

An interesting illustration relates to the nation known as the Hittites. The Hittites are mentioned in Genesis, where it is stated that Abraham purchased a burial place for his wife from two of the sons of Heth. They are mentioned in Exodus, where God promised that He would drive them out from Palestine to make room for the Israelites. A Hittite is mentioned in II Samuel, where we find that David had a mercenary soldier in his army, Uriah the Hittite. But the most striking reference to the Hittites is less familiar than any of these. It is found in II Kings 7:6, where we read: "For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even a noise of a great host; and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us." It was not long ago that ridicule was poured upon this verse. In 1904 a British scholar, in a private conversation, made the statement that he did not believe that such a people as the Hittites ever actually existed. "But," he said, "if it should be proven that there were actually such a people as the Hittites, I am sure we will find that they were only a small and unimportant tribe of people." He went on to say that, to speak, as this verse does, of the Hittites and Egyptians in the same category, is as if one were to speak of a treaty of alliance between the British Empire and the Cherokee Indians. That is how it looked to this British scholar in 1904. And then just two years later, in 1906, Professor Hugo Winckler of the University of Berlin began excavations at Boghazkeui in Asia Minor. There he found, buried under the soil, remains of the great capital of the ancient Hittites. He found many acres of the foundations of palaces and temples. Best of all, he found the archives of the Hittite empire. In these archives he found proof that the Hittites were a great nation, able to treat on equal terms with the Egyptians and the Babylonians. In fact, at one time, they actually captured and plundered the city of Babylon. The Hittites and the Egyptians fought each other for one hundred and fifty years, back and forth, up and down through Syria and Palestine. Eventually they reached a point where they decided that neither of them could conquer the other, and decided to call it off and make a treaty of friendship. In this treaty we have the earliest extradition clause that is known to history. Today, instead of anybody doubting the existence of the ancient Hittites, there are scholars in Germany, France, England, and America who are giving much of their time to the study of the language and culture of the ancient Hittites. The Hittites who so recently were just a name in the Bible and otherwise seemed to have no existence, have now been proven to have been actually one of the great powers of world history. For almost three thousand years no trace of their glory was preserved, save for a few references in the Bible. What a wonderful illustration of the statement in I Peter 1:24-25: "All flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of grace. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away; but the Word of the Lord endures forever."

We could hardly expect that every archeological discovery would corroborate the Bible. The material comes from many countries. Much of it has no direct connection with any Biblical statement. Even where the same subject is treated in a written document, it often comes from a writer of very different outlook. You would hardly expect reports on recent history by citizens of various countries to coincide in selection of fact or detailed viewpoint. Apparent contradiction often means real agreement, but it may take considerable study to see the full situation.

Sometimes an archeological discovery has seemed, at first sight, to present a direct contradiction of a Biblical narrative. An interesting instance of this was found in connection with the fifth chapter of Daniel. Nowhere do we find greater unanimity among adherents of the so-called "Higher Criticism" than in relation to the Book of Daniel. Virtually all agree that it does not come from a Jew who was prominent at the court of Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century B.C. but from an unknown writer of the Maccabean period, four centuries later. Consequently, when Babylonian discoveries appeared to contradict the chapter at two vital points, this seemed to provide convincing evidence of the truth of the critical viewpoint.

Let us briefly recall the principal events of the chapter. It tells of a king of Babylon named Belshazzar who gave a great feast. During the feast he saw fingers of a man's hand writing upon the wall. He became very much excited and anxious to know the meaning of the writing. Calling for all the wise men of Babylon, he made a wonderful offer: "Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof shall be clothed in scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." (vs.7) All the wise men were brought in, but none could read the writing. Eventually the queen heard what was happening and told the king about a wise man named Daniel who had been prominent in Babylon during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, a