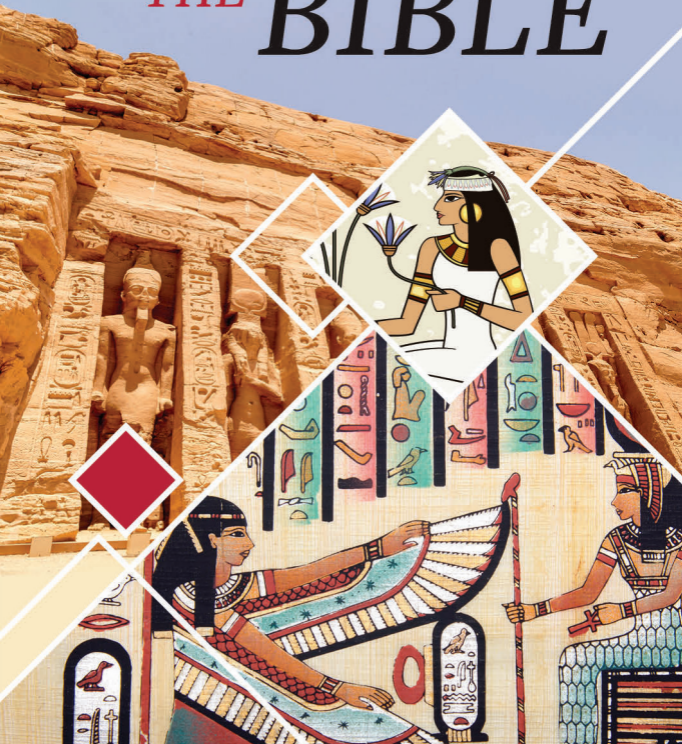


GARY KENT



The Incredible
Journey

EGYPT AND THE BIBLE



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Contents

Egypt and the Bible	2
The Nile	6
Papyrus.....	8
Beni Hasan	10
Tell el-Amarna.....	12
Luxor.....	17
Hittites.....	18
Rosetta Stone	20
Shishak.....	24
Aswan and Elephantine Island	25
Abu Simbel.....	27
Map of Egypt	30
Conclusion.....	32

EGYPT AND THE BIBLE

Egypt and the Bible

The timeless land of Egypt is the setting for some of the most dramatic stories in the Bible and is associated with four leading Bible characters and their experiences there: Abraham's visit to Egypt and his meeting with Pharaoh; Joseph's experiences in Egypt as a slave and his rise to power there; Moses and the Exodus; Jesus and His family's visit to Egypt to escape from Herod.

These stories and other references make the country of Egypt one of the most mentioned locations in the Bible. Egypt is mentioned almost seven hundred times in the Old Testament

and another twenty-five times in the New Testament.

In Biblical times, Egypt was already an ancient civilisation, and the pyramids were thousands of years old. Egypt and Israel shared a common border in Bible times as they do today. As a result, there was contact and interaction between the peoples of the two lands.

The land of Egypt served both as a refuge and as a threat to the people in Israel during Old Testament and New Testament times. From Abraham to Jesus, the prophets, patriarchs, and the people had a continuous connection with the nation of Egypt. It was a destination for people leaving Israel either on their own or because they were forced to seek asylum or refuge from oppression and tough times.

Some of the well-known Bible characters who travelled to Egypt to escape hardship are Abraham

and Sarah (Genesis 12:10-20), King Jeroboam of Israel (I Kings 11:40), a group of people fleeing the Babylonians (II Kings 25:26), the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 43:5-7), and the baby Jesus and His family (Matthew 2:13-15).

The relationship between Egypt and the Israelites in the Bible is complicated. Abraham visited Egypt but experienced challenges in his relationship with Pharaoh and had to leave. Joseph, son of Jacob, ended up in Egypt when his jealous brothers sold him to traders. Joseph lived the life of a slave until, after some amazing circumstances, he became the second most powerful man in Egypt.

The Israelites first came to Egypt to escape a famine during the time when Joseph was a leader in Egypt (Genesis 37-47). It was after this that the Israelites spent about four hundred years in slavery in Egypt (Genesis 15:13, Exodus 12:40-41, Acts 7:6).

This time in Egypt was their longest period away from Israel, and Exodus 14 describes it coming to an end in dramatic fashion when the ten plagues fell on Egypt and the Israelites were able to escape to freedom when the Red Sea parted.

Moses, the first Bible writer and one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament, was born in Egypt, and led the Israelites out of captivity, through the waters of the Red Sea and on to the promised land.

The country of Egypt and its people have played important roles in the story of the Israelites.

Let's find out some more about the connection of Egypt and the Bible and discover how some of the monuments and hieroglyphics help us better understand the Bible stories and the interaction between Israel and Egypt.

The Nile

The Wonders of Egypt have fascinated many people. And the heart of Egypt is the Nile. It is truly a gift to the people of Egypt. Through the years, the Nile has been their means of travel, communication, commerce and food.

This important river has influenced every aspect of life in Egypt. It is the longest river in the world with a total length of about 6,650 km from its source in the region of Lake Victoria to its mouth at the Mediterranean Sea.

Once every year the Nile overflowed its banks, fertilizing and watering the soil. Because the ancient peoples thought the flooding was mysterious, the river was sacred.

The rise of the river was regarded as a good omen and celebrated by the River Festival. This event is all described in vivid detail on the walls of the magnificent temple of Luxor at Thebes.

But until the 1800's no-one could read the ancient inscriptions.

The Nile valley varies from 20-40 kilometres in width. But the fertile section of the valley is the part watered by the Nile and is only about three to four kilometres across. 99% of the population of Egypt live on 3.3% of its soil because beyond Egypt is a desert.

The people have invented ingenious ways to harness and effectively use every drop of available water. There's the shaduf, a long beam with a leather bucket at one end and a counter-balance at the other used to raise the water from the river to the field. Another water-raising device is the water wheel. A blindfolded cow treads in a circle, yoked to the forked wooden centre post of the water wheel to lift the water out of the ditch.

The Nile boatmen pioneered in the development of river craft. They had

smaller reed rafts and built mighty 60-metre barges for hauling obelisks and other monuments. These barges would frequently be used to haul the world-famous, rich, red granite of Aswan down the river.

Papyrus

In ancient times the banks of the Nile as well as the Nile delta were covered with tall reeds called papyrus. The papyrus was also the symbol for Lower Egypt and the Delta. It can be seen in ancient Egyptian art and is depicted on the columns in their temples.

During Bible times, as told in Exodus 2, there is the story of the baby Moses being placed in a little basket boat made of bulrushes from the river Nile and hidden amongst the bulrushes by his mother Jochebed, and watched over by his sister, Miriam, before being found by the princess of Egypt.

The early Egyptians also developed an

excellent type of paper from the papyri. In fact, it was the most convenient writing material available to the ancient world for many centuries. The Egyptians exported this paper, maintaining a lucrative monopoly on this important product.

But Isaiah, the prophet, predicted that the bulrushes would dry up and be no more. It's found in Isaiah 19:6, where it says, *'The reeds and rushes will rot away, ... and will be no more.'* The Bible prediction is true, as today in Egypt there are no reeds or bulrushes growing along the Nile River.

The ancient Egyptians also used the reeds to make boats. In the Bible, Isaiah 18:2 says, *'Egypt sends messengers up the Nile on ships made of reeds.'* Historians confirm that the papyrus reeds were bound into bundles and used to construct many of the vessels that sailed the waters of the ancient Mediterranean.

Beni Hasan

Egypt is one long archaeological museum and is full of many amazing structures, monuments, and tombs.

About 170kms south of Cairo are the tombs of Beni Hasan. These thirty-nine tombs are cut into the limestone cliffs. These tombs belonged to nobles who ruled this Egyptian province almost four thousand years ago and date back to the days of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The walls of these tombs are covered with magnificent paintings and hieroglyph inscriptions. Of special interest is the beautiful tomb of Khnumhotep. He was the province's most important official, the governor of the eastern desert.

One of the paintings in the tombs has become particularly famous for its colourful picture describing the arrival of thirty-seven Semites from Canaan bringing the products of their country

to barter for the grain stored in Egypt during times of famine. The painting shows the clothes they wore, the kind of footwear they had, and the musical instruments they played.

Currently, it was common for groups of people from neighbouring countries to travel to Egypt to barter for grain. There is a story of the sons of Jacob coming to Egypt to buy grain found in the Bible in Genesis 42:1-3 This painting demonstrates that life in ancient Egypt was very much like the Bible records.

'When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt: go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die." So Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt.'

As archaeologists study the hieroglyphs and uncover the past in Egypt, they are discovering monuments, inscriptions,

people, and places that demonstrate the accuracy and reliability of the Bible.

Tell el-Armarna

A short distance south of the tombs of Beni Hasan stand the ruins of Tell el-Amarna. In 1887 an Egyptian peasant woman was looking among the remains of the deserted site and came across several baked clay tablets with writing on them. Thinking they might be worth something, she put them into some gunny sacks and sold them to a neighbouring villager for a small amount. He in turn loaded the sacks on donkeys and took them to Cairo. There the antique dealer showed little interest for the writing was cuneiform rather than the familiar hieroglyphics. Consequently, they were suspected to be forgeries. So unable to sell them, the man put them back on the donkeys and jostled his way the 671 kilometres south to Luxor.

Eventually a scholar in Luxor recognized their value and gradually the tablets found their way into the great museums of the world. They proved to be an immense find, and include hundreds of letters written from Palestine, Syria, Babylon and other countries to Amenhotep III and Akhenaton during the days of the important eighteenth dynasty.

This discovery led the famous archaeologist, Sir Flinders Petrie, to commence excavations at Tell el-Amarna resulting in the uncovering of the lavish capitol of Pharaoh Akhenaton, the famous sun king. The city, dating back to the fourteenth century B.C., was spread over a crescent-shaped plain about twelve kilometres long and five kilometres wide.

Akhenaton was first given the name of his father, Amenhotep, meaning 'Amon is satisfied.' Amon being the name of one of their gods. For six years he

reigned peacefully with his father. But upon his father's death, he rebelled against the whole traditional worship system of Amon at Thebes, moving the capitol to this new area.

His name was changed to Akhenaton, incorporating the name Aton – the Sun, and the city was called the city of the Radiance of Aton, instead of the City of Amon. So, Akhenaton is best known as the heretic king. He did away with all the old cults, dispossessed priests, terminated official worship of the gods throughout the land, smashed their images, erased their names from the monuments, and abolished the plural form of the word 'god'.

Akhenaton introduced a new system of worship where there would be only one unique universal god, the sun. Under the name of Aton and the symbol of a sun disk, this radical monotheist challenged the old order with its many gods and deities.

Before transferring the capital from Thebes to present day Tell el-Amarna, the new king erected at Thebes a huge sun temple. Later Ikhnaton moved his capital to Amarna and set up fourteen boundary stelae to mark the limits of his holy city. Hieroglyphic inscriptions describe how Ikhnaton dedicated the capitol to his god and swore never to leave the place for the rest of his days.

His holy city contained a vast complex of buildings including temples, a royal estate, barracks, mansions, administrative buildings, and a workmen's village. The royal palace was perhaps the largest secular building in the ancient world. Its western frontage was 800 metres in length and faced the river. There were state apartments, a great coronation hall, two harems with hundreds of rooms and colonnades leading to sunken gardens and ornamental pools.

Later pharaohs destroyed the site

but fortunately many records remain depicting life in the sun capital. Many of the records and pictures are of Akhenaton's famous wife, Nefertiti, and his six daughters, one of whom became the wife of King Tutankhamen, who succeeded Akhenaton to the throne.

Tutankhamen's wife was Akhenaton's second daughter and Tutankhamen was only nine years old when he was chosen to be co-ruler and future successor of Akhenaton.

The famous young Pharaoh, Tutankhamen, ruled briefly at the sun capitol, then forsook it and returned to Thebes where the former gods were reinstated, and he began restoring the desecrated temples. The influence of the sun worship of his father-in-law though, was retained. This is seen in the treasures found in King Tutankhamen's tomb. One of the most famous is the beautiful relief on his throne chair

depicting the orb of the sun with its characteristic rays.

Unfortunately, the boy king died at the age of eighteen and was buried in a small tomb in the Valley of the Kings opposite Thebes. The story of the discovery of his tomb with its immense treasure is one of the most thrilling of all archaeological epics.

Luxor

In ancient Egypt, Luxor was known as Thebes. It was during the reign of Amenhotep III that Egypt reached one of its periods of greatest splendour. Amenhotep III is sometimes referred to as Amenhotep the Magnificent. The name of the chief god of Thebes was Amon. This name is incorporated into the name of the king, Amenhotep.

The Great Temple of Amun, or Amon, is the central temple of the huge Temples of Karnak in present-day Luxor. At the front of the temple is the pylon of

Ramses II, one of the best known of the pharaohs, who came to the throne about 1299 B.C. and reigned for 67 years.

Inside is the forecourt of Ramses II which is surrounded by seventy-four large granite columns. The walls and pylons are lined with statues of Ramses II and adorned with scenes of his victories over his enemies. He placed his inscriptions everywhere, waged war as far away as Syria, built temples all over the country, and erected giant monuments to himself and his beautiful Queen Nefertari.

Hittites

As archaeologists studied these great temples and monuments with their hieroglyph inscriptions built by Ramses II, they made an amazing discovery that confirmed Bible history. It involved the mysterious Hittites.

Now, the problem with the ancient Hittites might well be called the riddle of the ages. Because you see, 48 times the Bible mentions the Hittite race – its dealings with Abraham, with Solomon, with David, with Egypt.

These Bible references picture the Hittites as one of the most powerful of ancient empires. Yet in all the records of antiquity, aside from the Bible, not a trace of them – not a word – remained. Only the Bible mentioned the Hittites.

So, scholarly critics of the Bible said that it would be impossible for such an empire to disappear from history without leaving a single trace behind. Therefore, a lack of evidence was interpreted as evidence that the Hittites never existed – and were nothing more than an ancient legend, a Bible myth. People said the Bible was wrong.

Rosetta Stone

Then came the Rosetta Stone. It is one of the most important objects in the British Museum today as it holds the key to understanding Egyptian hieroglyphs – a script made up of small pictures that was used originally in ancient Egypt.

The Rosetta Stone was found at a fort in the town of Rosetta, near Alexandria, by one of Napoleon Bonaparte's officers in 1799 during his Egyptian campaign. The French soldier discovered a black basalt slab inscribed with ancient writing. The irregularly shaped stone contained fragments of passages written in three different scripts: Greek, Egyptian hieroglyphics and Egyptian demotic.

The ancient Greek inscription on the Rosetta Stone informed archaeologists that it was inscribed by priests honouring the king of Egypt, Ptolemy V, in the second century B.C. More startlingly,

the Greek passage announced that the three scripts were all of identical meaning. The Rosetta Stone thus held the key to solving the riddle of hieroglyphics, a written language that had been "dead" or not used for nearly 2,000 years.

Unfortunately, no one could read the Egyptian Hieroglyphs until a French linguist and Egyptologist named Jean-Francois Champollion finally managed to decipher it. He taught himself ancient languages and cracked the code and deciphered the hieroglyphics using his knowledge of Greek as a guide. Hieroglyphics used pictures to represent objects, sounds and groups of sounds.

Once the Rosetta Stone inscriptions were translated, the language and culture of ancient Egypt was suddenly open to scientists as never before. Now the Egyptian hieroglyph reliefs

and inscriptions could be read. And the stories told on the great pillars, pylons and monuments of Karnak Temple could be read.

And here, on these massive walls, is an amazing story of when Ramses II went to war with the king of the Hittites in one of the great, decisive battles of history. A battle in which the power of Egypt was tested to the limit.

In fact, the battle was so important, and the Hittites so powerful, that Ramses carved the story of his epic battle with them on all the major temples of Egypt. He is seen in his chariot shooting arrows at the Hittites, and holding ropes binding rows of Hittite prisoners.

Finally, Ramses is shown dedicating the prisoners and booty to the Egyptian gods and there's a long poem that describes this tremendous battle with the Hittites and its outcome.

Ramses II claimed a great victory and his personal heroism is depicted on the temple walls. But despite these claims, it is now known that Ramses II was almost killed in the battle and ended up signing a peace treaty with the Hittite king and sealed it by his marriage to one of the king's daughters. This is the earliest international peace treaty known in history.

From these inscriptions and other archaeological discoveries, we now know that the Hittites were indeed a mighty empire, one of the most powerful in the ancient world. They were based in present-day Turkey and their rule stretched from the Black Sea to Damascus.

The hieroglyphic inscriptions at Karnak show that the Hittites of Bible fame were no myth after all. And the Bible is vindicated again. This has happened at one ancient site after another here in Egypt.

Shishak

Another significant relief found on the Karnak Temple walls is the story of Shishak. The inscriptions on the temple wall tell the story of how after the death of King Solomon, Shishak, Pharaoh of Egypt invaded Palestine and entered Jerusalem and took all the gold and riches from Solomon's Temple or sometimes known as the First Temple.

The Bible records the invasion in I Kings 14:25,26:

It happened in the fifth year of King Rehoboam that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. And he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king's house; he took away everything. He also took away all the gold shields which Solomon had made.

One of the reliefs on a wall of the Karnak temple depicts Shishak dedicating his spoils from Solomon's Temple to the

Egyptian god, Amon. Each captured city is represented by the figure of a Hebrew on whose body is inscribed the name of a conquered city. On the part of the relief still visible, there are over 100 of such cities listed.

Aswan and Elephant Island

Aswan has long been known for the building of the Aswan Dam in 1960. But there is a place that is lesser known that has some amazing archaeological discoveries. Elephant Island is in the centre of the Nile River at Aswan. This island is said to have gained its name from the shape of its huge rocks that resemble elephants. In ancient times it was a commercial, religious, and military centre for the district.

It was on this island that some extremely important papyri, or ancient writings, were discovered. These writings, known as the Elephantine Papyri, give support to the Old Testament books of

Ezra and Nehemiah. Historians tell us that a Mr Wilbour purchased the papyri in 1893. He became ill on his way back to America and his trunk containing the precious documents was stored in a warehouse in New York City where it lay unopened for 50 years until it came into the possession of the Brooklyn Museum.

The ancient writings were first read by Dr Siegfried H. Horn, archaeologist, and professor of Old Testament studies at Andrews University. Other ancient writings were also found on the island. These documents were written by a colony of Jews stationed on the island as mercenary soldiers serving in the Egyptian army.

These documents confirm the accuracy of the Bible books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Some scholars questioned the historic accuracy of these books and the existence of the people mentioned in them. But in these documents, you can

read about Sanballat, the old enemy of Nehemiah, and of Johanan, the high priest of Jerusalem frequently referred to in Nehemiah.

The papyri also established that the Jewish civil calendar began in the autumn of the year and confirmed 457 BC as the date for the decree of Artaxerxes authorizing the rebuilding of Jerusalem as recorded in Ezra 7.

Abu Simbel

When the Aswan High Dam was built on the Nile, Lake Nassar was formed. Many temples were completely covered and destroyed by the waters of the new lake. But one temple was saved and relocated, the great temple of Ramses II, Abu Simbel.

For 3,200 years, the huge, sculptured sentinels guarded the southern entrance to Egypt. It is believed that 25,000 men worked for twenty years to erect this colossal monument to the sun and the

god-king, Ramses II.

But when the Nile was dammed, the rising waters threatened to submerge these structures. In a mad rush against time, the two temples were cut into 1,050 blocks, some of them weighing 33 tonnes, and transported to the new site on higher ground, nearly 300 kilometres to the south. It was an amazing and complex feat – to move 15,000 tonnes of monument - and took over four years before it was completed in 1967.

At Abu Simbel today, the structures include two temples, one for Pharaoh Ramses II and one for his beautiful wife, Nefertari. The great temple celebrates the sun god and Ramses himself as a living god. The smaller temple was erected to honour Hathor, goddess of love, and Ramses' favourite wife, Queen Nefertari.

The temples are a colossal size. At the great temple, the seated colossus of Ramses towers upward some twenty-three metres. The face measures over four metres across from ear to ear. Ramses wanted everyone to know that he was the Pharaoh and the dominant leader of the nation. He even lords it over his wife at Abu Simbel as Queen Nefertari was only granted two statues fronting the façade of her temple and although standing, they are a mere eleven metres high and each one is flanked by two statues of Ramses.

The great temple is orientated toward the east so that the first rays of the morning sun would pierce the interior illuminating the ten metre statues in the great hall. Twice each year, about the 20th October, the date of Ramses' accession to power, and again about mid-February, the sun's rays penetrate nearly seventy metres back into the inner-most sanctuary, there to bless the

MEDITERRAN

Marsa



Alexandria



Siwah



Al Fayyu

Al Minya

L I B Y A

E G Y P T

Mut



*Western
Desert*

S U D A N



statue of the god king dwelling in the company of the other gods. Ramses, of course, considered himself one of the gods and sits between the sun god, Re-Harakhti and Amon, god of Thebes.

The temple includes twelve separate chambers, and the walls are covered with some of the largest reliefs of battle scenes, hunting expeditions and religious life to be found anywhere in the world.

Conclusion

As archaeologists and linguists read the hieroglyphs on the temples, tombs, and monuments of ancient Egypt, they discovered that it all fits together with the Bible record. They bring a message from the past to our generation and to you and me. It's a message that echoes across the centuries stating loud and clear, 'You can trust the Bible.'

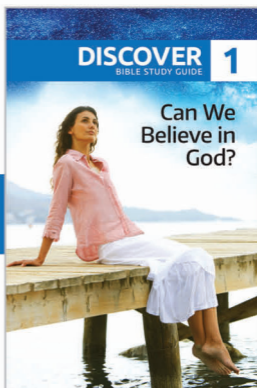
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Australia

0481 315 101

info@tij.tv

The Incredible Journey
GPO Box 274
Sydney NSW 2001

New Zealand

020 422 2042

infonz@tij.tv

The Incredible Journey
PO Box 76673
Manukau, Auckland 2241



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Pastor Gary Kent is Speaker for The Incredible Journey ministry. He holds a B.A. in Theology, M.A. in Ancient History & Archaeology, and M. in Divinity. He has produced and presented numerous documentaries on subjects including the Bible, Bible prophecy, world events and natural health. His passion is to share the good news of Jesus' imminent return.

The Incredible Journey
Facebook.com/TheIncredibleJourneyMinistry
Website: www.tij.tv

Australia
0481 315 101
info@tij.tv

New Zealand
020 422 2042
infonz@tij.tv



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Journey