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Earth's Treasure Heaps! A Study of Archaeology: Booklet Number 1

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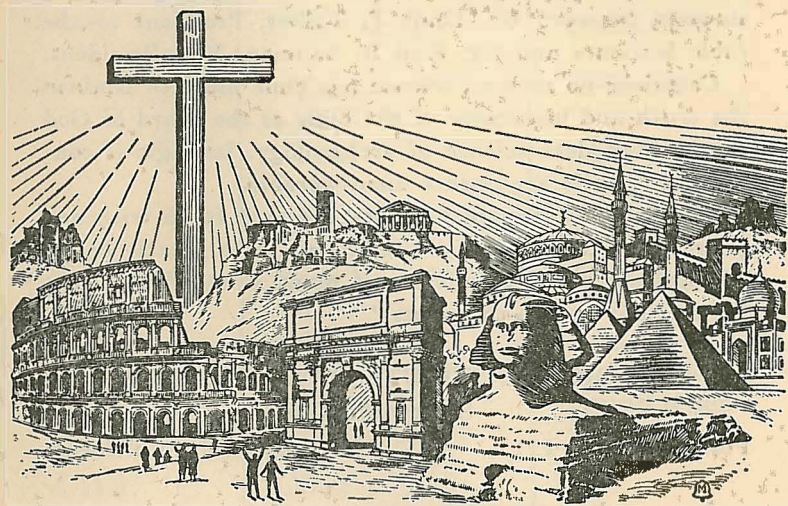
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Earth's TREASURE! HEAPS!

A Study of Archaeology



Booklet Number One

The Bible Institute of Los Angeles

FOREWORD

This booklet is the first in a series containing discussions as they were given over a Pacific Coast hookup of radio stations, between Dr. Louis T. Talbot, President of the Bible Institute and Dr. Paul R. Bauman, Vice President.

Certainly no modern science has done more to confirm the truth and historicity of the Bible as the Word of God than this modern science of archaeology. Its logic is convincing and its arguments unanswerable.

This, and subsequent booklets, are sent forth with our prayer that God will be pleased to use them greatly to the strengthening and upbuilding of many in the "faith once for all delivered to the saints."

THE BIBLE INSTITUTE OF LOS ANGELES

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WHAT IS ARCHAEOLOGY?

Dr. Talbot: Just what is meant by the term "Archaeology," Dr. Bauman? That is rather an imposing title for one of the subjects that you teach, isn't it?

Dr. Bauman: I am glad you asked that question at the very beginning, for everywhere I go people are continually asking what archaeology is. It may be defined as "The science of antiquities—a study of dead men, dead empires, customs, religions, dead languages, etc."

Dr. Talbot: Sounds to me as if it might be sort of a dead subject, but seriously, just what is the purpose of archaeology?

Dr. Bauman: In answering that question, may I say first of all that all antiquities are not really dead. Here is what I mean: The Bible is an antiquity, but no one, not even its enemies, would consider it a dead book in at least one sense. More copies of the Bible were printed and circulated last year than at any similar period in all history, yet, it is an old book—the oldest in the world. Again, the church of Jesus Christ is an antiquity, yet the church is not dead and it never will be, for Jesus said, "The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." And do you know, that nothing has done more to stem the tides of unbelief, which in recent years have arrayed themselves to destroy our Bible and the Church than the Science of Archaeology.

Dr. Talbot: This sounds very interesting, but tell me just how has this been accomplished?

Dr. Bauman: Perhaps first I should have answered your former question a bit more specifically, telling you something about the purpose of archaeology. It is a science that actually goes down into the ground and digs out the

ruins of ancient empires, many of which ceased to exist long ago. Through the things brought out of the ground, it has been possible to completely rewrite the history of such ancient nations as Babylonia, Assyria, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and others.

Dr. Talbot: I can see the value of this, but just how does a knowledge of secular history apply to the Bible?

Dr. Bauman: There are many nations whose histories were contemporaneous with the history of God's people as recorded in the Bible. Down through the centuries to the call of Abraham, the scene of events was located in Mesopotamia. You will recall that Abraham was born in Ur of the Chaldees, that is, in Babylonia. A little later, the children of Israel spent more than four hundred years in the land of Egypt. Later on, they were carried captive into Babylon, after which they were under the dominion of Medo-Persia, Greece, and then Rome. The Bible records many events associated with these nations. Now, the archaeologist is one who goes into the ground, digging out the ruins of these civilizations together with ancient records which have been long buried. These historical documents he is able to compare with the records found in the Bible, thus testing its historical accuracy.

Dr. Talbot: Pardon me for injecting this question, but I am just a bit curious. You speak of civilizations that have been long buried. Just how were the cities of antiquity covered over?

Dr. Bauman: This is perhaps the most common question that is asked of the archaeologist. The answer varies with different times and different places. Sometimes the burial is due to the sinking of the land level, as at Alexandria where the sea now covers sections of the early city. Occa-

sionally a city like Jerash in Trans-Jordania was located upon a geological fault. In that case a tragic earthquake levelled the city and buried it under its own debris. Cities at the base of a mountain were sometimes covered by the silt which washed down over them. An example of this was Shechem. Changing courses of rivers have buried some. Today Old Testament Memphis, or Noph, is largely below the water of the Nile. When the Tigris and Euphrates rivers suddenly changed course, many of the cities of ancient Babylonia were swallowed up by desert dust storms. It is of interest to see, how in some cases in the land of Palestine and elsewhere the ruins of as many as thirty cities are now superimposed the one upon the other. These hills, which in reality are the mounds of buried cities, are called Tels.

Dr. Talbot: You will pardon my digressing again just a bit from the main subject, but I am curious. Just how did all these cities become buried the one beneath the other?

Dr. Bauman: First, let us think of a time when there was no street cleaning department and every day of the year for several hundred years the ashes and other refuse were not carried outside the city wall but merely emptied into the street and beside the house walls. In a comparatively short time the street would be several feet higher than the floor of the dwelling so that one must step up to the street. Should the house be torn down for another, the builders would not take the trouble to send the floor down, but would naturally place it on the level of the street. In this way the old floor and foundation would be preserved beneath the later structure for future archaeologists. Then, too, an invading army would seize the city, burn the houses, and level the walls. The rebuilders would

not take the trouble to remove the debris of the former city but rather would build their houses upon the ruins belonging to their predecessors. The new foundations would be placed upon the walls and pottery of the old. Easily, in a destruction by fire, a mound might gain several feet in height. This was true at such Biblical sites as Bethel and Beth-shan. At Bethel the debris reached a height of more than thirty feet. This fact has proven tremendously valuable to the archaeologist. For example, it meant that the ruins of the Jericho of Joshua's day, which was destroyed by fire, could be preserved for our examination inasmuch as they were covered by the ruins of at least three later civilizations.

JERICO

Dr. Talbot: Thank you. You have answered several questions I have wondered about for some time. Inasmuch as you mentioned the destruction of Jericho, would you mind telling me something about the excavations there?

Dr. Bauman: Certainly. The story is a bit long, but I will try to give you a resume of the archaeological investigation of this site. Not so many years ago Jericho's fall was considered by the critics of the Bible to be nothing but a story derived from Hebrew folk-lore or tradition. It was declared that if Jericho did exist and if it was ever captured, the armies of Joshua must have done so by storming its walls. However, the walls of the Jericho of Joshua's day were excavated by Prof. Garstang, and it is his testimony that the walls of Jericho did fall flat, even as the Bible says. He declares that, "The walls fell outwards so completely that the attackers would be able to clamber up and over the ruins into the city." Note, that these walls fell outwards and down the slope, all of which

means that they could not have been battered down by an invading army.

Dr. Talbot: How interesting. Have any other details of Jericho's destruction been confirmed?

Dr. Bauman: Yes, indeed. For example: Joshua was commanded to destroy the city by fire. Everywhere the fallen walls present evidence of a tremendous conflagration. Then again, Joshua was commanded not to plunder the city except for "the silver and gold and vessels of brass and iron." These he was to remove. It is an interesting fact that while many things were discovered in Jericho, such as pottery, ornaments, charred wheat, barley, lentils, onions, dates, and pieces of dough,—all still remaining after three thousand years,—yet there was a notable lack of any metal. These facts show that the city was destroyed just as God commanded.

Dr. Talbot: Well, tell me, did the archaeologists discover anything at Jericho that would shed any light on the story of Rahab, who lived on the city wall?

Dr. Bauman: I am glad you mentioned that, for the story of Rahab was one of the points which was challenged by the critics who said that it was not customary to build houses upon the walls of ancient cities such as Jericho. Archaeological investigation revealed two parallel walls built of sun-dried brick. The outer wall was six feet thick; the inner wall was about double that width. Both were about thirty feet high, and there was a space of fifteen feet between them. Evidence showed that houses had been built astride these walls and these linked them with a simultaneous downfall. Professor Garstang says that the evidence shows the citadel was destroyed about 1405 B.C., and that there is not one detail given in the Biblical

record which has not been amply confirmed by the discoveries of archaeology.

Dr. Talbot: Thank you. This discussion has been profitable not only to me, but I am sure to all who are listening in. Would you summarize in one statement something of the value of archaeological investigation to the present time?

Dr. Bauman: This is a hard assignment, but perhaps I can put it something like this: Many characters mentioned in the Old Testament particularly, whose existence was once denied, are now definitely known to have lived. The existence of cities and even of whole empires (such as the Hittite Empire) were once challenged. These, too, have been identified, and much is known about them. In short, archaeology has done more to confirm our belief in the historical accuracy of our Bible than any other science. The Psalmist truly spoke when he said, "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89).

DATING CITIES

Dr. Talbot: Dr. Bauman, I should like to have you answer a question which has been upon my mind for some time. It has to do with the method of dating these ancient cities which have been dug out of the ground. For example, when you spoke about the excavation of Jericho, you said that level Number IV proved to be the Jericho which Joshua destroyed, and that the archaeologist Garstang dated the destruction of the city at about 1405 B.C. Just how are such dates as this determined?

Dr. Bauman: This is done through a study of Ceramics, or what is known as the science of Pottery Chronology. It is difficult for the average person to understand the rap-
ture with which the modern archaeologist gazes at old

broken pieces of pottery. Also, it is a curious fact that for a long time these were no more attractive to the archaeologist himself than they are to us.

Dr. Talbot: Just why was this, and who was responsible for this change?

Dr. Bauman: Well, for a long time excavators had their eyes open only for large or important objects. Broken pottery, which abounded at nearly every site, was ignored. It was Sir Flinders Petrie who first recognized its value as a method of dating civilizations.

Dr. Talbot: Well, tell me, how did he do this? And, why pottery more than anything else?

Dr. Bauman: We all know that people always have been fadists. Dr. Petrie realized that fashions of domestic pottery, shapes of vases, the material out of which they are made, their ornamentation, coloring, and other details changed from one generation to the next. This led him to state the principle which the archaeologists since have followed, namely, that periods of occupation at a site can be recognized by the fragments of broken pottery found in the successive layers.

Dr. Talbot: I can see how they can distinguish new periods through the changes in the styles of the pottery, but how did this lead to a system of dating?

Dr. Bauman: This was done by a multitude of observations, so that a sort of a chronological scale was constructed which would be applicable to any new site opened up in the same country. In other words, suppose we were able to accurately date one site through the discovery of a coin or a scarab bearing the name of a man we know lived at a certain time, say, through the Egyptian records.

Then, suppose sometime later we would excavate another site some distance away and find pottery corresponding exactly to that which we had found at site Number 1. The obvious conclusion would be that these two civilizations were contemporaneous, and knowing the accurate date for the first, we would be able to learn the proper date for the second.

Dr. Talbot: I can see how that would be possible all right. Would you mind giving an example which bears on Biblical history?

Dr. Bauman: We have already mentioned Jericho, so let's use that. So great was the importance of verifying the date of its destruction that in 1930 Professor Garstang and his wife cleaned and examined no less than 60,000 fragments from the strata of the burned city. The next year another 40,000 were treated in the same manner. They all attested the same date, about 1400 B.C., which agrees with Bible chronology. These dates were confirmed definitely with the discovery of a large number of scarabs found in the Jericho cemetery. Royal seals bearing the name of Amenhetep III (1413-1377) were the latest of any discovered in connection with this burned city level; therefore, the city must have been destroyed during his lifetime. This conclusion was extremely disconcerting to the critics who said that the fall of Jericho had taken place some 220 years later. I might add that pottery dating is now considered accurate within a margin of about twenty-five years.

ARCHAEOLOGY'S BEGINNING

Dr. Talbot: Well, you have certainly given me a new conception of the supreme importance of the humble potsherd, but you told us that archaeology is the science of

antiquities. From this we might assume that it is a very old field of research. Will you tell us something about the beginnings of archaeology?

Dr. Bauman: I am glad for that question, for although archaeology is a science dealing with old things, it is not what can properly be called an old science. It is nothing short of marvelous to see the way God cares for His Word. This He promised to do many centuries ago when through Isaiah, the Prophet, He said, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever" (Isa. 40:8). The beginning of archaeology as a science was nothing short of providential. Do you mind if I stop long enough to explain what I mean?

Dr. Talbot: I would be very happy, indeed, if you would.

Dr. Bauman: The Church has always had its heresies. This has been true all down through the centuries, but there was one truth on which both orthodox believers and heretics were in complete agreement. That truth was the Inspiration of our Bible. Both appealed to the Scriptures in an effort to support their views, but about a hundred and fifty years ago there began within the church a movement which soon developed a negative attitude toward the historical accuracy of our Bible. This movement was soon known as higher criticism. It developed rapidly and today it is recognized popularly under the term, "religious liberalism." The movement gained such momentum in religious and intellectual circles that many were led to wonder if they could reasonably maintain, in the light of developing research, their belief in a historically accurate and, hence, an inspired Bible.

Dr. Talbot: How is the science of archaeology related to all of this?

Dr. Bauman: Well, as I suggested, to me it can be considered nothing short of providential that, at the very time these attacks were being levelled at God's Word, there should begin another movement, or more properly a science, called Archaeology. This science has done more to prove the theories of destructive criticism to be false than any other science in existence.

Dr. Talbot: It surely does appear providential when one realizes that the ruins of these ancient civilizations lay buried for several thousand years, and no one was even interested in digging for them until such time as evidence was needed to confirm the truth of our Bible. Had these things been dug out of the ground a few centuries sooner, most of them would probably be lost to us today, wouldn't they? But tell me why was it that these things were not excavated sooner.

Dr. Bauman: This was partly due to the fact that for more than a thousand years no one was able to read either the Babylonian language or the Egyptian. Many a traveler, for example, walked through the ruins of ancient temples, palaces, and into the tombs found so often in the land of Egypt. On the remains of the walls, pillars and ceilings of these were hundreds of inscriptions, but because a comprehension of the language had been lost no one was able to read them.

Dr. Talbot: That is interesting, but just how was all this related to the Bible?

Dr. Bauman: Well, you will recall that much of the history contained in the Old Testament is definitely associated with the history of contemporaneous civilizations. For example, all Biblical history down to the time of Abra-

ham finds its location in Mesopotamia. Abraham himself was called out of Ur of the Chaldees. Again, a number of centuries later the children of Israel were carried off into Babylon. The history of the captivity is vitally tied in with the history of Babylonia, later of Medo-Persia, and then of other nations.

Likewise, a goodly portion of Old Testament history is associated with events which took place in the land of Egypt. The children of Israel sojourned in this land for about 450 years. Then Moses led the children of Israel forth from that country. But we find an association again in the days of Solomon, who married the daughter of an Egyptian Pharaoh.

Dr. Talbot: I believe I understand what you mean. Should someone be able to unlock the secrets of the Egyptian and Babylonian languages, then it would be possible to visit the ruins of these lands and to read from the inscriptions on their walls and pillars much of their history. That of the Bible in turn could be checked against this. Is that the idea?

Dr. Bauman: Exactly! Now let us come more specifically to our original question. Archaeology as a correlated science really had its beginning in the days of Napoleon. When he invaded Egypt in 1798, he took with him a corps of scholars whom he commissioned to investigate and report on the ancient monuments of that land. While excavating at Rosetta near the mouth of the Nile, an engineer by the name of Boussard uncovered a strange stone, about three feet, nine inches in height, two feet, four and one-half inches wide, and eleven inches thick. On this stone were inscriptions in three languages, written in three registers one above the other. The upper was imme-

diately recognized as Egyptian, though no one was able to read it. The second was Egyptian Demotic likewise unknown, while the third register was written in the Greek language. For years scholars endeavored to decipher the two unknown languages. It occurred to them that what had been written in the known language, namely, the Greek, might likewise be written in the unknown. Acting upon this clue, a Frenchman by the name of Champolion in 1818 began a comparison of the known with the unknown in an effort to decipher the Egyptian language, and within four years, he announced his discovery to the world. For the first time in a millennium or more, men were able to read the Egyptian language.

Dr. Talbot: Well, and what did this mean?

Dr. Bauman: Why, the unlocking of the Egyptian language opened up whole new avenues of historical and Biblical research. In the first place, the historical events of the land of Egypt which had been recorded on the walls of public buildings by the Pharaohs could be compared with large portions of Biblical history. Some of these Bible records have been under severe attack at the hands of the destructive critics. Among these are the story of Abraham's sojourn in the land of Egypt, Joseph's experiences there, the birth and early life of Moses, and the Exodus of the children of Israel from that land. Later in these broadcasts we may be able to refer to each of these, pointing out archaeological confirmation as well as the manner in which this science has made a number of these events more understandable to us. But our time is gone for today. However, at our next broadcast, we'll go on to investigate further into this most interesting and amazing science.

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