

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE CITY OF DAVID

Perhaps more than any other academic discipline, archaeology has enlarged our understanding of the historical record in the Bible. Archaeologists have found some of their most spectacular artifacts in the City of David, an area of 12 square miles in the southeast part of modern-day Jerusalem.

From the earliest investigation, conducted by American Edward Robinson in 1838, to the extensive excavation under the direction of Yigal Shiloh from 1978 to 1982, archaeology has progressively and dramatically confirmed the biblical account—from both Old and New Testaments.

The City of David itself contains only a limited amount of material from the actual Davidic period of Iron Age I and II. To date, diggers have unearthed no evidence of Solomon's Temple.

The archaeological record of Jerusalem in the late 11th and early 10th centuries B.C. is not nearly as prolific as we might wish it were. Indeed, one of the noteworthy products of excavation in Jerusalem, commonly called the Tower of David, excavated by archaeologist R.A.S. Macalister in the 1920s, bears a title that can easily mislead. Although the tower's name associates the structure with Israel's most famous monarch, in fact only the lower courses of the tower are from the Davidic period. Most of this fortified edifice dates to the Maccabean period of the 2nd century B.C.

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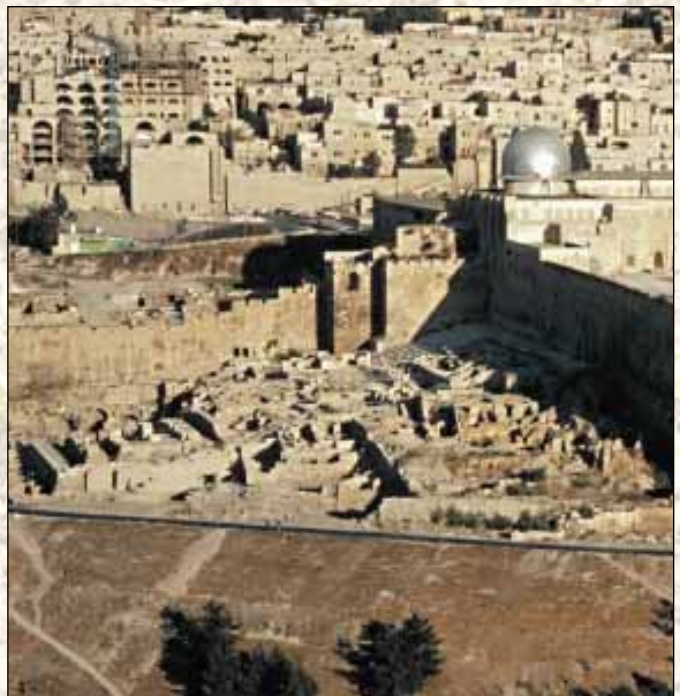
Other archaeological work convincingly documents the history of the Bible. In particular the grande dame of British biblical archaeology, Kathleen Kenyon, revealed an important archaeological feature from the time of David. In 1961 her excavation exposed a part of the Jebusite wall that surrounded Jerusalem when David took the city near the end of the 11th century B.C. (see 2 Samuel 5:6, 7).

Stealthy fighter

Relevant to this same episode, another discovery numerous archaeologists have examined has supported fascinating speculation about the account of Joab's stealthy entry into Jebusite Jerusalem. The event, related in 2 Samuel 5, occurred near the beginning of David's reign over all 12 Israelite tribes. David had offered to reward the man who took Jerusalem by appointing him leader over Israel's army. David's own nephew, Joab, achieved this seemingly impossible feat

by gaining entrance into the city through the *tsinnor*, loosely translated "gutter" (verse 8) in the King James Version of the Bible and "water shaft" in the New King James Version.

This reference quite possibly describes a subterranean Jebusite water shaft discovered in 1867 by Englishman Capt. Charles Warren. Joab may well have discovered the underground passageway leading to the shaft, then scaled it to gain entry into the city. To demonstrate the possibility of such a feat, one member of the Capt. Montague Parker Mission (1909-1911) climbed the shaft from top to bottom. Though archaeologists still are not certain they have found the right shaft, the wedding of the biblical account and the particular geological feature of the city raises interesting



Jerusalem is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world and was occupied long before David made it his capital. Numerous archaeological excavations, like these at the base of the Temple Mount area, have been carried out over the years.

possibilities.

Another major feature, not to mention popular tourist attraction, beneath the City of David is Hezekiah's Tunnel. This underground channel is associated with the reign of Judah's 8th-century (B.C.) king and religious reformer Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chronicles 32:2-4). Edward Robinson was the first man in modern times to explore it. Many others, scholars and tourists alike, have followed in Robinson's footsteps.

Again, the evidence is subject to interpretation, but the tunnel may well be part of a comprehensive defensive response to a late-8th-century Assyrian invasion, first of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and later the kingdom of Judah. The latter military campaign is described in 2 Kings 18:9-19:37 and Isaiah 36:37. The discovery of the Nahaman Avigad excavation of 1970 is generally considered evidence of the story in 2 Chronicles 32:5, describing significant work on the 8th-century city wall. Hezekiah's concern about an impending military threat is evidenced by the remnants of a wall that expanded to the south and west, considerably beyond the boundaries of the City of David (Isaiah 22:9-11).

This enlarging of the wall suggests that the population of Jerusalem swelled during the years before the Assyrian invasion of Judah. No doubt the project was in part the result of refugees from the falling Northern Kingdom relocating in Jerusalem. Perhaps some Jews as well left the hinterland of the kingdom to seek safety in the capital.

It is plausible that Hezekiah, anticipating the Assyrian onslaught, took measures to ensure a steady water supply should Jerusalem be put to siege. And well he should have; King Sennacherib's Assyrian forces overran the kingdom. According to the biblical record and the Taylor Cylinder (a small cylinder-shaped clay tablet from Sennacherib's archives inscribed with a version of the story of the siege of Jerusalem), Hezekiah found himself, albeit temporarily, trapped like a bird in a cage.

Inscription found

The serpentine tunnel itself runs from the intermittent Gihon Spring, just outside the northeast wall of the City of David, and winds some 1,750 feet before resurfacing at the Pool of Siloam. Evidently Hezekiah's workmen constructed this engineering marvel by tunneling from opposite ends and meeting near the middle. To commemorate such a landmark achievement, someone left a Hebrew inscription on the rock wall near where the two teams of tunnelers eventually met.

When discovered in 1880 near the Pool of Siloam, it was almost entirely preserved. This "Siloam inscription," now housed at the Museum of the Ancient Orient in Istanbul, reads:

"When the tunnel was driven through. And this was the way in which it was cut through: while . . . were still . . . axes, each man toward his fellow, and while there were still three cubits to be cut through, there was heard the voice of a man calling to his fellow, for there was an overlap in the rock on the right and on the left. And when the tunnel was driven through the quarrymen hewed the

rock, each man toward his fellow, ax against ax; and the water flowed from the spring toward the reservoir for 1,200 cubits, and the height of the rock above the heads of the quarrymen was 100 cubits."

The Bible, apparently referring to this engineering marvel, says: "Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah—all his might, and how he made a pool and a tunnel and brought water into the city—are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?" (2 Kings 20:20).

The above examples identify only some of the significant archaeological discoveries scientists have

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unearthed in or near the City of David. Christians can be grateful for the evidence archaeological excavation provides. It inspires faith in the infallible Word of God. **GN**

—Rick Sherrod, Ph.D.

Major Archaeological Excavations in Jerusalem

1838	Edward Robinson	Hezekiah's Tunnel
1864, 1867	Charles Warren, Charles Wilson, Claude R. Conder	Hezekiah's Tunnel and Jebusite shaft
1886	Conrad Schick	Solomonic irrigation channel
1894-1897	F.J. Bliss A.C. Dickie	Byzantine church above Pool of Siloam
1909-1911	Parker Mission	Hezekiah's Tunnel and Jebusite shaft
1913-1914, 1923-1924	Raymond Weill	Tombs believed to be of kings of Judah
1923-1925	R.A.S. Macalister	Tower of David
1961-1967	Kathleen Kenyon	Jebusite city
1968-1982	Benjamin Mazar	Temple Mount area
1970	Nahaman Avigad	Hezekiah's wall
1978-1982	Yigal Shiloh	Gihon water system

This lists only the most prominent excavations in the area of Jerusalem. Many other excavations are not listed.