# Archaeology and the Bible
## General Introduction

"Archaeology" prompts many to conjure the escapades of Indiana Jones. Modern archaeology rarely exhibits such dramatic suspense and mystery—and certainly none of the out-of-this-world experiences. However, archaeology offers its own suspense and surprise. While we excavate to answer questions and achieve goals, inevitably surprises occur, many extending beyond our wildest expectations. An exciting correlate is the privilege to be the first to see and touch something produced by people thousands of years ago.

The ancient world used the compound word *archaiologia* to refer to "antiquarian lore," "ancient legends," and "history" (Liddell and Scott, 251). Josephus used the Greek word "archaeology" in his title usually translated as *Jewish Antiquities.*

The modern use of the term archaeology, however, refers not necessarily to antiquity, but to an academic enterprise that seeks to discover the activities of past peoples and cultures based on the material remains that survived them. Usually, these are the only data by which to know of their existence, since written documents tend to be more elusive the further back into history one goes.

The academic discipline of archaeology is a sub-discipline of anthropology—the study of humanity. Four sub-disciplines appear under this general umbrella. Cultural Anthropology is the study of the cultures and practices of a people, dealing with the beliefs, activities, and material remains that help define them. Physical Anthropology is the study of the human anatomy—particularly the skeletal structures. This helps us identify changes through time, differences between males and females and children, and can provide the specialist with the opportunity to identify stress issues, diseases, health status, etc. Linguistics is the formalized study of the similarities and differences and connections of the languages that exist in the world. And, of course, archaeology is the study of the material remains left behind by people, usually of those who are no longer alive. Archaeology, however, must tap into all of the sub-disciplines to yield the most comprehensive understanding possible. In a sense, archaeology attempts to identify as much as possible of what people did, where they lived, what they ate, and even to a point what they may have believed, based on the character of the finds left behind.

While archaeology may have begun as collection projects by explorers, it has become much more inter-disciplinary as it has developed. It taps into literature, geography, environmental studies, climatology, zoology, botany, chemistry, nuclear sciences, astronomy, and other disciplines to enhance our understanding. To one degree or another, these disciplines open a much richer investigation of people's interpersonal and political interactions as well as their connections with their environments.

Works cited

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**General bibliography.** These sources provide overall perspectives and information that the student of the Bible should find useful.

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Yamauchi, Edwin M. and Marvin R. Wilson. *Dictionary of Daily Life in Biblical and Post-Biblical Antiquity*. Complete in One Volume, A-Z. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2017.

**Translations of texts relevant to the Bible.** These sources offer translations of ancient texts that supply literary contexts of the times of the Bible.

Bock, Darrell L. and Gregory J. Herrick. *Jesus in Context: Background Readings for Gospel Study*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.

Elwell, Walter A. and Robert W. Yarbrough, eds. *Readings from the First-Century World: Primary Sources for New Testament Study*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

Evans, Craig A. *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005.

Hallo, William W. and K. Lawson Younger, Jr., eds. *The Context of Scripture*. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2002–2017.

Pritchard, James B., ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts.* 3d ed. Princeton: Princeton University, 1969.

**General Popular Periodicals.** These report discoveries and analyses of archaeological finds that have occurred in fairly close proximity to the time of publication and thus help the student to be somewhat up to date on the activities in the field.
*Archaeology*.
*Bible & Spade.*
*Biblical Archaeology Review*.
*Near Eastern Archaeology* (formerly *The Biblical Archaeologist*).

Episode 1

# What Can Archaeology Do for Biblical Studies?

Archaeology will always essentially deal with a limited data base. The inevitable decaly, plundering, and reuse of material remains dramatically skews the preserved range of what people did and possessed in antiquity. What remains, however, can still offer insight to the activities, beliefs, and relations of those who left them. If the artifacts that are in their original use context (i.e., "in situ") provide the most immediate insight to the activity of the people since almost always (with the exception of predictive prophecy) the events recorded in written sources are composed sometime after the events—sometimes immediate and sometimes quite later.

A fair-minded use of archaeology is in its capacity to confirm the accuracy of a historical record—whether the Bible or some other source. It is critically important, though to recognize that if data for an event/person is not discovered, one should not necessarily infer that the event/person did not exist. Think simply in terms of the millions (billions) of people who have lived for whom no preserved physical evidence exists.

An additional benefit of archaeology is the possibility to clarify events in antiquity. We are separated from the events and people of the Bible by thousands of miles, thousands of years, as well as generally different cultural, political, and social contexts. Archaeology can often provide insights into the circumstances surrounding these situations.

Given the fact that Hebrew became functionally a dead language (with the exception of its use in the synagogues), the meanings of some of the terms of the Hebrew Bible became lost. Archaeology's discoveries of ancient inscriptions and literature that were roughly contemporary with the Hebrew Bible has helped clarify some of those meanings. In similar fashion clarification of the New Testament Greek texts have found refinement as a result of archaeological investigation.

Perhaps the most pervasive arena of archaeology's contribution is its ability to provide illustration and clarification of customs, traditions, and events of the biblical world. While one may infer that this confirms the Bible, its practicality is more in the realm of understanding. Archaeology can often help us better understand the message of the Bible from the perspective of God and his human authors (i.e., Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Paul, Peter, etc.). It is critical to know what *they were saying* in order for us properly to apply the principles of revelation.

To these ends, archaeology has become an invaluable tool.

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Discussion questions

1. Is it reasonable to expect archaeology to confirm every incident in the Bible? What relationship does evidence have to faith?

2. From your own experiences discuss the intrinsic limitations of artifactual data.

3. Do you think archaeology *proves* that the Bible is inspired by God? Give reasons for your response.

4. How might archaeological data be open to varying interpretations?

5. How might a person's presuppositions color the interpretation of data (e.g., how might an atheist interpret the biblical data as opposed to a believer who subscribes to the possibility that miracles could occur)?

6. List some ways in which our world is *separated* from that of the Bible?

7. List ways in which people are basically *the same* as in the times of the Bible?

Episode 2

# Doing Archaeology

The idea of archaeology often projects images of Indiana Jones and his escapades. While it offers an intrinsic excitement for those so inclined, the archaeological pursuit is usually far more mundane. The orientation sheets for the Tel Miqne/Ekron excavations (1985) offered the following apt description:

> It is hard, dirty physical labor—stooping, picking, hoeing, lifting stones and heavy baskets of dirt to shoulder height, etc. …There is, of course, much fine hand work as well. But this can be tedious and is often done in the hottest, most airless parts of the area. When you do get a chance to raise your head in the breeze, you may well get a face-full of flying dust. The mixture of dust and sweat produces charming little rivulets of mud that trickle down your back and off your nose.

In addition to the excavation process itself, archaeologists must keep meticulous records since "archaeology is destruction"—it is an enterprise that destroys the evidence as you proceed. Then there are hours scrutinizing library resources to help clarify the significance of the finds. In some ways the library and laboratory are the main arenas of activity.

Our excavation at Tel Beth-Shemesh usually occurs over a four week span, five days a week, and eight hours a day in the field. After the field work of the day, hours are spent cleaning the artifacts and processing of the finds. At the end of the season we pack these all up and ship them to storage facilities and labs for further research. The remainder of the year seeks to process and evaluate the finds, which usually has not been fully completed by the next season's excavation.

All that said, it remains an exhilarating experience as we uncover finds associated with the story of humanity and often of God's people.

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Matson Photographic Collection. Library of Congress.

Further reading

Currid, John D. *Doing Archaeology in the Land of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999.

Discussion questions

1. What are the basic issues to determine where to build a town in the land of Canaan?

2. Why are there layers of towns built on top of each other in the land of Canaan?

3. Why might one occasionally find newer material at elevations below older remains?

4. How do concentrations of certain kinds of finds often imply certain activities? Give examples from your own experiences.

5. Give some modern examples of significant language variations of names of foreign cities.

6. What limitations can you envision regarding merely surveying the ground rather than excavating a site?

7. What is the basic goal of a trench excavation along the edge of a site?

8. What are some inferences one can draw from the study of bones at a site?

9. Why is careful and thorough record keeping important in archaeology?

Episode 3

# The Patriarchs' Canaan

The period of the Patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—is usually understood to be the beginning of the second millennium B.C. (i.e., ca. 2000-1600 B.C.; some, however, would date Abraham into the late third millennium B.C.). It is clear from the narrative that Abraham and his sons were shepherds (cf. Gen 12:16) and that Abraham's flocks grew so numerous that the combined herds of Abraham and Lot apparently posed significant competition for pasturage, prompting them to separate (cf. Gen 13:5-8).

A casual reading of Genesis prompts many to assume that the patriarchs occupied a sparsely populated land. As shepherds, the patriarchs were generally in the countryside with minimal reasons to interact with urban areas. There are, however, passing references to several towns.

Archaeology has identified numerous well-fortified towns dotting Canaan's landscape. In addition, the Egyptians apparently at least imagined Canaan to pose political threats. Mesopotamian sources document the presence of diplomats from Babylon to Hazor, and shipments of tin from Mari to Hazor and Dan. Tin was critically important in the production of bronze and prompted major technological advances usually in the form of weaponry.

Within this context, Abraham's concern for his family's well-being prompted him to train 318 men from his household in military arts. These personnel facilitated the rescue Lot from the clutches of the Mesopotamian kings (Gen 14).

All in all, the archaeological record accentuates Abraham's faith to separate from his family in Haran to go to the land that the LORD would show him (Gen 12:1-4). But Canaan was a land rife with military presence.

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Discussion Questions

1. What "occupation" characterized Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

2. Why might the records of their occupations not lend themselves to see the "urbanization" of the land of Canaan?

3. From the Bible, identify some of the towns that appear in the patriarchal narratives.

4. What was a glaçis and what was its function?

5. What was a *migdal* temple and why might it have been called such?

6. What insight does the *Story of Sinuhe* provide to the conditions in the land of Canaan?

7. What is bronze? What was its advantage over copper?

8. What was an "execration" text and what did their use imply about the Egyptians' perception of the land of Canaan?

9. God promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants; what property did Abraham himself "own" by the time of his death?

Episode 4

# Israel Arrives in Canaan

The Late Bronze Age (i.e., ca. 1600–1200 B.C.) is the period during which God delivers Israel from their bondage in the land of Egypt to usher them to Canaan in fulfillment of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This lesson focuses on the larger political context that characterized the land of Canaan during this period of transition.

At the end of the Middle Bronze Age, a group of Asiatics (i.e., Canaanites) rose to power in the Delta region of Egypt. At the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, the native Egyptians expelled this foreign political influence into southern Canaan. With this expulsion, the Egyptians eventually gained political control of the majority of the territory of Canaan. Thus there were various campaigns conducted by Thutmose III, Amenhotep II (aka Amenophis II), Seti I, and Ramses II into Canaan.

Additionally, during the reigns of Amehotep III (aka Amenophis III) and his son Akhenaten, a collection of correspondence known as the Tell el-Amarna tablets reflect Egypt's political control over Canaan. These letters often narrate squabbling Canaanite rulers complaining about neighboring kings. In their letters, they often lavishly declare loyalty to the Egyptian king and often solicit military aid to help against their city-state neighbors. Compounding the internecine squabbles is the presence of a marauding group collectively known as the 'Apiru/Habiru who were causing chaos in the Canaanite countryside.

The on-going political presence of Egypt in Canaan poses serious questions of exactly how the Israelites fit into the larger scheme of things. Somehow Israel's departure from Egypt and their wandering in the wilderness and eventual settlement fits into this historical quagmire.

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Discussion questions

1. What was the change in the political situation in Egypt that helped contribute to the enslavement of Israel?

2 How many military campaigns did Thutmose III claim to have conducted into the land of Canaan and what was one of the most notable ones?

3. As far as we are able to determine, how did the population of Canaan during the Late Bronze Age compare with that of the Middle Bronze Age?

4. What issues may have contributed to this difference from the Middle Bronze Age to the Late Bronze Age?

5. What theological peculiarity did Akhenaten initiate in the land of Egypt?

6. What are the Tell el-Amarna tablets and what insight do they provide for the political situation in Canaan during the Late Bronze Age?

7. Discuss the possible explanations for the reference to "the hornet."

8. What contribution did the discovery of the Ugaritic tablets provide to our understanding of the religious situation in the land of Canaan?

9. What two notable ethnic groups emerge in Canaan during the Late Bronze Age?

10. What appears to be the area of origin for the Philistines and what evidence points to that general area?

Episode 5

# The Date of the Exodus

The exodus event is a central tenet of the Old Testament story. Nahum Sarna (xii) notes that the Hebrew Bible refers to the exodus as an event over 120 times. As Christians, we may add the numerous references in the New Testament to Moses, the exodus, Passover, Joshua and the conquest, and even the type-antitype imagery of Jesus as the Passover lamb, all of which pivot on the exodus as a historical event. Without the exodus the entire basis of both the Hebrew Bible and the New Covenant is severely undermined. This discussion proceeds on the presupposition that Israel experienced a real exodus from Egypt—but when did it occur?

The biblical narrative presents two main time periods for the event of the exodus. Both dates begin at basically the same point to initiate the calculation—that being Solomon's accession as king in ca. 970 B.C.[1] One date proposal derives from 1 Kings 6:1 which yields an exodus date in the 15th century B.C. The other is from Exodus 1:11, which implies that the event occurred during the reign of Ramses II in the 13th century B.C. Scholarship is generally divided between these two options. Conservative scholars often tend toward the earlier of the two options but many conservatives subscribe to the latter date. Liberal scholars tend almost exclusively to subscribe to a late date scenario, if they believe there was an exodus at all.

Regardless, the exodus event occurs within the political chaos of Egypt's and Canaan's history during the Late Bronze Age. This discussion will orient you to the general lines of argument that contribute to the conclusions of either an early (15th century B.C.) or late (13th century B.C.) date exodus. That said, the data and inferences can be confusing and difficult to trace. Many inferences occur with both scenarios, data for which are often tentative at best.

Ultimately, more substantive evidence is needed to come down definitively on one date or the other. Given the confusion, a spirit of tolerance and patience should characterize our conclusions, recognizing that the evidence is ambiguous and open to legitimate varying interpretations.

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[1] The determination of this accession year is another discussion, but those who believe there was an exodus at all generally agree on this date. There are, however, many scholars who do not believe that Solomon even lived. That, too, is another discussion some of which we lightly discuss in episode 7—"David and Solomon."

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Discussion Questions

1. If you were to lean to a late date exodus (i.e., 1200s B.C.), how might you assess Jephthah's remark in Judges 11:26, where he states that Israel had lived in territory of Ammon for 300 years?

2. If you were inclined to an early date exodus (i.e, 1400s B.C.) before Ramses' reign, how might you address the statements that the area of Ramses (aka: Rameses) and the city of Ramses (aka: Raamses; Gen 47:11; Ex 1:11) were connected with the Israelites (cf. Gen 14:14 and Jdg 18:27-29)?

5. On the basis of Egyptian extra-biblical evidence, by what date is it clear that Israel was in the land of Canaan?

6. Why might it be unrealistic to expect to find many ceramic remains connected with Israel's wandering?

7. Why should we be cautious about arguing that a site was unoccupied when material remains are not found at the site?

8. What sites does the Bible indicate were burned in connection with Israel's conquest and why should we not expect to find burn levels at all (or most) of the sites that Israel conquered?

9. Can you think of examples of when/where the Bible appears to use numbers in non-arithmetic ways, but to convey concepts?

10. Give some modern examples of words that have shifted meaning from their original literal meanings to different applied meanings.

11. How might a sudden explosion of population in central Canaan imply a late date Exodus? How might an early date Exodus scenario explain the *lack* of settlements in central Canaan?

Episode 6

# Israel Settles in Canaan—the Period of the Judges

## Iron Age I (ca. 1200–1000/930 B.C.)

Israel's arrival in Canaan begins with a significant surge as Israel conquers first Jericho and then Ai. A "southern" campaign erupts when a coalition of city-states gather to punish Gibeon for its treaty with Israel. A "northern" campaign develops when northern towns similarly ally to try to curtail Israel's incursion. Hazor apparently heads this coalition.

Some scholars argue that the account of Joshua contradicts Judges. A superficial reading of the two books may yield such an inference, but even the end of Joshua clearly impresses Israel with the need to continue to address the presence of the Canaanites in their midst (cf. Josh 23). Furthermore, the themes of the two books differ. Joshua emphasizes that God gives the land to Israel to fulfill his promises to the Patriarchs (Josh 1:1-6). Judges, however, emphasizes Israel's covenant failure with the LORD since they were unfaithful to him allowing the Canaanites to lure them away from the LORD (Jdg 2:11-15).

Archaeology reveals a general mixture of material culture particularly in the central hill country—the main area where Israel initially settles. This mixture includes some widely dispersed and distinctly new material culture, but it also reflects some continuity in forms with the resident Canaanite cultures. Particularly problematic, though, is the influence Canaanite religion poses on Israel's response to the LORD. Evidence of calf worship transcends the ethnic orbits of the Canaanites and the Israelites.

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Discussion Questions

1. Why is this period referred to as the Iron Age?

2. The termination of the Iron Age I differs depending on the scholar (either ca. 1000 B.C. or 930 B.C.). Basically the difference is whether one views the reigns of David and Solomon as the beginning of Iron Age II or as part of the end of Iron Age I. Why do you think the reigns of these two individuals might serve as significant lines of demarcation for the respective proposals?

3. Briefly describe the large international scene during the Iron Age I, particularly noting the issues surrounding the Egyptians, the Hittites, and the Sea Peoples.

4. What multiple issues may have contributed to the disruption of the socio-political scene of the Late Bronze Age into the Iron Age I? Can you think of any modern circumstances that reflect similar socio-cultural disruption?

5. How might Israel's failure or refusal to eradicate all of the Canaanites contribute to a similarity of ceramic stylistic traditions? How might you explain the differences that occur?

6. Both Joshua (17:11-13) and Judges (1:27-28) refer to Israel's failure to take control of the cities of Beth-shean, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, and Megiddo. Where were these towns situated geographically?

7. While one must be careful not casually to equate material cultural designs and artifacts with ethnic groups, note some of the material culture features that apparently tended to characterize Israel.

8. While Israel was drawn to worship Baal (who was sometimes associated with a bull/calf), what earlier episode occurred in Israel's history where they were drawn to worship a calf?

9. Do you think the structure on Mt. Ebal was associated with the Israelites? Give reasons for your answer.

Episode 7

# David and Solomon

David and Solomon were iconic personalities for Israel, especially since God planned the Messiah to come through the dynastic line of David. While believers probably do not question the existence of these two pivotal personalities, extra-biblical evidence for their existence and reigns are not as abundant as we would expect.

Thus far,[2] no explicit extra-biblical references *contemporary* with David or Solomon have come to light from any source, either in the land of Israel or from surrounding countries. However, during the reigns of David and Solomon (ca. 1000-930 B.C.) both Egypt and Assyria were in sort of dark ages relative to their international political strength. Shishak will record a campaign into Canaan *after* the death of Solomon (cf. 1 Kgs 14:25-28; 2 Car 12:2, 9-10) and Assyria's first reference to Israel in any form does not occur until 853 B.C. in a campaign which involved Ahab as part of a coalition battling Shalmaneser III (interestingly, a battle about which the Bible says nothing).

Two steles from the mid-to-late 9th century B.C. refer to Israel and one clearly notes the "house of David." These, however, are some 80-100 years removed from Solomon. The reference to the "house of David," though, is usually thought to refer to a dynastic line from David.

A hurdle to identify clear evidence of the United Monarchy in Jerusalem was the tendency to clear earlier remains to bedrock because of the steep terrain upon which Jerusalem stood. Some evidence still exists, but it is somewhat circumstantial and is not direct, explicit evidence for the Monarchy.

An intriguing site, known as Khirbet Qeiyafa, stands on the ridge north of the Elah Valley about 16 miles southwest of Jerusalem. This site dates to David's reign and was likely built by David as a sentinel military site to protect against the Philistines whose towns stood further to the west.

Solomon is later attributed with military fortifications at Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer (1 Kgs 9:15). The last three of these sites have yielded ruins of city gateways that exhibit remarkable similarity and which appear to date to Solomon's reign. Sadly, none of these architectural elements have inscriptions to identify the monarchs under whose rule they actually were built.

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[2] "Thus far," is an important conditional statement. Archaeology offers on-going prospects to discover evidence for people and events who were earlier known only through literary sources, or not even known at all! This does not imply that such confirming evidence will necessarily come to light, but fairness should recognize the tentative nature of archaeology—remember the "circles of evidence" discussed in Episode 1.

Even monumental inscriptions remain elusive, but that lack of evidence characterizes essentially all of the surrounding countries—the Phoenicians, the Philistines, the Amorites, the Syrians, and the Edomites.

All in all, though, strong circumstantial evidence points to the actual reigns of David and Solomon and there is no reason to minimize the biblical narrative.

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Discussion Questions

1. Why is it reasonable not necessarily to expect surrounding contemporary nations to refer to either David or Solomon?

2. The reference on the Dan Stele to the "house of David" dates to about 830 B.C. Think in terms of your own family and/or friends and your childhood; how far back might discussions with them go relative to your age today? How many generations might be represented? Is it reasonable to assume that information they told you would be accurate?

3. What was the first reference from Assyrian sources to Israel or Judah and what is odd about that event relative to the biblical narrative?

4. When building on steep terrain, what construction strategies would create problems to preserve earlier remains?

5. What impact on evidence might recycling/reusing/repurposing building materials have on the evidence base? What modern examples can you offer with similar implications?

6. What appears to have been the purpose of the *millo* in Jerusalem?

7. How many times was Jerusalem fairly pervasively destroyed? Who were the enemy in some of those episodes?

## Episode 8
# Divided Monarchy: Rehoboam/Jeroboam to Jeremiah

The United Monarchy ends with Solomon's death. As far as the LORD was concerned, Solomon's apostasy precipitated the division of the kingdom (1 Kgs 11), but the human impetus was Solomon's heavy economic burden that he had imposed (cf. 1 Kgs 12). Jeroboam, son of Nebat, served as the spokesman for the northern coalition and upon Rehoboam's refusal to comply with their request, the northern tribes appointed Jeroboam to be their king.

Jeroboam apparently distrusted the LORD's promise (cf. 1 Kgs 11:26-40) and initiated several strategies to consolidate the kingdom around himself and away from any loyalty to Jerusalem and the house of David. Among those strategies was to tap into the latent proclivities of the Israelites to serve Baal and Asherah. Thus he established two main rival places of worship at Dan and at Bethel where he set up golden calves to serve as the focal points for their worship.

While the calf was not at this point explicitly identified with Baal—the Canaanite storm god—the calf motif characterized Baal's worship. A correlate was the worship of his female consort, Asherah. Such worship, however, was not isolated to the northern kingdom, but also infected much of the worship in Judah as well.

A correlate of Israel's and Judah's departure from the LORD's directives was the construction of rival places of worship and sacrifice, such as at Beersheba and Arad. These were directly contrary to the LORD's instructions in Deuteronomy 12.

Ahab's reign in Israel was marked by accentuated apostasy from the LORD evidenced by his marriage to Jezebel, a Phoenician princess, who influenced his behavior not only to worship Baal, but also in the arts. Excavations at Samaria have uncovered numerous elaborately carved ivories that reflect Phoenician influence. Some of these were found on-site in Samaria, while others were discovered in Mesopotamia and are thought to have been part of the Assyrian plunder when they conquered Samaria in 721 B.C.

The Assyrian threat afflicted not only Israel, but Judah as well. Judah's fear of the Assyrians was well-grounded since they were noted for their extreme cruelty toward those who resisted their imperial efforts. Assyrian eventually targeted Hezekiah with their military might, but Hezekiah resisted their threats recognizing that Judah had been remiss in their proper worship of the LORD. To that end, he sought to eradicate the places of rival worship, such as at Arad and Beersheba. In addition, he sought to stockpile food, strengthen the fortifications of the towns, build reserves of weapons, and secure water supplies. Archaeology has been able to confirm each of these strategies.

Eventually, however, Judah's apostasy became so intense that the LORD permitted the Babylonians to eliminate Judah's independence. Nebuchadnezzar targeted Judah and Jerusalem in four campaigns, one in 605 (when apparently Daniel and his friends were taken into captivity; Dan 1:1-7), a second in 597 (when Ezekiel was taken to Babylon; Ezek 1:1-2), a third in 586 (when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed; 2 Kgs 25:1-17, 2 Chr 36:17-21), and yet fourth

in 582 (cf. Jer 52:28-30). The severity of the siege in 586 was so severe that the food resources were exhausted and the people scavenged for food from any source they could find.

The Bible indicates that with the division of the kingdom, the northern kingdom of Israel never had any kings who made any efforts seriously to serve the LORD—theirs was essentially a constant spiritual decline. Judah, on the other hand, had occasional kings who attempted to serve the LORD faithfully—notably Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah—but their efforts only postponed the ultimate demise of the kingdom.

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Discussion Questions

1. What element of nature did Baal, the Canaanite god, ostensibly control? Read all of 1 Kings 18 and note the implications and domain of the conflict between Yahweh and Baal.

2. What arena of "nature" was Asherah thought to control? How does the belief in Yahweh relate to Asherah?

3. What was the "problem" of having places of sacrifice somewhere other than Jerusalem (cf. Deuteronomy 12)?

4. Why was Ahab's palace called a "house of ivory"?

5. With what relatively modern militaries might one compare the behavior of the Assyrians?

6. What were the four basic areas of Hezekiah's preparations for the Assyrian threat (cf. 2 Kgs 18:3-6; 20:12-13; 2 Car 29:3-10, 16-19; 32:1-5, 37-30)?

7. How would you assess the accuracy of Sennacherib's declaration that he shut up Hezekiah in Jerusalem "like a bird in a cage"?

# Episode 9
# Palestine and the Life of Jesus

"Palestine"[3] appears often from at least the time of Herodotus (*Histories* 1.103ff; 3.91; 7.89) to refer to the areas of Old Testament Syria and Canaan. It can legitimately apply to the regions of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea—the areas in which Jesus traveled and ministered.

This, of course, is where Jesus was born, was baptized by John, and conducted his ministry. Numerous places can put one into close proximity, if not actual presence of where Jesus preached and worked. With the continued study and excavation of ancient Palestine, scholars gather more information about places already discovered, as well as occasionally finding additional locations and information for the first time. Fortunately many of these have escaped development for pilgrimages and remain fairly pristine.

An initial visit to modern Israel and the West Bank prompts many to express first surprise of how small the land is to have had such a global impact, and secondly how many of the sites have jumbled remains spanning a wide chronological spectrum. This last point can be confusing and disconcerting, but careful study of the archaeological discussions and reports usually help untangle what at first appears almost to be a Gordian Knot.

Discussion Questions:

1. In spite of the desert region through which the Jordan flows, why might the Bible refer to "the jungle of the Jordan" (cf. Jer 49:19)? What causes this radical contrast of vegetation?

2. How might the Cliffs of Arbel contribute to rough waters on the Sea of Galilee?

3. What stratigraphic (building construction) evidence appears at Capernaum to infer the existence of an older synagogue under the 4th-5th century A.D. "White Synagogue?"

4. Is it reasonable to infer that Jesus may have preached in the synagogue at Magdala? Give reasons for your answer.

5. Jesus' discussion with the apostles at Caesarea Philippi involved a play on words. How might the geography and geology have served as a backdrop to that discussion?

6. When the woman at the well of Sychar referred to "our fathers worshiped in this mountain" to what was she referring?

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[3] Use of the term "Palestine" here has nothing to do with the current political scene raging in the Middle and Near East. It was a term that was used in antiquity to refer to the region independent of the current political milieu.

7. The Pool of Siloam is named thus because the water is transported through the old Hezekiah's tunnel from Gihon to the pool. How does this reality help explain the phrase in John 9:7?

8. Read Genesis 3:15; what relationship, if any, might this passage have to the only physical evidence that has been found of crucifixions from the Roman world?

## Episode 10
# Three Cities of Acts

Paul was the evangelist to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Gal 2:8-9). While many cities appear in the book of Acts, three provide a range of response that is sometimes surprising. The intellectual center of Athens was relatively unresponsive to the Gospel (Acts 17), while Paul found the trade port and worldly town of Corinth to be quite responsive (Acts 18). We are not informed of the duration of Paul's stay in Athens, but it appears to have been fairly short; his stay in Corinth, however, was at least eighteen months, plus warranting several visits and letters.

While also sitting at a trade crossroad, Ephesus was more noted for its adoration of Artemis and was steeped in her worship and in other mystery religions. Paul's stay in Ephesus (Acts 19) was the longest that we have on record. His message clearly elicited the ire of the Jewish and pagan communities and impacted the economy of some of the merchants.

While towns often have their reputations (think Hollywood, Las Vegas, Nashville, and Fort Worth), we must not infer that everyone in the towns participate in the activities that formed the reputations. Paul's work in these three towns, however, can provide perspective as we deal with the circumstances of our own world. Obedience to the Gospel often comes from quite unexpected sources.

Discussion Questions:

1. What were the basic functions of the civic and commercial agoras in ancient Greek cities?

2. From your general familiarity with Greek and Roman mythology and the list of deities mentioned in the video who were associated with Athens, identify and describe the domains that various deities were thought to control.

3. How did Corinth's geographic proximity contribute to its wealth and influence?

4. What was the Diolkos?

5. How and why does a town's intense trade connection *often* (not always nor for everyone) contribute to a worldly and immoral atmosphere?

6. What was an Aesclepion and what was an unusual feature associated with it?

7. What geographic range does the book of Acts indicate Paul's preaching to have had while he was in Ephesus? List some of the towns that would have been in that orbit of Paul's teaching effort.

8. What dual economic impact did Paul's preaching have in Ephesus and how are those evident in the narrative of Acts?

9. The Temple of Artemis was traditionally noted as one of the "Wonders of the Ancient World" (dating from the first century B.C.); what were some of the others?

10. Read Acts 17:32-34; 18:11; and 20:31. Given the "character" (or reputations) of each of the cities—Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus—what inferences might we draw relative to our evangelism? How might you explain the relative differences in the reception of the gospel in these three cities?

## Episode 11
# The Archaeological "Dating Scene" (or "How Old is That?")

Historical reconstruction demands a proper perception of when things occur. Genealogies and cause-and-effect issues are realities that one must keep in order.

Chronological reconstruction has traditionally relied almost exclusively on written records—national archives, personal diaries, monumental inscriptions, etc. However, such documents usually have no relevance for items or events that they do not mention. The historian needs other avenues available to fill in the voids.

In the late 1800s **ceramic typology** began to permit scholars to infer at least relative chronologies. This was a strategy that would identify by the changing designs of forms (particularly ceramic forms) a general relationship of "this-before-that" determination. When a collection of various artifacts from a stratum were identified as overall contemporary and the stratum could be dated on the basis of historical documents (e.g., a destruction level associated with a military campaign), then if the same kind of collection were to appear at another site, one can infer the same general date. Material above that stratum would characterize a later date, and material below, an earlier date. The typology would allow one to transfer the chronological scheme to other sites.

**International synchronism** utilizes ancient documents and observations as the basis to reconstruct the chronology. The Assyrians named their years after various administrators in the government and usually listed an event or two associated with that person's named year (an eponym instead of a numeric designation). One of the events mentioned in connection with the eponym of Bar-Sagali was a solar eclipse that occurred on what we identify as June 15, 763 BC. By looking at the eponyms before and after Bar-Sagali and the references to campaigns against neighboring countries a fairly tight chronology can emerge.

The Egyptians also relied upon the heavens to determine their chronology. They carefully observed the rising star Sirius over the southern horizon (sometimes called the "Dog Star"). The problem is that it is not always clear to us from where their observations were made—Memphis, Thebes, Elephantine—the curvature of the earth made for different times of observation. Several hundred miles separate the observation posts in Egypt, thus affecting the conclusions for chronological reconstruction.

There was a need, thus, to identify a strategy to permit independent dates for layers and artifacts. Eventually **Carbon 14 dating** developed providing an overall framework. However, as with essentially all scientific discoveries, human understanding needed refinement as further development and experimentation occurred. Carbon 14 dating is generally quite useful, but while acknowledging its value, we must respect the problems that continue to find refinement.

A fairly recent addition to the arsenal of strategies is **archaeomagnetic dating** which relies on the magnetism of the iron particles in most soil-based contexts (fire pits, mud brick, etc.). The molecules in the matrix naturally reflect a random magnetic alignment, but when the soil matrix is heated to a certain temperature, the magnetic alignment adjusts to a north-south

orientation. When samples of burned soil matrices are studied in situ, technicians can observe the alignment of the molecules and how they align with the drifting magnetic north of the earth's polarity (nobody knows why the earth's polarity drifts, but it has been traced through time). This application is somewhat in its infancy, but tests have corroborated other chronological conclusions.

**Dendrochronology** (i.e., "tree-ring" dating) has helped immeasurably to refine and recalibrate the results of Carbon 14 dating. As far as the ancient Near East is concerned, however, an unbroken sequence of overlapping tree-ring data to extend into Biblical times remains elusive. Advances, however, have been made, but at this point it cannot be used for an absolute date for the ancient Biblical world.

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Discussion questions:

1. Give a practical example of why it is important to know what event/person comes before or after another and how a failure to respect that can create confusion if not out right error.

2. Identify a common item that one can somewhat intuitively trace its relative development through time (usually from simple to complex) as an example of typology. What intrinsic constraints exist with typological development?

3. Give modern examples of cross references to international events that serve as points of significance to us. Why do these tend to be important?

4. Thinking in terms of the various time zones (Eastern Time Zone to Pacific Time Zone or even within one time zone such as the geographic span of the "Central Time Zone"), how does the curvature of the earth affect the observation of a sunrise across the time zone? How would that curvature affect the time of observation of the rising of Sirius, given a distance from Heliopolis/Memphis Egypt to Elephantine of ca. 400 miles (i.e., what approximate amount of time differential would this characterize)?

5. Can one place confidence in the observation of a solar eclipse as a start point to calculate chronology?

6. Do you see any value in Carbon 14 dating strategies? What would be its value? What cautions should one consider?

7. What is the basic principle of archaeomagnetic dating? Why might it not be helpful at least in many situations?

8. Identify any experiences with tree-ring dating that you may have witnessed in a museum. What is the basic principle upon which it works? How has it helped to correct some inconsistencies in Carbon 14 dating?

# Episode 12
# Archaeology and Arks

Undoubtedly the discovery of Noah's Ark and the Ark of the Covenant would be sensational. The identification of either would likely create a surge of confidence in the integrity of Scripture. Regretfully, the evidence that accompanies the respective claims remains vague and tenuous.

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1) Does a failure to find Noah's ark necessarily imply an unhistorical event? Give examples of things that we know occurred or existed for which no physical evidence remains.

2) While conspiracies to suppress evidence of events or things may occur, how might we deal with the claims in our evaluations?

3) Outside of the Bible, what are the earliest claims for evidence of Noah's ark and why might those claims raise suspicion?

4) Where are the four main locations where Noah's ark is claimed to be?
5) What about the Durupinar site grabbed the attention of investigators to infer that it is a suitable candidate for Noah's ark?

6) List the main locations where claims for the current resting place of the Ark of the Covenant occur and evaluate the basic evidence for each.

7) Read 1 Kings 10:1-13 and 2 Chronicles 9:1-12. What do the passages indicate about Solomon's relationship with the Queen of Sheba? What implication might this hold for the inference that the Ark of the Covenant was taken to Sheba?

8) Read Jeremiah 3:16-17. Does the statement appear to have any relevance to the current existence of the Ark of the Covenant?

## Episode 13
# Sinai and Israel's Crossing the Red Sea

Two topics intertwine to make up this discussion. First is, where is/was Mt. Sinai? Paul refers to "Mount Sinai in Arabia" (Gal. 4:25), but Mt. Sinai has traditionally been located in the south-central Sinai Peninsula. That site has often been identified as Jebel Musa at the foot of which is St. Catherine's monastery, however, other mountains in the area have been identified as the biblical Mt. Sinai. In recent years, attention has shifted to identify Mt. Sinai in modern Saudi Arabia at the site of Jebel al-Lawz.

The location of Mt. Sinai impacts any identification of where Israel crossed the Red Sea. The area of Arabia, however, needs to be defined as the people in antiquity identified it rather than by modern political boundaries. Similarly, one must identify Egypt on the basis of ancient perceptions. Thus the modern Sinai Peninsula becomes a major focal point for definition.

For those who believe that Israel crossed the Red Sea at the Gulf of Suez, the argument usually concludes that Sinai is somewhere in the modern Sinai Peninsula. For those who identify the crossing site with the Gulf of Aqaba, Sinai then is located in modern Saudi Arabia. Part of the discussion evaluates the biblical data regarding Israel's itinerary with the two respective gulfs. In addition, the discussion evaluates briefly the claims for bones, chariots, and chariot wheels.

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Discussion Questions:

1) While this discussion does not evaluate all of the sites, at least how many sites have been identified with Mt. Sinai?

2) Why is it important to define geographical locations as they were understood at the time of the composition of the documents? Give some modern examples of geographic differences over time.

3) Would a reference to "an 11-day journey" necessarily indicate that was how long it took the masses of Israel to make the journey? How might one alternatively understand the phrase?

4) Discuss the location of the "land of Shur" as implied in the biblical texts.

5) What weaknesses apply to the identification of Mt. Sinai with the south-central Sinai Peninsula?

6) What relevance does Saudi Arabia's identification of Jebel al-Lawz as an archaeological site have on its identification as a biblical site?

7) What challenges exist in trying to trace Israel's migration from Egypt to Canaan?

8) Why is it unlikely that human (or animal) bones would survive in the Red Sea for over 3000 years?

9) If the walls of water on each side of Israel's crossing the Red Sea (cf. Exodus 14:22) stood just 12 feet tall (ca. 4 meters), what is the likelihood that the chariots of Egypt would survive with any integrity when the water collapsed back on the Egyptians?

10) Rather than chariot wheels, what other options exist to explain the features?

Introducing Dale W. Manor

Dale W. Manor is Professor Emeritus of Archaeology and Bible at Harding University. He earned his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Arizona in Syro-Palestinian Archaeology with a minor in Hebrew Bible. His undergraduate education was at Freed-Hardeman University and Pepperdine University. He also has an M.A. in Humanities from the California State University at Dominguez Hills.

Manor preached weekly while a student at Freed-Hardeman and preached full-time for over twenty-five years before his employment at Harding where he taught for twenty-four years.

Manor's archaeological work is extensive, with twenty-three seasons of experience in field archaeology. Since the year 2000 he has been the Field Director of the Tel Beth-Shemesh excavation project in Israel. He has also served on the staffs of the Tel Miqne/Ekron excavation as well as the Tel Rehov project in Israel. He also worked at Tel Dan in northern Israel and at Ketef Hinnom near Jerusalem. Additional work includes survey work in the Negev of Israel. He has made a total of over thirty trips to Israel.

In 1988-89 he was the Kress Fellow at the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem and from 2000-2012 organized and chaired the session on "Hebrew Bible, History, and Archaeology" for the international conference of the American Schools of Oriental Research (now the American Society of Overseas Research). He worked as an Assistant to the Editor for the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* project (Doubleday 1992), editing some 450 articles on archaeology and historical geography. He also has several articles in the dictionary, as well as articles in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* (1997), the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Archaeology* (2013), the *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (2000), and the *New Interpreters' Dictionary of the Bible* (Abingdon, 2008-2009). He has written the introductions for the historical books in the *Old Testament Introduction* for the College Press series (2005), as well as a chapter on the relationship of archaeology to the Bible. In addition, he wrote the chapter on Ruth in the *Zondervan Illustrated Biblical Background Commentary on the Old Testament* (2009). He currently is working on the second major volume of the excavations of the work at Tel Beth-Shemesh. The Truth for Today/Resources Publications issued fifty-three of Manor's videos, *Through Their Eyes*, which are associated with their study of *Acts: Going Forward with Christ's Mission* (2023).

Additional articles and reviews have appeared in *Near Eastern Archaeology*, the *Biblical Archaeology Review*, the *Stone-Campbell Journal*, the *Restoration Quarterly* and various other publications.

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