

“I Told You So!”

The Historicity of Holy Scripture as Demonstrated by the Discoveries of Secular Archaeologists and Historians

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Every year during the Christmas season, it seems one or more of America's major news publications (*Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News & World Report*, etc.) decides to publish a feature article questioning the historicity of the Bible and the Christian faith. In keeping with this apparent tradition, the cover of the December 18, 1995 issue of *Time* carried the headline: “IS THE BIBLE FACT OR FICTION? Archaeologists in the Holy Land are shedding new light on what did – or didn't occur in the greatest stories ever told.” Inside the magazine listed “tales of the Bible that are in doubt.” The accompanying list of questions included: “Was Abraham a myth? Was there a Moses? Did the Exodus happen? Did Joshua conquer the city of Jericho?”

Journalists are not alone in casting doubt on the reliability of what the Bible says. Sadly, many “scholars” teaching at the seminaries of major church bodies announce to their students that the Bible is less than 100% reliable. Too often these religious leaders do not believe that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. According to these “wise men,” the first five books were written centuries after Moses died and were compiled from various sources designated as J - E - D and P. What was once the topic of debate in graduate courses is now taught as fact which “thinking” individuals will accept without question. As a result, the JEDP source hypothesis is now being taught to Sunday School children in some major denominations. Although Jesus Christ taught that Moses wrote these books, liberal critics of Scripture maintain that Christ was simply mistaken, which really means that Jesus is not the all-knowing God.

Questioning the validity of the Bible is no longer considered to be the practice of unbelievers. Respect for the Lord's Word has been replaced by ridicule and rejection. Living in such an environment, it is not surprising that today much of the American public is from Missouri; not that their address is from that particular state, but they subscribe to the school of thought which demands, “Show me!” That the typical unbelieving, non-Christian American insists, “Show me, and I will believe,” does not surprise us. Yet it does shock us that many who consider themselves to be believers quietly, or not so quietly, wrestle with similar doubts and come to the same conclusion about the Christian faith. People today are no different than the people of Jesus' day. “Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders,” Jesus told him [the royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum], “you will never believe” (John 4:48). The disciple Thomas, in yesterday's gospel lesson, displayed a similar doubt when told that Jesus had appeared to the rest of the disciples. “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it,” Thomas declared (John 20:25). Paul continued to run into that type of thinking on his missionary journeys when he wrote, “Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1:22). “Prove it, then I'll believe it” also seems to be the modern slogan, especially among those who have received an education stressing “critical” thinking and “higher level” questioning skills.

There is no doubt that people are more comfortable with the concrete and the specific than they are with the theoretical and the abstract. Jesus knew that. We see it in his teaching that is rich with illustrations and parables out of everyday life. The Savior did everything he could to help people overcome their doubts and weaknesses. Anything that we can do to assist people in understanding Scripture and accepting its contents as factual and true will also be beneficial.

We do people a service when we help them to see what the Bible is. It is not a book like other books. It does not have a human author and therefore it is not open to our interpretation. When it comes to Holy

Scripture, we must remember the reason for which God has given it. The Bible is not intended to be a science textbook nor is it an historical treatise. The “Good Book’s” purpose is to proclaim Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Savior. After all, God “wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Yet in carrying out his divine purpose, the Lord also provides us with a wealth of information which covers a wide range of topics.

The Bible was not written to be a history book, but it does contain a great deal of historical data. Believing that “all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16), we can only conclude that the history found in the Scriptures is also factual. The people described in the pages of the Bible actually lived and the events recorded there really happened.

We are so used to the fact that the biblical background of our faith is historically true that we tend to forget what a blessing we enjoy. Of all the world’s religions, none is more thoroughly intertwined with secular history than Christianity. With the exception of Judaism, all the rest of the world’s religions shy away from history. Oh, yes, the founder of a religious sect may have been a historical figure, but the holy books they produced do not even try to fit into what has happened in the world. The Bible entrusted into our care is very different. The Old and the New Testaments cover more than 2,000 years of constant interaction with their surroundings in the ancient historical past.

Historical evidence as supplied by secular archaeologists and historians, then, can supplement what the Bible tells us. Secular history can help us to understand the world in which the events of the Old Testament and the New Testament took place. Of course, the reverse is also true. The Bible helps us to understand secular history, although many historians would choke before they would admit that there is much to be learned from the biblical narrative. Since all of you are computer-literate and cyber-savvy pastors, we could say that secular history and the history of the Bible share the same database, one which the Lord himself generated. Because secular and religious history are interrelated, neither one should ignore the other. Our understanding of one benefits from our knowledge of the other.

That having been said, a “caveat” is in order. We do need to be careful! From our perspective the one is not as important as the other. We do not need secular history and archaeology to prove the validity of Scripture. Our faith is not dependent upon the discoveries of archaeologists and the “best-guess” determinations of historians. The Holy Spirit produces faith and increases our understanding as we use the Word. The Bible is totally reliable because it is God’s Word.

Secular historical evidence can easily supplement what we learn from the Scriptural record and vice versa. To use modern techno-talk once again, the history recorded in the Bible and the history compiled by secular historians and archaeologists share a large common database. Our Lord is, after all, the Lord of history. He always has and always will guide and direct what happens in this world. What happens is recorded by believers and by unbelievers alike, although the flavor of the one is often different from the other. Likewise the physical reminders of what has happened in the past are constantly being dug up and being brought back to light.

This combination of information that we learn from biblical and non-biblical sources can be used to explain, illustrate and enhance what we learn from one or the other. Whenever the historical basis of Christianity is questioned, we can easily call upon the secular ancient historical record as a witness to the truthfulness of what the Bible says. Herodotus, Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius and a host of other ancient “historians” give us information that we might otherwise not have available.

In addition to the written records of the ancient world, we also have the “hard evidence” which has been made available by archaeological excavation. The garbage of the ancient world uncovered in archaeological digs helps us to understand the world in which the people of the Testaments lived and how the events of the Testaments unfolded. Although educated people have treasured the remnants of the ancient world for hundreds of years, archaeology as a scientific pursuit is barely a hundred years old. In that hundred years, however, hundreds of thousands of artifacts relating to the biblical world have been uncovered. As this information is catalogued, analyzed and interpreted, our understanding of and our appreciation for the ancient world continues to expand.

Today any interested individual can know more about the world of the Old Testament and the origins of the Christian Church than would have been possible for even the greatest names of Church history. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and even Martin Luther did not have the wealth of information provided by archaeology and its discoveries. We do. As a result our database of information is much deeper and broader than what they had available. This collection of resources will continue to grow, thanks to all the excavating work that continues in the Near East.

But even as we say this, do not imagine that archaeologists go off to Israel or Jordan and dig in order to “prove” something in the Bible. Real archaeologists insist that they only dig and that they then let the “chips” fall where they may. Archaeologists insist that their members with any kind of integrity will not go into a project with a foregone conclusion in mind. In spite of that claim, however, we find that they too often are unconsciously skeptical of whether the biblical record is factual. What is remarkable then about their “chips” is that the vast majority still fall in such a way that they strengthen the biblical account. Even when archaeological evidence seems to conflict with Scripture (as it did, for example, in some of the excavations at Jericho), a new reading of the old evidence or a re-evaluation after the discovery of fresh evidence can correct a previous misreading or misunderstanding of the data. In spite of our hesitancy to accept assistance from sources outside the Bible, we cannot overlook what we have here. Even when they don’t want to be our friends, history and archaeology have become powerful allies of Christianity in supporting the biblical record.

There is a good reason to pay attention to what is happening in the worlds of archaeology and historical research. History and archaeology enrich our preaching and teaching. They provide insights that we would not otherwise possess. They give us a broader background, fresh insights and new perspectives from which to view the familiar biblical accounts. Today we want to consider some examples of what has been learned from secular historians and archaeologists and what benefits can be gained for our personal understanding and for our own professional development.

Every Christian is familiar with the name of Pontius Pilate. Every Sunday we hear that name as we recite the Creed. Usually we speak of Pilate in extremely negative terms as a prime example of pagan cruelty and judicial weakness. Is this justifiable? The gospel accounts tell us so very little about Pilate that it is difficult to make a defensible judgment. There is, however, more that we can learn about this individual. We have about ten times more information concerning Pilate from ancient secular sources than we have in the gospels. If we use all the information that is available on Pilate, it is possible to bring this character to life and show him as an intriguing figure in the events of Christ’s Passion. When we use this information in our teaching, we can stifle the yawns, building interest in Pontius Pilate as a real person and demonstrating how the Lord uses real people to carry out his plans.

Like the Athenians on Mars’ Hill (Acts 17:21), modern people are curious about anything new. During the nineteenth century, critics of the Bible doubted that Pontius Pilate ever existed. These so-called scholars suggested that early Christian copyists had added Pilate’s name to the manuscripts of Josephus and Tacitus in order, they argued, to give credibility to this “mythical” (their description, not mine) Roman governor introduced in the gospels. Here is where archaeology came to the rescue.

Too bad these critical “experts” were no longer living in 1961, when an Italian archaeological expedition discovered a two-by-three foot dedicatory cornerstone at Caesarea with the name *Pontius Pilatus* etched into it in two-inch high Latin letters. Had they seen this evidence and traced its letters with their own fingers, they would have known that there really was a Pontius Pilate. A variety of other references, as well as additional archaeological discoveries, have brought us to the point where no one today doubts that Pontius Pilate was a real person.

What happened in the case of Pilate has been repeated often. “Show me, then I’ll believe.” None of us needs to fear such a challenge. Although the biblical record is good enough for you and me, it is nice to have additional ammunition when confronting the skeptic. When it comes to “Show and Tell,” there is plenty to show and even more to tell. The only problem confronting us is that too few want to see what exists in front of their

own eyes. Just as we cannot believe for another person, so we cannot see for another person. We can only point them to the evidence and let the truth speak for itself.

History and archaeology have repeated the “documentation” of Pilate by bringing another Roman governor into the light of day. This governor is Junius Gallio, Paul’s judge at Corinth (Acts 18:12ff). We must admit that Gallio has only a “bit part” in the New Testament record. His claim to fame is that he threw Paul’s case out of court and thereby allowed Paul to continue his ministry. For most Christians that is all they know about the man and, more likely, all they care to know about him. Yet if we have such a limited concern, we are actually shortchanging ourselves and undermining our appreciation for what happened in the book of Acts.

As it turns out, Junius Gallio is a well-known figure in Roman history. He was the brother of Annaeus Seneca, the great Stoic philosopher of the first century A.D. Gallio enjoyed a brilliant career in Rome. Later, he had to serve as master of ceremonies at Nero’s inept recitals. Given the instability of Nero’s mind and his questionable musical ability, this was no easy job. Finally, Gallio conspired against the emperor and contributed to his demise. If you doubt the existence of this governor, an inscription at Delphi in Greece which is dateable to 51-52 A.D. mentions Gallio in a decree from the emperor Claudius. This “hard evidence” not only defines Junius Gallio as a real person, it allows us to date St. Paul’s second missionary journey with great accuracy.

In the first Appendix attached to this paper is a partial listing of additional New Testament episodes that become more colorful and more understandable thanks to the discoveries of archaeology and the determinations of history. Since these events are only about 2,000 years old, we have a variety of tools and resources to assist us. The farther back we go into the mists of history, however, the more challenging the work becomes. Although we do not always have as much information available, we can still uncover individuals and events as we dig through the Old Testament.

If you had studied Ancient History at the end of the nineteenth century, you would have found most historians insisting that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Bible. As proof they would have told you that writing was not yet developed at the time of Moses. No self-respecting historian or archaeologist would make such a claim today. This doesn’t mean that they have all become Christians, believing in the inerrancy of Scripture. It simply means that the discoveries of the past century have helped them to understand what the Scriptures have always known. Writing was a well-developed skill long before the birth of Moses. Archaeological digs have demonstrated that writing, in not one but several forms, goes back to at least 3,500 B.C. Of course this does not mean that everyone knew how to read and to write, but writing was available to an educated elite.

The Lord guided world affairs in such a way that Moses was able to grow up in the palace of an Egyptian ruler. Since Egypt was one of the centers of civilization where writing skills developed early, it wasn’t difficult for the Lord to get these skills into the hands of Moses. Educated in the learning and academia of the Egyptians, Moses was able to write down the words that the Lord gave him. As the Lord so often does, he waited to send out his representative until the “fullness of time.” God made the necessary preparations so that when the time came to provide a written “Scripture” for his people to pass down from generation to generation, his people possessed the ability to do so.

In recent years some researchers have been more inclined to give the Bible the benefit of the doubt. In an article entitled, “Are the Bible Stories True?” the December 18, 1995 issue of *Time* recognized that some archaeological discoveries have shown that, according to their way of thinking, at least parts of the Bible are true. The *Time* article reports:

But a series of crucial discoveries suggests that some of the Bible’s more ancient tales are also based firmly on real people and events. In 1990, Harvard researchers working in the ancient city of Ashkelon, north of the Gaza Strip, unearthed a small silver-plated bronze calf figurine reminiscent of the huge golden calf mentioned in the Book of Exodus. In 1986, archaeologists found the earliest text of the Bible, dated to about 600 B.C. It suggests that at least part of the Old Testament was written soon after some of the events it describes. Also in 1986, scholars

identified an ancient seal that had belonged to Baruch, son of Neriah, a scribe who recorded the prophecies of Jeremiah in 587 B.C. Says Hershel Shanks, founding editor of the influential magazine *Biblical Archaeology Review*: “Seldom does archaeology come face to face with people actually mentioned in the Bible.”

Some of the discoveries have been very personal. In 1993, a team of archaeologists, were excavating an ancient mound called Tel Dan. Avraham Birnan uncovered a ninth century B.C. stele complete with an inscription. Carved into this chunk of basalt were the words “Beth David” or “house of David” and “king of Israel.” It was the first time that David’s name as monarch had been found outside the Bible. This stele demonstrates that in the ninth century B.C.E. the Arameans and other neighbors of Israel know of kings of Israel and kings of Judah from the house of David. This confirms the existence of the state of Israel in the ninth, if not in the tenth century. For any one who doubted the physical reality of King David, the discovery proved him to be more than a legend.

In spite of an almost constant flow of new discoveries, however, many scholars still insist that much of what is recorded in the Bible is, at best, distorted. Most scholars still suspect that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob never existed. Many doubt the historicity of the events that took place during the captivity in Egypt. Relatively few modern historians believe in Joshua’s conquest of Jericho and of the rest of the Promised Land. In the most extreme view, they would insist that these were all complete fabrications, invented centuries after they were supposed to have happened.

Frequently their basis for rejecting the conquest under Joshua is the lack of proof that the cities mentioned in the book of Joshua actually existed. In the summer of 1996 Hebrew University professor Amnon Ben-Tor announced the discovery of the ancient city of Hazor. The remains of a palace destroyed by fire corresponds to the biblical account of Joshua burning down Hazor in battle.

This dig is still uncovering layers of civilization at Hazor, first settled in the twenty-seventh century B.C. By the time of Abraham, this city, situated along the major trade route between Egypt and Babylon, had already become a major center for trade in tin, silver, gold and precious stones. It has been described as “the biggest city of its day.” Other evidence discovered in the summer of 1996 points to the existence of two royal archives at the site in as yet unexcavated palace rooms. The discovery of such archives would be unprecedented in the Holy Land and could provide a wealth of information about life in the Canaanite period, which lasted until the arrival of Joshua and the Israelites. The potential for even greater discoveries in coming summers warrants close attention.

The long-standing debate over the dating of Jericho’s destruction illustrates the battle that is being waged between supporters and critics of the Bible. From 1930 to 1936 John Garstang, an English archaeologist, excavated the site of ancient Jericho. He came to the conclusion that in the fifteenth century B.C. Jericho had been destroyed by the invading Israelites, who were fleeing bondage in Egypt. “In all material details and in date,” Garstang insisted, “the fall of Jericho took place as described in the Biblical narrative.” “The link with Joshua and the Israelites,” he added, “is only circumstantial, but it seems to be solid and without flaw.” When we hear such a verdict, we tend to be cheered by the news, as if the unbelieving critics must now certainly see the truth.

The critics, however, did not believe. Rather they insisted that Garstang had misread the evidence. British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon, who followed Garstang at the Jericho excavations, on the basis of what she saw to be the evidence, reversed the findings of Garstang. Jericho, she said, had been destroyed 150 years before Israel’s invasion of Canaan. Garstang was out. Kenyon was in. Once again scholars wrote off the Bible’s account of Jericho’s fall as folklore and religious mythology.

Lest we despair, however, the battle has come full circle. Now Bryant Wood, an archaeologist at the University of Toronto, has re-evaluated Kenyon’s findings and has published his conclusions in detail. He found much in Kenyon’s work to support Garstang’s conclusions. For example, he claims Garstang had actually found the pottery which Kenyon claimed was missing. This was the key evidence in her rejection of the biblical

account. Wood, in his review, found the correlation between the archaeological evidence and the biblical narrative to be “substantial.”

The evidence cited by Wood includes: the city was strongly fortified; the attack occurred after the harvest in spring; the inhabitants had no opportunity to flee; the siege was short; the walls were leveled, possibly by an earthquake; the city was not plundered; and it was burned. This latter point is specifically mentioned in Joshua 6:14. Although the present evidence is now leaning in “our” favor, don’t be surprised if the “opposition” comes up with new reasons for disavowing the truth.

Discoveries and theories relating to biblical history before the reign of Solomon are vigorously contested by archaeologists, religious scholars and secular historians. After the reign of Solomon the Bible version of Israelite history is generally believed to be based on historical fact because it is corroborated by independent accounts of kings and battles in Egyptian and Assyrian inscriptions of the time. Prior to that time, about 930 B.C., the “experts” disagree on just about everything.

In recent years a group of “superskeptics” has emerged. At the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Academy of Religion in November 1995, the members of this group were out in force. One summed up their commonly held positions when he pompously proclaimed: “The oldest books of the Old Testament weren’t written until the Israelites were in exile in Babylon, after 587 B.C. There was no Moses, no crossing of the sea, no revelation on Mount Sinai.” In spite of this declaration, however, the mounting evidence records a much different picture.

One of the lengthy accounts recorded in the Old Testament concerns the suffering of the Jews at the hands of the Assyrian Empire. Modern archaeological discoveries have again demonstrated the validity of these accounts. Beginning in 1845, a young Englishman, Henry Layard, made a series of findings at Nineveh, the ancient capital of the Assyrian Empire. Before these discoveries, critics of the Bible relegated the entire Assyrian civilization to pure mythology, because they had no evidence that this great empire ever existed.

In 1845 Layard began excavating an ancient mound along the Tigris River called “Tell Nimrud,” after the king who founded Asshur and Nineveh according to Genesis 10:11. Layard uncovered what would become the greatest discovery of his life – the Black Obelisk of Nineveh. This was a victory monument of the Assyrian King Shalmaneser III, who reigned from 858 - 824 B.C., making him a contemporary of King Ahab. The inscription on the obelisk summarizes Shalmaneser’s battles against, among others, King Hazael of Damascus, who is mentioned in 2 Kings 13:24. Even more important was the picture of men paying tribute to the Assyrian king along with the words, “Tribute of Jaua of Bit-Humri: silver, gold, lead, scepters of the king and balsam-wood I received from him.” “Jaua of Bit-Humri” is simply the Assyrian translation of Israel’s king Jehu, of the House of Omri (2 Kings 9).

Later, the great library in the palace of Ashurbanipal was uncovered at Nineveh. Among the thousands of clay tablets found there were the annals of Assyria’s greatest conquering kings, Tiglath Pileser III and Sargon. The accounts of their military successes against Israel match the Biblical narrative perfectly. (See Appendix #2) These Assyrian discoveries serve as great proofs that the Holy Bible, rather than being a collection of ancient myths, is a reliable historical document. The only “myth” involved with the Bible is the myth that it is a book of fables and untruths.

Noted Jewish archaeologist Nelson Glueck in his *Rivers in the Desert* writes: “As a matter of fact, however, it may be clearly stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a single biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible.” Once again that sounds as if the Bible has won the victory and has gained acceptance as a valid historical record. That, unfortunately, is not the case.

From time to time we hear of historians and archaeologists proclaiming their agreement with some Biblical fact. Rather than getting our hopes up too high, we need to “beware of wolves in sheep’s clothing.” Often their “conversions” to the truth of Scripture are limited or deformed. An example is found in the July/August 1996 issue of *Biblical Archaeological Review*. There James A. Sauer writes:

Evidence of climatic change has the potential, already partially realized, of dating the patriarchal age, the sojourn in Egypt (the Joseph story) and the origins of the Biblical Flood story. It may even enable us to locate at least one of the four rivers associated with the Garden of Eden.

I speak as a former skeptic. . . .

Now I am recanting. . . .

All of this seems too good to be true – a recognized, respected archaeologist who seems to announce that the Bible is right after all. Not so fast. Sauer dashes our hopes when he flip-flops in viewing Scripture as sometimes being accurate and other times as inaccurate. He continues:

I do not mean to imply that the early Biblical stories are literally true. Clearly, the Biblical traditions are very much cast in the worldview of the Iron Age. But that has led too many scholars to ignore the possibility that the Biblical texts accurately preserve some earlier traditions. Since the memories of climatic change and of early geography seem so accurate, some of these traditions may have been written down for the first time, not in the tenth century B.C.E. (the earliest date given by most scholars) but very much earlier.

The inconsistency of archaeologists and historians should not scare us away from the contributions which archaeology can make to biblical study. Consider this brief summary of benefits that we can gain. First, archaeology helps us understand the daily lives of people living in Bible times. We get a glimpse of how they worked and how they lived. Archaeology allows us to know more about the homes they lived in, their customs, the languages they spoke, the foods they ate, and how they conducted their businesses.

Archaeology also gives us a feel for how people understood their world. It gives us some insight into how they viewed society, culture and religion. By helping us to reconstruct the kingdoms that were Israel's neighbors, archaeology can help us understand the struggles the people of the Bible faced. Archaeology helps us assess the economic systems of the biblical period. It aids our understanding of climate and geography, as well as what resources were available to these people.

Biblical archaeology assists us in our study of the biblical text. We are given additional information about vocabulary, literature, and grammatical constructions employed in the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Old and New Testaments. Archaeology often sheds light on difficult passages in the Bible. Sometimes it provides us with historic, cultural, or social information the biblical text does not provide.

This is not to suggest that archaeology has all the answers. Likewise we cannot get our priorities mixed up. Just as the Trojans found out too late that they should beware of Greeks bearing gifts, so we must always be on our guard. There is much that we can learn from historians and archaeologists that will help us better understand the world, the people and the events of the Bible. But we dare never forget that the Bible is God's Word and is not open to constant revision at the hands of those who do not believe its message.

Conclusion

All the discoveries and the discussion enable us to read the Bible from a new perspective. We realize that the Scriptures speak of God in the context of a real world with real problems. The Bible is real history. It records the lives of real people who lived in real places. Although the ancient world produced its share of myths and legends, the Bible is not a part of them.

The Bible is different from any other literature produced in ancient times. As the Old Testament and the New Testament unfold under the Lord's direction, they are intertwined with the secular history of this area. With each passing year, our formerly skimpy knowledge of what took place in the ancient Near East continues to increase. Archaeology has enriched our knowledge of the world in which the biblical record took place.

Furthermore, it confirms by and large the historicity of the Bible. No longer can secular historians summarily dismiss the Bible as unreliable.

What is the point in all this? First of all, don't get too upset if secular history and secular historians continue to work harder to disprove the biblical record than they do to prove it. Their attempts have not made the Bible less reliable – “holy baloney,” as some would call it. We need never fear that some discovery will produce evidence that negates what the Holy Spirit has so clearly revealed.

For those people who confess that they believe and accept Scripture, accepting as fact what it presents as history, there can be no myths and no folklore in the Bible, only the people as they existed and the events as they happened. If historians should differ with the biblical narrative due to self-imposed ignorance or misguided interpretation of the evidence, then the Holy Spirit leads us to confess that the Bible is still “the truth.” Pastor Ted Gullixson said it so well in the August 1995 issue of the *Lutheran Sentinel*: “The issue again is whether to accept the archaeologist's interpretations of the evidence as the truth, or to trust in the reliability of God's Word . . .”

Every time secular history and archaeology find reasons to agree with the Bible, we should not act surprised. We don't require that support, but it is always nice to have it. It simply backs up what we knew all along. Basing our convictions on our faith in the validity of all Scripture, we can only respond to these discoveries with a loud and hearty: “I told you so!”

Soli Deo Gloria

Biblical Episode	Secular History	Archaeology
Census at the Nativity	Roman references to Augustus' censuses	Actual census records discovered in Egypt
Herod and the Magi	Josephus' court history of Herod; Persian records	Herodian masonry across much of Israel
John the Baptist	Josephus, <i>Antiquities</i> 18:106ff.	Ruins of Herod's Machaerus fortress, where John was killed
Jesus' Galilean Ministry	Josephus' writings about Galilean geography and politics	Synagogue at Capernaum; Peter's House
Sea of Galilee, Boats	Josephus' writings about Galilee	Discovery of the "Galilee Boat"
Samaritan Woman at Well	Josephus' description of Samaria and Samaritans	The actual Jacob's Well near Nablus
Blind Man at the Pool of Siloam	Josephus' description of the Pharisees	The actual Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem
Biblical Sites such as Jericho, Mount of Olives, Gethsemane	Josephus' <i>Antiquities</i> , <i>Jewish War</i> , <i>Vita</i>	Many archaeological and geographical sites identified and intact today
Cleansing of the Temple at Jerusalem	Josephus' <i>Antiquities</i> , <i>Jewish War</i> , <i>Vita</i>	Excavations of Royal Portico of Jerusalem Temple, site of cleansing
Trial of Jesus	Josephus' <i>Antiquities</i> 18:63; Tacitus, <i>Annals</i> 15:44	Ruins of Herod's Palace in Jerusalem, site of the trial
Pontius Pilate	Josephus' <i>Antiquities</i> 18:55ff, <i>Jewish War</i> 2:169ff, Philo, <i>Embassy</i> 3 8; Tacitus, <i>Annals</i> 15:44	The "Pilate" stone and hippodrome at Caesarea
Crucifixion process	Greek, Jewish and Roman historians	Bones of crucified victim discovered at Jerusalem, with nail between wrist bones Excavated theater at Caesarea, referred to in Acts 12:21-23 and Josephus Synagogue stone; $\beta\eta\mu\alpha$ where Paul was judged Acts 18:12,16f, $\mu\alpha\kappa\epsilon\lambda$ on "enclosure, grating" = meat market of I Corinthians 10:25; Erastus' Inscription (cf Romans 16:23)
Death of Herod Agrippa I (cf. Acts 12) Paul at Corinth	Josephus' <i>Antiquities</i> 19:212ff Greco-Roman references to Corinth and Gallio	Theater where silversmiths' riot took place (Acts 19); figurines of Artemis
Paul at Ephesus	Greco-Roman references to Ephesus	Theater where silversmiths' riot took place (Acts 19); figurines of Artemis

APPENDIX #2

A Comparison of the Histories of Tiglath Pileser III and Sargon from the Library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh with the Accounts of the Bible

Tiglath Pileser III

“I received tribute from Menahem of Samaria.”

“I received tribute from Jauhazi [Ahaz] of Judah.”

“I besieged and captured the native city of Reson [Rezin] of Damascus. 800 people with their belongings I led away. Towns in 16 districts of Damascus I laid waste like mounds after the Flood.”

“They overthrew Pekah their king and I made Hoshea to be king over them.”

Sargon

“Ashdod ...I besieged and conquered.”

“And Hezekiah of Judah who had not submitted to my yoke ... him I shut up in Jerusalem his royal city like a caged bird.”

“As for Hezekiah, the splendor of my majesty overwhelmed him ... 30 gold talents ... valuable treasures as well as his daughters, the women of his harem, singers both men and women, he caused to be brought after me to Nineveh. To pay his tribute and to do me homage he sent his envoys.”

The Bible

“Then Pul [Tiglath Pileser] king of Assyria invaded the land, and Menahem gave him a thousand talents of silver gain his support and strengthen his own hold on the kingdom” (2 Kings 15:19).

“Ahaz send messengers to say to Tiglath Pileser king of Assyria, . . . And Ahaz took silver and gold found in the temple of the Lord and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it as a gift to the king of Assyria” (2 Kings 16:7,8).

“The king of Assyria complied by attacking Damascus and capturing it. He deported its inhabitants to Kir and put Rezin to death” (2 Kings 16:9).

“Then Hoshea son of Elah conspired against Pekah son of Remaliah. He attacked and assassinated him, and then succeeded him as king” (2 Kings 15:30).

The Bible

“In the year that the supreme commander, sent by Sargon, king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and attacked and captured it” (Isaiah 20: 1).

“The king of Assyria sent his supreme commander, his chief officer and his field commander with a large army, from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem” (2 Kings 18:17).

“So Hezekiah king of Judah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: ‘I have done wrong. Withdraw from me, and I will pay whatever you demand of me.’ The king of Assyria exacted from Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold” (2 Kings 18:14-15).

APPENDIX #3
A Short List of Magazines
which regularly contain
Articles dealing with Archaeology and the Bible

Archaeology

Address: Subscription Service
P.O. Box 420423
Palm Coast, FL 32142-0423
<http://www.archaeology.org>
Publication Frequency: Bi-monthly
Subscription cost: \$19.97 / year
Published by: Archaeological Institute of America

Archaeology in the Biblical World

Address: 29528 Madera Avenue
Shafter, CA 93263
Publication Frequency: Annually
Subscription cost: \$5.00/year
Published by: Near East Archaeological Society

Bible and Spade

Address: 31 East Frederick Street
Suite 468
Walkersville, MD 21793-8234
<http://www.ChristianAnswers.net/menu-aal.html>
Publication Frequency: Quarterly (with bi-monthly newsletter)
Subscription cost: \$35.00 / year
Published by: Associates for Biblical Research

Bible Review (aka BR)

Address: 4710 41st Street, NW
Washington, DC 20016
Publication Frequency: Bi-monthly
Subscription cost: \$24.00 / year
Published by: Biblical Archaeology Society

Biblical Archaeologist (Near Eastern Archaeology as of March 1998)

Address: Subscriber Services
P.O. Box 15399
Atlanta, GA 30333-0399
Publication Frequency: Quarterly
Subscription cost: \$35.00 / year

Published by: American Schools of Oriental Research

Biblical Archaeology Review

Address: 4710 41st Street, NW
Washington, DC 20016
Publication Frequency: Bi-monthly
Subscription cost: \$27.00 / year
Published by: Biblical Archaeology Society

Biblical Illustrator

Address: 127 Ninth Avenue, North
Nashville, TN 37234
Publication Frequency: Quarterly
Subscription cost: \$20.48 / year
Published by: Southern Baptist Convention

Journal of Near Eastern Studies

Address: 5720 S. Woodlawn Avenue
Chicago, IL 60637
Publication Frequency: Quarterly
Subscription cost: \$42.00 / year
Published by: University of Chicago