

The Bible Vindicated! - 1

The current and general rejection of the Bible's authority has some of its origins 140 years ago in the efforts of Source Critics of the Pentateuch (first 5 books of the Old Testament). They attempted to give a scholarly spin to their denial that these books were produced by Moses (about 1450 BC).

They claimed that these books were a fictional history which were cobbled together 900 years later in Israel's history - written by Jewish priests in an effort to consolidate their authority over the nation.

But an attentive reading of the books of Moses shows how incompatible this claim is with the facts. We noted earlier how God instructed Abram to "Get out of your country, from your kindred and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you," adding, "you shall be a blessing...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" - Genesis 12:1-7.

In response, Abram left Haran for Canaan with his wife and orphaned nephew. He "passed through the land to the place of Shechem...and the Canaanites were then in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land'."

Mentioning a place name while recording a narrative, exposes the author to a test of authenticity - was there such a city? If so, when did it actually exist? Is its site now known? Have any facts been discovered from its remains?

There is a later reference in Genesis 33:18 when Abraham's grandson Jacob "came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan." It is now known that Shechem was one of the most prominent cities north of Jerusalem. It was situated on the central ridge road when ran north-south through Bethel and Jerusalem.

But if Genesis had been written 900 years after Joshua's conquest of Canaan, what Israelite would need it explained that Shechem was in the land of Canaan? As we now read through these books, it is clear that the writer, having been born in Egypt, is regarding the Promised Land as new and unfamiliar territory.

As to the facts which have been discovered about Shechem, all are in harmony with the record as provided by Moses. Archaeological excavations at Shechem have uncovered the history of the city back to its beginnings about 4000 BC - showing that it was inhabited in Abraham's time - down to about 107 BC when the site was finally vacated.

About 1650 BC the great temple of Shechem was built, and recent excavation has led to the conclusion that it may well have been this structure that is referred to as "the tower of Shechem" in Judges 9. The destruction of the city by Abimelech has been clearly identified in the excavations. Not to be outdone, the Assyrians left the city in piles of brick and burnt debris during their invasion which began in 721 BC. After this time it remained little more than a village for four centuries, and was finally destroyed during the later Maccabean rule of Judea.

Probably none of these facts were known by those anti-Bible scholars who had attempted to discredit the Mosaic record. They were acting not only from dislike of being asked to believe in God by a book coming from a scorned and despised race, but they were also arguing from a position of ignorance of some important points of reality.