

artificial story constructed in order to present certain ideas. In 1800 all that remained above ground of the two important ancient cities of Nineveh and Babylon could have been placed in one small room. Today the situation is entirely different. During the past century there has been dug from the ground a tremendous amount of material throwing light upon conditions in ancient times in Bible lands. From it we are able to reconstruct the history not only of the political events but also of the life and culture of these areas during long periods. A new world has risen from the dust and it is interesting to see how this world makes vivid and real the world described in the pages of the Bible.

For a brief idea of this particular type of approach to the Bible we might look at a few of the outstanding features of the general background of the Old Testament. Thus we find that most of the history in the Old Testament centers around the descendants of one man, Abraham. Abraham is described as living in a city called Ur of the Chaldees and as being called by the Lord to leave his environment and to go out into a distant country which the Lord would show him. How much more living and natural this account becomes when we learn that excavators in recent years have uncovered in Mesopotamia the indications of a great civilization stretching back thousands of years before the time of Christ and probably many hundreds of years before the time of Abraham himself. Beginning in 1919 a series of excavations at the site of Ur, in the extreme south of Mesopotamia, gave evidence that it had been one of the most highly developed of the early cities of the region. In fact the excavator, C. Leonard Woolley, declared that the standard of living at Ur in 2000 B.C., as evidenced by the comfort of the houses and other marks of culture, was as high as it was in Babylon at the time of Nebuchadnezzar, over a thousand years later. (12)

The book of Genesis states that Abraham left Ur with his family to go into the land of Canaan, but that he stopped at Haran in northwestern Mesopotamia and stayed there until the death of his father. Abraham had already covered half the distance from Ur to Palestine. One wonders why he was stopped at this particular town of Haran. It becomes realistic to us when we learn that Ur was the great city of the cult of the moon god, Sin, and that the other city which ranked along with Ur as a great center for the worship of this particular deity was Haran. It is easy to see that this would mean many points in common in the general culture and civilization of the two cities and probably also an interchange of (13)