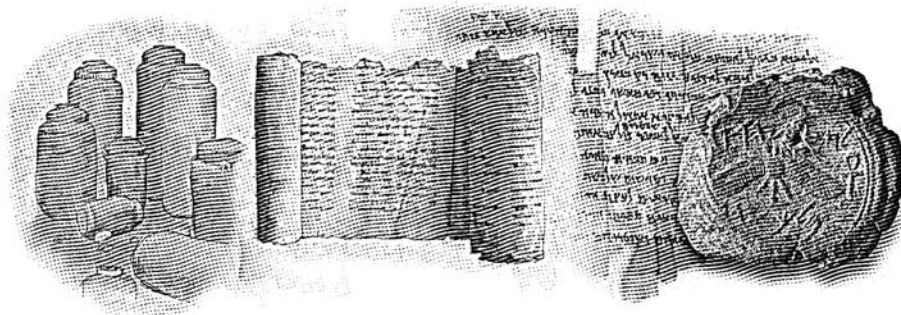


The Bible as History



SABBATH—MAY 30

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Samuel 17; Isaiah 36:1–3; Daniel 1; Daniel 5; Matthew 26:57–67; Hebrews 11:1–40.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘I am the Lord your God. I brought you out of the land of Egypt where you were slaves’ ” (Exodus 20:2, ICB; also read Deuteronomy 5:6).

THE BIBLE SHOWS US HISTORY. First, the Bible shows us the beginning of human life when God made the sky and the earth. Then the Bible shows us the history of God's people from the beginning to the end of time. Finally, the Bible shows us that God will make the earth new again at His Second Coming.

The Bible's record of history makes the Bible different from the holy books of other religions. The Bible shows us a God who is personal. The Bible does not try to prove that God is real. It just teaches that He lives. He acts in human history. In the beginning, God speaks. His words make all the life there is on earth (Genesis 1:1–31). God commands Abram to leave Ur, the land of the Chaldees. God brings His people out of slavery in Egypt. God writes the Ten Commandments on stone with His own finger (Exodus 31:18). God sends prophets, or special messengers, to His people. God gives His law to Israel and asks them to share His saving plan with other people. God sends His Son Jesus to the earth and changes history forever.

This week, we will look at some important happenings in Bible history. We also will look at some of the proof that shows us that Bible history is true.



The Bible shows that God will make the earth new again after His Second Coming.

DAVID, SOLOMON, AND THE KINGDOM (1 Samuel 17)

Some people say that David and Solomon were not real. They say that their kingdom was not as big as the Bible says it was. But if there is no David, then how can there be a Jerusalem? (2 Samuel 5:6–10). If there is no David, then how can there be a temple built by his son Solomon? (1 Kings 8:17–20). With no David, how can there be a future Savior? God promises that the Savior will be born to one of David's future family members (Jeremiah 23:5, 6; Revelation 22:16). If David was not a real person, then we will need to write a new history for Israel that is different from the one in the Bible. So, we can see why Israel's history in the Bible is important. This history gives Israel and the church its reason for being here on earth.

Read 1 Samuel 17. How does God give Israel a big win in a war against their enemies? Who does God use to help Israel win? Where does their big victory happen?

Do you see that 1 Samuel 17:1–3 tells us the exact name of the place where the war happens? Today this place is named Khirbet Qieyafa. Archaeologists went there and dug up a city named Shaaraim in Bible times. Shaaraim was built in the time of King Saul and David. Archaeologists are scientists who study the way people lived long ago to learn more about the past. Scientists found two gates at Khirbet Qieyafa. Most cities in Israel during Old Testament times had only one gate. So, the two gates help us know that this city that was dug up at modern Khirbet Qieyafa is Shaaraim. The Bible talks about this city in 1 Samuel 17:52. In the Hebrew, "Shaaraim" means "two gates."

If this information is true, then they have discovered this Old Testament city for the first time. In 2008 and 2013, two objects were found with Hebrew writing on them. Many people believe that these two objects are the oldest Hebrew writing ever discovered! The second object has the name Eshbaal written on it. Eshbaal is the same name as one of King Saul's sons (1 Chronicles 9:39).

In 1993, archaeologists dug up the ground at the northern city of Tel Dan. There, they found an object written by King Hazael of Damascus. Hazael records his victory over "the king of Israel" and a king who was from "David's house." "House" is a word picture for someone's family in Old Testament times. The Bible also talks about David's family in this way. So, this writing is powerful proof that David was a real person, just as the Bible says.



If David was not a real person, then we will need to write a new history for Israel that is different from the one in the Bible.

ISAIAH, HEZEKIAH, AND SENNACHERIB (Isaiah 36:1–3)

Read the story in Isaiah 36:1–3 and Isaiah 37:14–38. In this story, a very big Assyrian army comes to fight against Judah. How does God save His people?

In 701 B.C., Sennacherib fights against Judah. The record of the war is found in the Bible. Sennacherib himself writes about the war, too, in several ways. Sennacherib writes about it in his personal records. These records were discovered in Sennacherib's capital city, Nineveh. In his records, Sennacherib brags: "I took 46 of Hezekiah's towns and villages from him." In Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh, Sennacherib celebrates his win against the Jewish city of Lachish. Sennacherib had the walls of his palace painted with pictures of his victory.

In modern times, people went to the city of Lachish to dig for old things from the past. They found proof that Sennacherib burned Lachish. But Jerusalem was kept safe by a miracle. So, Sennacherib cannot brag about destroying Jerusalem at all. He can brag only about what he does to King Hezekiah: "I shut King Hezekiah in his city the same as a bird in a cage." But we find no record in history about Sennacherib's destroying Jerusalem or taking anyone from the city as his slaves.

It is true that Sennacherib's army attacked Jerusalem. But the Bible shows us that the attack lasted only one day. Then the Angel of the Lord saves Jerusalem, just as Isaiah says He will. "So the LORD says this about the king of Assyria: 'He will not come into this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not bring his shields up against this city or build up a hill of dirt to attack its walls. He will go back the way he came. He will not come into this city. The LORD says this! I will protect this city and save it. I will do this for myself and for my servant David' " (Isaiah 37:33–35, ERV).

It is interesting that Sennacherib's palace did not have any pictures of Jerusalem on it. Only pictures of Lachish. That tells us that Sennacherib never beat Jerusalem. So, he can brag only about beating Lachish. The God of heaven shows us that He is stronger than the Assyrian gods. We see proof of God's power when He saves His people from the Assyrian army. God sees how Assyria tries to take control of Judah. God hears the words of Hezekiah's prayer. God acts in history to save His people.



Sennacherib brags, "I shut King Hezekiah in his city the same as a bird in a cage."

DANIEL, NEBUCHADNEZZAR, AND BABYLON (Daniel 1 and Daniel 5)

In July 2007, a teacher from the University of Vienna was working at the British Museum. He discovered a stone tablet with writing on it. The tablet came from the time of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. On the stone tablet, the teacher saw the name “Nebusarsekim.” This is the name of a Babylonian leader that we read about in Jeremiah 39:3. Nebusarsekim is one of many people who lived during the time of Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar.

Read Daniel 1 and Daniel 5. What decision did Daniel make early in his life? Why was God able to use Daniel as His servant? God showed Daniel the future history of many countries. How has Daniel’s record of history changed the lives of many people worldwide?

Daniel “decided not to eat the king’s food and wine because that would make him unclean [not clean]” (Daniel 1:8, ICB). Daniel wanted to stay loyal to God in what he ate and how he prayed. Daniel formed good habits when he was young. His good habits made him strong his whole life. Daniel had a clear mind. God gave Daniel wisdom and understanding. Both King Nebuchadnezzar and King Belshazzar saw that God blessed Daniel with wisdom. So, they gave him the most important jobs in the kingdom. More important, Daniel’s example caused King Nebuchadnezzar to accept God (Daniel 4:34–37).

Nebuchadnezzar was the son of Nabopolassar. Together, they built a wonderful city. There was no city like it during Old Testament times (Daniel 4:30). The city of Babylon was very big. It had more than 300 temples and a beautiful palace. The city had two walls around it. One wall was 12 feet thick. The other wall was 22 feet thick. There were eight gates in the walls. All the gates were named after important Babylonian gods. The most famous gate is the Ishtar gate. The Germans dug up part of the gate and rebuilt it in the Pergamom Museum in Berlin.

In Daniel 7:4, we see a picture of Babylon as a lion with eagle wings. The way that leads up to the Ishtar gate is covered with pictures of 120 lions. Someone who dug up the earth around Babylon found a picture of a lion jumping on a man. This picture stands outside the city of Babylon to this day. All these pictures show us that the lion is the perfect symbol for Babylon, just as the Bible shows us.



The lion is the perfect symbol for Babylon, just as the Bible shows us.

JESUS IN HISTORY (Matthew 26:57–67)

Read about Jesus in Matthew 26:57–67; John 11:45–53; and John 18:29–31. Who was Caiaphas? What part did he have in Jesus' death? Who was Pontius Pilate? What decision did he make about Jesus? How did Pilate's decision make it possible for the Jewish leaders to do what they did to Jesus?

Caiaphas was the top Jewish religious leader. He came up with the plan to kill Jesus. Josephus, a history writer, gives us some important information about Caiaphas. This information helps us to know who Caiaphas is. "Caiaphas also was named Joseph. At first, he was not allowed to be the top Jewish religious leader. That is because a man named Jonathan was chosen to be the next top religious leader. Jonathan was the son of Ananus. Ananus had been the top religious leader in the past." —Flavius Josephus, *Complete Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1969), book 18, chapter 4, page 381, adapted.

In 1990, a family grave was discovered south of Jerusalem. 12 boxes filled with bones were in the grave. The coins and pots in the grave help us to know how old the grave is. The pots and coins were made in the middle of the first century A.D. The most expensive bone box has a name on it: "Joseph son of Caiaphas." Many thinkers believe this name shows that the grave and the bone box belong to the Caiaphas that Josephus wrote about. This is the same Caiaphas who was the top Jewish religious leader at the time of Jesus' death.

In 1961, someone found a stone with the name Pontius Pilate on it. Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea during the time of the Roman King Tiberius. The stone was found in the theater at Caesarea Maritima. So, these examples of the coins, pots, and stone help us to see that the Bible shows us a true picture of history.

History writers who lived during the first 200 years after Jesus also talk about Jesus of Nazareth. Tacitus is one of them. He is a Roman writer of history. Tacitus writes about several Bible topics: (1) Jesus, (2) His death by Pontius Pilate during the time of Tiberius, and (3) early Christians in Rome. Pliny the Younger was a Roman governor. In A.D. 112–113, Pliny writes to the Roman King Trajan and asks him what he should do about the Christians. Pliny says that the Christians meet on a certain day before the sun comes up. Then the Christians sing hymns as to a god. These writings give us more proof that Jesus was a real person.



Pliny wrote about Christians who sang hymns to their God, Jesus.

FAITH AND HISTORY (Hebrews 11:1–40)

Our choices do not change only our lives. They change other people's lives too. In the same way, many of God's people during Old Testament times have had the power to change people's lives. In Hebrews 11, we see how the heroes of faith changed the lives of many people.

Read about the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:1–40. What lessons can we learn from their lives?

Enoch _____

Noah _____

Abraham _____

Sarah _____

Joseph _____

Moses _____

Rahab _____

Samson _____



Rahab chose to believe that God could save her. So, she protected the two spies.

Faith is not simply a belief in something or someone. Faith leads us to take action that can change history.

Noah acted on faith when he built the ark. He trusted in God more than experience and reason. It had never rained on the earth before the Flood. So, people's experience and reason told them that a Flood could not happen. But Noah trusted God. He obeyed Him, and humans in the ark were saved from the Flood. The only reason there are people on the earth today is because Noah obeyed God. Abram left his home in Ur in Mesopotamia. He went out, not knowing where God led him. But Abram chose to act on God's Word. Moses could have become the King of Egypt. But he chose to become a shepherd to lead God's people to the Promised Land. He trusted God's voice that talked to him from the burning bush. Rahab chose to believe that God could save her. So, she protected the two spies. Then she became part of the line of Jesus! Our choices can change the lives of many people, now and in the future!

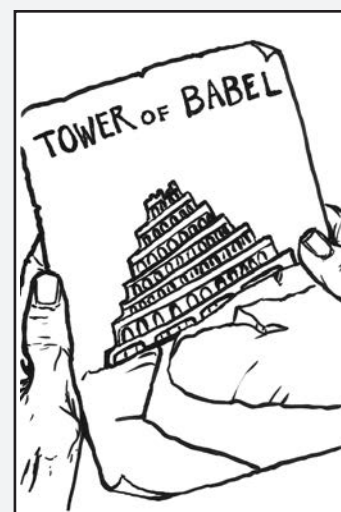
ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “David and Goliath,” pages 643–648, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; “Hezekiah,” pages 331–339; “Deliverance From Assyria,” pages 349–366, in *Prophets and Kings*; section 4.k., in “Methods of Bible Study,” which can be found at <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/bible-interpretation-hermeneutics/methods-bible-study>.

“The Bible is the oldest and most complete history that humans have. This history came to us from God. God has kept this record of history safe since the beginning of time. Bible history helps us to understand what happened in the long-ago past. Scientists cannot see that far back on their own. Only the Bible shows us the Power that made the sky and the earth. Only the Bible shows us a true record of how different people groups got started. Only the Bible shows us a history of our race that is not spoiled by human pride or wrong views and feelings.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 173, adapted.

“If you know who God is and the Bible, then you will believe that the Bible came from God. We must not judge the Bible by human ideas about science. We must bring these ideas to the Bible and let the Bible judge these ideas as true or false. We must trust that God’s Word, the Bible, is truth. Truth never can disagree with itself. So when the teachings of science disagree with Bible truth, then these teachings are wrong.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 8, page 325, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Yes, it is good when science agrees with Bible history. But what happens when science does not agree with the Bible? What do we do then? Why must we depend on God’s Word, the Bible, for truth? Why must we give the Bible the final say about what is true, even if science does not agree?
- ② Think about all the Bible prophecies that have come true. Bible prophecies are special messages from God that show us the future. Think about the kingdoms in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7. Parts of these prophecies have come true already. But some parts have not happened. Why can we trust the Lord that every part of His prophecies will come true?



Only the Bible shows us a true record of how different people groups got started.