REPORT FROM PALESTINE

LESTER J. KUYPER

A rapture would come over any Christian, I suppose, as he views Palestine from his seat in a plane which is about to land in the Holy Land. So it was with me as in mid-September I looked out of my plane and saw the rugged hills beneath me, the Dead Sea, with the River Jordan worming its way into the Sea and a landing strip with an airport at the end of it. Two hours before I had left Beirut, Lebanon, where the U.N. and U.S. Army were maintaining the peace and where the temperature was uncomfortably hot. Here in Jerusalem, however, at noon it was comfortable, which can be accounted for in that the Holy City is 2,600 feet above sea level.

The taxi of Air Liban brought me to the gate of the American School of Oriental Research where I was to spend the next six months. This school was organized in 1900 by American biblical scholars for the purpose as given in the charter:

To promote the study and teaching and to extend the knowledge of Biblical literature and of geography, history, archaeology, and ancient and modern languages and literatures of Palestine, Mesopotamia and other Oriental countries by affording educational opportunities to graduates of American Colleges and Universities and to other qualified students and by the prosecution of original research, excavation and exploration.

Throughout the years the research and excavations of the school have been carried on by many outstanding biblical scholars and many professors and students have been greatly helped in their studies by opportunities that this school afforded them. The school receives much of its financial support from the annual membership dues. Since Western Seminary maintains a corporate membership in the school, her professors and students are permitted to use the facilities and advantages the school can offer for study. Because of these provisions I was appointed honorary lecturer at the school for the present academic year.

The director of the school this year is Professor Fred V. Winnett from the University of Toronto. Professor Winnett also served as director in 1950-51. He has had much experience in excavations and has a rich background for pointing up interesting and important features in the sites we have visited. Professor Robert Marshall of Chicago Lutheran Seminary,
Maywood, Illinois, is the annual professor. In addition we have two graduate students from John Hopkins, one from Princeton University and one from Yale University. Besides these, students or professors on study-travels stop over at the school for a few days or weeks.

Our work at the school is a combination of private research and of corporate study of important places and sites that have been excavated in recent times. Usually lectures are given about the site to be seen and afterwards we discuss what we have observed. The main purpose is to learn how our “finds” relate themselves to the material given in the Bible. Some of this will become evident in the course of this paper.

**JERUSALEM TODAY**

The American School is located in the New City, which means that it is outside the city wall built by the Turks in the 16th century. This part of the city is much like any city in the States with many new buildings used for offices, shops, and especially for hotels. The streets are paved and kept clean. The traffic is a combination of the ancient and the modern in that cars, buses and trucks share the street with donkeys either drawing vehicles or carrying loads on their backs. Pedestrians walk as much on the street as on the sidewalks so that traffic here has a continuous “beeping” of horns to alert the pedestrian and the donkey driver. Occasionally a shepherd drives his flock through the city to the greener (?) pasture on the other side. The camel, much used on highways and side roads, rarely is seen in this part of the city.

The main business centers around the tourists. All airlines—I never knew there were so many—have offices here. In addition there are many travel agencies, which arrange both world-wide and local tours. Souvenir shops, money changers and dealers in antiquities are here in abundance to help the tourist spend his money. We have passed through the Christmas season, which brought several hundreds here from all parts of Europe and America. My friend who runs a large tourist agency tells me that his firm has bookings for 500 tourists for Easter, with no hotel accommodations available. Beside the tourists I see many soldiers of the U.N. forces stationed in the Middle East, who come to spend their leave in Jerusalem. Most of these are young men from the Scandinavian countries and from Canada.

To enter the Old City we usually go through the Damascus Gate about ten minutes from our school. This takes us directly into the Suq, the busy, crowded market street. The shops are open with wares and foodstuffs on display within reach of the passerby. The street becomes narrow, and the crowd moves slowly so that we can view all the merchandise, from fresh meat hanging up to attract the hungry, to tin cups and flashlights.
There are other streets, however, especially in the Christian quarter, where there is no congestion and where the shops are more modern in structure. A large part of the business is in the selling of cloth for suits, dresses and mantles, and consequently one sees many tailor shops in the "upper" parts of the city. In this section of the city I found the Bible Shop, which was run by a pleasant engaging young Christian who is a member of the Brethren group, which holds its meetings at the Garden Tomb, the alleged site of the tomb of Christ.

The dress of men and women reflects the influx of the West into Jerusalem in that many wear clothes that are seen in Europe and America. To be sure there are some who still cling to the old dress and some women wear the veil. In the villages and among the bedouin one finds more of the old customs. However, when I compare Jerusalem with Kuwait, where the veil and other Arab modes of dress prevail, then I am amazed at how far the Holy City has taken over western dress. In contrast, I should note that places like Kuwait and Bahrain, places which I visited in the interests of seeing the R.C.A. missions, are much further advanced in mechanization, because of the oil industries there. In passing, I observed that these oil-rich states along the Persian Gulf make the kingdom of Jordan look very poor, and because of this Jordan's only chance for development of her resources is to have help from outside.

The land of Palestine and the city of Jerusalem have been divided since 1948 into the states of Israel and Jordan. The driving out of many Arabs from Israel, the consequent loss of property, for which little or no compensation has been given, and the large refugee camps are the factors that make intense bitterness toward Israel and toward the powers that have allowed these conditions to arise. This is the burning issue here. There is no crossing over from one side to the other except once a year at Christmas, when the birthday of the Prince of Peace allows a suspension of restrictions for 48 hours. I have asked several what they would suggest would be the solution for this very intense problem. The more sober shake their head and affirm that the problem cannot be solved and that it is something like a bodily ailment with which one must learn to live. I fear that living in America has made us insensitive to conditions that make Palestine and the Middle East a volcano that may erupt any moment.

I have taken special note of the church situation in Jordan. The religion for the majority is Islam, as the many mosques and the minarets clearly testify. My friends here tell me that many Moslems are lukewarm toward their faith and do not observe its rules. Yet it must be remembered that rarely does a Moslem renounce his faith to become a Christian. I had heard of this in the States, but I was unwilling to accept this as a final statement. To be sure, one finds many Christian churches here,
but they are mostly descendents of Christian families from ancient times and many have come here from the Turkish persecution of the Armenians 40 to 50 years ago. Of the older Christian groups, I have encountered the Latin (Roman) Catholic, Orthodox (Greek) Catholic, Armenian, Russian Orthodox and Copts. The two most prominent Protestant churches are the German Lutherans and the Anglicans, who began their work here about a century ago. It was first introduced as a cooperative project, but later they separated. In addition to these two I have been informed that there are fifteen independent groups or sects. Many of these are of the Pentecostal varieties and of different Baptist groups. The Lutherans and the Anglicans, as also the Latins, have well established schools and hospitals. The "fringe" groups usually work through homes for orphans or schools for blind children or training centers for refugee people. In this poverty-stricken country one can readily find human need where Christian compassion can be exercised. I have seen some of the work done for blind children and I commend this to the generosity of Christians everywhere. From these schools children, some of whom are Moslem, are being instructed in the Christian faith and they will become the hope and leadership of the Christian church of the future.

In conference with Bishop Kubain, an Arab Anglican, I asked whether the Church should abandon her schools and hospitals since the government has in recent years taken on the work of these institutions. His answer was an emphatic "No." His understanding in the matter is that the Church must have a means to demonstrate her message in these communities by healing the sick, by caring for the needy and by letting the Arab society feel the heart of compassion which Jesus had for the afflicted of his time. It was his mind that the Gospel must be preached wherever there is opportunity and with the preaching there must be a demonstration of Christian compassion and mercy.

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGY IN PALESTINE

Since its organization, the American School has been active in excavation and archaeological research. Here in Jerusalem we have two other similar institutions, the British School of Archaeology and the French Dominican École Biblique. Wherever excavations are contemplated, permission must be obtained from the Jordan government, which has claim to all artifacts, which they may want to place in their museums. The museum here has a splendid exhibition of the results of many excavations, and if one is permitted to visit their store rooms, there many bowls, jars, lamps of various ages and sites, are kept which are not used for display purposes.

The work done in Israel is under the supervision of the Hebrew University and the Israeli government. At this moment I am not aware of
their activity, except the work now being done at Hazor, north of the Sea of Galilee. Unfortunately, we have no direct contact with this work because of the hostile relationship between Israel and Jordan.

In this article I propose to give a brief summary of prominent excavations that have been carried on during the last five years. The school was not involved in any digging during my stay. Beginning in May work will be resumed at El Jib, the O.T. Gibeon, under the direction of J. B. Pritchard, and during the summer G. E. Wright will continue his work at Balata, the O.T. Shechem. However, these sites and many others are open for inspection and study. Field trips were made by the personnel of the school, where we were given first hand information about the ruins and the different levels of occupation.

**Qumran**

Qumran and the Dead Sea scrolls have become as well known to people as Jericho or the Jordan River. The discoveries at this site during the past ten years have been phenomenal. Here biblical MSS and fragments, small and large, have been found for every book of the O.T., except Esther. These ancient Hebrew writings date from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D. This means that we now have Hebrew MSS which are over 1,000 years closer to the O.T. prophets than we had before these discoveries. In addition to the biblical material, the caves at this site produced much non-biblical material which throws much welcome light on pre-Christian times.

Work on the many fragments is being done at the Jerusalem Museum in a room known as the “Scrollery.” Only a few competent scholars from America and Europe are allowed to work here. At the present time they are working on fragments from Cave 4. As soon as writing on a fragment is legible, and if the writing is recognized, it is placed under a glass with other fragments from a supposed common source. It is hoped that enough of these fragments may be found to make an intelligible document. All MSS and fragments are photographed, for some deteriorate rapidly. Material from Cave 11 is in but will not be studied before the fragments from Cave 4 have been catalogued. Cave 11 produced a Targum on the book of Job and a scroll of the Minor Prophets. Preliminary investigation on the Minor Prophets scroll reveal that it is substantially the same as the Masoretic Text.

A most common question is whether these early texts agree with the O.T. as we now have it. The answer is that there is a remarkable agreement, so that one can say that in most cases they support the reading of the Hebrew text from which we get our modern translation. The variations of these new texts from the Masoretic Text are slight, as the examples from Isaiah will show. In 6:3 the Qumran text has two “holy’s”
instead of three. In 53:9 the Qumran text has "and they set his grave" instead of "and he set his grave." In 53:11 the traditional text has "From the travail of his soul he shall see;" to this Qumran adds the word "light," which is what the LXX also has. One can see, therefore, that in Isaiah there are variations of a minor sort, and that in the main the texts agree.

Another area in textual studies is to compare Qumran with the Septuagint (LXX), which is a translation of the O.T. into Greek during the third and second centuries B.C. The LXX differs from the Hebrew text rather much in places. And now we note that in some cases Qumran agrees with the LXX against the Hebrew text. Let me cite a few examples. In Heb. 1:6b we read, "Let all the angels of God worship him." This obviously is a quotation from the O.T. which can be found in the LXX text of Deut. 32:43, but is missing in the Hebrew text. A Qumran fragment has this text and therefore agrees with the LXX. In the same chapter, v. 8b, the Hebrew text reads, "He fixed the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel." Here Qumran agrees with the LXX to read, "...according to the number of the sons of God." Another case of agreement between Qumran and the LXX is in the book of Jeremiah. The LXX Jeremiah is one fifth shorter than the Hebrew text, and Qumran supports the shorter text. These interesting comparisons and variations point up what textual scholars have known for some time, namely that there were several texts for the O.T. Hebrew during the pre-Christian centuries. The text was fluid and during the first century A.D. the rabbis established a uniform text, which became the accepted text from then on. It is now clear also that the LXX did have in some instances at least another Hebrew text from which it made its translation. Consequently, the LXX has been given more respect by scholars today than in the past, for it has been alleged that these Jews who did the translation into Greek were poor translators or took unwarranted liberties in their translation. It now appears that they may have had a different original.

In the Apocryphal literature three Aramaic and one Hebrew copies for the Book of Tobit were found. The books of the Maccabees do not appear, since it is most likely that the people of Qumran were bitter foes of the Maccabean king-priests, who in the eyes of this group were worldly minded and not the legitimate priests. A fragment of Ecclesiasticus appears, which agrees perfectly with the Hebrew text found in the Cairo geniza at the beginning of this century. A Greek fragment of the sixth chapter of Baruch, usually known as the letter of Jeremiah, was found. This Greek MS and other Greek MSS that have come to light, support the LXX texts of Sinaiticus and Vaticanus.
The Qumran sect produced writing on extra-biblical books, such as The Book of Jubilees, The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, The Book of Enoch, The Psalms of Joshua, etc. To these we must add the literature dealing with the life and rules of the community and their commentaries on some of the prophets and psalms. Much of this literature has been published and has become an interesting field for scholarly research, especially for purposes of determining points of contact with N.T. times.

Since 1952 the ruins of the Qumran community have been uncovered, which are an elaborate complex of cisterns, rooms, water channels and a defense tower. These people left the worldly city of Jerusalem to live in the desert and there await the coming of the Messiah or Messiahs. The “end time” was at hand. They spent their time in study of the law, in copying the O.T. scriptures, in strict observance of the law and in living the communal life. The history of Qumran begins about 130 B.C., although scholars are not too confident of the exact time. The site was abandoned after the earthquake in 29 B.C., and life was again resumed about 6 A.D. When the tenth Roman legion destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D., this group hid their precious manuscripts in the caves with hopes of returning to them later. This did not happen. As a result, these ancient documents have survived, even though the ones responsible for them suddenly disappeared from history.

It is now generally agreed that they were Essenes, who are not mentioned in the N.T., but are known from the writings of Josephus and others. They lived in strict asceticism and in careful observance of the law. Did John the Baptist know these people? Did he live with them? The Gospel tells that he lived in the wilderness, where Qumran was located. And did Jesus have any contact with this sect? And did any of these people become members of the New Testament church? These questions have produced many articles and discussions. Interesting similarities and differences between Qumran and the Christian community are now evident. We can be sure that future studies on this sect will help us understand the early church and its background more fully.

El Jib (Gibeon)

During the summers of 1956 and 1957 extensive work was done at El Jib, O.T. Gibeon, under the direction of Professor J. B. Pritchard. Another campaign is planned for this summer. El Jib is five miles north of Jerusalem, which places the “dig” within commuting distance of the American School. Here by good fortune workmen uncovered a huge cistern and tunnels. A huge basin, 30 feet in diameter, which had been cut out of the rock, was discovered. Along the side of this basin steps had been cut in the rock, which spiraled down 82 feet to a pool at the
bottom. The pool and the immense crater above it had been filled with debris, which contained many jar handles, and at the bottom a few jars in perfect condition. On some of them the name Gibeon was inscribed, which clearly showed that this was the O.T. site of Gibeon. The purpose of this construction in ancient Gibeon was to have access to the water cistern from within the city wall so that in time of siege the entrance to the cistern outside the city could be blocked and water could be obtained by means of steps and tunnels from within the city.

The date as determined by the pottery and the inscriptions on the jar handles is from the 6th to the 8th centuries B.C. At other points of excavation early dates have been established, namely, at 1700 and 2800 B.C.

Gibeon is mentioned 43 times in the O.T. Joshua 9 gives the account of the deception of the Gibeonites by which they became a part of Israel by covenant agreement, in which the Gibeonites were to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for Israel. It was at this place that the sun stood still (Josh. 10:12). Another well-known incident which took place here is the great sacrifice which Solomon made at the great high place, and the dream in which he asked the Lord for an understanding heart to rule wisely (I Ki. 3:4ff.). We also saw what may have been the pool near Gibeon, where the 12 men of Abner and 12 men of Joab met in bloody encounter (II Sam. 2:12-17). These are a few of the better-known accounts which took place at Gibeon.

**BALATA (SHECHEM)**

During the summers of 1956 and 1957 work was also being done at Balata, biblical Shechem, under the supervision of Professor G. E. Wright. E. Sellin, a German scholar, had done considerable work here from 1926 to 1934. The results of this dig and that of Wright reveal a large city with two huge gates, one on the east and another at the north. Besides these there are evidences of walls from different levels of occupation, a temple, possibly of Ba'el Berith (Judg. 8:33; 9:4), and granaries which may have been a store center in Ephraim for Solomon (I Ki. 4:8). The most evidence of occupation is during the patriarchal times. There is little disturbance during the time of the conquest and the monarchy. After the disruption of the northern kingdom there is no occupation at Shechem until the third century B.C., when it becomes a thriving Samaritan center.

Shechem figures prominently in biblical history. Abram made his first stop here and built an altar. Jacob on his return from Laban bought land at Shechem and there he performed rites of purification (Gen. 33:18-20; 25:2-4). Joshua at the close of the conquest held a dedication ceremony here (chap. 24). It is little wonder, therefore, that
Shechem rated as a sacred place and that the Samaritans after the exile made Mount Gerizim, which towers over Shechem, their sacred mountain. It is here that we find Jacob's well, where Jesus asked for a drink from the woman of Samaria who spoke about the worship at this mountain.

In our trip to Balata we drove up Mt. Gerizim, which gives a magnificent view, the Mediterranean Sea to the west, the Jordan valley to the east, Mt. Ebal directly to the north, and a long valley running north and south at the foot of the mountain. Here on this mount the Samaritans conduct their annual passover sacrifice. The place for sacrifice is an enclosure with a small dip in the level of the ground, where the killing of the animals takes place. We saw no altar where the sacrifice could take place. Somewhat to the north of this enclosure are the ruins of a church of Byzantine times. Apart from this the mount is barren with a few shepherd boys wandering about with their flocks.

Jericho

The American School had the unusual privilege of having Kathleen Kenyon conduct our tour at the recent excavation of O.T. Jericho. She happened to be in Jordan a few weeks and consented to guide us in and around these excavations from which she has produced the latest "results" on Jericho. Miss Kenyon's father is the renowned textual scholar whose well-known book, *Our Bible and the Ancient MSS*, I have used in class work over the years.

On a large tell overlooking present-day Jericho, the fertile plain, and the Jordan Valley, we saw many and elaborate excavations going down 30 to 50 feet. In these places we saw walls and floors which go back from the times of Israel's monarchy to neolithic and mesolithic times. Charred remains of the low levels were subjected to radio-carbon tests which date this level at 7800 B.C. And there are levels of occupation below this. We were shown the plastered covered floors in the side of the excavation, for each new house with its cement covered floor was built upon the remains of the preceding house. We also saw the huge towers built for defense of the city and the walls of different times built into the tower which would get another coating of rock or stones around it. The city walls had a 33 degree slope built against them and over the slope a heavy covering of plaster was put. At the bottom of the slope there was a sturdy wall and the slope was crowned with a thick wall which made the city secure against any who would scale the wall and against battering rams. These plastered revetments can clearly be seen in the cross sections of the dig.

As far as biblical history is concerned, the city suffered a severe destruction at the close of the Hyksos period, 1580 B.C. This roughly is
the end of the middle bronze age. There is very little evidence of occupation during the late bronze age which comes to a close about 1200 B.C. After this time, during the iron age I and II there are signs of occupation. This completely repudiates the conclusions of Garstang made about 30 years ago, in which he thought that he had found the wall of Joshua's time. Garstang did not recognize the pits or dumps into which debris of past centuries had fallen and thus he did not accurately determine levels of occupation. I well remember that in our studies in the seminary we related the exodus of Israel to the date of Jericho's wall which Garstang identified as of the 14th century B.C. Much as one would like to think that we have evidence of Joshua's wall at Jericho, yet one must accept the results of better and more scientific techniques of archaeology.

During the afternoon, under the direction of our director, Professor Winnett, we viewed the N.T. Jericho, which is about two miles from the O.T. site. This is a far more modest dig carried on five to seven years ago. The levels of occupation are during the Seleucid times, 300 B.C., and during the times of Herod the Great and his son Archelaus, the time of Jesus' birth and boyhood. Here we saw square-faced bricks with a wedge-shaped back side. These were set in fresh cement walls in diagonal pattern. This style of wall building is found in Italy and it may well be that Herod saw it there and brought the idea back for his building at Jericho.

These months of study and viewing the above sites and many others offer a background for understanding the Bible and its history which I hope to share with others in the days to come. Our faith is more than a statement of doctrine; it comes out of the living situations of ancient Israel, and more particularly out of the coming of Christ to live in these places where history's greatest event took place. To be here is to sense that history more intimately.