



BIBLE *Times*
**& ANCIENT
KINGDOMS**

David W. Cloud

Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms

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Table of Contents

PowerPoints and Teaching Tips	7
Important Old Testament Dates	10
Bible Geography	16
Bible Culture Miscellaneous.....	18
Bible Animals	38
Bible Plants	56
The Synagogue.....	75
Ancient Writing	83
Genesis 10-11	97
Ancient Babylon.....	137
Hammurabi: His Times and His Law.....	183
Ur of the Chaldees	198
Ancient Egypt.....	219
Phoenician Empire (1450-332 BC)	257
Baal	276
Hazor and Her Times.....	295
David and His Palace.....	306
Solomon and the Queen of Sheba	324
Samaria and Jezreel.....	355
Assyrian Empire.....	386
Hezekiah and His Times	425
Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon	449
Medo-Persian Empire	466
Greek Empire (323-146 BC).....	494
Edom, Nabateans, and the Spice Route.....	521
Herod's Temple and the Roman Era in Israel.....	525
Christ's Ministry on the Sea of Galilee.....	547

From Jerusalem to Jericho	560
Christ's Passion Week.....	565
Rome's Destruction of Israel.....	579
Corinth of Paul's Day.....	610
Ephesus of Paul's Day	617
Pergamos of Paul's Day	620
Sardis of Paul's Day	623
Caesarea Maritima.....	626
Review Questions	630

Copyright and Distribution Policy

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What's New for the 2016, 2018, and 2021 Editions?

Each new edition incorporates a wealth of new on-the-ground research in Israel, Jordan, and Egypt.

The 2016 edition of *Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms* has five new chapters with accompanying PowerPoint presentations.

- The Bible Critics Were Wrong
- Edom, Nabateans, and the Spice Route
- Christ's Ministry on the Sea of Galilee
- From Jerusalem to Jericho
- Christ's Passion Week

The 2021 edition has the following new PowerPoints with approximately 400 new slides:

- Bible Animals
- Bible Plants
- Ancient Ships
- Ancient Egypt (major enlargement)
- Phoenician Empire
- Greek Empire
- Herod's Temple and the Roman Era (major enlargement)
- Corinth of Paul's Day
- Ephesus of Paul's Day
- Pergamos of Paul's Day
- Sardis of Paul's Day
- Caesarea Maritima

There is new information and editing throughout the book and PowerPoints and a great many new reconstructive drawings which we have licensed.

The Review Questions have been enlarged and expanded to include every section of the course.

PowerPoints and Teaching Tips

Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms is a package consisting of a book and a series of PowerPoint/Keynote presentations to illustrate the material. (Keynote is the Apple version of PowerPoint.)

Basically, the PowerPoint presentations are a graphical edition of the book. They are packed with more than 4,600 high quality color photos, drawings, historic recreations, and video clips.

Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms is a course on Bible geography, Bible culture, and Bible history.

It can be used for private study as well as Sunday School, Home Schooling, Bible Institute, and any similar setting.

It can be used as a stand-alone Bible course or as a supplement to other courses and studies.

It has a two-fold objective: to present apologetic evidence for the Bible and to give background material to help the student better understand the setting of Bible history.

We cover this fascinating history from Genesis to the New Testament, dealing with the Table of the Nations in Genesis 10, the Tower of Babel, Ur of the Chaldees, Egypt, Baal worship, the Philistines, the Canaanites, David's palace, Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, Edom, the Nabateans, and the Spice Route, Ahab and Jezebel, the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, the Assyrian Empire, Hezekiah and his times, Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylon, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greek Empire, Herod the Great and his temple, Rome and Her Rule over Israel, Christ's ministry on the Sea of Galilee, From Jericho to Jerusalem, Christ's Passion Week, Rome's Destruction of Jerusalem, and the history of the Temple Mount.

Many of the archaeological discoveries from the past 200 years, which we relate in the course, are so fascinating and improbable that they read like a novel. It is easy to see God's hand in this field, in spite of its prevailing skepticism.

The course also deals with Bible culture, such as weights and measures, plant and animal life, Caesar's coin, the widow's mite, ancient scrolls and seals, phylacteries, synagogues, false messiahs, judgment in the gate, ancient shipping and commerce, cosmetics,

fine linen, the widow's mite, the pomegranate, mustard seed, idolatry, divination, tombs, the operation of ancient lamps, ancient war methods, millstones, pottery wheels, and olive presses.

We begin with an overview of Israel's geography and a timeline of Bible history to give the student a framework for better understanding the material.

Each section includes maps to help the student place the events in their proper location.

The course is packed with important but little-known facts that illuminate Bible history and culture.

The preparation for the book is extensive, the culmination of 48 years of Bible study, teaching, and research trips. In this context the author built a large personal library and collected information from major archaeological museums and locations in North America, England, Europe, Greece, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt and Israel.

Few things have helped me understand the Bible better than the archaeological and historical research that was done in preparation for writing this book, and we guarantee that the student who completes the course will read the Bible with new eyes and fresh enthusiasm.

The PowerPoint presentations for the 2021 edition are as follows (6,100 slides, which is about 400 new slides):

- 01 Bible Culture Misc (247 slides)
- 02 Bible Culture Animals (194 slides)
- 03 Bible Culture Plants (264 slides)
- 04 Bible Culture Synagogues (120 slides)
- 05 Bible Culture Fishing (56 slides)
- 06 Ancient Writing (136 slides)
- 07 Babylon Ancient (296 slides)
- 08 Genesis 10-11 (185 slides)
- 09 Hammurabi and His Times (104 slides)
- 10 Egypt Ancient (533 slides)
- 11 Ur of the Chaldees (184 slides)
- 12 Phoenicia (127 slides)
- 13 Baal (116 slides)
- 14 Hazor and Her Times (the Canaanites) (148 slides)
- 15 David and His Palace (165 slides)

- 16 Samaria and Jezreel (northern kingdom) (309 slides)
- 17 Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (184 slides)
- 18 Assyrian Empire (250 slides)
- 19 Hezekiah and His Times (149 slides)
- 20 Babylon Empire Nebuchadnezzar (107 slides)
- 21 Medo-Persian Empire (126 slides)
- 22 Greek Empire (216 slides)
- 23 Edom, Nabateans, and the Spice Route (106 slides)
- 24 Roman Empire and Herod's Temple (387 slides)
- 25 Christ's Ministry on the Sea of Galilee (186 slides)
- 26 From Jerusalem to Jericho (86 slides)
- 27 Christ's Passion Week (176 slides)
- 28 Rome's Destruction of Israel (191 slides)
- 29 Corinth in Paul's Day (90 slides)
- 30 Ephesus in Paul's Day (94 slides)
- 31 Pergamos in Paul's Day (45 slides)
- 32 Sardis in Paul's Day (47 slides)
- 33 Caesarea Maritima (85 slides)
- 34 History of the Temple Mount (121 slides)
- 35 Bible Critics Were Wrong (269 slides)

The PowerPoint presentations feature explanatory text on the slides themselves, but teachers should first read the material in the book, where more information is found. In this way, the teacher will be better prepared to describe the slides and answer questions.

The material in the course is extensive, and the teacher can decide whether to use all of it or to select only some portion of it for his particular class and situation.

Important Old Testament Dates

We are largely following the chronology of Floyd Nolen Jones (except in the case of the date of the Tower of Babel). Jones' dates are based on the God-honored Hebrew Masoretic Text and align closely with those published by the great biblical scholar and linguist James Ussher in the 17th-century masterpiece *The Annals of the World*. For those interested in learning more about Dr. Jones' research, we recommend *The Chronology of the Old Testament* (Master Books, 2005).

These dates may not be exact in every case, but they are nearly correct, because the Bible provides explicit chronological information.

We have not followed Jones' chronology in regard to the identity of King Ahasuerus who married Esther. He identifies this king as Darius the Great, father of Xerxes. This could be true, but we are more inclined to believe that it was Xerxes. We cannot be dogmatic on this since the Bible only identifies him as Ahasuerus and in our estimation a case can be made for identifying him either as Darius or Xerxes.

In the following chronology we have added secular events, such as the dates for the reigns of pagan kings that relate to biblical events, though the dates for these cannot always be as certain.

“There have been those who have objected to the suggestion that God is concerned with providing information on the age of the Earth and humanity. But the numerous chronological tables permeating the Bible prove that theirs is a groundless objection. God, it seems, was very concerned about giving man exact chronological data and, in fact, was so concerned that He provided a precise knowledge of the period back to Abraham, plus two tables—with ages—from Abraham to Adam. The ancient Jewish historians (1 Chronicles 1:1-27) and the New Testament writers (Luke 3:34-48) understood the tables of Genesis 5 and 11 as literal and consecutive. The Bible explains quite explicitly that God created the Sun and Moon to be timekeepers (Genesis 1:16) for Adam and his descendants (notice how

Noah logged the beginning and the ending of the Flood using these timekeepers, Genesis 7:11; 9:14)” (Bert Thompson, “The Bible and the Age of the Earth,” August 1999, <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/85>).

Important Old Testament Dates

- 4004 Creation
- 4003 Cain’s birth
- 3875 Cain slays Abel
- 3874 Seth’s birth
- 3074 Adam’s death
- 3017 Enoch’s Translation
- 2962 Seth’s death
- 2948 Noah’s birth
- 2353 Lamach’s death
- 2348 Methuselah’s death
- 2348 The Flood
- 2242 Tower of Babel
- 1998 Noah’s death (350 years after Flood Ge. 9:28)
- 1996 Abraham’s birth
- 1921 Abraham departs Haran (beginning of 430 year sojourn of Ex. 12:40 and Ga. 3:17)
- 1910 Ishmael’s birth
- 1897 Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
- 1896 Isaac’s birth
- 1863 Abraham takes Isaac to Mt. Moriah
- 1856 Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca
- 1846 Shem’s death
- 1836 Jacob and Esau’s birth
- 1821 Abraham’s death
- 1773 Ishmael’s death
- 1770 Hammurabi’s Code (ruled Babylon c. 1792-1750 BC)
- 1759 Jacob’s marriage to Leah and Rachel
- 1745 Joseph’s birth
- 1739 Jacob departs Haran and Laban
- 1728 Joseph sold into slavery
- 1720 Job born (Issachar’s 3rd son Ge. 46:13)
- 1718 Joseph interprets dreams of baker and butler
- 1716 Isaac’s death
- 1715 Joseph made 2nd ruler of Egypt

- 1706 Jacob goes down into Egypt
- 1689 Jacob's death
- 1650 Job's trial (approximately)
- 1635 Joseph's death and end of the book of Genesis
- 1580 Job's death
- 1571 Moses' birth and beginning of the book of Exodus
- 1531 Moses flees to Midian
- 1491 Exodus from Egypt (Ex. 12)
- 1452 Moses' death
- 1451 Israel enters Canaan (Jos. 1)
- 1445 Canaan divided among the 12 tribes of Israel
- 1424 Joshua's death (approximately)
- 1410 Othniel delivers Israel
- 1360 Ehud delivers Israel
- 1278 Barak and Deborah deliver Israel
- 1251 Gideon delivers Israel
- 1162 Eli's judgeship begins
- 1152 Jephtah delivers Israel
- 1122 Ark captured by Philistines, Eli dies
- 1121 Samson begins judgeship
- 1101 Samson brings down Dagon temple
- 1095 Saul anointed king (1 Sa. 15)
- 1085 David's birth
- 1070 David anointed by Samuel
- 1067 David slays Goliath (1 Sa. 17)
- 1060 Samuel's death
- 1056 Saul and Jonathan's death
- 1055 David becomes king over Judah (2 Sa. 2)
- 1048 David made king over all 12 tribes
- 1047 Ark brought to Jerusalem
- 1036 Solomon's birth
- 1027 Absalom's rebellion
- 1015 Solomon's coronation
- 1004 Solomon's Temple dedicated (1 Ki. 8)
- 975 Kingdom divided (1 Ki. 12)
- 924 Samaria built by Omri (1 Ki. 16)
- 906 Elijah slays prophets of Baal (1 Ki. 18)
- 897 Elijah translated to heaven (2 Ki. 2)
- 886 Hazael of Syria reigns (c. 886-840)
- 826 Jonah sent to Nineveh

- 771 Assyria invades Israel (2 Ki. 15)
- 757 Rezin of Syria reigns (c. 757-740)
- 753 Rome founded by Romulus
- 747 Tiglath-pileser III or Pul of Assyrian (747-727 BC, 2 Ki. 15-16)
- 727 Shalmaneser V of Assyria (727-722 BC, 2 Ki. 17:3; 18:9)
- 732 Tiglath-pileser destroys large portions of northern Israel (2 Kings 15:29)
- 722 Sargon II of Assyria reigns (722-705 BC, Isa. 20:1)
- 721 Samaria destroyed by Assyria and northern tribes deported (2 Ki. 17)
- 709 Sennacherib's army destroyed (he was co-regent at this time)
- 705 Sennacherib of Assyria (705-681 BC, 2 Ki. 18-19; 2 Ch. 32; Isaiah 36-37)
- 701 Lachish destroyed by Assyria
- 681 Esarhaddon of Assyria (681-668 BC 2 Ki. 19:37; Isa. 37:38; Ezr. 4:2)
- 677 Manasseh carried captive to Babylon (2 Ch. 33)
- 668 Assurbanipal of Assyria (668-626 BC Ezra 4:10)
- 628 Jeremiah begins to prophecy (Jer. 1)
- 623 Josiah repairs Temple and finds Law
- 612 Nineveh's destruction by Nabopolassar of Babylon, father of Nebuchadnezzar
- 605 Nebuchadnezzar (general of Babylon's armies) defeats Necho (Jer. 46:2, 12; 2 Ki. 24:7).
- 605 First deportation to Babylon (2 Ki. 24) (70 year captivity Jer. 29:10; Isa. 44:28-45:3)
- 604 Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon reigns (604-562 BC)
- 604 Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream
- 597 Second deportation to Babylon (2 Ki. 24)
- 586 Jerusalem and First Temple destroyed by Babylon (2 Ki. 25)
- 585 Tyre falls to Nebuchadnezzar after 13 years siege
- 562 Evil-merodach of Babylon, son of Nebuchadnezzar, (562-559 BC)
- 559 Cyrus rules over the Persians
- 559 Neriglissar of Babylon (559-555 BC)
- 557 Buddha in India 557-447 BC

- 555 Nabonadius of Babylon reigns with his son Balshazzar (556-539 BC)
- 551 Confucius in China 551-478 BC
- 550 Cyrus unites Persia and Medes
- 539 Cyrus conquers Babylon (Daniel 5)
- 538 Cyrus' edict to restore the Temple at Jerusalem (Ezra 1; Isa. 44:28; 45:1)
- 536 Zerubbabel conducts remnant to Jerusalem (Ezra 2)
- 535 Foundation of new Temple laid but work stopped (Ezra 3)
- 530 Cambyses of Persia reigns (530-522 BC)
- 522 Darius I of Persia reigns (Darius Hystaspis or Darius the Great) (522-486 BC)
- 520 Haggai and Zechariah prophesy (520-515 BC) (Ezr. 5:1)
- 520 Temple work renewed during Darius the Great's 2nd year (Ezr. 6)
- 516 Second Temple completed (Ezr. 6:15)
- 486 Reign of Xerxes (Ahasuerus) of Persia 486-465 BC
- 485 Greek historian Herodotus (585-525 BC)
- 479 Esther becomes Xerxes' queen (7th year of his reign, Est. 1:1-3; 2:16)
- 470 Socrates (470-399 BC)
- 465 Artaxerxes of Persia reigns (465-423 BC)
- 467 Artaxerxes stops building the walls sometime at beginning of his reign (Ezr. 4:17-23)
- 457 Ezra conducts remnant to Jerusalem (Ezr 7-8)
- 444 Artaxerxes' decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Da. 9:25)
- 444 Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem to build the walls (Neh. 2)
- 445 Jerusalem walls rebuilt
- 441 Malachi prophesies sometime after Nehemiah
- 428 Plato and Aristotle 428-322 BC
- 356 Alexander the Great born
- 336 Alexander succeeds to the throne of Macedonia
- 331 Persian Empire falls to Alexander
- 323 Alexander's death, Greek Empire divided four ways
- 320 Jerusalem captured by Ptolemy, the Egyptian king
- 320 Large settlement of Jews in Alexandria, Egypt
- 170 Israel conquered by Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria
- 168 Second Temple desecrated by Antiochus
- 168 Maccabean revolt against Syria begins
- 164 Judas Maccabees takes Jerusalem

- 142 Syrians sign a peace treaty with the Maccabees
- 63 Jerusalem captured by the Roman general Pompey
- 54 Roman general Crassus plunders Jewish temple
- 37 Herod I appointed by Romans as king of Judea
- 20 Herod begins renovation of Temple
- 4 Birth of John the Baptist
- 4 Birth of Jesus
- 4 Herod's death

Bible Geography

The study on Bible geography from earlier editions of *Bible Times & Ancient Kingdoms* has been replaced by a more extensive course, *Introduction to Bible Geography* (2020), which is available from Way of Life Literature.

The course consists of a PowerPoint presentation and a PDF. The PowerPoint covers the same material as the PDF, but it includes videos and photos that aren't in the PDF and is intended especially for classroom use, though it can be used with profit by individual students. The abbreviated PDF edition is for students to use in classrooms and for private study and easy reference. As the teacher goes through the PowerPoints, the students can have all of the major parts of the study before them in the PDF (using a smartphone or tablet, etc.) or in a printout of the PDF. The downloads of both files are provided as part of the package.

We cannot say enough about the importance of studying Bible geography and paying close attention to geography in the biblical text. If you don't, you overlook a great amount of information and teaching.

The more the student knows about the geography pertaining to a Bible passage, the better he can understand the scene and the teaching.

The student has to ask questions such as where is the author located? Where are the recipients? If the passage describes an event, where does it take place? "What was the terrain like? What topographic features made this region unique? What was the weather like? How far was this place from other places mentioned in this passage? What were the travel routes? What size was this town or city? What was the layout? What was the location known for?" (William Hendrick).

This requires a good knowledge of Bible geography and constant reference to maps and to resources that provide geographical and historical background information, such as good commentaries, surveys, Bible encyclopedias, and Bible atlases.

The study of Bible geography should be a lifelong process. We cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of a personal visit to the Bible lands, especially Israel itself, but also Turkey, Greece, and Egypt. Every preacher, especially, should make this a priority, and he should prepare well for any trip he makes to that part of the world. We recommend this course on *Bible Times; Jews in Fighter Jets; Israel Past, Present, and Future; The Seven Churches of Asia Then and Now; and Treasures in the Israel Museum* as starters. All of these are available from www.wayoflife.org.

Bible Culture Miscellaneous

👉 A PowerPoint presentation of this material is included in the *Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms* package. See “PowerPoints and Teaching Tips” at the beginning of the course for more information.

In this chapter we will examine some of the archaeological discoveries that shine light on ancient Bible customs and culture.

Scrolls

The Old Testament Scripture was written on scrolls rather than books.

Some were made of animal skins called parchment. Others were written on papyrus, which was paper made from the papyrus plant.

It was common for a scroll to contain one book of the Old Testament, such as Psalms. There is a beautiful Psalms scroll in the synagogue near the Western Wall where the Jews pray.

A near complete copy of an Isaiah scroll was found in the Dead Sea caves near Qumran. Located in Cave 1 it is 24.5 feet in length.

Phylactery

A phylactery is a small box containing tiny scrolls inscribed with the following Scripture portions: Exodus 13:1-10; 11:16; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21. The phylactery is attached to the forehead and arm during prayer.

The practice is based on Exodus 13:9, 16 and Deuteronomy 6:6-8, 11:18.

“And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt” (Ex. 13:9).

“And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt” (Ex. 13:16).

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes” (De. 6:6-8).

“Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes” (De. 11:18).

Note the following lessons from Scripture itself.

First, the Word of God was to be in the heart. “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart” (De. 6:6). “Therefore shall ye lay up these words in your heart and in your soul” (De. 11:18). This is the fundamental thing. God desires that His people cherish His Word and hide it in their hearts and obey it. This is what He was commanding, but by Jesus’ day, this had deteriorated into an empty ritual and an emblem of self-righteous religion.

“But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries...” (Matthew 23:5).

Second, the Scripture says the Word of God is to be “AS a sign upon your hand ... AS frontlets between your eyes” (De. 11:18). Wearing the Word of God on one’s arm and between one’s eyes was a METAPHOR for loving it and keeping it in the heart and meditating on it day and night.

Third, frontlets are first mentioned in Exodus 13:9 in reference to the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread. It was to be a “memorial between thine eyes that the LORD’S law may be in thy mouth.” It should be obvious that the bread itself was not to be tied to one’s forehead! It was rather to be *remembered* so that the Word of God would not depart from the worshiper’s heart.

Fourth, frontlets are mentioned in Exodus 13:16 in reference to the offering of the firstborn of every beast. The sacrifices were to be “a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes.” Again, it should be obvious that the sacrificial beasts themselves

were not tried on the hand or forehead. They were to be memorials and spiritual lessons in order to keep the Scripture in a prominent place in the lives of God's people.

Mezuzah

God also instructed the Jews to write the Scripture on their doorposts (De. 6:9; 11:20).

This has deteriorated into the current practice of the *mezuzah* (Hebrew meaning "doorpost"), which is a small case attached to the doors of houses and gates containing a piece of parchment inscribed with Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21. (Formally, it is the inscribed parchment that is the *mezuzah*.)

"Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. ... And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates" (De. 11:18, 20).

By this tradition, the Word of God is hidden away in a decorative box instead of displayed as God's law commands, and those entering the house are not confronted with God's Word.

The affixing of mezuzahs is practiced widely by Jews today, even "secular" Jews, but it is more akin to a "lucky horseshoe" or a pagan amulet.

One can see mezuzahs everywhere in Israel today. We saw one on the Damascus Gate (this gate was blown open by Israeli soldiers during the Six-Day War) and one on the door to the room known as the Tomb of David.

Manger or Ephah

Mangers, which were used to feed animals, were typically made of stone rather than wood in Israel, so baby Jesus would probably have been laid in a stone manger. Some of the mangers that were used in Solomon's stables can still be seen at Megiddo. They hold an ephah measure of grain (about six gallons), which explains how

much grain of barley Ruth gleaned in Boaz' field in one day (Ruth 2:17).

The Cubit

The cubit is mentioned more than 250 times in the Bible as a standard of measure.

The problem is that there were different cubit measures in ancient times. One was measured from the tip of the fingers to the elbow, which would be about 18 inches. Other cubit measures were 16 inches and 21 inches.

The *American Tract Society Dictionary*, published in 1859, said:

“The Hebrew cubit, according to some, is twenty-one inches; but others fix it at eighteen. The Talmudists observe that the Hebrew cubit was larger by one quarter than the Roman.”

In 1880 evidence was found in Hezekiah's Tunnel that the standard Jewish cubit was 18 inches. The tunnel is 1800 feet long, and the dedication inscription, which was found in 1880, says it is 1200 cubits long. That means the standard Hebrew cubit of Hezekiah's day was 18 inches.

Gerah

The gerah was a measure of weight that was measured by the seed of the carob plant. The Hebrew shekel equaled 20 gerahs (Exodus 30:13), which was 40% of an ounce.

The *carat*, which was a measure of gold in ancient times and which is used today as a measure of the weight of diamonds, was originally derived from the carob seed. The English word *carat* came from the Greek *keration*, which refers to the carob seed. “In 1871, the British were establishing what we now know as The Old English Weights and Measures. They found that a carob seed from one side of the Mediterranean weighed 0.1885 grams and from the other side weighed 0.215 grams. Over time, between 1878 and 1889, these two numbers were averaged, and the number 0.204304 was used. Subsequently, several trees had all of the beans stripped

from them, counted and weighed. The average weight was 0.197 grams. This figure is used today; carats are figured as 5 per gram, or 200 milligrams” (Davenport Fine Gems and Jewelry).

Many times God commanded the Jews to measure the shekel exactly by the measure of the gerah.

The prophet Amos condemned Israel for “making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit” (Amos 8:5).

The ephah was a measure for grain. Thus, the Jews were decreasing the size of the ephah of grain that they sold as well as inflating the amount of money required in payment. They did this by means of crooked scales. So they were cheating twice in one transaction!

“They increased the weight, or shekel stone, with which they weighed the money the poor gave for their grain and wheat; this was made heavier than it should be, and so of course the money weighed against it was too light, and the poor were obliged to make it up with more” (Gill). “So the poor were twice oppressed in the same way, had less than was their right, and paid more than they ought to pay; and thus they undid the poor, and ate him up” (Poole).

In fact, they were being cheated three times in one transaction, because Amos also says they were selling “the refuse of the wheat” (Am. 8:6). The poor weren’t even getting good quality wheat for their money.

It would be like a tradesman moving to the gold fields of California in the 1800s to sell wheat by the bushel in exchange for gold dust. He sets the price of one bushel of wheat at \$50 worth of gold dust, but the measuring container that is supposed to be the size of a bushel is actually less than a bushel. And using his own balance to weigh the gold dust given in payment, his balance is set to weigh too low, so that he actually gets more than \$50 worth of gold dust in payment for less than a bushel of wheat. And the wheat he is selling is very poor quality, to boot!

Millstone

Millstones, mentioned 11 times in the Bible, were used to grind grain into flour.

They were very heavy, and Jesus warned that if someone causes a child to be offended at the truth it “were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Mt. 18:6).

Capernaum, where Jesus gave this warning, was a center of millstone production.

These were personal millstones used in the homes. Two feet tall, they were cut from volcanic rock. The sound of the millstones was one of the common sounds heard in Jewish towns and villages.

“Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth ... the voice of the bridegroom ... the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle” (Jer. 25:10).

The Jewish millstone had two parts. The bottom was conical and stood upright. The other piece fit over it. This is called the nether or upper millstone in Deuteronomy 24:6.

Grain was poured into the top, and the upper millstone was turned with wooden handles, crushing the grain into flour. A hole in the upper millstone allowed the flour to flow out.

Battlement

The law of Moses required that houses be built with battlements--low walls or rails--to keep people from falling off.

“When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence” (De. 22:8).

God’s law teaches that men are responsible for any avoidable injury they cause to others. According to the Bible, I *am* my brother’s keeper.

Fine Linen

Fine linen was used to make the priest's clothing and curtains for the tabernacle.

“And thou shalt embroider the coat of fine linen, and thou shalt make the mitre of fine linen, and thou shalt make the girdle of needlework” (Ex. 28:39).

Linen was made of the flax plant. There are many varieties, but the Egyptians used the blue-flowering variety “because the universe is surrounded with the ethereal blue of the sky.” This reminds us that Jesus is the “Lord from heaven” (1 Cor. 15:47).

The Egyptians were famed for their ability to make fine linen in ancient times and their tombs preserve many examples such as those we have seen in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The Jews perhaps learned to make the fine linen items for the tabernacle system from their time in Egypt.

“The linen used by Egyptian royalty was unusually white and so finely woven that they cannot be distinguished from silk without the use of a magnifying glass” (*Archaeological Study Bible Notes*).

The high priest's fine linen garments depict Christ's perfect righteousness, whereas the fine linen garments of Aaron's sons depict the believer's imputed righteousness. Christ has justified us and made us priests.

“And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Re. 19:8).

Caesar's Coin

Caesar's coin was the coin used to pay tribute or tax to Rome. In Jesus' day it bore the image of Caesar Augustus Tiberius.

“Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which

are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Mt. 22:19-21).

The penny (also called denarius) was the standard wage for a day worker (Mt. 20:2).

Widow's Mite

"And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing" (Mark 12:42).

A mite was a very small amount of money. It could purchase one lowly sparrow. (Compare Mark 12:42 with Matthew 10:29; two sparrows cost one farthing, which was two mites.)

This shows how very poor the woman was, yet she gave everything she had to the Lord, and we can be sure that He took care of her!

It has been said, "God accepts the widow's mite, but He rejects the miser's mite."

Seals

Seals were used widely in the ancient Bible world, going back to the days of Abraham in Ur, and hundreds of them are on display in museums.

In Old Testament times the seals were impressed on clay. Later they were impressed on wax.

A signet was a ring used as an official seal. It signifies ownership, authority, and protection.

"And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and THE KING SEALED IT with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel" (Dan 6:17).

"And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, SEAL UNTO IT" (Neh. 9:38).

Ur of the Chaldees

🖱️ A PowerPoint presentation of this material is included in the *Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms* package. See “PowerPoints and Teaching Tips” at the beginning of the course for more information.

In the early 19th century, skeptics claimed that Ur, the birthplace of Abraham, was a biblical myth. This was still a time when the critics thought that Moses couldn't write.

The city was located 1854 but nothing of substance was known about it until the 12-year excavations beginning in 1922 under the direction of renowned archaeologist Leonard Woolley. The findings made international news.

Not only did the excavation prove that the skeptics were wrong about the existence of Ur, but it further proved that Ur was one of Mesopotamia's sophisticated, literate, idolatrous city-states with far-flung commercial enterprises. And this civilization existed hundreds of years before Abraham.

The amazing artifacts that have been recovered are housed in the “Ur Room” at the British Museum, the University of Pennsylvania's archaeology museum, and elsewhere.

The excavations at Ur provide a wonderful glimpse into the civilization that spread across that part of the world after the Flood and reveal the glories of the kingdoms established by Nimrod and his successors (Genesis 10:1-12; 11:1-4).

Through these artifacts we can better understand the world in which Abraham grew up and out of which God called him in about 1920 BC.

We also see the type of pagan gods that Abraham's father Terah worshipped (Joshua 24:2).

Ur's Technologically Advanced, Wealthy Civilization

Ur was a great city of perhaps a quarter of a million people.

The following is a description of the city as it existed from about 2500 BC to the time of Abraham in 1900 BC:

“It was an urban civilization of a highly evolved type; its artists, capable at times of a very vivid realism ... followed for the most part standards and conventions whose excellence had been approved by many generations working before them; its craftsmen in metal possessed a knowledge of metallurgy and a technical skill which few ancient peoples have ever rivaled and which it must have taken long years to perfect; its merchants carried a far-flung trade, its agriculture prospered, its armed forces were well organized, and men practised freely the art of writing. ...

“Ur was a trading and manufacturing centre and its business extended far afield ... Raw materials were imported, sometimes from overseas, to be worked up in the Ur factories; the bill of lading of a merchant ship which came up the canal from the Gulf to discharge its cargo on the wharves of Ur details gold, copper ore, hard woods, ivory, pearls, and precious stones” (Leonard Woolley, *Ur of the Chaldees*, pp. 103, 213).

“Many goods were manufactured in factories owned by the temple, for example in the spinning-mills which the priests managed. One workshop produced twelve different kinds of fashionable clothing. Tablets found in this place gave the names of the mill-girls and their quota of rations. Even the weight of the wool given to each worker and the number of garments made from it were meticulously recorded.

“In one of the legal buildings they found copies of the sentences carefully stacked exactly as they are in the administrative offices of modern law courts. ...

“Ur of the Chaldees was a powerful, prosperous colourful and busy capital city in the beginning of the second millennium BC” (Werner Keller, *The Bible as History*).

Building construction techniques in that day were impressive.

“... the Sumerian builders mastered all the construction techniques which were in use in the West before the advent of modern materials like steel and concrete. ... they were

able to lay out large-scale buildings with accuracy, providing right-angles for the corners and orienting them to the cardinal points as tradition seemed to demand, while decorating the external walls with a regular display of buttresses and recesses. ... Among the techniques employed by these early builders were barrel- and corbel-vaulting, while both the true arch and the dome are found in the Early Dynastic period. Engaged and free-standing pillars are found in the great temples of the Uruk period and occur again throughout the third millennium” (Harriet Crawford, *Sumer and the Sumerians*, pp. 68, 69).

Many of the homes in Ur were large. The following is possibly the type of house in which Abraham grew up:

“An average dwelling measured forty by fifty-two feet. The lower walls were built of burned brick, the upper of mud brick, and the whole wall was usually plastered and white-washed. An entrance lobby led into the central court, onto which all the rooms opened. On the lower floor were located the servants’ room, the kitchen, the lavatory, the guest chamber, and also a lavatory and wash place reserved for visitors. Thus all of the first floor was utilized for the servants and guests; the second floor housed the family. The entire house of the average middle-class person had from ten to twenty rooms” (Free and Vos, *Archaeology and Bible History*, p. 46).

The rooms of the houses were furnished with such things as tables, chairs (even of the folding variety), beds with wooden bedsteads, chests, ornate pottery, wickerwork, and rugs.

The large houses had private wells, and water and waste were carried away by a city drainage system.

(The following five paragraphs are adapted from *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture and Character* by Samuel Kramer.)

Ur’s skilled carpenters used hammers, saws, chisels, and drill bits. Metalworkers fashioned gold, silver, tin, lead, iron, copper, bronze, and antimony. They used techniques such as casting, hammering, annealing, filigree, and granulation.

Leatherworkers tanned and fashioned the skins of bulls, calves, pigs, and sheep, making water bags, harnesses, saddles, tires for chariot wheels, slings, shoes and sandals, and other types of clothing. They used alkalies, sumac, and other ingredients for tanning, and fat to make the skins supple and impermeable.

The huge textile industry at Ur consumed the wool of huge flocks of goats, sheep, and lambs, as well as massive quantities of flax for linen. Using spindles and looms, a team of three women could produce a piece of cloth 9x12 feet in eight days.

Goods were transported by sledges, wagons (both two- and four-wheeled), and boats. On the rivers and canals boats were propelled by oars and sails or were pulled by men or by oxen teams walking along the banks.

The inhabitants of Ur were skilled in the use of leveling instruments and measuring rods, in drawing and map making.

(The previous paragraphs are adapted from *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture and Character* by Samuel Kramer.)

Ur was involved in far-reaching shipping enterprise. Early inscriptions make frequent mention of the "ships of Ur" (George Rawlinson, *The Seven Great Monarchies*, vol. 1). They were able to navigate to considerable distances, and Rawlinson says that it may have been the astronomical knowledge of the Chaldaeans that gave them the confidence to venture on long voyages.

One bill of lading from about 2040 BC was from a ship that had come up the Persian Gulf to southern Mesopotamia after a two-year cruise to distant lands. The cargo included copper ore, gold, ivory, hardwoods for the cabinet maker, and diorite and alabaster for making statuary (Free and Vos, *Archaeology and Bible History*, pp. 46, 47).

There is evidence that Ur had commerce with an ancient Indus Valley kingdom in western India.

"Another semi-precious stone much favoured by Sumerian jewellers was carnelian, which occurs both in Persia and northwest India. That there was indeed trade in carnelian with India is indicated by the presence at Ur of beads of carnelian with bleached patterns. This peculiar technique is

also attested at the Indian site of Harappa, in levels contemporary with the later Agade period in Mesopotamia. [The Agade dynasty lasted about 150 years, beginning in about 2300 BC.] There is a strong probability that the beads found at Ur were of Indian manufacture; other imports from this same area were seals bearing designs and writing which can be paralleled at Harappa [capital of the Indus Valley Civilization].

“All this evidence for foreign trade therefore indicates that during the early part of the third millennium B.C., if not somewhat earlier, there was traffic from Syria and Asia Minor down the great rivers to the Persian Gulf and over the mountains to Persia and Baluchistan. The wonderful display of the royal Tombs [of Ur], which may have been associated with a religious rite, shows that the cities of Sumer had sufficient wealth to acquire foreign commodities in considerable quantities” (Albert Champdor, *Babylon*, 1958, p. 34).

“Over the Persian gulf teak-wood found at Eridu was brought from India. Cotton also made its way from the same source to the southern cities” (George Goodspeed, *A History of the Babylonians and Assyrians*, 1902, Kindle Locations 867-868).

We deal more with the Indus Valley civilization and its ancient trade in the chapter on the Queen of Sheba.

Ur's Agriculture

The fortified city was surrounded by vast agricultural fields.

“Broad fields of corn and barley swayed here. Market gardens, groves of date-palms and fig trees stretched as far as the eye could see. These spacious estates could cheerfully bear comparison with Canadian wheat farms or the market gardens and fruit farms of California” (Werner Keller).

An intricate system of canals, reservoirs, dikes, and ditches provided irrigation for the crops.

“The techniques used were simple but effective, using gravity wherever possible to lead the water from the rivers or major canals into the low-lying fields on either side. If necessary water could be lifted into channels using a pulley and a scoop. There are representations of a device known today as a *shaduf* where a frame is erected above the source of the water. The horizontal bar attached at right angles to a pivot in the centre of the frame has a stone weight on one end and a bucket on the other. The bucket is hauled up by man or animal power helped by the dead weight of the stone” (Harriet Crawford, *Sumer and the Sumerians*, p. 54).

They grew belts of trees for wind breaks.

Farming techniques were methodical and complex. There was a farmer’s almanac that provided information on weather, irrigation, annual flooding, and guidelines for planting and harvesting.

There was information on crop rotation and letting the land lie fallow for specific periods.

The deep-rooted prosopis (trees of the pea family) was used to clean fields of salt (Crawford, p. 56).

There was information on the ideal number of times to water the crops. For corn, there was to be a final application shortly before harvest to fatten up the ears (Harriet Crawford, *Sumer and the Sumerians*, p. 55).

Planting began with a double plowing of the field, followed by a harrowing, raking, and pulverizing process.

The farmers grew corn, barley, wheat, millet, lentils, chick-peas, beans, garlic, onions, lettuce, turnips, cress, leeks, mustard, and cucumbers, among other things. Sesame was grown to produce oil.

They raised sheep, goats, pigs, cows, and oxen, and consumed over 50 different types of fish that were caught with nets.

Farmers used implements made of metal as well as flint and “hard overfired clay.” These included sickles, spades, and hoes.

They had plows with seeder attachments, so that they could plow and sow simultaneously, the depth of seeding being precisely measured.

“The use at Lagash and elsewhere of a new tool, a seeder plow with a funnel mounted on it, through which seed dropped into the furrows at regular intervals and at a consistent depth, enhanced productivity and allowed scribes to calculate precisely the cultivation expenses and ratio of return for a given plot of land” (Foster and Foster, *Civilizations of Ancient Iraq*, 2009, p. 43).

The seeder plow was operated by three men, one handling the plow, one leading the oxen, and one operating the seeder.

The following instruction is from an ancient Sumerian agricultural manual:

“Make eight furrows per cubit of width, the grain will sit better in furrows closely spaced. When you have to work a field with a seeder plow, watch the man who drops in the seed. The grain should fall two fingers deep, he should put in one ounce of seed per cubit” (Foster and Foster, p. 43).

Ur’s Military

A mosaic from one of the tombs (called the Royal Standard of Ur) was made of shell, red limestone and lapis lazuli. One side depicts scenes of war and the other, a victory feast. It is located in Room 56 of the British Museum.

The war scene’s three rows are described as follows by the object’s discoverer, Leonard Woolley:

“In the top row the king stands in the center, distinguished by his greater height, with behind him three attendants or members of his house, and a dwarf-like groom who holds the heads of the two asses which draw the monarch’s empty chariot while the driver of it walks behind holding the reins; in front of the king soldiers are bringing up prisoners, naked and with their arms bound behind their backs, to him to decide their fate. In the second row, come the phalanx of the royal army, heavily-armed infantry in close order with copper helmets exactly like those found by us in the king’s grave, and long cloaks of some stiff material

which I take to be felt, just such cloaks as are worn by the shepherds of Turkey today, holding axes in their hands; in front of them are the light-armed infantry without cloaks, wielding axes or short spears, already engaged with an enemy whose naked warriors are either fleeing or being struck down. In the lowest row we have the chariotry of Sumer, each car drawn by two asses and carrying two men, of whom one is the driver and the other a warrior who flings light javelins, of which four are kept in a quiver tied in the front of the car” (Leonard Woolley, *Ur of the Chaldees*, pp. 101, 102).

The “asses” that pulled the Ur chariots might have been a cross between wild stallions and donkeys.

“By the third millennium wild stallions were apparently being brought in to cross with donkeys in order to produce an animal which had some of the spirit of the onager [a type of wild ass] but was easier to train than the pure-bred wild species. It is suggested that it was these crossbreeds which drew the Sumerian war chariots shown, for instance, on the Royal Standard of Ur” (Harriet Crawford, *Sumer and the Sumerians*, p. 58).

We don’t know exactly how large Ur’s military was, but we know that Sargon of Babylon, who lived in about the same time period, had a standing army of 5,400 men (Foster and Foster, *Civilizations of Ancient Iraq*, p. 52).

The feast scene on the other side of the Royal Standard of Ur depicts the king and his courtiers banqueting. In the top row, the banqueters are seated on chairs while servants attend them and a male harpist and female singer provide musical entertainment. In the two lower rows “attendants are shown bringing in spoils captured from the enemy and food supplies for the banquet--one is driving a goat, another carries two fish, another is bent under the weight of a corded bale of wood, and so on, several of the figures being repeated” (*Ur of the Chaldees*, p. 101).