Earth's Treasure Heaps! A Study of Archaeology: Booklet Number 3

Louis T. Talbot

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A Study of Archaeology

Booklet Number Three

The Bible Institute of Los Angeles
FOREWORD

This booklet is the third in a series containing discussions conducted by Dr. Louis T. Talbot, President of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, and Dr. Paul R. Bauman, Vice President. These discussions are presented just as they were given over the microphone to a Pacific Coast chain of radio stations.

No science in recent years has done as much to strengthen the belief of young people and old alike in the veracity of the Word of God as this science of Archaeology.

These booklets are sent forth with the prayer that our God will be pleased to own them and use them for His glory.

THE BIBLE INSTITUTE OF LOS ANGELES
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Dr. Talbot: Now, Dr. Bauman, let's again go on with our talks on your favorite subject. If I may begin, let me ask you about Prehistoric Man and the so-called Stone Age. Can you suggest a helpful answer to this problem?

Dr. Bauman: We need to remember that "prehistoric" is a variable term. For example, in England, it refers to the days before Caesar visited her shores; in America, to the period prior to the discovery of Columbus. As for such terms as "cave-men" and "stone age," we must not forget that the ancient cave-dwellers may have been the contemporaries of the highly civilized inhabitants of other lands, just as the Australian aborigines, South African bushman, Central African cave-dwellers and others who use stone tools are our contemporaries today. I have visited the cave dwellings at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado. These were first thought to be "prehistoric," but they proved to be the rather recent dwellings of Indians. In other words, one civilization's golden age may be another's stone age.

Dr. Talbot: What then, do stone implements indicate to the archaeologist?

Dr. Bauman: In themselves, they indicate nothing more than the fact that such people used stone implements. Here is a good thing for young people to remember: the stage of a culture does not in itself indicate the age of a culture. There is no real evidence that man lived anywhere near the remote date that is attributed to him by many of the evolutionary anthropologists. "Science sometimes tells us that the water is deep when it is only muddy!"

THE FLOOD

Dr. Talbot: Reference has been made to the bearing of Archaeological discovery upon the Deluge account as it is
recorded in the Bible. I should like to ask you a few ques-
tions about these discoveries and their value to Biblical Research.

Dr. Bauman: I will be very happy to have you do so, for
there has been considerable discovery during recent years
which is related to the Flood, and students of the Bible
should by all means familiarize themselves with the ac-
cumulating evidence. Also, there is a real need for a
proper evaluation of the facts at hand. This is not given
by those who would undermine our faith in the accuracy
of the Bible, or sometimes even by those who believe the
historical record to be true.

Dr. Talbot: I shall be glad for this, because I have heard
a great variety of statements. But tell me, just what evi-
dence for the Flood has been discovered?

Dr. Bauman: There are three sources of evidence with
which the Christian is concerned: (1) Actual Flood De-
posits; (2) Ancient Records in the form of flood traditions
which have been unearthed; (3) Deluge traditions to be
found at the present time in localities all over the world.

Dr. Talbot: I believe that those listening in would appre-
ciate a few facts concerning each of these three sources
of evidence. You referred to actual flood deposits. Is it
true that such have been found?

Dr. Bauman: Yes, it is true, though it is my conviction
that on this subject the evidence is not yet complete. The
field is new and there needs to be a proper correlation of
the materials at hand. In 1929 Sir Leonard Woolley was
excavating at the site of ancient Ur (cf. Gen. 11:31). Let
me give you part of the story as he himself has told it.
"Suddenly the character of the soil changed. Instead of
the stratified pottery and rubbish we were in perfectly clean clay, uniform throughout, the texture of which showed that it had been laid there by water . . . The clay continued without change until it had attained a thickness of a little over eight feet. Then as suddenly as it had begun, it stopped, and we were once more in layers of rubbish full of stone implements and pottery.”

Dr. Talbot: But I have heard it said that this Flood was nothing more than a local inundation more or less common in that part of the world. Can such a deposit be explained on that basis?

Dr. Bauman: I do not believe so, for Sir Leonard Woolley adds, “No ordinary rising of the river would leave behind it anything approaching the bulk of this clay bank; eight feet of sediment imply a very great depth of water, and the flood which deposited it must have been of a magnitude unparalleled in local history.”

Dr. Talbot: Does Dr. Woolley believe the flood represented by this discovery to be the same as that recorded in the Bible?

Dr. Bauman: Yes, he does, and I quote once more: “The disaster which thus buried the old settlement and caused a breach in the continuity of civilization can on the face of it be nothing other than the Flood of Sumerian history.” And he continues, “He would have been an optimist indeed who had hoped to produce material evidence for such an event as the Flood of the Sumerian legend, which is also the Flood of the Book of Genesis; but in no other way can I interpret the facts which our excavations here give us.”

Dr. Talbot: May I ask, have there been in recent years any other such discoveries?
Dr. Bauman: Almost coincidentally, Dr. Langdon of Oxford found about two hundred miles from Ur an alluvial stratum running through Kish, near old Babylon and one of the oldest cities in the world. Describing his discovery, just a few days after Prof. Woolley’s article in The London Times, Langdon said, “When we made these discoveries two months ago we were loath to believe that we had obtained confirmation of the Deluge of Genesis, but there is no doubt about it now.” Perhaps I should add here that the chronological relationship between these two flood deposits has not yet been fully determined, but they do prove a deluge of tremendous proportions such as that recorded in Genesis 7, 8.

Dr. Talbot: I am glad for this fair evaluation of the evidence from actual flood deposits. It will be interesting to know something more about the ancient records which have been recovered by the archaeologists. What about that Babylonian Flood story of which you spoke once before?

BABYLONIAN ACCOUNT

Dr. Bauman: Do you mean the story related on the broken tablet from which George Adam Smith deciphered the words, “I released a dove; it flew about, but finding no resting place, returned”?

Dr. Talbot: Yes, that is the one. Tell us more about that discovery.

Dr. Bauman: That account is really interesting. The London Daily Telegraph, after Smith’s announcement, provided funds to send him to Nineveh, and as a result, in the library of the palace of Asurbanipal he found the additional fragment which he most desired. It proved to be the eleventh of twelve chapters of a great epic poem.
There are interesting details which cannot be related here, but let me give you a resume of the Flood story as told in the poem. Here is almost a paraphrase of certain lines from the translation of the Babylonian story. Men had become corrupt, and the gods decided to destroy their civilization with a flood. A man by the name of Utnapishtum was instructed to build a ship, forsake his wealth, and save his life. He was to take living beasts of every kind into the ship. The proportions were given, and the ship contained seven decks. It was to be smeared within and without with bitumen. He then embarked on the ship with all his family and kindred. The door was closed, and a terrible storm followed. The waters rose above the mountains and destroyed all life from the earth. When the flood had abated, a dove was sent forth but returned. Later a swallow, which also could find no resting place. Finally, a raven went out. Because of the diminution of the waters, the raven alighted and did not return. After this, the family disembarked from the ship and appointed a sacrifice on the top of the mountain peak. The story ends with the setting of the rainbow and the promise never again to destroy man by water.

Dr. Talbot: One can certainly see an amazing similarity between this Babylonian Flood story and that recorded in our Bible, and it is certainly evident that the two are related. I have heard it suggested that our Biblical account is derived from the Babylonian tradition. Have you anything to say about that?

Dr. Bauman: This theory long popular with the critics cannot be maintained for two reasons: In the first place, I have told you only of the similarities. Like the creation account of the Babylonians, this story is characterized by considerable corruption. The story gives no purpose for
the Flood; the duration of the waters differs greatly from that of the Flood account in Genesis. The concept of deity is likewise so polytheistic and degraded. The gods are described as hating each other. Apparently after the gods themselves had sent the flood, things went out of control, for they are represented as frightened at the deluge, climbing to the highest heaven where they 'crouched like dogs' with fear. The god who caused the flood was himself judged for the act. And when, in the closing lines of the poem, the sacrifice was made, they gathered like flies about the sacrifice. This last point alone should convince one that the Babylonian tradition cannot be compared favorably with the Genesis account.

Dr. Talbot: Well, I certainly agree with you there, but what is your second reason for rejecting the theory of the critics?

Dr. Bauman: Flood traditions much older than this particular story have been discovered. For example: an ancient Sumerian version of the Deluge was discovered a number of years ago at Nippur. It comes from one of the oldest civilizations discovered. This text was written nearly 4000 years ago, and it is proof that the Biblical account was not derived from Babylon during the period of the exile of God's people. Rather, the Biblical text is much older than the Babylonian, and there is no reason why Abraham could not have known the story of the Flood in his day. The absence in the Bible of the grotesque details which characterize the Babylonian texts proves the superiority of the Genesis account and points to it as a reproduction of the original record. The others must be considered as outgrowths of time. But the fact that the ancient world universally possessed these traditions is the finest kind of evidence that the flood actually did occur.
Dr. Talbot: Speaking of the Sumerian flood traditions, somewhere recently I read about the discovery of a tablet containing an entire list of Sumerian dynasties before and after the flood down to about the time of Abraham. Do you know anything about this particular tablet?

Dr. Bauman: Yes, it is known as the Weld-Blundell “chronological prism,” and it contains an inscription pronounced by Dr. Langdon as “the most important historical document of its kind ever recovered among cuneiform records.”

Dr. Talbot: I am told that this tablet contains some rather significant phrases in its description of these dynasties and the flood. What was of particular interest, Dr. Bauman?

Dr. Bauman: It is in the way the rulership is described. The first line of the tablet reads, “Rulership which from heaven descended” (cf. Gen. 1:28). The second and third lines run, “At Eridu rulership began,” “At Eridu Alulim was King.” Others tell how the rulership passed from one man to another.” Then, presently, there is this startling statement: “The Deluge came up” (cf. Gen. 7:11). Then, after the Deluge had come, there is again the significant line, “The rulership which had descended from heaven,” and then, “At Kish there was a rulership” (cf. Gen. 9:1, 2).

Dr. Talbot: Well, I can certainly see why the archaeologists have called the Blundell prism a valuable discovery. It not only adds its testimony to the fact of the Flood, but it speaks of the way the flood waters “came up” (cf. Gen. 7:11). It also refers to ten Antediluvian Patriarchs just as the Book of Genesis does. The very existence of these the critics formerly denied or relegated to mere He-
brew tradition. Then, I understand that the names listed on this tablet as having lived before the flood have been compared with the list of ten given in the Book of Genesis, and that there is a correspondence. Is that correct?

Dr. Bauman: A number of scholars have said that there is a distinct phonetic relationship between the names found in the Sumerian and Biblical lists, and it is significant that in both the number is ten. It is a matter of real interest to see the importance of this number ten in the traditions of many ancient peoples. Among these could be listed traditions of the Egyptians, where ten deities reigned before man; the Sibylline books, with ten ages between the creation and the deluge; the ten monarchs of the Iranians, who drank the pure homa or drink of immortals; the Hindoos, who spoke of their ten Pitris, or ancient fathers; the Germans and Scandinavians, with their ten ancestors of Odin; the Chinese with their ten emperors who shared the divine nature and reign before the dawn of historic time; the Phoenicians who likewise listed ten generations of primitive patriarchs. Then, in addition to the Blundell prism, about which we were speaking, another tablet, listed in the British Museum as WB2, gives a list of ten kings who “ruled before the Flood.”

Dr. Talbot: It certainly must be more than a mere coincidence that in each case the number ten prevails, and that these ten were related to the earliest history of man. There must have been a common ground for such narratives!

EARLY TRADITIONS

Dr. Talbot: I am sure that our radio audience has been genuinely interested in our discussion thus far. At the beginning you suggested a third evidence; namely, Mod-
ern Traditions to be found in localities all over the world. Would you mind listing a few of these briefly and suggesting their value.

**Dr. Bauman:** As I told you the other day, this is one of the most fascinating pieces of evidence ever to be gathered and correlated. These legends have been gathered from nearly fifty different peoples around the world. The stories may differ in detail, but all are strikingly similar to the Biblical account. They occur among both the most primitive tribes and the highly civilized groups. They are to be found in countries as far separated as Greece, Mesopotamia, India, Malaya, Polynesia, and even in the Western Hemisphere—all the way from Tierra del Fuego to the Arctic Circle.

**Dr. Talbot:** Say, that is interesting. Would you mind telling us about a few of these?

**Dr. Bauman:** That's rather a tough assignment, but perhaps I can give you sketches from a few of them. The people of Persia have two accounts which speak of the destruction of the earth by a deluge. Evil men were drowned. In one account a bird was sent out. A similar Greek tradition tells of a king and several companions who escaped in a boat from a deluge which reached the sky. In a Hindoo legend, a man whose name means "The Righteous" is told to build a ship and to take into it the seven Rishis, or holy beings, making in all eight souls.

**Dr. Talbot:** That reminds us of what the Lord said unto Noah in Genesis 7:1, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation."

**Dr. Bauman:** Yes, it does, and it is just an illustration of such similar details which are to be found in all the tradi-
tions. For example, the Welsh people had two legends. One spoke of a flood which drowned all men but two who were saved in a ship. These repeopled the land. The second legend tells of a ship which bore a pair of all kinds of living creatures at the time this flood broke.

Dr. Talbot: These two Welsh traditions put together certainly suggest the story contained in Genesis. I would say that they probably were derived originally from one source, wouldn’t you?

Dr. Bauman: That is certainly reasonable, and it is an example of the way traditions can either disintegrate or gather additional details. Here is an interesting one. An ancient Chinese classic tells of Fuhi, the reputed founder of the Chinese civilization, who escaped the waters of a deluge and reappeared as the first man accompanied by his wife, his three sons, and three daughters (notice the number—eight souls!).

Dr. Talbot: Why, that’s exactly the number of people who entered the ark; isn’t it? Do you know that one of our former students, the son of a returned missionary from China, said that the Chinese character for “boat” has an interesting history? It is made up from an old form of the word “boat” plus the character for eight, plus the character for mouth. Breaking the entire Chinese character down, it would be something like this, “Eight mouths in a boat.” Have you heard anything about this?

Dr. Bauman: Yes, I have. This statement was recently confirmed to me by a returned missionary from China. The Chinese number their families in terms of the number of mouths they have to feed, which, incidentally, isn’t a bad idea, is it?

Dr. Talbot: Yes, I have found that out myself!
Dr. Bauman: It should be remembered that the Chinese possess a very ancient language, and I am told that those interested in a study of philology will find many interesting characters for which no explanation can be given unless they are related to records contained in the Bible.

Dr. Talbot: You spoke a little while ago about similar flood traditions having been found in the Western Hemisphere. Would you mind bringing us many miles from China to locate a few more of these traditions?

Dr. Bauman: It is a remarkable fact that in North and South America we find traditions of the Deluge coming, in some cases, considerably nearer that of the Bible and the Chaldean account than perhaps many peoples in the Old World. Even the Alaskan Eskimos have a tradition concerning the father of the Indian tribe. Having been warned in a dream that a deluge would desolate the earth, he built a raft on which he saved himself and family, and all the animals. One of the most interesting traditions is that of the Thlinkuts, an Indian tribe inhabiting the Pacific Coast of Canada. Here the creator, because of alienation, resolves to bring a deluge on the earth. He was content to perish so long as he involved his rival in common destruction. The flood came, the waters rose, but the god who sent the deluge clothed himself in his bird-skin and soared up to heaven, where he stuck his beak into a cloud and remained till the waters were assuaged.

Dr. Talbot: Say, they certainly garbled that one, didn't they?

Dr. Bauman: Yes, they did a pretty good job of it all right. Such traditions certainly show the need for written records such as we have in our Bible. I could mention others, but let me give you just one more tradition, which is taken
from among the Indians down in Guatemala. They tell
the story of a great flood which destroyed all except eight
people (mark the number) who were miraculously saved.
Now, I have given you just a few examples of many tradi-
tions, and it has not been possible to recite them in detail.
While they differ somewhat, yet common to most of them
is the recollection of a great flood which in the ancient
past covered all, or a great part of the earth, and in which
all but a select few were drowned. These few, it should
be added, usually escaped in a boat or by taking refuge
on a high mountain or in a tree.

Dr. Talbot: This is amazing, but may I ask you how do
we account for all these legends coming to us from com-
munities all over the world many of which are completely
isolated from each other? It seems to me that it is harder
to believe that they arose independently of each other
than it is to accept them as variations of the same story.

Dr. Bauman: That is right. Someone has said, “A hoary
tradition cannot be lightly set aside.” It is unthinkable
that all these stories, similar in so many details, could have
arisen independently of each other. It is difficult to escape
the conclusion that most of them are recollections of a
common event, and that they prove a universal dispersion
over the face of the earth of the families of those who
survived the awful disaster.

Dr. Talbot: Yes, it is clear to me from our discussion that
the evidence from so many isolated traditions, together
with the evidence from ancient flood accounts dug up by
the archaeologist’s spade and that of actual flood deposits
point to but one conclusion: The Flood must actually have
occurred, and of all the accounts which we possess the
purest, the sanest, and the most accurate is still the record
to be found in that wonderful Book which God has given to us—our BIBLE!

Dr. Bauman: Yes, archaeology has furnished us with an abundance of illustrations of the way the God who said, "I watch over my word," is doing that very thing. He is doing it in a day when the machinations of evil men would destroy it, but praise God, "the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (I Pet. 1:25).
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