

Chapter 6: The Israelites enter Canaan; the kingdom of Israel.

“Welcome back boys!” Professor Ho smiled happily across his paper strewn desk as Xiao Wang and Xiao Li came in. “Did you bring your life preservers? We’re going to cross the Jordan River today, and it’s in flood stage!”

“We shouldn’t need them if the water stops!” Xiao Wang bantered back.

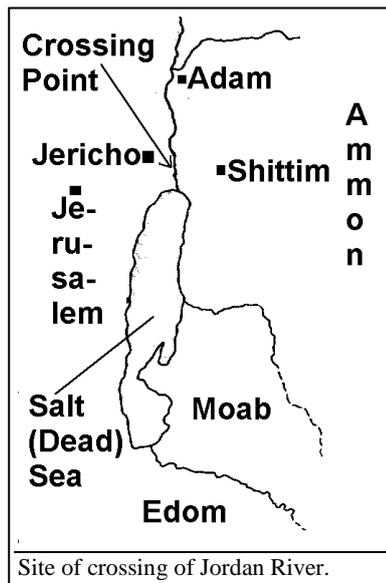
“True enough! True enough!” Professor laughed. “So you read on into the book of Joshua?”

“Yes,” nodded Xiao Wang, “and on into the books of Samuel and Kings as well.”

“Excellent! Then we’ll be able to start looking at specific archaeological findings. But first we need to get into Canaan.”

[Here read Joshua chapter 3-4.]

Crossing the Jordan River



Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you. . . . Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan. . . . It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap."

So when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant before the people, and when those who carried the ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest), the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho. . . . It came about when the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come up from the middle of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up to the dry ground, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place, and went over all its banks as before. (Joshua 3:5, 11, 13-16; 4:18 NAS)

“This event occurred sometime between March 21 and April 21 (Joshua 4:19). The Jordan River is at flood stage in the spring, roughly late March to early May. At that time of year the river would have been about 200 meters to as much as a kilometer and a half wide, depending on the exact location.^{1,2} There was no way for the Israelites to cross then with their children, cattle and possessions. The temporary stopping of the river was revealed to Joshua before it happened and he predicted it to the people so they were prepared to cross.

“Just as in the crossing of the Red Sea the record specifies a wind, the geographically and historically accurate account of the crossing of the Jordan specifies what happened to the water: it was piled up at the city of Adam, about 25 kilometers north of where the Israelites crossed. This dried out the riverbed in front of them. After the Israelites crossed, the water flow resumed and the river rose back to its flood stage height.

“Many scholars have pointed out that the Bible’s record precisely fits the geography and geology of the area.” Professor Ho turned and pulled down a paperback from one of his bookshelves and flipped it open. “Let’s look at the analysis of two professional archaeologists:”

An examination of Scripture shows that the waters of the Jordan were stopped in the vicinity of the cities of Adam and Zarethan (Joshua 3:16). The location of the city of Adam is marked by the present site of Damieh, some 16 miles [25 kilometers] north of Jericho. . . .

It has been suggested that God may have used an earthquake to cause a landslide to stop the Jordan River. . . .

At Damieh, the site of Adam, there are high banks that, when broken loose in a landslide, block the water. Such a blocking of the Jordan occurred in the year 1267 AD, when a lofty mound overlooking the river on the west fell into it and dammed it up for sixteen hours. There was a similar occurrence in 1927, when [due to an earthquake] a section of the cliff 150 feet high fell into the Jordan and blocked the water for twenty-one and a half hours. Whether God used an earthquake to effect a landslide to block the Jordan cannot be proved. It is certain, however, that at precisely the right time he caused the Jordan to cease flowing so that Israel could cross the river. The miracle would then be in timing rather than in the means of accomplishing God’s purposes.³

Thus we find the Bible records that the water of the Jordan was stopped precisely where landslides are known to dam the river. The stoppage continued for less than a day, just as it did in 1267 AD and 1927 AD. Furthermore, the Jordan valley is one of the world’s great fault zones, part of the Great Rift Valley fault that extends down into Africa. Earthquakes, such as the one which caused the landslide and river damming of 1927, are common there. Once again, the

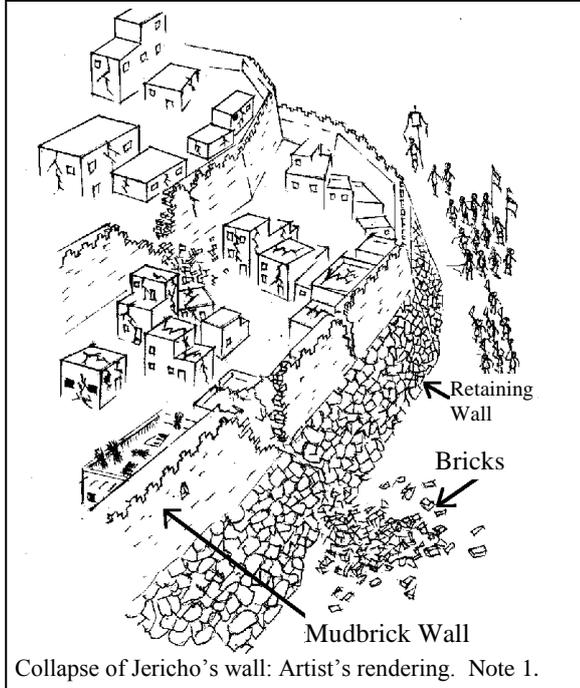
Biblical record fits a scientific and historical analysis of the phenomenon.”

“So do you think there’s any miracle at all here?” Xiao Li asked.

This time it was Xiao Wang who answered him. “That’s obvious! Don’t you remember from the ten plagues? The Jordan stopping was predicted before it happened!”

Professor Ho nodded in agreement. “At least that much was miraculous. The timing of this event was incredibly precise! Remember, it would have been an hour or more after the water was blocked at Adam before it began to recede 25 kilometers further south, where the Israelites were.

“Picture the scene as I understand it. The priests carrying the ark are walking straight toward the swollen river. The people are spread out on the plain behind them, ready to move, watching from a distance of 2,000 cubits, about a kilometer. The soles of the feet of the lead priests touch the edge of the water—and the river recedes a little. They put the next foot out to take the next step—and the river recedes further. Step by step they advance toward the middle of the



river, and the river shrinks away before them, until finally the whole course is dry and no more water is flowing down from the north. Who could have known what had happened a couple of hours earlier 25 kilometers away at Adam? There were no cell phones in those days! And in any case, Joshua had prepared everybody the day before.

“I’m not sure God used a landslide to dam the river. He could have stopped it for as long as He chose with just a word. But I am sure that the history recorded in the book of Joshua is completely reasonable and completely possible. It’s not like mythological legends.”

The conquest of Jericho

[Here read Joshua chapters 2 and 6.]

“Shortly after crossing the Jordan, the Israelites conquered the city of Jericho. This is one of the most famous stories in the Bible: the walls of the city collapsed after the Israelites had marched around them for seven days.”

Xiao Wang looked thoughtful. “I read that section. Before I would have written something like that off as a myth. But I’m starting to respect the Bible’s historicity. Do you have an explanation for it, Professor Ho?”

“It certainly could have been a providentially timed earthquake that caused the walls to fall. Many have suggested that.” Here Professor Ho smiled brightly. “But I have something better than an explanation. I have archaeological evidence for the event. First let’s review some of the details:

2:15 Then she [Rahab] let them [two spies from Israel] down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall. (Joshua 2:15 NAS)

6:15 Then on the seventh day they [the Israelites] rose early at the dawning of the day and marched around the city in the same manner seven times; only on that day they marched around the city seven times. 16 At the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city. 17 "The city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the LORD; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. 18 "But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, so that you do not covet them and take some of the things under the ban, and make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it. 19 "But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD." 20 So the people shouted, and priests blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city. 21 They utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword. 22 Joshua said to the two men who had spied



Houses found along the edge of the retaining wall during the 1907-1911 excavations. This fits the Bible’s description of the positioning of Rahab’s house. Note 1.

out the land, "Go into the harlot's house and bring the woman and all she has out of there, as you have sworn to her." 23 So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives and placed them outside the camp of Israel. 24 They burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold, and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. 25 However, Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho. (Joshua 6:15-25 NAS)

Note some of the specific details recorded here:

1. It was harvest time (Joshua 3:15).
2. There were houses along Jericho's wall (Joshua 2:15).
3. The city wall fell down flat all around its length in such a way that all of the surrounding Israelites could walk directly up into the city. (Joshua 6:20).
4. The city was burned (Joshua 6:24).
5. Aside from metals, the Israelites did not take any valuable items (Joshua 6:17-19, 24).

"Each one of these details have been confirmed by archaeology. The mound of ancient Jericho has been partially excavated several times in the past 100 years. We quote the conclusion of Dr. Bryant G. Woods, a professional archaeologist who is an expert on Jericho:

After the seventh trip around the city on the seventh day, Scripture tells us that the wall 'fell down flat' (Joshua 6:20). The Hebrew here carries the suggestion that it 'fell beneath itself.' Is there evidence for such an event at Jericho? It turns out that there is ample evidence that the mudbrick city wall collapsed and was deposited at the base of the stone retaining wall at the time the city met its end.

Kenyon's work [in the 1950's] was the most detailed. On the west side of the tell, at the base of the retaining, or revetment, wall, she found,

'fallen red bricks piling nearly to the top of the revetment. These probably came from the wall on the summit of the bank [and/or] ... the brickwork above the revetment.'

In other words, she found *a heap of bricks from the fallen city walls!* An Italian team excavating at the southern end of the mound in 1997 found exactly the same thing.

According to the Bible, Rahab's house was incorporated into the fortification system (Joshua 2:15). If the walls fell, how was her house spared? As you recall, the spies had instructed Rahab to bring her family into her house and they would be rescued. When the Israelites stormed the city, Rahab and her family were saved as promised (Joshua 2:12-21; 6:17, 22-23). At the north end of the tell of Jericho, archaeologists made some astounding discoveries that seem to relate to Rahab.

The German excavation of 1907–1909 found that on the north a short stretch of the lower city wall did not fall as everywhere else. A portion of that mudbrick wall was still standing to a height of over two meters (eight feet). What is more, there were houses built against the wall! It is quite possible that this is where Rahab's house was. Since the city wall formed the back wall of the houses, the spies could have readily escaped. ...

Both Garstang [excavating in the 1930's] and Kenyon [excavating in the 1950's] found many storage jars full of grain that had been caught in the fiery destruction. This is a unique find in the annals of archaeology. Grain was valuable, not only as a source of food, but also as a commodity which could be bartered. Under normal circumstances, valuables such as grain would have been plundered by the conquerors. Why was the grain left at Jericho? The Bible provides the answer. Joshua commanded the Israelites that the city and all that is in it were to be dedicated to the Lord (Joshua 6:17 lit. Heb.).

The grain left at Jericho and found by archaeologists in modern times gives graphic testimony to the obedience of the Israelites nearly three-and-a-half millennia ago.⁴

Professor Ho looked up at the boys over the top of his bifocals. "I can hardly think of a more complete confirmation from archaeology, especially for such an early event.



One of the jars filled with charred grain found at Jericho. Note 1.

“Consider especially the state of the walls the archaeologists found. The bricks fell out away from the city, unlike the usual circumstances when an attacking army breaks down the walls and they fall into the city. Moreover, virtually all of the wall fell. An invading army would only break down a wall at one or two points. Let me show you the detailed diagrams from the 1950s excavations.”⁵ Professor Ho stood up and quickly retrieved a journal from his bookshelves. “The yellow is an embankment built by the people of Jericho. To keep it in place, it was faced with a stone retaining wall, shown in black, the way we in Guangdong sometimes face hillsides with stone or concrete to prevent landslides. The retaining wall originally had a reddish brick city wall on top of it—but as you see in the diagram, all of the bricks have fallen down in front of the retaining wall, just as the Bible’s record indicates. This pile of bricks would have formed a ramp, allowing the Israelites to go ‘up into the city, every man straight ahead,’ as Joshua 6:20 records.”

“Consider another detail, a smaller one, which confirms the Biblical record. Both the 1930s and the 1950s excavations found storage jars filled with grain. As Dr. Woods mentioned, this is an exceptionally rare find in archaeology because grain was so valuable. In many ways it was better than gold or silver, because you could both use grain to buy things and to eat. The record in Joshua explains why the grain was left behind—the Israelites were forbidden take it (Joshua 6:18, 24). But the grain also confirms two other facts in the Bible’s account: the time of year of the conquest and the method used. Full storage jars indicate that grain had just been harvested, as Joshua 3:15 indicates. They also indicate that the city fell quickly, since the besieged inhabitants had not eaten their way through much of the grain. The normal procedure of, say, the Egyptians at that time was to attack just *before* the harvest, when grain stores were at their lowest. Furthermore, they commonly used starvation sieges lasting months or even years. A full grain supply indicates that Jericho fell quickly, just as the Biblical indicates.”⁶

“The archaeologists also found that the city had been completely burned, as the book of Joshua records.

“Finally, even the minor detail that the city wall had houses built up against it has been confirmed by the archaeologists. The houses against the wall apparently comprised a poor district of the city, since most of them had walls only one brick thick.”⁷

When did it happen?

“Professor Ho, the correspondence between the findings at Jericho and the Bible’s record is impressive,” Xiao Wang agreed. “But the diagrams here show it was occupied during time periods before and after the layer with the fallen wall. How do you know that layer came from the time of Joshua?”

“A good question!” Professor Ho replied enthusiastically.

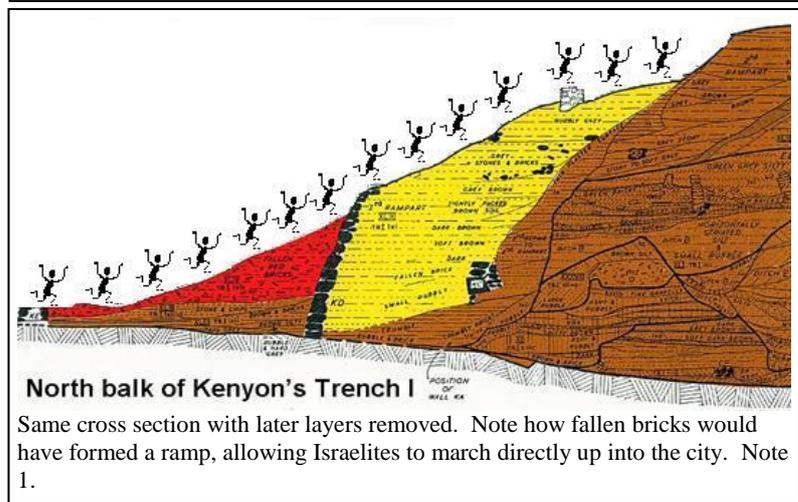
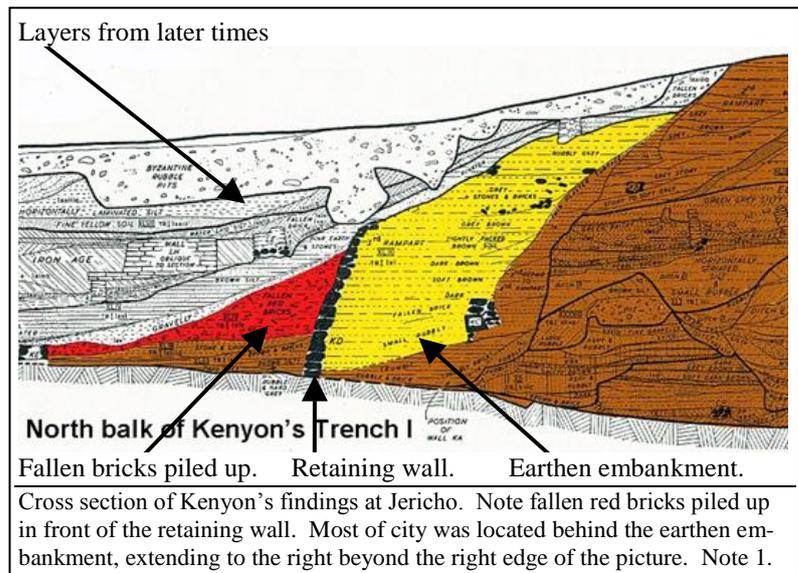
“You always say that!”

“That’s because, my young friend, I doubted and asked every question you’re asking long before you did! I respect your desire to find the truth.

“The most reliable and widely used method of dating artifacts from the Ancient Near East is through pottery chronology. Pottery styles and colors changed through time in given areas. At some periods, major pottery producing locations developed distinctive products which were exported throughout the near eastern region.

“The 1930s excavator, Garstang, dated the destruction of the city to c.1400 BC, which fits with our best estimates of when Joshua conquered the city according to the Bible. The 1950s excavator, Kenyon, revised the date to c.1550 BC. Apparently, however, she overlooked some important pottery.”⁸ When Wood reexamined all the archaeological findings, including Egyptian scarab seals, he was able to confidently date the destruction to c.1400 BC.”

“Are there any other ways to date it?” asked Xiao Li.





Bichrome pottery believed to have originated in the relevant layer at Jericho which helps to establish the date of the destruction of the city.
Note 1.

“You can always try carbon 14,” Professor Ho said with a laugh. “They did some.”

“So did the carbon 14 dates agree with the 1400 BC date?” Xiao Wang asked. Xiao Wang wasn’t really confident in carbon 14 anymore, but he always wanted the details.

“Yes—and then, later, no! The first carbon 14 dating actually did come out to c.1400 BC—but later it was said to have been an error and revised to an earlier date. You recall we saw those kinds of shifts when we discussed carbon 14 earlier. [See chapter 3.] Since 1990, a wide range of carbon 14 dates have been published for the site, but most of them are 100-150 years earlier than 1400 BC. Believe it or not, for me those ‘too early’ carbon 14 dates provide additional confirmation that it really did happen in 1400 BC.”

Both boys were surprised. “Why?” Xiao Li

asked.

“Because the carbon 14 dates for that period in the ancient near east are known to be consistently too old! Dr. Wood pointed this out:

My dating of the destruction of Jericho to ca. 1400 BC is based on pottery, which, in turn, is based on Egyptian chronology. Jericho is just one example of the discrepancy between historical and C14 dates for the second millennium BC. C14 dates are consistently 100–150 years earlier than historical dates. There is a heated debate going on among scholars concerning this...⁹

I think it’s safe to say that, in general, an archaeologist would not allow a carbon 14 date to ‘trump’ a dating based on pottery chronology and other factors.”

“But Dr. Wood is a believer,” Xiao Wang objected. “Couldn’t he be biased?”

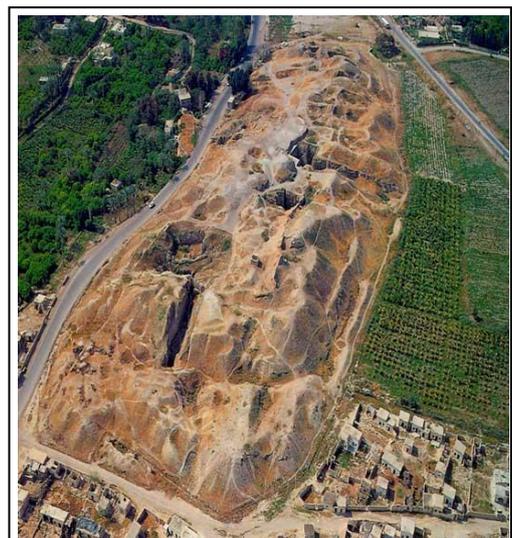
“Certainly not any more biased than the unbelieving scholars who are devoted to denying the historicity of the Bible! But actually the carbon-14 controversy is raging throughout the field.^A Consider the testimony of Manfred Bietak, one of the world’s premier Egyptologists. As far as I know, he’s not a believer.

It is well known that 14C [carbon-14 dating] is about 50-100 years higher than the historical dates of the New Kingdom [of Egypt, c.1550-c.1050] that, for the time being, leave only little scope for discussion. As a result, at the present stage of research, it seems wise not to mix historical with radiocarbon chronology, but to use them in opposition to each other until such time as the phenomenon of divergence can be better understood and explained.¹⁰

So you see boys, it’s not just the Christian scholars who recognize this phenomenon. The ‘too old’ carbon 14 dates, far from being a problem, might even be some additional evidence that Jericho fell in c.1400 BC.”

“This reminds me of an instructive historical footnote. In the mid-19th century, one of the objections raised against the accuracy of the book of Joshua was ‘the city of Jericho was doubtless too big for so many Israelites to circle it seven times in one day.’ It seems ridiculous to us now, but this was before Biblical archaeology had developed very far. Now of course we know that the circumference of the city was about a kilometer. If for safety’s sake the Israelites walked some distance from the city wall, their journey would have been a mere two kilometers. One the final day, when they circled it seven times, they would have walked about 14 kilometers. Thus it has long been proven that the ‘scholars’ who criticized the accuracy of the Biblical record on this point were mistaken.

“You might think that’s an old and obscure objection. But it was the ‘scholarly wisdom’ of it’s day! Such ideas were part of why people like Marx rejected the factuality of the Bible. This leaves us a lesson, a warning. When unbelieving scholars deny the historicity of the Bible, it’s almost always based on jumping to erroneous conclusions due to a lack of information. When more information becomes available, their objections fall apart. It’s happened again and again for 200 years. The same thing will happen to many of the so-called ‘scholarly’ objections



Ariel view of the mound of ancient Jericho.
Note 1.

^A For an example of the controversy, consult the scholarly literature on the dating of the Santorini / Thera volcanic eruption.

that are being raised now.

“As for me, when I saw the testimony of archaeology, I was convinced of the accuracy of the historical record in Joshua.”

The destruction of Jericho: Was it just? Was it loving?

“I’m convinced it happened just as the Bible says,” affirmed Xiao Li, “but that’s just what bothers me. Why did God tell them to kill everyone? I know you’ll say to me that He has the right to decide when anyone’s life ends, and I agree. But it was the Israelites who did the killing. And besides that, didn’t God love the people of Jericho? This seems different from the death of the firstborn. The people in Jericho didn’t have a chance!”

Xiao Wang agreed. “It seems downright bloodthirsty and barbaric. I’d rather be an atheist than follow that kind of God!”

Professor Ho nodded. “I used to be very bothered by it too when I read it. So I guess we’re all in agreement! But as I came to understand things better, I realized I had had some misunderstandings.

1. I didn’t understand the reason why God punished these people.
2. I didn’t understand the opportunity they had to escape the punishment.
3. I didn’t understand what God was trying to teach us through this event.

1: Why God punished the people of Jericho

“First we need to understand better who the people of Jericho were. The historical records from outside the Bible testify that the Canaanite city-states were constantly at war with one another to obtain territory and plunder. It was so bad that the Israelites at first weren’t willing to even go there because they expected to be wiped out in war. [See Numbers 13:28-33.] But far worse than their aggressive warfare was their society’s moral depravity and cruelty. Leviticus chapter 18 records that they committed every form of incest, bestiality and perversion, and, worse than that, infanticide as a form of religious worship:

21 'You shall not give any of your offspring to offer them to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the LORD. ... 24 Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled. 25 For the land has become defiled, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants.' (Leviticus 18:21, 24-25 NAS)

Infants offered to Molech were burned alive as sacrifices to the idol. This was a regular part of the lives of the people of Canaan.

“God not only has the authority to end a human life, He also has the authority to commission human beings to carry out punishment. He gave all humans a general standing order to execute murderers in Genesis 9:6: ‘Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.’ [See chapter 3.] And He gave a special, limited order to the Israelites to kill everyone in Jericho. He wanted their entire society to come to an end, because it’s depravity had reached an intolerable degree. Years before He had predicted to Abraham that it would come to this:

7 And [God] said to [Abraham], "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it." ... 13 God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. 14 But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. ... 16 Then...they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete." (Genesis 15:7, 13-14, 16 NAS)

God did not allow Abraham to dispossess the Canaanites and take over the land then because the Canaanites’ average morality had not yet sunk to a level that God felt warranted their destruction. By Joshua’s day, God had decided they’d forfeited their right to live and He assigned the job of removing them to the Israelites.

“God had another reason for removing the Canaanites. He knew that if they were allowed to continuing living and propagating their culture, the Israelites living among them would be influenced:

"But you shall utterly destroy them...as the LORD your God has commanded you, 18 so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the LORD your God. (Deuteronomy 20:17-18 NAS)

Humanity’s natural moral tendency is downwards! Living among the Canaanites, the Israelites would interact and intermarry with them, and inevitably be dragged down into their pagan religion and sinful lifestyles. That in fact is what *did* happen, because the Israelites did not obey God and completely drive out the Canaanites. As a result, they often worshipped their idols and some Israelite kings even burned their children as sacrifices to Canaanite gods. Therefore God punished the Israelites just as He had the Canaanites, including by near extinction in 586 BC. [See chapter 8.] God is not partial in His justice!”

“God seems so harsh in the Old Testament!” complained Xiao Wang.

“God didn’t give the Israelites the right to kill any enemy they chose. Even during the Old Testament, the Israelites understood that they did not have the right to indiscriminately kill captive enemy soldiers—much less civilians:

Then the king of Israel when he saw them [captive enemy soldiers], said to Elisha, "My father, shall I kill

them? Shall I kill them?" He answered, "You shall not kill them. Would you kill those you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink..." (2Kings 6:21-22 NAS)

Actually, even the command to love your enemy is in the Old Testament:

If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying helpless under its load, you shall refrain from leaving it to him, you shall surely release it with him. (Exodus 23:4-5 NAS)

"What about the children in Jericho?" Xiao Wang asked.

"You remember we talked about this when we discussed Noah's flood and the death of the Egyptian firstborn," Professor Ho replied gravely. [See chapters 3 and 5]. "God has the unilateral authority to decide when anyone will die—even a child. He didn't let the Israelites decide to kill the children. And remember, physical death isn't really the punishment for sin—it's a consequence of the Fall of Man which comes to everyone."

2: The people of Jericho had a chance to escape judgment

"But why didn't God give the people of Jericho a chance to repent, like He gave to the Egyptians?" Xiao Li wondered.

"He did!" replied Professor Ho immediately. "But only one family took it. That was the second thing I didn't understand when I first read the book of Joshua.

"Everyone in Jericho knew about Yahweh, the Exodus, the 40 years in the wilderness, and the crossing of the Red Sea. The Israelites had already conquered several people groups before they crossed the Jordan River. Notice how Rahab describes their situation:

[Rahab] said to the men [Israelite spies], "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth, and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death." (Joshua 2:9-13 NAS)

The people of Jericho knew they were fighting against Yahweh and they knew He really did have power on earth. But they chose to harden their hearts and make a last stand against the Israelites."

"What else could they have done?" asked Xiao Wang.

"They could have surrendered to the Israelites."

"Would God have spared them if they had?" asked Xiao Li hopefully.

"I'm virtually certain He would have. First of all, God always accepts the repentant. The Bible, way back in the Old Testament, records God's self-description:

..."The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin..." (Exodus 34:6-7 NAS)

We even have a specific example of a Canaanite people group who escaped punishment, the people of the city of Gibeon. [See Joshua 9.]

So they [the Gibeonites] answered Joshua and said, "Because it was certainly told your servants that the LORD your God had commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you; therefore we feared greatly for our lives because of you, and have done this thing. Now behold, we are in your hands; do as it seems good and right in your sight to do to us." Thus [Joshua]...delivered them from the hands of the sons of Israel, and they did not kill them. But Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, to this day, in the place which He would choose. (Joshua 9:24-27 NAS)

The event was complex, but the crux of it was, because the Gibeonites feared God, they submitted themselves to the Israelites and were allowed to live, but made subject to corvee labor. Of course, they would have been required to give up their idolatrous practices as well. Eventually they were assimilated into Jews.

"There is no reason to think this option was not open to the people of Jericho. In fact, Rahab and her family are proof of it: they were spared and lived among the Jews. [See Joshua 6:25.] Rahab even became an ancestor of both King David and Jesus Christ." [See Matthew 1:5.]

After a moment Xiao Li spoke up again. "Thank you, Professor Ho, for explaining all that to me. It had always really bothered me, but now I see that God really did give the Canaanites a chance, that He would have forgiven them too."

3: What God was teaching through Jericho

Professor Ho was silent for a time, thoughtful. Finally he said: “The time of their punishment had come! And yet there was a way out. That’s the great lesson of Jericho. The archaeological confirmation is wonderful—enough evidence, I think, to convince any unbiased person of the accuracy of the account. But the biggest significance is a warning, and an invitation. The warning is that God will judge the gross sins of our own time and our own selves.

“In their day they burned the infants alive. One wonders if some of Rahab’s babies died that way in their temple; what better candidate for a sacrifice than the child of a prostitute, with the father unknown! In our day, we go to the hospital and suck them out of the womb in pieces as an offering to the god of Lust.

“The warning is that God will judge—not just by physical death, but by eternal death afterward in hell. And the invitation is that if we repent and believe in God, like the prostitute, and probably idolater, Rahab did, then we will be forgiven and accepted into God’s family.”

(All dates approximate.)			
1400BC	Israelites cross the Jordan, enter Canaan and conquer Jericho	721BC	Northern kingdom of Israel destroyed by the Assyrian Empire
1375-1050	‘Judges’ lead the Israelites	586	Southern kingdom of Judah destroyed by Babylonian Empire, captives taken to Babylon, first temple destroyed
1050-1011	Saul is the first king of Israel, rules the united kingdom	539	Jews begin to return
1011-971	David rules the united kingdom of Israel	516	Second temple completed
971-931	Solomon rules the united kingdom of Israel	4BC	Jesus Christ born
960	The first temple completed	30 AD	Jesus Christ enters Jerusalem as king, is crucified and resurrected
931	Israel split in two: southern kingdom of Judah and northern kingdom of Israel	70AD	Romans destroy the second temple, Jews are scattered all over the world

The period of the conquest and the Judges, c.1400-1000 BC

[Here read 1 Samuel 9—12, 16]

“After Joshua conquered Jericho, he spent the rest of his life fighting against and conquering many of the small city-states in Canaan. [See the book of Joshua.] Some of these cities have destruction layers which have been attributed to Israelite activity recorded in the books of Joshua and Judges.¹¹

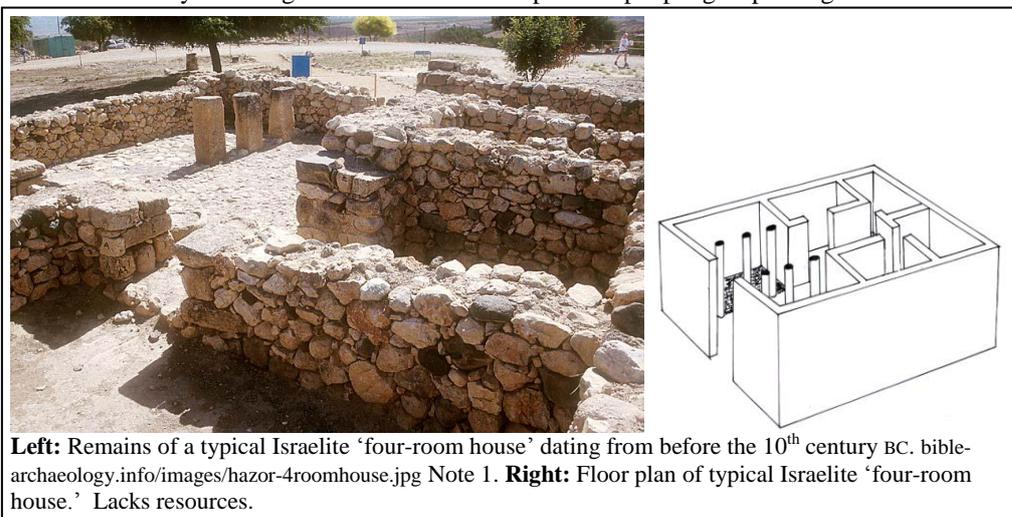
“For about 350 years after their entry into Canaan, the Israelites continued to live a relatively simple life in terms of their material culture. [See the book of Judges.] They had no central government. Not surprisingly, they did little building of major cities or massive fortifications, though they did have walled towns. Partly as a result of this, archaeological findings from this period are relatively limited.

“One typical archaeological finding in Palestine for the entire period from before 1200 BC to the Babylonian captivity in 586 BC is the so-called Israelite style ‘four-room house.’¹² These were built with a characteristic floor plan which was different from those typically used by the surrounding nations. Their unique style and ubiquitous presence in Israel shows that a people with a single, unified cultural tradition lived there at that time, just as the Bible indicates. Of course, many towns excavated in Palestine have Israelite occupation layers during the period 1400-1000 BC.

“The oldest explicit reference to the nation of Israel outside of the Bible^B which we’ve found so far is an inscription made about 1220 BC by the Egyptian pharaoh Merneptah. In it he celebrates his conquest over the Libyans in his fifth year as king, and then claims to have subdued various territories in Palestine. In the midst of a list that includes Canaan, Ashkelon, Gezer, and the land of the Hittites, the Pharaoh boasts ‘Israel is laid waste, his seed (or grain) is not.’¹³ Thus we know that Egyptians in the 13th century BC recognized Israel as an independent people group living in Palestine.”

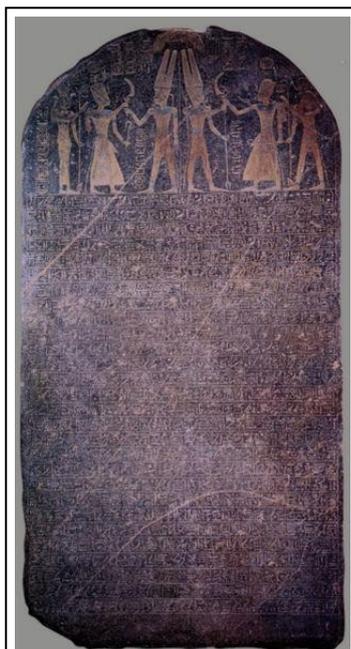
“The Israelites at this time were led by what are called ‘judges.’ These were not kings but men specially called by God to lead Israel or some of its tribes in fighting against the enemies who were oppressing them.

“After over 300 years of living in Canaan without a central government, the Israelites went to the



Left: Remains of a typical Israelite ‘four-room house’ dating from before the 10th century BC. bible-archaeology.info/images/hazor-4roomhouse.jpg Note 1. **Right:** Floor plan of typical Israelite ‘four-room house.’ Lacks resources.

^B It has been suggested that the Amarna letters found in Egypt (written in the range of 1385-1325 BC) include references to the Israelites in Canaan, but this has not yet been confirmed.



Above: Pharaoh Merneptah's stele, c.1220 BC. Note 1.

Below: close up of the word 'Israel' in the stele.



et Samuel, their spiritual leader at that time, and demanded that a king be appointed:

4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah;
5 and they said to him, "...appoint a king for us ... 20 that we also may be like
all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our
battles." (1 Samuel 8:4-5, 20 NAS)

The Israelites' desire to have a king and be 'like all the nations' was actually a sinful lack of faith in God's guidance given through prophetic leaders [see 1 Samuel 12]. But God had known all along they would eventually do this [see Deuteronomy 17:14-20] and He granted their request. By God's guidance, the prophet Samuel appointed both the first and the second kings of Israel—King Saul and King David [see 1 Samuel 9—11]. The next ruler was David's son, King Solomon.

"The findings of archaeology which illumine the historical background of the these three kings fill countless volumes in college libraries. All we can do today is glance at a few of the evidences."

Saul, the first king of Israel

According to the Bible's record [1 Samuel 14:52], King Saul was continually at war throughout his reign. He didn't have the opportunity to do major building projects, and he probably wouldn't have had money to do so anyway. Centralized government and a monarchy were new in Israel, so there was no effective taxation system. The Bible does record the location of Saul's residence, however:

Then Samuel went to Ramah, but Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul.
(1 Samuel 15:34 NAS)

'Gibeah of Saul' refers to the town of Gibeah in the district of the tribe of Benjamin, Saul's tribe. This was in southern Israel. The remains of a fortress palace were covered there in 1922-23 by the famous archaeologist William F. Albright, who dated

it to about 1020-1000 BC.¹⁴ It may have been built by the Philistines and then taken by Saul. This is probably Saul's royal residence. Excavators describe it as crude and rustic, showing a far lower level of material culture than that of the surrounding Canaanite people groups of the period such as the Philistines.¹⁵ This reflects the fact that the Israelites of that time were still a comparatively simple, agricultural people. That began to change under that next King, David.

King David

"After consolidating his rule over Israel in about the year 1000 BC, King David completed the process begun by Saul of subduing the surrounding nations which had quently invaded and oppressed Israel. His direct rule tended far beyond Israel, and his sphere of influence even further, up to the edge of the Euphrates River."

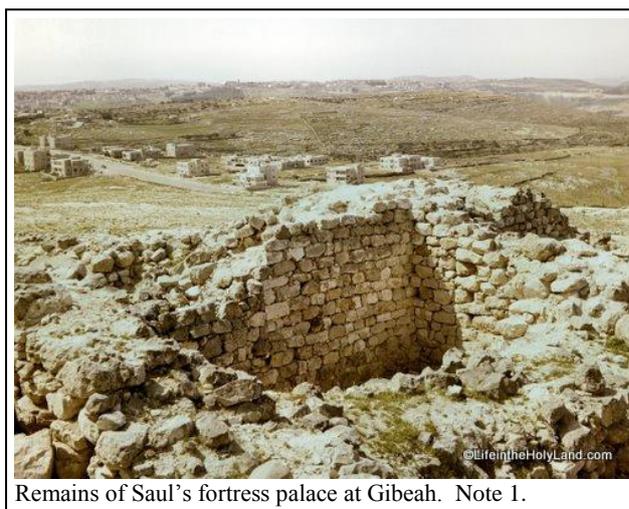
Xiao Wang looked at the map of Israel's kingdom. "If they were so weak and backwards at the beginning of David's reign, how could they have taken so much territory?" he wondered.

"An excellent question!" agreed Professor Ho. "You might remember the promise God had made to Abraham:

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land,
From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:" (Genesis 15:18 NAS)

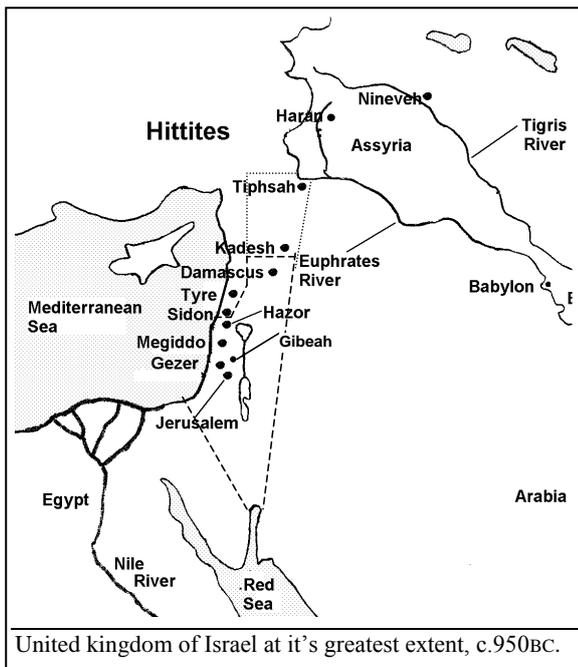
This promise was fulfilled under David and Solomon.^C The means which God used to fulfill it are a good example of a point I made before: God is in control of history.

"During much of the days of the Judges, three major powers had contended for control in the Middle East: the Hittites, who were based in what is now Turkey, Assyria, in what is now Iraq, and Egypt. At the time of David, all three of these powers were in decline and did not exercise any influence in Palestine and Syria.¹⁶ This was providentially timed to give the Israelites the opportunity to control most of the small kingdoms north and east of them. Later, both Egypt and Assyria recovered and struggled for supremacy in Syria and Palestine, quickly breaking up the Israelites' empire and encroaching on the territory of Israel proper. [See chapters 7 and 8.] But these large, aggressive nations were weak in



Remains of Saul's fortress palace at Gibeah. Note 1.

^C The term 'river of Egypt' is usually taken to refer to the Wadi el-Arish or Brook of Egypt at the northern end of the Sinai Peninsula. Some suggest it means the Nile, in which case the prophecy has not yet been completely fulfilled.



the days of David and Solomon.

“Once more, the Bible’s record is accurate, both in details it gives and in the timeframe it records. If the time notations in the Bible had portrayed Solomon ruling such an empire 200 years earlier or 100 years later, it would have been an absurd error. Myths and legends always abound with such historical inaccuracies and contradictions; the Bible never has any.”

“Then why do so many scholars, even in the Western countries, deny the Bible’s accuracy?” asked Xiao Wang.

“Many of them are biased by their preconceived notions, theories inherited from the 19th century speculations which were spun out before archaeologists began digging in Palestine. During their schooling these scholars were taught that the Bible is myth and legend, and they uncritically accepted this viewpoint. In addition to that, they don’t want the Bible to be true, because they know very well that if it’s true, they are in trouble, headed for judgment—and they don’t want to face up to that.

“In the face of increasing evidence for the Bible, the approach of the unbelieving scholars has been to always deny any historical statement in the Bible which cannot be absolutely proven by evidence from outside the Bible. This habit is so severe that for a long time they even tried to deny that King David

had ever existed. But it’s becoming increasingly difficult to hold such a ridiculous viewpoint.

“David founded a dynasty which lasted for over 400 years. He and his descendents who ruled as kings in Jerusalem are frequently referred to in the Bible as members of the ‘House of David.’ [See, for example, 1 Kings 12.] Inscriptional evidence for this term was unexpectedly discovered on stele fragments found by archaeologists excavating at the ancient city of Dan in the far north of Israel in 1993-94. The inscription has been dated to about 840 BC, or possibly somewhat later.^{17, D} The stele was written by a king of Syria, probably King Hazael who reigned in Damascus c.843-801 BC and who is also mentioned in the Bible. The stele specifically refers to the ‘House of David’ and mentions King Ahaziah who reigned in Jerusalem briefly in 841 BC. [See 2 Kings 8:23-29.] Thus we find a foreign king, an enemy of Israel in fact, acknowledging not only the existence of David, but also his dynasty, a little over 100 years after David’s death.

“This finding was absolutely unexpected—the stele had been broken apart and reused in building an ancient wall! It’s a good illustration of what I call the principle of Biblical archaeology: Dig and you will find it! When the Bible says something about history, sooner or later archaeology will help to confirm it.”

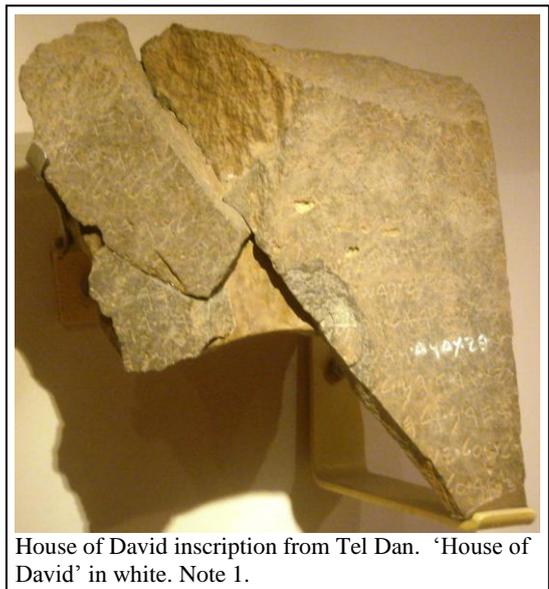
“This finding was absolutely unexpected—the stele had been broken apart and reused in building an ancient wall! It’s a good illustration of what I call the principle of Biblical archaeology: Dig and you will find it! When the Bible says something about history, sooner or later archaeology will help to confirm it.”

Building projects of David and Solomon

“A few scholars still deny that David and Solomon ever existed, but as archaeological evidence for the reliability of the Bible has accrued, most have had to give way on this point. But unbelieving critics never retreat any further than they have to! They just pick another point in the Bible to deny. What’s common now is to claim that David and Solomon were petty rulers of an undeveloped, tribal society. Israeli archaeologist Finkelstein is a good example:

The good news is that Finkelstein has publicly declared that he does not deny the existence of either David or Solomon (Shanks 2002: 45). The bad news is that he does not believe they were who the Bible described them to be. As an archaeologist, Finkelstein...[claims there is] no evidence for David's capital in Jerusalem and no evidence for his kingdom anywhere else in the region. Neither is there a capital city or temple in Jerusalem during Solomon's time, nor is there archaeological evidence of Solomon's reign elsewhere....¹⁸

It is claimed that Israel at that early period, the tenth century BC, was still a poor, rustic backwater, without the highly organized governmental and economic structure portrayed in the Bible. [See 1 Kings 4 and 1 Chronicles 27.] These critics deny that David and Solomon could have had the wealth the Bible indicates they possessed. [See 1 Kings 10 and 1 Chronicles 29.] Thus, it is asserted, they could not have built massive architecture the Bible attributes to them.



^D The dating is still disputed, with some claiming a date about fifty years later. Note that the stele fragments were found in a layer below a well dated 733 BC destruction layer, so they absolutely must be substantially earlier than 733 BC.

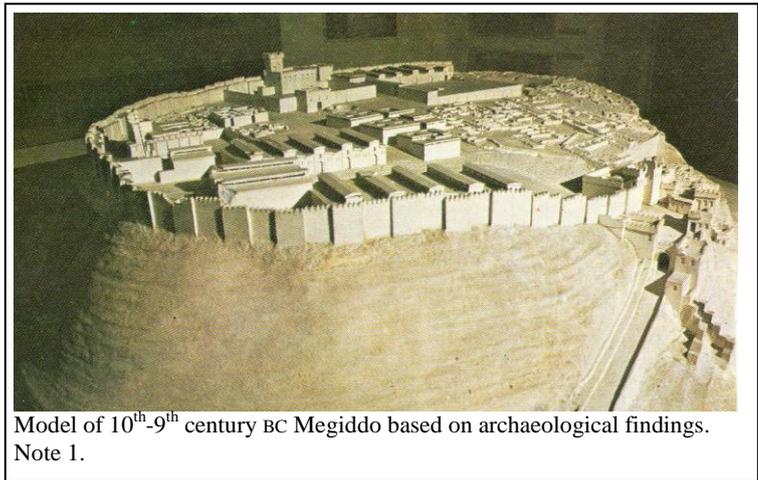
“So much for the claims of the critics! Lets look at the findings of archaeology. Dig and you will find it!

“Under King Solomon, the Israelites’ nation was secure from attack and their economy prospered. Borrowing the more advanced architectural and other technologies of surrounding peoples such as the Philistines and Phoenicians, the Israelites began to produce monumental architecture, as the Bible records:

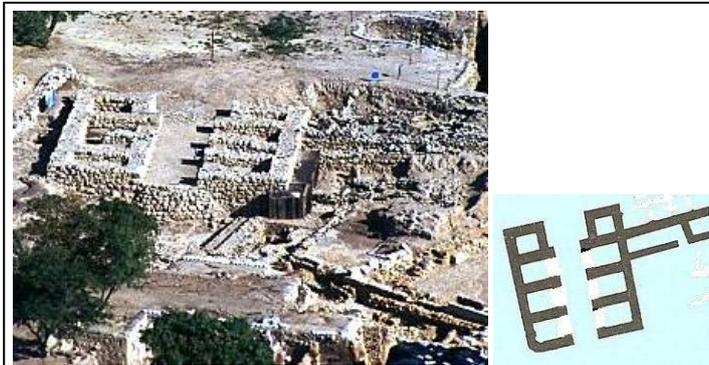
Now this is the account of the forced labor which King Solomon levied to build the house of the LORD, his own house, the Millo, the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. For Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burned it with fire, and killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and had given it as a dowry to his daughter, Solomon’s wife. (1 Kings 9:15-16 NAS)

The last three named cities—Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer—were strategically located fortress cities which were already very ancient in Solomon’s time. Solomon rebuilt Gezer from scratch after it was destroyed by the Egyptians and re-fortified Megiddo and Hazor, which he already held.

“Did Solomon really have the means to undertake massive building projects at these cities? Dig and you will find it!”



Model of 10th-9th century BC Megiddo based on archaeological findings. Note 1.



Hazor. Six chambered gate viewed from inside city. Right: Plan of gate viewed from inside city. Note 1.



Megiddo gate. Right: Plan of gate viewed from inside city. Note 1.



Gezer gate viewed from inside city. Drainage channel in middle was originally covered with stone. Right: Plan of gate. Note 1.

Solomon’s gates

“All three of these cities have been extensively excavated. At the layers dated to the 10th century BC, Solomon’s time,¹⁹ the gates of all three cities were found to have been made built according to the same, very special pattern. Just inside each gate were six chambers, three on the left and three on the right, facing each other. These have been interpreted as guardrooms. This style contrasts with the more common four chamber gates used by the Syrians and Canaanites, as well as in some Israelite cities.

“Note what we find here. Three cities that the Bible specifically says were fortified by Solomon are found to have gates built in the 10th century and all built according to the same pattern, a new and apparently unusual pattern. Dig and you will find it!

“So what do the critics say,” Xiao Wang wanted to know.

“Recently some, like our friend Finkelstein whom I mentioned a moment ago, have tried to date the layers the gates are in to the century after Solomon’s time, at least at Megiddo.²⁰ This idea seems to be driven by their presuppositions, not by any real evidence, and it has not been accepted by most archaeologists.

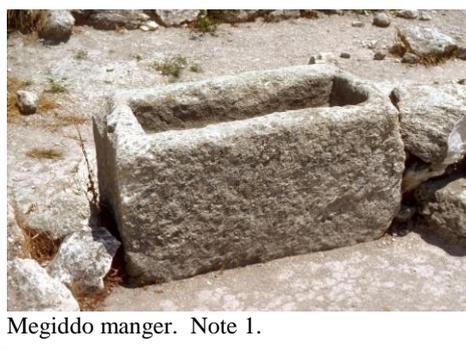
“The academic debate might go on for decades. But what we should learn here is, when the Bible says a king fortified a city, start digging and you’ll probably find the evidence for it, because the Bible is accurate history.

Solomon’s stables

“Why fortify those particular three cities? In addition to being strategically located, the terrain around the three cities mentioned above ‘permitted a swift deployment of chariots.’²¹ This would give



Megiddo stables. Note 1.



Megiddo manger. Note 1.

Solomon a quick response capacity, enabling a small standing army to have more defensive power than would otherwise be the case. But chariot corps needs horses, and horses need stables!

1:14 Solomon amassed chariots and horsemen. He had 1,400 chariots.... 9:25 Now Solomon had 4,000 stalls for horses and chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 1:14, 9:25 NAS)

Dig and you will find it! In the Solomonic layers at Megiddo, Hazor and other cities, archaeologists found long barn-like buildings which have been interpreted as stables. The ones found at Megiddo could have held 450 horses.²²

“Apparently there’s no question about the dating in Hazor. For honesty’s sake I must mention that recently some researchers have suggested that the stables at Megiddo come from the time of King Ahab, who reigned 874-853 BC, fifty years after Solomon, and that the remains of Solomon’s might be located beneath those of Ahab in Megiddo.²³ Others have suggested the stables were built by Solomon but continued to be used through the time of Ahab.²⁴

“All that is possible, and it is beyond us to go into the details of an ongoing archaeological debate about a fifty year difference from three millennia ago. But notice how much ground the critics have given. Now they have to argue over 50 years. Gone are the heady days of the 19th century when they could just deny everything! And before too much longer, even disputes about 50 year so-called ‘discrepancies’ will vanish under the onslaught of accumulating archaeological evidence.

“The lesson of the stables example is just like the city gates. The Bible says Solomon had stalls for horses in chariot cities and that he fortified Megiddo and Hazor. Unbelieving critics say Solomon couldn’t have done that by 931 BC, but when we dig we find evidence for it.

Solomon’s copper mines?

“The greatest building project of Solomon was the ancient Jewish temple in Jerusalem, what is usually called the first temple. The Bible notes that large quantities of bronze were used in the construction of the temple:

45 ...which Hiram made for King Solomon in the house of the LORD were of polished bronze. 46 In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarethan. 47 Solomon left all the utensils unweighed, because they were too many; the weight of the bronze could not be ascertained. (1 Kings 7:45-47 NAS)

The nearest source of copper was in Edom, southeast of Israel. The Bible indicates that David conquered an organized kingdom in Edom and ruled it as a tributary colony:

...In all Edom he [David] put garrisons, and all the Edomites became servants to David. And the LORD helped David wherever he went. (2 Samuel 8:14 NAS)

For decades, critical scholars have denied that Edom existed as an organized nation until the 8th century BC, two hundred years after the Bible’s indications. Thus there was no Edom to conquer and garrison! This viewpoint is indirectly connected to their denial that Israel was a highly organized nation with an economy that could support massive building projects.

“Very recently, archaeologists have excavated and dated a large, industrial scale copper mining and smelting site in ancient Edom.²⁵ They have dated it’s activity to the 10th and 9th centuries BC. It’s a huge industrial complex, with mines, smelters, housing for workers, and a fortress. It indicates that the region had very high level of social and labor organization, economic development including large scale demand for and trade in metal, and well developed metal working technology. All of that fits exactly with the Bible’s picture of the reign of Solomon in the 10th century BC. Dig and you will find it!”

Whose archaeology is right?

“But Professor Ho,” Xiao Wang interrupted, “if there’s so much archaeological evidence about David and Solomon, why do archaeologists deny that they existed? Or at least deny that they ruled



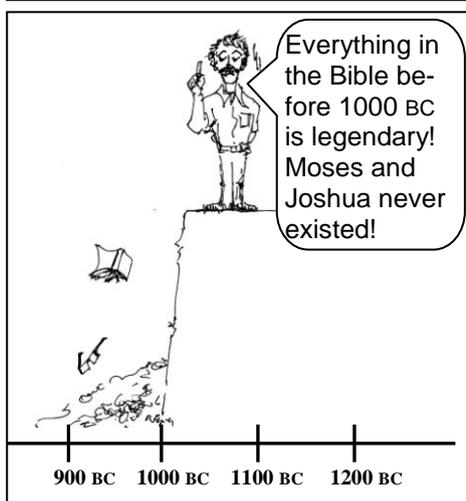
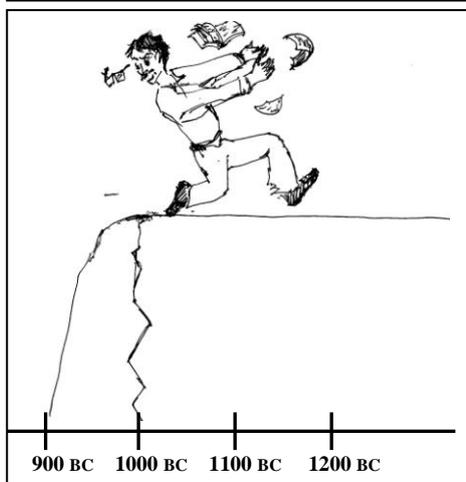
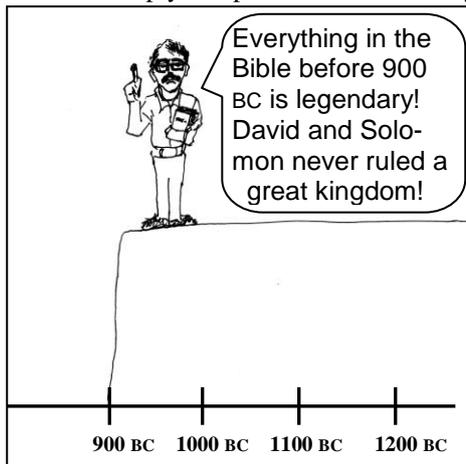
Site of copper mining and smelting operation dated to 10th century BC. At center of photo is 73m X 73m square fortress and black colored copper slag mounds. Note 1.

over significant kingdoms?”

Professor Ho raised both eyebrows and replied in a quizzical tone “Which archaeologists deny it? Certainly not all of them! The situation is the pretty much the same as it has been for over a hundred years: the steadily accruing archaeological discoveries consistently support the Bible’s historical record, but anti-Biblical scholars, including some archaeologists, deny it because of their religious prejudices.

“Consider support from a most unlikely source.” Professor Ho pulled one issue of a glossy illustrated magazine from a set on his bookshelves. “National Geographic’ magazine is almost fanatically committed to Darwinism and evolution. As such, it’s not a source you would expect to find supporting the historicity of the Bible! In 2010 the magazine reported on the controversy among archaeologists over the dating of the copper smelting site we just discussed:

Levy [the archaeologist heading the excavation] dates one of the biggest periods of copper production at the site to the tenth century B.C.—which, according to the biblical narrative, is when David’s antagonists the Edomites dwelled in this region. (However, scholars like Finkelstein [an archaeologist who denies the Bible’s record about David and Solomon] maintain that Edom did not emerge until two centuries later.) The very existence of a large mining and smelting operation fully two centuries before Finkelstein’s camp maintains the Edomites emerged would imply complex economic activity at the exact time that David and Solomon reigned.



... The proposition that a complex tenth-century B.C. society may have existed on either side of the Jordan River has thrown Finkelstein’s vision of the David and Solomon era squarely on the defensive. His many rebuttal papers and his sarcastic tone reflect that defensiveness, and his arguments at times seem a bit desperate.²⁷

The Israeli archaeologist Finkelstein is a fair representative of the attitude of the anti-Biblical scholars: deny everything you possibly can as long as you possibly can.”

Professor Ho paused and chuckled to himself. “It’s getting tough for them these days! Gone is the time when you could simply deny everything in the Old Testament! Even Finkelstein has to admit the general historicity of the Old Testament account about the kings of Israel from around 900 BC onwards. But he still denies everything earlier than that—despite the archaeological evidence! I picture him standing on a crumbling cliffside marked ‘900 BC’; meanwhile, the cliff’s face is cracking under his feet! Soon another hundred years of the hill of denial will slide out from under his feet, and he’ll have to retreat to 1000 BC. Then he’ll take his stand there and say ‘Well, David and Solomon may have ruled a great kingdom, but everything before *that* is just myth and legend!’

“Unbelievably enough, even ‘National Geographic’ guardedly acknowledged the implications of archaeology for the historicity of the Bible. The magazine reported on two different excavations which show a highly developed society and economy in Israel and Edom in the 10th century BC. They noted the archaeologists’ dating determinations were supported by:

... a host of scientific data, including pottery remnants and radiocarbon dating of olive and date pits found at the sites. If the evidence from their ongoing excavations holds up, yesteryear’s scholars who touted the Bible as a factually accurate account of the David and Solomon story may be vindicated.²⁸

What National Geographic calls ‘yesteryear’s scholars’ include archaeologists from the mid-twentieth century who were persuaded by the evidence that their earlier prejudices against the historicity of the Bible were wrong. The classic example was the archaeologist who excavated Saul’s fortress palace at Gibeah, the eminent Dr. William F. Albright. He started out thinking the Old Testament history was just legend and myth, but was gradually convinced by the evidence.” Professor Ho fished out one of the archaeology books already open on his desk and turned past a few more pages. “Here’s a quote written about 1950:

Years ago the biblical statements about Jericho, [king Ahab’s] ivory palace at Samaria, the tabernacle... the Hittites, and many other items constituted problems and even supposed inaccuracies. One archaeological discovery after another has shown the accuracy of these biblical indications and a multitude of others. In the light of such discoveries even one who did not label himself as conservative [i.e. a Bi-

ble believer] acknowledged,

‘Archaeological and inscriptional data have established the historicity of innumerable passages and statements of the Old Testament; the number of such cases is many times greater than those where the reverse has been proved or has been made probable’ (W.F. Albright, A[merican] S[cholar, Spring 1938], 181).

I [archaeologist Dr. Joseph P. Free] believe that further archaeological research will make it necessary to modify even the last part of this statement. I do not know of any cases where the Bible has been proved wrong.²⁹

Dr. Albright never came to fully believe the Bible the way Dr. Free believed, but he steadily moved toward a greater conviction of it’s historicity, as he himself noted as early as 1933:

...[this] writer [William F. Albright] has gradually changed from the extreme radicalism [i.e. denying the historicity of the Old Testament] of 1919 to a standpoint which can neither be called conservative [i.e. believing the Bible is completely true] nor radical in the usual sense of the terms.³⁰

The situation today is exactly like it was over half a century ago. The amount of evidence confirming the historicity of the Bible is constantly increasing. Some archaeologists acknowledge this, often having to modify the hyper-skeptical ‘deny everything’ positions they had been taught in college. In the mid 20th century, Albright was honest enough to do that, even though he wasn’t a believer. It seems like the 21st century Levy is that honest, too, though I’m almost sure he’s not a believer either. Other archaeologists, however, the hardcore anti-Biblical ones, meet every fresh evidence with intransigent rebuttal and only give ground when it becomes too embarrassing to keep denying the truth. Finkelstein is one of those.”

Jerusalem

“Now let’s move on to David and Solomon’s most important building activities, those in their capital city: Jerusalem.”

Professor Ho sighed and shook his head. “Jerusalem may be the most sensitive place in the entire world! In the Middle East conflict, the important issue is not the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, nor the ‘West Bank’ and ‘Gaza Strip’ problems. For those problems, the Jews and the Palestinians could probably work out a mutual compromise. The real sticking point is Jerusalem!”

“Why?” asked Xiao Wang.

“Because God gave it to the Jews!” Xiao Li affirmed at once.

“That sounds like an excuse for prejudice and oppression! Is your God like that?”

“I didn’t say—”

“Hold on boys,” interrupted Professor Ho, his hand raised. “You sound like a Palestinian and a Jew arguing! The problem is more complex than you think. To really understand it, we need to review the history of the city.

“Jerusalem is an ancient city, with more than 4,000 years of history. The oldest part is on Mount Zion. The Bible records the city’s priest-king interacting with Abraham around 2000 BC. [See Genesis 14:18.] In the time of Joshua, not long after c.1400 BC, the Israelites defeated the king of Jerusalem in a battle outside of the city, but they were not able to conquer the city itself. [See Joshua chapter 10.] The inhabitants of Jerusalem, called Jebusites, continued to live there, in the midst of the Jews, up to King David’s time. The ancient city of the Jebusite period has been partially excavated, including some city walls, fortifications, gates, and a water system.

“One of the great achievements of King David was capturing the ancient city of Jerusalem from the Jebusites and making into the capital of Israel:

6 Now the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land... 7 ...David captured the stronghold of Zion, that is the city of David. ... 9 So David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David. And David built all around from the Millo and inward. ... 11 Then Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David with cedar trees and carpenters and stonemasons; and they built a house [palace] for David. (2 Samuel 5:6-11 NAS)

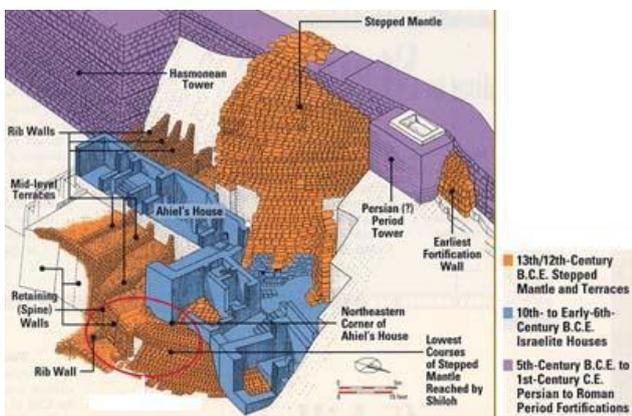
The Millo was apparently a defensive wall at the north end of the old Jebusite city, on Mount Zion. David reinforced this and the other walls of Mount Zion, as well as building a palace. Archaeologists have identified some of the old Jebusite walls, and also some of the fortifications subsequently added by David and the following kings.³¹ Just recently a new structure was uncovered, dated by the archaeologist to David’s time.³² It has been suggested this may have been his palace, but investigations are still underway. In any case, there is no question that the Israelites built massive structures in Jerusalem in the 10th century BC, just as the Bible says they did. Dig and you will find it!

“David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, making it the center of worship for the Jews as well as the political capital. He wanted to build a temple for God, but was not permitted:

2 Then King David rose to his feet and said, "Listen to me, my brethren and my people; I had intended to build a permanent home for the ark of the covenant of the LORD and for the footstool of our God. So I had made preparations to build it. 3 "But God said to me, 'You shall not build a house for My name because you are a man of war and have shed blood.' ... 6 He said to me, 'Your son Solomon is the one who shall build My



Top: The so-called 'Stepped Stone Structure.' A stepped 'mantle' of stones covering the hillside was built by the Jebusites before 1000 BC. Halfway down the hillside, the Israelites built houses founded on top of the stepped mantle during c.1000BC to 586BC. Note 1.



Middle: An interpretation of the layers of Jebusite, Israelite kingdom, and later buildings. B.C.E.= BC, C.E.=AD.



Bottom: Recently discovered 'Large Stone Structure.' Located slightly north of 'Stepped Stone Structure.' Dated to the 10th century BC, the excavator thinks it may have been King David's palace. Note 1.

house and My courts; for I have chosen him to be a son to Me, and I will be a father to him.' (1 Chronicles 28:2-6 NAS)

"Without question, the greatest achievement of Solomon's reign was building the temple in Jerusalem. He also extended the walls of Jerusalem north to encompass the Temple Mount. The Temple Mount was also known as Mount Moriah:

Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. (2 Chronicles 3:1 NAS)

'Moriah' is the same as the name of the place where God had tested Abraham by telling him he had to sacrifice Isaac. [See Genesis 22.] It is probably the same place though the Bible never directly states this. It must be admitted that many different places in Canaan have the same names. In any case, Muslims and Jews alike firmly believe that it *is* the same place—though the Muslims claim it was Ishmael, not Isaac, who was to be sacrificed.

"Solomon completed the temple in about 960 BC. It existed for nearly 400 years, finally being destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC. Seventy years later, in 516 BC, the Jews rebuilt the so-called 'Second Temple,' which was the one in existence in the time of Jesus Christ. In 70 AD, the Romans destroyed this 'Second Temple,' and it has never been rebuilt to this day. Religiously conservative Jews all over the world are longing to rebuild it today.

"The reason the Jews have not yet rebuilt the temple is because there are two Islamic mosques on the site where it formerly was. You can see the shining gilded dome of the larger one in the picture of modern Jerusalem. Muslims consider that spot to be the third most important, most 'holy' place on earth, after Mecca and Medina."

"Why would Muslims consider it holy?" asked Xiao Li.

"A good question! In fact, the Koran, Islam's holy book, never once mentions the word 'Jerusalem.' But a traditional Islamic interpretation of a passage in the Koran asserts that one night the founder of the religion, the prophet Mohammed, went to Jerusalem and ascended to heaven from the Temple Mount (Mount Moriah). That's why the spot is considered sacred by Muslims. They don't even let Jews enter it!"

"But I thought the Jews controlled Jerusalem," said Xiao Wang. "Why don't they just tear down the mosques and build their temple?"

Professor Ho's eyebrows shot up. "The Jews don't dare to do anything about the mosques—it would instantly provoke all the surrounding Muslim nations to attack them! No, the Jews and the Palestinians are at an impasse. Both want Jerusalem for their capital. Both want total control of the Temple Mount. Both regard it as a holy site.

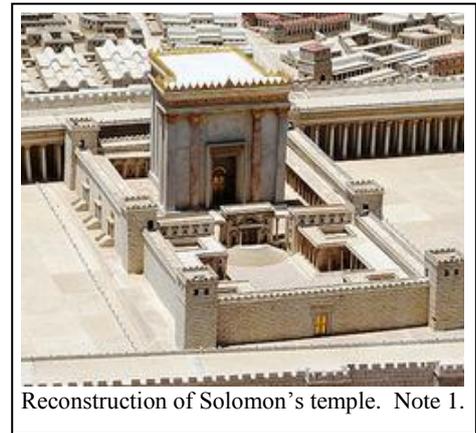
"Perhaps you can understand now why the Middle East conflict is so intractable. What's amazing though is how the problems of this tiny place are entangling not only all of the surrounding Arab countries but also distant,

ful nations, including America, Russia, the European Union, and the entire United Nations. To cite an obvious example, in the 9/11 attacks on the United States, a major motivation of the terrorists was their belief that America was biased in its support of Israel and opposed to the Palestinians. Of course we can trace the 'historical roots' of such entanglement. But what I find fascinating is, the situation in the Middle East today fits a prediction made long ago in the Bible.

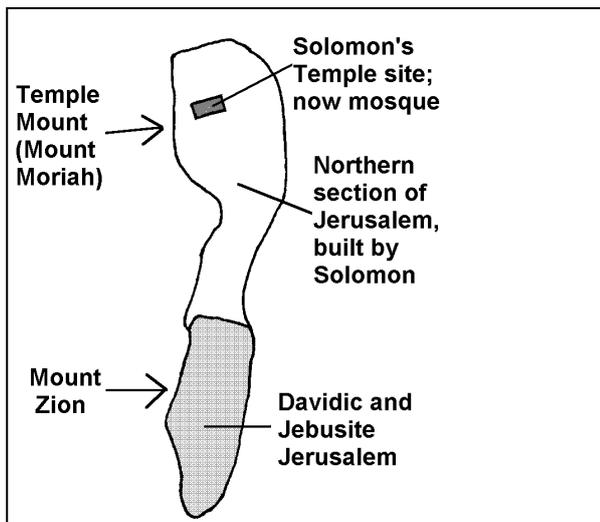
“It was predicted that the Jews would have no homeland and be scattered all over the earth, as they were from 70 AD to 1948 AD. [See chapters 4 and 9.] It was also predicted that they would return to Israel. [See chapters 4 and 15.] But the Bible specifically says that sometime after the Jews are back in Israel:

Behold, I [the LORD] am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah. It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it. (Zechariah 12:2-3 NAS)

That prophecy was written over 2,400 years ago. Notice the prediction: every nation in the world involved with Jerusalem, and every nation being ‘severely injured’ because of it’s involvement. I’m not saying this prophecy has been fulfilled already. It’s only been partially fulfilled so far. Not every nation has gotten involved yet. But for



Reconstruction of Solomon’s temple. Note 1.



Jerusalem. Above: Diagram of city in Solomon’s day. Below: Part of the present city. The northern part shown in the picture is wider and longer than Solomon’s northern section. Note 1.



the first time in world history we can see how it could happen. In our own day, Jerusalem has already begun to be a ‘heavy stone,’ and every nation which is entangled with it has been ‘severely injured.’ In 1948-49, 1956, 1967, and 1973, the Arab nations which attacked Israel were severely injured. More recently, even the powerful nation of America was also injured because of her. Meanwhile, more and more nations are becoming involved in the problem.

“Back in the late 1980s I used to say to people, ‘some day China will be entangled in the Middle East conflict between the Jews and the Palestinians.’ People would often reply, ‘What has that got to do with us? There’s no reason to think we will be involved there!’ Well boys, let me put the question to you now: will China get involved?”

“Of course! It’s a major international issue; China will certainly have a role to play in it.” replied Xiao Wang confidently.

“Yes, I agree with you. It’s easy to see that—*now*. But back then no one thought so, and I only knew it because of the prophecy. An event like Jerusalem becoming an insoluble problem for the entire world is entirely beyond the ability of humans to foresee, but over 2,400 years ago it was already written in the book of Zechariah.

“Of course the present situation does not constitute complete fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy; there are still some nations that haven’t been dragged in yet! But now we can easily see how it could happen in our own time. Thus today’s international relations confirm for me that the prophecy in the book of Zechariah came from God, who knows the future, not from humans—who don’t!”

Xiao Wang was coming to believe in the historical accuracy of the Bible. But he was far from convinced that it had been revealed by God and could predict the future. Half-jokingly he asked Professor Ho: “So how will it turn out?”

“Let’s see what God said about it:

4 ... the house of the LORD of which the LORD had said, "My name shall be in Jerusalem forever." ... 7 ... the house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever; 8 and I will not again remove the foot of Israel from the land which I have appointed for your fathers, if only they will observe to do all that I have commanded them according to all the law, the statutes and the ordinances given through Moses." (2 Chronicles 33:4, 7-8 NAS)

Notice the two promises in this passage, one conditional and one unconditional. The promise, ‘My name shall be in Jerusalem forever’ is unconditional. God has appointed Jerusalem as the permanent center of Jewish worship. The promise ‘if only they will...do all that I have commanded them,’ ‘I will not again remove...Israel from the land’ is conditional. If the Jews sin, God will remove them from Israel. The Jews did sin, and God twice punished them, driving them out and exiling them to foreign countries. Moreover He allowed ‘Gentiles,’ that is, non-Jews, to destroy the temple. The first time, 586 BC, their sin was worshipping false gods and idols. God let them return and rebuild the temple 70 years later. The second time, 70 AD, their main sin was rejecting the king God had sent to them, the Messiah, Jesus Christ. In 1948, God allowed many of the Jews to return to their home and reestablish the nation of Israel. But God has not yet let them rebuild their temple. The Bible says that won’t happen till the endtimes.”

“So you think they will rebuild it?” asked Xiao Wang.

“Yes, I’m quite sure of it,” affirmed Professor Ho.

“What about the mosques?”

“I don’t know, but I can only assume they will be removed.”

“Why are you Christians always biased in favor of the Jews and against the Palestinians?” Xiao Wang said accusingly.

“Actually, I don’t take sides in the issue. The root of the Middle Eastern conflict is the mutual hatred between two people groups which do not know and do not obey the true God—the Jews and the Palestinians. Because they do not know God, many on both sides regard a dry, stony hilltop as more important than human lives. Real Christians certainly should not favor either side in this conflict. In fact, every person on both sides will face God’s judgment and go to hell, unless they repent and believe in Jesus. My hope for all of them is that they will believe in Jesus and learn to love each other! That’s what God really wants, too. But God knows the future, and He wrote it in the Bible, so I already know how it will turn out in the end: a bloody war involving the entire world and centered on Jerusalem.”

“I’m not convinced yet that the Bible really predicts the future.” Xiao Wang spoke soberly this time.

As so often before, Professor Ho only nodded and smiled without a trace of offense. “I understand! That’s why next time I’d like to start looking at fulfilled prophecies with you. You remember the three step proof of Christianity.”

“I think I could recite it by now,” said Xiao Wang with a smile.

“Give it a try!”

“O.K. As best I remember:

1. Nature demonstrates that a supernaturally powerful, non-material Creator exists.
2. History and archeology demonstrate that the Bible records are historically accurate and allow us to approximately date when the Bible was written.
3. Prophecies written in the Bible and fulfilled long afterward demonstrate that it is a revelation from God.

Is that about right?”

Professor Ho beamed at Xiao Wang. “Exactly! Are you convinced by now that the Bible is true history?”

“At least half convinced. Maybe a little more.”

“Then next time you come, let’s start looking at fulfilled prophecy—and add a little more historical proof, too!”

Xiao Wang smiled back at him.

¹ Pictures downloaded from:

Collapse of Jericho’s wall: modified from Note 5.

Houses on the edge of retaining wall: Note 5.

Jars of grain at Jericho: from Note 5.

Cross section of Kenyon’s findings at Jericho: from Note 5.

Cross section with layers removed: modified from Note 5.

Bichrome pottery : from Note 5.

Ariel view of the mound of ancient Jericho: from Note 5.

Remains of a typical Israelite ‘four-room house’: bible-archaeology.info/images/hazor-4roomhouse.jpg

Pharaoh Merneptah’s stele: biblearchaeology.org/post/2010/07/01/The-Curious-History-of-the-e2809cEditore2809d-in-Biblical-Criticism.aspx

The word ‘Israel’ in the stele: PUB-DOM: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Israel_segment.jpg

Remains of Saul’s fortress palace at Gibeath: www.LifeInTheHolyLand.com

The House of David inscription from Tel Dan: use by permission, from [השלוים בית, upl-oad.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7e/Tel_dan_inscription.JPG](http://hebrew4christians.com/Texts/Inscriptions/Tel_Dan/Tel_Dan_inscription.JPG)

Model of 10th-9th century BC Megiddo: PUB-DOM en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Model_of_Megiddo,_1457_BCE..jpg

Hazor Six chambered gate: [biblelandpic-](http://biblelandpictures.com/gallery/gallery.asp?action=viewimage&categoryid=40&text=&imageid=4212&box=&shownew=)

tures.com/gallery/gallery.asp?action=viewimage&categoryid=40&text=&imageid=4212&box=&shownew=

Megiddo gate: used by permission from Gunter Hartnagel, flickr.com/photos/39631091@N03/5442166594/

Gezer gate: CC-BY [טוייכר אבישי ר"ד upl-](http://hebrew4christians.com/Texts/Inscriptions/Gezer/Gezer_gate_in_tel_gezer.jpg)

oad.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/55/PikiWiki_Israel_8694_solomon_gate_in_tel_gezer.jpg

Megiddo stables: members.bib-arch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=2&Issue=3&ArticleID=1

Megiddo manger: visualbiblealive.com/image-bin/Public/038/12/038_1

Site of copper mining and smelting operation: use by permission, from Note 26.

‘Stepped Stone Structure.’: bib-arch.org/e-features/king-davids-palace.asp

Interpretation of the layers of Jebusite, Israelite kingdom, and later buildings: biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-sites-places/jerusalem/did-i-find-king-davids-palace/

'Large Stone Structure.': [flickr.com/photos/antiekpubliek/4378888548/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/antiekpubliek/4378888548/)

Part of the present city: biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-sites-places/jerusalem/did-i-find-king-davids-palace/

² Unger, Merrill F., R.K. Harrison, Howard F. Vos and Cyril J. Barber. The New Unger's Bible Dictionary, Revised and updated edition. Moody Press, 1988. Pg. 708-709.

³ Free, Joseph R. and Howard F. Vos. Archaeology and Bible History, Revised Edition. Zondervan Publishing House, 1992. Pg.110, 111.

⁴ Wood, Bryant G. "The Walls of Jericho." *Creation Magazine*, 21(2) (1999 Mar-May), pp. 38-39. creation.com/the-walls-of-gericho

⁵ Wood, Bryant G. "Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho: A New Look at the Archaeological Evidence." *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 26:2, March/April 1990. biblearchaeology.org/post/2008/05/Did-the-Israelites-Conquer-Jericho-A-New-Look-at-the-Archaeological-Evidence.aspx#Article

⁶ Note 5.

⁷ Note 5.

⁸ Wood, Bryant G. "Carbon 14 Dating at Jericho." biblearchaeology.org/post/2008/08/07/Carbon-14-Dating-at-Jericho.aspx

⁹ Note 8.

¹⁰ Bietak, Manfred. Review of A Test of Time by W. Manning. *Bibliotheca Orientalis LXI* N° 1-2, januari-april 2004 informat.math.org/BiOr04i.pdf

¹¹ Note 3, Pg. 115-116, 119-122.

¹² Vos, Howard F. Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Manners & Customs. Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999. Pg. 204.

¹³ Pritchard, James B., Ed. The Ancient Near East Volume I, An Anthology of Texts and Pictures. Princeton University Press, 1958. Pg. 231.

¹⁴ Note 12, Pg. 153.

¹⁵ Note 1, Pg. 1136.

¹⁶ Note 12, Pg.147-148.

¹⁷ "David Inscription." Tell Dan Excavations website. teldan.wordpress.com

¹⁸ Byers, Gary. "The United Monarchy under David and Solomon." Sep. 26, 2005. biblearchaeology.org

¹⁹ Note 12, Pg.202-203, Note 18.

²⁰ Discussed in "The Kings of Israel – 8 / Solomon – 3 / 3." Theophyle's Biblical – ANE Blog. theophyle.wordpress.com [Note that the author of this site does *not* believe in the inerrancy and full historicity of the Bible.]

²¹ Note 12, Pg.203

²² Note 12, Pg.204.

²³ Barker, Kenneth L. and John R. Kohlenbeger III, eds. Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary, Volume I: Old Testament. Zondervan, 1994. Pg.515.

²⁴ Note 3, Pg.143

²⁵ Draper, Robert. "David and Solomon: Kings of Controversy." *National Geographic*. December 2010. ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2010/12/david-and-solomon/draper-text/1

²⁶ Levy, Thomas E. "High-precision radiocarbon dating and historical biblical archaeology in southern Jordan" *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* October 28, 2008 vol. 105 no. 43 16460-16465. pnas.org/content/105/43/16460.full

²⁷ Note 25, pg.4, 12.

²⁸ Note 25, pg.12.

²⁹ Note 3, pg.113-114

³⁰ Note 3, pg.114, footnote 16.

³¹ Note 1, Pg.679.

³² Mazar, Eilat. "Did I Find King David's Palace?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*. E-features. bib-arch.org/e-features/king-davids-palace.asp