

There are thousands of books written discussing their contents. So we have a great ancient civilization which was unknown 2000 years ago, and which was completely unknown except for the references in the Bible and in Greek documents -- a few references. And now we have these thousands and thousands of tablets from which we know so many of the details of the life of ancient Mesopotamia.

Actually in this cuneiform writing there are perhaps 20 different languages that we have found written in this writing. But one of the commonest of them -- the one we call Akkadian -- is the one in which the great bulk of the literature is written. Writing was not invented for Akkadian, it was invented by a previous people called the Sumerians. The earliest writing is in Sumerian, so the writing doesn't fit the Akkadian language particularly well. It's almost as poorly adapted to it as the Latin alphabet is for our English language, but not quite. It does therefore have great irregularities because of its being used originally for an utterly different type of language -- not a Semitic language at all -- the Sumerian.

We have considerable literature in Sumerian, but far more in this Akkadian language. Running through so long a period, it -- we naturally divide it into different sections. We have grammars for the Akkadian language in one period, and in another period in different periods. It's a very involved, complex and extremely fascinating study. It is hard to summarize it in a few minutes, but I don't dare take more time on that now. Except to speak briefly of the importance of the study of Akkadian or Babylonian.

The Importance of Its Study.

For the Biblical scholar, it is important for three reasons: this study of the Akkadian language.

a. It is important for historical corroboration. That was where the interest in this Akkadian language originally began. We found inscriptions in Assyria which told of events described in the OT. We had in the OT the name of Jehu, king of Israel. We knew nothing about him except what we had in the OT. Then we found in Assyria, hundreds of miles across the desert, a monument put up by a king there which has on it the name of Jehu -- the king of Israel who is represented ~~long before~~ as bowing before the Assyrian king and paying tribute to him.

There is a picture drawn on this side of the monument and these words underneath naming Jehu the king, the son of Omri, king of Israel. He was actually the one who killed the whole line of Omri, he was the successor but they used the term son as we would use the word successor. We began to find -- in the first discoveries in Assyria -- we began to find things that corroborated ~~the~~ Biblical historical statements that previously had stood almost alone.

It was back about 1870 that a young man named Geo. Schmidt who was working in the British museum went to a society in England and gave a report that he had found in the British museum a tablet