Is the Bible a message from a God I can't see? — Archaeology

1. Overview

Archaeological discoveries are like buried treasure. Many fascinating artifacts have been found, some of which have ended up in national museums. Often, inscriptions and writings are even more exciting because they refer to people and places in history.

It is only in the last 200 or so years that archaeology has had any real relevance to the Bible. Before that time, many of the places and people found in the Bible were not mentioned anywhere else. Critics said that the Bible was myth and legend. But in the last 200 years, names from the Bible have leapt to life with the discovery of palace walls, stones and coins displaying Biblical names and records of Biblical events.

Before we look at the discoveries, we shall very briefly give the geography and history behind the discoveries to enable you to see their background.

We shall look at the discoveries in chronological order as they relate to the Bible.

Bible quotations are *in italics*.

Translations of inscriptions are on grey panels.

2. Background geography

The events in the Bible relate to the area we know as the Middle East. The map below shows the location of places that we will mention. The names on the map are the modern cities and countries.

The numbers on the map refer to the locations mentioned in the sections. Each place will be identified by its number where it appears in the relevant section. There is a full key below the map.

1. Tel Dan
2. Dibon
3. Moab
4. Kurkh
5. Calah
6. Khorsabad
7. Samaria
8. Babylon
9. Persia
10. Ephesus
11. Caesarea
12. Thessalonika
13. Philippi
14. Corinth

3. Background history

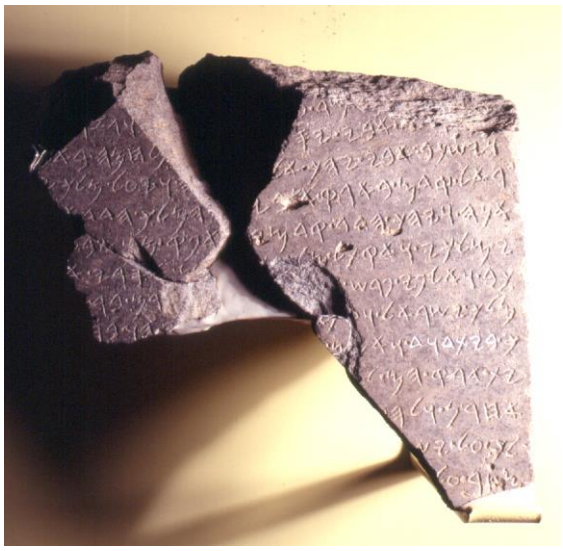
The Bible is mainly concerned with the nation of Israel and its neighbours. Below is a simple timeline for Israel relating to the period of the archaeological discoveries we shall look at. As the oldest discovery refers to King David, we shall start our timeline there. Many of the discoveries relate to the superpowers that dominated the nation of Israel: the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans. Each superpower conquered the previous one and Israel usually suffered as a result. The "Page" column indicates relevant page numbers in this workbook.

Israel		Century BC	Other nations	Page
King David		11		66
Israel split into 2 parts Known as Judah and Israel		10		
Kings of **Judah**	**Israel**			
	Omri	9	Ben-Hadad I King of Syria	66, 68
	Ahab		Mesha King of Moab	68
			Ben-Hadad II King of Syria	66, 70
	Jehu		Shalmaneser III King of Assyria	71
			Hazael King of Syria	66
	Hoshea	8	Sargon II King of Assyria	73
Hezekiah	Israel taken captive by the Assyrians		Sennacherib King of Assyria	74
		7	Esarhaddon King of Assyria	77
			Babylon conquers Assyria	
			Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon	75
Jehoiachin		6		75
Zedekiah				75
Judah taken captive by the Babylonians				
			Nabonidus King of Babylon	76
			Darius King of Persia conquers Belshazzar King of Babylon	
Persians allow Jews to return to their own land			Cyrus King of Persia	77, 78
Jews ruled by Greeks		4	Greeks conquer Persians	
Jews ruled by Romans		1	Romans conquer Greeks	79 to 81

4. Archaeological discoveries

a) The Tel Dan Inscription

Critical scholars used to doubt that the king David mentioned in the Bible ever existed. But they were forced to reconsider their opinions in 1993 when part of a 3,000-year-old inscription was found at Tel Dan (map ref. 1) in northern Israel. A second part was subsequently found in 1994.



Collection of the Israel Antiquities Authority
Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

The fragments were part of a wall and are inscribed in a Middle Eastern language known as Aramaic. Although much of the text is missing, you can see the following points from lines 4 to 9 of the translation, (see box below):

- "Hadad" made the writer king
- The writer is boasting of his military achievements involving the king of Israel
- The writer mentions "the house of David"

The Bible talks several times of war between Israel and Syria and mentions the Syrian kings who had the title "Ben-Hadad", which means "son of Hadad":

> *Now Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces together… And he went up and besieged Samaria, and made war against it.*
>
> *1 Kings 20 v 1*

> *Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel, and He delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-Hadad the son of Hazael, all their days.*
>
> *2 Kings 13 v 3*

(Numbers are line numbers)

1. and cut
2. my father went up … he fought at
3. And my father lay down, he went to his … And the king of I
4. rael entered previously into my father's land…. **Hadad made me king**
5. And **Hadad** went in front of me… I departed from … seven…
6. s of my kingdom, and **I slew** …nty kin… who harnessed thou…
7. riots and **thousands of horsemen**, … ram son of
8. **king of Israel**, and …killed …iahu son of …
9. g of the **house of David.** And I set
10. their land into
11. other
12. led over Is

The tension between the Israelites and the Syrians was obviously a recurrent problem. The Bible records both Israel and Syria being victorious on different occasions. The Tel Dan inscription probably refers to one of the Syrian victories.

There are many references in the Bible to the "house of David", meaning the kings who were David's descendants.

Here are two:

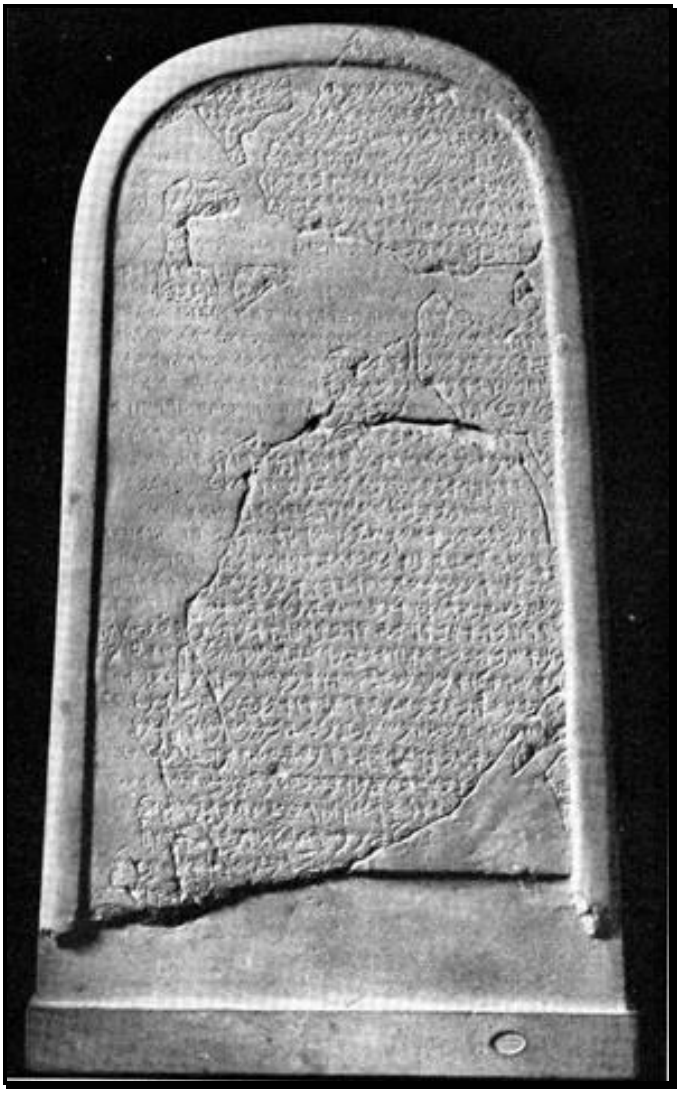
> *And Jeroboam said in his heart, 'Now the kingdom may return to the house of David…'* *1 Kings 12 v 26*

> *So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.* *2 Chronicles 10 v 19*

The Tel Dan Inscription confirms the Bible record that:

- There was hostility between Syria and Israel
- Ben (son of) Hadad was a title of Syrian kings involved in this hostility
- The royal line from king David was known as "the house of David"

b) The Moabite Stone



The Moabite stone was found in 1868 at the ruins of Dibon (map ref. 2). This city mentioned in the Bible is in modern Jordan. The stone inscription is now in the Louvre in Paris.

The inscription was made by king Mesha of Moab (map ref. 3). He was an enemy of Israel in the time of Ahab, son of Omri, one of the early kings of Israel (see page 43). He was boasting about a victory over Israel.

Here are the interesting portions of what is written on the stone:

> I am Mesha, son of Chemosh, the king of Moab … As for Omri the king of Israel, and he humbled Moab for many years, … And his son reigned in his place: and he also said, "I will oppress Moab!" In my days he said so. But I triumphed over him and over his house, and Israel has perished; it has perished forever!

The inscription confirms three Bible references:

In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel, and reigned twelve years. *1 Kings 16 v 23*

Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel; and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. *1 Kings 16 v 29*

Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheepbreeder, and he regularly paid the king of Israel one hundred thousand lambs and the wool of one hundred thousand rams. But it happened, when Ahab died, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. *2 Kings 3 v 4 and 5*

From these verses we learn:

- Omri was a king of Israel
- His son was Ahab
- Mesha, king of Moab, had been giving tribute to the king of Israel
- This tribute consisted of sheep and wool, which were given as an indication of submission
- Mesha rebelled and stopped giving the sheep and wool when king Ahab died

We can see that the Bible is saying that a period when Israel had the Moabites under tribute ended at the time of the death of Ahab. This agrees with the inscription, which says that Ahab's father Omri "humbled Moab for many years".

The inscription states that Moab "triumphed over" Israel in the reign of Omri's son (Ahab). The Bible tells us that the rebellion actually happened at the time of Ahab's death.

Another interesting part of the inscription probably mentions the "house of David".

> And the house of (Da)vid dwelt in Hauranen, …Chemosh said to me "Go down fight against Hauranen!"

The "Da" part of "David" is not 100% legible, but, as we have seen in the previous section, the phrase "house of David" was commonly used in Old Testament times to refer to the kings descended from David.

Archaeology supports the Bible

The Moabite stone confirms the Bible record that:

- Mesha, king of Moab, was under tribute to Israel
- Mesha rebelled against Israel in the time of king Ahab
- The "house of David" existed
- Israel had a king called Omri

c) The Kurkh Stela of Shalmaneser III

This round-topped vertical slab (or stela) was found at Kurkh (map ref. 4) in Turkey in 1861.

It shows the Assyrian King Shalmaneser III (see page 43) facing the symbols of four gods.

Across the front and the back of the stela are 102 lines of writing recording the main events of his first six military campaigns.

Included in the record of those defeated by the Assyrians are the names of Ahab, king of Israel and Ben-Hadad, king of Syria.

The Bible tells us of a time when there was a league between Ahab and Ben-Hadad:

So Ben-Hadad said to him, 'The cities which my father took from your father I will restore; and you may set up marketplaces for yourself in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.' Then Ahab said, 'I will send you away with this treaty.' So he made a treaty with him and sent him away.

1 Kings 20 v 34

The stela confirms the Bible record that Ahab and Ben-Hadad were ruling at the same time.

Assyrian records also exist which mention the following Bible kings:

Hezekiah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekah, Hoshea, Uzziah, Ahaz and Hazael.

The Kurkh Stela confirms the Bible record that:

- Ahab was a king of Israel
- Ben-Hadad was king of Syria at the same time

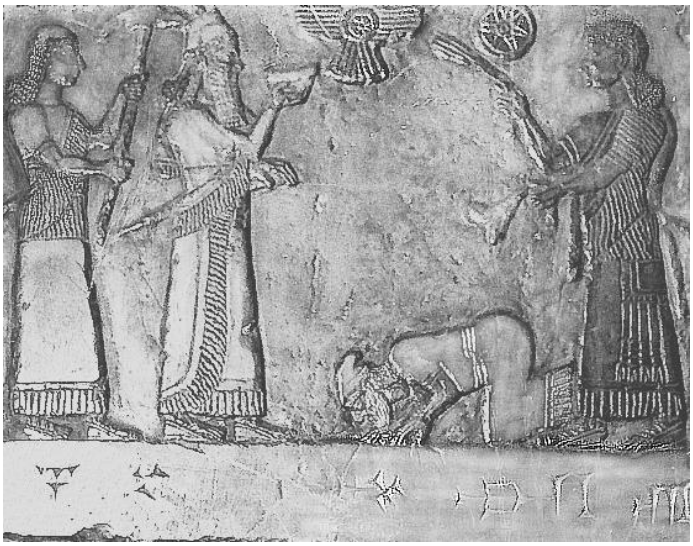
Other Assyrian records mention eight other kings referred to in the Bible

4.4 The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III

This large black stone was one of the most exciting discoveries in history. It was found in a pit at the ancient Assyrian city of Calah (map ref. 5) in 1846. But, amazingly, archaeologists almost missed it. The dig was about to be closed down. It was winter, the ground was difficult to dig and not much had been found. It was agreed to dig for just one more day. Early on that last morning the workmen struck a huge stone that has become one of the most important finds relating to the Bible.

The stone has five panels of carved "pictures" on each of its four sides. Each panel has an inscription. On one side, the second panel from the top shows the Jewish king Jehu bowing before Shalmaneser III, bringing tribute to him. The inscription directly above the panel says:

> Tribute of Jehu the Israelite -- silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden vase, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king and hunting spears I received.



As you can see, Jehu is pictured with a short, rounded beard, a sleeveless jacket, a long fringed skirt, a belt, and a soft cap. This is the earliest "depiction" of an Israelite.

The Bible tells us of some of the exploits of Jehu in 2 Kings 9 and 10.

Shalmaneser was the name of several kings of Assyria. We meet one of them later on in the Bible:

> *Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him; and Hoshea became his vassal, and paid him tribute money.* *2 Kings 17 v 3*

Here we read of Hoshea, a later king of Israel. He paid tribute in the same way as Jehu, who is shown on the obelisk.

The Black Obelisk confirms the Bible record that:

- Israel had a king named Jehu
- Jehu reigned in the period when Assyria was a superpower
- The Assyrians had kings named Shalmaneser
- The Assyrians made subject nations pay tribute

4.5 Relief of Sargon II

The picture shows part of a relief from the palace of Sargon II, king of Assyria, at Khorsabad (map ref. 6) in Iraq.

Sargon is seen holding a staff and facing one of his officials.

The following is part of an inscription found in the same palace:

> I besieged and conquered Samaria, led away as booty 27,280 inhabitants of it.

(For Samaria, see map ref. 7)

This inscription confirms what we read in the Bible:

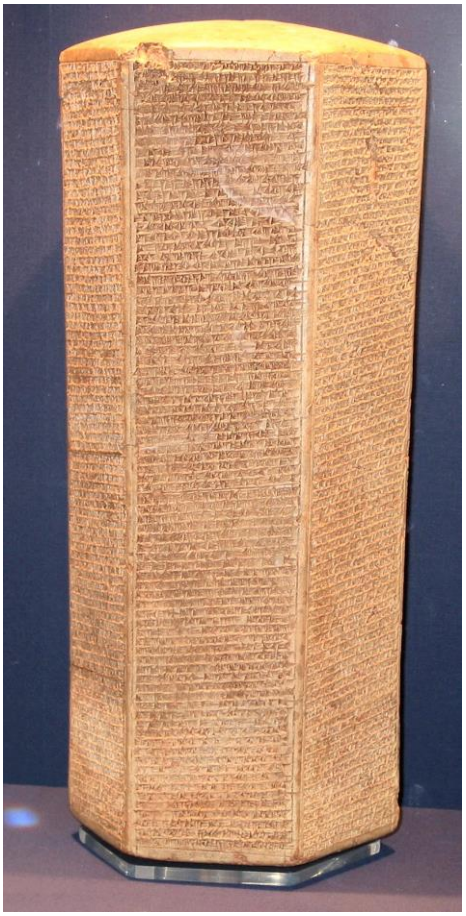
Now the king of Assyria went throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years.
In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria … *2 Kings 17 v 5 and 6*

Archaeology supports the Bible

The Relief of Sargon II confirms the Bible account that:

- The king of Assyria conquered Samaria
- He took the inhabitants away captive

f) The six-sided Sennacherib Cylinder



This is a six-sided clay prism found at Nineveh (near to Khorsabad – map ref. 6). It is inscribed with an account of eight military campaigns of Sennacherib king of Assyria.

The most interesting part of the record says:

> I then besieged Hezekiah of Judah who had not submitted to any yoke and I captured forty-six of his strong cities and fortresses, innumerable small cities … I brought out therefrom 200,150 people … (Hezekiah) himself like a caged bird, I shut up within Jerusalem, his royal city. I threw up mounds against him, and I took vengeance upon any man who came forth from his city.

The record interestingly does not claim that Jerusalem – the capital city – was taken. The Bible account tells us why!

In the book of 2 Kings we read:

And in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah, and took them. *2 Kings 18 v 13*

Then the king of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rabsaris and the Rabshakeh from Lachish with a great army against Jerusalem, to king Hezekiah. *2 Kings 18 v 17*

But the Bible – the honest history book – reveals why Sennacherib avoids mentioning Jerusalem:

And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand …
So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed … *2 Kings 19 v 35 and 36*

Such an embarrassing defeat is not likely to have been mentioned by Sennacherib.

Archaeology supports the Bible

The Sennacherib Cylinder confirms the Bible record that:

- Sennacherib conquered "all the fortified cities" in Judah
- Sennacherib failed to take Jerusalem

g) Babylonian Chronicle

This clay tablet is one of a series of Babylonian records summarising the main events of each year. Each entry is separated from the next by a horizontal line, and begins with a reference to the year of the reign of the particular king.

The tablet includes the record of the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. It records that Nebuchadnezzar:

> …encamped against the city of Judah and on the second day of the month Addaru he seized the city and captured the king. He appointed there a king of his heart, received its heavy tribute and sent (it) to Babylon.

From this we can see that Jerusalem, the main city of Judah, was conquered, tribute taken and the king replaced by one of Nebuchadnezzar's choice.
This agrees with the Bible record of these events:

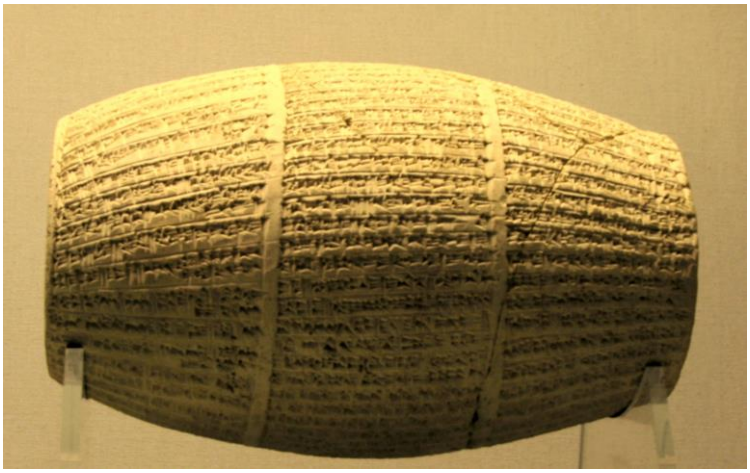
… the king of Babylon, in the eighth year of his reign, took him [Jehoiachin] prisoner. And he carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the kin''s house …
And he carried Jehoiachin captive to Babylon …
Then the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah. *2 Kings 24 v 12, 13, 15 and 17*

Archaeology supports the Bible

The Babylonian Chronicle confirms the Bible record that:

- Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem
- The king of Judah was taken captive and another king put in his place

h) The Cylinder of Nabonidus



The Old Testament book of Daniel is well known for its stories of heroes. One of these stories has given us the well-known phrase, “the writing’s on the wall”. Belshazzar, king of Babylon, (map ref. 8) was holding a drunken feast. As he and his lords revelled, a hand wrote on the wall in front of him. The king offered great rewards to anyone who could tell him what the writing meant. The writing was interpreted by Daniel. He told Belshazzar that his kingdom was going to be overthrown. Belshazzar kept his promise, and the record in Daniel tells us:

> *Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom* *Daniel 5 v 29*

Critics of the Bible used to say that these were only made-up stories with no historical foundation. In 1850 one eminent German wrote in a commentary on the book of Daniel that Belshazzar was simply a figment of the author’s imagination. Just four years later the small cylinder in the picture above was discovered, which showed how wrong the critics were!

The inscription on the cylinder was written by Nabonidus, king of Babylon. The words were a prayer for a long life and good health for himself and his eldest son. The name of that son, clearly written, was Belshazzar! Other inscriptions have been discovered that indicate that Belshazzar was “second in command” to his father. This would explain why Belshazzar offered to make Daniel the “third ruler in the kingdom” and not the second.

Archaeology supports the Bible

The Cylinder of Nabonidus and other inscriptions confirm the Bible:

- Belshazzar was king of Babylon
- He was second in command in the kingdom

i) Brick of Cyrus

Ancient rulers had bricks inscribed with their names to use in important buildings. This practice provides valuable evidence for archaeologists. The brick in the picture has the inscription:

> Cyrus king of the world … the great gods delivered all the lands into my hand, and I made this land dwell in peace

Cyrus was the first powerful king of Persia (map ref. 9). He allowed the Jews to return from captivity (see next page). Here is one of the Bible references to him:

> *Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: 'All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me…'* *Ezra 1 v 2*

Bricks bearing the names of other kings mentioned in the Bible have been found, such as:

Shalmaneser	*Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him… 2 Kings 17 v 3*
Sargon	*… when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him … Isaiah 20 v 1*
Sennacherib	*So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and … 2 Kings 19 v 36*
Esarhaddon	*Then Esarhaddon his son reigned… 2 Kings 19 v 37*
Nebuchadnezzar	*In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came … 2 Kings 24 v 1*

- The Bible is correct when it records the names of these kings

j) The Cyrus Cylinder

This is another clay cylinder, written this time by Cyrus, king of Persia. It was found at Babylon (map ref. 8). The cylinder contains an account of the conquest of the city of Babylon by Cyrus.

The cylinder spells out Persian policy towards captive people, such as the Israelites, and their sacred ritual objects:

> I returned to (these) sacred cities on the other side of the tigris, the sanctuaries of which have been in ruins for a long time, the images which (used) to live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries. I (also) gathered all their (former) inhabitants and returned (to them) their habitations.

The Babylonians had captured all the sacred objects from the Jerusalem temple. These would have passed into the hands of the Persians when they overthrew the Babylonian Empire. We read in the book of Ezra of the policy outlined in the Cyrus cylinder being put into practice:

> *Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia … he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom …*
>
> *'Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel … which is in Jerusalem.'* *Ezra 1 v 1 and 3*

Archaeology supports the Bible

The Cyrus Cylinder confirms the Bible record:

- Cyrus allowed people to go back to their own cities and practise their own religion

k) Coins

Silver *denarius* of Augustus

denarius

The denarius was the basic Roman coin. It is mentioned in several places in the New Testament (in the King James Version it is always translated “penny”).

Jesus mentions it in his parable of the vineyard and seems to imply that a denarius was about a day’s pay for a labourer:

> *For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. Now when he had agreed with the labourers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard ...* *Matthew 20 v 1 and 2*

The denarius was the coin used by the religious leaders in their attempt to trick Jesus. They thought up a question about paying tribute money:

> *But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, ‘Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it.’* *Mark 12 v 15*

Coin of Herod

Herod was made king over the Jews by the Romans. On the reverse side of the coin shown in the picture the legend reads “of King Herod”.

It is this king who appears in the record of the birth of Jesus:

> *Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,* *Matthew 2 v 1*

Historians tell us that he was very suspicious of others. He even killed three of his own sons who he thought were plotting against him. The Bible record reflects this when it tells what Herod did when the wise men did not return as agreed:

> *Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.* *Matthew 2 v 16*

Silver *cistophorus* of Claudius

The picture shows a Greek coin minted at Ephesus (map ref. 10) in Turkey. On the reverse side of the coin there is an image of the statue of the goddess Diana of the Ephesians and the words “Diana Ephesia”.

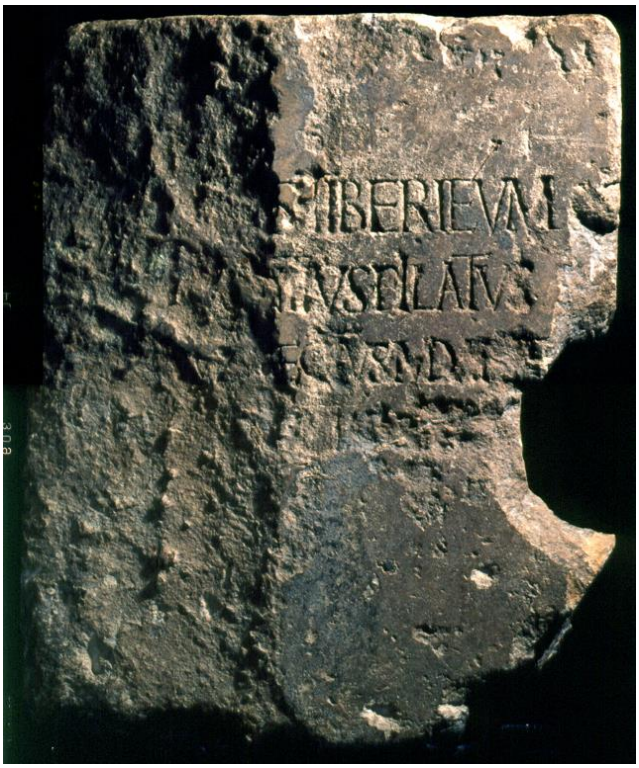
This relates very well to an episode recorded in the book of Acts. The preaching of the apostle Paul in Ephesus against this false goddess caused an uproar among the silversmiths who made souvenirs of her. The Bible tells us that the silversmiths complained:

> *‘So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.’*
> *Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’* *Acts 19 v 27 and 28*

These coins confirm the Bible record:

- The denarius was a coin around in New Testament times
- Herod was a ruler of the Jews
- “Diana of the Ephesians” was a popular goddess in Ephesus

I) The Pilate Inscription



Collection of the Israel Antiquities Authority
Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Not long ago many scholars were questioning the existence of a Roman Governor with the name Pontius Pilate, the Roman official who ordered Jesus' crucifixion.

In June 1961 Italian archaeologists led by Dr. Frova were excavating an ancient Roman amphitheatre near Caesarea-on-the-Sea (Maritima) (map ref. 11) and uncovered this interesting limestone block. On the face is a monumental inscription, part of a larger dedication to Tiberius Caesar. It says:

> Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea.

This agrees perfectly with what we read in the Bible:

> *Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea…* *Luke 3 v 1*

The Pilate Inscription supports the Bible:

- Pontius Pilate was governor (or "prefect") of Judea in the reign of emperor Tiberius Caesar

m) The Politarch Inscription and the accuracy of Luke's writings

In the past, some scholars said that Luke, who wrote the book of Acts, was an inaccurate and unreliable historian. His inconsistent use of official titles showed that he either did not know what he was writing about, or perhaps just couldn't be bothered to do the research. For example, Luke's use of the word "politarch" occurred nowhere else in Greek literature. Luke must have got it wrong!

But recent discoveries show that local rulers and officials had different titles in different places. Furthermore, they tell us that Luke always used the right title for the right place.

The picture on the right shows a Greek inscription discovered in 1835 on an arch in Thessalonika (map ref. 12) which lists the officials in the town in the second century AD. It begins by listing six "politarchs." Since then the same term has been found on other inscriptions in Thessalonika.

This agrees with Luke's account of problems in Thessalonika in Acts 17:

> *... they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers [politarchs in Greek] of the city, crying out, 'These who have turned the world upside down have come here too... And they troubled the crowd and the rulers [politarchs] of the city when they heard these things...'* *Acts 17 v 6 and 8*

Other examples of Luke's correct use of titles for rulers are:

"praetors" – rulers of Philippi (map ref. 13)
"proconsul" – the ruler of Corinth (map ref. 14)
"leading man of the island" – the ruler of Malta

- The writer of the book of Acts used accurate titles for government officials throughout Europe

5. Summary

Bible Reference	Statement	Supported by Archaeology
1 Kings 20 v 1 2 Kings 13 v 3	There were periods of hostility between Syria and Israel. Ben-Hadad was a Syrian king involved in this hostility.	✓
1 Kings 12 v 26 2 Chronicles 10 v 19	The kings of Israel were referred to as the house of David.	✓
1 Kings 16 v 23 and 29 2 Kings 3 v 4 and 5	Mesha king of Moab was for a time under tribute to Israel and subsequently rebelled. Omri was one of the kings of Israel.	✓
1 Kings 20 v 34	Ahab was one of Israel's kings. At one time he had an alliance with Ben-Hadad, king of Syria.	✓
2 Kings 9 and 10 2 Kings 17 v 3	Israel had a king named Jehu who reigned when Assyria was a superpower. The Assyrians had a king called Shalmaneser who made subject nations pay tribute.	✓
2 Kings 17 v 5 and 6	The king of Assyria conquered Samaria and took its inhabitants captive.	✓
2 Kings 18 v 13 and 17 2 Kings 19 v 35 and 36	Sennacherib, king of Assyria, conquered all the cities of Judah except Jerusalem, which he failed to conquer.	✓
2 Kings 24 v 12, 13, 15 and 17	Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, conquered Jerusalem and took tribute. The king was then taken captive and another king put in his place by Nebuchadnezzar.	✓
Daniel 5 v 29	Belshazzar was a king of Babylon. He was second in command, under his father.	✓
2 Kings 17 v 3 2 Kings 19 v 36 and 37 2 Kings 24 v 1 Isaiah 20 v 1; Ezra 1 v 2	Assyria had kings called Shalmaneser, Sargon, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon. Babylon had a king called Nebuchadnezzar. Persia had a king called Cyrus.	✓
Ezra 1 v 1 and 3	Cyrus, king of Persia, allowed the people taken captive by the Babylonians to go back to their own lands and practise their own religion.	✓
Matthew 20 v 1 and 2 Mark 12 v 15 Matthew 2 v 1 and 16 Acts 19 v 27 and 28	The "denarius" was a coin of New Testament times. Herod was a ruler of the Jews. "Diana of the Ephesians" was a popular goddess.	✓
Luke 3 v 1	Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea.	✓

Summary (continued)

Bible Reference	Statement	Supported by Archaeology
Acts 17 v 6 and 8	In the first century, the local rulers were called "politarchs" in Thessalonica, "praetors" in Philippi, and "proconsuls" in Corinth. The ruler of Malta was called "leading man of the island".	✓

We have seen that the Bible is accurate when it records information about people and places that it talks about. We have only looked at archaeological discoveries involving inscriptions. There have been many more discoveries that support the Bible record in other ways.

6. The challenges to *you*

You now have to answer the challenges posed by the evidence of a power greater than ourselves.

The first challenge is:

Where else can you find so much evidence of a power greater and wiser than us?

This section has shown that the Bible is accurate in its information about people and places despite the assertions of critics to the contrary.

The other "What's so special about the Bible?" sections will tell you of:

- 100% accurate, clear and direct predictions about nations and cities
- A consistent message written by people from vastly different cultures and times
- A law thousands of years ahead of its time

The second challenge then is:

- *Find out what this accurate and reliable source of information has to say about your future*
- *If it is 100% correct about other issues, you can trust its statements about your life*

Our aim is to help *you* see the Bible message for *yourself* – not just accept what we or anyone else might say about it.