectares/6 acres of ground and had over 260 rooms, courtyards, and passages. Enemies had ransacked the place and set it on fire. Then the desert sands filled the rooms until they were entirely covered. Thus the walls filled the rooms until they were entirely covered. Thus the walls were still standing 5 meters/15 feet or more high when the archaeologists dug into them, and now a roof has been erected over parts of the palace to protect the walls, so that visitors can walk into a most impressive ancient building.

After shifting the tons of sand from each room, the excavators hoped for great rewards. Some rooms were empty, some rooms were stores: rows of great jars stood ready for oil, wine or grain. There were living-quarters - spacious for the king, his wives and his family, more cramped for officials, and servants. We can imagine craftsmen were busy in workshops, secretaries in their offices, pastry-cooks in the kitchens. There were even singing-girls practicing to entertain the king's foreign guests.

As always, the most informative discoveries are the written documents. Clay tablets were scattered on the floors of various rooms. One in particular was the archive room where they were stored. Altogether over 20,000 cuneiform texts awaited the archaeologists in the palace of Mari.

The scribes kept their eye on every detail of palace life. Tablets record the amounts of food coming into the palace, grain and vegetables of all sorts, and several hundred list the provisions provided for the king's table each day.

Hundreds of letters carry news to the king from all over his realm. One official reports progress in making musical instruments the king had ordered, another that there is not enough gold to decorate a temple as the king wanted. A small group of letters brings accounts of messages given by the gods to prophets or to ordinary people. Some advise the king to act in a certain way, others assure him of divine protection.

The nomadic tribes and their movements were a serious matter for military officers. They constantly reported about them to the king. Tribesmen moving in hundreds were a threat to small farming towns and even to Mari itself. They stopped traffic on the trade-routes and pinned down the king's forces. In attempts to keep the peace, treaties were agreed with some groups who were allowed to settle in parts of the territory of Mari. This is one picture of a situation that has repeated itself throughout the history of Mesopotamia.

The letters name several of the tribes. All fall under the blanket-term 'Amorites.' When scholars first studied these texts they were excited to read one name as 'Benjaminites'. Was this the Israelite tribe, or an ancestor of it? Later research decided the name was actually 'Yaminites,' meaning 'southerners' (like the Yemen in the south of Arabia). Another name means 'northerners,' and they both seem to have to do with the origins of the tribes. There is no reason to see a biblical connection here.

In the same way, the initial enthusiasm of discovery led to a claim that the name David was current as Mari as a title 'chieftain.' On that, theories were built about David's name originally being a different one, 'David' only adopted when he became king.

A long-standing problem could be solved by this means. According to 1 Samuel 17, David killed Goliath, whereas Elhanan killed the giant according to 2 Samuel 21:19. If 'David' was a title, David and Elhanan could be the same person. It is now certain the word at Mari is not a title and not related to David (it is a word meaning 'defeat'), so this solution disappears. (Although there are difficulties, the simplest answer may be to suppose the Philistines had more than one champion named Goliath).

Apart from David, hundreds of Amorite names occur in the Mari tablets. Similarities with Hebrew names abound, notably in names of the patriarchal age. Sometimes the names are identical, as in the case of Ishmael, but this does not mean a

reference to the same man (see “Headline News: The Lost City of Ebla”), simply that the name was common, perhaps fashionable at the time.

Mari’s great palace displays the organization and the bureaucracy of a small, though powerful state. Its archives give a wealth of unexpected knowledge about the life of nomads in the eighteenth century B.C. Despite diplomatic alliances with other kings and with tribes, Mari fell to the forces of Hammurabi of Babylon soon after 1760 B.C. Other towns flourished in the area from time to time. The nearest today is Abu Kemal, but none was as great as Mari.

TUTANKHAMUN’S TREASURE

Lord Carnarvon was an extremely wealthy man, but he had paid for 200,000 tons of Egyptian sand and stone to be shifted and after six seasons of digging, they had still found nothing. It was a waste of effort to carry on and he decided to end the work. He called Howard Carter to his country home to tell him. It was Carter who had proposed and directed the excavation because he was convinced there was one royal burial place still to be found in the Valley of the Kings. Tombs existed there and through all of rulers history, all should be there, except for one - Tutankhamun.

Carter persuaded his patron to support one final attempt. Hardly an inch of the valley floor remained to be cleared of rubble. Just one area, which had been left so that tourists could visit another tomb easily, was still unexplored. Surely it would be worth clearing that, too! So, in November 1922, Howard Carter returned to his task - and to his triumph.

The workmen cleared away the stones and the ruins of huts which builders of another tomb had made. Beneath them, cut in the rock, was a staircase leading downwards. After sixteen steps, there was a sealed doorway and some of the seals bore Tutankhamun’s name. Although in ancient times thieves had broken through, the royal cemetery-keepers had filled up the hole they made. Had the thieves left anything

of value behind?

Beyond the door was a passage about 9 meters/30 feet long, then another sealed doorway.

On 26 November, Lord Carnarvon, his daughter, and an assistant pressed around Carter as he made a hole in the blocking and held a candle inside. What could he see?

'Wonderful things,' he replied.

Carter was looking into the largest of four underground chambers. Three proved to be packed with objects, the equipment the king would need in his next existence. The fourth chamber housed the body of the king.

The robbers' hole and the disturbance they had made searching in the tomb for precious things they could carry away, show how Tutankhamun's treasure was almost destroyed centuries ago, just after it was buried. The vigilance of the ancient guards foiled their attempt. Soon after, the entrance disappeared under the rubble of the valley floor and the later workmen's huts, hid it completely. That is how the tomb of an unimportant pharaoh escaped the looting, which all the tombs of Egypt's greatest kings suffered.

Tutankhamun's tomb gives a glimpse of the glory that Egypt's kings enjoyed when the nation's power was great. Gold flowed into the treasury as booty or tribute from foreign countries, and from gold mines in the south of Egypt. Tutankhamun's tomb shows how the gold was used to honor the king.

What Carter saw in his first glimpse included a gilded wooden bed, a gilded statue, and many other pieces of furniture decorated with gold. As they gradually emptied the tomb, the archaeologists were constantly amazed at the variety of the

objects they found, the high quality of workmanship, and the high level of art.

There is, for example, a wooden throne, the legs ending in lions' claws, and topped at the front by lion's heads, the whole encased in gold. The arms are carved as winged serpents protecting the king and the gold plating of the back shows the queen attending the seated king. The sheen of the gold is relieved by details picked out in silver and glass, colored blue, green and reddish-brown.

Four chariots had been dismantled and laid in the tomb. The wooden body of one was cased in gold, beaten and engraved with pictures of Egypt's enemies tied together. The dead king owned many pieces of fine jewelry, too, of gold and semi-precious stones. He had a dagger of solid gold and a more effective one with a blade of iron, a rarity at that time. Twenty-nine bows lay in the tomb, some of them bound or plated with gold. The catalogue of precious possessions seems endless.

Most magnificent of all, and most well known, are the solid gold coffin and the golden mask that enclosed the pharaoh's body. Inside the four shrines (see "Tutankhamun, the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant") was a yellow stone coffin. Within this coffin was another mummy, shaped of wood and covered with a gold leaf. A second gold-plated wooden coffin (fitted inside the first), and when it was opened, the astonishing gold coffin was revealed. The metal is 2.5 to 3 mm/ 1/8 to 1/10 in. thick, beaten to the shape of the body and inlaid, like the second one, with colored glass and stones. The body had been mummified and on it between the layers of careful bandaging, were dozens of amulets and jewels in precious metal.

In effect, the royal tomb was furnished with all the king had needed or used in his life-time, so that his spirit could maintain the same life-style in the next world. To ensure the welfare of the spirit, various magic texts were engraved in the tomb, and carved figures of gods and goddesses were placed in it. Great care had been given to do everything that was right and would benefit the dead Tutankhamun.

He had died about 1350 B.C., within 100 years of Moses' life-time. In the treasures of his tomb; therefore, we can see the style of the Egyptian court where Moses was educated, and the luxury that surrounded him. Although the ordinary Egyptians would not have shared in these riches, various discoveries make it clear that a considerable number of royal officials, soldiers, and administrators did.

From these people, in the main, we may assume, the Israelites 'borrowed' the gold and silver they took when they left Egypt after the tenth plague.

Exodus 12 records: 'The Israelites had done as Moses had said, and had asked the Egyptians for gold and silver jewelry and for clothing. The Lord made the Egyptians respect the people and give them what they asked for. In this way, the Israelites carried away the wealth of the Egyptians.'

Later, in the wilderness, according to Exodus 38, the Israelites gave nearly thirty talents of gold for decorating the Tabernacle (see 'Tutankhamun, the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant') and making its equipment. Taking the talent as about 30kg/66 lbs., this amounts to about 900 kg/1,980 lbs.

Some people are skeptical of so large an amount, yet it gains plausibility in the light of Tutankhamun's treasure. His solid gold inner coffin weighs about 110kg/243 lbs., rather more than three and a half talents, and there are numerous other objects in his tomb which are made of gold or overlaid with gold. It is impossible to weigh the gold plating, but if 180 kg/400 lbs., is a reasonable guess for the total weight of gold in the tomb, then it was about one fifth of the amount that the Israelites carried off.

Tutankhamun's treasure is the most spectacular of all archaeological discoveries. Although there is no direct link between this discovery and the Old Testament, it illustrates the wealth of Egypt and the background for the Exodus story. It also demonstrates the quantity of gold available and how it was used.

IN THE BRICKFIELDS OF EGYPT

Visitors to Egypt stand in amazement before the great pyramids near Cairo, then travel over 322 km/200 miles south along the Nile to gaze at the great temples of Karnak. These tremendous monuments are built of stone. Gangs of men were organized to quarry the stones in the hills at the edge of the Nile valley and bring them by sledge and by boat to the building site. There, the masons would trim and shape them ready for use.

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Although the stone structures still stand to impress the tourist, (and there have been tourists visiting them for a very long time - the Sphinx and the pyramids were already an attraction in the time of Moses), bricks were the usual building material in ancient Egypt.

Each year the River Nile rises about 7.5 meters/25 feet to flood its valley. The flood begins in July and the waters gradually subside from the end of October. As the river rushes down from the mountains of Ethiopia, it brings tons of mud, suspended in the water. This rich black soil settles on the ground as the water moves more slowly across Egypt, leaving a new deposit to make the earth very fertile for farming. With mud all around them, it was natural for the Egyptians to use it for building.

Their earliest shelters may have been simply reeds, woven and plastered, with mud. Buildings of this sort were made for a long while, until the people discovered the advantages of bricks, sometime before 3000 B.C. The idea may have reached them from Syria or Palestine, where bricks were common much earlier, as they were in Babylonia.

Making bricks was simple. Laborers dug out suitable mud and carried it to a yard where they mixed it with water, treading it in or turning it with a hoe to get the right consistency. Mud alone will make brick, but adding chopped straw gives strength and makes the substance less crumbly. Nowadays, about 20 kg/44 lbs. of straw are needed

for every cubic meter of mud, and sand is often included as well.

After mixing and kneading, men carried the brick-earth to the brick-makers. They pressed it into rectangular wooden frames held flat on level ground. Then they lifted the frames off and left the bricks to dry. After two or three days in the hot sun, the bricks were hard and ready for the builder.

The work was messy, even when the bricks were dry. An ancient Egyptian scribe praised his own profession above all others. The builder, he said, had a miserable time: "The small builder carries mud...He is dirtier than....pigs from treading down his mud. His clothes are stiff with clay...."

Bricks found in Egypt often show the pieces of straw still in their makeup. When they were soft, bricks destined for a special building might be marked with a stamp. Cut in the wooden stamp would be the name and titles of a pharaoh or a high official (see also "The Glory that was Babylon"). The bricks for houses measure about 23 X 11.5 X 7.5 cm/9 X 4 1/2 X 3 ins. For bigger buildings they might be larger, up to 40 X 20 X 15 cm/16 X 8 X 6 ins.

Several records present accounts of brick-making for official purposes. They list gangs of twelve workmen, each under a foreman. In one case, 602 men produced 39,118 bricks. That is only sixty-five each; the modern rate for a group of four men is 3,000 bricks each day. Other accounts give the numbers of bricks of various sizes - 23,603 of 5 palm-breadths, 92,908 of 6 palm-breadths - in all, 116,511 bricks. A detailed account from the thirteenth century B.C., lists forty men with the target '2,000 bricks' opposite each. Then the actual numbers delivered are entered, one being 'total 1,360; deficit 370.' We are not told the penalties for failure!

All this produces the same picture as the Bible gives in Exodus (chapters 1 and 5), describing Israelites making bricks for pharaoh before the Exodus.

“The Egyptians put slave-drivers over them to crush their spirits with hard labor. The Israelites built the cities of Pithom and Rameses to serve as supply centers for the king. But the more the Egyptians oppressed the Israelites, the more they increased in number and the further they spread through the land. The Egyptians came to fear the Israelites and made their lives miserable by forcing them into cruel slavery. They made them work on their building projects and in their fields, and they had no mercy on them.”

Moses and Aaron went to the king of Egypt and said, “The Lord, the God of Israel, says, ‘Let my people go, so that they can hold a festival in the desert to honor me.’ ‘Who is the Lord?’ the king demanded. ‘Why should I listen to him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord; and I will not let Israel go.’ Moses and Aaron replied, ‘The God of the Hebrews has revealed himself to us. Allow us to travel for three days into the desert to offer sacrifices to the Lord, our God. If we don’t do so, he will kill us with disease or by war.’ The king said to Moses and Aaron, ‘What do you mean by making the people neglect their work? Get those slaves back to work! You people have become more numerous than the Egyptians and now you want to stop working!’

That same day the king commanded the Egyptian slave-drivers and the Israelite foremen: ‘Stop giving the people straw for making bricks. Make them go and find it for themselves. But still require them to make the same number of bricks as before, not one brick less. They haven’t enough work to do, and that is why they keep asking me to let them go and offer sacrifices to their God! Make these men work harder and keep them busy, so that they won’t have time to listen to a pack of lies.’

The slave-drivers and the Israelite foremen went out and said to the Israelites, ‘The king has said that he will not supply you with any more straw. He says that you must go and get it for yourselves wherever you can find it, but you must still make the same number of bricks.’

So the people went all over Egypt looking for straw. The slave-drivers kept trying to force them to make the same number of bricks everyday as they had made when they were given straw. The Egyptian slave-drivers beat the Israelite foreman, whom they had put in charge of the work. They demanded, 'Why aren't you people making the same number of bricks as you made before?'

Then the foremen went to the king and complained, "Why do you do this to us, Your Majesty? We are given no straw, but we are still ordered to make bricks? And now we are being beaten and you are responsible!" The king answered, "You are lazy and don't want to work, and that is why you ask me to let you go and offer sacrifices to the Lord. Now get back to work! You will not be given any straw, but you must still make the same number of bricks." The foremen realized that they were in trouble when they were told that they had to make the same number of bricks every day as they had made before.

Here are the mud and straw, the mold's, the foremen and the taskmasters, and the daily quotas. The biblical narrative illustrates the human suffering and toil behind the figures of the Egyptian accounts. No wonder the people of Israel wanted to escape!

Their demand, was for permission to leave, to worship their God. That was in order; notes about workmen carving the tombs of the pharaohs in the Valley of the Kings, report many men taking days off for religious festivals and worship.

Straw made better bricks: the Israelite laborers had to find their own, after their petition to pharaoh. An Egyptian official in a remote border-post complained, "there are no men to make bricks, and no straw in the region."

For thousands of years men have made bricks in Egypt; the Exodus record and the Egyptian sources give vivid pictures of the processes and hardships involved in the second millennium B.C.

THE STORE-CITY OF PHARAOH RAMESSES II

When Egyptian kings wanted to honor their gods and preserve their own fame by some great building work, they always built in stone because mud-brick buildings did not last nearly as long. The stone had to be quarried in the hills and brought to the towns.

This was a very costly business, for any buildings sited in the Nile Delta, in the north of Egypt. So, when one of the pharaohs ruling at a period when the country was weak, about 900 B.C., wanted to build in two Delta towns, he could not afford fresh stones. Instead, his men took the stones they needed from the ruins of earlier palaces and temples.

The new buildings were put up at Tanis and at Bubastis. Excavations at Tanis, now called San el Hagar, uncovered large quantities of carved stonework in the buildings of Osorkon II (about 874-850 B.C.). On many of the blocks are the names and titles of the great Pharaoh Ramesses II, who ruled 400 years earlier.

When they were first discovered, the excavator jumped to the conclusion that Ramesses himself had erected these important temples and palaces. He was known to have built a new city in the Delta, named after him, Pi-Ramesse, and believed to be the "Ramesses" which the Israelites toiled to build (see Exodus 1:11; the identity of the other place, Pithom, is uncertain).

But Ramesses' stonework at Tanis is clearly not in its original position. Some of the inscriptions are built in the walls upside down, or facing the interior of the wall. Nowhere on the ground at Tanis were there any foundations of Ramesses II's buildings, or any blocks in their proper places.

Since the excavations at Tanis, other work has been done at a place 30 km/18

miles to the south, now named Qantir. Today there is almost nothing to be seen there above ground.

From time to time, brightly glazed bricks and tiles came out of digging done in the area. Some had decorated a summer palace that Ramesses' father, Seti I, had had constructed. Much belonged to a great reconstruction of the palace for Ramesses. His name and titles stood out in blue on white and white on blue, with scenes of his victories in other colors, and figures of defeated foreigners on the steps of the throne.

Obviously, this had been an elegant palace, making up in decorative brick-work for the lack of the carved stone featured in palaces further south.

Study has disclosed that the palace at Qantir was part of a city - the city called Pi-Ramesse. There were temples for the chief gods, and one for the Canaanite goddess Astarte, houses and offices for the government staff, and military barracks. Small houses and workshops accommodated large numbers of servants, craftsmen, and laborers.

A canal led water from a branch of the Nile at one side of the river to join it at the other, so setting the town on an island. Ships from the Mediterranean could easily sail to the port created on the canal. Storehouses were built to contain goods imported and exported, and to hold the taxes the pharaoh's customs' men exacted.

All this was Ramesses' work, some of it done hastily. An ancient town, Avairs, lay beside the new one, so Ramesses had pillars carried from older temples there to complete one of his new ones, just as a later king, in turn, took Ramesses' stone blocks and pillars for his buildings at Tanis.

Pi-Ramesse was plainly a commercial center. It was also a well located military center. Under Ramesses II, Egypt kept control over Canaan and part of Lebanon. After twenty years of battles and campaigns in Syria-Palestine, Ramesses made a peace-

treaty with the Hittite king, whose army had marched as far south as Damascus (1259 B.C.).

From Pi-Ramesse there was easy communication with Egyptian governors in Canaan by land and sea, and the Nile led on through Egypt, giving access to the old capitals at Memphis and at Thebes, far up-stream.

No Egyptian accounts for the construction of Pi-Ramesse are known. The extensive, labor-intensive works would need many gangs of men, clearing sites, making bricks, and raising the walls. A large alien community living in the neighborhood would be an ideal pool for the essential man-power. And that is exactly what the book of Exodus describes.

Even without precise details of the labor-force from Egypt, we can see how the discovery of Pi-Ramesse illuminates the biblical record and endorses it. From Pi-Ramesse, the oppressed Israelites did not have to go far to cross the frontier and escape into the Sinai Desert.

KING HAMMURABI'S LAW-CODE AND THE LAW OF MOSES

French archaeologists digging in the ancient city of Susa in western Persia in 1901-1902 made a surprising discovery. Amid ruins of buildings abandoned at the end of the second millennium B.C., they found finely carved stone monuments made hundreds of years before. They were not local Elamite sculptures, they were memorials that famous kings of Babylon had set up in their own cities.

In a short-lived moment of triumph, a king of Susa had raided Babylonia, carried away these pieces as trophies, telling about his victory in his own inscriptions and writing his name on some of the prizes. The stones were shipped to Paris where they now adorn the Musee du Louvre.

Chief among these monuments is a black stone pillar. It stands 2.25 meters/7 feet 5 ins. high and has a carving 60 cm/2 feet high at the top. Hundreds of lines of cuneiform writing are carefully engraved over the rest of the stone. Details of this discovery, with a translation of the text, were issued within a year and so the world came to know about the Laws of Hammurabi.

There was great excitement, for here was a series of laws very much like the “Laws of Moses” in many respects. Here are translations of paragraphs which find their closest similarities in Exodus 21-23.

“If a son has struck his father, they shall cut off his hand.” (no. 195)

“Whoever hits his father or his mother is to be put to death.” (Exodus 21:15)

“If a citizen steals a citizen’s child, he shall be put to death.” (no. 14)

“Whoever kidnaps a man, either to sell him or to keep him as a slave is to be put to death.” (Exodus 21:16)

“If a citizen has hit a citizen in a quarrel and has wounded him, that citizen shall swear, “I did not strike him intentionally,” and he shall pay the doctor.” (no. 206)

“If there is a fight and one man hits another with a stone or with his fist, but does not kill him, he is not to be punished. If the man who was hit has to stay in bed, but later is able to get up and walk outside with the help of a stick, the man who hit him is to pay for his lost time and take care of him until he gets well.” (Exodus 21: 18-19)

“If a citizen has hit a citizen’s daughter and she has a miscarriage, he shall pay ten shekels of silver for her miscarriage. If that woman dies as a result, they shall put his daughter to death.” (nos. 209, 210)

“If some men are fighting and hurt a pregnant woman so that she loses her child, but she is not injured in any other way, the one who hurt her is to be fined whatever amount the woman’s husband demand, subject to

the approval of the judges. But if the woman herself is injured, the punishment shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.” (Exodus 21:22-25)

“If a citizen has put out a citizen’s eye, they shall put out his eye. If a citizen has broken a citizen’s bone, they shall break his bone. If a citizen has knocked out his equal’s tooth, they shall knock out his tooth,” (nos. 196, 197, 200)

“Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.” (Exodus 21:24)

“If an ox has gored a citizen while going along the road and has caused his death, there shall be no penalty in this case. If the ox belonged to a citizen who had been informed by the authorities it was likely to gore, and he has not removed its horns or kept it under control, and that ox gored a citizen to death, he shall pay half a mina of silver.” (30 shekels) (nos. 250, 251)

“If a bull gores someone to death, it is to be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but its owner is not to be punished. But if the bull had been in the habit of attacking people and its owner had been warned, but did not keep it penned up - then if it gores someone to death, it is to be stoned, and its owner is to be put to death also. However, if the owner is allowed to pay a fine to save his life, he must pay the full amount required. If the bull kills a boy or girl, the same rule applies. If the bull kills a male or female slave, its owner shall pay the owner of the slave thirty pieces of silver, and the bull shall be stoned to death.” (Exodus 21:28-32)

or a “If a citizen has stolen an ox, or a sheep, or an ass, or a pig, goat, if it is the property of the temple or of the crown, he shall give back thirty-fold, but if it is the property of a dependent, he shall give back ten-fold. If the thief has no means to make repayment, he shall be put to death. If a citizen has committed a robbery and is caught, he shall

be put to death.” (nos. 8, 22)

“If a man steals a cow or a sheep and kills it or sells it, he must pay five cows for one cow and four sheep for one sheep. He must pay for what he stole. If he owns nothing, he shall be sold as a slave to pay for what he has stolen. If the stolen animal, whether a cow, a donkey, or a sheep, is found alive in his possession, he shall pay two for one. If a thief is caught breaking into a house at night and is killed, the one who killed him is not guilty of murder. But if it happens during the day, he is guilty of murder.” (Exodus 22:1-4)

Hammurabi was king of Babylon about 1750 B.C., several years before the time of Moses. His laws deal with many of the same offenses because Babylonians were mostly farmers living in small towns, as the Israelites were to be. Some of the similarities are so striking that there is little doubt the Hebrew laws draw on a widely known tradition.

This is most apparent in the laws about the dangerous ox. Another collection of Babylonian laws, slightly older than Hammurabi's has a ruling he does not include, yet which is close to a biblical command: “If an ox has gored another ox to death, the owners of the oxen shall divide between them the value of the living ox and the body of the dead ox.” (Laws of Eshnunna, no. 53)

“If one man's bull kills another man's bull, the two men shall sell the live bull and divide the money; they shall also divide up the meat from the dead animal.” (Exodus 21:35)

The differences between these Babylonian laws and the biblical ones are just as striking as the similarities.

In the Babylonian laws, property and possessions are as important as people. Crimes to do with either have the same range of punishments.

In the biblical laws, only crimes against the person carry physical penalties, offenses over possessions are penalized in money or goods.

The fate of the thief who cannot make repayment under Hammurabi's law (no. 8), is death, whereas Exodus 22:1-4, requires him to be sold as a slave. The Hebrew laws set a higher value on man than the Babylonians.

Hammurabi's laws, as far as can be discovered, Babylonian scribes were still copying them in Nebuchadnezzar's time, well over a thousand years after Hammurabi. No Babylonian reports of legal cases refer to them. Their influence may have lain in their principles rather than their practice.

In this too, they are interestingly like the Old Testament laws. Although they are recorded as given by Moses, scholars commonly claim there is little trace of them in the history books of Samuel and Kings. They could have existed for centuries, as Hammurabi's did.

This famous monument shows that Hebrew laws shared many concerns with the older Babylonian ones. The Hebrew laws may have inherited certain solutions for particular problems from the Babylonians. The comparisons also point to deep-seated distinctions in concepts of human life and values, drawing attention to an aspect of Hebrew thought which still influences modern civilized society.

AND THE WALLS FELL DOWN FLAT

The Bible tells us that at the time of the Israelite conquest of Canaan, Joshua's soldiers marched around Jericho and when the walls fell flat, they killed the inhabitants, took everything worth having, and set the city on fire. If any event in Israel's history can be traced by archaeology, surely this one can!

Jericho was one of the first places in Palestine to attract the early archaeologists.

The first team sent from London by the Palestine Exploration Fund, a group of Royal Engineers led by Charles Warren, dug shafts deep into the ruin mound in 1868. Everyone was hoping for great stone carvings like those recently brought back from the Assyrian palaces. Finding nothing but earth and mud bricks, the diggers decided there was nothing worth searching for, and moved on.

Forty years passed before more excavations were made at Jericho. In the interval, there was some progress towards a better understanding of the ancient cities in Palestine. German archaeologists, directed by E. Sellin, uncovered part of the city wall and houses within it during the years 1907-1909. They found nothing they could say was the result of Joshua's attack.

That was left to the third expedition, from 1930-1936, led by John Garstang of the University of Liverpool. The excavators had the search for remains of Joshua's Jericho as a major aim. After digging for a few weeks, Garstang amazed the world. He pointed to masses of mud-bricks and the stumps of walls. These, he claimed, were the very walls that fell before Joshua and his men. Garstang's discovery was accepted by other archaeologists and became a stock example of how archaeology "proves" the Bible's record true.

There were two walls, parallel, with a space of 4.5 meters/15 feet between them. Buildings had rested across the tops of these walls. A violent destruction by fire had overtaken the city. According to Garstang, this happened about 1400 B.C., a date he reached on the evidence of Egyptian scarabs from tombs he opened around Jericho. None of the scarabs was later than the reign of Pharaoh Amenophis III, then dated about 1411-1375 B.C. This date is in agreement with the earlier of the dates proposed for the Exodus. (see "Relatives of the Hebrews?")

In addition to this city belonging to the Late Bronze Age, Garstang's work proved that Jericho had been an important place at much earlier periods, in the Middle Bronze Age, in the Early Bronze Age (about 3000-2300 B.C.), and in the Neolithic Age, before

man used metal. It was about this very early time that the fourth series of excavation at Jericho had most to reveal, but they also related to the question of “Joshua’s Jericho.”

In 1952, Miss Kathleen Kenyon of the University of London, opened new trenches at Jericho. She wanted to clear up some problems about Garstang’s conclusions. Other excavations in Palestine had produced results which did not agree entirely with Garstang’s, quite apart from the question about the date of the destruction of the city. Very few scholars accept the date Garstang used, about 1400 B.C., preferring the late date in the thirteenth century.

Kathleen Kenyon examined the walls and houses Garstang found and was able to show he had dated them wrongly. By minute, painstaking study of the layers of earth running beneath them, up to them, and over them, and of the broken pottery in those layers, she demonstrated that the walls were about 1,000 years older than Garstang had thought. Earthquakes had made them tumble long before Joshua’s day. The rubbish of later buildings piled up over the ruins and Garstang’s excavations, failed to separate them.

Kathleen Kenyon found the same evidence for destruction by fire as Garstang had done. With better knowledge of the pottery fashions, the fruit of an extra twenty years research by many archaeologists, she demonstrated that the fire happened some decades before 1500 B.C. After that, Jericho lay desolate until about 1400 B.C., or soon after.

What buildings existed then, and how long they stood, is very hard to say. Certainly there was never a great city at Jericho again. Over many centuries, wind and rain have scoured the mounds, washing away the ruined mud-brick walls. The city which was burnt before 1500 B.C., had a great rampart all round it with a brick wall on top. Erosion had taken away every part of that wall except at one corner, and there only the foundations had escaped. At other points, up to 6 meters/20 feet of the height of the sloping rampart had vanished too. In the light of this evidence, Kathleen Kenyon could

suggest that erosion had removed almost all traces of the lost Jericho.

However, she found a small part of a building which she dated before 1300 B.C., and Garstang had found pottery belonging to the same time or a little later. There is enough to show there were some people about at Jericho somewhere near the time of Joshua's attack. But what the place was like cannot be discovered.

Jericho is a good example of the limitations archaeologists may face. The excavations have revealed nothing that really agrees with the biblical history. The best one can say is that erosion has obliterated the ruins of Joshua's Jericho. But the absence of ruins is taken by some Old Testament scholars to support their view that the biblical account is a piece of legend or folk-lore, a story which need have no factual content at all.

In the case of Jericho, archaeology can contribute nothing for or against this view. For a historian; however, it is most unsatisfactory, for it opens the way to treating ancient records in any way the individual pleases. He may even remodel them to suit his own theories.

The book of Joshua preserves the story in its ancient form. Like any other ancient record, it deserves serious historical consideration. The fact that archaeological discoveries have been reinterpreted, warns us against treating them as crystal clear evidence.

SOLOMON'S BUILDINGS

The most remarkable of the buildings assigned to Solomon's time are the gateways leading through the walls of three cities. There are no foundation stones or documents to say who built them. But the pottery found there can be dated to Solomon's reign, showing that the buildings were certainly in use at that time.

One was discovered at Gezer in excavations from 1902 to 1909, another at Megiddo in 1936-37, and the third at Hazor in 1955-58.

Progress in the techniques of excavation and better knowledge of pottery types, led Yigael Yadin to assign the gate he excavated at Hazor to Solomon's time. He then took a further look at the ruins at Gezer and especially at Megiddo which the original excavators had not associated with Solomon at all. Yadin was able to show that all three gates have a nearly identical plan and very similar dimensions. The pottery fragments belonging to the moment when the gates were constructed and in use, belong to Solomon's time - the middle of the tenth century B.C.

Yadin turned his attention to Gezer and Megiddo after the Hazor gateway had come to light because he recalled a passage from the Bible that relates Solomon's building activities at important towns in his kingdom. I Kings 9:15 records: "King Solomon used forced labor to build the Temple and the palace, to fill in land on the east side of the city, and to build the city wall. He also used it to rebuild the cities of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer."

In addition to the uniform plan of the gateways in the city, Yadin found that the adjoining city walls were also of identical design. They were what is called 'casemates' - that is, a double line of wall with cross-walls making a series of long narrow rooms.

At each site, the stonework of the walls above floor level was of very high quality. The blocks in each face of the walls were carefully squared and laid, giving an imposing solidity to the structures.

The similarities between these three gateways, and the quality of their masonry, suggest they were built to a design circulated by a central authority with considerable resources at its disposal. The evidence of the pottery indicates a tenth century date for the building work.

When these points are placed beside the biblical report, the conclusion that these gateways are indeed Solomon's work, becomes almost inescapable. Short of inscriptions on the stones themselves, it would be hard to make a stronger case.

At Megiddo, there were traces of extensive buildings with the city belonging to the same date. Unfortunately, their stonework was so good that later builders demolished the walls to re-use the blocks, with the result that the palaces, offices, and houses of the time are little known.

At Gezer and at Hazor too, very little could be learned about the Solomonic cities because later occupants had disturbed and destroyed their ruins.

KING HEZEKIAH'S TUNNEL

For years, women of Jerusalem had washed their clothes in the pool at the south of the city. Water came into the pool from a tunnel and the children used to splash in the water. Some of the boys crept a little way into the dark passage.

One day in 1880, one of them holding a light, went further than usual. By the flickering flame, he noticed some writing scratched on the rocky wall. He came out to describe his discovery.

Nobody had seen this inscription before, so soon it was studied carefully. Water running down the tunnel wall had left deposits of lime over the writing, but when they were cleaned off, six lines of clear Hebrew writing appeared.

They describe how two gangs of men cut a tunnel through the rock. The gangs began work at opposite ends and eventually met deep underground. The text says one gang heard the sound of the other hacking at the rock, so they knew which way to go.

The tunnel runs to the pool from a spring on the east side of the city, in the

Kidron Valley. People had known about it for a long time when Edward Robinson, a famous American explorer of Palestine, made the first accurate survey of it in 1838. He demonstrated that the water ran from the Virgin's Fountain to the pool, not the other way as some had thought.

With his friends, he managed to make his way through the whole length of the tunnel. At some places, it was 4.5-6 meters/15-20 feet high, at others it was so low, the explorers could only wriggle through, lying at full length and dragging themselves along on their elbows. Since that time the silt has been cleared from the bottom and it is not as difficult to walk through.

Robinson had expected the tunnel to be about 366 meters/1,200 feet long on an almost direct line. So he was surprised when his measurement reached 534 meters/1,750 feet. The reason is clear because the tunnel bends like an S. There is another double bend near the middle which is evidently where the two gangs of tunnelers met. Had they not heard each others pick-axes, the plan suggests they might not have met at all.

Why the tunnel has so twisting a course is not certain. Despite their lack of compasses, the ancient engineers could have kept a straight line by sighting from the ends. Possibly they followed an underground stream and faults in the rock for part of their work.

The tunnel was dug to take water from one part of the city to another; that is obvious. The inscription which the local boy found nearly fifty years after Robinson's survey, points to the time when the tunnel was made and the reason for making it then.

The engraving is a fine example of the ancient Hebrew hand-writing current before the Exile. From the time of its discovery, scholars have linked it with King Hezekiah of Judah, just before 700 B.C. In recent years, the recovery of other early Hebrew documents has shown that the shapes of the letters belong to this date.

Among them is an impression on clay of a seal owned by one of Hezekiah's officers. "Jehozerah, son of Hilkiyah, servant of Hezekiah." (Hilkiyah is mentioned in 2 Kings 18).

The link with Hezekiah follows from records in the Old Testament about Hezekiah making a reservoir and a canal in Jerusalem. 2 Kings 20:20 records: "Everything else that King Hezekiah did, his brave deeds, and an account of how he built a reservoir and dug a tunnel to bring water into the city, are all recorded in "The History of the Kings of Judah."

2 Chronicles 32:3-4 says: "He and his officials decided to cut off the supply of water outside the city in order to prevent the Assyrians from having any water when they got near Jerusalem. The officials led a large number of people out and stopped up all the springs so that no more water flowed out of them."

Verse 30 adds: "It was King Hezekiah who blocked the outlet for the Spring of Gihon and channeled the water to flow through a tunnel to a point inside the walls of Jerusalem. Hezekiah succeeded in everything he did."

Today the pool is open to the sky, and lies outside the Turkish wall of Jerusalem. When Hezekiah's men dug it, the pool may have been open, reached by steps cut around the sides, or it may have been entirely underground. At that time, it was within the walls of the city, for the oldest part of Jerusalem was built above Virgin's Fountain, the Gihon Spring of the Old Testament, which provided the citizens with water.

A Greek who hoped to become rich by selling the inscription chopped it out of the rock in 1890 and broke it. The Turkish authorities, who then ruled Jerusalem, confiscated it, and it is now on exhibition in the antiquities museum in Istanbul.

The pool is called the Pool of Siloam, but it is not certain if this is the pool mentioned in the Gospel of John, Chapter 9. The pool Jesus sent the blind man to wash in, could be another pool, slightly to the south.

“NEBUCHADNEZZAR, KING OF THE JEWS”

Excavators digging into the ruined palaces of Sennacherib and other Assyrian kings all tell the same story. The magnificent halls and courtyards lined with sculptured slabs of stone were looted and burnt, and left desolate. What the plunderers could not carry away, they left to wild animals and the elements and the glory of Assyria vanished.

In place of Assyria, Babylon rose to rule. A few Babylonian tablets, the Bible, and some Greek reports describe these events. After 640 B.C., Assyria grew weak. From the east, from the hills of Persia, Medes, and their allies attacked. From the south came the forces of Babylonia, commanded by successors of Merodach-baladan, the king whom Sennacherib had defeated.

Following several battles, these forces joined to bring Assyria's power to an end by capturing Nineveh in 612 B.C. The victors shared the Assyrian empire, the Medes taking the hill-country to the east and north, the Babylonians holding Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine.

A third power, Egypt, tried to win some of the spoils, but the Babylonians thoroughly defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish, in 605 B.C. Commanding the Babylonian army in that battle was Nebuchadnezzar. He became king of Babylon in the same year and reigned for forty-three years, until 562 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar did not leave long descriptions of his victories on the walls of the temples and palaces he built, as the Assyrian kings had done. The inscriptions he did leave speak almost solely of what he did for the gods he worshipped. As a result, the history of his reign is not very well known. Some inscriptions name places in his empire, showing how large it was, and two groups of cuneiform tablets supply more detailed information.

The first group is the Babylonian Chronicles. Two tablets cover events in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar's father, and two in his own reign (other tablets deal with earlier and later kings). The two tablets for Nebuchadnezzar, unfortunately, only refer to the first eleven years of his rule. The remaining thirty-two are almost entirely without record. It is possible other tablets will be found one day. Those known at present were bought by the British Museum late in the nineteenth century, but the two about Nebuchadnezzar lay there awaiting publication until 1956.

Why the tablets were written is not explained; they seem to be extracts from a fuller account of each year's events. These chronicles are not boastful descriptions of bloodshed and victory, like the Assyrian king's monuments. They are plain, factual, and scholars agree, reliable. They tell us about the rise of Babylon to power and the fall of Assyria, of the battle of Carchemish and Babylonian successes in Syria and Palestine.

One short entry states: "The seventh year, the month of Kislev, the king of Babylonia mustered his forces and marched to Syria. He encamped against the city of Judah and on the second day of the month of Adar, he took the city and captured the king. He appointed a king of his own choice there, took its heavy tribute, and brought them to Babylon."

Enough is known for these dates to be translated exactly. The month of Kislev in year seven was December 598 B.C. The second of Adar was 15/16 March 597 B.C.

Here is the Babylonian report of the attack on Jerusalem which ended with Nebuchadnezzar making Zedekiah, king, in place of young Jehoiachin, whom he took prisoner to Babylon (see also "We Can't See the Signals"). These kings were under Nebuchadnezzar's control. He was really "Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Jews," as the nursery rhyme says!

The Babylonian soldiers transported Jehoiachin and his courtiers to Babylon.

There they lived under guard in the royal palace. During excavations in that palace, some cuneiform tablets came to light which list rations issued to all sorts of people living there. The tablets are dated by years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign between 594 and 596 B. C.

Among those who received grain and oil were Medes and Persians, Egyptians and Lydians, all with their own distinctive names. There were men from Phoenician cities - Byblos, Arvad and Tyre - from Philistine Ashkelon, and some from Judah. Most of them were officials or craftsmen, sailors, boat-builders, carpenters, and one Egyptian was a keeper of monkeys (see also "The Price of Protection")

From Ashkelon, there were sons of the king, but from Judah, there was the king himself. Four tablets list rations for "Jehoiachin, king of Judah," for his five sons, and probably for four other Judeans - one a gardener, bearing the good Hebrew name, "Shelemiah."

Nebuchadnezzar kept Jehoiachin in his palace throughout his reign. His son, 2 Kings 25 relates, released him and gave him a privileged place at his table.

Nebuchadnezzar made Babylon a splendid city (see "The Glory that was Babylon"). He had a very large palace, heavily defended at the north end of the city. Its main entrance opened into a great courtyard almost 66 meters/220 feet long X 42 meters/140 feet wide. At either end were rooms for guards and other personnel. Opposite the main entrance, the visitor would pass through a hall into the second court, a rather smaller one with many rooms at the ends. A suite at the southern end may have served the highest officials under the king for receiving petitioners.

A monumental gateway led west from that courtyard into the main one, nearly 60 meters/200 feet long X 55 meters/180 feet wide. Bricks covered with blue glaze bearing tree and flower designs in yellow, white, red, and blue covered the south wall of the main courtyard. Below the trees ran a frieze of lions.

A central doorway led through this wall to the king's throne room, a hall 52 meters/170 feet long X 17 meters/56 feet wide. The king's throne probably stood opposite this main door, partly recessed into the wall. This was presumably the room in which Belshazzar may be imagined sitting when the hand wrote his doom on the plaster of the wall. Beyond this central courtyard and throne-room lay two more courtyards with many more rooms. In some, the royal women may have lived.

At the north-eastern corner of the palace was a structure with thick brick walls and long, narrow vaulted chambers. (The ration tablets of Jehoiachin were found here). These may have been store-rooms, but the thick walls suggest this was a high building. The excavator proposed to identify it with the "Hanging Gardens."

Greek historians explain how a Babylonian king created a mountain-like garden to please his Median wife. She came from a hilly land and was homesick in the flat plains of Babylon. The vaulted rooms could have supported terraces of brickwork for these gardens.

Nebuchadnezzar had a long reign in which to enjoy his glory. Less than twenty-five years after his death, the Persians conquered Babylon and the city gradually lost its importance.

PERSIAN SPLENDORS

Three merchants from central Asia were traveling to India in May 1880. They were coming into northern Afghanistan with bags of money to buy tea and other things in India. They were told the local chief was taking a heavy tax from all travelers. The chief wanted money to build up his army. (He got enough to do that, later becoming ruler of Afghanistan).

But he failed with these merchants. Someone told them there was treasure for

sale, a treasure of gold and silver objects. The merchants bought those things and sewed them into packages to look like merchandise and so escape the chieftain's greedy eyes. All was well as they traveled across the country, through Kabul, and on; they were making for the Khyber Pass and Peshawar.

But then disaster fell on them, for somehow, rumors had spread about their load of gold. Robbers attacked, carrying off the merchants and their packages. But a servant escaped, made his way to a British political officer nearby, and reported the robbery.

Taking two men, the officer caught the bandits by surprise at midnight. They had been fighting over the share-out; four lay wounded on the ground. They handed over most of their loot to the Englishman. He heard of a plan to attack him, hid all night, went back to his camp, and threatened to lead his men to hunt down the robbers. Frightened, they brought more of the gold to him: only about a quarter was lost. He gave the treasure back to the three merchants, keeping one magnificent armlet which they could hardly refuse to sell to him in gratitude.

At length, the three men arrived in Peshawar, went on to Rawalpindi, and there sold the treasure to local dealers. From them, a British general and another collector bought all they could, and the treasure eventually came to the British Museum.

No one knows exactly where the treasure was found. The merchants said it came from a place where a river running into the great River Oxus cuts through the ruins of an ancient town. In 1877, the river's waters washed out the objects and the local people were delighted to find them scattered over the sand. How many pieces they found is also unknown. Some were lost, a few were cut up to be shared and what remains is called the "Oxus Treasure."

It is not a set of table-ware or jewelry, it is a mixed collection. Three gold bowls and a gold jug stand beside a gold dagger sheath, sixteen gold and silver figures of men and animals, thirty or so gold bracelets and collars, a series of gold sheets with human

figures on them, and a number of other objects. The most likely source for such a collection is a temple. People would have left them as gifts to the god or goddess. Whatever their purpose, these objects display the skill of the goldsmiths who worked during the Persian Empire and there is no doubt all the pieces belong to the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.

Other examples of Persian gold work have come to light from time to time. They show clearly what the biblical book of Esther describes: “drinks were served in golden goblets.” They illustrate the tremendous wealth of the Persian Empire. When Alexander the Great marched into Susa, one of the capital cities, Greek tradition says he took 40,000 talents of gold (that is about 1,200,000 kg or 1,180 tons. And there was more in other Persian cities.

Persian kings were great builders. Their empire stretched from India to Greece and south to Ethiopia, so they could draw on the skills and resources of every land. King Darius (522-486 B.C.), had an inscription written about the palace he built at Susa. Babylonians made the bricks, he said, men of Ionia and Sardis carved the stone, Assyrians brought cedar wood from Lebanon, gold came from Sardis and from the east, to be worked by Medes and Egyptians.

Little can be seen of the splendid palace of Susa. The description in Esther, chapter 1, rings true in the light of what is known. The king is holding a banquet in the palace gardens: “The courtyard there was decorated with blue and white cotton curtains, tied by cords of fine purple linen to silver rings on marble columns. Couches made of gold and silver had been placed in the courtyard, which was paved with white marble, red feldspar, shining mother-of-pearl and blue turquoise.”

Much more survives of the new palace Darius began at Persepolis. He probably designed it as the center for the annual festival at the New Year. It was also a center for administration and storing treasure. Once Alexander’s soldiers had sacked it, it was left to decay until archaeologists began to study it. An important expedition from the

University of Chicago worked there from 1931 until 1939, and further studies and restoration work have taken place since.

To achieve the greatest impact, Darius set his palace on a stone terrace partly cut in the rock, partly built artificially. Visitors would climb a wide stone staircase to a gateway, then pass into a great courtyard. Rising from this court was another stone platform 2.6 meters/8 feet 6 ins., high which supported the audience hall. To reach it, privileged visitors climbed more stairs. These had elaborate carvings on the walls.

In low relief, long lines of men move towards the center. They are the royal guards, horses and chariots, the nobles of the Persians and the Medes, and then representatives of all the provinces of the Persian Empire, each one carrying the special products of his land as tribute to the Great King. Arabs lead a dromedary, Ethiopians carry elephant tusks, an Indian bears jars probably filled with gold dust.

At the top of the stairs was a pillared porch leading to the audience hall. This was square, each side 60.5 meters/200 feet long, its roof held up by slender stone columns 20 meters/65 feet high, topped by elaborately carved bulls' heads.

Here the Great King sat in state, as a famous carving shows. The hall was bright with color, paintings and woven hangings on the walls, carpets on the polished stone floors. The courtiers moved in ceremonial dramas, wearing heavily embroidered robes and massive gold jewelry. Seated on couches covered with gold, at banquets, they ate and drank from dishes and flagons of gold and silver, like those of the Oxus Treasure.

Next to nothing remained of the treasure once housed at Persepolis. But the buildings themselves, and fine bronze work and stone vessels which the Americans found in their excavations, point to the high quality of everything made for the palace. They show why Persia represented the greatest degree of luxury for the ancient Greeks.

ALEXANDER'S ADVENTURE AND THE GREEK IDEAL

Alexander, king of Macedon, was twenty-one years old when he led his 45,000 Greek soldiers across the Near East to conquer Persia. He marched on and on, and ended up at the Indus river. The brilliant young general was not only a conqueror, he wanted to spread Greek culture and thought. To do that he gave his veteran soldiers land in those distant places, urging them to settle, marry local girls, and build up societies based on Greek ideals.

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Alexander's ambition was to a large extent realized. Greek became as widespread a language as Aramaic, city-states organized themselves on the pattern of Greek cities and many used Greek coin values. East of the Euphrates, local languages and customs reasserted themselves in many places within a century or so, but traces of the Greek influences still remained. In Syria and Palestine, the impact of the Greeks was stronger. Alexander's generals, who ruled there after his death, sustained it until the Romans came.

Alexander's conquests eventually left a stronger mark on the archeological record than any other event, apart from the building of mosques after Islam swept across the Near East in A.D.634. New approaches to art brought naturalism and individuality in place of formal and conventional styles. Coins carry fine portraits of kings; statues and other forms of art also characterize personalities. Above all, the Greek attitude reveals itself in towns planned on a regular, geometric pattern, the main buildings set up to Greek plans. These features began before the time of Roman rule in the Near East, and continued through it.

Excavations made over a few weeks in 1900 at Tell Sandahanna, between Ashkelon and Hebron, uncovered the whole of a small town destroyed about 40 B.C. An inscription in a tomb near the site and remarks in ancient books, prove that the name of the place was Marisa.

A city wall with square towers enclosed an area roughly 158 X 152 meters/170 X 165 yards. Dominating the eastern end was a large building thought to be a temple, and towards the center, around two large courtyards, were what seem to have been a marketplace and an inn. Other houses varied, from the large ones with central courtyards to small ones of a few rooms fitting into the space available. The town was clearly planned on a grid system, although in its later stages some of the streets were blocked by private buildings. Pottery and carved stonework have strong Greek elements in their designs, and most of the inscriptions are written in Greek. The most unusual finds were two groups of magic spells, and some richly decorated tombs.

Citizens of Marisa would commission small lead figures of their enemies. These were bent and tied, and left in the temple. On stone tablets they, or a magician, would scratch the words of a curse: "May the God strike X and Y with dumbness and impotence because they caused A to lose his job." Several dozen of these spells were found, and a few in Hebrew which are hard to read, others are prayers to the gods for help.

The names of the people in distress display the variety in the city's population. Egyptian and Semitic names are joined by many Greek and some Roman. Such a mixture was probably normal in all the larger towns outside Judah. The pagan forms of magic were probably typical too.

There were some quite wealthy men in Marisa in the second century B.C. Their wealth can be seen in their unique tombs. A long underground hall was hollowed in the rock and cut in its walls were horizontal shafts, each large enough to hold a coffin. Smaller chambers led from the hall to take more burials. On the rock walls were quite elaborate paintings. One depicts a man walking along, playing pipes, while a woman follows with a harp.

In the largest tomb is a long procession of animals, not only the local ones, but foreign and wild ones. A rhinoceros and a hippopotamus, an alligator and an elephant

walk along, a wild ass fights a snake and a lion stalks its prey. Greek letters by some of the creatures spell out their names. So strange was the giraffe that it had a made-up name, "camel-tiger."

In addition to these real animals there were imaginary ones, a griffin with a lion's body and an eagle's wings, a lion with a human face, and Cerberus, the many-headed dog whom Greeks believed guarded the way to the Underworld. All these animals were painted in a fashion coming from Egypt, but inspired in the first place by the Greek philosopher, Aristotle. Why they decorated a tomb is unknown. They may represent the rule of death over all creatures.

In the tombs were notices giving the names of the dead and their family history. The wealthy owners came from Sidon and settled, living in Marisa between 300 and 100 B.C. They mixed with the local people so that the children born there had local names, some of the Idumean (Edomite) and, as time passed, more and more of them Greek.

Marisa illustrates very well the mixed culture of many Palestinian places just before the birth of Christ. Towns and cities of the Near East have always had a medley of races and beliefs. Alexander's adventure brought new and very influential ingredients to the mix.

PETRA, THE HIDDEN CITY

Burning incense was a common act of worship in ancient temples and shrines. The strong, pleasant fragrance was thought to rise up to the deity being worshipped. Smoking incense also masked the sharp smell of animals roasted and burnt as sacrifices. Incense was also burnt to sweeten the air in the presence of Assyrian and Persian kings, and other people may have used it for that purpose too.

Enormous amounts of incense were needed to supply the demands of the Greek and Roman world. The basic ingredient was frankincense, the sap of a tree that grows

in southern Arabia. Caravans of merchants with strings of camels and donkeys plodded from south to north through the desert, transporting consignments of incense to Gaza and Damascus for export all around the Mediterranean. They took back, in exchange, fine metalwork, pottery, and glassware from the factories of Egypt, Syria, and Greece. In southern Arabia, the states of Sheba, Ma'in, and Qataban grew rich from this trade.

As the caravans traveled, they stopped where there were water and shelter. Some of these resting-places grew into major towns. The most famous of them is Petra. This city was built in a valley between cliffs of red and pink sandstone, where the high desert plateau breaks down to the great rift valley south of the Dead Sea.

In the centuries from 300 B.C. to A.D. 150, one of the main incense roads came past or through Petra, turning west to the coastal city of Gaza. The citizens sold provisions and lodgings to the travelers, and the kings taxed them, and the city grew rich.

The people of Petra were an Arab tribe that had settled and began to live in a fashionable way under Greek influence. The tribe was called the Nabataeans. Without the work of archaeologists in Petra and other towns, little would be known about these people.

They were great borrowers. Their towns, temples, and tombs have designs and decorations taken from Egypt and Phoenicia, from Greece and Rome. Their language was an Arabic one, but they borrowed the Aramaic alphabet for writing it. From the Nabataeans, that alphabet passed to the Arabs, the shapes of the letters having changed through the centuries.

After the Romans conquered Petra in A.D. 106, the city lost its power. People lived there for centuries, but earthquakes and neglect led to the ruin of its buildings, until no houses were left standing, and it was forgotten. Modern explorers first reached and identified Petra in 1812. Some excavations have been made by American, British, and

Jordanian archaeologists, but there is much yet to be learned about the city.

In its heyday, during the first half of the century A.D., the Nabataean kingdom controlled much of Transjordan, the southernmost part of Palestine (the Negev). Under its most powerful king, Aretas IV (about 9 B.C. to A.D. 40), the kingdom even ruled Damascus for a while. (The Apostle Paul escaped “the governor under King Aretas” in Damascus by being let down from the city wall in a basket).

At this time, recent studies indicate, a grand street was laid through the center of Petra, and splendid buildings set on terraces beside it. The road led to a square temple, built to the ancient plan of porch, holy room, and shrine that Solomon had followed.

Spreading over the valley from either side of the main street were the houses and workshops of the city. Some were built with finely-cut stones, the plaster on the walls inside decorated with moldings and paintings.

The Nabataeans excelled in one product and that was their pottery making. The Nabataean potters learned how to make pottery as thin as porcelain, but made by hand on a potter’s wheel, not in a mold. Their dishes are especially fine, painted in brown with floral designs.

Such thin ware breaks easily, so complete examples are very rare. But so many broken pieces are found on Nabataean sites that it is clear this pottery was in quite common use, not made by a single craftsman for wealthy patrons.

The city of Petra was protected by a wall with towers, and by the rocks and cliffs around it. In the soft stone of those rocks, the people of Petra cut the monuments which made their city famous. They wanted to bury their dead so that they would not be forgotten and they found the sandstone very suitable for carving.

Their masons hacked into the rock, making a doorway that lead to a large room. Some burials might be made in that room, or other chambers might be cut leading from it for the burials. Some of the rooms were apparently designed so that relatives could visit the tombs to hold celebrations in honor of the dead.

The rock face outside the tomb was prepared for carving, too. In most cases, it was cut smooth, carved to look like a stone-built doorway and, high above, like a roof.

The wealthiest citizens, the royal family and their associates, had even more magnificent tombs. For them, the rock was sculptured to take the form of a Roman temple.

Visitors to Petra see the finest one first as they make their way through the narrow gorge 1 km/1 ¼ miles long leading to the city. They see nothing but the rocky walls, but suddenly facing them at the end of the crevice, is a marvelous pink carving.

Above a pillared entrance are columns carved in the stone with delicate figures in relief between them. On top, on the pediment 30 meters/100 feet above the ground, is a great stone vase. It is solid, but local people shot at it for years, hoping to break it open and find gold inside.

The tomb is still called Pharaoh's Treasury, El-Khazne. Whose tomb this was, no one knows, but one leading scholar argues it was made for Aretas IV.

Petra's spectacular rock-cut tombs and the tumbled stones of the once-great city are evidence of the luxury and skill the Nabataeans enjoyed at the time when King Herod was erecting his splendid buildings (see "Herod, the Great Builder").

In addition to the temple built at the end of the main street, there were other sacred places in Petra, and one is of particular interest. Hundreds of feet above the city, on top of a great rock, is the High Place. This is not a temple in a Greek or

Roman style, it is a Semitic “high place” fashioned after an age-old custom.

A processional road cut through the rock, with carefully hewn steps, led up to the top of the hill. There the worshipper came to the sacred area. Two stone pillars marked it, not built from blocks of stone, but created by cutting the rock away until they stood alone. They are each about 6 meters/20 feet high, and they stand several meters/yards apart - so a lot of rock was removed. These pillars echo the pillars found in Canaanite temples (see “Conquered Cities of Canaan”).

Beyond the pillars, the summit of the rock is cut away. A level area about 14 X 6 meters/46 X 20 feet was made, with a bench cut in the rock on three sides. At the fourth side, facing east, is a rock-cut altar, approached by a flight of three steps. To the left of the altar, other steps rise to a circular basin cut in the rock. A drain running from it suggests it was the place where animals were slaughtered. Although the altar is big enough for a person to lie on, there is no evidence that the Nabataeans sacrificed human beings.

For long centuries, the Nabataeans and their city lay forgotten. Their recovery is another achievement of archaeology, and a contribution to the cultural background of the New Testament.

DEAD SEA TREASURE TROVE

It was a winter afternoon in 1946-47 when three shepherds were watching their sheep and goats near the edge of the Dead Sea. The animals scrambled about the stony hillside finding tufts of grass to nibble. The herdsman’s eyes were alert, watching their flock and the landscape around them.

One spotted a hole in the cliff face and threw a stone inside to see how big the hole was. The stone fell and made a strange noise. They wanted to explore, but the sun was setting and it would soon be dark, so they left.

It was two or three days before the youngest of them, Muhammed edhDhib came back. He scrambled up to a bigger hole, just above the first one, and fell into a cave and looked about.

Was there treasure waiting for him? His cousin was always hoping for a cave full of jars of gold, like Ali Baba's.

Around him in the cave were pottery jars, some standing by the walls, some lying on the floor, broken by rocks which had fallen from the roof. Most of the jars were empty and there was no gold. Only two had anything in them, a roll of leather and two bundles wrapped in cloth.

Muhammed had found his treasure, though he did not know it.

He scrambled out of the cave and took his find to show the others. They did not know what to make of it. When they opened the bundles, two more leather rolls appeared. There was writing on the leather, but none of them could read it.

The rolls were left in a bag in their tent for several weeks. Eventually, the shepherds took the rolls and two jars to a shopkeeper friend in Bethlehem. At first, no one was interested in them and then a Syrian Orthodox Christian clothes-merchant, saw them in Bethlehem and agreed to try to sell them. The shepherds did not trust him, so they called on a local cobbler named Kando and made him their agent.

The Syrian Christian took a sample of the rolls to the head of his church in Jerusalem. He thought they might be quite old and decided to buy them. After a few weeks, the sale was made. The three rolls, with another, the shepherds had taken from the cave on a return visit, were bought for about L24 (at that time just under \$100.00). Three other rolls, also brought out during the second visit to the cave were sold to an antiquities dealer for L7 (\$28.00), and they were bought for the Hebrew University later

in 1947.

The first group of rolls were carried from Palestine to America and sold to the State of Israel in 1954 for \$250,000. All are now together in the Shrine of the Book, attached to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

A year or so after the first discovery, the rolls sold to the Syrian, were taken to the American Schools of Oriental Research in Jerusalem where a young American, John Trever, interrupted his study of the plants of Palestine to photograph them. He saw at once that these rolls were ancient Hebrew books, and soon identified one as the biblical book of Isaiah.

The style of the Hebrew handwriting puzzled him. Checking with pictures of other early Hebrew books, he came to the conclusion that this writing was older than any other Hebrew manuscript, except for a tiny scrap in Cambridge and this seemed to be an impossible conclusion.

Trever wrote immediately to the leading American biblical scholar, S.F. Albright. A reply came as quickly as the bad political situation in Jerusalem allowed. This was, "the greatest manuscript discovery of modern times!" The news was made public on 11 April, 1948.

What was this discovery and why was it so important?

The four rolls Trever photographed are written in Hebrew. One of them is a copy of the biblical book of Isaiah, a roll of leather 7.34 meters/24 feet long and 26 cm/10 ins. High, made of seventeen sheets sewn end to end, covered with fifty-four columns of Hebrew writing.

Rolls, or scrolls, are normally used in synagogues for the Hebrew Bible, but when they wear out, they are buried or hidden and left to decay naturally so that men do not

destroy God's Word. As a result, none of the very old scrolls have survived. The oldest copies of the Hebrew Bible are some made for private study about 1,000 years ago, as books with pages.

Trever concluded, and Albright agreed (as do all scholars now), that this scroll of Isaiah was written 1,000 years before those oldest copies.

When scribes copied books by hand, they sometimes made mistakes. (Anyone who tries to copy two or three pages from a book will find how easy it is to mis-copy). Jewish scribes took great care when they copied their holy books, but still mistakes crept in. The Isaiah scroll, and many more found later, allows us to jump back 1,000 years and see how far the Hebrews text had changed in that time. The scroll also takes us much closer to the time when the book of Isaiah was written, although there is still a gap of several hundred years.

What is the result when we compare the Isaiah scroll with the oldest copies previously known?

Scholars were surprised to find that there was very little difference. The Jewish copyists had worked with great care. Over the 1,000 years, one or two words had been wrongly written here and there and some small changes made. The scroll proves beyond doubt that the Hebrew Bibles on which all modern translations are based has hardly changed at all since the time of Jesus.

In the years following the first discovery, archaeologists explored the cave where the scrolls were found, and many others too. They found pieces of more scrolls, all badly damaged because they had not been hidden in jars. The shepherds and their friends had not lost interest. They searched the cliffs even more thoroughly, and found more caves where scrolls had been hidden.

One which they came to in 1952, called Cave 4, had an enormous quantity of

fragments in it. The shepherds took some, then the archaeologists caught up with them. Altogether, about 40,000 pieces came from Cave 4, representing about 400 scrolls.

These discoveries made the shepherds' tribe wealthy. After the first scrolls were proved to be so old, they found they could charge a high price for anymore that they found. The price was set at L1 per square inch (at that time \$2.80), and from limited resources, the Jordanian government which then ruled the area, made available much of the money that was needed.

Other governments and private institutions also supplied funds, so all but a few fragments have been kept together in Jerusalem. There, a small team of experts have worked for years piecing together the fragments and trying to identify them. This is a long, slow task. The nature of the research and the small number of people able to do it are the main reasons for the fact that many of the documents are still unpublished - not, as some claim, a deliberate plot to prevent sensational information harmful to the Christian church from reaching the public!

On the contrary, if the Isaiah scroll is anything to go by, those who take a high view of the authority of the Bible have nothing to fear and much to gain from this research. It is a staggering fact that in the course of 1,000 years of copying by hand that no errors have crept into the text which in any way affect the Bible's teaching.

A LIBRARY - LOST AND FOUND

Sharp-eyed shepherds and eager archaeologists found eleven caves beside the Dead Sea which were hiding-places for ancient Hebrew books. Who hid the books and why?

These are questions archaeology tried to answer by studying all the evidence available. In this case, there are two main lines of evidence: first, the contents of the

books; second, the pots found with them and the ruins of a building close to the caves.

The books are almost all religious. Over 100 of them are copies of parts of the Old Testament. They include at least seventeen copies of Isaiah, beside the one from the first cave, and more than two dozen copies of Deuteronomy. Those seem to have been the favorite books. Joshua, in two copies, and Ezra, in only one, were less popular.

Every book of the Old Testament had a place in the collection except for the book of Esther. The owners may have rejected that because of its lack of religious teaching. There are no religious books in the library that do not depend on the Old Testament. So we see that the people who owned these books were a group of deeply religious Jews.

Among the other scrolls, there are some which are their own writings. These people studied their Bible earnestly to find out what it meant for their own situation. They wrote some of their conclusions as commentaries on the biblical text. They identified themselves as the true Israel, persecuted by faithless Jews and ruled by foreign powers. Where a prophet mentioned the Chaldeans of Babylonia as enemies of God's people, the commentator said that meant the Kittim, a name used for the Romans. The prophets had not spoken about their own times; their words were about the age in which the commentators lived.

As well as commentaries, there are books of rules. They are rules for a community of religious people, like monks or nuns, living under a very strictly organized system. This strictness is the sort that characterizes any group of people who claim, they alone are God's people. Anyone who wanted to join the society had to go through a two-year probation period. Once accepted, all property was held in common and everyone had to obey the leaders.

A very long scroll, now known as the "Temple Scroll," hidden by an antiquities

dealer after it was first found and only recovered in 1967, lists all the regulations for worship in the Temple, describes its arrangements and gives instructions for keeping the people holy.

These people looked forward to a time when they would triumph. In one book they described a war between themselves, the “Sons of Light,” and the “Sons of Darkness.” With God on their side, they would win. The proper way of worship would be set up and God would send two Messiahs, a king, and a priest to lead the people.

From the commentaries and the rule books, we can pick up clues about the origin of their authors. They respected a man called the Teacher of Righteousness. Much of their distinctive thought seems to stem from him. As far as can be learned from the scrolls, he lived in the middle of the second century B.C. He held unusual views about the dates of the main Jewish festivals, and so the priests in Jerusalem stopped him celebrating the holy days because they were not at the same time as their own.

One man, called the Wicked Priest, who ruled in Jerusalem like a tyrant, persecuted the Teacher. The commentators call him wicked, the liar, and describe how he met an agonizing death at the hands of his enemies, a punishment from God. The Teacher led his disciples to a refuge in “the wilderness.”

The ruins afford the second line of evidence. The archaeologists who explored the caves after the first discovery soon turned their attention to a ruin just above the sea-shore. They excavated there from 1951 to 1956.

The building they uncovered was unique. It was not a palace, a fort, or a house: it was a center for all sorts of activities. Potters made and baked dishes, bowls, cups, and jars. Farm produce was stored in silos and prepared in a kitchen. Weavers probably made wool from sheep and goats into clothing, and there was a dyeing plant to color it and a laundry to wash it.

In one room were pieces of plastered brickwork fallen from an upper floor. When these were pieced together, they formed three benches. Since two ink-wells lay among these pieces, we can be fairly sure the upper room was a writing-place. Unfortunately, no scrolls or other written documents remained there.

The region where the building stands is very dry. There is no spring of fresh water close to it. In order to obtain water for their work, the people made a canal to draw rainwater from the fills behind. They stored the water in large cisterns, enough, it is calculated, to supply the needs of 200 residents. But where did they live? A hall over 27 meters/70 feet long seems to have been a dining-room. In one corner lay over 100 pottery vessels, perhaps ready for a meal.

A thousand or more other pieces of tableware were piled on the floor of a small Room at one side of the hall. They had been covered with rubble when an earthquake damaged the building and left discarded, when repairs were made.

The large hall indicates that everyone ate together. It is possible they slept in dormitories upstairs. It is also possible they lived in the numerous caves in the cliffs all around. Pottery found in the caves is identical with pottery found in the ruins. Further, the jars found with the first group of leather rolls, large and uncommon in shape, have their counterparts in the building.

There is no good reason to doubt that the people who hid the book were the people who lived in the unusual building. The rules about their way of life in the scrolls agree in general with descriptions we have from other writers of a Jewish religious sect called the Essenes.

The Essenes flourished during the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. Those are the dates when the building was in use. Its life began, perhaps, as early as 150 B.C., and ended in A.D. 68. In that year, Roman troops marching through Palestine to crush the Jewish Revolt, advanced to Jericho and the Dead Sea.

Coins found in the ruins include Jewish ones of the year 68, but none later. Fire and mining destroyed the building, then Roman soldiers turned part of it into a look-out post. Their coins, minted between A.D. 65 and 73, lay in the ruins of their rooms.

The advance of the Roman forces is the obvious moment for the hiding of the scrolls. Their owners did not live to rescue them. Some were lost in landslides or through dampness. But many survived, to become “the greatest manuscript discovery of modern times.”

JESUS AND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

“Christianity is a sort of successful Essenism” declared the radical French scholar Ernest Renan in 1893.

After the Scrolls brought so much fresh knowledge of Essene beliefs to light, one of Renan’s successors in Paris, A. Dupont-Sommer, took up his approach. Writing one of the first surveys of the discovery, he said: “Everything in the Jewish New Covenant (as found in the Scrolls) heralds and prepares the way for the Christian New Covenant. The Master from Galilee, as the New Testament writings present him to us, appears as an astonishing reincarnation of the Master of Justice (the Teacher of Righteousness) in many respects...Like him, he was condemned and put to death. Like him, he ascended to Heaven, near to God...Like him, he founded a church whose members eagerly awaited his glorious return...” He then claimed that wherever there is a resemblance between the Scrolls and Christianity, the Christians had borrowed from the Essenes.

Here was a wonderful supply of ammunition for critics of Christianity, for skeptics, and for humanists. No longer did Jesus stand as an isolated figure, he was a product of his times. Still, time had demonstrated one major difference. One man’s teaching had failed to bring his followers through the war with Rome, the other’s lit a flame which persists to the present day.

What is the truth about the Dead Sea Scrolls and Jesus?

* In the first place, there is no sign that Jesus had direct contact with the men of Qumran. John the Baptist may have, but he did not follow their teaching when he preached.

* Both the New Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls have their roots in the Old Testament. A lot of the ideas and the language they share come from the Old Testament.

* The similarities between the Teacher of Righteousness and Jesus are not as close as the French scholar tried to prove. He based his sensational assertions on one scroll, a commentary on the book of Habakkuk. The scroll is quite well-preserved, except at the bottom, where the last lines in each column of writing are damaged. It was by filling in one gap with the words “he persecuted the Teacher of Righteousness” that Dupont-Sommer manufactured the basis for his claim that the Teacher “was judged, condemned, and put to death.”

No one now upholds him; most authorities accept that the dreadful fate of the Wicked Priest is described here, for that is what the nearby passages describe. If the Teacher of Righteousness was expected to reappear in the future, which is not certain, he was not to be a judge seated beside God.

* The differences between the Teacher of Righteousness and Jesus are huge.

The teacher taught a meticulous observance of the Jewish ritual law, and hoped for a time when his followers could offer sacrifices in the Temple again.

Jesus and his followers gave the Temple a diminishing part in their faith, and did not feel obliged to keep the ritual laws. This difference meant that the Teacher led his

disciples into an exclusive community (although not all Essenes left the towns); Jesus told his to mix with people.

The Teacher was seeking to please God by obeying the words of the Old Testament. He was waiting for God to send the Messiah, the specially chosen leader he does not seem to have claimed to be the Messiah.

The Christian church stands on the conviction that Jesus came as the Messiah, and that men can please God only by putting their faith in him. As Messiah, Jesus behaved in a way the Teacher of Righteousness did not, in a way that might have shocked him more than it shocked the Pharisees. The concept of one man's death making atonement for all mankind, not for Israel only, would have been hardest for the Teacher to accept.

* The Scrolls include rules that seem similar to Christian customs.

New members should be baptized, having repented of their sins. Although this sounds like John the Baptist's baptism and the Christian sacrament, it is not the same. For the Essenes could repeat it, apparently each year, to purify themselves, not to find pardon.

Members ate a meal together and some have likened this to the Last Supper and the Holy Communion. There may be a common background, but the meals at Qumran looked forward to a banquet with the Messiah. They had no sense of remembering the Messiah, or even the Teacher of Righteousness, in the way Jesus' words require: "Do this in memory of me."

* Lastly, the commentaries, the owners of the Scrolls who wrote on the Old Testament, depended on the way of interpretation the Teacher taught them. They applied the prophecies to their own situation and still looked for their fulfillment, often using some phrases arbitrarily.

In the New Testament, the prophecies apply mostly to the situation that has come into being with the arrival of the Messiah. There are similarities of treatment, but the Scrolls lack the unifying element of interpretation and the certainty that Jesus brought.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are especially important because no other books written by religious Jews in Palestine during the period immediately before the fall of Jerusalem, survive in reliable Hebrew texts. From the Scrolls, there is a new view of one area in Judaism at the time of the Gospels. This discovery has brought much fresh air into New Testament studies and as more of the fragments are published, the background to the Gospels will grow more intelligible. We have to remember that the Scrolls present only one part of Jewish thought at that time. Early Christianity arose in the context of the whole.

HEROD, THE GREAT BUILDER

It was to be bigger and better than any temple that had ever stood in Jerusalem. No expense would be spared. This was the king's present to his Jewish subjects, a new temple for the God of Israel. But there was a temple there already, the one the Jews had built when the Persian king Cyrus allowed them to go back from their exile in Babylon. There was no question of building the new one in another place, the site was sacred. Nor could builders interrupt the temple services; in fact, ordinary workmen could not go in to the inner parts of the Temple.

How did Herod solve the problem? He had a thousand priests trained as stonemasons and carpenters. Everything was made ready, so that the work could be done as quickly as possible.

The central building followed the same plan as Solomon's Temple: a porch, a central hall, and shrine. It was about 50 meters/164 feet long, and the porch was the

same in width and height. Inside, the main part was only 10 meters/33 feet wide, but a range of rooms surrounded it. All this part, built of white stone blocks, was finished in about eighteen months (20-18 B.C.). Crowning the roof were golden spikes to prevent birds perching or nesting on it.

Although the Temple building was quickly finished, Herod planned that it should stand in the middle of a great courtyard with colonnades or cloisters running round the sides. Here Herod could build as he liked, not limited by any existing structure.

He made the courtyard area nearly twice as big as it was before, and to do that he had to build up an artificial terrace because the hill sloped steeply away at the southern end. At the southeast corner, the rock surface is 47 meters/150 feet below the level of the courtyard, whereas the difference is about 30 meters/100 feet at the southwest corner.

Herod's Temple enclosure is now the Haram esh-Sherif in which the Dome of the Rock stands today and part of the massive stone-work of the platform at the western side is the famous "Wailing Wall." Stone blocks in the wall average 1.2 meters/4 feet in height, and from 1-7 meters/4-23 feet in length. Most of the building was completed by 9 B.C., but work went on at certain points until A.D. 64. In John's Gospel, the Jewish authorities declare: "It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple!" How could Jesus possibly say he would build it again in three days? (But the temple Jesus was speaking about, was his own body).

In A.D. 66, the Jewish people rebelled against the authority of Rome. Herod's Temple became a fortress and the Romans attacked it. In August of the year 70, all of Jerusalem was in Roman hands except the Temple, where a group of Zealots held out. In the face of their refusal to surrender, Roman soldiers set fire to the woodwork of the buildings and one threw a flaming torch into the Temple itself. A few of its precious furnishings were rescued, to be paraded in the victory procession of the Roman commander, Titus, whose father had just become the Emperor Vespasian.

When the Roman soldiers had finished, the Temple was in ruins. All that remained of Herod's work was the great level platform on which it had stood, as Jesus had forecast. "You see these great buildings?" he said to his disciples, "Not a single stone here will be left in its place; every one of them will be thrown down."

From 1968 onwards, the Israeli scholar, Benjamin Mazar, made extensive excavations outside the southern end of the courtyard, up against the wall. He cleared away a great heap of heavy stone blocks fallen from the Temple walls to reach the original street level. The paved street led along the wall with steps for the changing level of the hill. In the center at the south end were uncovered: the remains of a great stairway up to the gates that led into the Temple court. Among the masonry fallen from the walls, were stone slabs carved with geometric patterns and flowers-they had been part of the ceiling of the gateway or of the colonnade. These few fragments, and the quality of the masonry, point to the magnificence of the original Temple.

Jerusalem's Temple was only one, the most costly, among many grand buildings Herod had erected. At Hebron, to the south of Jerusalem, Herod put a great wall around the caves where Abraham and his family were said to be buried and another wall around an ancient tree Abraham was reputed to have planted at Mamre nearby. The wall around the tomb still stands, showing what the outside appearance of the Temple walls would have been like.

These buildings were to please the Jews, to help them to accept Herod's rule. He himself was not Jewish in origin. His father, Antipater, belonged to a family from the south, as family of Idumaeans, the Edomites of the Old Testament. The Jewish king, John Hyrcanus (134-104 B.C.), had conquered these people and allowed them to live only if they converted to Judaism.

When he was not in Judea, Herod did not pay much regard to Jewish customs. No more than 56 km/35 miles north of Jerusalem, he built another temple. He had

rebuilt the ancient city of Samaria, calling it Sebaste in honor of the Emperor Augustus (Sebaste is Greek for Augustus-berg). Crowning the town, was Herod's temple, dedicated to Rome and Augustus. Excavations have uncovered parts of the temple.

He built other cities in Palestine (Caesarea and Antipatris were the most important) and added public buildings to others further away. At Tyre and Sidon, he built theatres, at Damascus, a theatre and gymnasium. He paved the main street of Antioch and gave funds to Greek cities, including Athens.

In Athens, the people set up a statue for him. The stone base was discovered there with an inscription, "To Herod, the friend of Rome." Another inscription calls him "friend of Caesar," and yet another "benefactor." In response to an argument among his disciples as to who should be greatest, Jesus said, "The kings of the pagans have power over their people and the rulers are called "Friends of the People," but this is not the way it is with you."

The remains in Jerusalem and the wall at Hebron, illustrate the scale of Herod's work and the recent discoveries at the south end of the Temple area, show how it was decorated. Herod's other public buildings followed the most fashionable designs of the day, we may be sure.

Herod spent freely on palaces and fortresses for himself and his family. In Jerusalem, he built a palace but nothing of it remains. Part of the citadel there dates to his reign, especially "David's Tower" (called "Phasael's Tower" in ancient times, after Herod's brother).

Away from the capital, Herod fortified the hill-top of Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea, to guard his frontier with the Nabataeans of Petra. (It was at Machaerus that Salome danced for Herod's son, Antipas, pleasing him so much that his rash promise of reward led to the execution of John the Baptist).

Little is known about that site, but another has been excavated in the hills south of Jerusalem. For a long time it was called “Franks Mountain,” until Edward Robinson and later travelers identified it as Herodium, a fortress, and Herod’s burial place. The circular walls sit on top of a prominent hill, with four round towers to protect them. Within the walls were a garden, a large dining room, and a suite of baths. Private rooms would have been at a higher level.

At the foot of the hill stood another palace, its walls plastered and painted in various colors to imitate masonry. Several rooms had black and white mosaic floors and stone pillars with carved capitals to support the roof. Other buildings include store-rooms with jars still standing in them and a pool in a garden.

Herodium had a counterpart near Jericho. Jewish rulers had a winter palace there about 100 B.C., so that they could escape the cold of Jerusalem (the temperature there can fall below 10 degrees C/50 degrees F in December, January, and February, Jericho staying 10 degrees warmer). Herod made a new palace on the site of the old one, and towards the end of his reign, built a much bigger one with an elaborate bath-house of six rooms, a great reception hall, and a dining room.

Excavations in 1950-51 and 1973-74, revealed ruins of these rooms and traces of their mosaic floors and painted walls. They make it clear, Herod wanted nothing but the best for himself! This was true even at Herod’s’ most extraordinary and impregnable castle, on the rock of Masada, overlooking the Dead Sea (see “Masada - The Last Stronghold.”).

Excavations in Herod’s forts and palaces give substance to the descriptions left by the Jewish historian Josephus, who wrote about their splendor later in the first century A.D., having seen some of them himself. His accounts of buildings that cannot be excavated, such as Herod’s palace in Jerusalem and Herod’s Temple, both completely destroyed, are no doubt equally reliable.

A NEW TOMB IN A GARDEN

“At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid.”

“Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb...”

The burial of Jesus, recorded in the New Testament Gospels, is one of the few events in the story which archaeology help us to understand better.

His resurrection, the basis for the existence of the Christian church, is a matter for faith. No excavation or archaeological research could ever prove or disprove that Jesus rose from the dead. If someone were to find Joseph’s tomb and to find it empty, he could still say nothing about its occupant.

What archaeology can do, is to show what Jewish tombs were like in the first century A.D., and set the Gospel accounts beside that information.

Jerusalem stands on the ridge of limestone hills that form a spine through Palestine. There is very little soil on the hills, so burials were frequently made in caves or tombs, cut in the rock. As a result, the area around a long-lived city like Jerusalem is honeycombed with graves, of all ages.

Cutting an underground tomb was expensive, so usually the tombs accommodated the remains of several people. Often, the dead would all be members of one family, but in some places it was possible to buy a share in a tomb.

Scores of tombs made between about 50 B.C. and A.D. 135, have been

discovered around Jerusalem, most by accident, some by archaeological excavation. The majority have the same basic design, and it is this, that relates to the tomb of Jesus.

The stone-masons began by cutting a level area in the rock so that there would be a wall at one side in which they could hollow out the tomb. In the level area, the wealthy might afford a water supply and a garden for the benefit of mourners and visitors. Entry to the tomb chamber was normally through a doorway, so low that one would have to stoop or crawl through. The entrance was kept small in order to make it easy to close. This was essential, otherwise dogs, jackals, and hyenas might enter.

To close the tomb, the mourners rolled a large boulder, roughly shaped, to fit into the entrance like a plug. Very few magnificent tombs in Jerusalem have round wheel-like stones which roll across the doorway. In other places, this style was followed more often; an example can be seen in Nazareth.

Having cut the doorway, the masons would chisel downwards and upwards to make a chamber large enough for a man to stand in. On each side of this space, except where the doorway was, they would cut away the rock from the ceiling to about waist height to leave a shelf or bench up to 1 meter/3 feet wide. From the bench, they would drive two or three horizontal shafts into the rock wall, up to 2 meters/6 feet long and 1 meter/3 feet high. How carefully the walls were cut and finished would depend on the client's wealth.

The tomb was now ready for the first burial. If convenient, this took place on the day of the death. Jewish sources indicate that the arms and legs were bound with strips of linen and a cloth was wrapped around the head, binding the jaws. A shirt, or perhaps a long linen band, covered the body. Perfumes were sprinkled on the cloth. Once the body had been prepared, the mourners would carry it into the tomb and place it on the rock-cut shelf or bench, blocking the doorway as they left.

After some time, when the flesh had decayed, the relatives would re-enter the tomb, collect the bones together and place them in a box, an ossuary. They would then push the ossuary into one of the shafts in the tomb wall. Sometimes they wrote the name of the dead person with charcoal or ink on the box or its lid, or scratched it into the stone surface.

There were variations: the body might be placed immediately in a shaft and left there permanently, the opening blocked with stones, or the ossuaries might be piled on the benches or the floor.

A tomb used in this way seems to be what the Gospel writers describe. A stone blocked the doorway, too heavy for the women to move. Visitors to the opened tomb stooped down to look inside. They saw the grave-clothes heaped together with the cloth from the head at one side. According to Mark (16:5) and John (20:12), an angelic being or beings sat inside the tomb, presumably on the rock bench, where the body had been.

In this way archaeology helps us to envisage the tomb. Can it identify the tomb? Not without original inscriptions.

Through the centuries, builders have altered the landscape around Jerusalem so that it is impossible to locate even the hill of Calvary, the site of Christ's crucifixion, with assurance.

Since the fourth century, Christians have identified the tomb of Jesus with one now enshrined in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. No one can be sure this is correct, but it is part of a complex of first-century burial places of the sort we have described.

Visitors to the Holy Sepulcher who go beyond the Shrine of the Tomb to the "Tomb of Joseph of Arimathea" will find themselves among the rock-cut shafts of a first-

century tomb. The traditions may be wrong, but it does have that in its favor. The alternative site, the "Garden Tomb," does not conform to first-century fashion at all. Indeed, it is more like tombs from the days of the kings of Israel and Judah found near Jerusalem. Christians will agree that knowing the actual site of the tomb of Jesus is less important than knowing that he rose from it.

MASADA - THE LAST STRONGHOLD

Safe, he must be safe! All his life Herod lived in fear. He knew that no one really liked him. If someone could take his crown and his life, the people would make the assassin a hero. So Herod killed anyone he suspected might be a rival - even two of his own sons and the baby boys of Bethlehem, anyone of whom might be the infant king for whom the Wise Men sought. Indeed, one ancient author reports, the Emperor Augustus himself once said: "I would rather be Herod's pig than Herod's son." Only the knowledge that Herod had Rome's protection stopped the Jews from revolting against him. His fear made him build fortress-castles: Machaerus and Herodium, the citadel in Jerusalem, and others besides - above all, Masada.

This isolated rock, rising in the wilderness west of the Dead Sea, was a natural fortress. Herod used it to keep his family safe when he went to Rome to win the support of the man who was to become Caesar Augustus, and Masada resisted a siege then. On his return, he fortified it strongly, and continued to add to it during his reign so that it should be as secure as possible and comfortable too.

After Herod died, in March of 4 B.C., Masada had a garrison. Then the Jewish rebels captured it in A.D. 66 and made their last stand there. Roman military camps were set up at the foot of the hill and eventually the Romans captured the fort by heaping earth and stones to make a great ramp up one side of the hill. As they breached the walls, the defenders killed their families and themselves, rather than fall into the hands of the Romans. All this Josephus tells us in his "History of the Jewish War," completed in A.D. 79.

The rock of Masada was one of the sites Edward Robinson identified in 1834. Various later explorers visited and wrote about it, but only since the outstanding discoveries of the Israeli archaeologists directed by Yigael Yadin in 1963-65 has the place begun to be well understood.

A good water supply is vital for anyone wanting to live on a hill-top in the desert. Masada was well provided with rock-cut reservoirs, and with channels and aqueducts to bring water to them. Even so, men and donkeys would have had to carry water from the lower cisterns to those on the top. Masada's ability to resist attack depended to a considerable degree on its water system.

All around the flat top of the hill, right at the edge, ran a double wall with towers at intervals and four gateways where paths climbed down to the foot of the hill. Inside the walls were barracks, store buildings, and living quarters for the staff of the castle. There were also two palaces.

One was on the top of the hill near the western side. This was for official occasions. A hall paved with a fine mosaic opened on to a small throne-room and not far away was a small suite of hot and cold baths.

But for relaxation, Herod created a second palace, a pleasure palace, at the north end of the hill. On the end of the hill itself were living-rooms with black and white mosaic floors and painted walls. Looking out from the end of the hill was a semi-circular pillared porch where the king and his friends could look out across the barren hills.

Lower than the surface of the hill at this north end, 20 meters/65 feet below the living quarters, was a terrace on which a round building stood. Only the foundations and pieces of carved stones and pillars remained, not enough for the archaeologists to discover what the building was for. Beside it are ruins of other rooms, including a painted hall.

About 15 meters/50 feet lower still, down the end of the hill was another terrace. On a square platform were porches with painted walls and gilded pillars, apparently a place for meeting and talking. Yet another small bath-house stood on this terrace, for the comfort and refreshment of Herod and his favored guests. Broken wine jars in various buildings were labeled "for Herod, King of Judah." Here is further evidence of Herod's love of luxury.

Masada's last phase as a fortress was when the Jewish zealots held out against the Romans. It is from those years, (A.D. 66-73), that the most startling discoveries came. The rebels remodeled the stones of the buildings. They built a small synagogue for their worship, as they did at Herodium, and they made two ritual baths in other parts of the hill, built according to the rules preserved in later Jewish tradition.

Herod's palace at the north end gave a good supply of timber from its floors and roofs. The other buildings and the rooms in the wall round the hill were turned into living quarters and workshops. Most of them had been burned. In the rubbish were broken pots and pans and glassware, tools and weapons, piles of dates, and remains of other foods. Hidden in some of the rooms were small hoards of the silver shekels issued by the rebels.

The hot, dry atmosphere of the Dead Sea coast allowed unusual things to survive. In the synagogue and nearby, the excavators came upon fragments of leather scrolls. Some bear biblical texts, parts of Genesis, Psalms, Ezekiel, and other books. There are also pieces of Ecclesiastes and books known among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In the bath-house on the lowest of the northern terraces were the skeletons of a man, a woman, and a child. Beside them were fragments of a woolen prayer shawl, the woman's sandals, and her braided hair. Broken pottery had served as scrap paper; several hundred pieces were found. Dozens bore one or two Hebrew letters. The excavator thought they had been tickets in a sort of food rationing system.

Other potsherds carried names, or were labels for the tithe, or for sacred use. Twelve had written on each one, a single name, apparently the name of the commander of the rebels. Yadin believed these to be the actual lots which, according to Josephus, the last defenders drew to decide who should kill the others and then himself. Archaeology casts one of its most vivid rays of light on the history at Masada.

NO ENTRY - EXCEPT FOR JEWS

The Story of A Stone

The Roman garrison in Jerusalem was used to dealing with riots. For the Jews, religion and nationalism went hand in hand - and that meant trouble. The soldiers had a clear duty to keep order, to control the people, and to try to make sure justice was done.

On one particular day in A.D. 59, a riot broke out inside the Temple itself. As soon as he heard the news, the Roman commander took some of his men and marched quickly to the scene. Before he arrived, the crowd had pushed its way out of the Temple into the streets and the heavy metal-bound doors had swung shut.

The ringleaders were attacking one man, obviously wanting to kill him. When they saw the soldiers and the tribune coming, they stopped, and simply held on to their victim until the Romans arrived. The mob got quiet as the man was chained. They all began shouting again when the officer asked what it was all about. The full account is recorded in the New Testament, Book of Acts (chapter 21).

The victim was Paul, Apostle and Preacher. The riot had been started by Jews who had met him earlier in Asia Minor and wanted him silenced. Now, in Jerusalem, they had seen him going round with a Greek friend. Surely Paul must have taken him into the Temple court? At last, they had a good reason to make trouble.

From the beginning of Israel's existence as a nation, the Israelites had known they were God's people. No one could worship God properly except by becoming a Jew and obeying the Law of Moses. No one but a Jew could go into the sacred area of the Temple.

King Herod rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem between 19 and 9 B.C. He made it much larger than it was before (see "Herod, The Great Builder"). There was a great open courtyard, with colonnades along the sides, which anyone of any race or religion could enter. It was here that the teachers walked and taught their disciples and all sorts of business was carried out.

In the middle of the courtyard stood a low wall or fence of stone about 1.5 meters/5 feet high. This enclosed the Temple building and nobody but Jews could pass through. To make the position quite clear, notices were placed along the wall. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century A.D., says, they were written in Greek and Latin.

Just over 100 years ago, in 1871, an example of one of these notices, written in Greek, was discovered in Jerusalem. It is engraved on a block of limestone 57 cm/22½ ins. long and 85 cm/33 ½ ins. high. Part of another copy came to light in 1936 and shows that originally the letters, each about 3.8 cm/1½ ins. high, were painted red so that they would show clearly on the creamy-white stone.

The inscription reads: "No foreigner may pass the barrier and enclosure surrounding the temple. Anyone who is caught doing so will be himself to blame for his resulting death." No one could doubt its meaning and anyone who disobeyed would almost certainly be lynched.

The force of the warning was widely recognized. Josephus reports that the Roman general Titus, later to become emperor, admitted that it even applied to Roman citizens. Rome's authority was supreme and only the Roman governor could

order an execution. Yet the Romans respected the Jewish religion and left the control of the Temple area in the hands of the priests. So a blatant offense against religious laws, such as a non-Jew entering the restricted area, could be punished straight away.

But in Paul's case, the officer could not get a clear case and so he took him into custody and eventually he was taken for trial in Rome.

This complete copy of the warning is now in a museum in Istanbul, Turkey. (Jerusalem was a part of the Turkish Empire at the time when the stone was found). For Paul too, a museum would have been the right place for it. For him, the warning had lost its force.

Paul seems to have had the inscription in mind when he wrote to Christians in Ephesus and other cities of Asia Minor. He told them that the distinction between Jews and others no longer exists. Jesus Christ has taken it away. "He has broken down the dividing wall." As a result, anyone can approach God through him. All who do so are like stones being built into a single temple for God.

The stone in Istanbul, and the fragment in a museum in Jerusalem, appear to have been carved in King Herod's reign and must have stood in the Temple throughout the time of the Gospel story. They are among the most interesting of the few things which we can still see and be sure Jesus and his disciples also saw and they still have a message for us today: not as a wall of partition, separating Jews from non-Jew, but as witnesses of a new message.

Jesus has broken down the dividing wall. People of different nations and races and backgrounds can be "made one" through Jesus Christ alone.

WHAT KIND OF EVIDENCE?

The Early Christians

For some events archaeology gives no evidence. The beginning of Christianity is one of them. The earliest archaeological evidence of Christianity is from the second-century A.D. Nothing belonging to the first-century has been dug up which is clearly Christian. This is true in Palestine, in Rome, and elsewhere; there is no trace of Christianity.

Does this mean that the history books are wrong, that the church only came to life after A.D. 100? There are some who would like that to be true, for then they could dismiss the New Testament as unhistorical and so not worth believing. But the fact that no traces of first-century Christians are identifiable does not mean there were no first-century Christians. It is simply a reminder that archaeologists cannot discover everything about the past.

The nature of the most important discoveries about Christianity from the second-century explains the situation. These discoveries were made in Egypt. They consist of tattered pages and scraps of Christian books. In almost every other part of the Roman Empire, damp would quickly rot papers buried in the earth. Without these fragments, there would be no sign of second-century Christians in Egypt, either.

Obviously, there were Christians living in Egypt and the other Mediterranean countries. Why cannot archaeologists detect them?

The explanation is simple. In terms of their physical environment, Christians were no different from their neighbors. They lived in the same kinds of houses. They used the same utensils. They did not take up totally different customs which changed the plans of their houses or the shapes of their pots and pans - and those are the things archaeology can discover.

Without written indication, Joseph and Mary's house would be just like any other, the houses of Christians in Rome like the house of Jews or Romans. Changes in behavior towards other people, in morals, in language, fall beyond the scope of archaeology.

There are two areas of human activity which do reveal something about religious beliefs. They are forms of worship and types of burial. Even here, no Christian examples, churches or tombs, have come to light which date much before A.D. 200. The most that can be said is that some Christian churches and cemeteries known from the third-century probably had their origins in the late second-century.

The memorial uncovered beneath the high altar at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome may be one, a Memorial which Christians later treated as the tomb of St. Peter. But the oldest undoubted Christian church so far found was built shortly after A.D. 230, not in Jerusalem or in Rome, but far away to the east at Dura Europos on the Mid-Euphrates.

So we are driven back to the manuscripts from Egypt for the earliest relics of Christianity. They are pieces of papyrus books written in Greek. There are thousands of pieces of papyrus from Roman Egypt in the world's museums. Most of them were thrown on to rubbish dumps where they were never intended to be seen again. Happily for us, some of those rubbish dumps dried out and so the papyri survived. They cover every aspect of life, from preparations for the emperor's visit, to schoolboy letters.

Scholars were delighted to find among them copies of famous Greek books made long before any previously available. Among these are parts of the Old Testament in Greek, two or three of them copied as long ago as the first century B.C. For the New Testament, there are over 80 papyrus manuscripts, ranging from complete Gospels to tiny fragments of a single page.

Out of all these papyri, four are Christian products of the second-century. Two were probably copied at the end of the century. One contained the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, the other the Gospel of Matthew.

The third is a scrap from the top of a page of John's Gospel. It turned up in a box of odds and ends of papyrus bought by the Ryland's Library at Manchester in 1920. Only in 1934 did an expert identify it. He recognized that its style of handwriting belonged to the period A.D. 125 to 150, making it the oldest copy of a New Testament book ever found.

Although it is so small, it proves the existence of Christianity in Egypt early in the second-century. It also testifies against theories put forward in the nineteenth-century, and still aired from time to time by those ignorant of the facts, that John's Gospel was not composed until after A.D. 160.

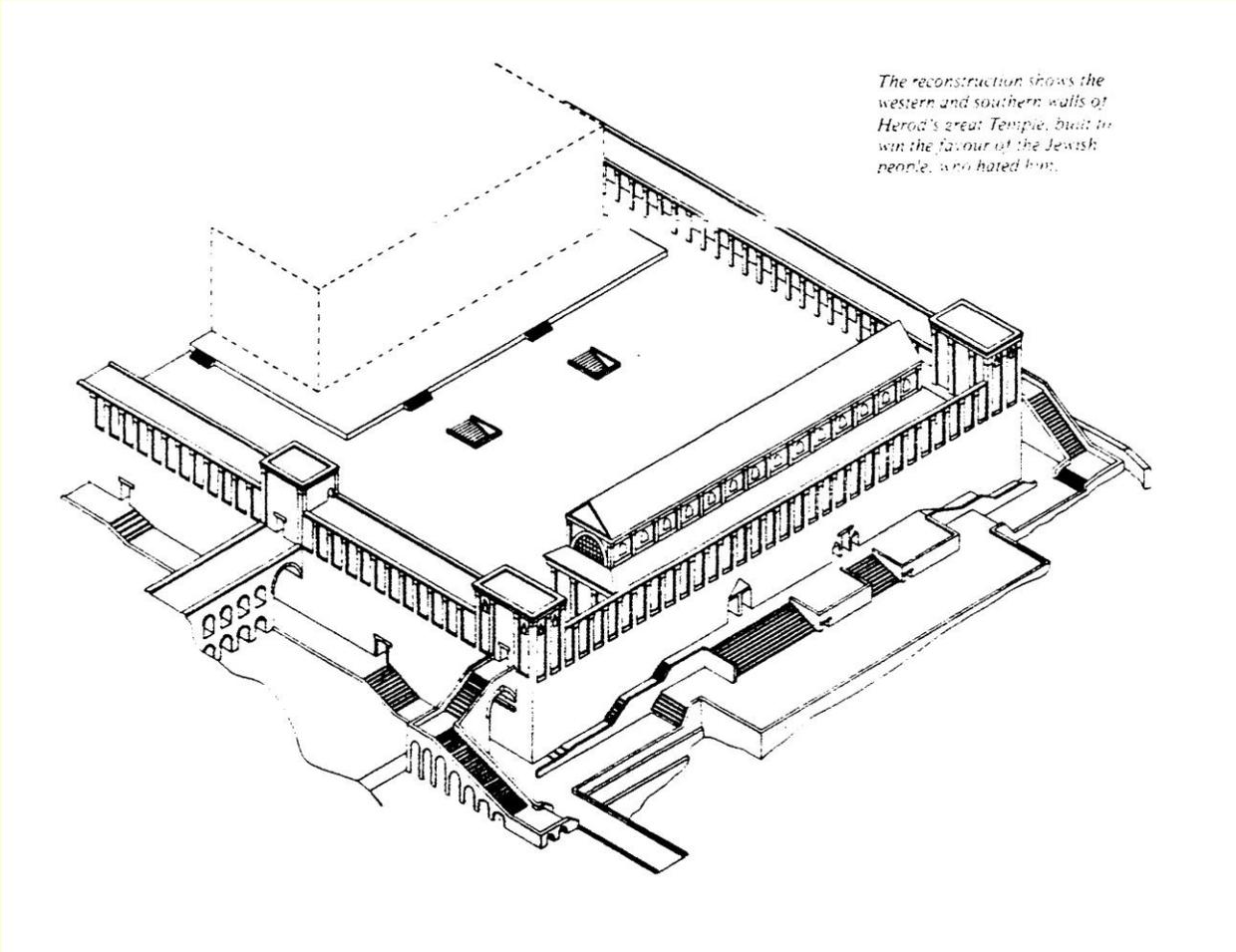
In the year in which that piece of John's Gospel was identified, the British Museum bought three other scraps of papyrus. Their handwriting dates them about A.D. 140 to 160. These are parts of a book of sayings and miracles of Jesus, drawn mainly from the Gospels.

Again, these fragments show the spread of Christianity in Egypt. They also indicate that the Gospels were well enough known for one to imitate them. The papyrus is unlikely to be the author's original copy, so the date of the original book is to be placed slightly earlier.

That is all archaeology can offer. But there is no doubt at all that this new religion did exist in the first-century A.D. In addition to the New Testament and other early Christian books, some Roman writers mention the Christians. The historian, Tacitus, reports that the Emperor Nero made them take the blame for the fire of Rome in A.D. 64.

Without question there were Christians in the first-century A.D. Few of them are known by name. Thousands died, and all physical trace of them has vanished. The real evidence for their existence lies in the faith to which they testified, a faith passed on to others - a living flame which spread and grew. Their legacy, like that of so many other ordinary men and women down the centuries, is the world-wide church of God, a church of all races and nations, alive and growing still today.

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Major Archaeological Finds Relating to the NT

SITE OR ARTIFACT	LOCATION	RELATING SCRIPTURE
ISRAEL		
Herod's temple	Jerusalem	Lk 1:9
Herod's winter palace	Jericho	Mt 2:4
The Herodium (possible site of Herod's tomb)	Near Bethlehem	Mt 2:19
Masada	Southwest of Dead Sea	cf. Lk 21:20
Early synagogue	Capernaum	Mk 1:21
Pool of Siloam	Jerusalem	Jn 9:7
Pool of Bethesda	Jerusalem	Jn 5:2
Pilate inscription	Caesarea	Lk 3:1
Inscription: Gentile entrance of temple sanctuary	Jerusalem	Ac 21:27-29
Skeletal remains of crucified man	Jerusalem	Lk 23:33
Peter's house	Capernaum	Mt 8:14
Jacob's well	Nabius	Jn 4:5-6
ASIA MINOR		
Derbe inscription	Kerti Hüyük	Ac 14:20
Sergius Paulus inscription	Antioch in Pisidia	Ac 13:6-7
Zeus altar (Satan's throne?)	Pergamum	Rev 2:13
Fourth-century B.C. walls	Assos	Ac 20:13-14
Artemis temple and altar	Ephesus	Ac 19:27-28
Ephesian theater	Ephesus	Ac 19:29
Silversmith shops	Ephesus	Ac 19:24
Artemis statues	Ephesus	Ac 19:35
GREECE		
Erastus inscription	Corinth	Ro 16:23
Synagogue inscription	Corinth	Ac 18:4
Meat market inscription	Corinth	1Co 10:25
Cult dining rooms (in Asklepius and Demeter temples)	Corinth	1Co 8:10
Court (<i>bema</i>)	Corinth	Ac 18:12
Marketplace (<i>bema</i>)	Philippi	Ac 16:19
Starting gate for races	Isthmia	1Co 9:24,26
Gallo inscription	Delphi	Ac 18:12
Egnatian Way	Kavalla (Neapolis), Philippi, Apollonia, Thessalonica	Cf. Ac 16:11-12; 17:1
Politarch inscription	Thessalonica	Ac 17:6
ITALY		
Tomb of Augustus	Rome	Lk 2:1
Mamertime Prison	Rome	2Ti 1:16-17; 2:9; 4:6-8
Appian Way	Puteoli to Rome	Ac 28:13-16
Golden House of Nero	Rome	Cf. Ac 25:10; 1Pe 2:13
Arch of Titus	Rome	Cf. Lk 19:43-44; 21:6,20