

In 1929 when I was on a train going from Berlin to Constantinople, a report came out over the radio that the tomb of Solomon's wife, the daughter of Pharaoh, had been discovered and that it contained records about the greatness and power of king Solomon. Then it became known that some newspaper correspondents in Egypt had made up a story as a joke. Somebody else had taken it seriously, and it had gone out over the radio throughout Europe. Unfortunately such a prank can easily lead many people to think that Solomon was really only a myth.

What would you or I do, if we were in God's place and faced a situation where people denied the truth of the Old Testament accounts of Solomon's greatness? Most likely we would cause that a monument should be discovered containing an inscription, something like this: "I am Solomon, the great king. I rule over all the territory from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt. I hold many nations in subjection. I have erected great buildings, the wonder of the world. My power is supreme in this whole region."

Unfortunately, if such an inscription were to be found, there would be those who would say that it was entirely a bluff on the part of a petty king. And it would not be altogether wrong for such an idea to be suggested. In the mountains of Armenia similar monuments have been found that were put up by unknown petty chieftains who simply copied the words on the inscriptions of the great Assyrian emperors. In the case of the Assyrian and Babylonian kings, when we find monuments like this we can check what they say by objective evidence and see that there is a great deal of truth to their boasts. It is not sufficient merely to have a man's claim. We are interested in objective facts. What is the voice of the stones regarding Solomon?

The first evidence on this point came from an unexpected source. Early in the present century some German excavators undertook to examine the hill of Megiddo. This is a large hill in northern Palestine standing at a strategic pass which connects the interior valleys with the end of the road that comes up from Egypt along the sea. The English word Armageddon is derived from the Hebrew har Megiddo, or "hill of Megiddo." It is used in the New Testament to indicate a great battle that is to be fought toward the end of the age. Megiddo has been the scene of many crucial battles, beginning in very early history and continuing even as late as World War I.

From the debris remaining on the hill of Megiddo it was easy to guess that a city had stood there in ancient times. It is not always so easy to tell where ancient cities have stood, yet an observer in Palestine soon learns to recognize a "tell," or artificial mound. It has a certain rather definite shape with a somewhat flat top, and sides going down rather symmetrically, showing that it is a place where a city was once built on a large or small hill, and then gradually the level was raised. In ancient times people simply threw their refuse into the street, and gradually the hill grew higher. When a house would deteriorate people would knock it down and rebuild on top of it. Eventually an earthquake, a fire, or an enemy would destroy the city. The enemy might decide that this was the place where they wished to build a city of their own. Consequently they would flatten out the ruin and build on top of it. There were already walls standing there, holding in the debris. The walls might be sufficient for the new city or they might be raised a bit. Thus we have many cases in Palestine where one city is built upon another, as at Megiddo.

These Germans, who decided to excavate the hill of Megiddo, did not have any great amount of money at their disposal. Consequently they used the method of digging trenches. They would dig trenches deep into the hill, and try from them to learn something of the civilization of different periods.

Nowadays excavators do not like the trench method. One trench may be dug to get a brief idea of stratification, but excavation is usually done by digging areas rather than trenches, since a trench opens too small a section from each period and can often be confusing instead of helpful.

When I visited Megiddo in 1929, I looked down into one of the trenches that the Germans had dug early in the century. It had rained shortly before and the dust had been cleared away from the side of the trench. It was easy to see in the trench a part of the foundation of eighteen cities, one above the other. The German excavators rightly decided that the fourth city from the top was the city of the time of Solomon.

These excavators were not men who accepted the Bible as true and dependable. They believed that monotheism had been unknown until the time of the later prophets.