Marc Roby: We are resuming our study of biblical theology today by continuing to examine extra-biblical evidence that corroborates the Bible. We left off last time during the period of the divided kingdom in the early first millennium BC. What do you have for us today Dr. Spencer?

Dr. Spencer: Well, we ended last time talking about the Moabite stone, which clearly mentions "Omri king of Israel", so let's start with a second reference to this king of the northern kingdom of Israel. In 1846 a 6½-foot-tall black stone monument, called the Black Obelisk, was found in what is now northern Iraq. It dates from about 825 BC and commemorates the military campaigns of the Assyrian King Shalmaneser III. It contains a carved picture of a king bowing and paying tribute to Shalmaneser and the inscription says that the king is Jehu, son of Omri.[1] It is in the British museum and I strongly recommend going to see it if you have a chance, it is an amazing thing to see.

Marc Roby: I've seen that stone too and it is amazing to see something from that long ago and to see it clearly corroborate the Bible. What else do you want to mention?

Dr. Spencer: We noted last time that Samaria, the capital city of the norther kingdom, fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC, but that wasn't the end of the Assyrian's aggression against the Jews. They came again against the southern kingdom in 701 BC and captured all of the fortified cities except for Jerusalem. The Assyrians were known for their brutality and we are told in 2 Chronicles 32:9 that the Assyrian king Sennacherib laid siege to the Jewish town of Lachish during this campaign. There is a famous 90-foot long carved mural that depicts this siege in gruesome detail. It was found in Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh, which was then the capital city of the Assyrian empire. Nineveh was on the eastern bank of the Tigris River and is now part the city of Mosul, in northern Iraq. This mural is also in the British museum and I again recommend going to see it if you get a chance.

Marc Roby: I concur that it is well worth going to see. And, of course, the Bible tells us that Sennacherib's troops came to Jerusalem to lay siege to it after finishing with Lachish.

Dr. Spencer: Yes. And that is the next, and in many ways most amazing, evidence I want to cite. There is a lengthy description of the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem in 2 Kings 18 & 19, 2 Chronicles 32 and also Isaiah 36 & 37. And we also, amazingly, have multiple copies of the Annals of Sennacherib, which describe the same events. One of these, the Taylor prism, is a 15-inch tall hexagonal clay piece with Akkadian cuneiform writing on all six sides. It was found in 1830 in Nineveh by a British Colonel named Robert Taylor and is again in the British Museum.[2]

Marc Roby: And do Sennacherib's Annals agree with the biblical account?

Dr. Spencer: The Assyrian account agrees in many details with the biblical account and there is one particularly interesting and important correspondence. The biblical account tells us that Hezekiah, the king of Judah, prayed for deliverance and we read in 2 Kings 19:33-36 that God

---

[1] Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out*, Harvest House Pub., 1997, pg. 77, see also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Obelisk_of_Shalmaneser_III
[2] Price, op. cit., pg. 272, also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sennacherib%27s_Annals

told him through the prophet Isaiah, "'By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city, declares the LORD. I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant.' That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. … So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there." [3]

Now, we would not expect Sennacherib's account to mention this miracle, but it is interesting that his account is clear that he did not enter Jerusalem, but instead he returned to Nineveh, so it's obvious that something prevented him from destroying the city.[4] After boasting about capturing 46 fortified cities, all he says about Hezekiah is, "I shut him up like a caged bird in his royal city of Jerusalem"[5]. There is no reasonable natural way to explain why the most powerful empire of the time was unable to capture Jerusalem after already capturing so many other fortified cities in Judah. The Bible's explanation, while obviously supernatural and therefore offensive to unbelievers, makes good sense and is consistent with all that we know about the events.

Marc Roby: Sennacherib's silence does speak volumes in this case. What other evidence would you like to present?

Dr. Spencer: The Bible also tells us that after Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, he was assassinated by one of his sons, and this fact is corroborated by extra-biblical sources.[6] In addition, several bullae, which are clay seals used to seal documents, have been found with King Hezekiah's seal, the most recent was found just a couple of years ago in Jerusalem.[7] There is more that we could say, for example about Hezekiah's tunnel and his wall, but as I've noted, the historical accuracy of the biblical account for this period is not controversial, so I'll let people who are interested in more detail watch Dr. Meyer's video[8] or read other sources.[9] The detailed references are in the transcript online as always.

Marc Roby: Alright. If we move on about a hundred years in biblical history, we come to the next major event, the fall of Jerusalem. Is that what we want to look at next?

---

[3] All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® (1984 version). Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The "NIV" and "New International Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™.

[4] Price, op. cit., pp 272-274

[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sennacherib%27s_Annals

[6] Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003, pg. 42 and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sennacherib#Death

[7] https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-sites-places/jerusalem/king-hezekiah-in-the-bible-royal-seal-of-hezekiah-comes-to-light/

[8] *Is the Bible Reliable? Building the historical case*, Dr. Stephen Meyer, The Truth Project, Focus on the Family

[9] E.g., Kitchen op. cit., Price op. cit.

Dr. Spencer: Yes. The Babylonian chronicles[10] provide extra-biblical evidence of that important event. In fact, they agree with many details of the biblical narrative. Going back a few years before the fall of Jerusalem, Jehoiakim became king of Judah in 609 BC right after his godly father, King Josiah, was killed in battle against Pharaoh Neco. The Bible tells us about this in 2 Kings 23. Josiah was, at that time, allied with Babylon and he was trying to stop Neco from getting up to Carchemish to help the Assyrians fight against Babylon. After Josiah was killed, his son Jehoahaz was named king. But after only three months, Neco took Jehoahaz captive to Egypt, and placed his brother, Eliakim on the throne in his place, renaming him Jehoiakim and making him pay tribute to the Egyptians.

Neco then went on up to Carchemish to join his Assyrian allies. The Babylonians defeated the Assyrians and Egyptians at the battle of Carchemish in 605 BC[11] and Judah then became a vassal to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, as we are told in 2 Kings 24:1. The Babylonians did not invade Egypt though, because Neco was able to successfully defend his country in 601 BC.[12] Nevertheless, perhaps because he was emboldened by Egypt's victory at home, we are told in 2 Kings 24:1 that Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, who then came against Jerusalem. Jehoiakim died during the siege and his son Jehoiachin became king, but only for three months before surrendering to the Babylonians in 597 BC. He was then taken captive to Babylon, along with about 10,000 other people. His uncle, Mattaniah, was then installed as king by Nebuchadnezzar, who also changed his name to Zedekiah. We are told about all of this in 2 Kings 24 and with other details in Jeremiah, who was the main prophet in Jerusalem at the time. And the Babylonian records agree with many of the details.

Marc Roby: And, of course, Zedekiah didn't remain king for all that long either. He again rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, leading to the final destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC.

Dr. Spencer: That's right. And many of the details provided in the Bible about the power struggles between Assyria, Egypt and Babylon in the late 7th and early 6th century BC are in agreement with the extra-biblical accounts, while none of the Bible's details are contradicted.

Marc Roby: All of this goes a long way in confirming what you said before; the Bible is our greatest archaeological treasure.

Dr. Spencer: It most definitely is. I want to give just one more amazing example of the evidence we have. Remember we talked earlier about clay seals called bullae? Well, they have found bullae of two of Jeremiah's opponents, mentioned together in Jeremiah 38:1, Shephatiah son of Mattan and Gedaliah son of Pashhur. We don't know anything more about these men, but the bullae were found in 2005 and 2008 only a few yards apart in excavations in the old City of David in modern Jerusalem.[13] Even though these are relatively common names from the time, the fact that they are mentioned together in that verse as having heard Jeremiah's prophecy,

---

[10] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian_Chronicles
[11] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Carchemish
[12] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Necho_II
[13] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gedaliah_son_of_Pashhur

which led to some unspecified officials telling the king that Jeremiah was worthy of death, would seem to imply that they were either officials themselves, or were at least called as official witnesses. When you combine this with the fact that both names also have the correct names for their fathers and the bullae being found in the same place, it all seems to add up to these being the very men mentioned by Jeremiah.

Marc Roby: That is truly incredible.

Dr. Spencer: Yes. But as I said earlier, even secular archaeologists do not seriously challenge the accuracy of the Bible's narrative for this part of history, so I don't want to spend much more time on it. What I want to do instead, is to finish looking at the Old Testament history and to simultaneously begin examining some of the prophecies made in the Old Testament.

Marc Roby: Alright. How do you plan to do those two things together?

Dr. Spencer: I want to briefly examine Isaiah's prophecy about Cyrus. This prophecy deals with the last historical period of the Old Testament, the return of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem in 537 BC.

Marc Roby: And this Cyrus is, of course, Cyrus the 2nd, king of Persia, who conquered Babylon in 539 BC.

Dr. Spencer: Right. He is also known as Cyrus the Great and he is an important figure in biblical history. In fact, one interesting little fact about him is that he is the only non-Jew ever said to be called "Yahweh's anointed" in the Bible.[14] Remember that people could be anointed for various tasks, like being a king or a priest, but in this case a foreigner is given this honor. He was, we are told in Isaiah 45:1, anointed "to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor". And in Isaiah 44:28, God says of Cyrus, "He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, 'Let it be rebuilt,' and of the temple, 'Let its foundations be laid.'" And this is true prophecy because Isaiah wrote this no later than the early 7th century BC, roughly 150 years before Cyrus fulfilled the prophecy by allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem.

We know a great deal about Cyrus from extra-biblical historical references, like the Histories by Herodotus[15] – also known as the Persian Wars, the Nabonidus Chronicle[16] and the Cyrus Cylinder[17]. And these extra-biblical references corroborate the biblical narrative of the fall of Babylon and Cyrus' decree to allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. In fact, there is a very interesting story told by the 1st-century Jewish-Roman historian Flavius Josephus. He said that Cyrus' decree to release the Jews was prompted by his being shown Isaiah's prophecy. It is entirely possible that the biblical Daniel, who was a high official in

---

[14] Lisbeth S. Fried, *Cyrus the Messiah*, Bible Review 19:5, October 2003
[15] Price, op. cit., pg. 248, also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Histories_(Herodotus)
[16] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nabonidus_Chronicle
[17] Price, pp. 251-252

Babylon when Cyrus conquered it, showed Isaiah's prophecy to him, so the story may very well be true.

Marc Roby: That is amazing. But I know that modern scholars typically divide the book of Isaiah up into different pieces and claim that the prophecy about Cyrus was written after the events it describes. How would you respond to that?

Dr. Spencer: I would first note that Bible believing scholars defend the unity of the book, and the main reason these unbelieving scholars have for dividing the book is precisely their presupposition that true predictive prophecy is impossible. But, secondly, I would say that such a view strikes me as incredibly hard to swallow. The oldest extant copy of the book of Isaiah, which is substantially the same as our current copies, was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls and dates from no later than the 2nd century before Christ. It is impossible to believe that it was the only copy of Isaiah around at the time. In fact, given the importance of the book and the geographical dispersion of the Israelites, I would say there must have been a number of copies available in antiquity in a number of different places. So, to believe that someone modified or added to the book in order to make it look like prophecy, and to believe that we have absolutely no indication that anyone pointed this out until the last 200 years is ridiculous.

In addition, the purpose of this prophecy, and the one by Jeremiah that the captivity of the Israelites would last for 70 years[18], was to encourage the Israelites in this desperate time that their God was fully in control of history. If this had not really been prophecy, people would have known that and there would be some indication in our written histories that this was severely contested. Randall Price does a good job of discussing this in his book *The Stones Cry Out*.[19]

Marc Roby: You make a good case. I think it is very hard to believe that such wholesale changes could be made and we would have no historical record mentioning that. But, it is easy to see how those who think prophecy is simply impossible would arrive at such a conclusion.

Dr. Spencer: You're right, it's very easy to see how they arrive at such a conclusion. But, simply assuming that prophecy is impossible does not in any way make you right. And there are other prophecies in Isaiah that it is much harder to dismiss since we have a copy from over 100 years before Christ, and some of Isaiah's prophecies were fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

Marc Roby: Well, it sounds like we are ready to move on the next phase of biblical history. So, which of these prophecies would you like to highlight?

Dr. Spencer: With the time we have left today I'd like to stick with ones that are in Isaiah, or some other passage that is attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls, so there can be no question at all that they were written prior to the time of Christ, and also to stick with prophecies that were recognized as having to do with the Messiah by Jewish scholars at the time of Christ so that we

[18] See Jer 25:11-12, 29:10 and Dan 9:2
[19] Price, op. cit., pp 246-252

can't be accused of searching the Old Testament and looking for things that could possibly be taken as prophecies about Christ.

Marc Roby: That sounds like a reasonable approach. I assume that means that we want to look at Chapter 53 of Isaiah?

Dr. Spencer: That is certainly one of the passages, yes. There are also two other verses we will get to in a moment, but, let's begin with Isaiah 53. It was recognized by the Jews at the time as being Messianic, simply meaning, as I said, that it was speaking about the promised Messiah. In Verses 3 through 5 it says, "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."

Marc Roby: That passage is always amazing to read, it so clearly fits Jesus Christ and his redeeming work on the cross.

Dr. Spencer: Yes, and it so clearly speaks of God's amazing love for sinners too. We are not able to save ourselves, but "he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows" and "he was pierced for our transgressions". It always reminds me of 2 Corinthians 5:21 where we are told that "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." It is also clear that this coming Messiah was not going to be an earthly king since it says "He was despised and rejected by men" and "we esteemed him not". We are also told in Verse 9 that he was assigned a grave with the rich, and we know from Matthew 27:57-60 that Jesus was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man. Then, in Verse 10 Isaiah tells us that "the LORD makes his life a guilt offering", which agrees perfectly with what we are told in Ephesians 5:1-2, where we read "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." There is much more that could be said, but I think that is enough for now.

Marc Roby: That is a lot. But you mentioned two other verses you wanted to mention?

Dr. Spencer: Yes I did. And both of these verses were also recognized as Messianic by the Jews at the time of Christ[20], and both of them are attested to in the Dead Sea Scrolls[21], so there can be no doubt about them pre-dating Christ. One is Psalm 22 Verse 16, which says "Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet."

---

[20] Robert C. Newman, *The Evidence of Prophecy*, Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1988, pg. 104

[21] For Psalm 22:16 see, for example, Shon Hopkin, The Psalm 22:16 Controversy: New Evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls, BYU Studies Quarterly, Vol. 44, Issue 3, available at http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3716&context=byusq
For Zech 12:10 see, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zechariah_12 or http://dssenglishbible.com/zechariah%2012.htm

This verse is clearly speaking about the crucifixion of Christ. And this is an interesting verse because it has long been a subject of dispute between Jews and Christians. The Jews claim that it should read something like "For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me, like a lion, my hands and feet."[22] It turns out that the difference between the two translations depends on just one letter in the Hebrew. But, there are two major problems with this alternate view. First, the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew text, finished long before the time of Christ, agrees with our version about Christ's hands and feet being pierced, so the Jews have to claim that Christians changed the Septuagint – an unlikely proposal to say the least in my mind. Secondly, since the verse has now been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, they have to claim that the letter is being misread and or the word mistranslated. I think that given the preponderance of evidence, including the next verse I want to mention, our translations stand.

The other verse is Zechariah 12 Verse 10, which says in part, "They will look on me, the one they have pierced". This again is in a passage known at the time of Christ to be Messianic, and it has also been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Marc Roby: That is absolutely amazing. In fact, it appears to be clear evidence that God has deliberately given us more revelation to bolster our faith. But, we are out of time for today.

Transcript corrected: 7/7/25

[22] https://judaism.stackexchange.com/questions/64954/location-of-dead-sea-scroll-with-psalm-22-verse-17-they-pierced-my-hands-and-m/64962