

CREATION TO CREATOR

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# Signs of the Times!

Evidence in the British Museum supporting the accuracy and reliability of the  
Old Testament section of the Bible

By Neil Pattison March 2014

*“These (signs) have been written so that you may believe that  
Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may  
have life in His name.” (John 20:31)*





## Introduction

Welcome to one of the most significant and fascinating tours you will ever experience. The British Museum has enthralled visitors by its presentation of civilisations forgotten to the past since its foundation in 1753. The free admission to all 'studious and curious persons' is still offered today.

When I first witnessed the evidence relating to the truth of the Old Testament contained within the museum, I was astounded. We often treat the Bible as an ancient document which must be accepted as true by faith alone, as there are no comparable documents of that age in existence. The archaeological artefacts displayed in the British Museum give us direct and indirect evidence that supports the accuracy of the book Christians accept to be the inspired Word of God.

God has revealed His general nature to all cultures in every age. The Old Testament writers have been inspired by the Holy Spirit to bring us a revelation of God's character and His plan of redemption. Join us for a journey from the Flood and Gilgamesh Epic and the beginnings of civilised man from where Abram originated, to the rise and fall of empires as Israel's kings reigned, right up to the time of Jesus in Roman Palestine around 30 AD.

We will travel in time through some of the most influential civilisations in ancient history and see how they interacted with the nation of Israel. Israel was chosen by God to bring us the understanding of the ultimate kingdom of them all: the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God can impact all of our lives today and we will see that so many biblical stories and events point towards the pivotal moment of history: when the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, the Maker of History, the Saviour of our lives, Jesus Christ came and dwelt with us.

By Neil Pattison

## Overview of the Tour

*“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son...” (Hebrews 1:1)*

During our tour, we will go on a journey through human history in six stages:

### 1: Sumeria (2900BC - 1700BC)

Sumerian Dynastic Period until rise of Babylonian Empire

### 2: Babylonia (1700BC - 1120BC) First Dynasty of Babylonian Empire until rise of Assyrian Empire

### 3: Assyria (1120BC - 612BC)

Assyrian Empire until rise of Second Dynasty of Babylonian Empire

### 4: Neo Babylonia (Chaldea) (612BC - 539BC)

Second Dynasty of Babylonian Empire until rise of Persian Empire

### 5: Persia (539BC-332BC)

Persian Empire until rise of Greece and Alexander the Great

### 6: Greece to Rome (332BC - 31BC)

Alexander the Great until rise of Roman Empire

**Return of the King and the Kingdom of God!**

## In the beginning: God

**KEY POINT: ADAM AND EVE CREATED AND GIVEN DOMINION**

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)*

*"God created man in his own image..." (Genesis 1:27)*

*"God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth..." (Genesis 1:28)*

Start in Room 56 - Gallery of Early Mesopotamia.

### 1: Sumeria (2900BC-1700BC) Noah to Abram

*"The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become..." (Genesis 6:5)*

*"The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth..." (Genesis 6:6)*

*"I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth..." (Genesis 6:17)*

*"Everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark..." (Genesis 6:17-18)*

Room 55 - Early Mesopotamia.

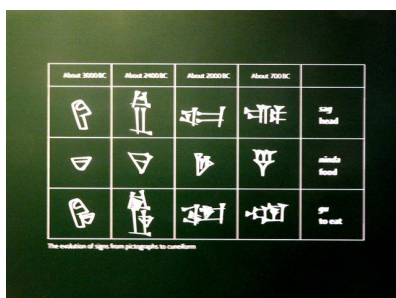
#### The Flood Tablet

There have been many oral traditions around the world, passed on from generation to generation, about a flood which covered the earth. One version can be found on The Flood Tablet of Gilgamesh.



- *The Flood Tablet* is part of a collection of tablets which record the ancient *Epic of Gilgamesh*. The epic tells the story of Gilgamesh, a legendary ruler, and his search for immortality. It is the longest literary work in 'Akkadian' which was the language of the Babylonian and Assyrian people.
- The Assyrian King, Ashurbanipal (reigned 668-627BC), towards the end of their dominance as an empire, collected thousands of cuneiform tablets in his palace at Nineveh. They recorded legends and scientific information. The tablet of the Epic was found there in 1853.

The earliest known writing system in the world, cuneiform, emerged in the Sumerian civilisation around the 34<sup>th</sup> Century Before Christ. Written on clay tablets using a reed stylus, the impressions left were wedge-shaped, giving rise to its name (Latin for wedge is cuneus)



The development of the cuneiform language from pictures to symbols to letters.

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## Similarities between Genesis and the Epic of Gilgamesh

Mankind had become obnoxious to God (or the gods)
God (or the gods) decided to send a worldwide flood
The flood would destroy people and all land animals and birds
A man is chosen to save a few people and samples of creatures
The man is told to build a multi-storey wooden ark
The ark is sealed with pitch
A great rain covers the land
The ark lands on a mountain in the Middle East
The hero sends out birds to find dry land
The hero and their family on leaving the ark, offer an animal as a sacrifice
They are blessed and repopulate the earth

## Differences between Genesis and the Epic of Gilgamesh

Genesis	Gilgamesh
People have become obnoxious because of wickedness	People have become obnoxious because of excessive noisiness
The 'hero' is called Noah	The hero is called 'Utnapishtim'
The ark is 3 stories high and rectangular	The ark is 6 stories high and square
The rain lasts for 40 days and nights	The rain lasts for 7 days
The ark lands on Mt Ararat	The ark lands on Mt Nisir
God promises not to send such a flood again.	The gods quarrel among themselves and give immortality to the hero

*"Then God spoke to Noah... be fruitful and multiply on the earth." (Genesis 8:15, 17)*

*"...Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth..." (Genesis 9:18)*

- Some time after Noah, God confused the languages of the nations as they disobeyed God's command to 'fill the earth.'
- The descendants of Shem are called Semites and they include the Hebrews and the Arab tribes. Abraham came from the Chaldeans who also traced their origins to these Semitic roots.

**KEY POINT: SHEM CHOSEN AS LINE FOR GOD'S RESCUE PLAN**

### Ur - the Land of Abraham (2,500BC)

*"Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there." (Genesis 11:31)*

**Before the discovery of the city of Ur in 1854, people had challenged the biblical account of Abraham because no evidence had been found for the existence of this metropolis.**

- The remains show that the city was wealthy with its inhabitants displaying a sophisticated civilisation just as Genesis recorded.
- Seventy years after its discovery, Sir Leonard Woolley then excavated and recovered artefacts from the Royal Tombs at Ur (built around 2500 BC) between 1922 and 1934.
- The city had two-storey houses, mains drainage, and a commercial system based on written contracts, money and receipts. Tablets containing advanced mathematics (equations to solve cube roots) and science give evidence of widespread literacy. God spoke to Abram, telling him to leave this comfortable, advanced civilisation (including his family) and go!

**KEY POINT: UR WAS A REAL CITY AT THE TIME OF ABRAM**

## 2: Babylonia to Assyria (1700BC-1120BC)

Walk through Room 56 to Room 57 - Ancient Levant

**The first Babylonian Dynasty was started by the Semitic Amorite people. The 6<sup>th</sup> king, Hammurabi, brought in the first golden age.**

Hammurabi centralised government and unified the empire, seeking to bring greater justice between men and improve the lives of those in his kingdom. The first golden age of Babylon ended with the fall of Babylon to the Hittites around 1600BC.

*"On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying; 'To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite..." (Genesis 15:18-20)*

The Patriarchs nurtured an emerging Israel; Isaac followed Abraham, and then Jacob produced 12 sons to become the 12 tribes. The story of Joseph leaves the Israelites multiplied and numerous but slaves in Egypt. It is time for Moses the deliverer and his successor, Joshua.

**KEY POINT: EXODUS AND PASSOVER IS PIVOTAL POINT IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY**

**Joshua** - *"Be strong and courageous; for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them."* (Joshua 1:6)

Joshua 12:9-24

- Canaan was carefully chosen by God in His desire to reach 'the nations'.
- The land consisted of more than 30 city states, each with its own king. At times the kings would join together to fend off a powerful foe. Abraham's nation was to reach and affect them all!

## The Amarna Letters and Israel

Amarna Letters in Case 8

**In 1887 the discovery of 382 ancient letters in Egypt at the site of Tell el-Amarna yielded some important information.**

- These clay tablets had been written to two pharaohs (Amenophis III and IV) around 1390 BC, two generations before the famous Tutankhamun.
- Palestine belonged to the Egyptian empire at this time. The writers were officials of the Canaanite cities of Palestine about the time that the people of Israel were settling in the land.
- A group mentioned as the `Apiru are not specifically Israel but marauding nomads. The Israelites would also have been seen as `Apiru.
- The governor of Jerusalem wrote several letters to pharaoh, requesting help to resist these invaders.

*Quote from one of the letters:*

*'The `Apiru plunder all the lands of the king. If archers are here this year then the lands of the king, my lord, will remain. But if the archers are not here, then the lands of the king, my lord, are lost.. . All the lands of the king, my lord, are going to ruin.'*

**KEY POINT: AMARNA LETTERS CONFIRM SITUATION AT TIME OF JOSHUA. AFTER A TIME OF DISORDER IN JUDGES, ISRAEL BECOMES A MONARCHY**

*Walk through Room 58 and 59 to Room 4*

## 3:Assyria (1120BC-612BC)

Assyria rose as a super power under aggressive expansion policies initiated by Tiglath-Pileser I (1115-1077BC), one of the greatest Assyrian conquerors. Named from their original capital of Assur, in modern day Iraq, Assyria was a Semitic Akkadian kingdom

Walk to the end of Room 4 (Egypt), Enter Room 6 & walk to the left end wall.

### Assyrian Sculpture

After King Solomon, the 10 tribes loyal to King Saul broke away from the 2 tribes loyal to King David. Northern kingdom of Israel and Southern kingdom of Judah (1 Kings 12:15,16).

Read 2 Kings 15:29, 1 Chronicles 5:25-26

The middle stele details the accomplishments of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC), the Assyrian king who continued expanding the empire. He introduced new siege techniques, including the use of earth ramps and siege engines, supported by slingshooters and archers. He also liked botany and zoology.

### Stela of Shalmaneser III (Kurkh Stele)

To the left is a sandy-coloured stone block known as the Stela of Shalmaneser III (also called the Kurkh Stele). This account mentions Ahab (king of Israel) and Benhadad I (king of Syria) by name during Shalmaneser's first six military campaigns.

- He records how twelve kings (including Ahab and Benhadad) fought against him in 853BC. Ahab and Benhadad enjoyed three years of peace (1 Kings 22:1) while they joined forces against Shalmaneser (during the time of Elisha). The battle was fought at Karkara.
- Ahab then went back to war with Benhadad and died on the battlefield (1 Kings 22:34-35).

#### Assyrian Quote from Stela:

*I approached Karkara. I destroyed, tore down, and bound Karkara, his royal residence. He brought along to help him 1,200 chariots, 1,200 cavalrymen, 20,000 foot soldiers belonging to Hadadezer [Benhadad I] of Damascus, . . . 2,000 chariots, 10,000 foot soldiers belonging to Ahab the Israelite...'*

### Stela of Tiglath-Pileser III

The third stela records Tiglath-Pileser III's second invasion of Israel between 734-732 BC. After 80 years of peace Tiglath-pileser III (745BC) resumed aggression towards Israel. The capture of Astartu in 732 BC (in Gilead, east of the river Jordan) is detailed. Tiglath invaded Israel twice during his reign.

- The king is at the bottom and the booty and Israelite prisoners being led away. This ties in with the biblical record of 2 Kings 15:29.

### Jehu's Portrait 841 BC

The Black Obelisk was discovered in 1845 at Nimrud from the time of Shalmaneser III. It records how Jehu king of Israel paid homage to Shalmaneser III. The text states the value of the homage and the name of the king prostrated before him:

*'I received from him silver, gold, a golden bowl, golden goblets, pitchers of gold, tin, a staff for the hand of the king...'*

**Before you is the only known picture of an Israelite king in the world:  
King Jehu.**

### Background

Ahab's reign resulted in the anointing by Elisha's messenger of a military captain called Jehu in 841BC. He was 'anointed' king of Israel, and commanded to destroy the Ahab dynasty (2 Kings 9 and 10).

**KEY POINT: ISRAEL'S UNFAITHFULNESS RESULTS IN EXILE 722BC**



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Leave Room 6, passing between the Winged Bulls of Tiglath Pileser III and past the gates of Balawat.

Imagine the shame and confusion in the minds of the Northern tribes of Israel as they entered the Assyrian city as captives. Thinking of their captivity in Egypt, they are once again slaves, this time as a result of their disobedience.

## **Assyrian Royal Palaces 880-612 BC**

- Assyrian kings placed huge, human-headed winged bulls and lions at the entrances to their royal palaces.
- **History of the three significant Assyrian capitals: Nimrud, Khorsabad and Nineveh.**
- The Assyrian capital was moved from Ashur to **Nimrud** by Ashurnasirpal II about 880 BC.
- Shalmaneser III built a second palace at nearby Balawat. When Tiglath pileser III became king in 745 BC, he reigned from Nimrud.
- Sargon II followed Shalmaneser V in 722 BC, and built a new palace at **Khorsabad**.
- Sennacherib, the son of Sargon, changed the capital to **Nineveh**. This location remained until its destruction by Babylon in 612 BC.

Enter room 7, and find some of the Assyrian innovations of warfare, like armoured rams. Then enter room 8 and view the portrait to the right.

*"Pul, king of Assyrian, came against the land, and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver..." (2 Kings 15:19-20)*

**Tiglath Pileser III (745-727 BC) is mentioned nine times in the Bible. The first invasion by Tiglath is during the time of king Menahem of Israel (752-742 BC).**

Tiglath-Pileser's chronicles mention Israel's king in poetic language:  
*'As for Menahem, I overwhelmed him like a snowstorm and he fled like a bird alone, and bowed to my feet. I returned him to his place and imposed tribute upon him.'*

*From the Pul Portrait turn left through Room 23 (Greek and Roman Sculpture) into Room 10 - the Lachish Room. **Pause in front of the winged bulls and look at the portraits on the right of Sargon and his son, Sennacherib.***

## **Shalmaneser V, Sargon II and the fall of Samaria in 722BC**

*"...Hoshea the son of Elah became king over Israel in Samaria...Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him, and Hoshea became his servant and paid him tribute." (2 Kings 17:1,3)*

- Hoshea, king of Israel in the time of Isaiah, initially acted as vassal to Shalmaneser V. When Hoshea stopped paying the tribute and sought help from Egypt, Shalmaneser took Hoshea captive, imprisoned him and besieged Samaria.

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- The walls of Samaria were up to 10 metres thick and it took three years to conquer.

*“In the year that the commander came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him and he fought against Ashdod and captured it...” (Isaiah 20:1)*

*“The king of Assyria brought men from Babylon and from Cuthah and from Avva and from Hamath and Sepharvaim, and settled them in the cities of Samaria in place of the sons of Israel. So they possessed Samaria and lived in its cities.” (2 Kings 17:24)*

- The foreign people brought into Samaria replaced the Israelites. These led to new languages and customs, a pick and mix religion, and the cult of the Samaritans who were hated to the day of Jesus.

## **Destruction of Nineveh (612BC)**

**Sargon II took over from Shalmaneser and built a new capital city called Khorsabad. These human-headed bulls are from the city gates.**

There is a stone panel from the palace which depicts tributes being paid to Sargon.

Eventually Samaria fell to Sargon in 722BC because of the unfaithfulness of Israel, not the size of the city's walls.

To the left of the winged bull is a large, fire-scorched panel

**The large stone bears witness to the destruction of Nineveh by fire in 612 BC. The judgement marked the end of the Assyrian Empire and the rise of the Neo Babylonian - their second chance to be super power.**

- The prophet Nahum, prophesied this event:

*“Woe to the bloody city... And it will come about that all who see you Will shrink from you and say, ‘Nineveh is devastated!...The gates of your land are opened wide to your enemies; Fire consumes your gate bars...” Nahum (3:1, 7, 13)*

## **King Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh and campaign against Judah and King Hezekiah (701 BC). 2 Kings 18:1-15**

Hezekiah was a righteous king of Judah and he witnessed Shalmaneser overcoming northern Israel, finally falling to the Assyrians in 722 BC. Hezekiah initially refused to serve or pay tribute to the king of Assyria.

Sennacherib, reigning after Shalmaneser, decided to invade Judah on his way to taking the ultimate prize - Jerusalem. Sennacherib then imposed a tribute on Hezekiah which amounted to 10,200kg of silver and 1,020kg of gold.

- At the same time his senior commander attacked Jerusalem, Sennacherib besieged the last major city before Jerusalem - Lachish.

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Ignoring Hezekiah's tribute, Sennacherib attacked Jerusalem anyway. The city was able to withstand the siege due to Hezekiah's Tunnel, through which the water supply was diverted.

The artefacts, discovered in 1847 from Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh, were the first direct proof found of these events.

**The Bible and Sennacherib's chronicles agree that:**

- **Hezekiah rebelled,**
- **exactly 46 walled cities of Judah were taken,**
- **Lachish was overwhelmed,**
- **Hezekiah was imprisoned in Jerusalem**
- **30 talents of gold were paid in tribute**

**His own records agree with the biblical account:**

*'As for Hezekiah the Jew, who did not submit to my yoke, 46 of his strong, walled cities---by escalade and by bringing up siege engines, by attacking and storming...by mines, tunnels and breaches, I besieged and took. 200,150 people...horses...cattle and sheep without number I brought away...`[Hezekiah] himself like a caged bird I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city. Earthworks I threw up against him; the one coming out of his city gate I turned back to his misery... `As for Hezekiah, the terrifying splendour of my majesty overcame him. . . and his mercenary troops . . . deserted him. In addition to 30 talents of gold and 800 talents of silver [I took] gems, antimony, jewels. . . ivory. . . valuable treasures, as well as his daughters, his harem, his male and female musicians which I sent to Nineveh, my royal city.'*

- But the Assyrian record does not explain this 'mystery of history': What happened to Jerusalem? Despite the sole aim of the Assyrian army to take the Judean capital city, Jerusalem did not fall. The mighty Assyrian army left the area without a battle. Why?
- In the Bible account, Sennacherib's army are destroyed by the angel of the Lord in defence of His Name:  
*"Then it happened that night that the angel of the Lord went out and struck 185,000 the camp of the Assyrians; and when men rose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead." (2 Kings 19:35)*
- The Assyrian chronicle is silent about the result as the truth would have been too humiliating to record.

## The Lachish Room

**Lachish was the last fortified city before his goal of taking Jerusalem just 30 miles away. 2 Kings 18.17-37. The sculptured reliefs would have functioned as wallpaper in the palace walls (and painted brightly).**

- On the walls you see an almost cartoon-like retelling of the battle: sling-shooters, archers, infantry, cavalry, siege engines, earth ramps and the Lachish occupants defending with missiles and rocks.
- The story starts on the left of the city, and the victory is on the right.
- Prisoners were led from the city; some are spiked on poles and others tortured by flaying alive.

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Sennacherib accepts the tributes of the vanquished. The cuneiform reads: *'Sennacherib, supreme king, king of Assyria, sits upon a throne while the booty of Lachish passes before him.'*

On display are sling shot and arrowheads found at the Lachish site, not far from Gaza Strip. The eight-sided Assyrian prism records five of Sennacherib's campaigns including the capture of Lachish.

## Records of Esarhaddon

- **Assassination of Sennacherib**  
Sennacherib was slain by two of his sons on his return to Nineveh. The Bible mentions the sons' flight to Armenia. Another son, Esarhaddon, became king and finally defeated *Tarharqa*. (2 Kings 19:36-3, 7; 2 Chronicles 32:21 and Isaiah 37 and 38.)

Esarhaddon records this:

*'In the month of Nisanu... I made my happy entrance into the royal palace, the awesome place wherein abides the fate of kings. A grim determination fell upon my brothers. They forsook the gods and turned themselves to deeds of violence, scheming evil to seize power they slew Sennacherib their father...'*

Leave room 10, turn right to the Rosetta Stone and then left to the end of Room 4 (Egypt), just before the large Scarab Beetle.

## Ram of Tarharqa

*"When he heard them say concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, "Behold, he has come out to fight against you," he sent messengers again to Hezekiah..."* (2 Kings 19:9)

**Tarharqa was the king-regent of Cush (Ethiopia), later to become King of Egypt.**

**In the year 730 B.C., Tarharqa's father, Piye, decided the only way to save Egypt from itself was to invade it. Piye was the first of the so-called 'black' pharaohs—a series of Nubian kings who ruled over all of Egypt for three-quarters of a century.**

Sennacherib brags that he "inflicted defeat upon them", but a young Nubian prince, Tarharqa, managed to survive and remained a thorn in the Assyrian's side until his eventual defeat by Esarhaddon.

When Piye died in 715 B.C., his brother, Shabaka, solidified this dynasty by taking up residence in the Egyptian capital of Memphis.

To the east, the Assyrians were fast building their own empire.

In 701 B.C., when the Assyrians marched into Judah, the Nubians decided to act.

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Retrace your steps to the Rosetta Stone, turn left towards the central gift shop and back up staircase in main hall to Early Mesopotamia. Through Room 56 to Room 57 - Ancient Levant (Lands of Middle East bordering Mediterranean)

Also during the time of the Assyrian dominance is the amazing 'Shebna's Tomb', as mentioned by the Prophet Isaiah.

## Shebna's Tomb and Isaiah's prophecy detailing future ruler Cyrus

View the stone slab on the wall, above head height, to the right of the door leading from Room 56.

Isaiah 22:15-20; 36:3. Circa 715 BC.

- This inscription on a slab of stone was found over 100 years ago near Jerusalem, translated in the 1950s.
- It was taken from above the door of a burial chamber cut out of the solid rock of a hillside. Mentioned by the prophet Isaiah, Shebna was chancellor in Hezekiah's early administration, later deposed from office, and finally captured by the Assyrians. The inscription reads:

*'This is \_\_\_yahu, who is Over the House. There is no silver and gold here; only [him] and the bones of his slave-wife. Cursed be the man who opens this.'*

- 'Over the House' is a term for an official in charge of Royal finance. Shebna was told off by Isaiah for arrogantly preparing a splendid tomb for himself. He was replaced by Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah.
- When Sennacherib came to invade Judah, Eliakim was in office and leading the deputation sent to meet the Assyrian chief official (Isaiah 36:3 and 37:2).

## Isaiah Prophecies change in World Order in Isaiah 44:28; 45:1

*"It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'" Thus says the Lord to Cyrus His anointed, Whom I have taken by the right hand, To subdue nations before him And to loose the loins of kings; To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:*

**KEY POINT: ISAIAH IS ATTACKED BECAUSE OF ITS SPECIFIC PROPHECY, LIBERAL SCHOLARS WRONGLY SUGGESTING 3 AUTHORS. CHAPTER 53 DEMONSTRATES ITS AUTHENTICITY AS TRUE PROPHECY**

Back to room 55, Case 11

The final item from the Assyrian period is the clay cuneiform record of the victories of Sennacherib, as we already mentioned in the Lachish Room.

## The Taylor Prism

This 6 sided clay prism was discovered in Nineveh by Colonel Taylor in 1830. Written in 691 BC, the prism is a record detailing King Sennacherib's achievements for later generations.

The king's final eight military campaigns are recorded:

- his march south taking tribute from Ammon, Moab, Edom and Ashdod
- the besieging of 46 Judean cities with the deportation of 200,150 Judeans
- no mention of the loss of Sennacherib's army or the result of the siege.

## 4: Neo Babylonia-Chaldea (612BC-539BC)

*"You, O King (Nebuchadnezzar), are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory... You are the head of gold..." Daniel 2:37-38*

- A strong Babylonian king, Nabopolassar, fought Assyria and burnt Nineveh to the ground in 612BC, according to the prophecy of Nahum. His son, Nebuchadnezzar, defeated Egypt and also transported Jewish captives to Babylon, including Daniel. The second Dynasty of Babylon rose up 1000 years after Hammurabi!

Room 55 Case 11

The Babylonian Chronicles

The Babylonian Chronicles are extremely significant in verifying Bible history. They are the records of the Babylonian kings who came after the Assyrians covering the years from 615 to 539 BC.

🍏 612 Fall of Nineveh 🍏 605 Daniel taken in first defeat 🍏 597 Second defeat of Jerusalem - Jehoiachin and Ezekiel taken 🍏 586 final defeat

- **The Fall of Nineveh - 612 BC.** Confirming the collapse of the Assyrian Empire and the fall of Nineveh to the Babylonians, predicted by Nahum and Zephaniah and recorded by Jeremiah. **Nahum 2:13** *Behold, I am against you, says Jehovah of Hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions. I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall be heard no more. Read Zephaniah 2:13* *And He will stretch out His hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and will make Nineveh a desert and dry like a desert. Read Jeremiah 50:17-18* *Israel is a scattered sheep, driven away by lions. First the king of Assyria devoured him, and last this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon crunched his bones. So Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel, says this: Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria.*
- **The attacks on Jerusalem in 605 & 597 BC** detailed in the Bible are also confirmed by the records of Nebuchadnezzar.
- In Jeremiah 25.9-11, Jeremiah predicts the victory of Babylon over Assyria and Egypt, and the subsequent captivity of Judah for 70 years. Nebuchadnezzar led Babylon against the Egyptian army resulting in the slaughter of the Egyptians at Carchemish (Jeremiah 46). The Bible

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records that Pharaoh Neco came again to help the Assyrian empire against the Babylonians (605 BC).

- Daniel then realises the prophesied 70 years of captivity is coming to an end and prays for the fulfilment of the prophecy in Daniel 9.2.

*"To Egypt, concerning the army of Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt, which was by the Euphrates River at Carchemish, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah..." (Jeremiah 46:2)*

- **Babylonian Chronicle for 605-594 BC.** The chronicle confirms the biblical record of the battle of Carchemish and the siege of Jerusalem.

*"King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia attacked Jerusalem... He took some prisoners back with him... Among those chosen were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, all of whom were from the tribe of Judah." (Daniel 1:1-6)*

- Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:6) and took prisoners including the young man Daniel and his friends:

*'Nebuchadnezzar... mustered and took command of the troops. He marched to Carchemish ... against the Egyptian army. ... accomplished their defeat and beat them to non-existence. As for the rest... which escaped. . . the Babylonian troops overtook and defeated them. At that time Nebuchadnezzar conquered the whole area of the Hatti country.'*

- The 'Hatti country' included Palestine, agreeing with the Bible's historical account.
- 2 Chronicles 36:9-10. Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem again in 598 BC.

*"...the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon went up to Jerusalem and the city came under siege... he led Jehoiachin away into exile to Babylon...the king of Babylon made his uncle... king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah." (2Kings 24:10-17)*

## **Babylonian Quote:**

*'The King of Akkad mustered his troops, marching to the Hatti-land, and encamped against the city of Judah...besieged the city and captured the king. He appointed there a king of his own choice, received its heavy tribute and sent them to Babylon.'*

- Ezekiel was taken to Babylon at this time.
- Read 2 Kings 24:16 'Nebuchadnezzar deported all the important men to Babylonia, seven thousand in all, and one thousand skilled workers, including the blacksmiths, all of them able-bodied men fit for military duty.' Nebuchadnezzar needed a large number of men to maintain the miles of irrigation channels as well as building the palaces and temples, especially after Sennacherib had previously destroyed the city, leaving much to be rebuilt.
- The special relations between Babylon and Israel are confirmed by tablets discovered in the royal palace of Babylon by Robert Koldeway (now in Museum of the Ancient Near East, Pergamon Museum, Berlin, room 6) stating that certain rations were to be provided for Ya-u-kinu

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(the Akkadian spelling of Joachin). The Jews were allowed to maintain their religion.

**KEY POINT: JUDAH FOLLOWS ISRAEL INTO EXILE IN 586BC UNDER THE BABYLONIANS. RETURN TO SLAVERY THIS TIME IN BABYLON**

## 5: Persia (539BC - 332BC)

Cyrus united Persia with Media and expanded without destruction. Cyrus diverted the River Euphrates and entered Babylon through the river bed, the people welcoming him as liberator from the hated rulers Nabonidus and Belshazzar. Under Cyrus, the Persian Empire established capitals at Susa, Ecbatana and Babylon.

- As mentioned at Shebna's Tomb, Isaiah 45 mentions Cyrus as the anointed instrument used by God to deliver the Jews, predicting the events 100 years before they happened!

*"Thus says the Lord to Cyrus His anointed, Whom I have taken by the right hand, To subdue nations before him..." (Isaiah 45:1)*

### The Cylinder Inscription of Nabonidus

- **The Fall of Babylon 539 BC**  
The stated king of Babylon, Belshazzar, drank and boasted at a feast held in honour of Babylonian gods and achievements.
- Daniel covers the events in the Babylonian palace just before the Medes brought its empire to an end in 539 BC. Belshazzar promised Daniel the position of third ruler in the kingdom if he could interpret the writing on the wall.
- Before the 1850s many scholars attacked the record given in Daniel, because the last king of Babylon was known to be Nabonidus, and the name 'Belshazzar' was unknown elsewhere. Even Herodotus was unaware of the name a few generations after these events occurred (in 450 BC.)
- In 1854 Babylonian inscriptions were discovered that Nabonidus made his eldest son co-regent while he lived in Arabia.
- **The Cylinder Inscription of Nabonidus** (Case 14) found at the Ziggurat at Ur ends with a prayer about the religious life of Belshazzar, his son, calling him:

*'Belsarusur, the firstborn son, the offspring of my heart.'*

Case 15 - exhibit 26

**KEY POINT: BOOK OF DANIEL ALSO ATTACKED BY SCHOLARS BECAUSE OF SPECIFIC NATURE OF PROPHECY**



### **The Nabonidus Chronicle (556 - 539BC)**

*'The king was in the city of Tema; the king's son, courtiers and army were in Babylonia.'*

This explains why Belshazzar (as co-regent) could only offer Daniel third place in the kingdom.

The chronicle mentions the fall of Babylon during Belshazzar's rule in 539 BC:

*'The gods of Babylonia entered Babylon from every direction when Cyrus attacked the Babylonian army at Opis. . . the people of Babylonia revolted.. . the troops of Cyrus entered Babylon without battle.'*

The book of Daniel has also been criticized because of its very accurate prophecies about subsequent empires up to the time of Christ. A popular view was that the book of Daniel was written centuries later as a propaganda tool to encourage the Israelites in exile. The evidence found here demonstrates Daniel was written in the sixth century BC because:

- (1) The author knew about Nabonidus' son Belshazzar, a person not mentioned when Herodotus wrote a few generations later.
- (2) The author knew that Babylon had been rebuilt by Nebuchadnezzar - another fact that was only revealed recently (see Daniel 4:30)
- (3) Also the discovery of the scroll 4QDan (dating 125 BC) at Qumran undermines the 2nd century BC theory. Godfrey Rolles Driver recognized that "the presence and popularity of the Daniel manuscripts at Qumran" conflicted "with the modern view which advocates the late dating of the composition of Daniel".

Go to Room 57, Case 10.

### **Lachish Letters (586BC)**

#### **Nebuchadnezzar's threat prompts Military Letters**

Jeremiah describes the state of impending doom confirmed by The Lachish Letters. Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah in 586 BC destroying Jerusalem and its Temple; many people were taken into captivity.

- Jeremiah warned King Zedekiah of the disaster to come. The fortified Lachish had been rebuilt after it was destroyed by Sennacherib in 701BC.
- The letters were found in 1935 in the ruins of a guardroom by the main gate of Lachish.
- In total, twenty one letters were found, written in joined-up writing, in black ink on pieces of broken pottery (called ostraca).
- The letters are urgent messages, written in alphabetic Hebrew, as Nebuchadnezzar's army closed in on Jerusalem.
- The writer was Hoshai'ahu (Hoshai'ah), the commander of a military outpost. He wrote to Ya'osh, the Lachish military governor. The description in one letter appears to reflect the conditions in Jeremiah 34:6-7:

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*'May Yahweh cause my lord to hear this very day tidings of good. And now, in accordance with everything my lord has written, so has your servant done. I have written on the door everything which my lord has written to me... and I report that we are watching for the fire signals of Lachish according to the directions which my lord has given, because we cannot see Azekah.'*

Walk through room 54 and 53, turning right into the Gallery of Ancient Iran (Room 52)

## **Esther, Nehemiah and the Persian Court 536-400 BC**

**The palace at Susa was built in 490 BC by Darius the Great and was decorated with friezes of glazed painted tiles in moulded relief. The picture is of a life-size Tiled Archer from the palace of Susa.**

- Esther became queen to Xerxes I, king of Persia in 479 BC (also known as Ahasuerus in the Bible). The archer would have been a familiar figure to Esther as she walked around the palace.
- Xerxes I was a Zoroastrian and led more than a million soldiers with 10,000 elite 'immortals' against King Leonidas of Sparta depicted in the film '300'.

## **The Cyrus Cylinder**

**KEY POINT: THE JEWS AS SLAVES WERE IN NEED OF A MIRACLE. CYRUS PROVIDES REDEMPTION JUST AS ISAIAH PROPHESED 150 YEARS BEFORE**

### Ezra 1.1-3

*Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying:*

*"Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem.*

- In cuneiform, the cylinder mentions the wickedness of Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, and how Cyrus took Babylon (in 539 BC) without killing anyone.
- This confirms again the accuracy of Daniel. Scholars attacked the idea that a sixth-century BC Persian emperor would release captive peoples and give them freedom to pursue their own religion; a politically sophisticated idea.
- The Cyrus Cylinder details the policy of Cyrus (559-530 BC) to do just that:

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*‘As to the inhabitants of Babylon. . . I abolished the unpaid labour and denial of social standing. . . I brought relief to their derelict dwellings. . . I returned to the sacred cities on the other side of the Tigris (the sanctuaries of which had long been in ruins) the images, which once lived in them and established for them [the images] permanent sanctuaries. I also gathered their former inhabitants and returned them...’*

## **Breakthrough in Cuneiform Translation, The Behistun Inscription of Darius I (521-486BC).**

- The Behistun Inscription is to cuneiform what the Rosetta Stone is to Egyptian hieroglyphs: the document most crucial in the decipherment of a previously lost script. It is located in the Kermanshah Province of Iran.
- The inscription includes three versions of the same text, written in three different cuneiform script languages: Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian.
- A British army officer, Sir Henry Rawlinson, had the inscription transcribed in two parts, in 1835 and 1843. Rawlinson was able to translate the Old Persian cuneiform text in 1838, and the Elamite and Babylonian texts were translated by Rawlinson and others after 1843. Babylonian was a later form of Akkadian: both are Semitic languages.

## **Silver Bowl of Artaxerxes (Ahasuerus)**

- Xerxes (Ahasuerus) the son of Darius in 486 BC, ruled an empire stretching from India to Ethiopia. He was assassinated and succeeded by his son Artaxerxes (465-424 BC).
- Artaxerxes temporarily halted the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Ezra 4.7-23), and commissioned Ezra to visit the city in 458 BC.
- Nehemiah is sent 13 years later as his cup-bearer (a high-ranking officer), to Jerusalem as civil governor.

## **Seal of Darius the Great**

Used to emboss clay tablets to authenticate whatever had been inscribed in cuneiform script, this **Agate Cylinder Seal** is an official cylinder seal of Darius I. His title is given in Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian, the three official languages of the empire.

- The Darius described in Daniel 9 and also mentioned in chapters 6 and 11 ('Darius the Mede') is a regional governor who served under Cyrus. He is different to this Darius.
- After Cyrus, Darius the Great, or Darius I, (ruling 521-486 BC) married Cyrus' daughter (Cyrus' own son committed suicide).
- The prophets Zechariah and Haggai operate during the reign of Darius I, both mentioning him. Also see Ezra 5-6.

## 6: Greece to Rome (332BC - 31BC)

### Alexander the Great

Alexander defeated Darius III of Persia, capturing Susa and Babylon. After his death, a power struggle resulted in a four way division: Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt; Seleucid Empire in the east; Pergamon Kingdom of Asia Minor; and Macedon.

- Octavian (who became the Caesar Augustus of the Christmas story) defeated Mark Anthony and Cleopatra VII, Queen of Ptolemaic Egypt in the Battle of Actium.
- Herod the Great backed the wrong horse, but was granted Palestine due to his allegiance to the Roman Empire and way of life.

Go to Room 70 - Rome: City and Empire

### Roman Emperors

**Augustus (31BC-AD14)** was the first Emperor of Rome, avoiding the fate of his predecessor, Julius Caesar, with a fine line in spin. Instead of calling himself a dictator (which he was), and being slaughtered on the Ides of March, he called himself Princeps (the foremost), Imperator (the title of a military general) and primus inter pares (the first among equals).

Augustus was frequently outmanoeuvred by his brilliant, scheming wife, Livia. After the defeat of Mark Antony and Cleopatra VII at the Battle of Actium in 31 BC, Octavian became undisputed master of Rome and its territories and, as Augustus, the first true emperor.

Augustus's boast that he found Roman a city of brick and left it a city of marble is borne out by the enormous list of his building projects in Rome itself, and many more were undertaken abroad. In Rome most public buildings were embellished or rebuilt from scratch. In the provinces, either through personal involvement or imperial pressure, civic buildings of all types were erected.

It was very important to impress on the people of the vast Roman Empire that there was now a single, strong ruler. The image of the emperor therefore became very important, from the mass imagery of coinage to metal and stone sculptures, and luxury pieces such as gems, seal-stones and cameos.

**Tiberius (AD14-37)** was sulky, diffident and impatient, a man who waited for ever for his chance to shine, then appeared to find the whole thing tiring and annoying when he got there. Tiberius disliked his senatorial colleagues so much that he hired an unelected adviser, Sejanus, to do his wheeling and dealing for him. Sejanus ended up being dragged to the River Tiber by a hook, dying a traitor's death. Juvenal tells us that even statues of him were melted down to obliterate him more completely.

**Gaius Caligula (AD37-41)**, the mad emperor, loved his sister in a more-than-brotherly way. He loved his horse, Incitatus, so much that he threatened to make him a consul. He was assassinated by his own men when his lunacy became intolerable.

**Claudius (AD41-54)** was the great pretender. He survived the reign of his murderous nephew Caligula by acting dumb.

He was actually an extremely learned man - a historian who compiled 20 volumes of Etruscan history, and wrote books in both Latin and Greek - whose physical disabilities convinced others he was stupid. Claudius's love of bureaucracy eventually helped to choke the Roman Empire to death.

**Nero (AD54-68)** was the boy king, manoeuvred into power by a scheming mother, Agrippina, who almost certainly poisoned the man standing in his

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way, her husband Claudius. Nero was a golden child - privileged, fortunate, and ruthless.

**Vespasian (AD69-79)** was the first emperor who didn't come from Rome. He came from the country and had the accent to prove it - the snobbish Romans mocked him for his inability to say -au (he pronounced it -o instead). Fond of jokes, he died with the words, "Vae! Puto deus fio" - "Uh-oh, I think I'm becoming a god."

Suetonius says of Emperor **Titus**, who ruled the Roman Empire from **AD79-81**, before death cut his reign tragically short:

As commander of Roman forces in Palestine he conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in AD70.

*"Titus had such winning ways - perhaps inborn, perhaps cultivated subsequently, or conferred on him by fortune - that he became an object of universal love and adoration."*

## Tribute Penny

Turn into Room 68, The Money Gallery. Case 3 panel 3.

[Matthew 22:19-21](#)



*'Show Me the tribute money. And they brought a denarius to Him. And He said to them, Whose image and inscription is this? They said to Him, Caesar's. Then He said to them, Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things which are God's.'* (Matthew 22:19-21)

END OF TOUR

*We sincerely hope you have enjoyed the tour and that the evidence you have seen in the museum has built your faith!*

### Credits and Bibliography.

The basis of the tour was taken from:

*Heritage of Evidence in the British Museum*; Peter Masters; The Wakeman Trust; ISBN 1-870855-39-6.

*Babylon*; Albert Champdor; Elek Books; 1958.

*Foundations in the Dust*; Thames and Hudson; 1980; ISBN 0-500-05038-4