



Foundations of

FAITH

The Historical Accuracy of the Bible

Lesson 7

To be divinely inspired, a book must be historically accurate. For if its credibility cannot be established on the basis of known events, it certainly cannot be relied upon as an adequate guide in matters beyond our ability to check. On the other hand, if we can demonstrate that such a book is correct in historical matters to an extent unknown among human writings, then we have strong evidence that the authors were inspired by God. In this lesson we shall learn that this is true of the Bible.

Through the centuries enemies of the Bible have attacked its historical accuracy. Time after time the scriptures have been this questioned, only later to be exonerated by archaeology. Archaeology is a study of relics, monuments, etc. of ancient civilizations. Peoples and events known heretofore only in Biblical accounts have been illuminated by the excavations of ancient cities. Always the Bible has been proved right. Consider a few cases.

GRAPES IN EGYPT. In Genesis 40 we are told how Joseph interpreted the dream of Pharaoh's butler. In this dream grapes are mentioned. The ancient historian Herodotus states that the Egyptians grew no grapes and drank no wine, and many therefore questioned the accuracy of the Biblical account. However, frescoes (paintings) discovered on the ancient Egyptian tombs show the dressing, pruning and cultivating of vines, and also the process of extracting the juice of grapes, as well as scenes of drunkenness. There can be little doubt that the "Father of History" was wrong and the Bible was right.

THE BRICKS OF PITHOM. In Exodus 1:11 we are told that the children of Israel built the treasure cities of Pithom and Raamses for Pharaoh. In Exodus 5 we are informed that they made bricks first out of straw, and then out of stubble, because no straw was furnished them for that purpose. In 1883 Naville and in 1908 Kyle found at Pithom, one of the cities built by Israel, that the lower courses were built of bricks filled with good chopped straw. The middle courses have less straw including stubble. The upper courses were made of pure clay, with no straw whatever. It is difficult to read the Biblical account and not be astonished at the amazing confirmation which archaeology here has given to the Bible.

THE HITTITES. Forty-eight times in the scriptures a people called the Hittites are mentioned. We find them blocking Israel's path as it sought entrance to the promised land. We read of Uriah, the Hittite, whom David sent to his untimely death. However, in all the records of antiquity not a reference to those people was to be found, and the sceptics attributed them to imagination and fiction. In 1876 George Smith began a study of monuments at Djerba in Asia Minor. This city proved to be Carcemish, a capital of the ancient Hatti. We now know that the Hatti were the Hittites of the Bible, who, according to Professor A.H. Sayce, "Contended on equal terms with both Egypt and Assyria." The Hittites not only were proved to be a real people, but their empire was shown to be one of the great ones of ancient times.

SARGON. In Isaiah 20:1 we read, “In the year that Tartan came into Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him) ... “. This is the only mention of King Sargon in the Bible, and the only one in ancient literature. His historicity was severely questioned on this account. But in the years 1842-1845 P.E. Botta uncovered the tremendous royal palace of Sargon. Among the other things discovered was an account of the siege of Ashdod mentioned by Isaiah. Once more the Bible was right, the critics wrong.

THE FLOOD. Genesis 7 and 8 tells us of the destruction of the world by a great deluge. To many the story of the flood is actually a recording of ancient myths. However, we have much evidence outside the Bible to show that the flood was a reality and that the Bible is true. Notice the flood traditions of ancient peoples. One scholar lists 88 different traditions. Almost all of these agree that there was a universal destruction of the human race and all other living creatures by a flood. Almost all agree that an ark or a boat was the means of escape. Almost all are in accord in saying that a seed of mankind was left to propagate the race. Many add that wickedness of man brought the flood. Some mention “Noe” (compare with Noah), several speak of the dove and the raven, and some discuss a sacrifice offered by those who were saved. To any familiar with the Biblical account the similarity is astounding. The universality of this translation is such as to establish that the Biblical flood was not a figment of someone’s imagination.

In 1872 George Smith discovered the now famous Babylonian flood tablets. In these, Utnapishtim was told to build a ship and take into it the seed of all creatures. He was given the exact measurements and was instructed to use pitch in sealing it. He took his family into the boat with food. There was a terrible storm which lasted six days. They landed on Mt. Nazir. He sent out a dove. It came back. He sent out a swallow. It came back. He sent out a raven and it flew back and forth over the earth. When these people were safely out of the boat they offered sacrifice to the gods. This account differs from the Bible in some particulars, but is so much in agreement with the scriptures as to make one wonder how the historical nature of the flood could be questioned.

Furthermore, archaeology has found positive evidence of a great deluge in some ancient cities. At Susa a solid deposit of earth five feet thick was found between two distinct civilisations. The nature of the

deposit establishes beyond doubt that Susa was completely destroyed by a flood which was not merely local. At Ur, the ancient home of Abraham, a similar deposit of water-laid clay eight feet thick was found. This deposit clearly shows that Ur was destroyed by a flood of such proportions that it must have been a vast inundation such as the Biblical flood. Further evidence could be presented, but this should be sufficient to demonstrate that the Biblical deluge was a reality.

JERICO. The sixth chapter of Joshua tells how Israel felled the walled city of Jericho which blocked its conquering path as it entered the promised land. For six days the people marched once around the city. On the seventh day they marched around seven times, the priests blew their trumpets and the people gave a great shout. When they had done this, “The wall fell down flat,” (Joshua 6:20) and the people rushed into the city, burned it, and (except for Achan) took none of the booty. They saved Rahab who lived in a house upon the wall and who had helped them.

Starting in 1929 Dr. John Garstang excavated the ruins of ancient Jericho. His archaeological discoveries corresponded remarkably with the Biblical account. Jericho, he found, had a double wall with houses built across the two walls. This explains how Rahab’s house could have been built upon a wall. He learned that the wall was destroyed by some kind of violent convulsion such as described in the Bible and that, when the wall fell, it fell outward down the hillside, dragging the inner wall and houses with it or, as the Bible says, it fell down flat. Had the wall been destroyed by the battering rams of an enemy army the walls would have fallen inward instead of outward. Furthermore, the city had been burned and D. Garstang found considerable evidence that the conquerors had refrained from appropriating the foods as the Lord had commanded Israel. Once again the spade has established the credibility of the Bible.

SERGIUS PAULUS, THE PROCONSUL. In Acts 13:7 mention is made of Sergius Paulus, the proconsul (deputy – K.J.V.) of Cyprus. For a long time sceptics contended that Luke should have called him propraetor instead of proconsul, since the former was the usual title. However, coins discovered on Cyprus have positively established that the governors of Cyprus were proconsuls. One such coin found at Soli on Cyprus bears the inscription, Paulus the Proconsul, very possibly referring to the very man mentioned in Acts.

CONFIRMATION BY NON-BIBLICAL WRITERS.

Some Biblical accounts have been substantiated by non-Biblical writers. We will give one example. The Jewish historian Josephus has enlarged upon many facts presented in the Bible. For example, in Matthew 14:3 & 4 we are told that Herod put John the Baptist to death for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because John had informed Herod that it was not lawful for him to have Herodias as his wife. Josephus tells us why it was unlawful. Herodias had originally been married to Herod's brother, Philip. But she divorced Philip and married Herod. This unlawful marriage was the occasion of John's denunciation. The accounts of Josephus and the Bible are in perfect accord.

APPARENT INCONSISTENCIES.

Nothing establishes the authenticity of a writing better than apparent inconsistencies which evaporate when closely examined. Such apparent inconsistencies show that no collusion was engaged in by the writers.

An example is found in regard to the ruling family of Palestine. In Matthew 2:1 we read of "Herod the King" who was reigning when Jesus was born. Matthew records his death. Yet in Acts 12:12 we read once more of "Herod the King" killing James, the

brother of John. How could he do this if he were dead? Does the Bible contradict itself? Josephus, an unbeliever in Christ, explains the difficulty by showing that Herod of Acts 12 was actually the grandson of the Herod mentioned in Matthew 2. The Bible agrees perfectly with the facts.

Again, Luke 2:1 mentions "Caesar Augustus" as the ruling monarch of the Roman Empire. In Luke 3:1 we are told that John the Baptist began his ministry in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. This shows that Augustus was no longer on the throne. Still later in Acts 25:21 we find Paul appealing against his arrest to Augustus. A superficial reading might lead us to suppose that the Bible contradicts itself. But on close examination with other known facts we find that the emperor at that time was Nero whose full name was Caesar Augustus Nero. Luke, the author of both books in question, does not explain this because the first century readers were familiar with the fact that there were two different men named Augustus.

The attacks upon the credibility of the Bible have served to make stronger, not weaker, the conviction of its students that it is truly God's inspired word.

TEST ON LESSON 7

Write **true** or **false** after the following statements:

- 1. Any historically accurate book is divinely inspired.
- 2. Archaeology is the study of the stars.
- 3. Herodotus said the Egyptians drank no wine.
- 4. The Hittites once had a great empire.
- 5. Sargon is mentioned once in the Bible.
- 6. Jericho was excavated by George Smith.
- 7. The walls of that city fell inward.
- 8. In the book of Acts, Sergius Paulus is called "Propraetor.".
- 9. Josephus gives details about Herod's unlawful marriage.
- 10. Two emperors named Augustus are mentioned in the Bible.

Read the account of the flood in Genesis 6:11 to 8:22. Write "yes" before the following things from the Babylonian flood tablets which agree in substance with the Biblical account. Write "no" after those in which there is no agreement.

1. The man who built a boat was Upnapishtim.
2. Pitch was to be used on the boat or ark.
3. Seed of all kinds of creatures was to be taken into it.
4. There was a great storm.
5. A dove was sent out, but it returned.
6. A swallow was sent out, and it returned.
7. A raven which was sent out did not return.
8. After disembarking from the boat a sacrifice was offered.

Read Exodus 1:7-14 and 5:1-19 which tell of the oppression of Israel by the Egyptians and the building which Israel did for Pharaoh. Then fill in the blanks:

A new king came to the throne who did not know He feared that the children of Israel would join with the enemies of Egypt and he therefore set over them to afflict them with burdens. They built for Pharaoh the cities of and Raamses. The Egyptians made their lives bitter with hard bondage, mortar, brick, and service in the Moses and went to Pharaoh to ask if Israel might be released to go into the wilderness for a Pharaoh refused, telling them to get back to their The same day he told the taskmasters not to give the people any more for bricks, but that they should gather it for themselves. The taskmasters were not tothe burden of the people. The people scattered to gather instead of straw. They were required to do as much work as when there was

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Answers

These lessons are based on the King James Version, so if you are using another translation the words employed may vary slightly. Sometimes an alternative answer is possible. The following is a useful guide.

Section 1 – F, F, T, T, T, F, F, F, T, T.

Section 2 – no, yes, yes, yes, yes, no, yes, yes,

Section 3 - Joseph
taskmasters
treasure
Pithom
field
Aaron
feast
burdens
straw
diminish (lighten)
stubble
straw

Enquiries to - graemestudy@gmail.com