

When the Rocks Cry Out



SABBATH—APRIL 28

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Isaiah 20:1; Nahum 3:2-7; Luke 19:40; Hebrews 11:24-27; John 20:24-31.

MEMORY VERSE: “Moses had faith. So he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. That happened after he had grown up. He chose to be treated badly together with the people of God. He chose that instead of enjoying sin’s pleasures for a short time” (Hebrews 11:24, 25, NIV).

KEY THOUGHT: Archaeology¹ has played an important part in supporting Old Testament truths.

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, THE BIBLE FACED ATTACKS FROM MANY SIDES. The greatest attacks came from Bible scholars.² They argued that we just could not trust the Bible and its historical stories. Many kinds of new ideas were presented to explain where the Bible came from. All of these ideas tried to prove that the Bible stories were false.

But when these attacks were at the strongest, archaeologists³ began making surprising discoveries. Bit by bit, these discoveries support Bible truths. A well-known Bible scholar wrote, “Past discoveries show that future archaeological finds⁴ will continue to support Bible history.”—Adapted from Edwin Yamauchi, *The Stone and the Scriptures [the Bible]* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), p. 168.

This week we will take a look at some archaeological discoveries and how they have proved some Bible stories.

¹archaeology—the science of digging up relics (old things) that have been buried under the ground for many years.

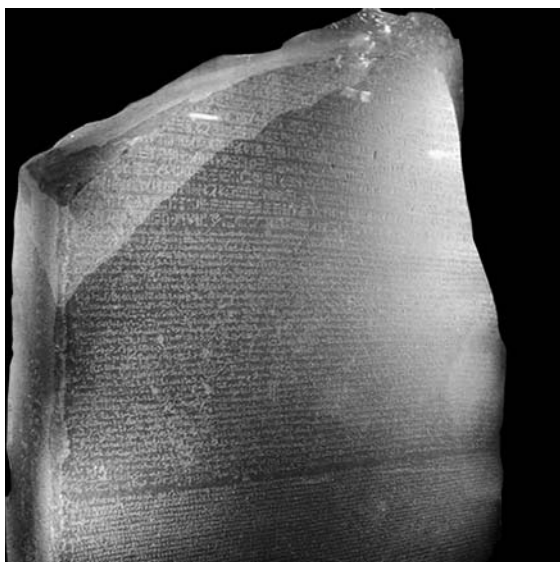
²scholars—thinkers who study and research the Bible for a living.

³archaeologists—people who dig up relics (old things) to learn about the past.

⁴archaeological finds—things that someone has found from hundreds of years in the past. The things people find when they dig to find old cities.

SUNDAY—APRIL 29**FAITH AND ARCHAEOLOGY
(Luke 19:40)**

Read Luke 19:40. Jesus was not talking about archaeology⁵ when He said these words. But He might as well have been. Over the years, different archaeological discoveries (finds),⁶ such as the Rosetta Stone⁷ and the Behistun inscription,⁸ have done much to support the Bible record.



The discovery of the Rosetta Stone helps support the Bible.

Dr. W. F. Albright, perhaps the most famous archaeologist⁹ of the twentieth century, said, “There can be no doubt that archaeology has supported the record of Old Testament history.”

—Adapted from *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1942), p. 176.

Millar Burrows, from Yale University, said, “On the whole, archaeological work has no doubt made stronger our faith that the Bible record is very dependable. More than one archaeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased through archaeological work in Palestine.”—Adapted from *What Mean These Stones?* (New Haven, Conn.: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1941), p. 1.

K. A. Kitchen wrote, “The Old Testament has been proven dependable, so long as its writings and writers are treated fairly and honestly.”—Adapted from *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), p. 500.

It is nice to have these quotes. But our faith must not depend on archaeology. This is because archaeology is still the work of humans. People have to interpret archaeological relics, so the danger of personal opinion always comes up. What happens when someone makes a find that some scholars interpret in a way that does not follow the Bible? Is our faith then destroyed? It is nice when archaeological interpretations fit what we believe. But our faith must not depend on old things. We need to put our faith in God’s promises

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⁷The Rosetta Stone—a large black rock slab with statements written in three languages that helped scholars decipher (decode) the Egyptian hieroglyphic (picture) language.

⁸The Behistun inscription (message)—this message was carved on a cliff by Darius I of Persia. In this message, Darius writes about his military victories.

⁹archaeologist—a person who digs up relics (old things) to learn about the past.

as shown to us in Jesus Christ.

What principle¹⁰ do we find in John 20:24-31 that we can use with our faith? How does John 20:29 help us understand what faith means?

MONDAY—APRIL 30

SOME PROPHECIES PROVEN (Nahum 3:2-7)

The Bible is filled with prophecies. Many of them have already been fulfilled. It is exciting to look back and see how archaeology¹¹ shows us that these prophecies were fulfilled as the Bible said they would be.

For example, Nineveh was the capital of Assyria at the top of Assyria's power and glory. Nineveh was one of the centers of the world. Governors were sent to rule over a huge empire, reaching from Persia and Arabia in the east to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea in the west, and from the border of Ethiopia in the south to the Black Sea in the north. But the Bible says that Nineveh was not going to last.

According to Nahum, what was going to happen to the city of Nineveh? Nahum 3:2-7.

The combined armies of the Medes and the Babylonians destroyed Nineveh in 612 B.C. Palaces were burned. Its temples were broken

down, and Nineveh's walls were destroyed.



The prophets said that Nineveh would be destroyed.

What was to be the future end of another great kingdom, Babylon? Isaiah 13:19-22.

Archaeological discoveries (finds)¹² have shown that Babylon was once a beautiful city. It had (1) a wall around the main city more than 11 miles long and 85 feet thick; (2) many gates, including the Ishtar Gate with its blue-tiled bricks showing 575 dragons and bulls and 120 lions; and (3) the beautiful palace of Nebuchadnezzar with its banquet hall and throne room, 57 feet wide and 168 feet long. But whatever glory the city had in the past as archaeology showed, the city today remains in ruins!

Babylon in ruins? Nineveh in

¹⁰principle—a basic rule.

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ruins? Today it would be the same as saying that the United States would be in ruins. What lesson is here for us about how temporary earthly things are? What should be the most important things in life?

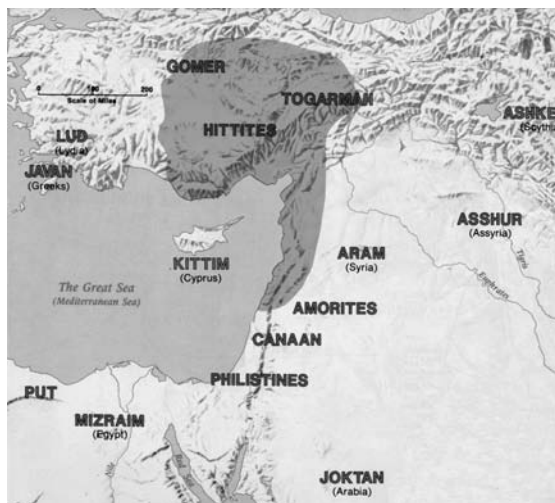
TUESDAY—MAY 1

MORE EXAMPLES OF PROOF (Exodus 3:8)

What nation is mentioned in each of these verses? Genesis 15:20; Exodus 3:8; Joshua 1:4; 1 Kings 10:29; and 2 Chronicles 1:17.

These are just a few of the many times the Bible mentions the Hittites.¹³ For many years, people claimed this as evidence (proof) that the Bible could not be trusted historically. Why? Because no other historic records spoke about the Hittites. So, some people saw this as proof that they could not trust the Bible. The Hittites were thought to be a people of myth.¹⁴ Or they were a small group living in a small village or two. Thanks to many archaeological discoveries (finds),¹⁵ we now know that the Hittites once ruled the greater part of Asia Minor. This was a large area from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River. We also know that they were almost as powerful as Assyria or Egypt. It was only when the Hittite empire ended around 1200 B.C. that

they finally vanished from history. But small city-states remained.



The Hittites once ruled a large empire.

How does the Bible picture the relationship between Israel and Moab? 2 Kings 3:4-27.

In a little village east of the Dead Sea the Moabite Stone was found. This stone was carved by King Mesha. It tells of Moab's suffering under Israel just as the Bible describes it. This stone is now in the Louvre Museum in Paris. It is very valuable, because the writing differs very little from early Hebrew. It was carved about 850 B.C.

Suppose no Moabite Stone had ever been found. It is not hard to imagine critics saying, "Oh, more proof that the Bible is untrustworthy." What lessons can we learn

¹³the Hittites—people of a powerful nation in early history but unknown to the world until recent times through archaeological discoveries.

¹⁴myth—a false story.

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from this about what we should base our faith on?

WEDNESDAY—MAY 2

EBLA AND OTHER DISCOVERIES (Isaiah 20:1)

Another important discovery (find) was the Ebla Tablets (flat stones). They were found in the Syrian city of Ebla in the 1970s. These were a whole library of clay tablets. There are about fifteen thousand of these tablets. They were dated from about twenty-three hundred years before Christ. The Ebla Tablets are “now considered more important for explaining ancient [early time] history and the early background of the Bible than any other archaeological discoveries.”¹⁶—Adapted from *Thompson Chain-Reference Study Bible*, pp. 1653, 1654.

What king does Isaiah 20:1 name?

For years scholars claimed that there was no such king. So they said the Bible was not trustworthy. But in the 1840s, archaeological discoveries uncovered a palace with a statue and carving telling all about Sargon, king of Assyria. Again, archaeology¹⁷ proved that the Bible is correct.

What sad end came to Sennacherib, who took the throne after Sargon? 2 Kings 19:36, 37.

An Assyrian record says that on the twentieth day of the month Tebet, Sennacherib was killed by his son in a rebellion.

The law code of Hammurabi was discovered in 1901–1902 in Susa. And the diggings in Nuzi showed that some of the practices of the early Bible leaders were common practices in their time. Among these practices were Sarah giving her slave girl to Abraham (Genesis 16:1-3), the selling of the birthright for food (Genesis 25:33), and married daughters receiving a handmaid (Genesis 29:24, 29).

Whether in archaeology, science, or history, it is always nice when things support what we believe. We should be thankful for these supports. But, at the same time, what message is in Hebrews 11:1 that is so important for us to remember?

THURSDAY—MAY 3

MORE USEFUL INFORMATION (Hebrews 11:24-27)

According to Hebrews 11:24-27, what did Moses give up for God?

What might have been some of those treasures Moses left behind? In 1922, Howard Carter discovered the tomb of King Tutankhamen. Tutankhamen was an Egyptian king who lived in the fourteenth century B.C. Carter’s

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discovery helps us understand what Moses gave up. There are more than seventeen hundred things in the Cairo Museum from Tutankhamen's tomb. These include his mask of pure gold, a golden death boat, 143 jewels, and many other valuable pieces of jewelry. This one tomb has a multi-million dollar treasure. But, according to the Bible, Moses left those valuable treasures because "he [Moses] saw him [God] who is invisible [unseen]" (Hebrew 11:27, NIV).



Moses gave up such riches to serve God.

Siegfried Horn said that the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb also has answered the Bible's critics. The critics claim that "the mentioning of iron in the stories of the books of Joshua and Judges is strong proof of a late date for these books. This is because people thought that iron had not been

used before the twelfth century B.C. But the iron objects [things] of King Tutankhamen's tomb show that iron objects were used in that very age [time period]." Adapted.—*The Spade [Shovel] Confirms the Book [Bible]* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald® Pub. Assn., 1957), p. 121. Tutankhamen's tomb gives more proof that the Bible stories are correct.

What did God tell the Israelites to do? 1 Samuel 15:2, 3.

Many people find such verses as these bothersome. But archaeology¹⁸ has added some light that can help us better understand what was going on. Some archaeologists¹⁹ have argued that the Canaanite religion was cruel and bloodthirsty. If this is true, it could help explain why God used the Israelites to punish them. Meanwhile, Genesis 15:16 shows a principle²⁰ that can help us better understand what was happening here.

Why is it so important for us to trust God and His goodness, even though there are hard verses to understand? Think of examples of God's love, mercy,²¹ and forgiveness. Ask God to give you faith, even though there are things that are hard to understand.

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¹⁹archaeologists—people who dig up relics (old things) to learn about the past.

²⁰principle—a basic rule.

²¹mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

FRIDAY—MAY 4

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “Archeology [*sic*] and the Recovery of Ancient²² History,” pp. 99–132, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1.

“Doubtful and negative thinking toward ancient writings, though true in many cases, was also directed toward the writings of the Bible. Many people thought that the biblical records about this world’s ancient history, and the stories about the patriarchs [leaders], prophets, judges, and kings, were legendary [false]. They believed that these Bible people were as legendary as those of other ancient peoples in Greek and Latin writings. The most famous historians and religious leaders of the nineteenth century were the greatest doubters of Bible stories. They were among the Bible’s strongest critics.

“But this attitude²³ has greatly changed since the turn of the [twentieth] century. Much more respect is now shown toward the Old Testament, its stories, and its teachings. The results of archaeological discoveries (finds)²⁴ in Bible lands have done more than anything else to

bring respect back to the Bible.

“The light thrown by archaeology upon the Old Testament proves that the Bible is historically correct and trustworthy. It also proves that the Bible stands alone as showing something better than the best things the ancient world had to offer.”—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 100.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ As a class, talk about the question of faith in God. What is faith? Where does it come from? What causes people to lose faith? How can archaeology help support our faith? But, at the same time, why must we not put too much focus on archaeology? What can we do to help strengthen one another’s faith?
- ❷ Suppose evidence (proof) for the Hittites had never been found. Critics would still be using that lack of evidence to attack the Bible. But having no proof does not mean something is not true. What lesson can we learn from this story about what our faith needs to be based on?

²²ancient—very old.

²³attitude—a way of thinking, acting, or feeling.

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