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Is the Bible's Portrayal of People, Places and Events Accurate?

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Is the Bible's Portrayal of People, Places and Events Accurate?

If the Bible is true, it must be historically reliable. In other words, its portrayal of people, places and events must be accurate, or how could we trust what it says about God, Jesus Christ and our purpose of existence?

Many skeptics argue that the Old Testament stories are based upon imaginary people, and the New Testament accounts were written years after any eyewitnesses would have been alive to verify their truthfulness.

Let's briefly look at the first of these two major arguments skeptics use against the Bible's historical reliability, and see what the latest evidence tells us.

Did the key Old Testament characters of Moses and David exist?

If you could remove Moses and David from the Bible, little would be left of the Hebrew Scriptures. Moses was the prophet who led the children of Israel out of Egypt and later wrote the first five books of the Bible (Torah), including the Ten Commandments. Historian Paul Johnson writes of Moses' importance to the people of Israel:

*Moses is the fulcrum-figure in Jewish history, the hinge around which it turns....the moulder of the people; under him and through him, they became a distinctive people, with a future as a nation.*¹

However, in the late 19th century, the German critical scholar, Julius Wellhausen, convinced many scholars that Moses couldn't have been the author of the Torah, since the art of writing hadn't yet been developed.

That was the foot in the door skeptics needed to "prove" the Bible untrue. It was easy for them to argue that—if Moses didn't write the Torah—he didn't even exist. And of course, if Moses didn't exist, the Bible would be untrue.

Such skepticism seemed logical—that is, until archaeologists discovered evidence of writing well before the time of Moses in the 15th century B.C.² In fact, archaeologists found numerous written documents, such as the codified Laws of Hammurabi, dated centuries prior to Moses.³

In his classic work, *A History of the Jews*, Paul Johnson criticizes Wellhausen’s opinion—that Moses didn’t write the Torah—as “skepticism carried to the point of fanaticism, a vandalism of the human record. Moses was beyond the power of the human mind to invent.”⁴

Moses isn’t the only important Old Testament person accused of being fictional. King David, author of most of the Psalms, is another important biblical figure whom skeptics say never existed.

But in 1993, archaeologists discovered a ninth-century B.C. stone slab with the inscriptions, “king of Israel, and the “king of the House of David.” Scholars believe this “Tel Dan inscription” provides solid evidence of David’s existence.⁵ Furthermore, two archaeologists believe they have recently unearthed David’s palace and storehouse, dated to his time.⁶

Based upon these discoveries, as well as hundreds of other archaeological finds confirming Old Testament people, places and events, historian Paul Johnson concludes,

*It is now possible to see much of the historical writing...as constituting the finest and most dependable history in all the ancient world.*⁷

Endnotes