

Q2 L10 - The Bible as History - 2020-06-06

Jean Ross: Good morning, friends. Welcome again to "Sabbath School Study Hour," coming to you from the Amazing Facts offices near Sacramento, California. To be specific, we're in the area of Granite Bay. We'd like to welcome all of those who are joining us. We have an important study today, and we've still been studying through our series talking about the Bible. Today we're on lesson number 10 in our lesson quarterly. It's entitled The Bible As History. We got some important information, some fascinating archaeological information to share with you that helps prove the validity of the Bible. Pastor Doug, we have a very important lesson. Good morning.

Doug Batchelor: Morning, how are you doing?

Jean: Doing good. Of course, we're going to be talking about the Bible as history, and it's always a good idea to start with prayer before we get into the study of God's Word, so let's do that. Dear Father, we thank you again that we have this wonderful opportunity to open up and study your Word. We can see how that the Bible reveals to us, not only the way of life, but it also reveals God's dealing through human history, and so, we pray for your guidance as we study together this morning. In Jesus' name, amen.

Doug: Amen.

Jean: We've got a free offer that we'd like to tell our friends about. It's one of the Amazing Facts study guides. It's one of our classics, it's called "The USA In Bible Prophecy," and this is our free offer. All you'll need to do is call the number 866-788-3966 and ask for Offer Number 181. Again, that's 866-788-3966 and ask for Offer Number 101. And we'll be happy to send this out to anyone who calls and asks. You can receive a digital download of our free offer by texting the code SH039--or 93 I should say, SH093 to the number 40544. You'll get a digital download, and you'll be able to study this very important lesson talking about the United States in Bible prophecy. Our lesson today, lesson number 10 entitled The Bible As History, and Pastor Doug, we've got a memory verse for today.

Doug: Yes, it's from Exodus chapter 20, verse 2, and it says, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage." I think most people recognize that as part of the Ten Commandments, but it also gives, it's an encompassing memory verse because the theme of the lesson today is really how the panorama of Bible history can be supported with World History. And, you know, one of the big questions I asked when I first started reading the Bible is, well, the Bible's not a fairytale, it's a true book, it's a historical book, these things really happened? And I was very pleased as I studied over the years to find out that the Bible is probably the most comprehensive historical book in the world.

Jean: Mm-hmm. There's an important number of themes that are introduced that we find in the Bible. For example, the Bible talks about creation. The Bible talks about the fall, where did sin come from. We have the story of the flood. We have the call of Abraham. We have the history of Israel revealed in the Bible. And, of course, all of that culminates in the coming of the Messiah, and that's really the central focus of the Bible. The establishment of the Christian church is, of course, a theme in the New Testament. And then, you've got all of the prophecies found in the Bible, as well as the practical information on how we find a saving relationship with Christ. So, the Bible is both a religious book, but it is also very authoritative, the most authoritative history book as well.

Doug: Amen. You know, I was pleased that as I was reading the Bible, I should mention, I did not do very well in some classes. I did not do very well in math. I did not do very well in English, believe it or not. I still struggle to spell if it wasn't for spell check. Something I did well in was history because for me, our teachers often taught history as stories. And so, I knew about the Persians, and the Romans, and the Greeks, and the Babylonians, or Mesopotamians, I think we called them. And so, as I was finally reading the Bible for the first time I'm going yeah, I remember reading that, I remember.

So, going through the prophecies in Daniel, reading about Egypt, and going to Egypt later in my life,

going in the pyramids and seeing the things the Bible writes about, it covers such a big span of Middle Eastern history, which was, in many ways, the cradle of civilization. So, some of the most important learning knowledge, mathematics, writing, originated in Mesopotamia and the Middle East, and it's all backed up and endorsed by the Bible.

Jean: Now, of course, we also want to mention this, I didn't mention this in beginning, but we want this to be an interactive Bible study. So, if you have a question related to the Bible, the trustworthiness of the Word of God, or maybe a verse that you've never understood, you're welcome to send us a comment or ask your question in Facebook in the comment section. And they're going to be sending these questions to me, and we'll try to answer as many of them as we get through our lesson study this morning.

Doug: Now, that can be either the Granite Bay Facebook page or the Doug Batchelor Facebook page. It might even be on Amazing Facts but one of those two, just type your question in there. We've got someone watching them and they'll spring them over to us.

Jean: And, of course, this program is being broadcast on Pastor Doug's Facebook page, the Doug Batchelor Facebook page, Amazing Facts Facebook. It's also on AFTV live, so there's a number of ways that you can view and participate in our study. Well, we get to Sunday's lesson and its introduction, he's talking about David, Solomon, and the monarchy.

Now, if you were to find a time in Israel's history when the promises that God had made to Abraham met their fullest fulfillment, it would probably be during the time of David and Solomon. It's sometimes referred to as the golden age of Israel's history. Now, of course, it's an important time because if you don't have David, then you don't have Jerusalem because David conquered the Jebusite fortress eventually named Jerusalem. Without David, you wouldn't have Solomon. Without Solomon, you wouldn't have the building of the temple. And, of course, most important, it's through the line of David, through the tribe of Judah that the Messiah would come. Now, of course, there's some dispute amongst historians today as to whether or not David was a real historical figure. Maybe it's because of the great stories. You read about David killing Goliath and some of the exploits. People say, "Ah, that seemed a little too far fetched. He wasn't a real historical figure. He was made up by the Jews."

Doug: And there--we were in Israel a year and a half, two years ago, and there's also very big political reasons that some people dispute the historical truth about the Davidic line and Solomon and that's because David conquering all the surrounding nations and God, you know, fully giving them the Promised Land, that really creates some, some support for Israel saying, "This is our native land, we want to come back." And so, there have been people who, for political reasons, they don't appreciate Israel. And whether they're, you know, supporting the Palestinian view that "well, Israel never--this never was their land, they made that all up," or for some other political reason, you can see there's very strong opinions on both sides of this to prove or disprove, did David really exist? Did Solomon really exist? Did Joshua really bring them into the Promised Land? Because it's a question of the most disputed holy land in the world and its ownership. And so, when we were there, our guides who we should say in the interest of full disclosure, they were hired by Israel. The tour guides took us and they showed us the city of David and the excavations there. But I'll tell you, it was pretty convincing.

And I remember a young Israeli girl took us around, gave us the whole history. You could look down, you could see the ancient city of David. And there have been discoveries along the way; for example, they did some archaeological work, what they Tel Dan. Now, that's actually not in Jerusalem, it's north. And they found a stele there. That's like a pillar with writing on it, ancient writing, and it actually mentions the house of David. And so, that was some of the first written history that proved that David really did live. And they find, they found others since that. And I should mention just backing up to Joshua a little bit. If you go to Western Africa, in Algeria, there is again a large column, or two large columns, on which is inscribed in Phoenician characters, "We are the Phoenicians who fled from the face of Jesus." Now, that was the Greek way of saying Joshua the son of Naue, Joshua the son of Nun. And many of the Phoenicians and the people in that land when Joshua came, they were driven out. And so, there's throughout the Middle East, there's written history that proves this.

Jean: You know, another interesting, historical archaeological find took place in a region that is probably well known to most Bible readers. It's the famous story of David and Goliath. And we read in 1 Samuel chapter 17, verse 3 how the armies were situated during that time. It says, "The Philistines stood on a mountain on one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, with a valley between them." And archaeologists, because of these descriptions that we find in the Bible, were able to pinpoint the very place where the story took place. And they'd done some archaeological digs and they've discovered a massive fortified garrisoned city that dates back to the time of Saul and David, and the interesting about this is it's got two gates in the excavation. They weren't typically these type of fortifications that had two gates.

What's significant about the two gates is in the Bible in 1 Samuel 17, verse 52, it identifies this place as Shaaraim, I guess is how it's pronounced. In the Hebrew, it literally means two gates. So, from the Bible record, as well as archeological finds, we can actually pinpoint this very spot where the story of David and Goliath took place, and the archaeological evidence supports that.

Doug: Yeah, and even today if you go to Israel, I was surprised how many of the ancient names of places that you find in the Bible are the, basically the modern names that even the Arabs use. Sometimes it's a little different pronunciation, but it's pretty clear. It's the same place, you know, Joppa, Haifa, and some of the others, yeah.

Jean: We got some questions, Pastor Doug, that's coming in related to the Bible, and this one's not directly related to archaeology but it's an interesting question. It says, "Was the story of Ananias and Sapphira a parable?" And, of course, we find that in the New Testament. It says, "If not, why did they receive such a severe punishment as usually associated with Old Testament times before the death of Christ?"

Doug: Yeah, Ananias and Sapphira you find in Acts chapter 5, and it is a true story. It's a very sobering story, but it explains that God's Spirit was moving in a mighty way on the hearts of the people. And they were touched with the Spirit, they were giving in a very sacrificial, generous way. And that was the Spirit of God moving on the church. But a couple, they were basically going to pollute that whole movement by feigning that they were making this tremendous sacrifice, but really keeping a percent, maybe a large percent, of those monies for themselves, but acting like, "We've sold everything, and we're giving it all to the Lord." And they basically both died that very day that they lied to the apostles about this gift that they were giving. And some have thought, "Well, that was pretty severe."

I think it's showing that, and someone said that if God treated the whole church today the way he treated Ananias and Sapphira, there'd be a lot of funerals. But the reason he did it then is because it was a lesson for future ages that we should not pretend we're giving all when we don't and that honesty was very important in the church, and that we should not deny the moving of the Spirit. Peter said, "You've lied to the Holy Spirit." So, it was a real event, it's not a parable.

Jean: One of the important historical things that we read about in the Bible, of course, we find in Exodus chapter 20, and that is the giving of the law. But there are some interesting things associated with that and somebody is asking a question about this, Pastor Doug. Exodus chapter 34 and their question is connected between verse 27 through to verse 35. And they're asking, "Can you explain what this is all about, this passage?" And it's talking about the receiving of the law, and then it says Moses didn't eat for 40 days on the mount, then he came down and his face was shining. What is that all about?

Doug: Well, I believe it's true. Moses is up on the mountain, he's in communion with God. He's up there for 40 days and 40 nights. It shouldn't surprise us that his face was glowing. You see, in the Bible before, before sin when Adam and Eve were in the garden and they were perfectly holy and talking to God, we believe they had an inner light that kind of radiated out. And that's why after they sinned, that light faded and they saw their nakedness. They sort of had robes of light. When Moses was talking with the Lord, his face was shining.

You find a parallel story of that. Jesus goes up the mountain with Peter, James, and John, you read in Mark chapter 9, it's called the Mount of Transfiguration. And Moses and Elijah appear and it says, Christ's garments began to glow brighter than the sun at noonday. And Jesus was shining. And Moses was shining, and Elijah was shining. The disciples are cowering. They can't even look at the glory. One time Christ said, "I am He, and the glory of God shone through Jesus," so that the mob coming to arrest him fell backwards from the light. And so, it shouldn't surprise us. I remember as a kid that I would get these glow-in-the-dark stars, you could hold up to a light and stick it on your ceiling or something. And they glowed pretty bright for a while after you put them right next to the flashlight, then it would gradually fade and that's what kind of happened to Moses. The radioactive glory of God, whatever it was, it was just shining off his face and for a while there until it kind of faded, people couldn't even look at him.

Jean: They had to veil his face.

Doug: Yeah, and it's no mystery that he didn't eat or drink for 40 days. He just supernaturally sustained. That also happened later to Elijah when he was strengthened by the angels, and he went in the strength of one meal 40 days through the wilderness.

Jean: And you mentioned the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus didn't eat for 40 days. Moses didn't eat for 40 days. Elijah didn't eat for 40 days. So there's a connection there. Another question that someone's asking related to the archeological discoveries in Jerusalem, the question that Joel asks is, "Are the streets of Jerusalem built on the original streets from the time of Christ?"

Doug: Well, you know, they've modernized Jerusalem and so many of them are different, but many of them are the same. It's even like when you go through Italy today, they still have some that's like the Appian way, it's an ancient Roman road. There are some roads that were just the best, most direct route, and they have repaired and built on top of them for millennia, but you can actually see, there are some very old streets in Jerusalem. When pilgrims go to Jerusalem, they've been this for over 1,000 years since the time at least of the crusaders. During the Easter week, they walked what they called the Via Dolorosa, the way of suffering. And it's believed to be the approximate path that Jesus would have taken from Antonia Fortress to Golgotha. And very likely, some of those streets are the same. In the days of Paul in Damascus, it says Paul was on Straight Street. They still have a street in Damascus called Straight Street, if they haven't blown it up recently. That dates way back to the time of Paul.

Jean: Yeah, that's interesting. On Monday, we're going to be talking a little bit about Isaiah, Hezekiah, and Sennacherib, so we spoke on Sunday about David, Solomon, and the monarchy. Now, moving a little further in time, we have the story of Hezekiah. Is there any archaeological evidence that helps to testify to the story of Hezekiah and, in particular, Sennacherib, who's this Syrian king that came up against Jerusalem. And it's an incredible story. You actually find it in Isaiah 36: 1 to 3, and it talks about how that King Hezekiah in Jerusalem received this letter from Sennacherib and he brought it, and he laid it before the Lord. And he prayed and he asked for God's protection against the kingdom. And, of course, by this time, Sennacherib had sort of marched down from the north and had conquered all of the territory. By this time, the ten tribes in the north, they were gone, and he was already beginning to enter into Judea, but he was unable to conquer Jerusalem because God gave a remarkable, or a miraculous delivery for Hezekiah and the Jews. Is there anything archaeological evidence that supports this?

Doug: Well, you're going to tell us.

Jean: Okay, well, I got it right here. Thank you for asking, Pastor Doug.

Doug: I'll wind up when you talk about Moab in a minute.

Jean: Yes, you can read this in our lesson. I found it interesting. It was actually around 700, 701 BC that we have Sennacherib that brought his campaign against Judea, and Judah, and Jerusalem. And the Bible gives the description of this. They've done archeological digs back in Nineveh in the palace of Sennacherib, and he describes all of the areas that he conquered and various cities that he defeated,

including Lachish, one of the cities. But when it comes to Jerusalem, he doesn't say that he conquered Jerusalem. Instead he says, "As for Hezekiah the Judea, I shut him in his city like a bird in a cage. Now, it is true that Sennacherib did besiege Jerusalem, but he is unable to conquer. Now, of course, he doesn't mention the fact that, you know, thousands of his soldiers were killed, [inaudible] by the angel, and eventually he left, Sennacherib left and went back. But it does testify to the biblical account that God delivered Hezekiah at that time.

Doug: Now, these kings, when they were writing history on these stones, they usually put the best possible spin on their exploits. "I shut them in like a bird." You know, I was also going to talk, and we're dealing with the time of the kings. By the way, if you go to Israel, if you see the Dead Sea Scrolls, one of the most intact scrolls you can see is the Isaiah scroll. And I was very touched when years ago I was first there, my guide that I had, his name was Moshe, which means Moses, he trained in reading ancient Hebrew and I pointed to a place on the Dead Sea Scroll and I said, "Can you read what that says?" And he translated into English as he read to me, and it was a story of Hezekiah and Sennacherib. So, we know that that went back 2,000 years and it's still the same as in our Bibles today.

Then they found the Moabite stone. I don't know if you've ever heard of that before. This is another one of those steles, you know, a pillar with an inscription on it. It was a black basalt stone found in the area of the Edomites, or the Moabites, rather. And in the Moabite language, they specifically mentioned their battles with the house of Omri. Of course, Ahab was the son of Omri. Omri was one of the kings in Israel that you find written about also in 2 Kings. So, there's lots of endorsement in extra biblical history.

There's something I want to say now because I may forget, Pastor Ross. It always is amazing to me that people question the historicity of the Bible because there is so much more written about these Bible characters and about Jesus, who we'll get to a little later, than you have on Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great. And one reason is they say, "Well, you can't contest that Alexander the Great lived." Even though there's only a few stories from the ancient historians about him. They say, "You can see that his kingdom spread all around the Middle East." And so, there's no reason to doubt because of the effect in the English language and that what they call the hellenization of that great area. Well, you can see Christianity spread all over the world. So, you can see the impact of it spread all over Rome. There's so much more written about the Bible and Jesus, why would we doubt, unless a person has got a prejudice going into it to doubt?

Jean: Here's a great question coming from Teresa and she asks, "Does the pool of Bethesda still exist today?" Of course, you read that story where Jesus healed a man, 38 years he was laying beside the pool of Bethesda. So have they discovered the remains of this pool? Does it exist?

Doug: Yeah, I think they believe they have, and I believe they also, there's a couple of miracles. One is the pool of Siloam, and then the other is pool of Bethesda and miracles happen in both these places. And I think those who have done excavation around Israel, they'll take you to those locations where they believe the pools are. They don't look now like they did then. They're not full of water flowing crystal clear. One of the neat things, and this is to me really exciting, is when Karen and I, Karen's here on the front row, when we were in Israel, we arrived a couple of days before your crew came. And we were with some friends, Aaron and Jessalyn, and we had a couple of days we said we want to see Hezekiah's tunnel.

If you look in, I think it's 2 Kings, it talks about Hezekiah built a conduit that brought water into Jerusalem. And there's this tunnel, you go down this long winding stairs inside Jerusalem, and then you walk in anywhere from ankle to knee-deep water, sometimes thigh-deep water, pitch black. We had to use our cell phones to see where we were going, just the four of us. And you walk, and you walk, a you walk, and you can see on the walls where they picked it out by hand. Now, this is something that I think is 700 years A.D. You can see what's recorded in the Bible. You are feeling it, it is still bringing water into Jerusalem today. Very exciting.

Jean: You mean 700 BC.

Doug: Oh, yeah, 700 BC, and it's, it seemed like it was half a mile long. It's very long.

Jean: Now, talking about the pool of Bethesda, just the verse in John chapter 5, verse 1 it says, "There was a feast of the Jews. Jesus went up to Jerusalem and there in Jerusalem by the sheep gate is a pool, which is called in the Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches." And when we were there touring through Jerusalem, they took us to a spot that they've archeological digs have happened there. And sure enough, it's the very spot, they believe and I think they're right, where the pool of Bethesda was because it actually has five porches, and you can see that in the archeological dig. It's a lot lower than the ground level right now because the city's been destroyed and been rebuilt.

So, it's a remarkable thought to actually stand in the very spot where Jesus was and where He healed this man. And you kind of have that feeling when you visit Jerusalem. So many places that you've read about in the Bible suddenly just spring to life when you're actually standing there. I remember up in the area near the Galilee where you're walking where Jesus walked, where He called the disciples in the town of Capernaum in the temple there where he healed people. It's just a remarkable thought.

Doug: Yeah, and again, many of the towns like Tiberias, still have the same nouns--same names. You go to Caesarea, it's still there today and you can actually see a stone that has Pilate's name on it. Now, I think the original stone may be in a museum somewhere so they've made a copy, a model copy of it that's exact, but you can see Pilate mentioned. For years they said, "Oh, Pilate never lived," and then they found some history where Pilate is mentioned.

Jean: Now, Genie's asking, "Why is the Bible not written in chronological order?"

Doug: Yeah, well, the Jews in the Old Testament, they arranged the books in groups. You've got the books of history, the books of the law, the books of poetry, the minor prophets, the major prophets, and they basically bunch them together in that way. There's several ways, you know, a librarian can organize material. In the New Testament, you've got the gospels, the story of Jesus is what it begins with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and they're not actually organized probably, they weren't sure when they first organized them which was written first. Now, we're pretty sure Mark was written first, and then possibly Matthew. John was written last and that would put Luke in the third place, and then Acts is a continuing history of the church.

The interesting thing about the writings of Paul, I was always surprised to hear is, whoever organized those, and it may have been Martin Luther, that he organized the books in order of the longest to the shortest. So, when you're reading Romans, you're reading the longest book of Paul and then you get to--now, they weren't sure who wrote Hebrews. That's why they put it where they did. And then you get to books like Titus and Philemon, they're on the end of that.

Jean: So, it's interesting just to look at how the layout of the Bible and, you know, we do have some resources. If you're wondering about how do we get the Bible, it's called "The Ultimate Resource," and I believe you can read it for free on the Amazing Facts website. It's called "The Ultimate Resource." Well, then Pastor Doug, that brings us to our next day study and it's talking about Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar, and Babylon. Here is just a tremendous amount of archaeological evidence to support the biblical account of, first of all, Nebuchadnezzar as being the one who built the ancient city of Babylon.

Doug: And this is a very well-established fact of history that nobody disputes. Part of the reason they can't dispute it is because when you go, matter of fact, our friend Dr. Michael Hasel is a professor and does archaeology. And he actually has it's either reproduction or brick, but you go to ancient Babylon, and a number of the soldiers that went to visit ancient Babylon during the Iraq War have brought some home. Nebuchadnezzar had his seal stamped on millions of bricks. And so, to deny his existence that he was the one who did the massive building program so that he finally could declare, "Is this not the great Babylon that I have built?" And it was the golden kingdom. It's referred to both, of course, by Daniel and in history, and they've got the gates of Ishtar in the Berlin Museum, a museum in Berlin. I can't say the name of it.

Jean: There's actually a total of eight gates that entered into the ancient city of Babylon, of course, it had massive walls. The city contained more than 300 different temples to their deities. Probably the most famous of the gates is the Ishtar Gate. And the interesting thing about that is as you enter into the ancient city of Babylon and you're passing through the Ishtar Gate, and doubtless this was the way that Daniel and the captives were brought when they came back from Jerusalem, on either side of the walls as you're entering the gate, there are these tiled images of lions, some even have wings, so lions with wings that are described entering into Babylon.

And it's interesting that we have in Daniel chapter 7, verse 4, the nation of Babylon described as a lion with wings. So, it was very clear to the Babylonians, it was clear to the king, what power was being represented by this first beast of a lion with eagle's wings. It represented the ancient city of Babylon.

Doug: And there's even a character that you find mentioned in Jeremiah chapter 39, Nebuzaradan. Now, this is not Nebuchadnezzar. This was a captain of the king's guard, and they have found ancient writings. I believe it may be some cuneiform tablet that mentions him as well. So, there's just a lot of very strong historical collaboration.

Jean: Even stamped on the bricks of the ancient city of Babylon is the name "Nebuchadnezzar." And then, of course, you have the silent cylinder, which I believe is in the British Museum that actually records how Cyrus conquered Babylon, and it's according to the biblical account that we have so that's helping to validate what the Bible says. So, there's so much evidence the more archaeological digs, the more discoveries we find, the more testifies to the accuracy of the Bible.

Doug: Yeah, even the stones cry out, as Jesus said.

Jean: That's exactly what's happening. We have somebody asking a question. Jolie is asking, "Why is the Beautiful Gate, going into the ancient city of Jerusalem, walled up today?" And if you stand on the Mount of Olives and you look over the Kidron Valley and you look up against the old wall of the city of Jerusalem, one of the gates has been bricked up and he's wondering why is that.

Doug: Well, they are correct, it's technically it's not the Beautiful Gate. It's the Golden Gate that they sealed and it's because during the time, I think it was of Solomon the Great, one of the leaders of the Ottoman Empire, a Muslim, he knew that the Jewish tradition was that the Messiah would come through that gate from the Mount of Olives, because of a prophecy in Zechariah. And so, to prevent the prophecy from coming true--they didn't realize Jesus already did it. Supposedly, to prevent that prophecy from coming true, they bricked up that gate and then to desecrate the ground, they put a cemetery in front of it. But it's kind of tragic that you can't go through that gate right now, but they're too late because Jesus went through the Golden Gate during the triumphal entry, and he fulfilled that prophecy as it said there in, I believe, Micah that, "Your King comes to you lowly riding upon a donkey." Is that Micah or Zechariah?

Jean: Zechariah, I think.

Doug: Zechariah.

Jean: Now, of course, then that brings us to our study on Wednesday, which is the most important, and that's the historical Jesus. Did Jesus really exist? Well, according to the Bible, there is no question about the fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, that he began his ministry at the age of 30. He performed all kinds of miracles. He raised people from the dead. Of course, the combination of that is Jesus was crucified, and he rose from the dead. Now, the amazing thing about the story of Jesus, it's not just some story that is separated from historical facts or evidence. It's not some story that took place without knowing where, or when, or who was in charge.

You look at the archaeological and historical evidence that goes along with the story of Jesus, it's a specific place where Jesus was born, where he grew up, where he ministered, talks about where he went in Jerusalem for his trial. It talks about Pontius Pilate, talks about Caiaphas who was the high priest. And now there's a lot of archaeological evidence that helps to support these very individuals, these names, these places that we find listed in the Bible.

Doug: Yeah, absolutely. And there are, you know, there's a lot of archaeology that's been done that reinforces the evidence that Jesus really existed. There's also some historians. Now, if somebody 600 years now begins to write about Abraham Lincoln, they might say they made up this character, Lincoln. Yeah, president split logs and he, you know, was born in a cabin, became president. They may say, "Ah, it's not true." Well, we live close enough to the time of Lincoln where we know it is true. Matter of fact, the year before I was born, the last Civil War soldier died. And so, there's a very small gap in history between our day and the Civil War. I knew World War I veterans and would talk to them about the war.

So, there are people who wrote that knew people, during the time of Christ; for instance, you have Pliny the Younger is a Roman governor. He writes in 112 to 113 A.D. to the Emperor Trajan asking how he should treat the Christians. He describes them as meeting on a certain day before light where they would gather and sing hymns as to a God. He also wrote to Emperor Trajan, or Trajan, that the early Christians would sing hymns to Christ as to a God. And another historian wrote to Emperor Claudius, who had expelled the Jews from Rome, which is mentioned in the Book of Acts. And it says they were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Christos. Christos was the way that the Latins said Christ. And so, they were referring to Jesus at the influence of the Christian religion.

Jean: And probably one of the most trusted historians of the time would be the story in Josephus. He was actually alive in 70 A.D. and he wasn't in Jerusalem when the city was destroyed. He was actually a Roman citizen, but he was Jewish. And he appealed to the Jews in Jerusalem to, you know, give in to the Romans, to surrender him, but they didn't. He had some interesting statements. Josephus actually speaks of Jesus. There is a reference in his writings. But in addition to speaking of Jesus, Josephus actually mentions the high priest Caiaphas as well. So, we have Josephus speaking of Jesus. He also has references of Caiaphas the high priest says that he was the priest. So, we have some contemporary historians also referring to these historical figures.

Doug: Yeah, let me read the statement, it's not that long, of Josephus talking about Jesus because it is pretty amazing. Matter of fact, some historians it's so explicit, they say, "That can't be correct." Somebody added that later, but it does match his writing and as long as we've had his writings, it's been there. And it says, and this is from the Jewish Antiquities 18.3.3. "About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many of the Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Messiah.

And when, upon the accusation of the principal men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross, those who had first come to love him did not cease. He appeared to them spending a third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things and a thousand other marvels about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared," or not extinct. And by the way, Josephus also mentions this is not contested, and Josephus also mentions, it says, "James, the brother of Jesus, who is called Messiah," and it talks about his unlawful execution. Well, you read about that in Acts chapter 12. Herod killed James with the sword, brother of Jesus.

Jean: Okay, talking about Jesus we have some questions that have come in. And Carol is asking, "Pastor Doug, what does Jesus mean when he says, 'Take up your cross and follow me'?"

Doug: Well, it was a very, unfortunately, it was a very common scene in the time of Christ to see that criminals, the people deemed criminals by the Romans, would be carrying their crosses to their place of execution, which is, you know, a horrible thing to consider. It's kind of like during World War II sometimes the Japanese, or even the Germans, would force prisoners to dig their graves before they shot them. They said, "Look, we gotta bury you, but we don't want to do it so you're gonna dig your own grave." They used to make them carry their cross, and the crosses back then, they did not look like beautiful pieces of six by six lumber. They didn't waste good lumber on criminals. They would just hack down a spindly tree big enough to support a man, put it in two pieces and either tie or nail the pieces together, and they'd carry that to the place where they'd be executed. Usually outside a city gate where everyone could see the crime they committed above their head and to detour crime.

And so, when Jesus said, "You must take up your cross and follow me," when someone took up his cross, that meant that they were laying down their life. They were getting ready to die and they were going to kind of take their final burden being willing to, at any cost, bear the burden of self-denial, even to the point of death.

Jean: Okay, another question that's come in. It says, "Pastor Doug, where was the Garden of Eden located geographically?" And I'll just add, was it destroyed with the flood?

Doug: Well, we're not sure the, you know, some of the rivers probably changed course after the flood. The flood was so cataclysmic. Evidently, Noah and the people that populated the world after they came out of the ark and they went down to the area of Mesopotamia, they continued to identify the Euphrates River with a river in the area and the Tigris. They probably knew something about the stars, and navigation and location. So, we guess the Garden of Eden was somewhere in the area of Mesopotamia, we don't know.

Was the garden destroyed during the flood? We don't think so. Now, the Bible does not specifically mention that God took the garden up to heaven, but the Bible does say the New Jerusalem is coming down from God out of heaven. It does tell us the tree of life is in the New Jerusalem, and it stands to reason that if God planted this garden, it was a special garden to him, that if God can bring a city down, he can take a garden up. And so, it makes sense that God had assumed that garden somehow, caught it up to heaven to protect it so that it could be restored to Adam and Eve and the earth made new. It's a special garden that God made. So, my mother-in-law in her backyard, she has a garden box. You can actually pick up her garden and carry it around. So, God can do it if my mother-in-law can do it.

Jean: All right, well then that brings us to our Thursday's lesson talking about faith and history. And we have the great chapter sometimes referred to as the faith chapter in Hebrews chapter 11, where we have a summary of these historical figures. Now, of course, there's no doubt, as far as the apostles go and even Jesus, that these historical individuals did exist. Jonah existed. Of course, Jesus refers to Adam. So, there's no doubt that yes, these old testament characters did exist. And then we find in Hebrews chapter 11, a list of some of these great individuals, and there's so many important things we can learn from them. And we see a demonstration of their faith. He mentions, talking about Hebrews chapter 11, Paul mentions here Enoch, and we know from the Bible account that Enoch lived before the flood, and the Bible says he walked with God. According to the Book of Jude, Jude 14, he was a preacher of righteousness, preached concerning the second coming of Christ and of judgment, and we know that he was taken to heaven without seeing death.

Doug: Now, you've got, I think about 16 different people that are mentioned there in Hebrews in--men and women, and it talks about Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel. So, what's happening here is, and then he goes on to say, "What shall I more say for time would fail me to talk about," you know, he alludes to several others. He talks about those who have quenched the violence of the fire, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They escaped the violence of lions, meaning Daniel in the lions' den.

So, but in that list that he's giving, he's covering a long horizon of history that's reaching from Abel, who's back before, you know, in the Garden of Eden, the child of Adam and Eve. Jesus mentions Abel, so you gotta believe in Abel and he takes Abel all the way down to, I think, the latest character that's mentioned is David. And so, because no one, none of them questioned David. And it said it was all through faith that these people were victorious. And so, there's, I call this kind of the Bible's honor roll or the Hall of Faith in the Bible, the faithful.

Jean: And I think the point that's been emphasized there is yes, these historical figures are true, but when we see the evidence in Scripture, we should fasten our faith on what the Bible says. The Bible is a miraculous book, not only do we have accurate archaeological finds and historical finds that validate what the Bible says, but we also have prophecy that indicates that the Bible is indeed an inspired book. There is no other book like the Bible, and so it is God's Word revealed to us. Jesus Himself referred back to the Old Testament as evidence of who he was and his mission and his work. The apostles who wrote in the 1st century A.D., they referred back to the Old Testament. So, there is, even within the Bible itself, Bible writers that are referring to other passages of Scripture showing that it is the inspired Word of God, it is trustworthy. We can stake our lives on what the Bible says.

Doug: What's fascinating about the list that's given in Hebrews there is it's covering such a long span and most of the names of the people that are here also the chronologies of these people are given. And then you read stories about them when you talk about Enoch, you know, you're reading about the time before the flood. Then you go to Moses, you're talking about Egyptians. Well, we know about Egyptian history. In geology, we know about the flood. You can see evidence of a global flood. And even paleontologists who are atheist now agree, there was a global cataclysm of water, but they say it's caused by an asteroid. But they agree, there was a global water cataclysm, you can tell by the fossil record. And so, Noah supports that.

And then you get down to the time of Samson. His life interacts with the Philistines. We believe in the Philistine history. That's where you get the name Palestine. It's just a corruption of the word Philistine, these Phoenician people. And, you know, you go on down to the time of David, he battles with the Assyrians, and the Syrians, and the Moabites, and the Edomites. We believe in all these different characters, these cultures and nations.

So, you know, one more thing. I saw in my notes I missed something, but it still is relevant and I got a couple minutes left talking about the time of Jesus. You mentioned Josephus' reference to Caiaphas. In 1990, a family tomb was discovered south of Jerusalem containing 12 ossuaries. These are, you know, usually stone boxes where the Jews, we use big old full-sized coffins when we bury people, they would sort of just put the bones of the person, for economy of space, in these smaller boxes, and there's coins and potteries from the tomb dated around the middle of the 1st century A.D. time of Christ. The most ornate expensive of the Ossuaries has multiple sets of bones in it. It contains the name Joseph son of Caiaphas, and they believe this, many scholars believe this is the same tune-tomb and bone box that contains the bones of the high priest that was most responsible for the crucifixion and execution of Jesus.

Jean: It's an amazing thought when you're actually in Jerusalem, and you're walking around these places to think of what transpired here on the spot.

Doug: And I forgot, you know, the Mountain of Herodion, that cone-shaped manmade volcanic mountain, they've now dug, they've excavated just in the last ten years, they excavated the grave there and they found the tomb of Herod the Great. And so, who is mentioned as the one who killed the babies in Bethlehem. So, you go on and on, the Bible is the most accurate, historic book in history.

Jean: Now, somebody's asking, Angela's asking the question, why Enoch didn't have a book in the Bible. And I guess it goes along with the question some people think, you know, Jude refers to the writings of Enoch. Did he write a book? And if so, why was it not included in Scripture?

Doug: There is a book called the Book of Enoch. It probably was not written by Enoch, if it was, then it needed to be in Noah's library and brought on the other side of the flood. It is a book that was written and it was an allegory just like, you know, we've got the book "Pilgrim's Progress," which is a beautifully inspiring spiritual allegory. We recommend it for every Christian. It's not a true story. And Jude, the Jews who were in the captivity of Babylon, someone wrote the Book of Enoch to inspire the Jews to be faithful to the God of Jehovah. "Don't accept the Babylonian gods."

So, it's a book written with a good story. It supposedly uses Enoch as the author, Jude quotes from that because there's some inspired statements in there that were part of the Jewish oral history about, "Behold, the Lord comes with 10,000 of His saints to execute judgment on the ungodly and convince all the ungodly of their ungodly works that they have committed." Even back in the time of Babylon, the Jews believe the Lord was coming to execute judgment. Jude quotes from that, the statement is inspired. The Book of Enoch probably is not written by Enoch himself. Sorry, it's a long answer.

Jean: We got another question in the last few minutes, Joel is asking, "Can you visit Golgotha and see where Jesus was crucified?"

Doug: Yes. And, you know, one of the sites that we saw that we believe is accurate--you go to Israel today, and you'll have ten churches and they'll say, "Oh, this is the place where Jesus did this or that," and everybody wants a church. They said, "No, it's here, no, it's there." They're really not sure. But because the geography of Golgotha is described, it says it's near a garden. It's near a tomb area where you could dig a cave in the hillside, and it was on a hill. And we know it was outside of one of the main gates that where people were crucified.

There is a--and it says it looks like a skull. There is a limestone hill that actually has some potholes in it that look like a skull outside Jerusalem. They have found a garden area there with a cistern. They have found a tomb where a stone rolls away. You know, all of the evidence is there that this is probably the location where Jesus was crucified and it's very touching. Sad part is there's so much business happening, you go to this place that's sacred and you can hear the garbage trucks going by outside because it just so much bedlam of noise around Jerusalem. It just, it's kind of lost some of the sanctity of the moment.

Jean: Actually at the foot of what we think could very well be Golgotha, they've built a bus depot right now, and buses are coming and going and just the noise. But you can make out at a certain angle, what looks like a skull. You think that's the area. Well, there's a statement that we find from the book "Education," and I just want to share this in closing. It says, "The Bible is the most ancient and the most comprehensive history that men possess. It came fresh from the fountain of eternal truth and throughout the ages, a divine hand has preserved its purity. It lights up the far distant past where human's research is vain to seek, penetrate, or to penetrate." It says, "In God's Word only do we behold the power that laid the foundations of the earth and stretched out the heavens." So here, we find the authentic account of the origins of nations. Here only is given the history of our race unsullied by human pride or prejudice. We find that in the Word of God.

Doug: Amen. You know, if you want to know about the Romans, Edward Gibbon spent his life writing "The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire," spent a life studying that. But there is only one book that covers the entire history of man from creation up until at least after the time of Christ, and we have a pretty good history from then to now. That's the Bible. It's the most accurate account.

Jean: Let me remind our friends who are joining us, we do have a free offer and it's called "The USA In Bible Prophecy," and it deals with a study of Revelation. Revelation chapter 13 talks about a beast power that rises up from the earth as two horns like a lamb, speaks like a dragon. If you want to learn more about what the Bible says about the United States, we'll be happy to send you this study guide. All you need to do is call the number 866-788-3966 and ask for Offer Number 181, and we'll get it in the mail and send it to your house. Or if you like, you'll be able to get a digital copy of the book by texting the code SH093 to the number 40544, and you can get a digital copy of that. You can read it, you can actually share it with somebody else. So, an important lesson. I think everyone who gets it will enjoy it.

Announcer: Don't forget to request today's life-changing free resource. Not only can you receive free gift in the mail, you can download a digital copy straight to your computer or mobile device. To get your digital copy of today's free gift, simply text the keyword on your screen to 40544, or visit the web address shown on your screen. And be sure to select that digital download option on the request page. It's now easier than ever for you to study God's Word with Amazing Facts wherever and whenever you want, and most important, to share it with others.

Doug Batchelor: Friends, if you're scared of snakes, this may not be for you. I'm here at a Reptile Park outside of Durban, South Africa, and I'm holding my friend here who's a Red-Tail Boa. Snakes are found all over the world, and they come in all sizes. Snakes can be found through the trees, they crawl on the ground, they live under the ground, and they swim in the water. Very interesting creatures. Some snakes are venomous, not my friend here, but the Black Mamba, very poisonous. Matter of fact, their bite is often referred to as the kiss of death. They can grow 15 feet long and can travel up to seven miles an hour. They don't call them Black Mambas because of the color of their skin, but the interior of their mouth is black.

Snakes also come in all sizes, like this Boa or Python, they can grow to great sizes. Matter of fact, in South America, they found some fossils of a snake that they call Titanoboa. They believe it was as big as 50 feet long and weighed as much as a car. Say, "cheese." A lot of people are scared of snakes. I used to live in a mountain in a cave, and I ran into snakes frequently. They never bothered me unless I was bothering them.

In the Bible, the snake is often a symbol of the devil. In reality, it's just a symbol. They're animals like other animals, but it says they were cursed to go upon their belly because they were the first medium that the devil used to tempt Adam and Eve. In the Book of Numbers chapter 21, it tells the story of how when the children of Israel were going through the wilderness, they began to complain about God's manna. And it says the Lord allowed these fiery serpents to go among the people and many were bitten, and the venom was deadly.

I should probably mention at this point, that bread they were complaining about is a symbol for the Word of God. As many of the people were dying from this plague of serpents, they went on to Moses and they said, "What shall we do?" God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and put it on a pole and lift it up, that whoever looked upon the serpent, they would be healed of their venom. This is why it's so important because Jesus says in the gospel of John chapter 3, verse 14 and 15, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." They needed to look and to live.

You see, those ancient shepherds when they would kill a venomous snake, they would carry it off on their staff and bury it. So, a serpent on a pole represented a defeated snake. It's talking about defeating the devil, friends. Have you been bitten by the serpent? We all have. The only cure for the venom of Satan is to look in faith at Jesus. He then defeated the devil. He took the venom of sin in his body to provide the antidote in his blood. So friends, I encourage you to look today and live.

Male: My parents got divorced when I was three or four, and then I was basically unchurched most of my life. I had a girlfriend in high school tell me that she had to break up with me because I wasn't a Christian. I thought that's weird. I believe in God. Why would she say that? Not realizing I was living a horrible life with foul language, was mean, and other stuff. And that kind of challenged me initially.

And then my dad, 9/11 woke him up. He wasn't ready to meet his Lord, though he was a man that I valued and knew loved me, didn't doubt that, but he just knew he needed more. So, he started watching TV ministries first, Baptist preachers and others, and he was kind of intrigued by what he was learning. And so, when he turned me on to this television station, first thing that I got access to was Doug Batchelor's most amazing prophecy series that he did in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

And I remember when I first watched this, my background was Baptist-ish of sorts. I remember when I first watched this series, I remember thinking, I've never heard that before about the state of the dead, or about the Sabbath, or the commandments, or the rapture, or other things. And I remember thinking to myself I've never heard that before, but that's what the text says. And that kept happening. And I had this experience of just wondering like, well, what else have I believed that isn't as it is, you know? And the more I watched, the more helpful it became.

But again, he kind of took a different perspective on the messages. It was fresh to me, but I just, these things I had never heard before and I just realized like, there's so much stuff in the Bible that no one's talking about and that people need to know. And so, I ended up in this awkward situation that some of my friends who didn't believe what I was coming to believe, I didn't know how to communicate with them. And so, one of the things that helped me initially was thesabbathtruth.com website, thetruthaboutHell.com, and the truth about death, and some of those resource websites that Amazing Facts had put together that were just full of resources. If I needed an answer to something that someone brought up, there would be a 95% chance that Amazing Facts would have something that I could use. It makes witnessing even easier in that sense.

The Amazing Facts Prophecy Study Bible was my first real Bible that I had of a more trusted translation. The Bible study guides were in the back of it, they had a lot of other resources that were helpful. If you can hand a book to somebody and you can pick up a phone and call Amazing Facts, you have everything you need. And so, I was just printing off stuff and handing it to people, you know, like, here's what I'm coming to realize. This is true. It's in the Bible. And it was a huge blessing to me and a real help just to kind of help me to better understand what the message was, and understand it for myself and to have resources to put in the hands of other people. It was invaluable.

Some time went by, I eventually went to school for evangelism and was baptized. And then I had this amazing opportunity that after being in ministry for about five or six years, Doug Batchelor was going to be the main speaker at a youth event, and I was actually going to be doing a seminar at this youth event. It was just this amazing kind of full-circle experience that the first person that I came in contact with in Adventism to hear the message to have it makes sense, to be able to do ministry together with them in whatever role possible just meant the world to me. And to be able to tell him my story and tell him thank you was invaluable. And so, God just gave me a precious gift in affording that opportunity and I'll never forget that. My name is Dee. Thank you for changing my life.

Doug: On several occasions, scientists have demonstrated that people, and even creatures, can struggle with depression when exposed to continual darkness. This can be seen every year in the winter months in the Arctic regions. The beautiful village of Rjukan Norway is situated in a deep valley where mountains block the sun's rays for about six months every year. This, of course, keeps the 3,400 residents in a state of shade and sometimes depressing darkness throughout the winter.

Then the town leaders got a bright idea to help illuminate their village during the murky months. In October 2013, Rjukan installed an array of three gigantic 550-square-foot mirrors on a nearby mountain a thousand feet above the town. The computer control and solar-powered mirrors, track the sun through the winter months and reflect a giant beam of sunshine down to the town square brightening their lives. If you visit Rjukan in the winter months today, you can often see the people gathered or sitting on benches around the town square, bathing in the reflected sunshine.

Like those mirrors on the mountain, the Bible says that Christians are to reflect the light of Jesus who is the light of the world into this dark planet. Matthew 5:14 says, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do we light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it illuminates everybody in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." So friends, use today to brighten the life of someone else by reflecting Jesus.