

SOME EVIDENCES OF THE HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THE BIBLE¹

(Note: This is a "Working Paper" – Incomplete as of September, 2012)

INTRODUCTION: A well-known pastor has said, "*The Bible is always under attack.*" That has been true in the past and is certainly true today. The purpose of this paper is to show that while liberal scholars in mainline denominations, and proponents from various cults continue to attack the accuracy of Scripture, their attacks are not credible. Truth or error is not determined by majority vote but by an honest evaluation of the facts. I believe that a fair-minded evaluation of the following evidence will demonstrate to the satisfaction of open-minded individuals that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God.

The Bible contains an enormous amount of historical data (names, dates, titles, places, etc.). While liberal scholars and atheists and skeptics of the 19th & 20th century have heaped scorn on the historical accuracy of the Bible, they have had to repeatedly "*eat their words*" during the past 100 years. One highly-respected archaeologist has stated: "*It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted (argued against) a biblical reference.*"² What follows are a few examples of what were once thought to be errors in the Bible, but which now have been shown to be historically accurate! These are from the Old Testament, though I hope to include New Testament examples in the future.

A. Old Testament Accuracy:

1. **Moses & Writing.** Skeptics & liberal theologians used to say that Moses couldn't have written the first five books because supposedly they didn't know about writing in Moses' time. However the liberals have closed their mouth now, since later archaeological discoveries (including Hammurabi's code, the Ebla tablets, etc.) have shown that writing was known, not just in Moses' day, but in Abraham's day, and before!³
2. **Ur of the Chaldees – Gen. 11:28, 31.** Critics used to allege that the city the Bible says Abraham came from never existed. But they have had "eat their words" since a great part of Ur has now been excavated!⁴
3. **The Hittites – Gen. 15:28; Ex. 33:2; etc.** The Bible mentions these people over fifty times, but since no evidence of them had ever been found, skeptics said it was another error (sic) in the Bible. But again it was only a matter of time and patience. Archaeology has now discovered the remains of the Hittite people and has found that they were very significant historically!⁵
4. **The Walls in the City of Pithom in Egypt – Ex. 5:6-19.** This story, often pooh-poohed, states that this city was built through the slave labor of the Jews. According to the Bible, the people were first supplied with straw for their brick making, but later told to find their own straw while maintaining their previous quota of bricks—a task the people eventually found impossible. Halley mentions archaeological evidence for such. "Naville, 1883 and Kyle, 1908, found, at Pithom, the lower courses of brick filled with good chopped straw; the middle courses, with less straw, and that was stubble plucked up by the root; and the upper courses of brick were of pure clay, having no straw whatever. What an amazing confirmation of the Exodus account!"⁶
5. **Belshazzar – Dan. 5:1, 29; etc.** This king is mentioned in the book of Daniel but since no evidence of his existence had ever been found, liberal theologians & skeptics once again declared that he never existed. But...with another hundred years of archaeological research, we now know not only that he lived, but we have the names of "...his secretaries, are introduced to his sisters,

¹ These notes (incomplete at this time -Mar 2011) were compiled by Rev. Mike Edwards, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, West Indies. For additional help see such sources as: "*The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*" by Josh McDowell, "*Heritage of Evidence in the British Museum*," by Peter Masters, the appendix of "*Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*" by Francis Schaeffer & C. Everett Koop, "*The New Testament Documents-Are they Reliable?*" by F.F. Bruce, "*Answering the Tough Ones*" by David Dewitt, "*Reason to Believe*" by R.C. Sproul, "*The Battle for the Bible*" by Harold Lindsell & the writings of other apologists such as Norman Geisler, etc.

² Nelson Gleuck, Jewish archaeologist in his book "*Rivers in the Desert*," quoted in "*Answering the Tough Ones*," David Dewitt, Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 1980, p. 43

³ For further documentation see Josh McDowell, "*Evidence That Demands a Verdict, Vol. 1*" Here's Life Publishers: San Bernardino, CA, 1979 revised edition, p. 68

⁴ W.A. Criswell, "*Why I Preach That the Bible is Literally True.*" Broadman Press: Nashville, TN, 1969, p. 39

⁵ Criswell, op cit., pp. 40-41

⁶ Criswell, op cit., p. 39 & Henry H. Halley, "*Halley's Bible Handbook*," Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, MI, 24th edition, 1959, p. 121; 1965, p. 120

know that he co-reigned with his father Nabonidus, etc."⁷ Furthermore, regarding the story of Daniel being offered the position of "third" in the kingdom (also alleged to be another error, since why wouldn't king Belshazzar offer him the "2nd spot"?), it was later discovered that Belshazzar's father Nabonidus was still alive and reigned in a figurehead position similar to the Chancellor of a university. So "third" in the kingdom was precisely accurate and once again the Bible account was correct-even though historians didn't discover these facts until the 20th century!⁸

6. **Lachish – II Kings 18:13-16; etc.** Lachish is a city "...about 30 miles southwest of Jerusalem. This city is referred to on a number of occasions in the Old Testament...We know so much about Lachish from archaeological studies that a reconstruction of the whole city has been made in detail. This can be seen at the British Museum...There is also a picture made by artists in the eight century before Christ, the Lachish Relief, which was discovered in the city of Nineveh in ancient Assyria. In this picture we can see the Jewish inhabitants of Lachish surrendering to Sennacherib, the king of Assyria. The details in the picture and the Assyrian writing on it give the Assyrian side of what the Bible tells us in Second Kings...We should notice two things about this. **First**, this is a real-life situation- a real siege of a real city with real people on both sides of the war-and it happened at a particular date in history, near the turn of the eight century B.C. **Second**, the two accounts of this incident in 701 B.C....do not contradict, but rather *CONFIRM* each other... [it illustrates] how the Bible can be, and is, confirmed historically even in some of its smaller historical details."⁹

7. **Manuscript Accuracy – The Dead Sea Scrolls.** "The Dead Sea Scrolls, some of which relate to the text of the Bible, were found at Qumran, about fifteen miles from Jerusalem. Most of the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. Many people have been troubled by the length of time that has elapsed between the original writing of the documents and the present translations. *How could the originals be copied from generation to generation and not be grossly distorted in the process?* There is, however, much to reassure confidence in the texts we have. (!)...In the case of the Old Testament, however, there was once a problem. There were no copies of the Hebrew Old Testament in existence which dated from before the ninth century *AFTER* Christ. This did not mean that there was no way to check the Old Testament, for there *WERE* other translations in existence, such as the Syriac and the Septuagint (a translation into Greek dating from approximately two centuries *BEFORE* Christ). However, there was no Hebrew version of the Old Testament from earlier than the ninth century after Christ-because to the Jews the Scripture was so holy it was the common practice to *DESTROY* the copies of the Old Testament when they wore out, so that they would not fall into any disrespectful use. Then, in 1947, a Bedouin Arab made a discovery not far from Qumran which changed everything. While looking for sheep, he came across a cave in which he discovered some earthenware jars containing a number of scrolls...Copies of *ALL* the Old Testament books except Esther have been discovered (in part or complete) among these remains. One of the most dramatic single pieces was a copy of the Book of Isaiah dated approximately a hundred years before Christ. *What was particularly striking about this is the great closeness of the discovered text to the Hebrew text, which we previously had, a text written about a thousand years later!*"¹⁰

8. **DSS – Isaiah 53 specifically.** "For example, we study the copy B of Isaiah. The text is extremely close to our M.T. (Massoretic Text-the 900 A.D. Hebrew text). A comparison of Isaiah 53 shows that only seventeen letters differ...Ten of these are mere differences of spelling, like our 'honor' or 'honour', and make no change at all in meaning. Four more are very minor differences, such as the presence of the conjunction, which is often a matter of style. The other three letters are the Hebrew word for 'light' which is added after 'they shall see' in verse 11. *Out of 166 words in this chapter only the one word is really in question, and it does not at all change the sense of the passage. This is typical of the whole manuscript.* Even the use of vowel letters and the

⁷ Criswell, op cit., p. 41

⁸ Criswell, ibid.

⁹ Francis A. Schaeffer & C. Everett Koop, M.D. "Whatever Happened to the Human Race?" Fleming H. Revell Company: Old Tappan, NJ, 1979, pp. 227-228.

¹⁰ Schaeffer & Koop, ibid, pp. 228-229

preservation of archaic grammatical forms are exceedingly close to the M.T. It is true that the manuscript is not perfect. There are two or three places where the copyist skipped a few words because his eye jumped from one word to one just like it in the line below. This is a frequent error of copying as any typist realizes. Slips like this show that it is wise always to check one copy against another. But the manuscript dating from the first century B.C. is so much like the M.T. that we must MARVEL at the accuracy of the scribes who worked in the succeeding centuries."¹¹

9. **Hezekiah's Tunnel – II Kings 20:20; 19:9-10; etc.** This tunnel has a threefold confirmation from the Jewish side: "...the biblical account, the tunnel itself of which the Bible speaks, and the original stone with its inscription in classical Hebrew (In 1880 an Arab boy discovered the tunnel which had a stone in the wall describing how it was built). From the Assyrian side, there is additional confirmation of the incidents mentioned in the Bible. There is a clay prism in the British Museum called the Taylor Prism...It is only fifteen inches high and was discovered in the Assyrian palace at Nineveh. This particular prism dates from about 691 B.C. and tells about Sennacherib's exploits. A section from the prism reads, 'As for Hezekiah, the Jew, ...himself like a caged bird, I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city...Thus there is a three-way confirmation concerning Hezekiah's tunnel from the Hebrew side and this amazing confirmation from the Assyrian side."¹²

"There is also confirmation of what the Bible says concerning the Egyptian King Tirhakah who came up to oppose the Assyrians. Confirmation of his reality is typified by a sphinx-ram in the British Museum...The Bible says that when Sennacherib heard that Tirhakah, king of Egypt, was coming to fight against him, he sent messengers to tell Hezekiah that help from Egypt would be of no use to him (II Kings 19:9-10 & Isa. 37:9-10). "The date of Sennacherib's campaign in Palestine in 701 B.C. and something which has often puzzled historians is the role of Tirhakah, who was not king of Egypt and Ethiopia until 690 B.C. But the solution to this problem is simple. In 701 B.C. Tirhakah was only a prince at the side of his military brother, the new Pharaoh Shebitku, who sent Tirhakah with an army to help Hezekiah fend off the Assyrian advance. But the story in Kings and Isaiah does not end in 701 B.C. It carries right through to the death of Sennacherib in 681 B.C., which is nine years after Tirhakah had become king of Egypt and Ethiopia. In other words the biblical narrative, from the standpoint of 681 B.C., mentions Tirhakah by the title he bore at that time...not as he was in 701 B.C. This is still done today, using a man's title as he is known at the time of writing even if one is speaking of a previous time in his personal history.

"Unaware of the importance of these facts, and falling into wrong interpretations of some of Tirhakah's inscriptions, some Old Testament scholars have stumbled over each other in their eagerness to diagnose historical errors in the Books of Kings and Isaiah. But as the archaeological confirmation shows, they were quite mistaken."¹³ **Important note from Schaeffer & Koop:** "*We do not have confirmation of every single detail in the biblical account, by any means. Nor do we need such total confirmation in view of the amount of evidence there is. To insist on confirmation at every point would be to treat the Bible in a prejudiced way, simply because it is the Bible*"¹⁴. The fact that it is a religious book does not mean that it cannot also be true when it deals with history."¹⁵

10. **The Ration Tablets of Jehoiachin (Zedekiah) – II Kings 24:10-12, 17; 25:27-30.** After the northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed, the southern kingdom continued for another 150 years and endured the assaults of Sennacherib & Assyria, and later & Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar eventually overpowered Jerusalem and deported people from it in three stages in 606 B.C., 597 B.C., & 586 B.C. After the first siege, Nebuchadnezzar installed a "puppet" Jewish government with Jehoiakim as leader. After three years he rebelled (thinking he could break loose since Egypt

¹¹ Howard F. Vos editor. "Can I Trust the Bible?" Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 1963, p. 124 (article by R. Laird Harris).

¹² Schaeffer & Koop, op cit., pp. 230-231

¹³ Above paragraphs, Schaeffer & Koop, ibid.

¹⁴ This highlights the fallacy of atheist Carl Sagan's oft-quoted but incorrect statement, "Extraordinary claims demand extraordinary evidence." No they don't! Extraordinary claims, stories, or miracles simply demand solid, credible evidence. One doesn't have to provide 40-50 witnesses to convict a murderer. Two eye-witnesses will normally be more than enough. For the resurrection we have over 500!

¹⁵ Schaeffer & Koop, ibid.

and Babylon had weakened each other in various battles). It was a big mistake of judgment, and when Babylon came back again, Jehoiakim had died and unfortunately his son Jehoiachin had inherited the mess, and was there to receive the retribution for his father's rebellion. Jehoiachin was taken captive to Babylon and the Bible record says he was fed rations (an allowance) at the king's table. "The records of these allowances (rations) referred to in the Bible were unearthed in excavations in Babylon in basement storerooms of the royal palace (in Staat-Liches Museum, East Berlin, Vorderas Abteilung; Babylon 28122 and 28126). These are known as the 'ration tablets' and they record who received such 'rations.' In these, Jehoiachin is mentioned by name.

(!)¹⁶

Archaeologists have also now found Ostraca (broken pieces of pottery that have writing on them) dealing with Nebuchadnezzar's first campaign, in the ruins of Lachish (currently in the Palestinian Archaeological Museum, Jerusalem). "In Ostracon VI, the princes are accused of 'weakening our hands'(i.e. discouraging the writers) which is the VERY PHRASEOLOGY used in the Bible by the Judean princes against Jeremiah. Also, the use of fire beacons for signaling is found in both Ostracon I and Jeremiah 6:1, each using the same terminology...These events took place around the year 600 B.C. Events we considered earlier in relation to the capture of Lachish by Sennacherib during the reign of Hezekiah were around the year 700 B.C."¹⁷

11. **Ahab and his House of Ivory, stables, etc. – I Kings 22:39; etc.** "Other archaeological confirmation exists for the time of Ahab. Excavations at Hazor and Megiddo have given evidence of the extent of fortifications carried out by Ahab. At Megiddo, in particular, Ahab's works were very extensive, including a large series of stables formerly assigned to Solomon's time...On the political front, Ahab had to contend with danger from the Aramaeans just to the north (present-day Syria). Beh-hadad is named in I Kings 20:1 as the king of Syria who besieged Samaria, Ahab's capital. Beh-hadad's existence is attested by a stela (a column with writing on it) which has been discovered with his name written on it (Melquart Stela, Aleppo Museum, Syria). Again, a detail of history given in the Bible is shown to be correct."¹⁸

12. **Solomon's Wealth – I Kings 10:14-17.** "Solomon is remembered also for his great wealth...This wealth that the Bible speaks of has been challenged. Surely, some have said, these figures are an exaggeration. Excavations, however, have confirmed enormous quantities of precious metals, owned and distributed by kings during this period. For example, Shishak's son Osorkon I (statuette of Osorkon I, Brooklyn Museum, New York), the one who stood to gain from the booty carried off from Rehoboam's capital, is reported to have made donations to his god Amon totaling 470 tons of precious metal, gold, and silver, during only the first 4 years of his reign. This, of course, is much more than Solomon's 666 talents which equal approximately 20 tons of gold per annum. We also have confirmation of the Bible's reference to Solomon's gold as coming from Ophir. The location of Ophir is still unknown, but an ostracon dated a little later than Solomon's time actually mentions that 30 shekels of gold had come from Ophir for Beth-horon.

"So the story goes on. We have stopped at only a few incidents in the sweep back to the year 1000 B.C. What we hope has emerged from this is a sense of the historical reliability of the Bible's text. When the Bible refers to historical incidents, it is speaking about the same sort of 'history' that historians examine elsewhere in other cultures and periods...Of course, not all the incidents, individuals, and places have been confirmed, but the tide of archaeological discoveries in the past hundred years has swept away the possibility of a naive skepticism about the Bible's history." (Ibid, p. 236)

(Incomplete at this time—Feb 2011)

¹⁶ Schaeffer & Koop, *ibid*, p. 232

¹⁷ Schaeffer & Koop, *ibid*, pp. 232-233

¹⁸ Schaeffer & Koop, *ibid*, p. 234