



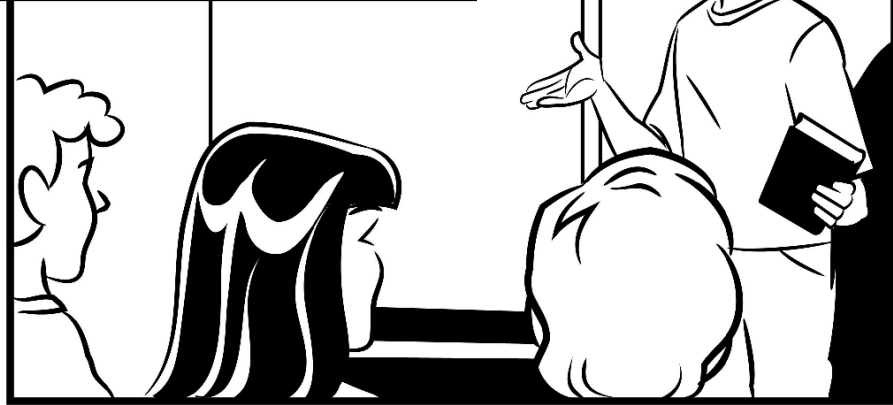
**The Bible – Fact or Fiction?**

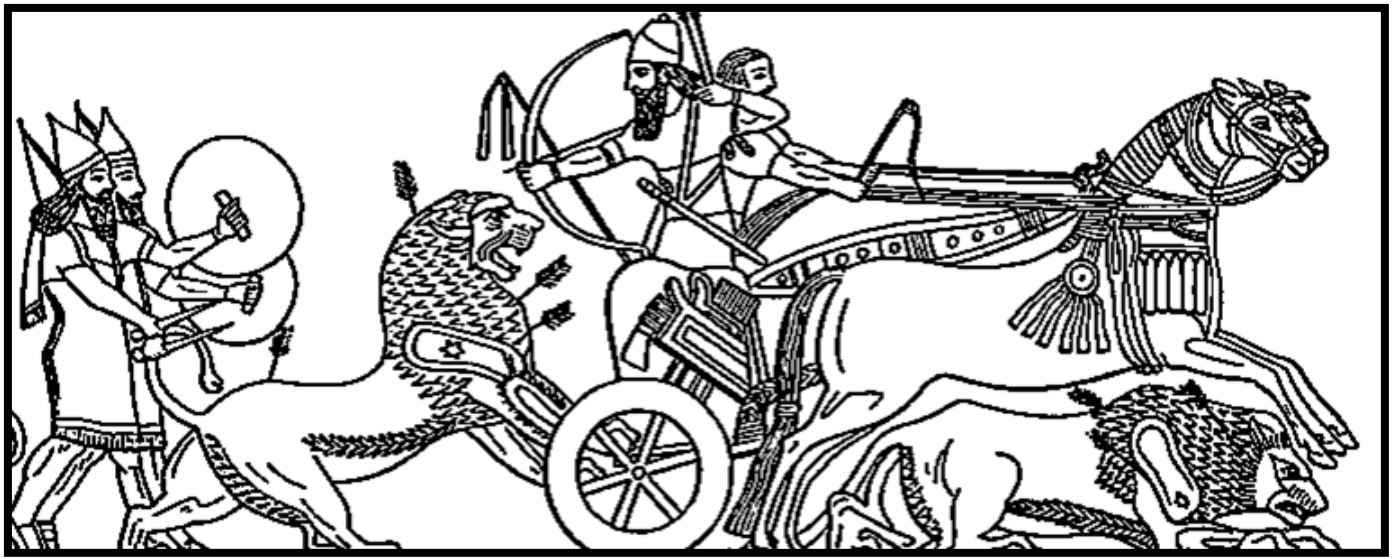
Despite popular dismissals of the Bible as little more than fables and fabrication, archaeology has provided remarkable evidence of its historical accuracy.

For example, the archive of the ancient city of Ebla in northern Syria was discovered in the 1970s. The documents it contained, written on clay tablets around 2300 BC, demonstrate that personal and place names in the accounts of the Hebrew patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are real.

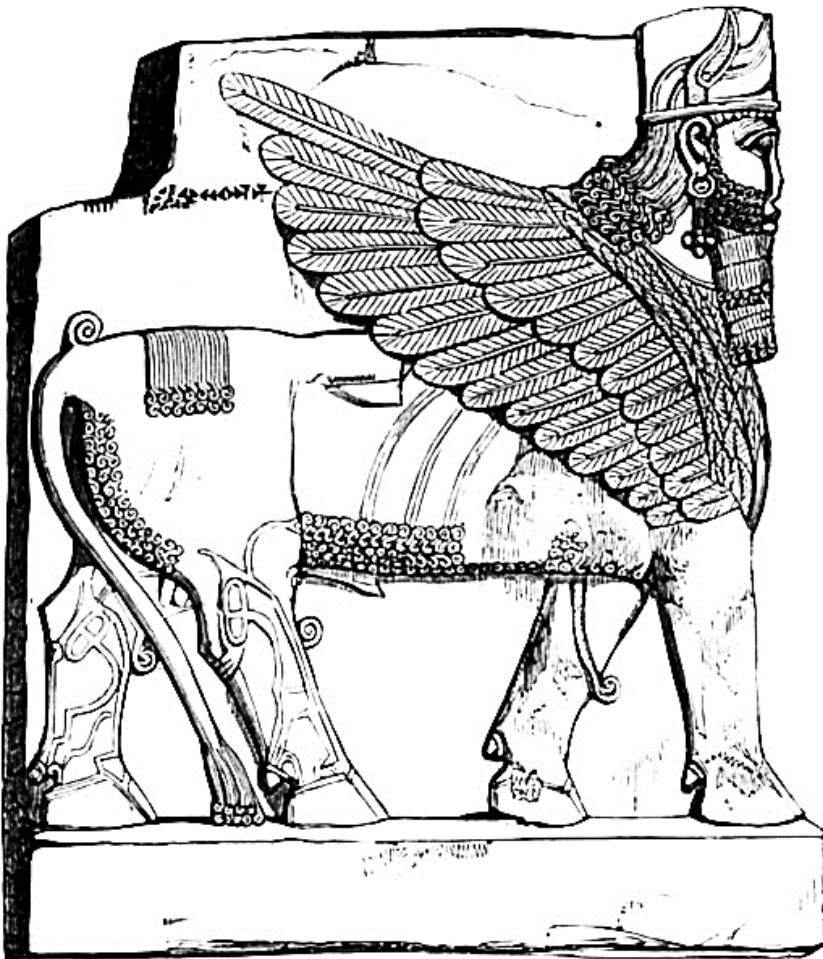


Ancient customs reflected in the stories of the patriarchs have also been found in clay tablets.

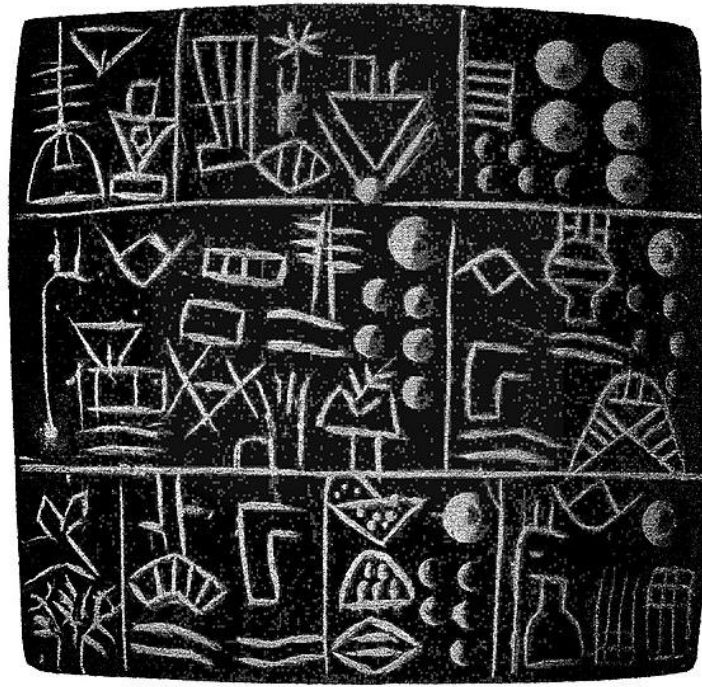




Another example concerns Sargon, king of Assyria, who is referred to in the book of Isaiah, but whose existence historians long disputed: "In the year that Tartan came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and fought against Ashdod and took it" (Isaiah 20:1).



We now know that Sargon II was indeed an Assyrian king who started his reign in 722 BC. Sargon's palace at Khorsabad, Iraq, was discovered by Paul-Émile Botta in 1843. Further excavation of the site some 90 years later found the very event mentioned in Isaiah—Assyria's conquest of Ashdod—recorded on the palace walls. Visitors to the British Museum in London can see the colossal winged bull taken from the palace.



A third example was discovered in the British Museum itself. In the summer of 2007, visiting professor Michael Jursa, an Assyriologist, was searching through the museum's collection of 130,000 Assyrian cuneiform tablets when he came across a name he half remembered—Nabu-sharrussu-ukin, described there in a hand 2,500 years old as "the chief eunuch" of Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon.

The small tablet on which the name appears is a bill of receipt acknowledging Nabu-sharrussu-ukin's payment of about 0.75 kg of gold to a temple in Babylon. Jursa checked the Old Testament and found the same name, rendered differently by the Bible's translators, in chapter 39 of the book of Jeremiah. Nebo-Sarsekim, according to Jeremiah, was "chief officer" to Nebuchadnezzar II and was with him at the siege of Jerusalem in 587 BC when the Babylonians overran the city.

Dr. Irving Finkel of the British Museum summed up the significance:

This is a fantastic discovery, a world-class find. A throwaway detail in the Old Testament turns out to be accurate and true. I think that it means that the whole of the narrative [of Jeremiah] takes on a new kind of power.





## What of Jesus Himself?

Dozens of ancient non-biblical manuscripts confirm that Jesus was a genuine historical figure who lived in Palestine in the early part of the

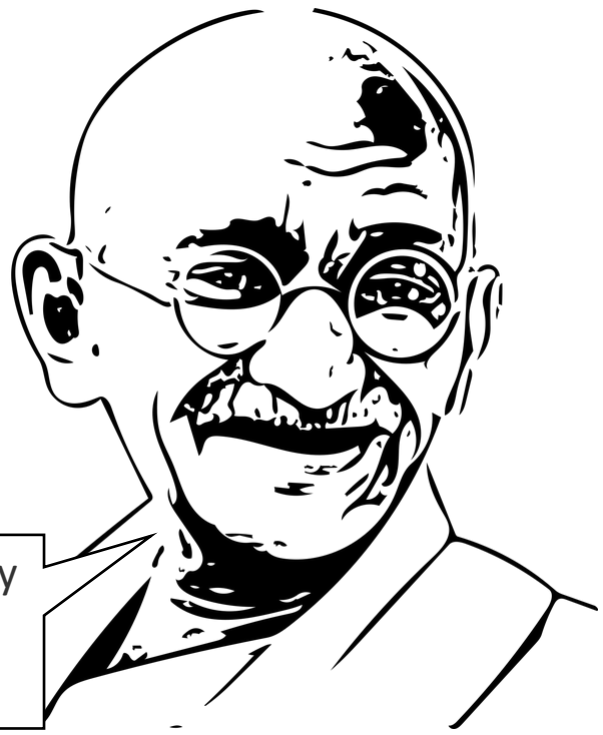
first century. The Encyclopedia Britannica states: "These independent accounts prove that in ancient times even the opponents of Christianity never doubted the historicity of Jesus, which was disputed for the first time—and on inadequate grounds—by several authors during the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries."

For instance, the Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus mentions "Christus" in his annals published around 115 AD: "Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hand of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus."



Today we live in a world of relativism, where it would seem there are no absolutes. People may imagine what they will, disparage as they will, and try to make reality conform to their own desires and agendas, but that doesn't change the truth. As Mohandas Gandhi put it:

God is, even though the whole world deny Him. Truth stands, even if there be no public support. It is self-sustained.



Those who read the Bible with open minds and believing hearts find what they've been searching for—answers to life's deepest questions and love enough to fill the deepest void—truth. "If you abide in My word," Jesus promises, "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32)



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