

The Stones Cry Out: Archaeological Discoveries in the Lands of the Old Testament

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“If we would destroy the Christian religion, we must first of all destroy man’s belief in the Bible.” So said Voltaire, champion of French humanism, in the years leading up to the disastrous results of the French Revolution.

Since the Age of Reason in the 1700s, archaeology over the last two hundred years has blossomed, all the while refining its digging and dating methods. Western scholarly interest has concentrated on excavating the ancient realms in Egypt and Mesopotamia, with a particular focus on the biblical world. Would uncovering these ancient sites support—or would they challenge the Bible’s history? While many Bible narratives have yet to be corroborated by general revelation, it appears that at every turn of the spade in the Near East, the Bible is confirmed rather than denied.

Two Major Discoveries in the Twentieth Century



Scrolls from the Dead Sea

Arguably the greatest archaeological event in the biblical world was the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls around 1947. These ancient writings dated from before the time of Christ, many of which were copies of OT books. The OT scrolls from the Dead Sea region: 1) verify the careful transcription of the OT through the centuries leading up to our modern translations; and 2) these pre-Christian copies (180-50 B.C.) of earlier copies of OT books help verify the antiquity of the original Scriptures of the OT canon.

A second bombshell discovery of the twentieth century was at Tel Mardik in northern Syria. Beginning in the 1960s, scholars uncovered the ruins of the ancient city state of Ebla that was destroyed just before the time of Abraham. Commercial records preserved in clay tablets from before 2000 B.C.



Tablet from tel-Markik

authenticate the historicity of Sodom and Gomorrah as Ebla’s trading partners, along with Jerusalem. It is just a matter of time before the locations of these ancient cities are discovered in the Dead Sea valley.



Major Discoveries in the last 25 Years

Just recently, the site of ancient Ai recorded in the Book of Joshua has all but been confirmed by scholars who used the Book of Joshua to pinpoint Ai’s location northwest of Jericho.

Skeptics had long doubted the historicity of King David, considering him a legendary figure like King Arthur of Britain. However, in the early 1990s, an ancient inscription dating from the ninth century B.C. was uncovered in northern Israel that recorded several ancient kings of the Bible. This monument’s mention of the “house of David” exploded the critical theory that David was a legend. David really did reign in the tenth century B.C.



Fragments of the "house of David" Stela found at Tel-Dan. This monument likely was set up by King Hazael of Damascus following his defeat of Israel and Judah (2Kgs 8:28-29).

Since the time of that extra-biblical discovery of David, other major discoveries have been found in excavations around the old city of Jerusalem. Two of the most significant finds are



Hezekiah's Seal, 2015

1) a clay seal from King Hezekiah’s signet ring, published in 2015; and 2) in January 2019 another seal was found just 10 feet from Hezekiah’s seal showing it came from the same time period—this latest seal belonged to “Isaiah the proph[et]!”



Isaiah's Seal, 2019

There are many more archaeological corroborations of the OT text. Still, modern critics continue to attack the Bible. Like Voltaire, they seek to destroy people’s trust in the reliability of the Bible.

Archaeology, however, has been a helpful witness to the historicity and accuracy of the biblical record. Isaiah really did minister in the time of King Hezekiah, and his prophecies still speak to God’s people today.

Just the same, even if biblical archaeology were not finding these many corroborations of biblical people and events, true Christians still would trust and use the Bible as God’s Word, because the Lord Jesus said,

“...search the Scriptures, ...for they bear witness of Me.” (John 5:39)

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