

# The Bible Was Right

(by Bob Pulliam)

Scholars and other Bible critics have often attacked the accuracy of the Bible. For them, the Bible is guilty until proven innocent, and their half-baked claims expose this attitude in them. When they do this, however, they find later that the Bible was correct. Do you hear much about this? No, you won't from most sources. But they are important testimonies to the wisdom and accuracy of the Bible.

## ***The Tower of Babel...***

The account of the tower of Babel is one of the best known in the Bible. The location of Babel seems to have been the ancient city we know as Babylon (although this is argued over by many scholars). The name in its original language (Akkadian) meant "the gate of God" (in Hebrew it means "confusion"). This ties together quite well with the statement made by the people in the account: "let us build for ourselves a city and a tower whose top will reach into heaven" (Gen 11:4).

Now let me call your attention to the mortar that was used in this tower. Such a very small point in the account. Several old versions use the word "slime" (11:3) for that which was utilized for mortar. The actual Hebrew word used by Moses here means "bitumen, or asphalt". At the time that earlier versions (e.g. King James, American Standard) were translated, it was thought that the ancient people had no way of obtaining enough bitumen for such an extensive project. To correct the "obvious mistake," the translators rendered the word as "slime". But the mistake was soon to be seen as being in the translator's knowledge. Extensive excavations in Mesopotamia has uncovered several temple towers (known as ziggurats) that were constructed from kiln-dried bricks and bitumen (for mortar). These towers date back to about the time of the tower of Babel. Here's an example of the veracity of God's word, and how it can be trusted the way God gave it.

## ***Abraham and Hagar...***

Many of the Old Testament customs seem odd to us. One such custom is Abraham's taking his wife's handmaid to bear children (Gen 16:1 - 4). In days gone by, Bible believers taught that this was a common custom of that day. The basis for this assertion was that the Bible mentions other cases of such (e.g. Gen 30:1 - 13). Those who didn't believe the Bible record scoffed at such "nonsense". The past several decades have changed this, and have even seen the verification of such incidents as those recorded in Genesis 16:1 - 4 and 30:1 - 13.

The importance of the family inheritance and having an heir is verified in thousands of documents from this period of time. These archaeological documents (e.g. ancient Nuzi texts, discovered 1925 to 1931) exhibit the legalities that were involved in inheriting family possessions, and what was done when there was no heir. These ancient documents reveal four courses of legal action that could be taken in the event that there was no heir. They were:

- Adoption
- Marry another wife (keeping the first),

- Obtain a concubine,
- Wife could provide one of her own slave girls to her husband.

It was quite common for individuals to adopt slaves as heirs. "Eliezer of Damascus" is undoubtedly a case in point (Gen 15:2f). When a case like that given in Genesis 16 occurred, the son automatically became heir (Ishmael). If the couple (in this case Abram and Sarai) ended up having a child after the concubine or slave had theirs, the inheritance would automatically go to the child born to that couple (in this case Isaac). It is also interesting to note the fact that great lengths were taken to protect the rights of the concubine or slave who bore a child (in our case, Hagar). Kicking out the servant and her child could bring stiff legal action against a man by the offended party. This might further explain Abraham's reluctance at sending Hagar away (Gen 21:8 - 14), and the necessity of the divine message to do so (v12). The "experts" can't thumb their nose at Abraham and Hagar anymore. Archaeology has confirmed what the Bible believer knew all along!

### ***People and Cities...***

One of the amazing aspects of the Bible can be found in it's accuracy regarding ancient cities. Some of these cities have been continually occupied by man down to the present. Haran is a good example of a city whose location has never been lost. The city of Nahor (24:10) is mentioned in several ancient documents (e.g. Mari and Cappadocian texts). These place it in the district of Haran (Gen 24:10; 28:10 & 29:4). Do the names in Genesis seem too strange to be true? Several cities mentioned in ancient texts have the same names as Bible characters in Genesis. We have already noted Haran and Nahor; but Terah and Serug are also good examples. This is not to say that the cities mentioned in these documents were necessarily founded by the Bible characters. However; it does point out (from secular sources) the wide use of these same names during this period. Think about that the next time you laugh at one of those funny names. They may seem unlikely to some; but archaeology has found those same names to have been common in that day.

### ***Missing Nations & Cities...***

Up until around 1900, there was no verification of the existence of a people known as "Hittites" outside of the Bible. This allowed some Bible critics to ridicule the idea of such a missing people ever existing. According to them, the Bible contained a fairy-tale people, and therefore could not be trusted. In 1906, thousands of text fragments (Hittite and Akkadian) were found in an ancient capital of the Hittites. The Hittites are now a part of history, and you can get a degree in Hittite civilization from the University of Pennsylvania.

The city of Ur was another "Bible fancy" that critics loved to ridicule. It had not been found, and would never be found. Sir Leonard Woolley began excavating Tell el-Muqayyar around 1922. There has been much found at the site leading to the conclusion that the site was once the city of Ur. The level of the city from Abram's time had tombs, town drains, a large temple tower, two-story houses, showed signs of government and extensive trade with large cities in the region. Archaeologists describe this city, which is claimed to be Ur, as having been a highly developed civilization.

### ***The Law of Moses...***

The nineteenth century saw it's share of critics who tried to thoroughly undermine the Bible in every way. One attack was against the law of Moses, and even Moses himself. It was surmised that the law was a later invention and that Moses was mostly a legend. The law of

Moses was much too complex for its supposed period of time, therefore it was created later. Such a charge assumes that God was not behind the law of Moses to begin with. How is it that God would be limited to the progress of the day. That would be tantamount to saying that God could not have brought about the miraculous because man cannot do so.

Excavations have since shown that other civilizations of that day also had highly developed law codes. Does this convince the critic of his error? No; now the Israelites are simply one among many. But there is one thing that Israel had in their law that the other nations did not. The extensive laws regarding quarantine, health and sanitation have no rival in ancient law codes. And every precept that seems strange or foolish had its purpose for folks who did not have antibiotics or means of immunization. The truth of this became clear in southern Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as Leprosy swept the region. Control was only achieved when the applicable portions of the law of Moses were enforced. Remember that when you read the law of Moses and wonder why it is so laborious and meticulous.

### ***The Last King of Babylon...***

Everyone knew that Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon; but the book of Daniel indicated the Belshazzar was. The critic was quick to claim that Belshazzar was a fictitious character, and that the Bible unworthy of trust. As it happens so often, the critic would be proven the fool. Not only was a character named Belshazzar found in ancient cuneiform writings, he turned out to be the son of Nabonidus, king of Babylon.

Now if Daniel is to be understood as correct, we will need to find at least three years in history during which Belshazzar reigned (Dan 8:1). Three years may be found in the ninth through eleventh years of his father's reign. During that time, Nabonidus went on a building campaign and entrusted the throne to his son Belshazzar. It would seem that Nabonidus established his residence at Tema during this period. Did Belshazzar ever hold the throne? He sure did!

Indication of this can actually be found in the book of Daniel. When Belshazzar offers a reward to whoever can read the writing on the wall, he does not offer to make him the second ruler in the kingdom (Dan 5:7, 29). He offers to make him third ruler in the kingdom? Why "third"? The queen did not have a right to accession, so she isn't the second. Who was second ruler? The answer is simple. Belshazzar was second. His father, Nabonidus was first, he was second, and the next open position was third ruler.

### ***Conclusion...***

Archaeology has never dug up a single thing to contradict or disavow anything in or about the Bible. The centuries have seen countless attacks against the Bible by men of outstanding academic credentials. The outcome is always the same. The Bible weathers all time, and every attack. It can do so for only one reason: It is the word of God, the truth. Just as was written so long ago:

"All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever." (I Pt 1:24f)