

# HIGHLIGHTS OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN BIBLE LANDS

by

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## CHAPTER TWENTY

### REPORTS ON RECENT EXCAVATIONS

#### SOUTHERN ARABIA AND THE KINGDOM OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

IN THE SEASON OF 1950-1951 the *American Foundation for the Study of Man*, under the direction of Wendell Phillips, undertook to excavate at the city of Mareb at the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula, which was the ancient capital of the Queen of Sheba. The scene of these excavations is now located in the kingdom of Yemen. Dr. W. F. Albright was the chief archaeologist.

Thirty feet below the surface Temple Bil Quis was discovered, the home of the Queen of Sheba. Crumbling remains of once lofty pillars gave evidence of a one-time magnificent building. Valuable inscriptions had been chiseled in the stone.

Before the discoveries of this expedition, certain Bible scholars had maintained that the kingdom of Sheba was located in the northern rather than the southern portion of Arabia, and that it arose at a period of time centuries after the era of King Solomon. Such a view was, of course, in conflict with the Old Testament, which tells of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon; and Jesus referred to this monarch as the Queen of the South. But the work of the archaeologists has now established the fact that the kingdom of Sheba was actually in southern Arabia and not in northern Arabia, and that the empire of the famous queen was coexistent with the empire of Solomon. These findings of the excavators have been announced by Dr. Albright.

The capital of Sheba was shown to be an important trade center for many years following the time of Solomon, especially for the transporting of spices and incense. The Hebrew prophets often refer to these products that were brought by caravans from Sheba. (See Isaiah 60:6; Jeremiah 6:20; Ezekiel 27:22). 1

#### EXCAVATING THE MOUND OF DOTHAN

In the spring of 1953 an expedition began work at Tell Dotha, the site of the Biblical city of Dothan, located sixty miles to the north of the city of Jerusalem. Dr. Joseph P. Free, of Wheaton College, was director.

The Old Testament mentions the city of Dothan in the story of Joseph searching for his brethren (Genesis 37:17f.); it was also in that city that Elisha was encompassed by the Syrian army (II Kings 6:13f.).

Dr. Free discovered that there was a city of Dothan in the time of Joseph, that it existed in the reign of Thothmes III, the Pharaoh of the Oppression, and that it was a city in the days of the prophet Elisha. Thus the Bible history is confirmed by what the excavators found. 2

### **A NEW EXPEDITION TO JERICHO**

Some archaeologists have thought that there was certain archaeological evidence to point to the late date (late thirteenth century B.C.) for the capture of Jericho by the Israelites. To accept such a view would mean, of course, the discounting of the evidence of the Garstang expedition which indicated the fall of the city took place in the early fourteenth century B.C. In order to try to settle the issues involved in this controversy over this important date of Biblical significance, and in order to discover more about the early epoch in the history of the old city, an expedition was organized to dig again in the mound of Old Testament Jericho. It was sponsored jointly by the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem and the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem. Miss Kathleen Kenyon has served as director, and work was begun in 1952 and continued in 1953 and 1954. Discoveries of value having to do with the early life of the city have been made, but at this writing no new evidence has come to light to settle the matter of the date for the Israelite invasion of Canaan and the destruction of the Canaanite city of Jericho. 3

1. Gus W. Van Beek, "Recovering the Ancient Civilization of Arabia," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, XV, No. 1, Feb. 1952, pp. 2-18; "Queen of Sheba's Temple Explored," *The Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 1952, p. 19 (interview of Robert Carmean, a member of the expedition to Arabia); "Archaeology and the Queen of Sheba," *The Prophetic Word*, Jan. 1954, p. 6.
2. Joseph P. Free, "The First Season of Excavation at Dothan," *Bulletin of American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 131, Oct. 1953, pp. 16-20.
3. A. Douglas Tushingham, "Excavations at Old Testament Jericho," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, XVI, No. 3, Sept 1953, pp. 46-67; Kathleen M. Kenyon, "Jericho Gives up its Secrets," *The National Geographic Magazine*, Dec. 1953, p. 853f.; Kathleen M. Kenyon, "Jericho Oldest Wall Town," *Archaeology*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Spring, 1954, pp. 2-8.

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