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Proofs That the Bible Is True

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Abstract: This article discusses archaeological evidence of the Bible found in the Near East. Reprinted from the *Deseret News*.

said, two voices, and they are so near alike that it is a hard matter to distinguish between them unless you are acquainted with and have learned to be guided by the proper spirit.

"I contend that every Latter-day Saint has a Monitor within him; and if he conducts himself in such a manner that he himself is truly satisfied with his labors, then he may feel assured the Lord is apt to be satisfied. We can never do wrong unless we are admonished that it is wrong. Before we take a wrong step or do something that we should not do, that Monitor will chide us and will give us a chance to reflect if we will accept the opportunity. There is, therefore, no reason why the Latter-day Saints should do wrong, if they will only be guided by the whisperings of God and the Spirit."

PROOFS THAT THE BIBLE IS TRUE.

RECENT EXCAVATIONS OF THE BURIAL CITIES OF ANCIENT TIMES PROVE THE BIBLE TO BE TRUE.

[DEAN PENNIMAN of the Academic Faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A., recently visited Salt Lake City. While there he delivered a lecture on "The Old Testament in the Light of the University of Pennsylvania's Excavations in Babylon." The following account of the address is taken from the *Deseret News*.—ED.]

Dean Penniman began by remarking that when one seeks for the secret of the Bible's power, he is impressed with the intense humanity of the people whose lives are depicted therein. The Old Testament represents the literature of ages gone by, and the excavations being made in Egypt, Palestine, and old Babylonia are bringing to light remarkable corroborations of ancient Biblical records, as well as giving interesting information concerning the history of the human race during periods which we only think of as exceedingly remote, but which, in the light of the human interest of the inscriptions, seem to us singularly close.

The speaker then said, "Most people are inclined to look askance upon such statements as '4,000 or 5,000 years before Christ.' They think that records of such a long time ago are impossible. They regard lightly the statements of learned men to the effect that the Bible is a true work, a historical account of the doings of a people, and not the work or imagination of some fertile brain.

"The proof of the authenticity of the Bible lies in its preservation. It is the only written work, or book, which has come down to us perfect. Another proof of the authenticity of the Bible lies in the fact that the Jew of thousands of years ago, is an individual of to-day.

"It is a great comfort to believers in the Bible, that just as science seems to break down the logic of the Bible, she at the same time supplies some unexpected corroboration of the Bible's historical facts. Archaeology has traced back, through countless ages, the story of religious belief. It has sifted from the dust of millenniums facts already recorded in the Scriptures, and it has supplied many missing links, thus making the chain of Biblical argument the stronger. The latest Biblical proofs are to be found in the excavations now

being carried on in Nippur, Persia, under the direction of Professor H. V. Hilprecht of the University of Pennsylvania.

"In the tenth chapter and the tenth verse of Genesis these words are found: 'Calneb, in the land of Shinar.' By tablets and other stone-age messengers, we have learned that the present city of Nippur is Calneb. I mean by this that Nippur is built for the most part on the site where Calneb is buried. From the ruins of Calneb we have taken tablets telling stories of a wonderful development thousands of years ago.

"It was known for a long time that the ruins of Biblical cities lay under the sands of Mesopotamia. The name of Nippur was familiar to a few scholars. When excavations finally began in and around Nippur, great were the expectations. The results are far in excess of what was thought they would be.

"From what has been found in Nippur we know that the men who built the ancient city, who lived there and who have left the tablets for us to decipher, lived at least 7,000 years ago. This is a little hard to realise at first, but it is harder yet to believe that these men did not live within a comparatively few generations of the creation of the world, but that they were a part of a civilization as highly developed as that of the Greeks. Men carried on business in those days in a manner and with ambitions and desires not very different from those of our time. Most remarkable of all is the fact that from the tablets and vases found, we are led to believe that this state of affairs had been going on for many thousands of years before the making of the tablets.

"Many persons ask, 'How did the ancient cities become buried, and then new cities become built on almost the same spot as the location of the ancient places?' It is easy to answer this question. Most of the people living in the olden days were nomadic. They traveled from place to place. They might live for many years in one locality and then they would forsake it, nobody knows why, and seek other habitations. Possibly because of wars and the like cities were destroyed and the inhabitants were forced to seek other countries far distant, as the only means of self-preservation.

"The buildings being built largely of adobe mould, as time went by, fell in. The sands of the desert would be blown over the ruins, and in the course of time, the city would be completely obliterated.

"Generations afterward, perhaps, the progeny of the builders of the ruined cities would wander back to the land of their forefathers. They would hunt around until they had found the location of some ancient temple or massive building. Here they would begin the building of another city. It has taken thousands of years to build one city, obliterate it and then build upon the same site another city. But such has been done. That is why, the deeper we dig in the ruins, the more cities we find, and the more ancient are the tablets we are able to uncover.

"With what we find by digging in the ruins we are able to prove absolutely certain parts of the Old Testament. We do not have to modify the Bible in the light of recent discoveries. The tower of Babel, which has been found at last, is not a myth. It was a huge tablet of history. It was a temple upon which were written the great deeds of the warriors and the good and great

men of the times. The expression of the Temple of Babel 'till it shall reach the heavens' seems strange to us. It was nothing more than an oriental saying. I wonder if some 5,000 years hence, New York City should be excavated, what the archaeologists would say if they read the expression of one of the modern tall buildings, 'It is a great sky-scraper.' They would ask each other, 'Why in the world did they want to scrape the sky?' That will show you how we read certain meanings in the Bible."

One interesting statement made by the lecturer was that the date of the beginning of the world as printed in margins of Bibles, 4004 B. C., is given on the authority of one Bishop Usher, and by what authority he was able to furnish such information was something that had not yet been ascertained. He also called attention to the fact that modern views as to Old Testament history were decidedly ephemeral and often based on a misconception of what the sacred text actually meant, so that where the text and the monumental inscriptions verified each other, the modern student imagined there was a contradiction, and that the Biblical narrative was in error because he failed to understand the real character of the language and the historical environment of the same.

Dean Penniman also said in fuller statement: "The Old Testament deals chiefly with the Jews, and only incidentally with other nations. They found in the records of other nations mention of the Hebrews only just as there was a contact between them. It might be well if they had a statement of the Old Testament confirmed by Assyrian kings, and vice versa. As a matter of fact a good many discrepancies disappear in the light of fuller knowledge. Many of those mentioned in Genesis have been recorded as myths. Their names are now found in some of the tablets since discovered. The Old Testament was a transcript of a transcript, and no one knows how far back the transcript goes."

The lecturer said Jerusalem was not a Jewish city until several centuries after the occupation of Palestine by the Hebrew nation, and existed long before under the name of Salem—how far back is not yet known. He then referred to Melchisedek whom the Scriptural narrative speaks of as without parents or lineage, or beginning or end of days. This has been hard to understand, but it is now cleared up by the tablet or cuneiform historical records which show that this being without parentage or days referred to Melchisedek's priesthood which was from everlasting, and does not refer to any such thing as exemption from the ordinary procreative processes of human kind. A peculiarity of the cuneiform records is that they do not refer to defeats and misfortunes of the various royal dynasties, but only to their triumphant achievements and successes, whereas the Bible narrates defeats and mistakes as well as successes, and thereby stands as a positively truthful and impartial history.

Dean Penniman exhibited several tablets made from burnt clay both in the time of Abraham and in the time of Moses. He said they were the genuine, original articles, and not transcriptions, and related to business transactions. He read several, one being an agreement to pay so much money for a ring in twenty years, and another on a trial of a public officer for corruption. Then the speaker also showed by tablets that there existed away down in the early

ages of the world methods of brokerage and commission which were not unlike the transactions of cotton brokers in the southern states to-day, and he also called attention to the fact that the alabaster vases containing inscriptions and which were made thousands of years ago in Nippur were turned off from a lathe and with other fashioning tools that must have been like what we have to-day in that class of work. Those vases are of just as fine symmetry and pattern as any we have now. The Dean made his audience laugh when he remarked how careful the ancients were to enclose their private correspondence in clay envelopes—like pie crust, which was much like the pie crust of to-day, and lasted thousands of years. Then the fact that there is yet a great deal to be learned from excavations, was illustrated by stating that only within comparatively recent years was it discovered by digging in the sands that there was a large temple standing between the front paws of the Sphinx. The excavations at Nippur began in 1889, and only a part of the city has as yet been uncovered. The latest occupancy of the city was about the time of Xerxes, four centuries before Christ.

One passage in Ezekiel, not well hitherto understood, was made clear by the lecturer. The passage is where the prophet states that he saw his vision by the river Chebar. Now it has been claimed that there never was any such river because no one could locate it. But recently discovered profane records show that this river was a navigable canal which formed the boundary of certain parcels of land. So Ezekiel was confining himself to historical fact.

The lecturer made a point in saying, "The excavations do not give parallel accounts of all Bible things, but where they do they are wonderfully correct in corroboration of the Old Testament." And indirectly these records open up to us new light on the Biblical narrative, as in the matter of human sacrifice, for instance. The action of Abraham in taking Isaac to the mount expecting to sacrifice him in response to divine behest was nothing unusual in that day and time, for such practices were common enough. And moreover, in the sale of Joseph into slavery by his brethren, it was not specially ordained that Joseph should be sold as a slave to that particular caravan happening to be traveling in that particular route and on that particular occasion. The route was a regular one traversed by caravans the year round, and selling people into slavery was a regular feature of the civilization of the time. The entire body of Israelites were after Joseph's time brought into slavery themselves.

AS YE SOW, SO SHALL YE REAP.

A GREAT truth is presented in this saying of our Savior that runs through every phase of life into the very acts of God's children, of which Jesus was speaking when He uttered these words, so simple yet so full of meaning.

We know that the farmer reaps of its kind from the seed he sows, whether wheat, oats, barley, or other grain. He knows well that if he wishes a crop of rye he must sow rye seed. The gardener gathers vegetables according to the kind he has planted in the earth, just as he has expected; or fruits from the apple, the pear, the peach, or cherry, each from its own tree.

The florist plucks the beautiful roses from the rose tree; the lily, the sweet