

Lesson 15: Museums and Key Bible Finds

A common practice is to list top archaeological finds for the year or generate a Top 10, 20 or even 50 finds for both the Old and New Testaments. By "biblical finds" we mean both those items directly connected with biblical characters or history and artifacts that provide an understanding of the background and context of that world, including literary parallels. Many of these artifacts are on display at Museums around the world. This class will be a review of important artifacts enhancing our understanding of the Bible. Attached to the end of the material is the article "Some Biblically Related Artifacts in the British Museum" by Ferrell Jenkins. Other important sources of artifacts of Biblical interest include Lost Treasures of the Bible by Fant and Reddish and Evidence for the Bible by Anderson and Edwards, an excellent book for where there are interesting finds from archaeology that confirm or illustrate the biblical account. One thing will become clear: contrary to the claim of many, the records in the Bible are intended to be taken as historical fact. They are not legends or myths. Foreign rulers and kings of Israel and Judah who feature in the Old Testament are found in the order and places that we discover from contemporary texts; battles and their outcome are exactly as we know them from inscriptions; the setting of narratives fits the period they relate to; and the details of prophetic utterances are precisely what are known to have happened.

The first table lists finds associated with the Old Testament. The list was compiled from several different top ten lists including a book from Biblical Archaeology Review that compiles several articles from the magazine, lists from Bible and Spade magazine and radio show, Crossway publishers, Holman, Keith N. Schoville, and the Bible archaeology Report website. Interestingly the top on almost all lists is the Tel Dan Stele that mentions the House of David.

The inscription dating to 850 BC found at Tel Dan in Northern Israel in 1993 comes from the time of Hazael of Syria. The king boasts that he killed the king of Israel and the king of Judah (2 Kgs 10:32, 13:3.22 and even may take credit for Jehu's work 2 Kgs 9:21-28). The significance for the evidence of David is that the inscription includes the claim: 'the king of Israel and [I] killed him and the king of Bayt-Dawid' (same wording as Isa 7:2 and reads as "House of David"). Thus, 250 years before the stories of David were supposed to have been invented, he was recognized as the founder of the kingdom of Judah. Kenneth Kitchen concludes, 'It cannot seriously be interpreted in any other way'. George Athas, who made his doctoral study of the inscription, is sure that it is a place name rather than a dynasty and is the equivalent of the biblical 'City of David' or Jerusalem. Either way, it is a clear reference to the existence of King David. A scholar who dismisses much of the biblical record as inaccurate concedes, 'Archaeologists now seem considerably closer to establishing that, at the very least, David was real' a reluctant but inevitable admission. This find came as Biblical minimalist declare David and Solomon were nothing more than myths and legends and that the Bible could not be used at all for serious Archaeological interpretation.



The Tel Dan Stele

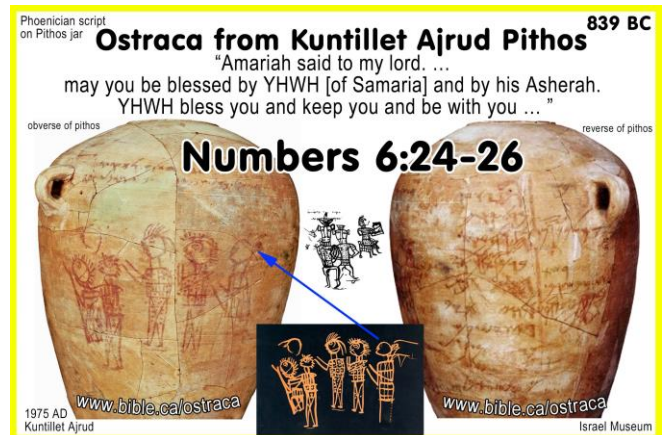
850 BC

This engraved stone is the only archaeological evidence of King David to be discovered. It reads bytdwd, "House of David" (as in Isa 7:2). The stele dates to the mid-ninth century BC, and was found in Dan's city wall in 1993. The wall was likely reconstructed by Israelites during the early seventh century BC, after their recapture of Dan from the Assyrians.

Top Old Testament Finds Part 1

	Source	Old Testament Finds	Importance	Bible Period	Location of Find
1	Bible Archaeology Review/ Bible Archaeology Report//Holman Quicksource Apologetics /Schoville/Book & Spade Radio/Crossway	Tel Dan Stele at Israel Museum	Existence of House of David	~842 BC Divided Kingdom	Dan, Israel
2	Bible Archaeology Report/ Cross Way /Schoville/Book & Spade Radio	Silver Ketef Hinnom Scrolls at Israel Museum	Oldest Biblical Text	~640 to 609 BC Judah Alone	Jerusalem
3	Bible Archaeology Report/Holman Quicksource Apologetics/Crossway	Moabite Stone at Louvre in Paris	Moabite version of 2 Kings 3	~ 835 BC Divided Kingdom	Dibon, Jordan
4	Bible Archaeology Report/Crossway	Hezekiah's Tunnel at Arch Museum in Istanbul	confirms Hezekiah's efforts to fortify Jerusalem	before 701 BC Judah Alone	Jerusalem
5	Bible Archaeology Report	Lachish Reliefs at British Museum	Depicts Siege of Lachish in days of Hezekiah	~700-691 BC Judah Alone	Palace of Nineveh, Iraq
6	Bible Archaeology Review	Jerusalem's Babylonian Siege Tower	confirms Hezekiah's efforts to fortify Jerusalem	before 701 BC Judah Alone	Jerusalem
7	Holman Quicksource Apologetics	The Taylor Prism at British Museum	detailing Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem	690 BC Judah Alone	Palace of Nineveh, Iraq
8	Bible Archaeology Report	Babylonian Chronicle at British Museum	mentions capture of Jerusalem in 597 BC	605-595 BC Exile & Return	Babylon in Modern Iraq
9	Bible Archaeology Report/Bible & Spade 2004 List	Merneptah Stele at Cairo Museum	1st widely confirmed mention of Israel outside of Bible	~ 1208 BC Judges	Thebes in Egypt
10	Bible Archaeology Report/Holman Quicksource Apologetics	Cyrus Cylinder at British Museum	confirms Cyrus decree foer Jews to return to Judah	~539-530 BC Exile & Return	Babylon in Modern Iraq
11	Bible Archaeology Report	Assyrian Inscriptions-Limmu Lists	absolutely allows dating over 250 years of Assyrian History	858 to 699 BC Divided Kingdom/Judah Alone	Palace of Nineveh, Iraq
12	Bible Archaeology Report	Assyrian Inscriptions-Annals of Assyrian Kings at British Museum	Mentions Ahab fight against Shalmaneser III in the battle of Qarqar	852 BC Divided Kingdom	Kurkh in Turkey
13	Bible Archaeology Report/Holman Quicksource Apologetics	Assyrian Inscriptions-Black Obelisk at British Museum	Mentions Jehu, Omri, picture of Israelite	~ 827 BC Divided Kingdom	Calah/Nimrud in Iraq
14	Schoville/Book & Spade Radio	Baruch Bulla at Israel Museum	the stamp and name of the scribe of Jeremiah	~586 BC Divided Kingdom	Jerusalem
15	Bible & Spade 2004 List/Crossway	Rosetta Stone at British Musuem	Allowed translation of Egyptian hieroglyphics	196 BC Between the Testaments	Egypt

In general, we see the finds enhances and confirm what we read in the Bible or is a counter argument/point to those who dismiss the Bible. A different find is listed as item #28 from the Bible Archaeology Review magazine, a meeting point for those both camps. An Ostraca (broken pottery with writing) of significance with inscriptional references to "Yah-weh of Samaria and his Asherah" and to "Yahweh of Teman," which provide important evidence of the complex nature of Israelite religion during the OT period.



Top Old Testament Finds Part 2

	Source	Old Testament Finds	Importance	Bible Period	Location of Find
16	Bible Archaeology Review	Jerusalem's Stepped-Stone Structure	Stepped-Stone Structure maybe the Millio	1300s to 930 BC Judges to United Kingdom	Jerusalem
17	Holman Quicksource Apologetics	The Gilgamesh Epic at British Musuem	another flood account	copies from 2000 BC to 600 BC	Palace of Nineveh, Iraq
18	Bible & Spade 2004 List	Law Code of Hammurabi at Louvre, Paris	writing/laws before Moses	~1760 BC Captivity	Susa, Modern Iran
19	Bible & Spade 2004 List	Amarna Tablets at British Musuem	Political State of Canaan	1365-1335 BC Judges	Egypt
20	Schoville/Book & Spade Radio	Mt Ebal Altar	maybe loaction of Altar built by Joshua	~1220-1000 BC Judges	Israel near modern Nablus
21	Bible Archaeology Review	'Ain Dara Temple, Syria	Closest Remaining Structure similar to Solomon's Temple	~1300 to 740 BC Judges to Divided Kingdom	Syria
22	Bible & Spade 2004 List	Mari Archive	tell of practices similar to those in Genesis	2300 to 1760 BC Patriarchs	northern Syria
23	Bible & Spade 2004 List	Nuzi Tablets at Oriental Institute, the Harvard Semitic Museum and the Iraq Museum	tell of practices similar to those in Genesis	1450-1350 BC Exodus/Conquest	northern Iraq
24	Schoville/Book & Spade Radio	Ekron Inscription at Israel Museum	confirm Philistines had largely assimilated to Canaanite culture	~700 BC Divided Kingdom	Ekron
25	Schoville/Book & Spade Radio/Crossway	texts from Ugarit at Louvre, Paris	describing a Canaanite religion	1300 to 1180 BC Judges	Syria
26	Crossway	Lachish Letters at Israel Museum	important Glimpes of conquest by Babylon	~588 BC Judah Alone	Lachish, Israel
27	Book & Spade Radio	Elephantine Papyri at Brooklyn Museum, Bodleian Library in Oxford & Egyptian Museum in Cairo	colony of Jews, apparently mercenary soldiers	500's BC Exile & Return	Egypt
28	Bible Archaeology Review	Kuntillet 'Ajrud Ostraca	Did Yahweh Have a Consort	~850 to 750 BC Divided Kingdom	Sinai Egypt
29	Bible Archaeology Review	Ashkelon's Arched Gate	world's oldest known monumental arch	~1900-1750 BC Patriarchs	Ashkelon, Israel

While often grouped as an Old Testament find the Dead Sea scrolls really belong to the period Between the Testaments, through the Life of Christ/Gospels into the Apostolic Period. Discovered in 1947 in caves close by the Dead Sea, the 'Dead Sea Scrolls' consist of almost one thousand scrolls composed of seventeen thousand fragments. It is generally agreed that the scrolls belonged to the Essene community, a Jewish sect opposed to the High Priest in Jerusalem, who hid their precious manuscripts from the advancing Romans. Most of the material is dated between 200 BC and AD 68 and the main interest is in the large number of copies from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament); every book is represented, except Esther. The Dead Sea Scrolls include fragments from every book of the Old Testament except for the Book of Esther. The only complete book of the Hebrew Bible preserved among the manuscripts from Qumran is Isaiah; this copy, dated to the first century BC, is considered the earliest Old Testament manuscript still in existence. One of the primary reasons the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was such a momentous find is the new information the scrolls provide scholars about the wording and arrangement of biblical texts. Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the earliest known copies of the books of the Hebrew Bible (in Hebrew) were written in the ninth and tenth centuries AD including the Cairo Codex of the Prophets, dated to ca. 895 AD and the Aleppo Codex (about one third of which is missing), dated to ca. 930 AD.

Many of the finds for the New Testament time period confirm the writings of Luke especially with relation to the correct names of Roman officials. But normally higher on the list with respect to importance is evidence for Roman crucifixion is the heel bone of the crucified man. While many authors wrote about crucifixions (Josephus, Plautus, Senneca), with the discovery of a heel bone of

a crucified victim – nail still embedded in it – scholars were able to analyze the Roman form of execution first-hand.

In 1968 an area in northeast Jerusalem when they accidentally dug up several tombs with numerous ossuaries, including one that contained the bones of an adult male who had been crucified. His name, Jehohanan (Yehohanan), was inscribed on the outside of the bone box, and his right heel bone still contained the rusted spike from his crucifixion. It seems the nail must have hit a knot in the wood of the cross and bent. It probably couldn't be removed from the victim by his family without doing considerable damage to his foot, and so it was left in place. An analysis of the heel bone and the nail dated them to the first century AD, and revealed that Jehohanan had likely been crucified with a leg on either side of the cross and the nail driven in sideways through his heel. The bones of Jehohanan also bore evidence that his legs may have been broken. This discovery confirms the description of crucifixion in the Bible, including the nailing of feet and the breaking of legs. Furthermore, it provides a definitive response to critics who argued that Jesus could not have been buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea because a crucified criminal would not have been dignified with a proper burial in Rome. Rather, critics argued, his body would have been disposed in a mass grave for the condemned. We now see that the loved ones of a crucified victim could retrieve the body and prepare it for burial in a family tomb.

Top New Testament Finds

	Source	New Testament Finds	Importance	Bible Period	Location of Find
1	Bible Archaeology Report/Schoville/Book & Spade Radio/Crossway	Dead Sea Scrolls at Israel Museum	Oldest OT Manuscripts	Between the Testaments to Apostolic 150 BC to 60 AD	Qumran, Israel
2	Bible Archaeology Report/Crossway	Heel Bone of Crucified Man at Israel Museum	crucifixion	Apostolic- before 70 AD	Jerusalem
3	Bible Archaeology Report	P52 Manuscript (Fragment of the Gospel of John) at Rylands Library	Gospels	Early Church Fathers AD 125-175	Egypt
4	Bible Archaeology Report/Schoville/Book & Spade Radio	The Pilate Stone at Israel Museum	Gospels-confirmed that Pilate's title	Life of Christ 26-36 AD	Caesarea
5	Bible Archaeology Report/Schoville/Book & Spade Radio	Caiaphas Ossuary at Israel Museum	Gospels - Trial of Jesus High Priest from 18 to 36 AD	Gospels-Apolostic before 70 AD	Jerusalem
6	Bible Archaeology Report	Temple Inscriptions (Trumpeting) at Israel Museum	Temple Practice	Gospels-Apolostic before 70 AD	Jerusalem
7	Bible Archaeology Report	Gallio Inscription Delphi Arch. Museum	Date when Paul was in Corinth	Apostolic -52 AD	Delphi in Greece
8	Bible Archaeology Report	Nazareth Inscription in Paris at National Library of France	death penalty in Israel for stealing bodies	Apostolic -reign of Claudius 41-54 AD	Nazareth
9	Bible Archaeology Report	Temple Inscriptions (Warning) at Arch Museum in Istanbul	Arrest of Paul at Temple	Gospels-Apolostic before 70 AD	Jerusalem
10	Bible Archaeology Report	Erastus Inscription	Mentioned in Paul's Epistles	Apostolic- before 50 AD	Corinth
11	Bible Archaeology Review/ Bible Archaeology Report	Pool of Siloam	Blind Man Healed	Gospels-Apolostic before 70 AD	Jerusalem
12	Schoville/Book & Spade Radio	Galilee Boat - Migdal Israel	Many Bible Events around boats and Sea of Galilee	~120 BC to 20 AD Between Testaments	Sea of Galilee
13	Bible Archaeology Report	Sergius Paulus Inscriptions	converted by Paul	Apostolic -54 AD	Paphos in Cyprus
14	Bible Archaeology Review	Peter's House	Location of Important NT Events	Life of Christ 30-33 AD	Capernaum, Israel
15	Bible Archaeology Review	Nag Hammadi Library in Cario Musuem	Gnostic Literature	~350 to 400 AD Post Constantine the Great	Nag Hammadi in Egypt
16	Bible Archaeology Review	Mona Lisa of the Galilee	adds to what we know about Sepphoris	~ 200 AD Early Church Fathers	Sepphoris in the Galilee