

There was about the same time, or just a few years after that, a professor in a liberal seminary in California who made some very sweeping statements about the book of Daniel's being untrue, and a friend of mine, a young fellow just out of college at the time, challenged him to a debate on the book of Daniel and he accepted the challenge. Then he found that this young man was familiar with Robert Dick Wilson's writings and had gathered a mass of evidence that disproved the critical attacks on Daniel, and he backed out; the professor backed out of the debate. Well, shortly after that he announced that he was going to conduct an excavation himself, and many thought he was trying to retrieve his reputation from the humiliation that had been suffered from accepting the challenge to this debate and then backing out. Whether it's true or not, I don't know. But this I know, that I visited his excavation, and he selected a very important city in Palestine, some miles north of Tela-vi-pool, but it was just off the main road from Jerusalem north to Samaria. There in one day there would be maybe 150 or 200 tourists who would leave their cars on the main road, climb up the hill, and there, while the expert archaeologists whom this man had hired to do the work were busy making a very worthwhile excavation, he was in the little shack where the finds were brought in. He stood there and told the people about some of the important finds and they returned to America telling about the great archaeologist whom they had met in Palestine. Certainly it is not true here, "Neither doth any son of man pass thereby," about the cities of Palestine. As one archaeologist remarked, "If a man wanted to make a great reputation, this is a wonderful place to excavate, but if you are interested in archaeology and wanting to learn anything about ancient times, it's a very, very bad place to be."

Now this isn't said about Palestine, it is said about Babylonia. And in Babylonia for hundreds of years after Jeremiah wrote there continued to be these great cities all up and down the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. They continued to be great centers of light, centers of industry, centers of civilization, and it looked as if what Jeremiah said was just vain words. Would such a change as described here ever take place? And then something happened that Jeremiah never could have predicted. Up in the mountains north of Mesopotamia those rivers which had for thousands of years been coming down through those mountains in a certain way, gradually broke through at one of the places where they made a curve; they broke through between one valley and the next, and the rivers began coming down through a different valley, than they had before. And so they flowed out onto the plain at a different point, and in the flat plain of Babylonia to the south the rivers flowed down at a different spot than before, and these cities were left high and dry. So they all moved 10 or 20 miles away, and today you find in Mesopotamia great cities, cities with thousands of people in them, centers of great agriculture, centers of great power, but they are 10, 20, 30 miles away from the cities of Babylonia of the time of Jeremiah. Those cities are beside an empty channel through which no water flows, not has flowed now for at least 1500 years, maybe 2000, I don't know exactly; but it is interesting to hear archaeologists who have never read Jeremiah and know nothing about the Biblical prophecy, tell you how Babylonia is today an archaeologists' paradise. It is true you have to haul your water; you may have to haul all your drinking water for 20 or 30 miles over dry, parched land, but it's worth it to be able to work and hardly ever be visited by tourists, instead of 200 or 300 a day coming in to ask you questions; without any local group of people claiming that they own this land and you've got to pay them exorbitant prices unless you spend a long period of time in court discussing the matter. The remains of the cities stand there, "a dry land, a wilderness, a land where no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby," a prediction which was fulfilled in a way which Jeremiah could not possibly have foreseen, but which happened in this one specific place. I know of no other great city of the ancient world of which this prediction could have been made. Surely there was a supernatural leadership directing Jeremiah as to these words which he was to express about this particular group of cities.