

The Bible in its World: The Bible & Archaeology Today

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Contents

	Preface	7
	Chapter	
1	Archaeology—a Key to the Past	9
2	The Most Ancient World	19
3	Ebla—Queen of Ancient Syria	37
4	Founding Fathers in Canaan and Egypt	56
5	Birth of a Nation	75
6	Kings and Poets	92
7	Wars and Rumours of Wars	108
8	Exile and Return	120
9	In the Fullness of Time	127
	Outline Table of Dates	135
	Notes [<i>now moved to chapter footnotes</i>]	138
	Select Bibliography	154
	Maps: Ancient Near East; Ebla; Palestine	159-161
	Index	162

[p.7]

Preface

Archaeology and the Bible remains a theme of unending fascination. The ancient Near East teemed with the life of rich and complex civilizations that show both change and continuity in how people lived in that part of our planet across a span of several thousand years. The study of the physical remains and of the innumerable inscriptions from the ancient Near-Eastern world is itself a complex and many-sided task. Yet, as that world is the Bible's world, the attempt is a necessary venture in order to see the books of the Bible in their ancient context. The enduring central themes of the Bible stand out clearly enough of themselves; but a more detailed understanding of the biblical writings can be gained by viewing them in relation to their ancient context.

Biblical studies have long been hindered by the persistence of long-outdated philosophical and literary theories (especially of 19th-century stamp), and by wholly inadequate use of first-hand sources in appreciating the earlier periods of the Old Testament story in particular. Therefore, this little book makes direct use of first-hand evidence from the ancient biblical world, both archaeology and texts, and concentrates principally upon the earlier periods down to the end of Solomon's reign.

Much is already available on later periods, and therefore the closing chapters are deliberately and progressively briefer. In the notes (kept to a minimum) and bibliography, English-language works are cited whenever possible.

[p.8]

It is always an author's pleasantest duty to thank those who have lightened his task. My thanks thus go to Mr. Alan Millard for valuable criticisms of the whole; to my mother for statistical checking of the MS; and to the publishers (who invited me to write this work), for their patience and helpfulness. The shortcomings, naturally, remain the author's property, and his alone.

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