

The Bible and Archaeology

by Dennis Lange

The spade of the archaeologist is continually digging up information that fills in important biblical background and helps explain the biblical text. Archaeology confirms the Bible's accuracy, that names and places and peoples were not invented, and it shows that the writers knew the culture of the times.

Archaeologists found the Nuzi tablets which date from 1500 BC and reveal much of the culture of Abraham's time. One of the tablets gave provisions for a barren wife to give a servant girl to her husband in order to have children. The wife would then be in charge of the children born to her husband through the servant.

In Genesis, God promised Abraham that he and his wife Sarah would have a son. Both were past the normal age of child-bearing. When Abraham was 86, Sarah said to him, "Please go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children through her." (Gen.16:2). Ishmael was born to Abraham through Hagar, Sarah's maid. They tried to work out the promise of God through their own idea, which was in keeping with a practice of the times. However, God had His own plan and Isaac the promised son was born to Abraham when he was past 100 and Sarah over 90.

The Nuzi tablets show that the cultural frame of reference for Abraham's and Sarah's act was an accepted practice in their time, even though it is strange to us today.

Men once thought the Bible was wrong about the Hittites (and therefore could not be from God). The Bible spoke of the Hittites as a strong group that opposed Israel as it came out of Egypt. Archaeologists have found proof of the existence of the Hittites. Abraham's home, the city of Ur, was once thought not to exist, but archaeologists have also found it. Jericho has been excavated and the walls fell outward just as the Bible says, even though walls of cities normally fell inward.

Luke, who wrote the gospel by his name and the book of Acts, was thought by critics of the Bible to be wrong in referring to a district (meris) of Macedonia in Acts 16:12, but archaeology confirms that he was right. He was again criticized for calling the rulers of Thessalonica politarchs (Acts 17:8) but archaeologists have found inscriptions in the ruins of ancient Thessalonica substantiating that fact.

How accurate is the Bible? A passage in Jeremiah 39:3 speaks of the time when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was destroying Jerusalem. "Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came in and sat down at the Middle Gate: Nergal-sar-ezer, Samgarnebu, **Sar-sekim the chief official**, Nergal-sar-ezer the Rab-mag, and all the rest of the officials of the king of Babylon." In early July of 2008, a professor named Jursa, visiting from Vienna, found a cuneiform tablet in the British Museum that had Sar-sekim's name on it. The tablet, 2500 years old, also calls him the chief eunuch. Sar-sekim was a fairly insignificant official but was mentioned in the biblical account and confirmed by archaeology.

Archaeology shows repeatedly that the Bible can be trusted.

Sources:

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