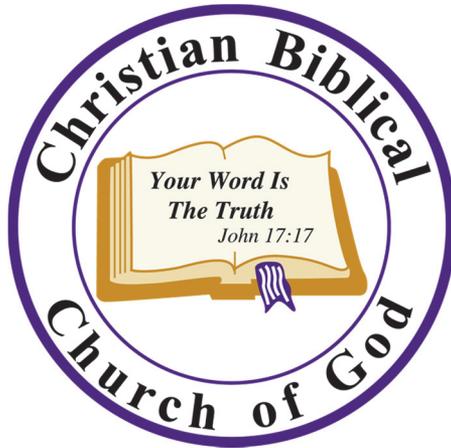
A magnifying glass with a black handle and frame is positioned over an open book. The book's pages are filled with text, though it is out of focus. The background is a dramatic sunset or sunrise with a bright sun low on the horizon, casting a warm glow. The text 'HOW CREDIBLE IS THE BIBLE?' is centered within the magnifying glass's lens in a large, white, serif font with a subtle drop shadow.

HOW  
CREDIBLE  
IS THE  
BIBLE?

*Duncan MacLeod*



# How Credible Is The Bible?



*by*  
*Duncan MacLeod*

All Scriptures quoted are from *The Holy Bible In Its Original Order—A Faithful Version* unless otherwise noted.

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*Christian Biblical Church of God*

*P.O. Box 1442*

*Hollister, CA 95024-1442*

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# Contents

<b>Introduction: How Credible Is the Bible?</b> .....	<i>i</i>
<b>PART I: Bible Prophecy Fulfilled Throughout History</b>	
<b>Chapter 1</b> Egypt .....	1
<b>Chapter 2</b> The Phoenicians .....	6
<b>Chapter 3</b> Assyria and Nineveh .....	10
<b>Chapter 4</b> Babylon .....	13
<b>PART II: The Bible Supported by Secular History and Archaeology</b>	
<b>Chapter 5</b> The Migrations of the Patriarchs .....	16
<b>Chapter 6</b> Israel In Egypt, Moses, and the Exodus .....	18
<b>Chapter 7</b> The Collapse of the Wall of Jericho .....	27
<b>Chapter 8</b> Israel Under Kings David and Solomon .....	30
<b>Chapter 9</b> Judah and Israel in Biblical Archeology .....	33
<b>Chapter 10</b> New Testament Account of Jesus Christ Supported .....	37
<b>PART III: Science and the Bible Agree</b>	
<b>Chapter 11</b> Biblical Statements Now Scientifically Proven True .....	45
<b>Chapter 12</b> Darwinian Evolution—The Failed Hypothesis .....	47
<b>PART IV: The Bible’s Internal Consistency and Harmony</b>	
<b>Chapter 13</b> Consistency of Principles Between Old and New Testaments .....	55
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	61
<b>End Notes</b> .....	62



# HOW CREDIBLE IS THE BIBLE?

## Introduction

Opinions about the Bible range from its total dismissal as a collection of myths and fables to the reverent embrace of Scripture as sacred, inerrant, and inviolate. In secular academic circles, there are those who see the Bible as nothing more than the efforts of ancient writers to portray their people as God's "chosen" nation, thus elevating the Bible's historical significance. Other scholars, however, after looking carefully into the Bible—along with the history and archeology of the nations and cultures impacting its narratives—have marveled at the accuracy of its predictions, the credibility of its history, and the consistency of its themes.

For professing Christianity, the compilation of books known as the *Holy Bible* is purportedly *the* basis for belief and doctrinal teaching. Accordingly, if you consider yourself a Christian, or at least a "believer in God," the next logical step is to determine whether the Bible is *reliable* as the inspired Word of God. Indeed, the Bible is the essential *foundation* on which your Christian life should be based.

But can you *prove* its veracity? Many Christians cannot.

There are hundreds of professing Christian sects and denominations that wrangle over doctrines and beliefs. They cannot all be correct in the sight of God. Finding out who, if anyone, is truly right could be a hopeless exercise—unless we know what *God Himself* teaches us. For that, we need a reliable *source* of information about God and what He actually teaches.

There is every reason to believe that the Bible *could* be that source. But rather than *assume* its accuracy and reliability, why not examine for ourselves whether the Bible is in fact the Word of God—or whether it is simply myth and legend? After all, if we are not careful, we could make the same mistake as those who are ignorant and gullible—assuming things to be true that in fact may not be true. Should we not rather "*prove all*

## *Introduction*

*things*”—refusing to believe anything we cannot prove?

Many professing Christians take for granted, *without proof*, that the Bible is the Word of God. Thus, they have little defense when assaulted by arguments against the Bible’s credibility or claims that it “says this” or “says that.” Doubt can set in, and their faith may be weakened. In some cases, the shaken believer can be led into all kinds of false notions—or worse, into outright skepticism and ultimately atheism.

But there is no reason that this should ever happen.

There are a number of solid reasons to believe that the Bible is in fact the *inspired* and *reliable* Word of God. For example: 1) Many of the Bible’s *prophetic predictions* have been fulfilled in history, sometimes centuries after the prophecy was given; 2) Many biblical *historical accounts* are verified by both secular history and archaeology; 3) The Bible is essentially *in agreement with the proven facts of science*; 4) The Bible’s *internal consistency and harmony* clearly point to its divine inspiration.

While these four areas of biblical authenticity are not the only evidence for the divine inspiration of the Bible, they are among the most convincing, especially for those coming to the subject from a position of uncertainty. With that in mind, we will elaborate on these four aspects of biblical veracity.—*Duncan MacLeod*

## PART I:

### Bible Prophecy Fulfilled Throughout History

The prophets of the Bible made countless predictions for many nations—great and small, well known and obscure. In this section, we will outline what biblical prophets had to say about the respective futures of four of the greatest powers of the pre-Rome ancient world: Egypt, the Phoenicians, Assyria, and Babylon. Each in its turn was the most powerful nation or empire of its time.

#### CHAPTER ONE

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##### Egypt

Historians generally treat Egypt as the earliest of the great world empires. But those studying its dynastic history often overlook the fact that Egypt was seldom a single, unified nation-state. Rather, “Egypt” was usually a federation of autonomous city-states located along the Nile River.<sup>1</sup> The two that generally dominated were Thebes and Memphis—each in turn being seen as the “capital” or most powerful of the city-states. Other city-states whose dynasties are included in Egypt’s king-lists were Heracleopolis, Elephantine, Abydos, Thinis, and Bubastis. Many Egyptologists also overlook the fact that often more than one of these dynasties ruled at the same time in their respective city-state territories—resulting frequently in dynasties whose time-spans overlapped.

The history of Egypt is typically seen as stretching back *thousands of years further* than it actually does. Historian Jack Finnegan explains: “In the arrangement of these and other Egyptian materials within a framework of consecutive dynasties, all modern historians are dependent upon an ancient predecessor. This was an Egyptian priest named Manetho.... Berosus of Babylon was practically a contemporary, and the two became rivals in the proclamation of the greatness and antiquity of their respective lands.”<sup>2</sup> To put it bluntly, Manetho knowingly portrayed the overlapping dynasties of multiple Egyptian city-states as if they all had been *consecutive*, so as to make Egypt *seem much more ancient* than it ever was.

## Chapter One

It is important that we understand this fact, because we can otherwise be deceived into thinking the Bible is in error on chronology, when in fact it is *accurate*. Egypt is nowhere near 10,000 years old; it is not even 5,000 years old. With the king lists correctly understood as overlapping dynasties, numerous modern historians have *revised* their estimated date for the First Dynasty—downward from 8,400 BC to about 2,750 BC. This corrected view better harmonizes with the biblical accounts.

In many cases, Bible prophecies regarding Egypt deal with individual city-states—the main two being Thebes (identified by its ancient name of *No-Amon*) and Memphis (identified as *Pa-noaph*). Passages in the *King James Version* (KJV) refer to No-Amon simply as *No*, and to Pa-noaph simply as *Noph*. Thebes and Memphis were names later applied to these cities by the Greeks after the conquest of Egypt in 330 BC by Alexander the Great. Even the name “Egypt” itself is of Greek derivation; the original name of the people was *Mizraim*.

There are several predictions in the Bible about each of the two primary Egyptian “capital” cities, Thebes and Memphis, as well as predictions about the whole land of Egypt.

### Thebes (*No*)

*Prophecy*—In Ezekiel 30, God is quoted as declaring that He will “execute judgments in No” (verse 14), “cut off the multitude of No” (verse 15), and that “No shall be torn asunder” (verse 16). Ezekiel was writing in the 580s BC after having been taken captive, along with the Jews, to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar—whose dynasty was later overthrown by the Persians in 539.

*Fulfillment*—In 525 BC, Cambyses, king of Persia, “captured Thebes and poured out upon its devoted head the wrath of his insane ferocity. Its majestic temples were consumed with fire; and the power of the victorious host was bent to overthrow, or mar, its colossal statues.... It ceased to be Egypt’s chief city. The capital was removed in turn to Memphis, Sais, and Alexandria.... Yet, notwithstanding its long decline, when the second stroke fell, in the first century preceding the Christian era, Thebes was even then one of the wealthiest cities in the land. The blow was dealt by one of Egypt’s own princes, Ptolemy Lathyrus, the grandfather of Cleopatra, about the year 89 BC.... It was almost

## *Egypt*

entirely leveled to the ground, and the words of the fourteenth and fifteenth verses [of Ezekiel 30] found a complete fulfillment.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Memphis (*Noph*)**

*Prophecy*—The prophet Jeremiah makes the earliest prediction about Memphis in the closing years of the nation of Judah, before Nebuchadnezzar first took many Jews into captivity to Babylon. In Jeremiah 46:19, he says that “Noph shall be waste and desolate without inhabitant.” Ezekiel, a few years later, quotes God as saying, “I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause their images to cease out of Noph” (Ezek. 30:13).

*Fulfillment*—“And now what of to-day? So completely has the doom been accomplished that a century ago [before 1925] the site of Memphis was a matter of dispute. Later investigations have settled the question, but they have also verified the truth of the [Bible’s] prediction ... [that] the idols and the images and the temples—the city and all it contained have passed away.”<sup>4</sup>

### **The Land of Egypt**

Of the land of Egypt itself, there are a number of prophecies in the Bible that, in some cases, have taken *centuries* to be fulfilled; in fact, some are still being fulfilled to this very day.

*Prophecy*—In the 580s BC, the prophet Ezekiel wrote of Egypt: “It shall be [become] the lowest of the kingdoms, and shall no more exalt itself above the nations. For I will make them so few, that they shall no more rule over the nations” (Ezek. 29:15). Thus, Egypt’s days of imperial power were to come to an end. In addition, Ezekiel predicted that “there shall no more be a prince of the land of Egypt; and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt” (Ezek. 30:13).

*Fulfillment*—These long-term prophecies—that Egypt would deteriorate into a base and weak nation, and that no native Egyptian would ever rule the land again—have taken centuries to be fulfilled. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquered Egypt soon after conquering Jerusalem. After about forty years, the Persians conquered the city of Babylon, and the Babylonian empire, including Egypt, passed into Persian hands. Two centuries later, in 330 BC, Alexander the Great conquered Egypt. This gave the

## Chapter One

land nominal independence under the *Greek* dynasty of the Ptolemies, which ended with the death of queen Cleopatra—killed along with Mark Antony by Octavian (nephew of Julius Caesar) in a battle for the rulership of Rome.

Throughout this time, Egypt had remained a somewhat prosperous nation and an important player in international politics. But it now became a mere province of the Roman Empire, and the region served as the “granary” of the empire for centuries. Importantly, Egypt had been *ruled by foreigners* since Nebuchadnezzar.

In 638 AD, the forces of the new Islamic Arab empire conquered Egypt after a long siege of the capital, Alexandria. Since then, the country has been mostly occupied and ruled by people of Arab descent.

Author John Urquhart asks, “Have the last twelve and a half centuries proved or disproved the Scripture? Here is the answer: There has been, as was predicted, a constant decline. From the time of the Babylonian invasion there was no revival of Egypt’s greatness and preeminence among the nations.... In the Egypt of the Pharaohs, of the Persian dominion, of the Ptolemies, of the Roman Empire, [and] of the Mohammedans, we see a gradual but continuous descent. After the Arab conquest the degeneration proceeded with rapid strides, till Egypt has become what it is today [1925].... Along that pathway of the past, everything that made the Egyptians what they were [historically] has been wholly lost.”<sup>5</sup>

Among the predictions about the physical deterioration of Egypt’s land and resources, Ezekiel quotes God as saying, “And I will make the rivers dry...” (Ezek. 30:12). Earlier, Isaiah had written: “And the waters from the sea will dry up, and the river shall be parched and dry. And rivers shall be fouled; the streams of Egypt will languish and dry up; the reed and the rush shall wither.... The fishermen also shall mourn, and all who drop a hook into the Nile shall wail, and those who spread nets upon the waters shall languish” (Isa. 19:5-6, 8).

Urquhart continues: “The rivers have been made dry, and instead of flowing in their ancient course have become stinking pools and marshes. What had formerly ministered to health and pleasure was changed into a danger and an offence. For there can be no doubt that what is shown here in the vivid picture of

## *Egypt*

prophecy was a condition through which they actually passed.... Having once been very productive and a main source of revenue as well as sustenance, the fisheries are now scarcely of any moment....”<sup>6</sup>

J. C. McCoan also points out that the Nile today has only two branches left in the delta that are at all navigable—the Rosetta and the Damietta. “The five other courses of the river have long ago silted up....”<sup>7</sup> McCoan tells us that according to the ancient Greek historian Herodotus, the two that are still navigable are the “work of man” (McCoan does not cite exactly where in Herodotus’ *Histories* we find these words).

All of the *natural* branches of the Nile Delta that existed in Isaiah’s time are today *dried up*—or are, at best, marshy swamplands! The only two branches that can be navigated today originated as channels dug *by man*. “Even these are accessible only to small to medium-sized vessels.”<sup>8</sup>

Regarding Isaiah’s prophecy that the “fishers shall mourn,” “Herodotus says that a certain number of the poorer Egyptians ‘lived almost entirely on fish.’ It was so abundant that it was necessarily cheap. The Nile produced several kinds which were easily caught; and in Lake Moeris the abundance of fish was such that the Pharaohs are said to have derived from the sale a revenue of above 94,000 [English pounds] a year.... The fishermen of Egypt formed a numerous class, and the salting and drying of fish furnished occupation to a large number of persons.”<sup>9</sup>

But has Isaiah’s prophecy of the decline of fishing in Egypt been fulfilled? “In the decline of Egypt the fish-pools and their conduits were neglected and ruined, and the fishers lamented, mourned and languished.”<sup>10</sup>

These fulfilled prophecies regarding Egypt are only a sampling—many more could be documented. But even these are sufficient to cause us to ask, *Is this just coincidence or lucky guesses? Or is this fulfilled prophecy?*

But wait. We’ve only begun to document prophecies made in the Bible about ancient great powers—and their fulfillments down through history.

## CHAPTER TWO

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### The Phoenicians

The Phoenicians were a loose federation of coastal city-states at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea that included Sidon (the oldest, and the name the Bible sometimes uses to refer to all the Phoenician people), Tyre (the most powerful and leading city-state), Akko, Byblos, Ugarit, and Berytus (now called Beirut). Their federation was arguably as much commercial as political. Together they formed the greatest maritime commercial empire the world had ever seen—from about 1200 to 600 BC. Their trade colonies included nearly every port city of the Mediterranean, plus colonies as far away as Spain and Britain and down the Atlantic coast of Africa. According to George Rawlinson, there was hardly a place in the Mediterranean-Atlantic world that they had not at least visited and probably traded with.<sup>11</sup>

The main Phoenician subject of Bible prophecy is the city-state of Tyre. There is some prophecy about Sidon as well, but we will focus mostly on those predictions concerning Tyre.

### Tyre

*Prophecy*—The beginning verses of Ezekiel 26 foretell of some of Nebuchadnezzar exploits, which have all been fulfilled. However, some might question whether these prophecies were actually made *before* their historic fulfillments. Thus, we will skip these earlier verses and go right to the *long-term* predictions, which begin in verse 12: “ ‘And they shall plunder your riches and make a pillage of your merchandise. And they shall break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses. And they shall lay your stones and your timber and your dust in the midst of the waters. And I will cause the noise of your songs to cease; and the sound of your lyres shall be heard no more. And I will make you like a bare rock. You shall be a place to spread nets on: you shall be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken,’ says the Lord GOD” (Ezek. 26:12-14).

*Fulfillment*—For well over two centuries after Nebuchadnezzar had conquered and destroyed the mainland part of Tyre, the inhabitants continued to occupy an island off the coast—which they fortified, and from which they continued

## *The Phoenicians*

their maritime dominance of the seas virtually unabated. It seemed during that time that Ezekiel's prophecy was going to remain only partially fulfilled. "So far the prophecy had been fulfilled, but only so far. Tyre was overthrown and spoiled; the noise of her songs had ceased; the sound of her harps was no more heard (verse 13); the great and joyous city was abased and desolate. But the ruins still stood. The words which declared that the stones and timber should be cast into the sea, and [that] the very dust should be scraped from the city's site, had not been fulfilled; and it seemed most improbable that they ever would be."<sup>12</sup>

The next stage of fulfillment of God's prophecy through Ezekiel waited over two centuries for the legendary "conqueror of the known world," Alexander the Great. When the inhabitants of the island city of Tyre refused to surrender to him, Alexander mounted a successful assault and conquered it—initiating a new phase in the fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy.

In his book *Phoenicia*, historian George Rawlinson gives a 24-page detailed account of the back-and-forth successes and failures of both Alexander's forces and the defenders of Tyre during his seven-month siege of the city in 332 BC. The following excerpts are relevant to our discussion:

"Alexander now took his resolution ... [in which] he resolved on the construction of a solid mole—two hundred feet wide—across the strait, from the mainland to the islet, whereby he should actually join it to the continent, and so be able to bring his engines to its walls, and to press the siege in the usual way. Having requisitioned the services of thousands of labourers, he began the work where it was easiest, in the shallow water near the shore. Here piles were driven into the soft mud which formed the sea bottom at this point, and stone, rubbish, boughs of trees, and whatever material came to hand was precipitated into the water, from the shore and from boats, to fill up the intervals between the piles, and make a solid structure. The work was, comparatively speaking, easy at first, for the water was shallow, the shore at hand, and the Phoenician ships unable to approach near enough to do the labourers employed much harm. There was a plentiful supply of materials in the near vicinity, for [the ruins of the mainland city of Tyre] ... and the crumbling houses and walls were easily pulled down and the stones conveyed to the edge of the mole as it advanced.... The fate of Tyre was now certain.... Alexander's workmen ... rapidly completed the mole, and brought it up to the

## Chapter Two

walls of the town. Its towers were advanced close to the walls, and were armed with more formidable and more numerous engines. Other engines ... [were used] against the walls north and south of the mole, while the main attack was delivered from the mole itself. Every device for assault and defense known in ancient warfare was brought into play on both sides.... Alexander, after one or two failures, organized a general assault, from which he anticipated success, and which succeeded.... He then quitted the city, which was half-burnt, half ruined, and almost wholly without inhabitants, content, as it would seem, with his work....”<sup>13</sup>

The excerpt presented here may imply an easy conquest for Alexander’s army, but Rawlinson’s account reveals that it was an arduous and complex event. There were subsequent invasions, with the final conquest coming in 912 AD. From that time the site fulfilled the words “like the top of a rock” (Ezek. 26:4). Those visiting the site to this day still find it so. Current photos and documentary footage show fishermen spreading their nets upon the otherwise bare site.

### Sidon

*Prophecy*—While the complete and permanent destruction of Tyre was prophesied, the sister city of Sidon was not to be destroyed. Ezekiel, in chapter 28, quotes God this way: “Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I *am* against you, O Sidon, and I will be glorified in your midst.... For I will send a plague into her, and blood into her streets. And the wounded shall fall in her midst by the sword upon her on every side. And they shall know that I *am* the LORD ’ (verses 22-23).

*Fulfillment*—“No doom of extinction is pronounced against her. She is to be spared, but she is to suffer. One or two facts from her long history will show how the words have been fulfilled. Under the Persian dominion, when Tyre was deserted, Sidon was still great and populous. It rebelled under Artaxerxes Ochus, and, after a successful resistance, was betrayed to the enemy. When all hope of saving their city was gone, 40,000 citizens chose to die rather than submit to Persian vengeance. They shut themselves up with their wives and children, set fire to their dwellings, and perished amid the flames. The ashes of the city were sold for an immense sum. It was soon rebuilt by the citizens

## *The Phoenicians*

who were absent at the time of the siege; but the doom of suffering still rested on it.

“During the Crusades it was taken several times and sacked. It was firmly retaken by Bibars, Sultan of Egypt and Syria, in 1290. But, in every commotion which has troubled that unhappy land, Sidon has had her share. It has been the scene of struggles between the Druses and the Turks, and again between the Turks and the French. So late as 1840, when Ibrahim Pasha was driven out of Syria, it was bombarded by the combined fleets of England, Austria, and Turkey, and captured by Admiral Napier, when again blood was sent into her streets, and her wounded fell in the midst of her.”<sup>14</sup>

Again, we must ask: Could the two quite *different* prophecies for the respective “sister” cities of Tyre and Sidon “just happen” to have been fulfilled down through the centuries? Isn’t it more likely that their respective fates have been the result of divine intervention—that what was foretold in the Scriptures was actually *brought to pass* by an all-powerful God?

## CHAPTER THREE

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### Assyria and Nineveh

Assyria's kings and armies were infamous for their ferocity, cruelty and outright bloodlust. History is full of accounts of Assyrian kings boasting of the unspeakable atrocities they perpetrated on enemies who had dared to oppose them. Moreover, the Assyrians saw themselves as the "master race" of their time.

The nation of Assyria (not to be confused with "Syria," an entirely different nation) was located in Mesopotamia (essentially modern-day Iraq), near the upper end of the Tigris River, northwest of ancient Babylon. Over a period of nearly two millennia, Assyria and Babylon vied back and forth for dominance of the Mesopotamian region. At times they were more or less equal rivals; at other times one dominated over the other.

The last stage of their rivalry began in the 800s BC with Assyria once again stretching its empire across Mesopotamia—Babylon then being only a province of that empire. At one point in the 700s, because Babylon had rebelled, the Assyrian king Sennacherib wrought such total destruction on Babylon that he thought it could never arise again. But eventually it did.

In 721 BC, it was Assyria that conquered the ten tribes of the northern Kingdom of Israel and removed the remnant of its population to other locations in the empire (II Kings 17:18). Then, in about 705, Sennacherib attempted to conquer the southern Kingdom of Judah during the reign of its king, Hezekiah. The prophet Isaiah gives a detailed account of what happened there in Isaiah 36 and 37. After being threatened by the Assyrian army at Jerusalem's very walls and the Assyrian general Rabshakeh making the mistake of taunting the God of the Jews, King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah prayed to God for deliverance. We read in Isaiah 37:36 that the next morning 185,000 Assyrian soldiers were all "dead corpses."

Archaeologists and historians know that most chronicles of the exploits of great kings seldom include their losses. Sennacherib's personal account of his siege of Jerusalem was found on a stele discovered in the ruins of Nineveh. Not surprisingly, he conveniently omits his *failure* to have ever penetrated the city (because of God's supernatural decimation of his

## *Assyria and Nineveh*

entire army in one night). Later historical records show that Sennacherib returned to Nineveh and was eventually killed by two of his sons.

### **Assyria's Fall Predicted**

*Prophecies*—The prophet Isaiah, writing mostly before 700 BC, forecasted Assyria's fall from world domination to tributary status. "Then Assyria shall fall with the sword—not of a man; and the sword, not of mankind—and it shall devour him, for he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall become tributary. And his stronghold will fall by reason of terror and his rulers shall be afraid of the banner..." (Isa. 31:8-9).

It was not until a century later, however, that Isaiah's prophecy reached its complete fulfillment with the fall of Assyria's capital, Nineveh, in 612 BC. In Zephaniah 2:13, the future state of Nineveh is also predicted: "And He will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and will make Nineveh a desolation and dry like a wilderness."

Indeed, some of the most striking prophecies regarding Assyria were leveled against its principal city, Nineveh. In its day, Nineveh was the largest city in the known world, with the highest and thickest walls. Yet skeptics once questioned whether there had ever been any such city as Nineveh, since for a long time the only knowledge of it was from the Bible. Then, in 1848, British archaeologist Austen Henry Layard excavated a tell that appeared to be the remains of a great settlement. Sure enough, it turned out to be Nineveh, as evidenced by countless inscriptions found there. Layard's examination of the site proved Diodorus Seculus' description of Nineveh's unusually high and thick walls to be accurate. In fact, they were "a hundred feet high and ... three chariots could drive upon them abreast."<sup>15</sup>

The whole book of the prophet Nahum is, as the opening verse tells us, "the burden against Nineveh." God says through the prophet that He will destroy Nineveh "with an overflowing flood" (Nah. 1:8). In verse 10, he says its defenders would be "as their drunkards are drunken." In chapter 2, verse 6, he predicts: "The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be helpless." And, "The gates of your land shall surely be opened to your enemies; the fire shall devour your bars" (Nah. 3:13).

### *Chapter Three*

*Fulfillments*—Excerpts from several accounts give us details of what happened to the supposedly impregnable Nineveh. Diodorus of Sicily describes how the Assyrian king and his army had defeated the attacking coalition of Babylonians, Scythians and Medes outside the walls of Nineveh and then celebrated their victory with drunken reveling. “It happened at this very time that the king of the Assyrians, who ... had become elated over his past successes, turned to indulgence and divided among his soldiers for a feast animals and both wine and all other provisions. Consequently, since the whole army was carousing, Arbaces [commander of the rebel coalition], learning from some deserters of the relaxation and drunkenness in the camp of the enemy, made his attack upon it unexpectedly in the night. And ... they won possession of the camp, and after slaying many of the soldiers pursued the rest as far as the city.”<sup>16</sup>

The “overflowing flood” predicted by Nahum is described by Diodorus in Book II, 27: “[But] in the third year, after there had been heavy and continuous rains, it came to pass that the [Tigris], running very full, both inundated a portion of the city and broke down the walls for a distance of twenty stades. At this the king ... abandoned hope of saving himself ... [and] built an enormous pyre in his palace.... [He] consigned both them [his servants] and himself and his palace to the flames.”<sup>17</sup> These events fulfilled the prophecies cited above from Nahum.

How did the prophets know ahead of time the details of Assyria’s demise and Nineveh’s fall? Did it all happen—just as they had predicted—by mere “coincidence”?

## CHAPTER FOUR

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### Babylon

The next powerful empire to rule the civilized world was Babylon. The rebel coalition that conquered Nineveh consisted of Medes, Scythians and, most notably, Babylonians. Babylon went on to conquer all of what had belonged to Assyria—plus it added Judah, Tyre and Egypt, among others. Under Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian Empire reached its height of power between 600 and 560 BC. The city of Babylon itself reached its zenith of magnificent splendor during Nebuchadnezzar’s reign.

The prophets Isaiah (writing about 700 BC) and Jeremiah (writing before 600 BC) made predictions about the city of Babylon that took a period of *centuries* to fully come to pass. Numerous secular historical sources confirm that these predictions were in fact accurate. Did Isaiah and Jeremiah just happen to make “lucky guesses”?

Let’s read some of their prophecies and then look at their subsequent fulfillments.

*Prophecies*—A prophecy written over *150 years in advance* about Babylon’s future fall—and of *specifically who* would bring it about—is found in Isaiah 45:1-2. “Thus says the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have made strong in order to humble nations before him. And I will loosen the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved doors; and the gates shall not be shut. ‘I will go before you, and make hills level. I will break in pieces the bronze gates, and cut the iron bars in two.’ ”

Isaiah also wrote: “‘And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the majestic beauty of the Chaldees, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited forever, nor shall *people* dwell in it from generation to generation; nor shall the Arabian pitch his tent there; nor shall the shepherds make their *flocks* to lie down there. But the wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of howling creatures; and ostriches shall dwell there, and he-goats shall dance there. And hyenas shall cry in their towers, and jackals in their luxuriant palaces. Yea, her time is coming near, and her days shall not be prolonged.... I will also make it a possession of the hedgehog, and pools of water; and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction,’ says the LORD of hosts” (Isa. 13:19-22; 14:23).

## Chapter Four

Several things are foretold in this passage: 1) Babylon would be as thoroughly destroyed as were Sodom and Gomorrah—though not by the same means, which had been fire from the skies (Isa. 13:19); 2) it would become uninhabited and never re-occupied (verse 20); 3) Arabs would not pitch their tents there (verse 20); 4) there would be no sheepfolds there (verse 20); and 5) it would become a swampland (Isa. 14:23).

*Fulfillments*—Both the Greek historian Herodotus in his *The Histories* 1.189-191 and the Jewish historian Josephus in *Against Apion* give detailed accounts of how Cyrus fulfilled these prophecies through his conquest of Babylon nearly *two centuries after* Isaiah wrote them.

According to Floyd Hamilton, “Travelers report that the city [Babylon] is absolutely uninhabited, even [by] Bedouins. There are various superstitions current among the Arabs that prevent them from pitching their tents there, while the character of the soil prevents the growth of vegetation suitable for the pasturage of flocks.”<sup>18</sup>

Layard describes the site of Babylon’s ruins this way: “The great part of the country below ancient Babylon has now been for centuries one great swamp.... The embankments of the rivers, utterly neglected, have broken away, and the waters have spread over the face of the land.”<sup>19</sup>

God predicted that Babylon would never be rebuilt or inhabited. In the late 1900s, Saddam Hussein, while dictator of Iraq, made an abortive attempt to rebuild and resettle Babylon. The few buildings he managed to erect stand empty today.

*More Prophecies*—The prophet Jeremiah also made predictions concerning Babylon’s fall. In chapter 51, God’s vengeance on Babylon is pronounced. Note especially verse 26: “And they shall not take a stone from you for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but you shall be a desolation forever.” Verse 43 tells us that Babylon’s ruins would not even become a tourist attraction, as the ancient ruins of Egypt and other places have: “Her cities are a desolation, a dry land and a wilderness, a land in which no man dwells, nor does *any* son of man pass by it.”

*More Fulfillments*—The giant foundation stones have not been removed from the ruins of Babylon. Peter Stoner writes, “Bricks and building materials of many kinds have been salvaged from the ruins for cities round about, but the rocks, which were

## *Babylon*

imported to Babylon at such great cost, have never been moved.”<sup>20</sup>

The ruins of Babylon today are not visited by sightseers. Stoner adds, “Though nearly all ancient cities are on prominent tourist routes, Babylon is not, and has very few visitors.”<sup>21</sup>

The Bible prophesied that Babylon, the major world power of its day, would completely fall to ruin. That ruin took centuries to complete, but has now been totally accomplished. Not even Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, with all his power and resources, could defeat the prophecies of the Bible. Was Saddam defeated in his effort to rebuild Babylon by a supernatural power far greater than himself?

### **Fulfilled Biblical Prophecies: What Does it Mean?**

We’ve only briefly sampled the most striking prophecies concerning past empires of the civilized world. Other prophecies—regarding Greece, Rome and lesser kingdoms and city-states such as Gaza, Ashdod and Ashkelon—abound in the Bible. History shows that those predictions were also fulfilled—some quickly and some over a long period of time. Were all these fulfillments just by “coincidence”? Did the biblical prophets who made such predictions simply manage one “lucky guess” after another? Do you realize how *astronomical* the odds against such a thing would be?

Some have estimated that a third of the Bible is prophecy. If that is true, an even larger portion of the Bible is *history*. Yet many scholars (and even some theologians) dismiss the accounts of historical events related in the Bible as myths or fables. In the next division of this work, we’ll see that much of the Bible’s history is *supported* by written secular history and/or by findings in archaeology. We’ll also examine the opinions of respected scholars on the *credibility* of the Bible’s history.

## PART II:

### The Bible Supported by Secular History and Archaeology

#### CHAPTER FIVE

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#### The Migrations of the Patriarchs

For centuries, scholars disputed whether there had ever been any such city as “Ur of the Chaldees,” where the Bible tells us Abram grew up. But in 1929, archaeologist C. Leonard Woolley unearthed what were clearly the remains of this ancient and very real city. Thus, another of the many objections to the Bible’s veracity has been debunked.

In his epic account of the discoveries made while excavating the city’s remains, Woolley relates finding multiple layers of settlement, showing that by the time of Abram the city was already centuries old. In fact, in Abram’s day Ur was the imperial capital of the Sumerian empire, which included several other city-states along the Euphrates river. Woolley’s team unearthed multiple shrines to pagan gods worshipped by the king and the people.<sup>1</sup>

Careful examination of ancient texts and archaeological evidence yields ample support to the biblical narrative about Abram and his kindred moving north from Ur to Syrian locations also mentioned in the Bible. Concerning the biblical account of Abram’s father Terah migrating from Ur to Haran, John Bright, in *A History of Israel*, writes: “To be sure, there is nothing intrinsically improbable about it. Ur and Haran were linked by ties of commerce and also of religion. In view of the fact that names associated with that cult [of the moon god] are not unknown among the Hebrew ancestors (e.g., Terah, Laban, Sarah, Milcah), it would be rash to deny that the tradition [i.e., the biblical account] may rest on historical circumstances. It is not impossible that certain Northwest-Semitic clans, having infiltrated southern Mesopotamia, had subsequently—perhaps in the disturbed days after the fall of Ur III—migrated northward to Haran.”<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the patriarchs as figures of history, Bright goes on to say, “The evidence so far adduced gives us every right to affirm that the patriarchal narratives are firmly based in history....

## *The Migration of the Patriarchs*

Although we cannot undertake to reconstruct the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we may confidently believe that they were actual historical individuals.”<sup>3</sup>

Summing up the evidence, Bright says, “Palestine in the early second millennium was filling with seminomadic clans, each of which was headed by a real individual, even if we do not know his name. If the patriarchs represent similar groups, as there is every reason to believe, it is captious to deny that the leaders of these groups too were real individuals; that is to say that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were clan chiefs who actually lived in the second millennium BC.”<sup>4</sup>

The Bible tells us that Jacob, the third patriarch, had twelve sons, one of whom was Joseph, Jacob’s favorite. The ten older sons were so jealous of him that they discussed doing away with him; instead, they sold him into slavery to a caravan heading for Egypt. There, Joseph became a trusted steward of the household of a noble, whose wife tried to seduce him. Joseph’s refusal to disobey God’s law incurred such wrath from the wife that she leveled a false charge against him that landed him in prison.

According to historian Paul Johnson, the account of this “affair” is a key to establishing Joseph as an *actual figure* of history. “There is no doubt about his historicity. Indeed, some of the more romantic episodes in his life have echoes in Egyptian literature. His attempted seduction by Potiphar’s wife, who in her fury at her rejection by him resorts to slander and has him thrown into prison, occurs in an ancient Egyptian narrative called *The Tale of Two Brothers*, which first reached written form in a papyrus dated 1225 [BC].”<sup>5</sup>

Among Joseph’s fellow prisoners are two former servants of the Pharaoh—his chief butler and his chief baker. J. A. Thompson tells us, “Such titles as we find in Genesis 40:2, ‘the chief of the butlers’ and ‘the chief of the bakers,’ are well known as the titles of certain palace officials in Egyptian writings.”<sup>6</sup>

## CHAPTER SIX

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### Israel In Egypt, Moses, and the Exodus

Egyptologists (those who study Egyptian history, language and culture) are by no means in agreement over the credibility of the biblical accounts of Joseph arriving in Egypt as a slave and rising to prominence; being joined by his father Jacob (Israel) and his brothers; generations passing during which their descendants become an enslaved nation, finally culminating in their liberation from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. Many dismiss the entire narrative as nothing more than legend, though they disagree as to the time the “legends” were written.

A few careful Egyptologists, however, cite evidence that such things could in fact have happened. Among things they consider are pillar-like monuments known as *stelae* (plural of *stela*: a stone monument on which a king has had records inscribed of his conquests or accomplishments); recent geological explorations such as those by the Israeli Geological Survey near the Gulf of Suez; Egyptian archaeological sites; and written records on materials like stone and papyrus.

In this chapter we’ll examine the evidence—and the opinions of scholars regarding 1) Joseph, and the likelihood that he was sold into Egypt as a slave and rose to be number two in the kingdom; 2) whether descendants of Joseph’s father, Israel, became so numerous that they were considered a threat and were thus forced into slave labor; 3) whether the plagues of the book of Exodus ever occurred; and 4) whether there ever was an Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and a parting of the Red Sea.

#### Joseph: Legend or History?

In the book of Genesis, we read that Joseph, Jacob’s favorite son, was sold by his jealous brothers into slavery and ended up in Egypt. After years in prison, he was eventually freed because the king of Egypt had a troubling dream that Joseph was able to interpret.

The dream warned that after seven years of abundant grain crops there would be seven years of famine. The king put Joseph in charge of the nation under himself as viceroy or prime minister. Under Joseph’s administration, surplus grain was put into

## *Israel In Egypt, Moses, and the Exodus*

storage during the good years so it would be available during the lean years, thus saving many from starvation. This of course made Joseph something of a national hero.

During the famine, which also included Canaan, Joseph's father, Jacob, sent the ten brothers (but not the youngest, Benjamin) to buy grain in Egypt. As the official in charge of distributing the food reserves, Joseph (whom they did not recognize) was the one his brothers had to deal with to purchase grain.

Eventually, Jacob himself and the entire extended family—sons, their wives, and his grandchildren—settled in Egypt in the northeastern Nile delta region, the "Land of Goshen." For purposes of sheep herding (the Israelites' main occupation), this was the "best of the land" (Gen. 47:6, 11).

Could this "story" have actually happened? Minimalists (those who attribute minimal or no *historical* value to the Bible) dismiss the entire account in Genesis as "historical fiction" or outright fabrication by writers in Canaan centuries later—though with no agreement among them as to *how much* later. But there are several Egyptologists who show that Genesis 37-50 contains information about places and customs that no fiction writer from centuries later in Palestine could have known about or gotten correct. Let's look at what a few of them have to say.

Historian Werner Keller in *The Bible As History* published an illustration of an Egyptian tomb carving in which a dignitary is being installed into office. According to Keller, "Joseph's elevation to be viceroy of Egypt is reproduced in the Bible exactly according to protocol. He is invested with the insignia of his high office, he receives the ring, Pharaoh's seal, a costly linen vestment, and a golden chain. This is exactly how Egyptian artists depict this solemn ceremony on murals and reliefs. As viceroy, Joseph rides in Pharaoh's 'second chariot.' That could indicate the period of the Hyksos [the non-Egyptian "shepherd kings"] at the earliest.... The first chariot belonged to the ruler, the 'second chariot' was occupied by his chief minister."<sup>7</sup>

Egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen—having examined evidence from writings on unearthed tablets, on tomb and temple walls, on objects inscribed with recently deciphered hieroglyphics and having considered the undisputed facts of the known history of that time—concludes the following: "Thus, the fairest judgment—no agendas please—would appear to be that a real historical family of

## Chapter Six

a man named Terah once existed in and around Ur this side of circa 2000 BC; he and they moved on northwestward [to Haran in northern Syria], and then his son Abraham and family moved south into Canaan; after three generations the latter's great-grandson (Joseph) could care for the group in Thirteenth/Fifteenth Dynasty Egypt in the East Delta."<sup>8</sup>

James K. Hoffmeier adds, "I concur with Kitchen that the weight of the Egyptological data, when thoroughly examined, lends credibility to the essential historicity of the [biblical] narratives...."<sup>9</sup>

The clincher, however, may be the well-documented work by Egyptologist/archaeologist David Rohl entitled *Exodus: Myth or History?* In his book, Rohl describes in detail the important excavations made in the 1980s in the eastern Nile delta region by an Austrian team headed by Manfred Bietak. According to Rohl, here are some of Bietak's astounding finds:

"In the city of Avaris—at the stratigraphical level of its foundation—the Austrian excavators uncovered an unusual building, to the west of the main mound (Tell A) in an agricultural field which they designated 'Area F.' A few feet below the plowed surface, they came across the foundations of a large villa laid out in the ground plan of a north Syrian dwelling.... This foreign design suggested to Manfred Bietak that its owner was from Syria, which of course was the homeland of Abraham and his descendants.... [Historically], this would have been the house of Jacob, constructed upon his arrival in Goshen in Year 2 of the [biblical] famine....

"Some time later ... a much grander residence was constructed over the *Mittelsaal Haus* [the German name for the type of house Jacob had lived in]. This mansion—it has been referred to as a 'small palace'—is much more Egyptian in character, built for a person of high status, with all the trappings of wealth and power.... This impressive building is fronted by a portico of twelve [the number of the tribes of Israel] wooden columns....

"[This] palace would have been constructed for Joseph the *vizier* [high official] as his family home. Once Jacob had died in the thirty-seventh year of Amenemhat's reign, the patriarch's home could not have continued in use. Instead, it was demolished, leaving only the shadow of the villa in its foundations and Joseph's house built over it on the family plot. Here, in

## *Israel In Egypt, Moses, and the Exodus*

this new Egyptian-style residence, Joseph—known to the Egyptians as the great vizier *Ankhu*—would have received petitioners and officials when he was residing in his northern residence.”<sup>10</sup>

Throughout this project, Bietak’s team found only foundations of buildings buried in farm fields. But as Rohl tells us, “[Enough] remained to work out what had once stood there. The excavations exposed a large, almost square base of mud bricks, attached to the front of which was a small chapel. Bietak determined that this base once supported a mud-brick pyramid. This in itself was remarkable because, for the period of pharaonic history up to the New Kingdom, pyramids were the exclusive prerogative of kings and their queens. No official or commoner had ever been granted a pyramid to house his mortal remains. Yet here, the high official who had lived in the Area F palace had been given just such an honor. This marked the man out as someone very special.”<sup>11</sup>

Rohl sums up the find and his conclusions: “To me—and I hope to you—this all pointed towards one conclusion. Without searching for it ... and, it has to be said, without realizing it ... the Austrian archaeological mission at Tell ed-Daba had found the *lost city of the Israelites* located at the heart of the biblical land of Goshen. They had unearthed the house of Jacob and the palace of the vizier Joseph with its twelve-columned façade representing the twelve sons of Jacob. They had found twelve main tombs in the palace garden, one of which was a pyramid tomb with a colossal cult statue of its occupant, which once stood in the chapel attached to the tomb. They had discovered that the burial chamber had been accessed in antiquity via a tunnel and the entire contents—including the body—removed. The tomb had not been plundered, but nevertheless, it was empty. The colossal cult statue had been smashed into pieces and parts had rolled into the tunnel. This statue had been made in the royal workshops of Amenemhat III, in whose time there had been a prolonged famine caused by a series of high Nile inundations. The cult statue represented an Asiatic official with yellow skin and sporting an Asiatic throw stick as his scepter. He had flame-red hair. And he wore a coat of many colors. Short of finding a name on the missing part of the statue, I could only come to one conclusion.... [This] complex in Tell ed-Daba Area F was the home and tomb of Joseph—the Asiatic vizier famous for his multicolored dream coat and the man

## Chapter Six

who brought the Israelites into the land of Goshen—the foreigner who had saved Egypt from the great famine and who had been rewarded by Pharaoh with a magnificent pyramid tomb in the heart of the Asiatic city of Avaris.”<sup>12</sup>

### **Israel’s Enslavement, Moses, and the Exodus**

After the death of Joseph, a new king arose in Egypt who “knew not Joseph” (Ex. 1:8). Meanwhile, Jacob’s descendants, the “children of Israel,” had become so numerous that they were seen as a potential threat; thus, they were forced into slave labor. To save her baby from an edict that had gone out to kill all male Israelite children, Moses’ mother had his older sister worked it out so the daughter of Pharaoh would adopt him and bring him up as her own. Reaching adulthood as an “Egyptian prince” who knew his Israelite heritage, Moses defended a fellow Israelite from an Egyptian attacker by killing the attacker. Moses then had to flee when he found out that Pharaoh wanted him dead.

In exile, Moses befriended a Midianite priest and ultimately married his daughter. Later, he encountered the Messenger of God, who sent him back to Egypt, after forty years in exile, to demand that Pharaoh let the people of Israel leave. Pharaoh refused, and God brought one plague after another on Egypt, each one worse than the last, until the whole land was essentially a devastated ruin. Finally, after the death of all the firstborn children of Egypt, Pharaoh practically begged them to leave.

However, no sooner had Pharaoh sent the Israelites away than he again changed his mind and led his army after them. The Egyptian army overtook Israel in a location where they were hemmed in between the land and the Red Sea—having no way of escape. But God parted the sea and the Israelites walked across on dry land. When the horsemen of Egypt tried to pursue them over the now-opened dry-land path, the sea’s waters returned, drowning the entire Egyptian army and destroying their chariots.

Did these events actually happen the way the Bible tells us? Minimalists, of course, dismiss the whole narrative as fiction or legend. But careful, open-minded analysts say, “Not so fast.” As we will see, many parts of the story questioned by skeptics actually fit with known facts about the land, the people and customs, and the times.

## *Israel in Egypt, Moses and Exodus*

By the time Moses was born, the dynasties with whom Joseph had found such favor had died out and been replaced. It would thus be understandable if such later kings viewed the Israelites as a threat—especially after they had become so numerous. In fact, Moses was born during the time when the Israelites had become so numerous that an edict had gone out to kill all male Hebrew babies at birth. His mother and sister hatched a plot by which Pharaoh's daughter would adopt him as her own; she gave him the name *Moses*, a name with Egyptian etymology, and brought him up as a "prince" in her household.

But finding they could not easily reduce Israel's numbers by infanticide, the new Pharaoh put them to work as slaves building his store cities, Pithon and Raamses. The idea was to keep them too busy to be able to mount any sort of rebellion.

At this point, David Rohl fills us in with some important details: "According to the Royal Canon of Turin, Neferhotep reigned for eleven years and two months. He was succeeded by his brother Sihathor who managed just three months on the throne. Then came the third brother—Khaneferre Sobekhotep IV—identified by Artapanus as Moses' stepfather. Now this all fits rather neatly with the biblical narrative. If we combine that narrative with the data from the Royal Canon we get the following timeline.

"The pharaoh who 'did not know Joseph' and enslaved the Hebrews must have been Sobekhotep III or one of his immediate predecessors. It is in this usurper king's reign that we first come across Semitic slaves in contemporary papyrus documents. With no obvious connection to the royal family of Amenemhat III, Sobekhotep III would not have seen himself as owing any loyalty to the now deceased vizier Joseph. And so he enslaved the Hebrews.

"Three years pass; Sobekhotep III dies and is succeeded by Neferhotep. It is during his rule in Upper Egypt (Memphis southward) that Moses is born in Avaris, where an independent line of rulers exists, and where the Hebrew boy is fortuitously adopted by the local king's daughter. The child spends his first few years of life in the palace at Avaris before the local king's daughter is married to Sobekhotep IV, the younger brother of the Upper Egyptian king, Neferhotep. Sobekhotep has succeeded to the throne following the eleven-year reign of his eldest brother and the three-month reign of his middle brother, Sihathor. By

## Chapter Six

now Moses is around ten years old and continues his education in the palace of his new stepfather, Khaneferre Sobekhotep IV.”<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, the Israelites’ primary task as slaves was the making of bricks for construction. Some have wondered why *straw* was such an important ingredient in the mud bricks the Israelites had to produce. Investigators have found that straw, when mixed with mud, releases humic acid, which makes the bricks up to three times stronger than ones made without straw. Those made without straw also tended to lose their shape and fall apart more easily. A wall painting found in the tomb of an Egyptian nobleman named Rekhmire depicts the multi-step, labor-intensive process of brickmaking as it was done in the middle of the second millennium BC, when the Israelites would have supplied much of the labor.

### Evidence for the Plagues

In 1808—years before the Rosetta stone provided the key to deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphics—Giovanni Anastasi discovered a papyrus (inscribed in hieroglyphics) in the area of Memphis, Egypt, that contained eyewitness accounts of plagues too similar to those described in the book of Exodus to be coincidental. After being purchased from Anastasi in 1828, the papyrus sat in a museum in Leiden, Netherlands, for decades until H. O. Lange and Alan Gardiner translated it in 1909. The complete hieroglyphic text, with Gardiner’s English translation, explanation and commentary, can be purchased from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

A few excerpts from Gardiner’s translation should suffice to paint a picture that well supports Moses’ account in Exodus (listed by papyrus numbers):<sup>14</sup>

2:10 “The river is blood. Men shrink from tasting.”

7:20 “All the waters in the river were turned to blood.”

Notice that the author does not say the river merely “looked like” blood. He says it had literally *become* blood. How many times in history has *any* river ever turned to blood—by any cause? Compare this with Exodus 7:20: “And he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that *were* in the river.... And all the waters in the river were turned to blood.”

8:1 “No fruit nor herbs are found. Oh, that the earth would cease from noise and tumult be no more.”

## *Israel in Egypt, Moses and Exodus*

9:23 “The fire ran along the ground. There was hail, and fire mingled with the hail.”

Notice Exodus 9:23-25: “And the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire [lightning] came down to the ground.... And *there* was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail struck throughout all the land of Egypt, all that *was* in the field, both man and beast. And the hail struck every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the field.”

9:11 “The land is not light.”

Compare Exodus 10:22: “And there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt.”

2:13 “He who places his brother in the ground is everywhere.”

3:14 “It is groaning that is throughout the land, mingled with lamentations.”

Notice Exodus 12:29-30: “And it came to pass at midnight the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, to the firstborn of the captive that *was* in the prison, also all the firstborn of livestock.... And there was a great cry in Egypt, for *there was* not a house where there was not one dead.”

The above is a sampling of the biblical plagues on Egypt as described in the Ipuwer Papyrus. The remainder of the text pertains chiefly to the conditions in the land and in society as a direct result of those plagues and the loss of Egypt’s slave population—the Israelites and the “mixed multitude” (probably also slaves) that left with them.

### **Crossing the Red Sea**

After finally being forced to release the Israelites from bondage, the ever-deceitful and vengeful Pharaoh—upon hearing that the children of Israel had taken a route by which they would be hemmed in between the land and the sea—decided to pursue them with his army. He was intent on slaughtering the unarmed former slaves. We read in Exodus chapter 14 that just when it looked like Pharaoh’s army was about to close in on them, God parted the sea so Israel could walk across on dry land. When Pharaoh’s army tried to follow, the waters returned—and Pharaoh

## Chapter Six

and his entire army were drowned.

Those who deny the biblical narrative claim that the area where the Israelites crossed was no more than a marshy swampland between a couple of lakes in the eastern delta. While it is true that the Hebrew *yam suph* can be translated “Sea of Reeds,” the translation “Red Sea” is also considered legitimate. According to James Hoffmeier, “the Red Sea has retreated from its ancient shoreline by five hundred meters.... Geological, oceanographic, and archaeological evidence suggests that the Gulf of Suez [i.e., the Red Sea] stretched further north than it does today and that the southern Bitter Lake extended further south to the point where the two could have actually been connected during the second millennium. This linking may have stood behind the Hebrew naming the lake *yam suph* as well as the Red Sea, to which it was connected.”<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, “salt-tolerating reeds and rushes, called halophytes, do thrive in salt marsh areas.” Also, the remains of marine life have been found in both Lake Timsa and in the Bitter Lakes, showing they were once part of an extension of the Gulf of Suez, (i.e., the Red Sea).<sup>16</sup>

What does this tell us about *where* the Israelites crossed? It tells us that they were not merely slogging through marshland, but were confronted with an impassible *sea*—which they could have never crossed without the miraculous intervention of God. There may well have been reeds by the shore of this sea, but that does *not* mean it was a freshwater lake or marsh.

But was Pharaoh’s army really drowned? Remains have been found in the area—still under water—of the wreckage of chariots, including one encrusted wheel of a chariot clearly identified as being Egyptian, still on its axle sticking up almost vertically. Rabbi Michael Rood presents a video on YouTube entitled “A Rood Awakening” in which these remains may be seen, still under water at the approximate site of the Israelites’ crossing. Are these the remains of Pharaoh’s chariots? See the video and draw your own conclusions.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

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### The Collapse of the Wall of Jericho

The book of Joshua recounts in detail how God told Joshua to approach the city of Jericho. The Israelites were to march around the city on seven successive days. On each day the priests were to blow trumpets (rams' horns). On the seventh day, while the horns were sounding, the whole army was to shout loudly. The wall of the city would then fall down and the Israelites could storm the city and conquer it. The Israelites followed God's instructions, and the city fell exactly as promised (Joshua 6:3-20).

Archaeologists examining the site have indeed found the remains of a fallen city wall at ancient Jericho. Unlike other cities with fallen walls—where such walls had fallen *inward* due to being smashed from outside—Jericho's wall had fallen *outward*, as if it had been knocked down from inside. Could this be a clue that it did not fall by the usual means?

Ernst Sellin and Carl Watzinger conducted the first major archaeological excavation at the Jericho site between 1907 and 1911. They dated the remains of "City IV" as being Late Bronze Age (c. 1550-1200 BC), during which time Jericho was supposedly unoccupied.

In 1930-36, archaeologist John Garstang examined the ruins of the wall and concluded that it was indeed the one we read of in the book of Joshua. He noticed something extraordinary, unlike what was found at remains of walled fortifications elsewhere: At other destroyed fortifications, walls had always fallen *inward*, as would be expected when they were battered from the outside. At Jericho, however, Garstang found walls that had strangely fallen *outward*. Garstang wrote a detailed account of his discovery; after signing it himself, he had two of his coworkers witness and co-sign the report—because he was sure that skeptics would otherwise doubt his findings.

In the late 1950s, another archaeologist, Kathleen Kenyon, registered her dissent to Garstang's conclusion that the remains corroborated the biblical account. Kenyon held that the remains should be dated as belonging to the Middle Bronze Age—around 1550 BC. At that time, the generally accepted date for the Exodus (for those who believed it had ever happened) was sometime in the 1200s BC. If Jericho's wall had fallen 300-plus years before

## Chapter Seven

the Exodus, it clearly could not have resulted from Joshua's attack.

Skeptics seemed to have won the controversy—that is, until 1990, when Bryant Wood re-examined the remains, especially the pottery shards on which earlier dates for the site had been based. Bringing his expertise to bear on the shards found at the site, Wood determined that they were indeed from the Late Bronze Age (rather than the Middle Bronze Age, as Kenyon had concluded).

Like Wood, Garstang had also found bi-colored pottery legitimately dated as Late Bronze Age. Kenyon was not privy to what Garstang had found, and she had not found this kind of pottery in the very limited area (two 26-ft. by 26-ft. squares) she excavated. Her dating, then, was based on what she did *not* find, rather than on what she *did* find. Wood also found bi-colored pottery shards from the Late Bronze Age, as well as scarabs (beetle-shaped amulets worn around the neck) with the names of Egyptian kings who reigned *much later* than the 1550 BC date favored by Kenyon.

To summarize: *All* scholars agree that “City IV” (the Jericho of the period in question) was *violently destroyed*. The only major disagreement concerns the *date* of the remains.

Still, each of the archaeologists who examined the remains—including Kenyon—found evidence that *corroborates* the details of the account in the Bible of Joshua's conquest. Garstang, as we saw earlier, noted that the wall had fallen *outward*, unlike the walls of any other conquered city excavated by archaeologists. He also found shards of bi-colored pottery dating from the *Late Bronze Age*, which Kenyon later overlooked. Both Garstang *and* Kenyon, however, found multiple jars of stored grain, much of it charred by fire—confirming that the conquest of Jericho was right after the spring harvest and that the city was subsequently burned.

Kenyon writes, “The destruction was complete. Walls and floors were blackened or reddened by fire, and every room was filled with fallen bricks, timbers, and household utensils; in most rooms the fallen debris was heavily burnt, but the collapse of the walls of the eastern rooms seems to have taken place before they were affected by the fire.”<sup>17</sup>

Bryant Wood summarizes the ways in which the account

## *The Collapse of the Wall of Jericho*

in the book of Joshua is corroborated by the evidence found at the remains of Jericho:

- The city was strongly fortified (Josh. 2:5, 7, 15; 3:15; 5:10).
- The attack occurred just after harvest time in the spring (Josh. 2:6; 3:13; 5:10).
- The inhabitants had no opportunity to flee with their foodstuffs (Josh. 6:1).
- The siege was short (Josh. 6:15).
- The walls were leveled, possibly by an earthquake (Josh. 6:20).
- The city was not plundered (Josh. 6:17-18).
- The city was burned (Josh. 6:20).<sup>18</sup>

The only major disagreement among analysts, then, is on the *date*. The preponderance of archaeological evidence favors a date for the remains of Jericho of approximately 1410 BC. The Bible and written history indicate a date for Israel's Exodus from Egypt at approximately 1480-1450 BC. Since the conquest of Jericho was 40 years after the Exodus, a 1410 date for the fall of Jericho certainly fits with the Bible's narrative.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

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### Israel Under Kings David and Solomon

The Bible tells us that during the reign of King David the extent of Israel's realm stretched from the Red Sea in Egypt to the Euphrates River (I Chron. 18:3). But minimalist scholars question whether David ever existed and relegate the Bible's accounts of him to the realm of mythology (surprise, surprise). Plus, they doubt whether Israel's territory was ever that extensive.

An article in *Biblical Archaeology Review* (March-April 1994) reported a discovery by a team under Avraham Biran at the northern site of Tel Dan, near Mt. Hermon. There they found an inscription in stone mentioning both the "King of Israel" and the "House of David." This inscription was dated as being from the 800s BC. In addition, the name of David is mentioned on the *Mesha Stela*—the so-called Moabite Stone. Who knows how many similar finds will be made that should eventually put to rest the dismissiveness of disbelieving scholars?

According to the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (volume II, p. 915), during the time of David and Solomon there was a power vacuum in both Egypt and Mesopotamia that enabled the new Kingdom of Israel to thrive and expand. To the north, "Assyria had entered then a period of decline, primarily because of difficulties with the Aramaeans...."<sup>19</sup> To the south, the decline of Egypt by Solomon's time is illustrated by the fact that Pharaoh Siamun, who reigned from 978 to 959 BC, gave his daughter to Solomon in marriage—"a concession almost without parallel in Egyptian history since it was a candid admission to the world of Egypt's weakness and conciliation. Normally, Egyptian kings took foreign princesses but did not give up their own daughters to foreign kings."<sup>20</sup>

### Hiram, King of Tyre, Friend of David and Solomon

Add to these facts Israel's alliance with the Phoenicians—the most powerful seafaring mercantile empire of that period. Indeed, the combination of Israel's land domination coupled with the seafaring empire of the Phoenicians (led by the city-state of Tyre) produced a formidable economic and political union. Historians agree that the reign of *Hiram* of Tyre was the "golden age"

## *Israel Under Kings David and Solomon*

of Phoenician history—just as the reign of Solomon was the pinnacle of Israelite history.

After providing materials and skilled labor to David for the building of his palace, Hiram did the same to Solomon for the building of the Temple for God. In I Kings 5:12 we read that Hiram and Solomon “made a treaty.” This treaty had long-term benefits, as we read of in later Bible passages. Not only did Hiram and his craftsmen help build the Temple, the Phoenicians joined Israel in other ventures. According to historian George Rawlinson, “the Tyrian monarch entered into a close maritime alliance with his Israelitish neighbour, and engaged with him in joint commercial enterprises of the most lucrative character.”<sup>21</sup>

I Kings 9:26-28 tells us that Solomon and Hiram built a fleet of merchant ships to go on joint ventures to far-flung countries to trade for valuable merchandise. From the history of the Phoenicians already quoted, we know that there was hardly a place in the known world where Phoenician ships had not already visited for trade purposes.

We are told in I Kings 9:15 that among Solomon’s building projects were Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. What have archaeological excavations of these sites yielded? Archaeologist Yigael Yadin writes this about his dig at Hazor in the 1950s: “What I’m about to say may sound like something out of a detective story, but it’s true. Our great guide was the Bible.... This was the real secret of our discovery of the Solomonic period.”<sup>22</sup> Yadin eventually excavated the sites of all three of the cities mentioned above. At each one he found the same architecture now referred to by archaeologists as “Solomonic”—with magnificent, ornately decorated polished-stone buildings whose grandeur certainly suggests the prosperity of Solomon’s time as described in the Bible.

According to Scripture, a host of kings and dignitaries visited Solomon during his earlier years—some to hear his reputed wisdom, some to see the grandeur of his realm. One, who visited for both purposes, was the *Queen of Sheba*. Many scholars relegate the story of her royal visit to myth. After all, where was this place called “Sheba,” anyway?

Recent discoveries point to what is now Yemen, south of Saudi Arabia, as the location of this once-prosperous kingdom. Werner Keller tells us that the area was not always barren and dry; in fact, the remains of a large dam can still be seen there to

## *Chapter Eight*

this day. “A gigantic dam blocked the river Adhami in Sheba, collecting the rainfall from a wide area. The water was then led off in canals for irrigation purposes, which was what gave the land its fertility. Remains of this technical marvel in the shape of walls over 60 feet high still defy the sand dunes of the desert.... Sheba was then the Land of Spices, one vast fairy-like scented garden of the costliest spices in the world.... That was until 542 BC—then the dam burst. The importunate desert crept over the lands and destroyed them.”<sup>23</sup>

## CHAPTER NINE

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### Judah and Israel in Biblical Archeology

King Solomon died around 930 BC. Because of his sins, God took most of the kingdom from his son, Rehoboam, and gave it to a former official who had years earlier lost favor with Solomon—Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. I Kings 12:1-24 relates how Rehoboam incited the northern tribes into rebelling against him by threatening to sanction an even heavier yoke of oppression than his father had. Jeroboam, the leader of that rebellion, quickly became king of the newly formed Northern Kingdom—which, consisting of *ten* tribes, from that time was called *Israel*. This left Rehoboam with only Judah, a portion of Benjamin, and most of Levi—called the Southern Kingdom or *Judah*.

For the next 230 years, the two distinct kingdoms often found themselves at war with one another. Skirmishes often resulted in various border cities changing hands.

Concerning the period of the two separate kingdoms, a number of archaeological finds lend credibility to the biblical accounts. One such find is called the *Mesha Stela*, also known as the Moabite Stone. It contains the account of Mesha, king of Moab, and his rebellion against Israel. Mesha's rebellion is recorded in I Kings 3. In verse 27, we are told that Mesha offered his son as a sacrifice to the Moabites' god in order to obtain deliverance from certain defeat by the armies of Israel, Judah, and Edom. The stela substantiates the biblical account of Mesha's sacrifice of his son. Until this stela was found, most scholars had questioned the accuracy of the biblical account, but now they have no excuse.

Another find corroborating the Bible is known as the Black Obelisk, a monument to the achievements of King Shalmaneser III of Assyria. The stone, now on display at the British Museum in London, was discovered by Austen Henry Layard in 1846 at the site of the Assyrian city of Kalhu (Calah), which was near Nineveh on the Tigris. Among the scenes depicted on the obelisk is one picturing a subjugated king named *Jehu* kneeling before Shalmaneser with his tribute (the inscription reads "Jehu of the House of Omri"). "House of Omri" was an Assyrian catchphrase for "House of Israel"—Omri being a notorious Israelite king (887-876 BC) who had managed to earn the respect of

## Chapter Nine

Assyrian rulers. Jehu was also one of Israel's kings, ruling from about 841 to 814 BC, when the nation was under tribute to Assyria. Both Omri and Jehu are mentioned several times in Scripture, and the obelisk clearly validates their biblical historicity.

Another archaeological find—at the site of Megiddo, in the Northern Kingdom—came during a dig by the German Oriental Society in the early 1900s. The find was an *agate seal*, which included a Hebrew inscription indicating that it belonged to an official of Jeroboam II's administration. As the eighth king of Israel, Jeroboam II was a prominent ruler of the Northern Kingdom. He is mentioned numerous times in the Old Testament (II Kings 14; etc.).

II Kings 15:17-20 tells us that King Tiglath-pileser (Pul) of Assyria set out to conquer Israel but was persuaded by Menahem, king of Israel, to instead accept extensive tribute. According to Eugene Merrill, the “annals of Tiglath-pileser” validate the Old Testament record and readily “attest to Menahem's eagerness to pay tribute to Tiglath-pileser in order to maintain his position in Samaria.”<sup>24</sup>

The city of Samaria, Israel's capital, eventually fell to the Assyrians. A three-year siege was initiated under Shalmaneser V (II Kings 17:3-6), but the actual fall of Samaria was overseen by Sargon (mentioned incidentally in Isaiah 20:1). While early archaeological work had yielded little information on Assyria's conquest of Samaria, a discovery in 1843 has helped to validate the biblical account. Among the ruins of what later proved to be Sargon's palace at Dur-Sharukin (now Khorsabad, Iraq), the French archaeologist Paul Emile Botta discovered inscriptions recording Sargon's many conquests. One of the inscriptions states, “In my first year [as king of Assyria] I besieged and conquered Samaria.... I led away 27,290 prisoners.”<sup>25</sup> Sargon's account of his overthrow of Samaria closely matches that of the Bible, once again substantiating its authenticity.

After conquering and deporting Israel from its homeland, Assyria eventually turned its attention to Judah. By this time, a new Assyrian king, Sennacherib, had come to power. The year was about 700 BC, and Hezekiah was king of Judah. Beginning with II Kings 18:17 and continuing through all of chapter 19, we read how Sennacherib's generals came to the walls of Jerusalem, blasphemed God, and then threatened to do to Jerusalem what

they had just done to *Lachish* (II Chronicles 32:9-10) and several other Jewish cities if Hezekiah didn't surrender. Hezekiah prayed to God for deliverance, and God responded by sending an angel who killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers while they slept.

The Prism of Sennacherib, also called the Taylor Prism, contains Sennacherib's boastful account of his siege of Jerusalem. It reads, "Hezekiah himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, [at] his royal residence, like a bird in a cage...."<sup>26</sup> Importantly, what is *left out* by Sennacherib is that he never conquered Jerusalem at all. But this is not at all unexpected, since no Assyrian king would easily admit failure or the unexplained loss of an entire army. Interestingly, Sennacherib *does* detail his triumph over *Lachish*—as if it was Assyria's only significant victory of the day. Moshe Pearlman comments on the writings on this prism: "What made this find especially important was that for the first time a detailed text was accompanied by even more detailed bas-relief illustrations which evoke the very atmosphere of the biblical battlefield.... Sennacherib and his gleaming cohorts did indeed come down on Judah like the 'wolf on the fold' in the year 701 BC, and destroyed many 'strong cities,' though not perhaps forty-six, as he claimed. The one city he sought to subdue, but failed, was Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, where king Hezekiah's spirit of resistance was much strengthened by the tough advice of the prophet Isaiah. Doubtless he [Sennacherib] would have wished the centerpiece of his wall decorations to have depicted the fall of Jerusalem. Instead, judging by the prominence given to [the battle for] Lachish, this must have been the scene of the fiercest fighting, and he evidently regarded its capture against stubborn defense as his most outstanding victory in this land."<sup>27</sup>

The point here is that Sennacherib *hid* the fact that he failed to take Jerusalem, yet he went to great lengths to emphasize his capture of Lachish—which precisely corroborates the biblical account!

Following his failure at Jerusalem, Sennacherib returned to Assyria and was eventually killed by two of his sons. His youngest son, Esarhaddon, ascended to the throne. The biblical account of Sennacherib's assassination (II Kings 19:35-37) is verified by Esarhaddon's own records.

Another century or so passed. Then, three different times Judah was conquered by Babylon and her inhabitants exiled—the

## Chapter Nine

last time being in 586 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple. The years 608-538 BC comprised the 70-year Babylonian exile of the Jews. In 539 BC, Cyrus of Persia conquered the city of Babylon, as prophesied in Isaiah 45:1-2, incorporating Babylon into the Persian Empire. A year later, in fulfillment of Isaiah 44:28, he gave by *decree* permission to the exiled Jews to return to Palestine.

In 1879, archaeologist Hormuzd Rassam was excavating the foundations of the temple of Marduk in the ruins of Babylon when he uncovered a cylinder (subsequently named the *Cylinder of Cyrus*) which proved to contain the *text* of this particular *decree* of Cyrus—thus validating the biblical account.<sup>28</sup> Because of its profound implications, a copy of this decree is on public display at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

## CHAPTER TEN

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### New Testament Account of Jesus Christ Supported

Many skeptics dismiss the Gospel accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as having been fabricated centuries after His time by leaders of the so-called “Christian movement.” In the past, such skeptics even denied that there *had ever been* a historical Jesus of Nazareth—until the overwhelming bulk of corroborating evidence made them look quite foolish.

Lately, it has been more fashionable to allege that since Jesus and His followers would have been only illiterate tradesmen and could not possibly have written the biblical books bearing their names, these books were probably not written until centuries later by people other than those after whom the books are named. How, then, can we *believe* much of the New Testament? Is there any support from outside secular sources for the New Testament accounts of the life of Christ and the writings of His followers?

According to Craig L. Blomberg, the answer is an emphatic *yes*. After extensively quoting many of these sources, he sums it up: “Combining the evidence of these various Greco-Roman writers, one can clearly accumulate enough data to refute the fanciful notion that Jesus never existed, without even appealing to the testimony of Jewish or Christian sources.”<sup>29</sup>

An example of the sources Blomberg cites was one of the most trusted contemporary Roman historians, Cornelius Tacitus, who was a member of the Roman Senate after having served in several official Roman posts. About 115 AD, Tacitus wrote *The Annals*, a history of the acts of those emperors who had succeeded Augustus Caesar up to and including Nero—a period spanning the years 14-69 AD. Much of what Tacitus included came from his personal experiences (he was born in 57), and his earlier material was drawn from the archives to which he had access as an official.

In *The Annals*, Tacitus writes of the disastrous fire that burned a huge portion of Rome, which many suspected Nero himself had deliberately set. “Nero looked around for a scapegoat, and inflicted the most fiendish tortures on a group of people already hated by the people for their crimes. This was the sect known as Christians. Their founder, one Christus, had been put to

## Chapter Ten

death by the procurator [governor] Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius. This checked the abominable superstition for a while, but it broke out again and spread, not merely through Judaea, where it originated, but even to Rome itself....” Tacitus goes on to describe in grisly detail the hideous ways in which Nero punished people for the “crime” of professing Christianity. Note that Tacitus speaks of Christianity in very negative terms. He himself was certainly no advocate of this “abominable superstition.”<sup>30</sup>

Another extra-biblical writer that mentions Jesus is the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. At the behest of Roman authorities, in about 94 AD he wrote *Antiquities of the Jews*. In Book 20, Chapter 9, section 1, he gives an account of the illegal execution of Jesus’ half-brother James in which he also mentions Jesus Himself. “Festus [the former Roman procurator, mentioned in Acts 24-26] was now dead, and Albinus [his newly appointed successor] was but upon the road; so he [Ananus II, the High Priest] assembled the Sanhedrin of the judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called [the] Christ, whose name was James, and some others.... [And] when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned....”

Jesus had been born during the Roman dominion over His birthplace, Judea. Any student of the history of Rome can find the accurately recorded names, dates, and places relating to the important events in the long history of the most extensive and powerful empire of the ancient world. For our purposes, the most important notable people in the life of Christ are all known from documented history: Emperor Augustus Caesar and his successor Tiberius; Herod the Great and his sons, kings of Judea and Galilee; Pontius Pilate, Roman procurator of the province; and Annas and Caiaphas, the High Priests appointed by Rome who tried and convicted Jesus.

We read of Christ’s birth in Luke 2: “Now it happened in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the [Roman] world should be registered [for tax purposes]” (verse 1). Continuing in verses 4-6, “And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was from the house and lineage of David, to register himself along with Mary, who was betrothed to him as wife, and was great with child. And it came to

## *New Testament Account of Jesus Christ Supported*

pass that during the time they were there, the days were fulfilled for her to give birth.”

Augustus reigned as Roman Emperor from 31 BC to 14 AD. History remembers his administration as having been competent and relatively just. According to the Jewish/Greek philosopher and historian Philo, during the reign of Augustus “no one dared to molest the Jews.”<sup>31</sup>

The same cannot be said for Herod “the Great,” Rome’s appointee to the kingship of Judea. We learn from Josephus that Herod was not even ethnically Jewish, but attained the throne by a mixture of political intrigue, military force, and outright treachery. Josephus depicts Herod as a highly corrupt despot who routinely courted the favor of those in power, betrayed the trust of associates, and ascended to political prominence via murder (including the murder of many of his own family members). It was thus that Herod both usurped and maintained power over the Jews in a tyrannical reign that stretched from 37 BC to 4 BC—a few months after the birth of Christ.

Should we be surprised, then, that Herod ordered the killing of all baby boys up to the age of two in Bethlehem after hearing of the birth of Jesus, whom the visiting “wise men” were calling “King of the Jews”? The increasingly mad Herod had never allowed anyone to live who even *seemed* to threaten any of his ambitions—and he certainly was not about to start.<sup>32</sup>

Tiberius, successor to Augustus, appointed Pontius Pilate to be procurator of the Roman province of Judea in 26 AD. Pilate’s administration is thus characterized by Alfred Edersheim: “Venality, violence, robbery, persecutions, wanton, malicious insults, judicial murders without even the formality of a legal process, and cruelty—such are the charges brought against his administration. If former governors had to some extent respected the religious scruples of the Jews, Pilate set them purposely at defiance; and this not only once but again and again....”<sup>33</sup>

The office of High Priest seems to have been a political reward given to whoever could curry the favor of foreign occupying authorities. (Such had been the case since the time of Greek rule of Judea under first the Ptolemies, then the Seleucids.) Edersheim writes of Annas and Caiaphas: “After holding the Pontificate for nine years, [Annas] was deposed and succeeded by others, of whom the fourth was his son-in-law Caiaphas.

## Chapter Ten

The character of the High Priests during the whole of that period is described in the Talmud in terrible language.... It deserves notice that the special sin with which the house of Annas is charged is that of ‘whispering’—or hissing like vipers—which seems to refer to private influence on the judges in their administration of justice, whereby morals were corrupted, judgment perverted, and the Shekinah withdrawn from Israel.”<sup>34</sup>

“The names of those bold, licentious, unscrupulous, degenerate sons of Aaron were spoken with whispered curses.... [We] can understand how antithetic in every respect a Messiah, and such a Messiah as Jesus, must have been to Annas. He was as resolutely bent on His death as his son-in-law, though with his characteristic cunning and coolness, not the hasty, bluff manner of Caiaphas.”<sup>35</sup>

The brutal nature of Pilate and the wholesale corruption of the Jewish religious leadership are *verified* by the New Testament account of Jesus’ death. On the night of His betrayal and subsequent mock trial by the Sanhedrin, His captors took Him first to Annas, the ex-High Priest—an obvious breach of protocol. For any *official* trial by the Sanhedrin, Caiaphas, as the current High Priest, would be required to preside.<sup>36</sup> We read in Matthew 26 that Caiaphas demanded that Jesus tell whether or not He claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus answered, “You have said it. Moreover, I say to you, in the future you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” Then Caiaphas ripped his own garments, saying, “He has blasphemed! Why do we need any more witnesses? Behold, you have just now heard His blasphemy. What do you think?” They answered, “He is deserving of death!” (verses 63-66).

Since the Romans did not permit the Jews to carry out executions themselves, they took Jesus to Pilate—who after questioning Him concluded that he could find no fault worthy of His death. As we have seen, Pilate had no scruples against unjustly killing Jews. So we might wonder why he was so hesitant to execute Jesus if he thought He was innocent. Pilate even ceremoniously washed his hands before the crowd as if to absolve himself of the guilt for Jesus’ execution. Perhaps Matthew 27:19 suggests an answer: “Now as he sat on the judgment seat, his wife sent a message to him, saying, ‘Let there be nothing between you and

## *New Testament Account of Jesus Christ Supported*

that righteous man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him.’ ”

The point here is this: If the execution of Christ had simply been fabricated, it would seem likely that the part about Pilate being reluctant to carry out this one execution could have been left out. Pilate was notorious for unjustly killing scores of Jews, so why bother to highlight his hesitation in this case unless the story really happened?

Finally, we have additional corroboration of the account of Christ’s crucifixion from (of all places) the Jewish Talmud: “It was taught: On the day before the Passover they hanged Jesus ... because he practiced and enticed Israel to go astray....”<sup>37</sup> The passage also claims that for forty days a herald went around trying to find anyone who might witness in Jesus’ favor, yet no one was found. This part seems unlikely, since the Bible tells us that Christ’s trial and crucifixion all took place in less than 24 hours. In fact, what the authorities actually did was to search for witnesses *against* Jesus—but as it turned out, even their false witnesses could not get their conflicting stories straight. We should not be surprised, however, that the Talmud often conflicts with the scriptural account.

### **The Book of Acts Corroborated**

In the late 19th century, a skeptical British scholar named William Ramsay set out to investigate the veracity of Luke’s book entitled “Acts of the Apostles.” Ramsay’s approach was to retrace the steps supposedly taken by Paul on his journeys through Asia Minor (modern Turkey) at a time long before paved roads would noticeably alter the landscape from what it had been in Paul’s day. He was expecting to find obvious discrepancies between locations and place names in Acts and the geographic reality—and possibly even prove that Paul could never have gone where Luke said he went. Highly influenced by the “Tubingen Theory” (which holds that most biblical books are composites of writings by multiple authors penned long after the events they describe), Ramsay started out believing that the book of Acts had actually been written in the second century (long after Paul and Luke had died), probably by multiple authors. He did not begin with an attitude ready to see Acts as reliable firsthand history.

## Chapter Ten

“On the contrary, I began with a mind unfavorable to it [his later conclusion that Acts did indeed constitute reliable firsthand history], for the ingenuity and apparent completeness of the Tübingen Theory had at one time quite convinced me. It did not lie then in my line of life to investigate the subject minutely; but more recently I found myself often brought in contact with the book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth. In fact, beginning with the fixed idea that the work was essentially a second-century composition and never relying on its evidence as trustworthy for first-century conditions, I gradually came to find it a useful ally in some obscure and difficult investigations.”<sup>38</sup>

“It is not my object to assume or to prove that there was no prejudice in the mind of Luke, no fault on the part of Paul; but only to examine whether the facts stated are trustworthy, and leave them to speak for themselves (as the author does). I shall argue that the book was composed by a personal friend and disciple of Paul, and if this be once established, there will be no hesitation in accepting the primitive tradition that Luke was the author.”<sup>39</sup>

After having personally seen the region and experienced the topography of the land, the locations of the named cities and towns, and the prevailing winds and currents as described by Luke, aided by his knowledge of historical records, Ramsay came finally to the conclusion that Acts did in fact constitute not only reliable history, but what he termed “historical work of the highest order”—comparable even to that of great ancient historians like Thucydides. Though it isn’t clear that Ramsay came to see the Bible as the inspired Word of God, it seems he did at least become a believer in the accuracy of the Bible’s history. He even went on to write several other historic works about Paul and other early Christian notables.

These examples from secular history clearly support the veracity of the New Testament accounts of the life of Christ and the writings of His followers.

## **Archaeological Finds Supporting the New Testament**

Here is a sampling of the countless archaeological discoveries that support the narratives found in the New Testament:

**Nazareth**—A lower-Galilee village where Jesus grew up after His family’s return from Egypt, Nazareth was located just a four-mile walking commute from Sepphoris—the bustling capital of Galilee under Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. Sepphoris was the site of a massive urban rebuilding project following its destruction by the Romans after an ill-advised rebellion had sprang up in the wake of the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC. Thus, as artisans working in building construction, Nazareth’s proximity to the city gave Joseph and Jesus ample opportunities for employment.<sup>40</sup>

Archaeological exploration of the remains of both Sepphoris and Nazareth has been ongoing since the early 1980s. In the time of Jesus’ youth, the “proximity of Sepphoris to the satellite village, Nazareth, made contacts with this influential urban center convenient and natural.”<sup>41</sup> This fact supports the biblical narrative that Joseph and Mary, though originally from Bethlehem, would have chosen Nazareth as their home.

**Capernaum**—A city by the Sea of Galilee mentioned 16 times in the Gospels. We are told that Peter and several other disciples of Christ were fishermen working out of Capernaum. As Randall Price tells us, “From the period of the New Testament there has been uncovered [at Capernaum] the evidence of the fishing industry (anchors, fishhooks), which employed the disciples, as well as a street and houses certainly used by them on occasion.”<sup>42</sup>

**A first-century fishing boat**—“In the 1980s, drought exposed a well-preserved first-century fishing boat (measuring 26.5 feet long, 7.5 feet wide, and 4.5 feet high) in the mud of the Sea of Galilee.... Pots and lamps found inside the boat dated it to the first century. Carbon-14 testing further confirmed the dating. The design of the boat was typical of fishing boats used during that period on the Sea of Galilee. In the back of the boat was a raised section like the one where Jesus could have been sleeping, as indicated in the Gospel accounts. The boat could accommodate fifteen people including crew. This archaeological discovery confirms the description given in the Bible.”<sup>43</sup>

## Chapter Ten

To sum up the opinions of respected biblical archaeologists, we quote two of the most esteemed authorities of the 20th century. First, William F. Albright: “The excessive skepticism shown toward the Bible by important historical schools of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, certain phases of which still appear periodically, has been progressively discredited. Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history.”<sup>44</sup> Another leading archaeologist, Nelson Glueck, writes: “It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or in exact detail historical statements in the Bible. And by the same token, [the] proper evaluation of biblical descriptions has often led to amazing [archaeological] discoveries.”<sup>45</sup>

Jack Finnegan has published a 409-page book, entitled *The Archaeology of the New Testament*, containing pictures, diagrams, and street plans of nearly every place mentioned in the New Testament—places that can be visited today by anyone who can afford it. This thick book can be ordered from Amazon.com. It may cost a bit more than you care to pay, but any good city library probably contains a copy.

This sampling of discoveries from archaeology clearly supports the biblical account. To those with an open mind, these examples should lend credence to at least the possibility that the Bible *is* in fact the inspired Word of God.

In Part III, we will examine some of the ways in which the Bible agrees with the *proven facts* of science—as opposed to unproven theories and speculations by scientists.

## PART III:

### Science and the Bible Agree

#### CHAPTER ELEVEN

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#### **Biblical Statements Now Scientifically Proven True**

The Bible often makes statements about our physical world (usually in poetic language) that have been corroborated *centuries later* by scientific discoveries. For example, we read in Job 26:7 that God “hung the earth on nothing.” The ancient Greeks knew the earth was a sphere, but pictured it being supported on the shoulders of the god Atlas. It was not until the time of Isaac Newton and Galileo Galilei—the 17th century AD—that science came to realize that the earth really was “hung upon nothing.” Thus, both astronomy and physics have confirmed the words of the Bible—over three thousand years *after* it was written!

In Job 38:16, God asks Job, “Have you entered into the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in search of the depths?” Only in the 20th century have oceanographic explorers discovered that there are indeed numerous scattered “springs” in the bottom of the ocean.

In addition to springs, Psalm 8:8 refers to the “paths of the seas”—currents in the oceans. Matthew Maury (1806-73) is considered the father of oceanography. After reading in the Bible of these “paths,” he famously set out to find them. His resulting book on ocean currents—such as the Gulf Stream and the Humboldt Current—remains a basic text on oceanography still used in universities today.<sup>1</sup>

The hydrologic cycle is also in the Bible, mentioned *millennia* before it was explained by the French potter/scientist Bernard Palissy in the 1500s. In Ecclesiastes 1:7 we read: “All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea *is* not full; to the place from where the rivers came, there they return again [as rain].” In Amos 9:6 we are told, “He Who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out upon the face of the earth, the LORD *is* His name.” Indeed, “If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth...” (Eccl. 11:3).

## *Chapter Eleven*

These are but a few of the many biblical statements corroborated by science. In the next chapter, we'll examine *evolution*—a theory embraced by scientists and science writers that not only conflicts with the Bible but is actually *disproved* by science. As we will see, there is no disagreement between the Bible and *proven facts* of science; but there most assuredly *is* disagreement between the Bible and theories *disproved* by genuine science.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

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### Darwinian Evolution— The Failed Hypothesis

The world of so-called “science”—which includes numerous scientists, philosophers of science, science writers, academics, and many who wish to convince themselves and others that there is no Creator God—has religiously embraced the Darwinian theory of evolution as if it were thoroughly established, incontrovertible fact. In reality, it is *nothing of the sort*.

There are several *inherent fallacies* one must embrace in order to believe Darwin’s theory of evolution:

1) Life can spontaneously generate. *It cannot.*

2) A large number can be reached from a small number by subtraction. *It cannot.*

3) Order and the information-rich organization of complex chemical compounds can “just happen.” *They cannot.*

4) Instructional information, a form of “communication,” does not require a *source* communicator. The fact is, no “communication” ever occurs without an *original communicator* as its source.

### The Law of Biogenesis Repeatedly Proven

Francesco Redi and Louis Pasteur both proved that life originates *only* from existing life. Evolutionists, however, argued that Redi and Pasteur had only disproved the “spontaneous generation” of mice, flies, or microorganisms; the theory of evolution, they held, dealt with the actual *beginnings* of life on earth—a much more “simple” and primitive event, perhaps involving only the mere alignment of simple compounds in a “chemical soup.”

Indeed, as Jonathan Sarfati writes, “In Darwin’s day, many swallowed the theory of spontaneous generation—that life arose from non-living matter. [The theory] was somewhat easier to believe then, because the cell’s structure was almost unknown. Ernst Haeckel, Darwin’s German ‘bulldog on the continent,’ claimed that a cell was a ‘simple lump of albuminous combination of carbon.’ There was no excuse for this, though, because light microscopy had advanced enormously, even before

## Chapter Twelve

Haeckel's day, to a level that could resolve many subcellular components."<sup>2</sup>

Countering evolution's supposition on the "spontaneous" origin of life was the late British astronomer and cosmologist Sir Fred Hoyle. Though he remained an atheist to his death in 2001, Hoyle was honest enough to have calculated (with the help of mathematician and fellow atheist Chandra Wickramesinghe) the odds against *even an enzyme*—a necessary catalyst for biological function in living cells, but not an actual living organism itself—having originated on earth "all by itself" from non-living matter. Hoyle outlines how they arrived at their answer:

"There are some ten to twenty distinct amino acids which determine the basic backbone of the enzyme and these simply must be in the correct position in the polypeptide structure. The rest of the amino acids, usually numbering a hundred or more, then control the inner details of the surface shape. There are also the active sites that eventually promote the biochemical reactions in question, and these too must be correct in their atomic forms and locations.

"Consider now the chance that in a random ordering of the twenty different amino acids which make up the polypeptides it just happens that the different kinds just fall into the order appropriate to a particular enzyme. The chance of obtaining a suitable backbone can hardly be greater than one part in  $10^{15}$ , and the chance of obtaining the appropriate active site can hardly be greater than one part in  $10^5$ . Because the fine details of the surface shape can be varied we shall take the conservative line of not 'piling on the agony' by including any further small probability for the rest of the enzyme. The two small probabilities we are including are quite enough. They have to be multiplied, when they yield a chance of one part in  $10^{20}$  of obtaining the required enzyme in a functioning form.

"By itself, this small probability could be faced, because one must contemplate not just a single shot at obtaining the enzyme, but a very large number of trials such as are supposed to have occurred in an organic soup early in the history of the Earth. The trouble is that there are about two thousand [necessary human] enzymes, and the chance of obtaining them all in a random trial is only one part in  $(10^{20})^{2000} = 10^{40,000}$ , an outrageously small probability that could not be faced even if the whole universe

consisted of organic soup.”<sup>3</sup>

Not only that, but the “soup” would have to exist in one contiguous mass, not divided into trillions of separate bodies, as the universe actually is. We are not talking “improbable” here; we are talking *impossible!*

For anyone who thinks Hoyle’s put-down of Darwinian evolution is “religion masquerading as science,” even a cursory examination of Hoyle’s life and work—while aware of his atheism—should put that patent nonsense to rest.

John Ashton reinforces Hoyle’s conclusions without quoting him directly: “There is no known proven mechanism that can explain all the steps [required] for a living cell to form from non-living molecules (abiogenesis), and statistically it is impossible.”<sup>4</sup>

*Science* has proven that life could *never* have spontaneously generated from inanimate matter. It is not doing so today; it never has; and it never will. The first of the four inherent fallacies of the theory of evolution stands exposed for the false, unscientific, and ridiculous idea that it is.

## **Second-grade Arithmetic**

The fundamental tenet of the theory of evolution is that life evolved from primitive forms to higher, more advanced forms by a process of mutations followed by “natural selection”—all “supervised by no one.” The inherent problem with this idea is that mutations do not *add* information to the genome. They only garble or *subtract* information. “Mutations do not produce new, purposeful genetic information.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, “There is no known physical or chemical mechanism [that can] generate heritable variations that will improve adaptivity or increase the complexity of living organisms.”<sup>6</sup>

We have shown above that life cannot spontaneously generate from inanimate matter. But let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that a primitive life form of some kind has spontaneously come into being. Clearly, its genome would be quite *simple*—perhaps akin to a single page of assembly instructions for a kiddie car. On the other hand, the genome for any “higher animal,” and certainly for a human being, would be more akin to multiple warehouses full of thousand-page instruction manuals for the assembly and operation of all the rocket engines, controls,

## Chapter Twelve

and computers—plus training manuals for astronauts, engineers, and technicians—needed to put a man on the moon!

Question: Can we get from the tiny amount of information in the imagined primitive genome to the *exponentially greater* amount of information in the human genome *by subtraction*? Remember, mutations do not add to a genome, they only *subtract* information. Yet Richard Dawkins, Bill Nye, Jerry Coyne, and their fellow evolutionists would have us believe the opposite—that mutations can somehow advance a genome. But if you remember your second-grade arithmetic, subtraction does not yield a larger number; it yields only a *smaller* one!

In spite of evidence to the contrary, numerous books have been written to convince the gullible and unsuspecting public that the mythical god called “Evolution”—by mutations followed by “natural selection”—somehow took a “simple” life form and *added* information to its genome so that it gave rise to more and more complex creatures, ultimately developing them into the infinitely complex and diverse life forms we find on earth today.

### Order and Organization: Accidental?

All life forms have in the nucleus of each cell a molecular substance called DNA. While most people have heard of DNA—indeed, it has become almost a byword of sorts in our everyday speech—few truly understand what it is, except that it plays an important role in the development and function of living things. What DNA in fact represents is a critical feature of life—*organization*. But do inanimate elements and compounds simply “organize themselves”? Evolutionists would have us believe that they do.

Researcher Stephen Meyer asks, “What about living cells and the complex molecules they contain? Does their organization derive from the physical and chemical properties of their parts? Do the chemical constituents of proteins or DNA molecules have properties that could cause them to self-organize? Are there physical or chemical forces that make the production of information-rich molecules inevitable under plausible prebiotic conditions? [Evolutionist] Dean Kenyon thought the answer to these questions might well be *yes*.”<sup>7</sup>

The essence of Kenyon’s argument was that laws of

chemistry and physics made the alignment of substances into living material virtually inevitable in the imagined “prebiotic soup” thought to have existed in the primordial earth. After a while, however, even Kenyon began to doubt his own theory, partly as a result of the work of Michael Polanyi.

“Polanyi argued that, in the case of communications systems, the laws of physics and chemistry do not determine the arrangements of the characters that convey information. The laws of acoustics and the properties of the air do not determine which sounds are conveyed by speakers of natural languages. Neither do the chemical properties of ink determine the arrangements of letters on a printed page. Instead, the laws of physics and chemistry allow a vast array of possible sequences, characters, or symbols in any code or language. Which sequence of characters is used to convey a message is not determined by physical law, but by the choice of the users of the communications system in accord with the established conventions of vocabulary and grammar—just as engineers determine the arrangement of the parts of machines in accord with the principles of engineering.

“Thus, Polanyi concluded, communications systems defy reduction to physics and chemistry for much the same reasons that machines do.... [He] insisted that living things defy reduction to the laws of physics and chemistry because they also contain a system of communications—in particular the DNA molecule and the whole gene-expression system....

“To say that the information in DNA does not reduce to or derive from physical and chemical forces implied that the information in DNA did not *originate* from such forces. If so, then there was nothing Kenyon could do to salvage his self-organizational model.”<sup>8</sup>

### **DNA Information With No Source?**

Most people have some idea of the role DNA plays in determining how living organisms develop from conception through birth and subsequent growth to adulthood. They also realize that DNA plays a part in bodily cell functions throughout life. But few—unless they are biologists or have at least studied college-level biology—have a clear picture of what this all-important compound called *deoxyribonucleic acid* really is. James Watson

## Chapter Twelve

and Francis Crick first discovered in 1953 that its molecular structure was what has been called a “double helix”—looking somewhat like a long ribbon-shaped ladder. The “steps” on the ladder are compounds that contain one of four elements—represented by letters. “Indeed, when Watson and Crick discovered the structure of DNA, they also discovered that DNA stores information using a four-character chemical alphabet. Strings of precisely sequenced chemicals called nucleotide bases store and transmit the assembly instructions—the information—for building the crucial protein molecules and machines the cell needs to survive.

“The DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) molecule is a polymer (a chain) whose elements (the links) are *nucleotides*. A *nucleotide* is made up of what is called a *nucleoside*, which is the main part of the link, and a phosphate group, which serves as the connector joining the links to each other. The phosphate group consists of a phosphorus atom joined with four oxygen atoms. The *nucleoside* is a combination of two molecules. One is a sugar, the other is called a *base*.... There are four kinds of bases, and therefore four kinds of nucleotides. The four bases are *adenine*, which we denote by A, *thymine*, denoted by T, *cytosine*, denoted by C, and *guanine*, denoted by G. The nucleotides are strung together in a long chain with a mixture of the four kinds of bases. The DNA can carry information in the order of its bases.”<sup>9</sup>

“Crick later developed this idea in his famous ‘sequence hypothesis,’ according to which the chemical parts of DNA (the nucleotide bases) function like letters in a written language or symbols in a computer code. Just as letters in an English sentence or digital characters in a computer program may convey information depending on their arrangement, so too do certain sequences of chemical bases along the spine of the DNA molecule convey precise instructions for building proteins.”<sup>10</sup> According to software developer Bill Gates, “DNA is like a computer program, but far, far more advanced than any software ever created.”<sup>11</sup>

Question: Does computer software “program itself”? If not, then why would any rational person imagine in their wildest dreams that biological encoding—which Bill Gates calls “far more advanced” than any computer software—somehow “organized itself” without any external agency being involved?

## *Darwinian Evolution—The Failed Hypothesis*

Another question: Is there such a thing as controlling, instructional information that has *no* source? When a person reads a written message or receives instructions, is it not correctly assumed that the communication was written by *someone*—i.e., a source? Yet Crick insists on reminding everyone, “Biologists must constantly keep in mind that what they see was not designed, but rather evolved.”<sup>12</sup>

*Huh?*

“The order of the nucleotides on the DNA molecule has all the characteristics of a message, laden with information. A message may be passed on, but in the real world, there can be no message without a message sender.... The ultimate puzzle of life is the origin of the information upon which life is based.”<sup>13</sup>

“Whatever information is—whether thought or an elaborate arrangement of matter—one thing seems clear. What humans recognize as information certainly *originates* from thought—from conscious or intelligent activity. A message received via fax by one person first arose as an idea in the mind of another.... Our experience of the world shows that what we recognize as information invariably reflects the prior activity of conscious and intelligent persons.

“What, then, should we make of the presence of information in living organisms? The Human Genome Project, among many other developments in modern biology, has pressed this question to the forefront of public awareness. We now know that we do not just create information in our own technology; we also find it in our biology—and, indeed, in the cells of every living organism on earth. But how did this information arise? And what does the presence of information in even the simplest living cell imply about life and its origin? Who or what ‘wrote’ the book of life?”<sup>14</sup>

“Darwin’s theory, when he proposed it, seemed to refute the Argument from Design. The theory was supposed to show that life could develop from a simple beginning to the complex organisms of today. It was supposed to be able to do this without the need for a designer or a creator. It was supposed to substitute *chance* for design.... [However, we have seen that] the NDT [neo-Darwinian theory of evolution], which describes an evolution that contradicts the Torah’s concept of creation, is incompatible with many scientific observations.”<sup>15</sup>

## *Chapter Twelve*

The Darwinian theory of evolution stands exposed as the failed hypothesis of pseudo-science that it clearly is—defying both rational logic and established scientific fact. The Bible tells us God created life, *not* that it somehow spontaneously generated and then “evolved” into ever more complex forms. The Bible and scientifically proven *fact* are in full agreement; but the Bible does *not* support would-be science.

Which will you embrace—the statements of the Bible corroborated by true science, or scientifically *disproved* theories like Darwinian evolution, which also contradicts Scripture?

## PART IV:

### The Bible's Internal Consistency and Harmony

#### CHAPTER THIRTEEN

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#### Consistency of Principles Between Old and New Testaments

We have shown in previous chapters how Bible prophecies have been fulfilled over the centuries; we have also confirmed the accuracy of the Bible's historical accounts; and we have demonstrated ways in which biblical statements about the physical world agree with facts of science. But what about the Bible itself? Does it hold *internal* evidence of its own veracity?

Many are unaware that the multiple books known as *The Holy Bible* were written by some 40 different authors over a period of more than 1500 years. This is surely a formula for a disastrous conglomeration of disjointed and contradictory teachings. Yet when the Scriptures are closely examined, we instead see a remarkable degree of *consistency* and *agreement* as to their content and the principles they teach.

Many who accept the New Testament reject the Old Testament as no longer applicable, while many who believe the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) reject the New. Some allege that there are conflicts between the two. In this chapter we will see that the Bible is amazingly *consistent in its teachings* between the Old and New Testaments. While the Old Testament teaches mainly the letter of God's laws and precepts, the New Testament raises the application of those precepts to the spiritual level.

Perhaps the most important principle taught in the entire Bible is *love*—love for God and love for one's fellow human being. This principle is taught in both the Old and New Testaments as the *first* and *second* greatest commandments of all. We find the first in Deuteronomy 6: "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (verse 5). We find the same command stated by Jesus in Matthew 22: "And Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

## Chapter Thirteen

This is the first and greatest commandment' ” (verses 37-38).

Right after that, Christ added, “And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets’ ” (verses 39-40). The second of these two commandments is also found in the Old Testament: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18).

Another important principle we find in both testaments is humility before God. Isaiah 66:2 quotes God as saying, “To this one will I look, to him who is of a poor and contrite spirit, and who trembles at My Word.” When Jesus gave the “Sermon on the Mount,” He began it with, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Those with this attitude of reverent humility before God will of course be obedient to Him. Moses told the Israelites in Exodus 23:22, “But if you shall indeed obey His voice, then He will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes....” The same admonition to obey God is repeated countless times (for example, Deut. 30:2, 8, 20). In the New Testament, Jesus tells His disciples, “If you love Me, keep the commandments—namely My commandments.” He says further in verse 21, “The one who has My commandments and is keeping them, that is the one who loves Me, and the one who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.” Just as in the Old Testament, Jesus closely links love for God with obedience to Him.

Another important principle found in both testaments is revealed first in Deuteronomy 8, the teaching that “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live” (verse 3). Jesus repeated this teaching when Satan tried to get Him to turn stones into bread. “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God’ ” (Matt. 4:4). Indeed, the principle of living by *all* of the Bible is consistently taught throughout both testaments.

We also note that each of the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 is taught in the New Testament as well.

1) The First Commandment is to *have no other gods before the true God* (Ex. 20:3; Deut. 5:6-7). In the New Testament,

## *Consistency of Principles Between Old and New Testaments*

the apostle Paul likewise emphasizes that there is only *one* true God. “For indeed, even if there are those which are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as there are many gods and many lords, still to us there is one God the Father, from Whom are all things, and we are in Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we are by Him” (I Cor. 7:5-6).

2) In Exodus 20:4-6 and Deuteronomy 5:8-9, we read the command against *idol worship*. This command appears several times in the New Testament (I John 5:21; I Cor. 6:9-10; Rev. 21:8; etc.).

3) The commandment prohibiting *using God’s name in vain* occurs in Exodus 20:7 and Deuteronomy 5:11. In Matthew 6:7, Christ tells His disciples not to vainly repeat any prayer by rote. Likewise, Paul admonishes the Ephesians to avoid all corrupt communication (Eph. 4:29).

4) The *seventh-day Sabbath* is commanded in Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-14. We note that Jesus kept the Sabbath as an example for His followers. We read in Luke 4:16 that keeping the Sabbath was His custom. Plus, He clearly articulated that He is “Lord” of the Sabbath day—not Sunday (Mark 2:27-28).

5) To *honor one’s mother and father* is the Fifth Commandment (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). In Mark 7:9-13, Christ condemned the scribes and Pharisees for nullifying this command by carnally reasoning around it.

6) Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17 tell us *not to commit murder*. In many places in the New Testament murder is condemned (I John 3:15; Rev. 21:8; 22:13; etc.).

7) We see next the *command against adultery* in Exodus 20:14 and Deuteronomy 5:18. Romans 13:8-9 tells us that not committing adultery is one of the ways we love our neighbor. Hebrews 13:4 tells us that God will judge adulterers.

8) The Eighth Commandment is *against stealing* (Ex. 20:15; Deut. 5:19). Thieves are numbered among those who will have no place in the Kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:10).

9) *Bearing false witness*, or lying, is prohibited in Exodus 20:16 and Deuteronomy 5:20. In Revelation 21:8, we read of liars being excluded from the Kingdom of God.

10) In Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy 5:21, God *commands us not to covet* (wrongly desire) anything that belongs to

## Chapter Thirteen

another person, including their wife or husband. Numerous New Testament passages teach that covetousness is wrong (Rom. 7:7; I Cor. 6:10; II Tim. 3:2).

God had commanded Abraham and his male descendants to be circumcised. In Paul's time, it was a *Judaic decree* that a Gentile proselyte to Judaism had to be circumcised. Gentile converts to *Christianity*, however, were not required by either Peter or Paul to be circumcised. Why? Because as Paul clearly taught, God intended physical circumcision to be only a *type* of *spiritual* circumcision—a “circumcision” of the *heart*, leading to profound repentance of sin and conversion. Paul wrote: “For he is not a [spiritual] Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is external in the flesh; rather, he is a [spiritual] Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God” (Rom. 2:28-29).

But is there a corroboration of this principle in the Old Testament? Indeed there is, in several places. For example, God told the Israelites through Moses: “Therefore, circumcise the foreskin of your heart and be no longer stiff-necked” (Deut. 10:16). Additionally, “And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live” (Deut. 30:6). A “circumcised heart” seems to be a metaphor in both the Old and the New Testaments for loving God and being willing to obey Him.

Some have alleged that the teachings of the apostles, especially Paul, differ from the teachings of Christ. But the following examples will show that Jesus and the apostles taught the *same principles*.

Christ unambiguously told His disciples that if they loved Him they would keep His commandments. John, the “disciple whom Jesus loved,” tells us in his first general epistle that the standard by which we (true Christians) know that we “know Him” is that we “keep His commandments” (I John 2:3). He goes on in the next verse to call anyone a *liar* who claims to know Christ but does not keep His commandments.

But what about Paul? Many have claimed that Paul taught the opposite of Christ and even said the commandments are “done away.” But in reality, such alleged conflicts are based on

## *Consistency of Principles Between Old and New Testaments*

the misinterpretation of the biblical texts. Paul looked to Jesus as God “manifested in the flesh” (I Tim. 3:16). How then can we imagine that he would dare preach *anything* contrary to Christ’s teachings? Indeed, a careful reading of Paul’s writings will reveal that in no way did he preach anything that conflicts with the teachings of Jesus.

For example, Paul summarizes the Ten Commandments as the *law of love*: “Because it says, ‘you shall not commit adultery, you shall not commit murder, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not lust,’ and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, even by this standard, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ ” (Rom. 13:9). He clearly writes, “Circumcision [of the flesh] is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; rather, the keeping of God’s commandments is essential” (I Cor. 7:19). Does this at all sound like Paul considered the Ten Commandments or the Law “done away”?

Quoting all of the places Paul’s writings agree with the teachings of Christ would make this writing excessively long. If your mind is open, the above examples should suffice. If not, I challenge you to study the whole New Testament and see for yourself that there *are no actual conflicts* between the teachings of Paul or any of the other apostles and those of Christ. In some cases an apostolic writing may go into greater detail on an issue than did Jesus, but such amplifications in no way constitute contradiction.

For example, in his famous “love chapter” (I Cor. 13), Paul expands on Christ’s teaching about *love* for fellow man. Then he sums up by reinforcing Jesus’ teaching that the second of the two great commandments is *love for neighbor*. He says, “And now, these three remain: faith, hope and love; but the greatest of these is love” (verse 13). Isn’t that what Jesus was saying in Matthew 22:39?

Christ and Paul also taught the same thing about the true *reward of the saved*—that it is the future resurrection of the dead. Jesus tells us in John 5:28-29, “Do not wonder at this, for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth; those who have practiced good unto a resurrection of life, and those who have practiced evil unto a resurrection of judgment.” (This, by the way, also agrees with Old Testament teachings in Ezekiel 37 and Job 14:13.) In Acts 24:21 and 26:8,

## Chapter Thirteen

Paul clearly says the teaching for which he was being judged by the Jews was the resurrection of the dead. In I Corinthians 15 (often called the “resurrection chapter”) and I Thessalonians 4:13-17, Paul tells in detail how those who have died in the faith will be resurrected to eternal life as Spirit-born sons and daughters of God when Jesus returns to the earth. The eschatological visions God gave John also agree with Paul’s teaching that the faithful dead will be resurrected to eternal life (Rev. 11:15; 14:14-16; 20:4-5).

Paul explains genuine godly faith in Hebrews 11, the “faith chapter.” Each example of faithfulness he cites can be found in the Old Testament—and each example of living faith links faith with *obedience* to God. Paul, like Christ, clearly equates godly faith with obedience.

Paul looked to Jesus as God “manifested in the flesh” (I Tim. 3:16). How then can we imagine that he would dare preach *anything* in conflict with Christ’s teachings?

## Conclusion

In summary, we find that the *same principles* are thoughtfully woven throughout the Bible—from one end to the other. True, some of the statutes God gave to ancient Israel cannot be applied by Christians in today’s world—not until Christ returns and sets up the Kingdom of God. Meanwhile, as Christians, we should obey the “laws of the land” that are in harmony with the laws of God. We are to live by every (applicable) word, then, that has come from God—as He gives us the help we need to understand those words.

Having proven that the Bible is in fact *true* and that it was *inspired* by the Creator God can be somewhat dangerous—if you fail to act on what you’ve learned. But if you are willing to apply what you have learned, this knowledge can be supremely valuable as part of the essential *foundation* of your faith. Without the solid, dependable Word of God—the Bible—you can be led by deceivers to believe a variety of erroneous teachings. But with a firmly founded trust in the Bible as God’s written Word to you personally, you can develop a loving, trusting, obedient relationship with God. If you continue to study God’s Word and increasingly come to know both what it teaches and what it does *not* teach, you can fulfill Peter’s admonition to “be growing in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Pet. 3:18).

*The Bible stands proven to be true.* It is God’s inspired Word to you—His all-important message of how to successfully live your life. What will you do with it—neglect it, or benefit by applying it in your life? The choice is yours—the most important choice you will ever make!

## **PART I End Notes:**

- 1 H. L. Hoeh, *Compendium of World History*, p. 40
- 2 Jack Finnegan, *Light From the Ancient Past*, pp. 65-66
- 3 John Urquhart, *The Wonders of Prophecy*, p. 27
- 4 *Ibid*, pp. 46-47
- 5 *Ibid*, pp. 31-32
- 6 *Ibid*, pp. 53-54
- 7 J.C. McCoan, *Egypt*, p. 5
- 8 Urquhart, p. 49
- 9 George Rawlinson, *Egypt and Babylon*, pp. 318-319
- 10 Urquhart, p. 53
- 11 George Rawlinson, *Phoenicia*
- 12 Urquhart, p. 16
- 13 Rawlinson, *Phoenicia*, pp. 222-235
- 14 Urquhart, pp. 19-20
- 15 Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*
- 16 *Diodorus of Sicily*, Book II, 26
- 17 *Ibid*, Book II, 27
- 18 Floyd Hamilton, *The Basis of Christian Faith*, p. 310
- 19 Austen Henry Layard, *Discoveries Among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*
- 20 Peter Stoner, *Science Speaks: An Evaluation of Christian Evidences*, p. 94
- 21 *Ibid*

## **PART II End Notes:**

- 1 C. Leonard Woolley, *Ur of the Chaldees*, pp. 78-79
- 2 John Bright, *A History of Israel*, p. 90
- 3 *Ibid*, p. 92
- 4 *Ibid*, p. 93
- 5 Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, p. 24
- 6 J. A. Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology*, p. 49
- 7 Werner Keller, *The Bible As History*, p. 86
- 8 K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, p. 366
- 9 James Hoffmeier, *Israel In Egypt*, p. 98
- 10 David Rohl, *Exodus, Myth or History*, pp. 106-108
- 11 *Ibid*, p. 110
- 12 *Ibid*, p. 117
- 13 *Ibid*, p. 137
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