

HIGHLIGHTS OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN BIBLE LANDS

by

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PART ONE

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING ARCHAEOLOGY

WHAT IS ARCHAEOLOGY? Archaeology is the science of antiquities, or the study of the relics of early races in order to understand as much as possible about the life they lived. Bible archaeology limits the study to Bible lands and to those discoveries that have definite bearing upon the Scriptures. Much of the work of Bible archaeology, we shall see, has to do with the excavating of mounds of ancient cities of Bible lands. 1

The value of the study of Bible archaeology. Numerous critics of the Bible who have boasted of using so-called scientific methods have challenged the accuracy and the historicity of many statements in the Scriptures. The early narratives of the Bible have been declared to be legendary or mythical. A late date has been suggested for certain books of Scripture, and thus certain expressions in those books have been said to be anachronistic. Archaeology is of value to the Bible student in demonstrating scientifically that the Bible is correct and historically accurate, thus proving again and again that its critics are wrong. Dr. W. F. Albright, a recognized authority in the field of archaeology, has made the following statement about the results of the excavator's work:

Nothing tending to disturb the religious faith of Jew or Christian has been discovered . . .
Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition of the value of the Bible as a source book of history. 2

Nor is this the only value of the study of Bible archaeology. In addition to proving the Bible to be true, the findings of the excavators have made it possible for the Bible student to have a better background for a study of Bible times. Because of these findings, we have a clearer understanding of the manners and customs of the Hebrew people of Bible days, and also those of other nations living in Bible lands. This knowledge is a great asset in the study of the Scriptures. It brings to us new light on the meaning of many Bible passages. There is, then, a twofold value in the study of Bible archaeology: Bible corroboration, and Bible illumination. 3

How cities have become buried, and why they are in the form of a mound (or tell). When the ancients would build a new city, they often chose a hill located near a spring. They would build a wall around the city to protect it against an enemy. The city thus built might be occupied for several centuries and then be destroyed by an enemy, or by earthquake, or fire. The site of the city might lie unoccupied for an indefinite time. Then another people would decide to build a new city on the site of the old one without clearing away all the debris of the old city. And many years later this city would also be destroyed. So it has happened that a mound, after being excavated, has been found to be the site for as many as twelve or thirteen cities built one right on top of the preceding one. Archaeologists call the plane or level of each successive city an occupational levels. 4

The science of uncovering a buried city. The early pioneers in archaeology had not developed the scientific methods that have been used by the twentieth-century excavators. Now it is customary for each occupational level of earth to be removed and everything found in it recorded before the next deepest level is uncovered. Everything found is always studied in relation to where it is found. Thus the value of the discoveries is not lost. 5

Dating a city-level. The giving of a date to each occupational level is largely determined by the remnants of pottery found there. It was Sir Flinders Petrie, about the turn of the century, who discovered that each archaeological period had its own typical pottery. Thus he was the first to state the principle that the successive levels of occupation in a mound could be recognized through the broken pieces of pottery that were found in those layers. 6

Evaluating discoveries. Since excavators seldom, if ever, find a building in a perfect state of preservation, it becomes necessary for them to make a very careful study of what remains they do find in relation to the vicinity where they were found in order to “reconstruct” a picture of the building as it once appeared. Such “reconstructions” of ancient temples, palaces, or ordinary houses, are of great value in the knowledge we secure of the life of people in Bible times. 7

Archaeological periods in Palestine. There is not exact agreement among archaeologists regarding the various datings of archaeological ages in the Holy Land. The following dates are suggested. Details concerning the Stone Age have not been included because there has been so much speculation regarding many of the early dates. New discoveries cause former dates to be changed. But the student of archaeology needs to know approximate dates of archaeological periods referred to in the writings on the subject.

I. THE STONE AGE	Prior to 3000 B.C.
II. THE BRONZE AGE	3000-1200 B.C.
Early Bronze	3000-2000 B.C.
Middle Bronze	2000-1500 B.C.
Late Bronze	1500-1200 B.C.
III. THE IRON AGE	1200- 300 B.C.
Early Iron	1200- 900 B.C.
Middle Iron	900- 600 B.C.
Late Iron	600-300 B.C.

IV. HELLENISTIC AGE	300 B.C- 63 B.C.
V. ROMAN AGE	63 B.C.-A.D. 323. 8

GLOSSARY

Cartouche—An oval figure on an Egyptian monument containing the signature of a king.

Cuneiform—Babylonian wedge-shaped writing done by use of a stylus, and not alphabetic but rather syllabic in character.

Graffiti—Wall scribbling.

Hieroglyphics—The word means “sacred engraving,” because the Egyptian priests used them on monuments, and the priests or those initiated were the only ones supposed to be able to read them. It is used now of any picture form of writing.

Lapis lazuli—Sapphire.

Ostraca—Fragment of pottery containing writing.

Pyramid—The tomb of certain Egyptian kings.

Scarab—A seal made in the form of a beetle and worn as a charm by the ancient Egyptians.

Squeeze—A copy of an inscription made by forcing plastic material into the depressions.

Stele—An inscribed monument made of stone in the form of an upright slab.

Tell—Mound of an ancient city. Most of the names of these mounds are in the Arabic language.

Terra cotta—Clay and sand material used for statues.

Ziggurat—Babylonian shrine for a god or goddess. 9

1. For interesting introduction to study of archaeology, see Edward Chiera, *They Wrote on Clay*.
2. William F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1933), pp. 127-128.
3. Joseph Free, *Archaeology and Bible History*, p. 1.
4. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, pp. 16-18; Adams, *Ancient Records and the Bible*, pp. 25-29.
5. Adams, *ibid.*, pp. 33-37.
6. George A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible*, rev. ed. 1937, p. 182; Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, p. 29.
7. Sir Leonard Woolley, *Digging up the Past*, pp. 53-80.
8. For dates, see Albright, *Archaeology of Palestine*, also Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*; also Adams, *Ancient Records and the Bible*.
9. Suggestions were derived from T. Christie Innes, *Thrilling Voices of the Past*, pp. 147-148.

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