

cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness." When Jeremiah wrote, Babylon had been attacked by foreign enemies, had been conquered time and again. Sennacherib said that he conquered Babylon. As he marched his soldiers across the city he plowed across it to make it just wasteland, never again a city. And yet we find that in the days of his son it was one of the greatest cities in the world again. It was speedily rebuilt time and again after it was destroyed. It was a place which was a natural center of commerce a place which for centuries had been a great center of civilization. And this isn't just speaking of Babylon, but all the cities of the area. "Her cities are a desolation." Up and down along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers there are maybe 20 cities, some of which had existed for 2000 years as great centers of commerce and civilization, centers from which great armies had gone out to obey the commands of the King of Assyria or Babylon, whichever happened to be in supremacy at that particular time. It was a great center of civilization. Enemies might come through and destroy it, but would it not be rebuilt, would there not new cities be built in the same place? But this says, "Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass by."

We notice that this statement is made here about Babylonia, the cities of Babylon. It doesn't say this about the cities of Palestine, but about Babylon. Now let's suppose it had been said about the cities of Palestine. What would be the situation? In 1921, Prof. William F. Albright, who was later professor at Johns Hopkins University, who was then director of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, went to a hill which was called the Hill of Beans. Here it stood, that desolate hill, just left wild. Nothing was growing on the hill except weeds. Albright went to this hill in order to excavate there because he had a theory that this hill contained the remains of the palace of King Saul. When they got through he had not found written material so he did not have proof of King Saul but the evidence found fit in with all that you read about Saul in the Scriptures, so he was, and remains to this day, quite convinced that he had indeed found the palace of King Saul. At the present, while it can't be said that it's proof, it's very likely that that is what he found.

Well, he wanted to dig into this mound of Telepool. There was no evidence of anyone living on it, so he went and stood on the top of the mound and looked out it; it just looked like a waste, a desolate waste. He saw no signs of anybody living or working or active in the area, and so he hired some men and began to dig into this mound. They hadn't dug five minutes before it looked like the waves of the sea as people came rushing out of mud houses which you wouldn't see as you looked out because they fitted exactly into the nature of the country, these mud huts, and all these people came rushing out, converging on that hill. "What are you doing on our hill? Who gave you the right to dig here?" And on inquiry he found that the hill was owned in 35 shares and some of these shares were owned by several families jointly. In fact, he had investigated and gained this information beforehand, and he knew it would take him two or three months to hunt up all these different families; dicker with them, and try to get a deal to let him dig, so he knew a simpler way was to start digging and then they'd all come to him. So they all came running up to him and he immediately hired some of them to work on the excavation, which would make them a little more friendly disposed and then proceeded to bargain about the right to excavate. "Well," they said, "We are glad to have you dig here; all you have to do is pay us the sum of \$2000 and you're privileged to dig here as much as you want." But he only had \$1500 altogether to pay for the expenses of the excavation, and he couldn't pay the \$2000 and do any excavating, so he let them go to court about it. They went into the courts of Jerusalem, and in the midst of the next 80 days he spent half of the days excavating and the other half in court. They argued and discussed the matter in court, and finally the court appointed assessors to set a fair rate, and they said that if he would pay them the sum of \$35 it would be a fair recompense for rent for digging into this hill. It wasn't much loss of pay, but the time he spent in court each day made him see that this was not a place of which you could say, "Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby."