

The Bible in the British Museum and in the British Library

A tour of the **British Museum**



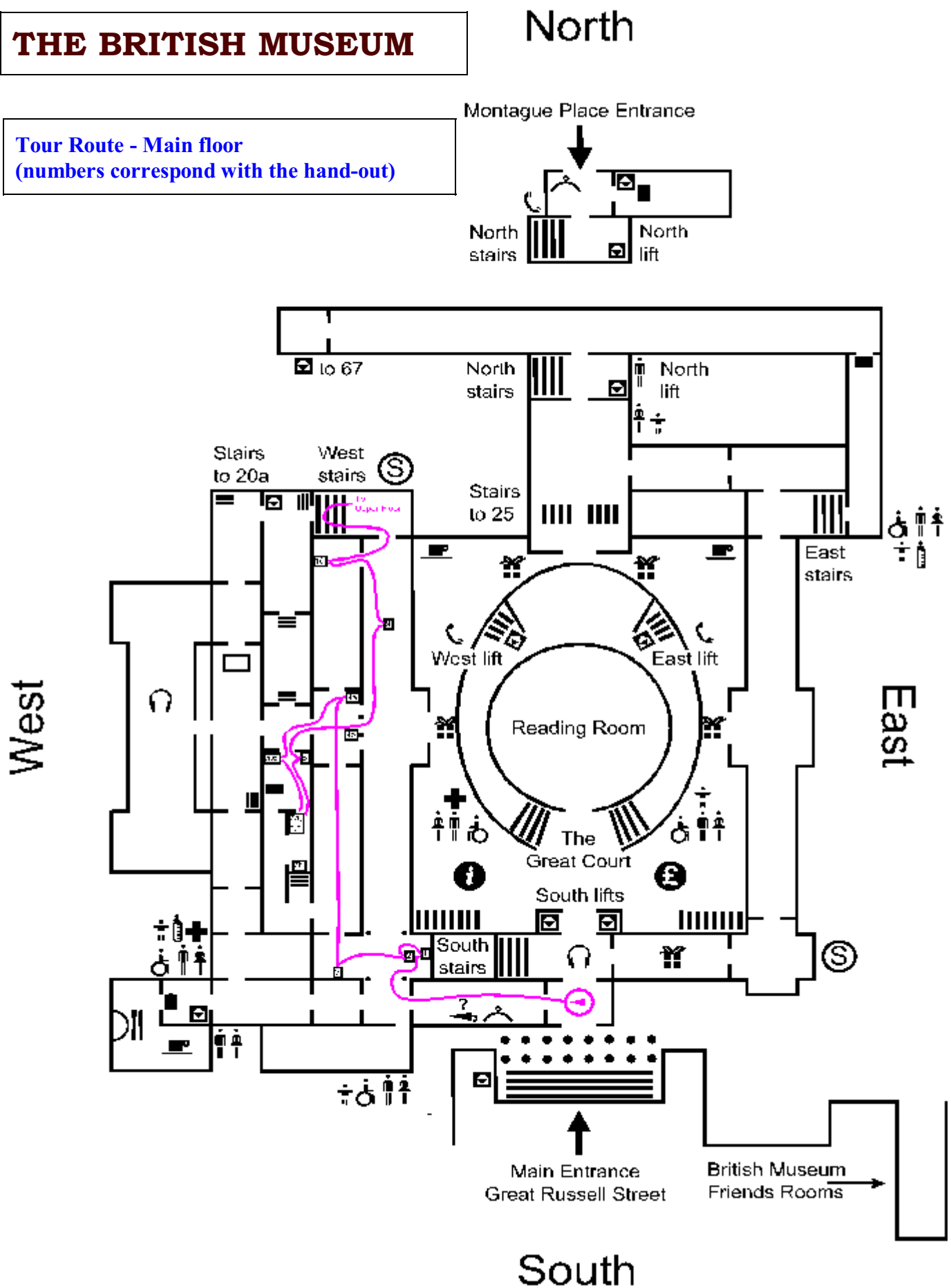
and the **British Library**



looking at Archaeological artifacts, Documents, and
Manuscripts
to support the Bible

THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Tour Route - Main floor
(numbers correspond with the hand-out)



INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to the Biblical tour of the British Museum and the British Library; a tour which sets out to find secular historical corroboration for some of the material found in both the Old and New Testament. Some of the material in this tour is taken from a previous study by Dr. Masters, found in the Sword and Trowel (issues 1996 no.4, 1997 nos. 1-2), now updated, and revised by members of the Hyde Park Christian Fellowship, All Souls, Langham Place.

This tour is not designed to prove that the Bible is the 'Word of God'. Rather, it is designed to look at archaeological, documentary and manuscript evidence to support the historical veracity of the Bible. We do this in order to prove that the Bible is not a book made up, as many historians suggest, of myths and legends, but a book which is quite historically credible. Many people may ask whether this is important, as the Bible never claims to be an historical book. Yet, the Bible does deal with historical material; such as peoples, places, and events. People are found in history, places exist in history, and events happen in history. So it is on that level that we can look and investigate it, corroborating those areas which touch history, and in doing so, verifying its historical veracity.

The Qur'an also talks about peoples, places, and events. Consequently, like the Bible, we must critique it from a historical standpoint as well. The importance of an historical critique is that it employs the most neutral criteria for its investigation, as it uses artifacts, documents, and manuscripts, etc...all of which can be investigated by anyone, providing they are open to scrutiny. It is such an investigation which stands against a bias, one which both sceptics and historians can and do accept.

For this tour we will try to show that when the Bible talks about history; about peoples, places, and events, we can investigate whether those things actually existed or happened, using the most neutral historical data at our disposal, that which is found here, under one roof, and open to our perusal. Once the Bible passes that historical test, we can then look at the other claims it makes, and have a greater confidence in those claims. Any book which contends to be from God, (i.e. the book of Mormons, the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, the Vedas, the Grant Sahib, or the Qur'an), must first pass such a test if they are going to be trusted by the sceptics.

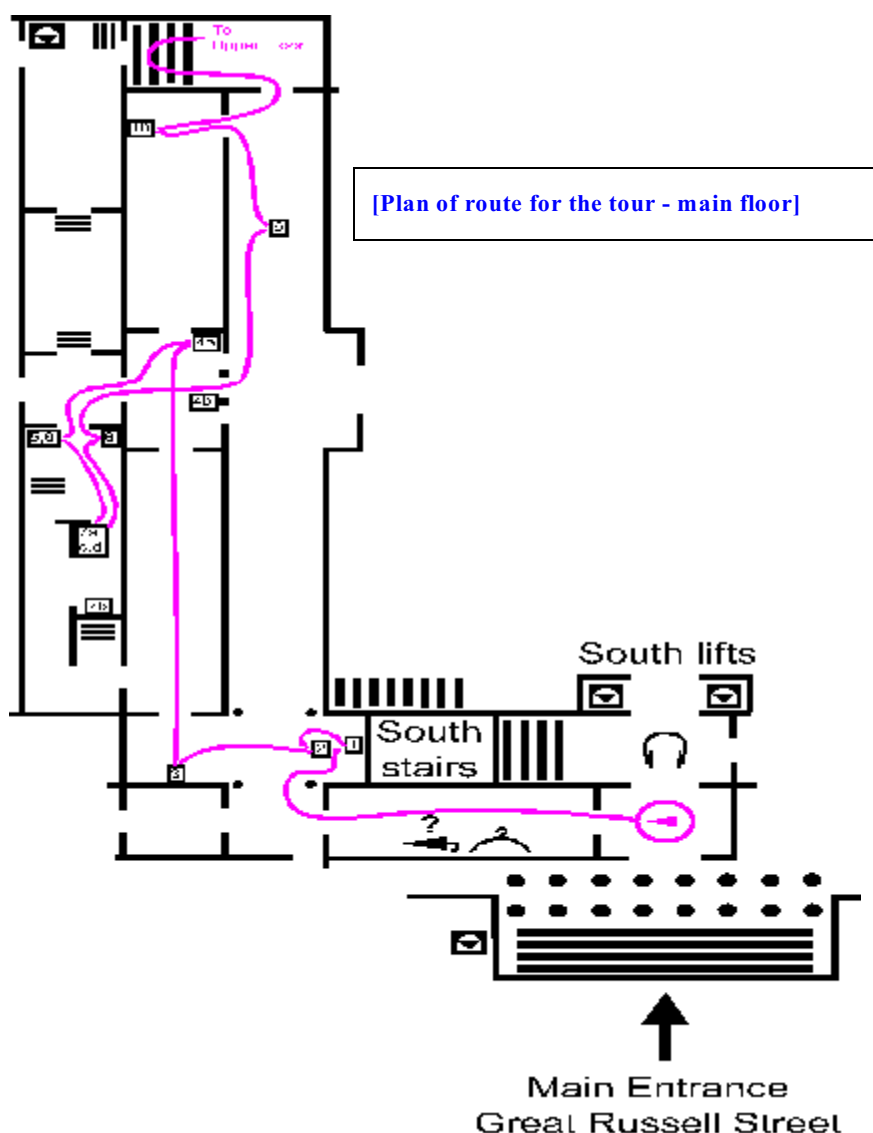
TOUR OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

We begin our tour of the British Museum, where we will primarily look at the historical claims found in the Old Testament. In this tour (see the plan above for the main floor) we will investigate three eras;

1. **The Assyrians period**, 9th-7th c. BC (884-615BC)
2. **The Babylonian period**, 7th-6th c. BC (615-539BC)
3. **The Persian period**, 6th-5th c. BC (539-424 BC)

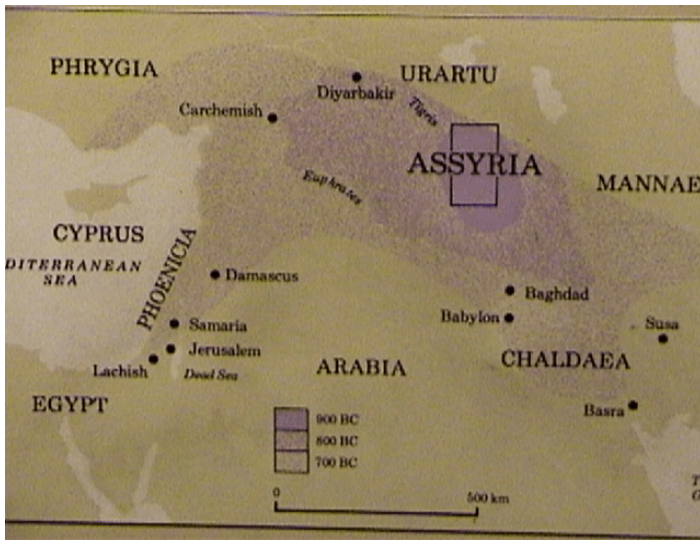
Then we will ask the same questions of Islam; ascertaining whether they have historical corroboration to verify the authenticity of their holy book, the Qur'an. We will look at coins to date the earliest scripts of the Qur'an in order to then date the earliest Qur'anic manuscripts, something Muslim Islamists are reticent to do.

Following this tour, we will move to the British Library, and investigate the early Biblical manuscripts, and attempt to then carry out a comparative between the biblical and Qur'anic manuscripts found there.



Let's now begin the tour with the Assyrian period. As we move from display to display, please refer to the maps provided, using the corresponding room number found on the maps.

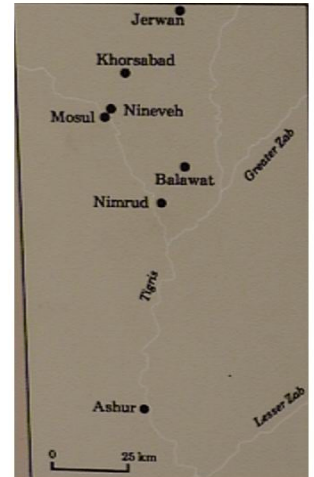
[1] **Monolith (Stella) of Shalmanezzar the 3rd, 859-824BC:**



We will begin with Shalmanezar 3rd. He is an Assyrian king. On the map at left you will find where Assyria is located, North East of Phoenicia (also Palestine, which today is known as Israel).

In the Assyrian period we will be focussing on four major cities; (see map at right)

1. Nimrud,
2. Balawat,
3. Khorsabad
4. Nineveh



Ashurnasirpal II (884-859 BC), who is pictured in the Stella on the right, was the king of Assyria who is credited with building the city of Nimrud.

On the left we find the Stella of Shalmanezar the 3rd (859-824 BC). He is important to our story, because it is he who attacks Phoenicia (Palestine) during the reign of the Israelite King, Ahab, according to 1st Kings 22. Ahab, the king of Israel, and Benhadad the king of Damascus, were at war with each other. Yet suddenly, according to 1st kings 22, for three years these two stopped fighting, though we are not told why. We need to look at this Stella (on the left) to understand what happened.

According to the Cuneiform written on the Stella, we find that in 853 BC, Shalmanezar the 3rd came to Phoenicia and attacked the great king Irhulini, the powerful king of Hamath, who quickly needed help to stave off the Assyrian aggression. He requested the aid of the 14 other kings of the plains, including Ahab and Benhadad, all of whom joined together to repulse Shalmanezar the 3rd. This event thus fills in the mystery of 1st kings 22, providing the answer for the 3-year hiatus, while providing us with a date for this period: 853 BC.

The Stella mentions the battle in detail, assuming victory for the Assyrians by stating that the rivers were dammed with corpses and the valleys flowed with blood. Yet this could not be, because his advance was halted and he never took possession of the land. Obviously, this is a bragging account, which was written as a legacy to embellish that which Shalmanezar the 3rd supposedly accomplished. We will see this repeated with many of the artefacts on this tour. It is only when we go to the Bible that we find a more accurate account of the events. We can see therefore, that both genres of evidence, the Bible and the historical artefacts are needed, one to enlarge the background to the story, the other to provide the dates.

[2] **Black Obelisk, 841BC**



The black obelisk (pictured on the right) is from the time of Shalmanezar 3rd. In Israel Ahab was an evil king, so that after his death (according to 2 Kings 9 & 10), the prophet Elisha went to Jehu, an Israelite military captain, and told him to destroy the entire family of Ahab, and become king himself. Jehu obeyed the orders of Elisha, purged the Baal worship from Israel, and ruled for 28 years (until 814 BC). In the first year of his



reign, however, he attempted to buy the allegiance of Shalmanezzer the 3rd by paying him homage. This is depicted on the black obelisk (see the man bowing down in the picture on the left, above). According to the cuneiform on the obelisk the man bowing down is Jehu. This is the first known depiction of any Israelite king, corroborating the events we read about in 2nd Kings 9&10.

[3] Balawat, mid 9th c. BC



Like all kings before him Shalmanezzer the 3rd wanted to leave his own legacy behind. Ashurnasirpal II is credited for building the great city of Nimrud. Therefore, Shalmanezzer the 3rd built the city of Balawat, a summer palace in the desert, as his legacy. Today it is just a mound in the Assyrian desert

(see picture at left). Mounds like these (referred to as 'Tels'), are typical when travelling through Turkey, Syria and other middle Eastern countries. An archeologist who comes upon such mounds knows there are cities in the many strata laying beneath them.



When cities are destroyed, subsequent cities are built on top of them, resulting in layers of cities. Archaeologists can date the mounds, by digging down through the layers (see picture above, on the right), using the pottery which are found in each layer, or noting the results from fires and floods, and recreate the history of those cities by such artifacts.



The large doors against the wall (pictured at left) are modern reconstructions built by the British Museum of the doors of Balawat. The hinges of the original door are made out of copper, and can be seen in the glass cabinet (see picture on the right). These hinges are important for our tour because on the second top rung we see



men being led with their hands tied behind their backs. These are the prisoners from Hamath, or Syria, being led to the throne of Shalmanezzer the 3rd, proving that king Irhulini of Hamath did fight against him. The Cuneiform on these hinges mention him by name, stipulating that though many of his soldiers were captured, he was not defeated, corroborating, yet again, the events found in 1st Kings 22, this time, not in Nimrud, but in Balawat.

[4] Tiglath-Pileser the 3rd, [745-727BC]



We now skip 5 intermediary kings who are not important for our tour, because they never attacked or had any relationship with Palestine or the Israelites. In the mid 8th century, King Tiglath-Pileser (pictured on the right, and in his chariot on the left), attacked the Israelites twice. He is referred to 9 times in the Bible, primarily as 'Pul' (see 2nd Kings 15:19/20 & 1st Chronicles 5:26). Once he had



attacked and conquered Israel he set up his own king called Menahim, a puppet king, who would pay tribute to him and not usurp his power. It is interesting that the Biblical nick-name for him, 'Pul', is referred to in this mural (on the left), proving that the Biblical writer was correct, in referring to him as such.

[5] Sargon the 2nd, [722-701BC]

Two kings after Tiglath-Pilezer is the great king Sargon the 2nd, depicted on the left of this Stela (see picture at right). He is credited with building the great city of Khorsabad, and is referred to by name in Isaiah 20:1. It is he who attacked the 10 northern tribes of Israel, destroyed them, took them into captivity, and replaced them with his own people (2 Kings 17:6, 24). He did not, however, defeat the southern tribe of Judah, the only tribe which remained true to their God. Though the Bible speaks of Sargon the 2nd in 2nd Kings and in Isaiah, historically, he was not discovered until 1843 AD, when the city of Khorsabad was uncovered and the Nimrud prism was found. Here is a prime example of the archaeologists finally catching up to what the Bible has known for 2,544 years.



[6] Sennacharib, (704-681BC)

The man depicted on the right of this Stela (see picture at right) is Sennacherib, the son of Sargon the 2nd. He did what his father could not, attacking and defeating the southern kingdom of Judah. This king is important for our tour, as there is much written about him in the Bible, particularly in his dealings with the righteous king of Judah, king Hezekiah. It is Sennacherib who is responsible for building the great city of Nineveh.

[7] Lachish room



At the end of the 8th century, in 701 BC, Sennacherib came from Assyria, through Phoenicia, and attacked all the fortified towns of Judah. Except for Jerusalem, Lachish, located southwest of Jerusalem, was the last of all the fortified cities to be attacked and destroyed. (See photo of modern Lachish at left, and an artist's depiction of the ancient city at right).



This room depicts the battle of Lachish (see the mural along the wall, found in the palace of Nineveh, following the story of the battle from left to right).



As archaeologists dug down through the different layers they found artefacts from the battle e.g. balls, slings, arrowheads, bone and metal (see photo at left).

They also found the Taylor Prism (pictured on the right) which is Sennacherib's account of all the battles, including those of Lachish, and Jerusalem, where Hezekiah lived, a righteous king, whom the Lord loved and honoured.



The Taylor Prism, an 8-sided prism, parallels the Biblical account (2nd Kings 19) in 7 areas. Both agree that:

1. Hezekiah rebelled against Sennacherib.
2. The fortified towns of Judah fell.
3. Lachish also fell
4. Hezekiah was shut up in Jerusalem
5. He paid 30 talents of gold in tribute to Sennacherib to gain favour
6. Jerusalem did not fall
7. The Assyrian army left without firing a single arrow at Jerusalem.

Here however is a mystery; why did they leave? The historical record, including the Taylor prism, gives us no reason. We have to go to the Bible to find out the reason. According to the Bible Sennacherib did not capture Jerusalem though he destroyed all the other cities. This is found in 2nd Kings 19:9 & Isaiah 37:9. What was the reason for his sudden departure in the Bible? According to 2 Kings 19:9, and Isaiah 37:9, he had to return because someone was attacking his southern flanks, king Tirhakah of Ethiopia/Egypt. Historians, however, have always puzzled over Tirhakah, as there is no documentation for such a king. Is he the product of a myth or legend? Most Historians think the Bible is full of myths, and Tirhakah is just another example of such a myth. For centuries only the Bible referred to Tirhakah. Later, in this tour we will see how Tirhakah has now been authenticated historically, right here in this

museum. Sennacharib had to return to defend the city of Ninevah against Tirhakah. Once he had defended his kingdom, he returned a 2nd time to Jerusalem.

[8] Hezekiah Mural:

The Mural (pictured at right), written in cuneiform, talks about Hezekiah by name and was found in the palace at Nineveh. According to this mural, Sennacharib returned to Jerusalem a 2nd time, with thousands of warriors to defeat Hezekiah and the city of Jerusalem. Yet suddenly he returns home again without firing another arrow. How would a historian explain this? Here is a great king who suddenly returns back to Assyria empty handed and then is killed by his two sons upon his return. For what reason? Something drastic happened. In order to find out we need to go to 2nd kings 19:35/36. It is here, in the Bible that we find the missing details.



According to the Bible, in the middle of the night, the angel of the Lord came down and destroyed 185,000 of Sennacharib's men. Therefore, he had no choice but to return to Assyria, an embarrassment, unable to explain what had happened. However, these facts are not found on this mural, and for one very good reason; because these murals (as we noted at the beginning of the tour) are bragging accounts. The kings did not record their failures/defeats, so we would not expect to find such a humiliation to be recorded in this mural. Therefore, historians are faced with a dilemma, as they cannot explain why Sennacharib returned empty handed. The Bible provides the solution, filling in the missing details. Both the Biblical and historical accounts inform us that Assyrians never did defeat Jerusalem, nor was Judah ever completely defeated, but it is the Bible which uniquely explains why.

You will notice this mural is blackened, by burning. For the moment take note of this fact, as we will explain the significance later in the tour.

[9] Tirhakah (or Taharkah)

Now we can solve the mystery concerning the ruler Tirhakah. Remember, we saw that Sennacharib had to suddenly return home to Nineveh, because a king referred to in the Bible as Tirhakah was attacking him on his southern flanks (2 Kings 19:9; Isaiah 37:9). Yet there is no secular documentation to support this king; that is until the last century, when this statue (pictured at right) was discovered. The Egyptian hieroglyphics written on this statue refers to the king Tirhakah by name. So this supposedly mythological king is actually historical, proving that when the Bible speaks about him in Isaiah 37, and 2nd Kings 19, it is historically credible and not simply a myth or legend. We now know that Tirhakah was the ruler of the Kushites, which included present day Sudan, North Africa, Egypt, and Ethiopia. He was a great power of that day, so when he attacked Sennacharib, it was a very serious offence. That is why Sennacharib had to return to defend against him, according to 2 Kings 19:9; Isaiah 37:9.



Two years ago in a Southampton museum, there was a statue of a king that was used as a bicycle stand. One of the curators of the British museum went down to Southampton in January of 1999, and when he looked at the figure and hieroglyphics underneath he saw again the reference to Tirhakah. Here was another statue of Tirhakah. The Southampton museum had no idea what they had, a statue from the 8th c. BC in their museum, with no idea as to its importance. So these two statues prove that Tirhakah is historical. Much as we are finding more evidence for Tirhakah we possibly could find further evidence for people or events in the Bible.

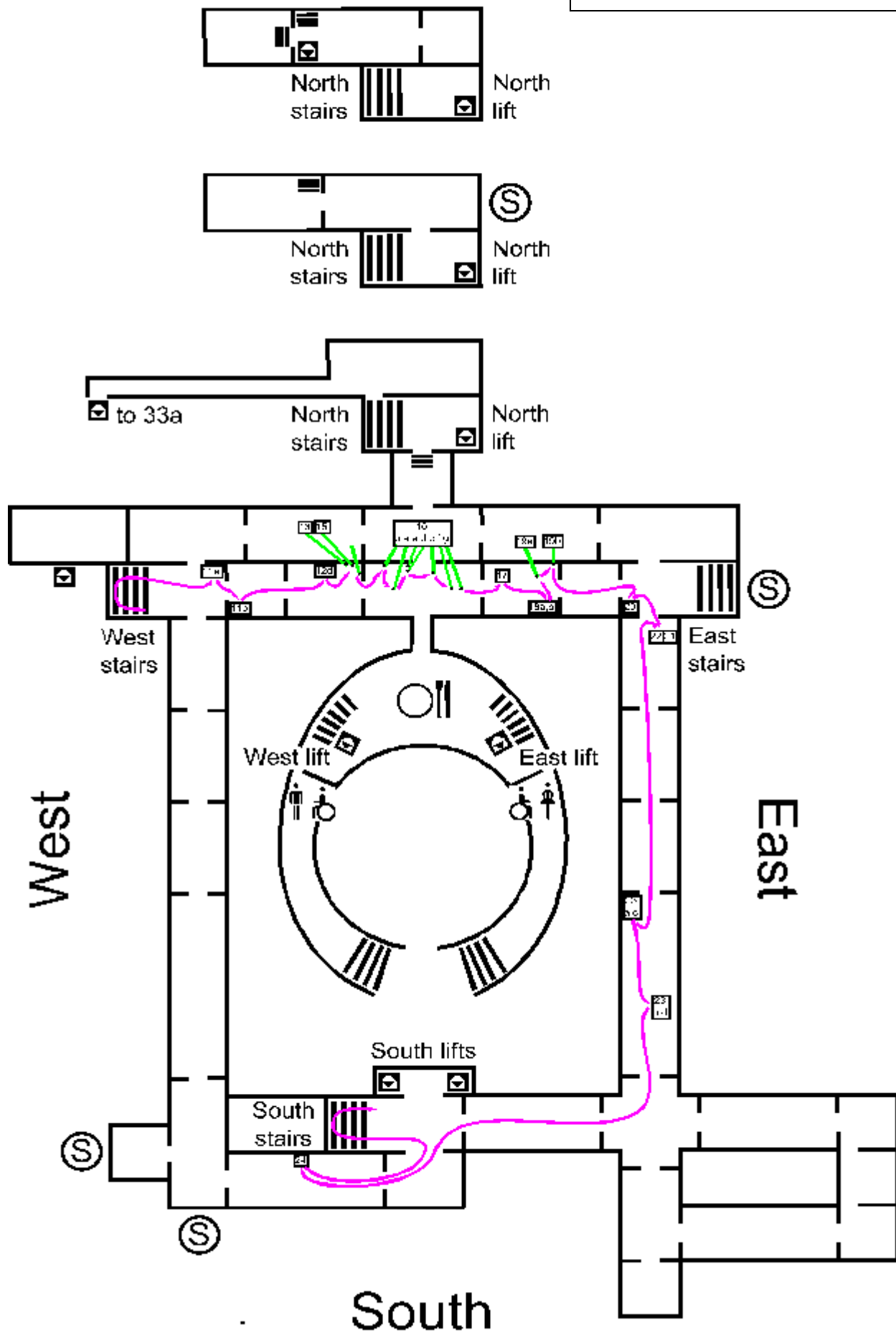
[10] Murals of Nineveh

The prophet Nahum in the book of Nahum 1:10, 2:13, 3:13-15 mentions Nineveh would be destroyed by fire and water, because of its apostasy. Here on these murals (pictured at right), and earlier on the Hezekiah mural, we see evidence of fire damage. When we go upstairs and look at the Babylonian chronicle we will find documentary evidence supporting the events that happened in 615BC where the Babylonians came and destroyed Nineveh, first by firing the palace and then by opening up the Khoser river and flooding out the palace. Not only do we have archaeological evidence here to support that prophesy, we also have documentary evidence upstairs.



North

Upper Floor route for the tour



[11] Jericho

[Note: Abraham = 1900 BC

Moses = 1400 BC

David = 1000 BC]

Now that we are up stairs, we are going to go further back in history; namely to 1400 BC, the time of Moses, as well as 1900 BC, the patriarchal period. Unfortunately the British Museum designs its displays geographically, and not chronologically, forcing us to skip back and forth between different centuries, as we move along the tour.



Black Sabbath, the site of ancient Jericho

We begin with the time of Joshua and the city of Jericho. Jericho is a very important city, one of the oldest cities in the world dating back to beyond 5000BC (see a picture of modern Jericho pictured left). Because of its antiquity, it has been a favourite for archaeologists, and so much good research has been carried out on it. Different teams have dug down through the different layers to try put together its history. At the turn of the last century, in the early 1900's, a German team went to Jericho and dug down to the 1300/1400 BC period. There, they found a lot of rubble outside the city, and soon realized this was part of the ancient wall of Jericho. But they noticed the walls of Jericho were scattered on the outside of the city. If an enemy were attacking from outside the walls, the walls would have naturally fallen in, imploding on themselves, instead of laying strewn around the plain outside. This was a mystery to the archeologists, as it simply did not follow any logic. Yet this

is not a mystery for those who have read the book of Joshua, because the walls were not destroyed by battering rams, but by 'the angel of the Lord' (Joshua 6:20), the same character we came across down stairs, who was responsible for eradicating the soldiers of Sennacharib.

[12] Tablets

Historians have often shed doubt on the historicity of the Genesis account, claiming that many of its cities, because of little to no historical corroboration, are simply mythological or legendary. For instance, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah had never been found and there was no documentation to corroborate their existence. The name of Ur, where, according to the Bible, Abraham came from, also had little to no corroboration or documentation. The Hittite's and the Horite's are two civilizations with no supportive evidence. All of these cities were deemed nothing more than legendary; that is until recently. Further on in this tour we will speak and show evidence for all these cities and civilizations.

The strongest case for extra-Biblical corroboration of the Patriarchal period are found in four sets of tablets which have been and are continuing to be uncovered from that area of the world. They demonstrate that the Biblical account is indeed historically reliable. Let's briefly look at all four sets of tablets:

- a. Mari tablets from Euphrates
- b. Nuzi tablets from Mesopotamia
- c. Ebla tablets from Syria
- d. Armana tablets from Egypt (pictured at right).

These tablets are beginning to give us a picture concerning what was happening in 1900 BC, at the time of Abraham, and 1400 BC, during the time of Moses and Joshua. Tablets are particularly good pieces of evidence because they are made out of clay, and fired, so that they do not disintegrate, and remain pristine for centuries. These specific tablets are written in cuneiform, a language which we can easily read and translate



a. *The Mari and Nuzi tablets* of Euphrates and Mesopotamia were written around 2000 BC. The *Mari* tablets (from the Euphrates) mentions king *Arriyuk*, or *Arioch* of Genesis 14, and lists the towns of *Nahor* and *Harran* (from Genesis 24:10), as well as the names Benjamin and *Habiru*.

The Nuzi tablets (from Mesopotamia/Iraq) speak about a number of customs which we find in the Pentateuch, such as:

- 1) a barren wife giving a handmaiden to her husband (i.e. Hagar)
- 2) a bride chosen for the son by the father (i.e. Rebekah)
- 3) a dowry paid to the father-in-law (i.e. Jacob)
- 4) work done to pay a dowry (i.e. Jacob)
- 5) the unchanging oral will of a father (i.e. Isaac)
- 6) a father giving his daughter a slave-girl (i.e. Leah, Rachel)
- 7) the sentence of death for stealing a cult gods (i.e. Jacob).

Now remember many historians believe that book of Genesis was written in the 6th c. and was redacted back on to the 19th c. Yet we find 7 customs in the Mari tablets that exactly parallel what we find in the Abrahamic account, written close to this time period. Therefore, how could someone writing in the 6th c. BC have known so accurately what was happening in the 19th c. BC, unless they had been eyewitnesses to those events. Many historians are now realizing the Bible is a lot more accurate concerning the time period of which it speaks.

c. Ebla tablets (Sodom and Gomorrah)

Many historians have doubted the historicity of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, as there is no documentation for them. The great historian Herodotus who was writing in 6th c. never referred to these two cities. Then in 1975, archeologists, while digging at Tell Mardikh (popularly known as the city of Ebla) came across 17,000 tablets in a room which had imploded on itself, dated to around 2300 BC. Many of these were trading tablets. They started translating these documents, which were written in cuneiform. The importance of these tablets points out that a thousand years before Moses, laws, customs and events were recorded in writing in that part of the world, and that the judicial proceedings and case laws were very similar to the Deuteronomy law code (i.e. Deuteronomy 22:22-30 codes on punishment for sex offenses)

While digging at Tell Mardikh, they came across one tablet, a trading document, which mentions 5 cities; the cities of *Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Zoar*. When we read Genesis 14:8, we will find the exact same 5 cities mentioned in the exact same order. These are the 5 cities which Abraham went to defend in 1900 BC, yet they are found on an Ebla tablet in the same order in 2300 BC, showing that Sodom and Gomorrah are historical. But more than that, the sequence used points to their geographical location on the plains, much like we do when we talk about the Levant; referring to the cities Basra, Baghdad, Damascus, Jerusalem and Cairo, in that order. Yet how could someone have known about these 5 cities if they were writing in the 6th c. BC, because these two cities were destroyed during the time of Abraham in the 20th c. BC. Yet it was Moses who wrote the book of Genesis in 1400 BC between four to five hundred years later. So how did Moses know about these 5 cities so accurately? There in is indeed a mystery. He was could not have been an eyewitness of these cities, as they had been destroyed 400 yrs before him. Herodotus didn't know anything about them, in fact there were no historians who knew about the cities. Yet we now find them mentioned here in the Ebla tablets.

If these cities were products of oral tradition, there would have been embellishment, and they would not have talked about Sodom and Gomorrah, because they would have realized they were inaccurate as no one talked about the cities. Yet today, we know those cities were historical. Historians don't know how to explain this. We however, proving the bible is very accurate. Its even accurate for time periods where the author wasn't even living, yet he still knew exactly what these great cities were and the order in which they should be listed. This suggests that the book of Genesis could not have been written in 6th c. BC, but was more than likely written either by Moses, who was inspired by God or another eyewitness. Its this kind of historical accuracy which gives us confidence in our scriptures.

a. Armana tablets: In 1887 AD hundreds of ancient letters were discovered at a place called Armana, in Egypt. These letters (some of which are pictured on the right) were written on clay tablets, sent from Palestine, to two Pharaohs; Amenhotep III & IV, between the years 1400 BC and 1367 BC. This is the same time period when Joshua and the children of Israel were moving into Palestine. These letters, written in Babylonian, refer to hostilities by a people named the *Hapiru*. Many Biblical scholars believe the *Hapiru* are the same as the Hebrew, a roving war like people. The governor of Jerusalem wrote several of these letters appealing for help. In the book of Joshua 12:9-24, the author refers to 31 city states which he destroyed, bringing an end to the independent states, while leaving only a few self sufficient political states in Southern Canaan. This scenario confirms the picture we find in the *Armana* letters, reflecting the survival of only 4 independent city states with their own kings, testifying to the results of Joshua's conquest.

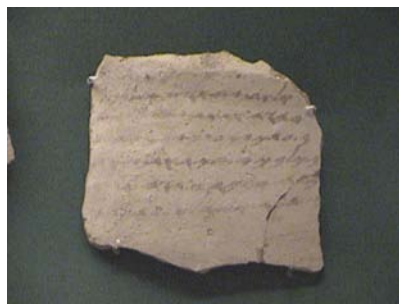


[13] Lachish letters



These are letters taken from the city of *Lachish*, in the 6th c. BC, (not the 8th c. BC, which we were talking about before). Remember *Lachish*, though it was destroyed by the Assyrians, was rebuilt and then repopulated again by the Israelites later on. It was then destroyed a second time by Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king in 586 BC, during the time of Jeremiah the prophet, and Zedekiah the Israelite king. At that time these letters (some of which are pictured at left) were written to ask for help from Jerusalem, against Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king.

What is interesting is that one of these shards (pictured at right) mentions the personal name of the Lord, YHWH in Hebrew, the 'tetragrammaton'. This is the earliest reference we have to the name Yahweh in any piece of literature, proving that Yahweh was a well-known word, though it didn't have any vowelization. It only had the four letters, YHWH. We now know that this was the name that Moses was given in Exodus 3:15 by



God to be his personal name, by which he would

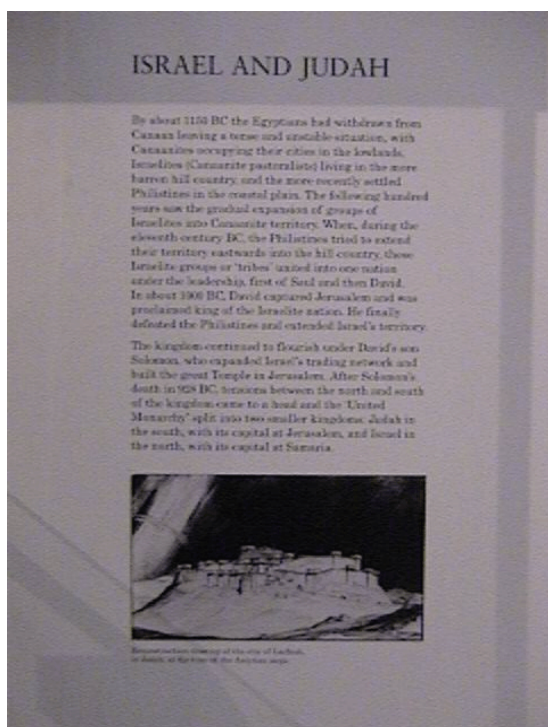
be remembered from generation to generation. Thus all the prophets knew this name. This is the first reference we have of it in literature, as early as the 6th C. This substantiates something as important as God's personal name.

[14] Shebna's tomb

To be written about at a latter date (pictured at right).



[15] David/Solomon Mural



You will have noticed that throughout this tour we have been looking for historical corroboration of events from the Biblical text. As we have moved from display to display it has become apparent that the Bible is credible in light of history. This seems to have become evident to those who work here at the British Museum. For example, notice the David and Solomon mural on the wall (photo at left). It is the story of Israel and Judah, written in paraphrase form, taken from that found in the Bible. Yet, what is the British Museum doing sticking up the story of Israel and Judah from the Biblical accounts on its walls? The British Museum is the most skeptical of institutions. They have always been skeptical of the Bible, asking whether or not it is historical. Yet, here they are borrowing the biblical account to portray what they believe happened in Israel. This mural was only put up in 2001.

It is almost as if the British Museum has realized that 'the more you scratch, the more you find, and the more you find, the more WE shine'. Perhaps in a few years there will be many murals on the walls taken from the Biblical account, proving its accuracy.

The accuracy we see with the Tirhakah statue downstairs, the accuracy we see with Jericho, the accuracy seen with the Armana tablets, Mari tablets, the Ebla and Nuzi tablets, even the accuracy shown with the names of Sodom and Gomorrah, the city of Ur, and the people called the Horites and Hittites;

all of these point to the historical credibility of the Bible.

As Jasper mentions in his writings, different schools of thought, philosophies and sciences are ascending the heights of knowledge. As they climb that great mountain of knowledge, soon they'll get close to the pinnacle at the very top; yet when they get there, they'll find the theologians waiting for them.

We need not be threatened by these artifacts, nor run away from them. It is important that we do investigate them critically and put them in a time framework, and not shy away from asking the difficult questions. It is when we do, that we come to conclusions, ones which substantiate the authenticity of the Biblical account. Many historians have always considered the Bible to be nothing more than an accumulation of oral tradition, written long after the accounts, redacted back, and considered mythological. But now much of this can be corroborated by historical evidence.

[16] UR



The city of Ur, in Mesopotamia, is another example of that which was considered mythological, now being proven by archaeological evidence. Many of the objects in this room come from this once mythological city of UR. We now know where it is, that it is not a fictitious city, and that Abraham could quite easily have come from this city.

Within this room we will see harps (photo at far left), as well as trinkets, and tablets from the city of Ur (photos at left). We will see artifacts which were found in the death pits from Ur, as well as a beautiful standard of a ram eating from a thorn bush, made out of gold and *Lapis Lazuli* (pictured on the right).



This could very well be the same city Abraham left in 1900BC, when by faith, he obeyed the injunction of the Lord, to leave his land and go to where the Lord directed (Genesis 12; Hebrews 11).

[17] The Babylonian Chronicle

Downstairs we saw the walls of Nineveh blackened by fire. This was archaeological evidence which suggests the veracity of the book of Nahum chapters 1-3. Here we find the Babylonian chronicle, which recounts the story of the Babylonians, not only destroying the city of Nineveh with fire, but opening the flood gates of the Khoser river, and flooding the palace, affirming the very events found in Nahum through documentation.

[18] Flood/Creation Tablets



The tablets of the flood (on the right), and the Epic of Creation (on the left), written in Cuneiform, are taken from amongst other records, the Gilgamesh epic, a well known document, though based on oral tradition. Many people believe it is these tablets that are the source for the Genesis account of the creation and flood. This is easy to understand, as the assumption is that the Bible was written long after these traditions were passed down. What we need to understand is that the stories in these tablets do not parallel exactly what we have in the Biblical account. This stands to reason, because since they are oral tradition, they are

passed down from generation to generation, and therefore are open to embellishment. What is interesting is that the core story parallels what we find in the Biblical text.



We have over 200 different cultures which recount a story of a flood, sometimes a local flood, while at other times a universal flood, proving the universality of this account. Yet, there is an important difference between these accounts and what we have in the Genesis report. When you look at the oral accounts, they take you nowhere. There is no background, nor foundation to these stories at all. They are nothing more than folk tales or stories for children. Yet when you look at the Genesis account, especially the story of creation, found in chapters 1 - 3, we find a qualitative difference, which is foundational for the rest of the Bible. It is difficult to understand the core themes of the Bible, unless you understand what happened in the Garden of Eden, after the 6-day creation. Therefore, it is imperative that we do a comparison between the tablets and Biblical account.

The oral traditions are nebulous, are not foundational, nor significant, while the Biblical references to creation are enormously foundational for the entire Biblical story. They are not written for story telling, nor as fairytales, nor by happenstance, nor for entertainment, but are written to give an historical and significant consecutive account of creation on which the entire scope of history is founded. Thus, when each prophet speaks about the sin of man, he is referring back to the fall, which we find referred to in Genesis 3. Every prophet and every book is dependent on the Genesis account, rendering it a lot more importance as well as accuracy. We do not find embellishment, nor material of a fantastic nature in the Genesis account. Every part of the Genesis account is imbued with portent, or some theological importance.

[19] Nabonidus Drum

(Fall of Babylon in 539 BC, the mid 6th c. BC)

The book of Daniel is not liked by historians because it includes so many prophecies, which imply a God who enters time and space, an assumption many secular historians find anathema.

Daniel prophesied four kingdoms, two of them which existed during his life time, (the kingdom of Babylon which he lived under, and the Persian kingdom of Cyrus the Great). Then he refers to the great kingdoms to come, that of the Greeks under Alexander the Great, and his 3 generals, in the 3rd century BC, 300 years after Daniel, as well as the Romans who came to power in the 2nd c. BC. Yet the book of Daniel was written in the 6th c. BC. How could Daniel have known what was happening 3/4 hundred years later? Consequently, historians have tried to find anything with which to discredit the book of Daniel, and they thought they had succeeded, pointing to the Biblical name of the king who was in power at the time of Daniel, Balshazzar.

Remember, it was at Balshazar's feast that Daniel interpreted the writing on the wall. And it was due to his interpretation, that Balshazar turned to Daniel and accredited him, saying "Because of what you have done you will be named number 3 in the kingdom" (Daniel 5:16). This has always been a curiosity; why number 3 in the kingdom, not the second, if Balshazzar was the first? Historians believe that this proves that the book of Daniel was not written in 6th c. because Balshazar is not the last king. The last king of the Babylonians is named Nabonidus. All the artefacts displayed from this period (in room 55) are written by Nabonidus. The historian Herodotus, writing in the 5th c. BC, roughly 100 years later, substantiates this by mentioning that the last king of the Babylonians was Nabonidus. He was therefore in power when Cyrus destroyed Babylon. Thus, whomever wrote the book of Daniel could not have not been around at the time of 6th c. BC, as he would have only known what Herodotus knew. Therefore, the book of Daniel was probably written in the 2nd c. BC, during the time of the Romans, and redacted back on the person of Daniel from the 6th c. BC. It seems the historians have us over 'a drum'. That is until a real drum was discovered at the Zigurat of Ur (pictured at right).



A. This drum contains a prayer written in cuneiform by Nabonidus for his son Balshazar. Balshazar's name is on that drum. Suddenly we now know Balshazar is historical. He isn't fictitious, but the son of Nabonidus. However, all these artefacts refer to the fact that Nabonidus was the last king of the Babylonians. How then can we align this fact with the Biblical text? To answer that question we need to go to another tablet found fifteen feet away, tablet 26 (photo at the right).

B. This tablet mentions that Nabonidus, for the last 10 years of his reign, went down to Teman in Arabia, in semi retirement, and left the ruling of his kingdom to his son. The tablet does not mention the name of his son. This name we find from Nabonidus's prayer drum, the same name we find in the book of Daniel. So the last 10 years of his life he was in Teman, whilst his son was ruling the kingdom. Therefore, they were co-regents together. So when, in Daniel 5:16, when Balshazar turns to Daniel and says, "I'll make you number 3 in the kingdom," we now know what he was talking about as he and his father were numbers one and two. How could someone writing in the 2nd century have known something as specific as that? How could someone in the 2nd century know it was Balshazar that was in Babylon at the time, while Nabonidus was away south in Arabia? Not even Herodotus, writing a hundred years later knew this. The reason is very clear due to the fact that all the artefacts which Herodotus would have had access to, were written by Nabonidus, the senior king at that time. Balshazar, because he was a co regent, before he could do any exploits or become senior king, Darius destroyed Babylon and with it any evidence for the name of Balshazar.



This evidence now suggests that whoever wrote the book of Daniel had to have been an eyewitness to the events. Daniel was the eyewitness, not Herodotus; therefore the Bible is even more accurate than Herodotus, the great historian. This fact alone presents a dilemma for the historians. From these two little artefacts, we can prove Daniel was written in the 6th c. BC, that it is more accurate than any other piece of historical writing, and consequently it could not have been written in 2nd c. BC.

So, what does that do to the Book of Daniel? If Daniel was written in the 6thC, then it includes very real prophesies. For the Christians this is exciting, because the book of Daniel is full of references to the Son of Man, the Messiah, and delineates it as a divine title. Daniel 7:14 *'the son of man will be from everlasting to everlasting and will have dominion over all the earth, tribes, nations, tongues.'* So when the Jews heard Jesus claim that he was the 'son of man', they knew exactly what he was talking about, because they had read the book of Daniel, and believed it. They knew the significance of what the son of man was. Only a divine person could claim that title for himself. Only God himself could claim to have dominion over every nation, tribe, peoples and tongues. These two artefacts, the drum and the tablet, corroborate the dating and the content of the book of Daniel 'in one fell swoop'.

[20] Hittites



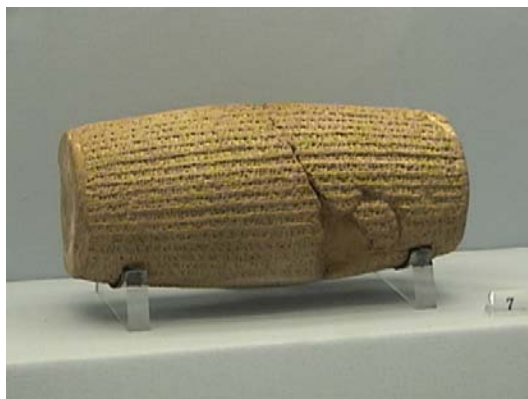
Earlier, we mentioned that historians have generally considered the Bible to be made up of myths and legends. An example of this is the reference to the Hittite people in the book of Genesis. Yet no documentation had been found of these people; therefore, the Hittites, according to many secular historians, were not historical. Looking at the



artifacts on the walls of room 53 (photo at right) we can see that they are all from the neo-Hittite civilization, proving that the Hittites were indeed historical (see map of their location on map at left). We now know that the

Hittites existed for over a thousand years in what is today the southern parts of Turkey, Anatolia.

[21] Cyrus Cylinder



Cyrus the Great had Darius destroy Babylon in 539 BC. Yet curiously, according to the books Ezra and Nehemiah, Cyrus, once he had destroyed Babylon, let the Israelites return back to Jerusalem to rebuild it, as well as the temple. Many historians mistrust this Biblical account, as this would be anathema for a king to destroy an enemy and then let them go back and rebuild their temple and city, creating a power base from which they could attack him. There is no precedence for this in history, so the Biblical accounts are considered suspect. That is until they came across this cylinder, written by Cyrus, which parallels the Biblical account. Whether historians like it or not they have to deal with their own artefacts, which relate the same story as the prophets Ezra and Nehemiah, substantiating what the Bible says. Cyrus must have been very confident to allow the Israelites to return and rebuild their land.

[22] Xerxes

You will note a tablet (photo at right) written by Xerxes, the king of Esther, corroborating the historicity for this king, which gives us added confidence for the book of Esther.



[23] Artixerxes



On display are artefacts, dinner ware (see picture below), from the temple of Artixerxes, who is the son of Xerxes, the husband of Queen Esther. These are the same plates that were in the palace Esther lived in, therefore, she could possibly have eaten off these plates.

We have now looked at the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian periods, and found corroboration for our scriptures. Let's now move on through the only part of the British Museum which actually has anything to do with Britain, and look at some early Roman Christian artefacts from around the 4th century AD.

[24] 'Kyro'

In the 4th c. AD, the Romans controlled Britain. Among many of the Romans living in Britain were Christians, who put Christian symbols (the 'Kyro' and Ichthus fish) to represent their religious allegiance. One of the villas (*in St. Hinton*) on a mosaic floor, depicted the earliest known image of Christ found in the world (Photo below, far left). This image has the 'Kyro' sign behind his head, the first two Greek letters of Christ's name, (XR - see photos above). We will see many signs on the Roman artefacts in room 49 of the 'Kyro', especially on dinner ware, some even including the Alpha and Omega (bottom right).



ARCHAEOLOGISTS COMMENTS ON THE BIBLE:

G.E. Wright states, "We shall probably never prove that Abram really existed...but what we can prove is that his life and times, as reflected in the stories about him, fit perfectly within the early second millennium, but imperfectly within any later period."

Sir Frederic Kenyon mentions, "The evidence of archaeology has been to re-establish the authority of the Old Testament, and likewise to augment its value by rendering it more intelligible through a fuller knowledge of its background and setting."

William F. Albright (a renowned archaeologist) says, "The excessive skepticism shown toward the Bible by important historical schools of the 18th and 19th centuries, certain phases which still appear periodically, has been progressively discredited. Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history."

Millar Burrows of Yale states, "On the whole, archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the scriptural record."

Joseph Free confirms that while thumbing through the book of Genesis, he mentally noted that each of the 50 chapters are either illuminated or confirmed by some archaeological discovery, and that this would be true for most of the remaining chapters of the Bible, both Old Testament and New Testaments.

Nelson Glueck (a Jewish Reformed scholar and archaeologist) probably gives us the greatest support for the Bible when he states, "To date no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a single, properly understood biblical statement."

[25] Muslim Coins

We have seen many artefacts which corroborate the Bible. We must ask Muslims the same question...i.e., what do Muslims have to corroborate the Qur'an? What do they have to corroborate the historicity, or the time period, of the initial writing of the Qur'an? We know when the Bible was written. The Muslims claim the Qur'an was written in the mid 7th c., compiled during the time of the Caliph Uthman around 650 AD. Thus, roughly 20 years after Muhammad's death.

Tradition tells us that four copies of the original Qur'an were made, and sent to the four cities of Basra, Baghdad, Damascus, and one left in Medina. Yet where are those four manuscripts? They should exist, as there is no reason not to have documentation from the 7th c., as durable velum was used for mss since the 4th c.

Muslims say there are two mss that exist; one is the Topkapi ms found in Istanbul (pictured on the right); the other is the Samarkand ms, found in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. At first glance they look authentic. Yet how can we date, and know whether a document is authentic? One has to compare it with documents of a similar time. Why? Because when looking at mss, the scripts change and evolve, (i.e. different types of lettering changes, such as the English 'f' used to be an 'S', over a hundred years ago). A professional can look at the Samarkand and Topkapi mss right away and see that they employ the wrong script. If they had been written in the 7th c. as Muslims claim, they should have been written in the Hijazi script. Since we don't have mss from that period we need to therefore go to coins to see how the Arabic script evolved.



As we mentioned earlier styles of letter formation change over time, and these changes tend to be uniform as manuscripts were usually written by professional scribes, with the result that the penmanship tended to follow easy-to-delineate conventions, with only gradual modifications (Vanderkam 1994:16). If only we could examine the handwriting in texts whose dates were already known, we would then be able to note the development of the script over time, comparing them with other undated texts, and thereby ascertaining the time period in which they belonged. Unfortunately, until recently it was difficult to carry out this exercise as there simply were no manuscripts which the palaeographer could go to for models of the development of the Arabic script. Fortunately that difficulty has been alleviated somewhat. We have at our disposal coins from the earliest Muslim dynasties which are dated and which use extensive Qur'anic inscriptions. It is when we look at them that we find this clear evolution in the Arabic script.

The Arabs of the conquest had no coinage of their own. Thus the earliest coins from the 'Umayyad' Dynasty were adaptations of Byzantine and Sasanian prototypes (see coin on the right, above; taken from *Islamic Coins*, by Michael L. Bates, American Numismatic Society, NY, 1982, pgs.4-6). They were used by the caliphs: Mu'awiyah 661-680 AD, Yazid I 680-683 AD, by Mu'awiyah II 683-684 AD, and finally by Marwan I from 684-685 AD. Thus these coins were in constant use from the time of the caliph Uthman (656 AD), right on through the Sufyani period and part of the Marwanid period of the early Umayyad Dynasty up to as late as 705 AD (Bates 1982:5-7). One will note that they employ imperial portraits borrowed from the Sassanid and Byzantine era, sometimes adding short Arabic inscriptions.



In 692 AD, the Caliph at that time, Abd al-Malik is credited with an 'Arabization' policy, throwing out all Byzantine Christian influences and replacing it with an Arab emphasis, replacing the images on the coins with ones of his own (see coin above). It is interesting to note that people were pictured on the face of the coin, a practice which one would think would not have been permitted by early Islam. These earliest coins show remnants of a cross on a pedestal (though the cross-piece itself has been removed), echoing the Byzantine Christian icon behind these coins.



These experiments in Muslim iconography were to be short-lived, however, for Islam forbade the use of objects or images as vehicles of devotion. Thus the caliph Abd al-Malik introduced the first purely Islamic coins in the form of gold dinars around 697 AD.



It is apparent that there are no icons or pictures on these coins (pictured on the right and left). Only Arabic inscriptions are permitted using a pre-Kufic (or *Mashq*?) script. What is of most importance for our discussion here, however, is that the majiscules in this script are all upright and close together, and therefore distinctly different from the later Kufic script.

These coins, introduced by Abd al-Malik at the end of the seventh century (during the Marwanid period) were used by the caliphs Walid from 705-715 AD, by Suleyman from 715-717 AD, by Umar II from 717-720 AD, by Hisham from 720-743, and finally by





Marwan II from 744-750 AD. Thus all of the Umayyad caliphs from Abd al-Malik's time used these coins which employed this same pre-Kufic script.

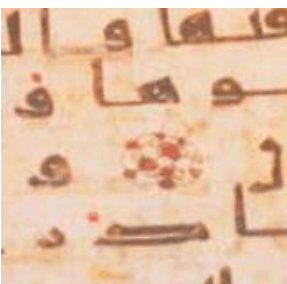


From the Abbasid period we find a change in the coinage (see pictured here on the right and left). The capital of Islam was moved down to Baghdad, and the caliphs in that area changed the coinage to reflect their own identity. The script which they employed on their coins reveals much for our current discussion. Notice the coins which were produced from 745 AD onwards.

The silver and gold Dirhams pictured date from 745 AD to 837 AD, which would place them from the early Abbasid period onwards. What one notices right away is

the script that is used on these coins. This is the official Kufic script. It is an elongated script, in that there is a horizontal line employed between the majiscules (letters - pictured on the right). It is this script which we find in the Topkapi and Samarkand manuscripts of the Qur'an. Compare the script found in the Topkapi manuscript, and the coin on the right. The scripts are indeed similar. Both use the long horizontal lines between the majiscules, typical of the Kufic script.

What these coins show us is that the Kufic script which we find evidenced in both the Topkapi and Samarkand manuscripts was probably not introduced into Islamic writing until the Abbasid period, or after 750 AD, as it is only then that we find this script evidenced on any coins. Thus, neither of these documents could have been written or compiled in the mid-seventh century, as the script which was used then was a pre-Kufic script, also evidenced by the coins above.

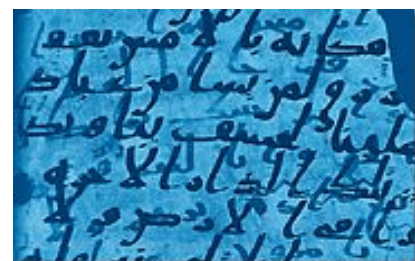


There are other problems with the mss. There are medallions pictured on them (see the small portion pictured on the left). Medallions point out every 10th verse. Muslims say these were put much later and were not therefore in the original mss. However, there is a gap to accommodate each medallion. That means that whoever wrote this ms, wrote the script, put the gaps in there, with the intention of adding the medallions 100 years later. The fact that they knew where to put the gaps shows that they knew where the verses ended. Yet versification was only delineated/canonized in the mid 8th Century. So these mss had to have been written after the mid 8th Century.



Thus, by looking at the script, by looking at the medallions, as well as the format, (the fact that they employ the landscape format, borrowed from the Christian Syriac mss of the 8th c. AD) all suggest that possibly these mss were written much later, as late as the early 9th c. They are much more recent than

the Muslims like to believe. That means they have a problem, so were are the originals? Muslims cannot come up with any originals.



More will be said in years to come concerning an even older Qur'anic manuscript, that found in Sanaa, in 1975 (see ms in photo on left and above), and now being researched by Drs. Gerd Puin and Dr. Von Bothmer. Using the criteria of script identification, we can now date this manuscript to the early eighth century, yet it does not parallel exactly the Qur'an which we use today. The ramifications of these new findings have yet to be realised. But this then leads us into the whole area of manuscript analysis, which must be undertaken at the British Library, and it is to that institution we now turn.

TOUR OF THE BRITISH LIBRARY MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE FOR THE NEW TESTAMENT

For years historians believed that the New Testament books, especially the gospels and the book of Acts were erroneous, or exaggerated stories of the life of Jesus and the early church. In order to respond to this criticism, it is important to employ the same criteria we used in the British Museum, namely, to investigate references to 'peoples, places, and events', in order to corroborate their historical authenticity. For the New Testament, the best place to look for these historical materials is the book of Acts, as the author (Luke), a physician, was interested in history himself, and so included quite a few references to peoples, places and events.

The Problem with Dating

A common accusation concerns how we can know when the New Testament originals were written? Here the book of Acts will help us as a guide in dating. For instance, in Acts 18:12, it mentions a proconsul called Gallio. However, historians say the great 1st century historian, Pliny, never mentioned Gallio was a proconsul, as proconsuls didn't come into existence until the late 1st century. Therefore, they contend, the book of Acts must be wrong, possibly because it was written after Pliny, in the 2nd century, and then redacted on to the emerging church of the 1st century. That was until the Delphi inscription was found. It mentions that for one year Gallio was a proconsul, in 52AD. This find not only proves that the book of Acts is correct, but it suggests that the author of Acts must have been an eyewitnesses in the 1st century, to have been so accurate.

Since Jesus was crucified in 33AD, we can date the book of Acts to within 20 years of his death, not only because of the dating of this inscription, but of other significant historical events which are not included in the book, yet should be since they would have affected the earlier church enormously. For example, the martyrdom of Stephen is mentioned (Acts 7/8), but other martyrdoms such as James in AD 62, Paul in AD 64, and Peter in AD 65 are not. The rebellion of the Jews in Jerusalem in AD 66, and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 are missing from the book of Acts as well. The reason; because they all occurred after the book of Acts was written. Therefore, due to this internal evidence, the book of Acts can possibly be dated between 52 - 62 AD, while three of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), written before Acts, would thus have been penned within 20-30 years of Christ's death on the cross. While the gospel of John is dated to around 80 AD, we can agree with Albright who states, **"We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about AD 80."** (Albright RDBL,136)

This is significant, as it suggests that they were all written while the disciples, those who had lived and travelled with Jesus during his 3 years of ministry, were still in Jerusalem, and therefore, would have been on hand to either accept or deny their content. The writers of some of the New Testament documents assume this internal corroboration by pointing to the veracity of that which they speak about:

Internal challenge in the New Testament: 'For we are witnesses of these things'

Within the New Testament texts, there is built in an internal challenge. The writers themselves challenge the audience they are talking/writing to, to accept or disagree with what they are saying. Consider the challenges below, addressed to three genre of people:

To Christians:

- Luke 1:1-3** 'It seemed good to me.. having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write..an orderly account'
- John 19:35** 'and his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe'
- 2 Peter 1:16** 'For we did not follow cunningly devised fables...but were eyewitnesses of His majesty'
- 1 John 1:3** 'That which we have seen and heard we declare to you'

To Jews:

- Acts 2:22** 'Wonders...which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know'

To a secular Roman administrator (Festus), and a Jewish king (Herod):

- Acts 26: 24-26** 'I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention...this was not done in secret'

In order to be comprehensive in our assessment, however, we need to look at both internal and external evidence, as well as specific challenges posed against the New Testament.

Accretions & Deletions

A common accusation of the New Testament, is that it has been changed over the centuries. In response to this, we need to ask, "When?" "Where?" and "By whom?" Because of the ample amount of manuscripts available for the New Testament (which we will talk about later), we can not only ascertain just how reliable they are historically, but also know what accretions may exist in the Biblical text. However, it is important to note, that any accretions that have been added (there are about 40 which are generally accepted today), were incorporated in the later manuscripts, and not in the earliest manuscripts. They are well documented in the modern translations,

Why these accretions? In 1611 King James made the first English translation of the Bible. The only mss available to him were 11 & 12th century manuscripts. In this late mss, accretions have made their way into the text. Today we now have fragments dating to as early as the 1st and 2nd centuries, early church writings from the first few centuries, and whole Biblical mss begin to appear by the 3rd century. It is only in later mss that accretions can be noted, and it is well stipulated which verses were not in the original canon. Therefore, there is no real doubt as to what should or should not be included in today's New Testament.

and referred to as scribal errors, integrated in the text in the later centuries. Below are noted some of the commonly accepted accretions.

Matthew 17:21; 18:11; 23:14

Mark 16:9-20 Snakes and poison, resurrection

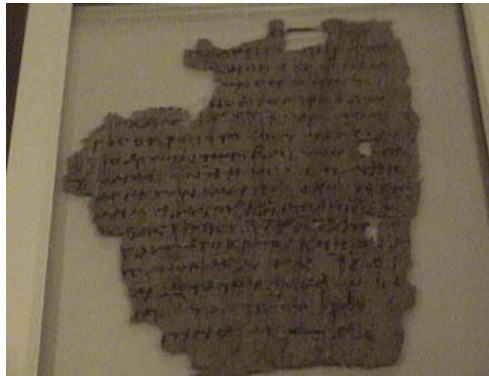
John 5:4 Angel at the pool of Bethesda

John 7:53-8:11 Adulterous woman

1 John 5:7&8 The Trinitarian formula

Manuscript Evidence:

So, the earliest manuscripts agree, while the older ones do not. Yet, how many manuscripts are we talking about here, and how authoritative are they? Since we don't have any of the originals, can we trust them? These are the questions Christian researchers have had to face in the past, and are now coming back with responses. **Today** there is a



plethora of different kinds of manuscripts we can look to, in order to establish the credibility and reliability of the New Testament documents. We can produce more than **5,686 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament**, though Strobel puts it at 5,664 (Strobel 1998:62-63). There are a further **10,000 Latin Vulgates**, and another **9,284 other early versions** translated into thirteen languages, a grand total



of almost **25,000 manuscripts at our disposal**. They are not all early, however; in fact only **230 manuscripts of the New Testament predate the sixth century** (McDowell 1972:39-49, 1999:38).

This fact has always troubled historians in the past. Yet, when we compare the dates of the secular historical and philosophical writings (see the graph below), and ascertain the earliest dates of the earliest copies of those writings, we find the gaps much larger than for those of the New Testament manuscripts.

When you look at the graph below, you will notice that the earliest copy for any secular manuscript does not appear until 850 AD, a good 750 years after the original was composed. What's more, all the other secular copies come after the 9th century. For example, Pliny was writing between 61-113AD, yet the earliest extant ms is dated to 850AD. Does anyone doubt Pliny's or and other of the secular writer's accuracy or credibility? Not at all.

Now look at the New Testament documents listed below. You will see that not only are the earliest copies of the New Testament books dated earlier than any secular manuscript written in the same time period (i.e. originals written in the 1st century, with fragments of copies, and whole manuscripts found by the 2nd century), but there are over 200 copies of the New Testament in existence even before the first secular extant copy is produced! Yet historians today are still sceptical of their authenticity. Surely if 9th century documents can be rendered credible, why can't the NT 1st century documents be counted likewise?

The Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	Copies (extent)
Secular Manuscripts:				
Herodotus (History)	480 - 425 BC	900 AD	1,300 year	8
Thucydides (History)	460 - 400 BC	900 AD	1,300 years	8
Plato (philosopher)	400 BC	900 AD	1,300 years	7
Aristotle (Philosopher)	384 - 322 BC	1,100 AD	1,400 years	5
Caesar (History)	100 - 44 BC	900 AD	1,000 years	10
Pliny (History)	61 - 113 AD	850 AD	750 years	7
Suetonius (Roman History)	70 - 140 AD	950 AD	800 years	?
Tacitus (Greek History)	100 AD	1,100 AD	1,000 years	20
Biblical Manuscripts: (note these are individual manuscripts)				
Magdalene Ms (Matthew 26)	1st century	50-60 AD	co-existent(?)	
John Rylands (John)	90 AD	130 AD	40 years	
Bodmer Papyrus II (John)	90 AD	150-200 AD	60-110 years	
Chester Beatty Papyri (NT)	1st century	200 AD	150 years	
Diatessaron by Tatian (Gospels)	1st century	200 AD	150 years	
Codex Vaticanus (Bible)	1st century	325-350 AD	275-300 years	
Codex Sinaiticus (Bible)	1st century	350 AD	300 years	

Hostile witnesses:

Negative Bible critics charge or imply that the new Testament documents are unreliable since they were written by disciples of Jesus or later Christians. They note that there is no confirmation of Jesus, or New Testament events in non-Christian sources. However, if we look to writers apart from the disciples and believers of Jesus, from within the 1st and 2nd centuries, we find many references to Biblical events, whilst many are not supportive or believe the message of the Bible, the events they document add to the credibility of the scriptures.

- Tacitus (1st C) 'Nero inflicted..tortures on **Christians**. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered..at the hands of **Pontius Pilate**.
- Thallus (AD 52) 'A most fearful **darkness**, and the rocks were rent by an **earthquake**.' Describing events at the crucifixion.
- Pliny (AD112) '**They sang a hymn to Christ, as to a god...**
- Suetonius (AD 117-138) 'Jews were making ..disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he (Emperor) **expelled them from Rome.**' Acts 18:2'
- Emperor Trajan (AD 112?) 'denies himself to be a **Christian**...pardoned.'
- Talmud (AD 70 - 200) **time of crucifixion** is corroborated, & intention of Jewish leaders **to kill Jesus**.
- Lucian (2nd C) 'The Christians **worship** a man...crucified...they are all **brothers**...live after his laws...despise worldly goods.'
- Mara Bar-Serapion (2nd C) 'What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise King?'
- Gospel of truth (2nd C) '**instructing** them about the Father.. he came by means of **fleshly appearance**..his **death** is life for many...'
- Justyn Martyr (AD 150?) 'the nails of the cross which were fixed to **his hands** and **feet**...after he was crucified they **cast lots**.'

Translations:

Because Christianity was a missionary faith from its very inception (Matthew 28:19-20), the scriptures were immediately translated into the known languages of that period. For that reason other written translations appeared soon after, such as Coptic translations (early 3rd and 4th centuries), Armenian (400 AD), Gothic (4th century), Georgian (5th century), Ethiopic (6th century), and Nubian (6th century) (McDowell 1972:48-50). The fact that we have so many translations of the New Testament points to its authenticity, as it would have been almost impossible, had the disciples or later followers wanted to corrupt or forge its contents, for them to have amassed all of the translations from the outlying areas, and changed each one so that there would have been the uniformity which we find witnessed in these translations today.



Lectionaries:

The practice of reading passages from the New Testament books at worship services began from the 6th century, so that today we have 2,135 lectionaries which have been catalogued from this period (McDowell 1972:52). If there had been a forgery, they too would have all had to have been changed.

Quotations:

However, there is evidence far more important than the manuscripts, hostile witnesses, translations, or lectionaries....namely, the letters penned by the early church fathers. In their letters, the early church fathers quoted from all 27 books of the New Testament. In the graph below you will see a list of some of the early church fathers and the number of quotes in their writings. There have been many studies done on these quotations. - In all, 86,489 quotes have been found by Leo Jaganay, now stored in the British Library (Jaganay, ITCNT,48)

Before the 4th century we have **32,000** quotes from the New Testament, i.e. prior to the Nicea Council. When we add Eusebius' work, it brings the number of citations of the NT to 36,289 (Geisler, GIB: 353,345). If we compile the **36,289** quotations by the early church fathers between the 2nd and 4th centuries, and put them into chronological order, we can reconstruct the entire NT except for 11 verses (Giesler 1999:532). This is astounding, for as Geisler puts it, "the quotations are so **numerous and widespread** that if no manuscripts of the New Testament were extant, the New Testament could be **reproduced from the writings of the early Father's alone.**" (Geisler, GIB 430). Since we can trace exact quotations of the Biblical texts in the early church father's writings from as early as 90 AD to 160 AD (Bruce, 1996:18), those who consider the Bible to have been corrupted will have to find documentation for this corruption from before these early dates. This is a strong argument against corruption, because it places Biblical text in an extra Biblical source, co-existent with the eyewitnesses to those events.

Therefore, we don't really need the 25,000 manuscripts, nor the hostile witnesses, nor the 15,000 translations, nor the 2,135 lectionaries; we can just go to the pre 4th century, early church father's quotations, and still reproduce the entire 27 books of the New Testament, except for 11 verses! No other piece of literature, secular or religious, can make this claim.

New Testament Quotations of the early Church Fathers from the New Testament:

Writer	Gospels	Acts	Pauline Epistles	General Epistles	Revelation	Totals
Justin Martyn	268	10	43	6	3 (266 allusions)	330
Irenaeus	1,038	194	499	23	65	1,819
Clement (Alex.)	1,107	44	1,127	207	11	2,406
Origen	9,231	349	7,778	399	165	17,992
Tertullian	3,82	502	2,609	120	205	7,258
Hippolytus	734	42	387	27	188	1,378
Eusebius	3,258	211	1,592	88	27	5,176
Grand Totals:	19,368	1,352	14,035	870	664	36,289

Quotes from some early church fathers, regarding evidence for the New Testament manuscripts:

<u>Church Father</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Comment</u>
Clement (of Rome)	(AD 95)	called a disciple of the apostles by Origen.
Tertullian	(AD 160-215)	‘Clement was appointed by Peter.’
Irenaeus		“the preaching of the Apostles still echoing in his ears & their doctrine in front of his eyes.”
Ignatious	(AD 70-110)	was Bishop of Antioch, He knew well the apostles.
Polycarp	(AD 70-156)	Bishop of Smyrna, martyred at age 86, disciple of apostle John,
Barnabas	(AD 70)	
Hermas	(AD 95)	
Justin Martyr	(AD 133)	battled the heretic Marcion
Tatian	(AD 170)	
Iraaneus	(AD 170)	
Clement (of Alexandria)	(AD 150-212)	quoted from all but 3 books of the NT.
Tertullian	(AD 160-220)	Church of Carthage, quotes N.T. 7000x, 3,800 are from the Gospels.
Hippolytus	(AD 170-235)	has more than 1, 300 references.
Origen	(AD 185-253/254)	He lists more than 18,000 New Testament quotes, (Geisler, GIB, 353)
Cyprian	(d. AD 258)	bishop of Carthage. Uses approx. 740 O.T. citations, and 1,030 N.T.
Eusebius	(260-340)	Bishop of Caesarea, quotes N.T. over 4000 times.

To the above we can add Augustine, Amabius, Lactantius, Chrysostom, Jerome, Gaius Romanus, Athanasius, Ambrose of Milan, Cyril of Alexandria, Ephraem of Syria, Hilary of Poitiers, Gregory of Nyssa....