

by the excavation in Babylon of over a million bricks every one of which bore stamped upon it the name and titles of Nebuchadnezzar.

The Bible tells us of the conquest of Babylon by the newly rising Persian empire, and many clay tablets and physical remains testify to this sharp change in the control of the Near East. A collection of inscriptions on leather belonging to a Persian courier who carried communications between the emperor and his distant outposts even as far west as Egypt has come to light recently. The picture in Ezra and Nehemiah of a people rigidly subject to orders which must be sought from a distant ruler corresponds to our evidence about the Persian Empire.

This hasty sketch gives a brief idea of the great interest of archaeology to the Christian from the viewpoint of general corroboration. A whole new world has risen from the dead through the work of the excavator and of the linguist; in the midst of this world we can see the background of the great events described in the Bible.

Special Corroboration

The second reason for interest in archaeology on the part of the Bible student is what might be designated as special corroboration. This differs from general corroboration in that it is not simply a matter of vividly presenting the background or showing the general fitting together of the two sources for reconstruction of history but is rather an examination in detail of particular points. If the Biblical account represented the imagination of a later time or the attempt to support theories by making imaginary stories of the distant past, one would expect that at point after point minor details would be obviously in error. It is interesting to compare specific details contained in the Bible with specific facts which archaeologists have brought to light, or with specific points of archaeological background, and to see whether the Biblical accounts contain the marks of being late imaginary reconstructions or whether they have the marks of verisimilitude that would be found in contemporary documents.

Here the most immediate observation concerns the many names of kings, both Israelite and foreign, contained in the Biblical story. Many of these names have been found on monuments in Mesopotamia or in Egypt written by agents of the very kings themselves or by their contemporaries and it is remarkable to note the general accuracy of preservation of the names contained in the Bible.