

Albright said, I'd like to excavate here. Yes, they said, All right, but the hill belongs to us. You'll have to pay ~~for~~ us." He said, What will I have to pay you?" They said, You pay us \$2000 and we'll give you the right to excavate our hill. Albright decided knowing Arabic well and knowing the customs of the land at that time, he decided it would be better to go to court. So they went to court. For the next few months he spent half his time directing excavations, and the other half dealing with affairs in court, and at the end the court decided that \$35 would be a fair rental for the place at the hill at that time!

If this had been said about the land of Israel it certainly would not fit with conditions in 1921 when Albright made his excavations there and it would be very far from conditions today. But there is a strange thing. In Babylonia at the time when Jeremiah wrote beside the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, beside them were great cities that were centers of population; cities that were great centers of commerce with great caravans coming in and out from going over to China or going over this way to Israel, going different directions. They were a very busy populous city, in an extremely fertile area beside those rivers. You leave the areas of the rivers and you have flat, desolate desert. Today in Iraq which occupies this site of ancient Babylonia, you find beside the Tigris and Euphrates rivers great towns in which there are wonderful crops with irrigation from the rivers, but none of them are where the ancient cities of Babylonia were. Those cities are empty, desolate, barren. Sometimes they had to carry all their water 20 miles to get to the place where they were excavating. The archaeologists' paradise there today! You don't have tourists coming by all the time asking you what you're doing. Nobody comes to bother you because the towns have been moved all of them.

How did this happen? Hundreds of years after Jeremiah wrote, way ~~x~~ up there in the mountains to the north, the great river which had been gradually wearing away the place. At one place where they hit the side of the hill where they turned south, they had finally worn their way through and made new channels. The result was that instead of the rivers coming out where they formerly had, they come out at a different place and made new channels for themselves down through that country which would be absolutely barren if it weren't for the irrigation of the rivers. So today you have great cities in Babylonia just as you had then. Not as great as they were then, of course. But the cities of those days are barren, desolate, and no man goes by unless he's an excavator or a rare tourist~~x~~ who is visiting those excavations in Babylonia. How on earth would any human being have known that this would happen to Babylonia and that it wouldn't happen to Israel? Surely this is an answer to this challenge which might conceivably be given to God!

Well, they said, That sounds fine. There's one illustration. But do you have any others? Well, I said, Look at Egypt. We've looked at Babylonia, one of the two great centers of history in ancient times. Let's look at Egypt. So we find that in connection with Egypt there are many predictions which are general in nature, of general destruction such as you find in many great areas, and could be true of most any area. But we have occasionally a specific matter. God did not give us the Bible to satisfy our curiosity about the future. Ordinarily when He tells us about the future it is because of something in it should have some effect upon our lives. Like in the N.T. over and over he says, Be ye ready for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."