

254 *Modern Science and Christian Faith*

of small settlements above the previous ruins. A great depopulation is vividly indicated in the archaeological remains and fits with the sad picture described in Kings and Chronicles and mourned in the Lamentations of Jeremiah.

After this the Bible presents pictures of the life of the Israelites under the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The picture in Daniel of Nebuchadnezzar looking out over his city and saying, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built?" is vividly illustrated by the excavation in Babylon of over a million bricks which had the name and titles of Nebuchadnezzar stamped upon each of them.

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 outpost 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 points of archaeological background, and to see whether the Biblical accounts contain the marks of being late imaginary reconstructions or whether they have indications 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. We must remember that the Bible as we have it represents something that has been copied and re-copied many times. Under such circumstances, the preservation of names of a type no longer used is very difficult. When the Bible refers to an Egyptian or Mesopotamian king, there is the additional problem of the manner of writing a foreign name. This name might contain sounds unfamiliar to the Hebrew ear and be written ordinarily in an entirely different system of writing from that of the Hebrews. The carvers of the monuments had the same problem in reverse, when they dealt with Hebrew names but had to write them in their own system. Under these circumstances it would not be at all strange if the names in the Bible and the names on the monuments were to show little relationship to one another. Yet in dozens of instances we find names of kings in the Bible and on the contemporary records which are easily recognizable as being the same. They occur in the Bible in the chronological order which the monuments show to be correct. To realize how difficult it would be for this to occur accidentally, imagine the average American of today setting out to write a story of events, say in 1838, and correctly naming the governors