

## **THE BIBLE'S PLACE IN THE WORLD.**

Thinking men are coming to place a higher estimate upon the value of Scripture history than formerly. It was fashionable, a few years since, for the literati of Europe to talk of myths of the Bible, and to speculate largely as to their probable origin "on the hazy horizon of the morning of time." But these morning fog-banks of antiquity have been lifting, and to the astonishment of these philosophers, these fancied myths are fossil facts. The same research and marvelous developments in the East that have done so much for the credibility of Herodotus, have also riveted man's faith to the Bible.

The uncovering of Nineveh alone has wrought wonders. Nineveh, that great city. Nineveh, buried so long ago that Herodotus, the Father of History, knew nothing of it, not even its name; so long ago that Xenophon led his immortal ten thousand over its very site, utterly unconscious of the fact that a vast city was smouldering beneath their tread; so long ago that Volair dissolved the name into a mere film of mythology – Nineveh suddenly looms up into the gaze of the world with its vast palaces, its massive mausoleums, its gorgeous galleries of art, and libraries whose rock volumes and historic scrolls are but the faithful duplicates of many of the Scripture annals. The Nineveh of the Bible is there, and from her tomb of Jonah, from her place of Sennacherib, from her very stone archives, there comes a thousand voices attesting the authenticity of Bible history. In the library of the royal palace, besides the numerous treatises on ancient science, and grammars of Assyrian dialects, there are the annals of the empire, giving minute details of extended conquests, and siege and capture of walled cities, the fate of captives, the levying of tribute, and, in fact, all the concomitants of successful war.

Among other campaigns, those into Judea are given with a carefulness of detail that is surprising. The names of Jerusalem, Samaria, Libnah, Lachish, Gaza, Ascalon, and others – of Jehu, king of Israel, of Hazael, Menahem, Hezekiah, Rezin, Omri, Hiram, king of Tyre, Illulus of Sidon, were evidently as familiar to the students of Assyrian history as they have ever been to Jewish or Christian readers of any age. They are perpetually recurring in many of the inscriptions. In a lengthy document is given the Assyrian history of "The Battle of the Kings," recorded in Genesis 14. The names of most of the kings who took part in this first important raid are given, together with the names of many of the cities of the plain.

Corresponding to the Bible account (2 Kings 18), is the siege and capture of Lachish, which is amply illustrated on the walls of the palaces, and full particulars given. Over the head of the king, in one of the illustrations, is the following inscription in the cuniform or wedge shaped characters: "Sennacherib, the mighty king, king of the country of Assyria, sitting on the throne of judgment, before the city of Lachish. I give permission for its slaughter." In immediate connection with this inscribed on a massive cylinder of stone, is a confirmation remarkable indeed. The inspired record says: "Sennacherib came up against all the fenced cities of Judea and took them," (2 Kings 18:13), and that when Hezekiah desired to purchase a peace, the invader demanded of him thirty talents of gold and three hundred talents of silver. The Bible also informs us that Hezekiah gave all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord and of the royal treasury, and that he also cut off all the gold from the doors and pillars of the temple, and sent to the haughty monarch. But only emboldened by this submissive spirit of Hezekiah, the scripture says that after repeated insults, Sennacherib advanced for the destruction of Jerusalem, but was discomfited by the angel of the Lord, who slew in one night 185,000 men, compelling the haughty Assyrian to return to Nineveh.

The two histories discovered are paralleled in a remarkable degree. The inscription on the monuments make Sennacherib to say: "Because Hezekiah, king of Judah, did not submit to my yoke, forty six of his strong fenced cities and innumerable smaller ones which depended upon them, I took and plundered, but I left to him Jerusalem his capital." The scripture account is a sufficient explanation for this fact. (2 Kings 19:32.) "And because Hezekiah still refused to do me homage I attacked and carried off the whole population, fixed and nomadic, which dwelt around Jerusalem with thirty talents of gold and eight hundred talents of silver – the accumulated wealth of Hezekiah's court, and of his daughters, with the officers of his palace. I returned to Nineveh and I accounted their spoil for the tribute which he refused to pay me."

The only apparent discrepancy (for it is apparent, not real,) in the whole of both accounts is in regard to the number of the talents in silver. The Bible states the amount demanded – the rock-records the amount carried off. The Bible gives the amount demanded of Jerusalem alone – the Assyrian the amount obtained from the whole of Judea.

A confirmation still more remarkable is given in reference to the humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar – his being driven forth to dwell with the beasts for a season – an event which least of all we should expect to find recorded in the annals of an Eastern satrap. On a tablet now in the East India House, in London, is an inscription which may be regarded as the official report of that amazing calamity. Breaking off abruptly in the midst of the narration of the king's achievements in the architectural decoration of Babylon and Borsipa, the historian suddenly denounces the Chaldeans and astrologers, and then goes on to say: "The king's heart was hardened against them. He would grant them no benefactions for religious purposes. He intermitted the worship of Merodach, and put an end to the [R520 : page 8]

sacrifice of victims. He labored under the effects of enchantment." There is much more that is obscure in this episode, and yet at its close the architectural narration is as abruptly closed. What clearer account of that awful visitation could be expected from a nation pre-eminent for haughty pride and vain-glorious pomp.

So deeply was one of the infidel editors of the Boston Investigator impressed with the evidence of Layard, that he said in his columns in 1859: "Hereafter, whatever we freethinkers may have to say of the divinity of the old Book, not one of us shall ever question the genuineness of its history."

– Extracts from Chautauqua Lectures.

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