

Archaeology is the science of old things. This does not mean old in the sense which paleontology deals with matters which are supposed to be millions of years ago. Archaeology deals with the early history of the human race. Anything which we learn from materials which we excavate rather than from records which have been handed down to us from antiquity, we call archaeology. Archaeology primarily then consists of remains of buildings, weapons, clothing, bodies, other things connected with human life which can be dug up from the earth and which can reveal to us something about human life as it existed at some time in the past. Archaeology, thus, need not necessarily deal with something in the remote past. If we dig up materials related to time one hundred years, the study of these would be considered a phase of archaeology. On the other hand, when we study records which have been handed down to us from the time of the Greeks and the Romans, this is not properly a study of archaeology, but rather of classical literature.

In the strictest sense then, archaeology deals with material remains of ancient life and their interpretation as this interpretation should us something about the way in which human beings lived and acted at some time in the past. However, there is a large and important section of ancient study which, while properly considered within the field of archaeology, is yet not within the field in this narrowest definition. That consists of the study of ancient records which have been excavated. The records of Greece and Rome which have been passed down from time to time, we consider classical literature rather than archaeology, but ancient Roman and Latin inscriptions which are excavated or read at the place at which they were written are considered a part of archaeology. The result of this is that all of the ancient literature of Egypt and of Babylonia is considered a part of archaeology.

We thus see that archaeology can deal with ancient civilization as it existed anywhere in the ~~old~~ world. This is a very large field and indeed, and it is necessary to specialize in it. The present paper is concerned with Biblical archaeology, by which we mean the archaeology of those nations and periods which are dealt with in the Bible. This is principally a matter of the study of the near-East, since most of the events mentioned in the Bible take place either in Palestine, in Egypt, or in Mesopotamia.