

LOST CITIES

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Introduction

Cities spring up for many and varied reasons. These can be commerce, politics, religion, convenience of location, or simply the pleasantness of the locality.

And they usually die for reasons such as these: gradual climate change, sudden disaster (natural or man-made), or again commerce, politics or religion.

The demise of the population centers covered in this book are extremely varied. They range from desertification, rise of sea level, war, earthquakes, alteration of trade routes, erosion, and fireballs from the sky.

But the common factor of interest is people... how they lived. How they died. The interplay of events in their lives. People are wonderful... fascinating... intriguing creatures. And this is a book of PEOPLE!

I think you'll find this a fascinating journey, as we peep into our past. We shall discover why a population died... and how some of these lost cities were found. So join me now, on this journey into a lost world...

1

LOST CITIES IN THE DESERT

I shall propose to you a fascinating scenario of the past, which may throw some light on the extinction of a number of ancient cities.

There is no doubt that some enormous disasters have struck our inhabited planet in the past.

In an attempt to explain the geologic phenomena seen around the earth, there has in recent years been a proliferation of interesting theories such as a succession of ice ages, collision with comets, and so on.

Another increasingly popular explanation is a global cataclysm, such as a Great Flood or Deluge, with an onflow of lesser, but significant, localised calamities.

The global disaster theory

Scientists who propose such a global water disaster suggest that our earth was suddenly and violently prodded by an outside force, which tilted the planet on its axis. This caused tremendous stresses in the earth's crust, which cracked open and unleashed forces of cosmic violence.

The pressure pent up within the underground water basins was suddenly released. With unbelievable force they shot their contents high into the stratosphere, to rain back down upon the earth. Sudden volcanism broke out across the globe.

With a dreadful shock, large land masses with their populations slipped into the sea. The surface of the entire planet became as a giant maelstrom, in which continents and seas were churned up together.

And it does appear that the earth's surface, at some point in the past, must have been torn up for miles down and relaid by the action of water. There was immeasurable power in these surging, raging waters.

The aftermath

Indeed, the earth, torn and twisted and shaking, was not to quiet down for centuries.

As the Deluge subsided, the survivors found themselves gazing upon a different world. Barren wastes, bleak and sterile hills and unbearable extremes of heat and cold confronted them. Great mountain ranges – high, forbidding rocky walls – had been thrust up, destined to isolate areas into harsh climatic pockets.

In the adjustments of stress following this cataclysm, further natural disasters continued. Although lesser events than the Deluge, some of these were quite significant and cannot be ignored. They have left their mark on the earth.

Wet conditions continue for centuries

At the close of the Deluge, large quantities of water filled all low continental areas.

Volcanic activity continued on a global scale, evaporating enormous quantities of water into clouds. It also produced dust, which reduced solar radiation and lowered temperatures.

The cold air and warm ocean caused heavy precipitation of snow and ice.

Falling again and again in a sunless world, the snow finally cooled the ground to the point where it could turn to ice. This proceeded to build up rapidly and push across much of the landscape.

In the interaction between heat and cold, snow would fall in some areas of the earth and rain elsewhere. This wet period persisted for centuries.

As the new, straggling population began to grow again, it kept at first to the hills. The low areas were still very much under water.

Texts of Sumer record, for example, that cultivation was possible by keeping the Flood waters at bay, but that this was ultimately extended to the lowlands.

The same condition still prevailed when settlers got over to China. One ancient legend says that after the great world Flood, a man named Yu

surveyed the land of China and divided it into sections. He “built channels to drain the water off the sea” and helped make the land liveable again. Many snakes and “dragons” were driven from the marshlands when Yu created the new farmlands.

When Egypt’s first historical king, Menes (the biblical Mizraim, grandson of the legendary Noah) formed a settlement in Egypt, Egypt was not a country, but rather one great “sea”. The whole of Egypt was an extended marsh, due to the unrestrained flowing of the Nile which, after the Deluge, washed the foot of the sandy Libyan mountains.

Before Egypt could become fit for human abode, it was necessary to set bounds to the overflowings of the “Sea”, or the “Ocean”, as the Nile was then called.

So when Mizraim led a colony into lower Egypt, he found it necessary to raise great embankments to confine the Nile waters. The name Mizraim (or Metzrim) means “the encloser, or embanker, of the sea.” What better name could have been given him for his great achievement? Even today, Egypt is sometimes referred to as “the land of Mizr (Muzr)”, an abbreviation for “land of the embanker”.

This embanking of the sea was the “making” of it as a river, as far as Lower Egypt is concerned.

The city of Memphis was later constructed in the bed of the previous wide channel. (*Wilkinson, Egyptians, vol.1, p.89*)

For centuries Egypt was a land with heavy rainfall.

Author John Anthony West delivered a seismic shock to archaeology in the early 1990s when he and Boston University geologist Robert Schach revealed that the Great Sphinx of Gisa, Egypt, showed evidence of rainfall erosion.

Such erosion could only mean that the Sphinx was carved during or before the rains that marked the transition of northern Africa from wet to dry.

By our scenario, the Sphinx was carved during this heavy rain period.

The extent of land originally under water is defined by the Greek historian Herodotus: “No part of that which is now situate beyond the

Lake Moeris was to be seen, the distance between the lake and the sea is a journey of seven days.” (*Herodotus, lib.ii, cap.4*)

Thus all of Lower Egypt was under water!

Once well watered

Old legends confirm that well-watered lands extended for hundreds of miles west of the Nile, into Sudan and Libya (now desert).

In November, 1981, enhanced radar photographs from the space shuttle *Columbia* revealed under that desert the beds of buried rivers and tributaries (some as large as today’s Nile), which once flowed south and west into a basin that may have been as large as today’s Caspian Sea.

That was the situation for centuries after the Great Flood. Rainfall was heavy.

Even 2,000 years ago, the Roman geographer Strabo described the land west of Alexandria as “this lovely land of Mareotis, full of villages and splendid churches; so abundant is the soil that the vine is produced and is of such quantity that it is raked and kept that it may grow old.” The region is now a barren wasteland.

Africa

The Sahara was at first part of the ocean. Later it comprised a group of fertile regions around a vast inland sea, which, as it diminished, remained a green area.

At the beginning of Egyptian history, there was an immense marsh. The present Lake Chad is probably a vestige of it.

The Piri Re’is map, originally drawn thousands of years ago, shows lakes, rivers and cities there.

Even 2,000 years after the Flood, North Africa was the granary of Europe, a well-watered fertile land. Vast wheat fields and dozens of Roman towns and cities sat in this region. The ruins of these cities lie buried under shifting desert sands today.

Modern expeditions in the Sahara have found drawings of numerous types of animals, as well as an abundance of ancient man-made implements.

Sophisticated cave paintings in Algeria's Tassili Mountains depict men and animals in a land of lakes, rivers and trees. (This advanced art is often defaced or drawn over by later, more primitive artists.)

At one spot between Sebha, the modern capital of the Fezzan, and the oasis of Ghat on the Algerian border, are 700 miles of tunnels (in places less than 20 feet apart). Considering the 100,000 graves found in the wadi, the region must have been populous.

Fertile lands dry out

Analysis of excavated pollen shows that initially cedars, lime trees, oaks, maples, pines and elders thrived there. As the climate dried, cypresses, olives and junipers joined the pines and oaks. Eventually, however, acacias and grasses struggled to survive.

People deserted the area as the Sahara dried out into desert.

The Sahara region is now as barren as the surface of the moon.

Over the last 80 years, an area as large as Britain, France and Germany has been lost to this creeping desert. This desert expands southward into Africa at a rate of 4½ miles (7 kilometers) per year. And a great sea of sand is moving eastward toward the fertile Nile delta at about 8 miles (13 kilometers) a year. As late as 1955, acacias were flourishing around Khartoum. Today these popular dry-zone trees, which can survive on only a few inches of water a year, are found no closer than 54 miles south of the Sudanese capital.

Across the African continent are found dry lakes and shrunken lakes.

Lake Victoria was 300 feet higher than it is today. Lake Chad possesses neither tributaries nor outlets. It is just a huge puddle of trapped water, left behind by the Flood.

An area now known as the Kalahari Desert was likewise once well watered.

Middle East

For a short interval after the Flood, the Dead Sea shoreline was 1,400 feet higher.

In 1450 B.C. the land of Canaan (Israel and Jordan) was described as “flowing with milk and honey”.

The huge civilisations of Sumeria, Assyria and Babylonia thrived in fertile country that now lies under desert sand, their sophisticated cities lost.

Russia

The Russian Steppes show evidence of the same type of former Flood “puddles”.

The Caspian Sea (between Iran and southern Russia) has shrunk from shore levels 250 feet higher. It was apparently confluent with the Aral and Black Seas. Today within its waters live ocean seals, stranded when the waters withdrew.

The Sea of Azov likewise has shrunk considerably over those 4,000 years.

Asia

Lake Baikal in Siberia, 1,500 feet above sea level, is proof that all Siberia was once under sea. Seals of the same variety as those found in the Arctic Sea, the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea, are also trapped in Lake Baikal.

The Gobi Desert was a great inland lake as large as the Mediterranean Sea! Chinese history calls it “The Interior Sea”. Russian archaeologists have discovered immense foundations rising from the sand in various places.

Mongolia and Turkestan, now semi-arid wastes of sand and gravel, were once lush lake country.

The Theytis Ocean covered large areas of Central Asia.

Shor Kul, a salt lake in Sinkiang province, China, stood 350 feet above its present level.

In 1280, Marco Polo mapped salt lakes which today have dried up to become salt basins.

The Tibetan Tablelands (the highest tablelands in the world, averaging 16,000 feet above sea level) are today dotted with numerous salt lakes. Marine terraces prove that it was submerged under a great sea.

Only the Flood on a global scale can account for phenomena such as this.

And look at India. India has a well-marked inland basin. There is clear evidence that this was filled with water. As it dried up, the climate became more arid. Relics in this northwestern region (now known as the Thar Desert) prove that great rivers, luxuriant vegetation and cities once existed.

India's desert area continues to expand. In one part of the Rajasthan region, the area of sand cover has spread by 8 percent in 18 years.

Australia

Australia, a very flat continent, is now mostly dry. Traces of salt pans and rivers that dried up thousands of years ago indicate that it was once green, its climate mild.

Satellite pictures of sand dune patterns indicate that a sea larger than America's Lake Superior existed in Central Australia. Today's salt lakes were once part of this sea. The dunes were formed as it progressively shrank and the climate became arid.

In Western Australia, the east-west road from Esperance to Ravensthorpe dips down periodically to traverse numerous wide, dry watercourse beds, carved out as the inland sea drained to the Southern Ocean.

Australia's giant animals suddenly became extinct as the freshwater lakes quickly dried and the surrounding grazing lands became arid.

South America

My favourite continent. What romance, what mystery, lies concealed here!

In 1799, while wandering in Guinea and the upper Orinoco, the explorer Humboldt came across rock pictures and hieroglyphic signs high up on the mountains.

The natives told him that their ancestors, in the time of the great waters, came to the tops of these mountains in canoes, and that the rocks were still so soft that a man could trace marks on them with his bare fingers. (*Baron Friedrich Alexander Humboldt, Views of Nature, Bd. 1*)

Do you see the significance? It tallies precisely with conditions that prevailed after the global Deluge. Great inland seas on all continents, often trapped at high levels, and not draining back into the ocean for centuries.

The Deluge, as it reshaped continental areas, thrust sedimentary rubble mountains high. This would have remained soft and impressionable for a considerable time.

The Amazon Sea

When man first settled South America, the whole Amazon basin was a shallow inland sea. Into the great inland Amazon Sea, many rivers flowed which are now the arms and feeders of the great Amazon River.

And note this. There was at that time no mountain range between the Amazon and the Pacific Ocean. The Amazon Sea connected naturally with the Atlantic Ocean in the east and with the Pacific in the west, by canals. These canals remained intact until the Andes mountains were raised. But that is something for another book.

The shore lines of this inland sea are distinctly visible today:

1. The northern shores: Along the foothills of the Venezuelan highlands are beautiful white quartz beaches.
2. The western shores: Along the eastern foothills of the Andes, these shorelines can also be seen.

In the midst of the Amazon basin there are vast tracks of sand “islands” not too far from the rivers’ edges. These sandy strips in the midst of

savannah or even forest seem to be ancient beaches where the sea surf once broke; yet they cannot be so very ancient because continental vegetation has not yet deposited more than the thinnest green veneer on most of them.

Some Brazilian scientists claim they have evidence that the Amazon Sea was still there about the year 1200 B.C. (*Ivan T. Sanderson, Abominable Snowmen: legend come to life, the story of subhumans on five continents from the early ice age until today. Radnor: Chilton Book Company, 1961*)

In the nineteenth century, James Churchward was travelling through Tibet. At one of the western monasteries he found some large tablets, which on examination proved to contain maps of various parts of the earth. These were very ancient. Among these maps was one of South America. (*James Churchward, The Children of Mu. New York: Ives Washburn, 1956, p.80*)

This South American map shows the Amazon Sea. It also shows a city at the exact spot where the ruins of Tiahuanaco are today. And it shows a canal nearby.

If you go to that ruined city today, you can find nearby the remains of ancient stone-lined canals, which are broken up and out of alignment, up and down, like the swells of the sea.

That whole area has risen thousands of feet. And there are clues that it happened suddenly.

But back to the big dry-out.

The now arid regions of the coastal strip of Peru and Chile must once have been very different. Deserts could not have supported the extensive cities with great urban populations whose ruins have been uncovered there. I've flown over the great Peruvian Desert. It is the driest in the world.

Even in our time, Chile's Coquimbo region was used for cattle grazing. It is now so depleted that only hardy cacti and goats seem able to survive.

Central America

Mayan legends describe the Yucatan as the land of the "honey and the deer", yet much of the interior of the Yucatan today is uninhabited and uninhabitable.

In Mexico, the Zuni and Acoma tribes lament that “over the Chihuahua Valley, which once was a garden, with commerce, now only Tamesha, the fire god dances in wild dust storms, hurling the hot sand all around him.”

Seeing that desert today, one could be skeptical of such legends of ancient glory. Until you see it from the air.

Since aircraft have been flying over some of this now barren part of northern Mexico, they have been able to confirm an amazing irrigation system running hundreds of miles, which can be traced from the air.

Some of the ancient terracing can be seen. Hillsides of what is now the most stark wasteland must formerly have bloomed like a garden, bearing out ancient legends of the fertility of the land and the tribes’ own wealth in the long-forgotten past.

North America

There is evidence that for some time the sea covered the region of the Great Plains from Alaska to Mexico, before draining off.

The Great Lakes lie in the heart of the continent, a thousand miles from an ocean. The upper Great Lakes are what is left of the ancient Lake Algonquin which covered about 100,000 square miles. Its ancient beach in the southern parts is almost as distinct as the shores of the modern lakes. The gravel bars are often used as roads. The ancient southern shore stands about 26 feet above the present lakes. On the north shore of Lake Superior, at Peninsula and Jackfish Bay, its splendid beaches rise terrace after terrace for hundreds of feet.

Lake Bonneville was once much larger, covering parts of Utah, Nevada and Idaho. Surrounding its former site are four terraces 50, 300, 650 and 1,000 feet above the present lake level. These were progressive shorelines, before the lake drained and dropped in level. The present Great Salt Lake is one of its small remnants.

Concerning territory south of Cheyenne, Wyoming, geologist George McCready Price says:

“Throughout all this region one cannot fail to be impressed with the visible evidence almost everywhere of a vast mass of water as it stood

here for a short time forming real sea beaches, still so clearly marked, and was gradually drained from off these lands, and this vast mass of water must have been here at no very remote period; otherwise the many visible signs of the retreat of the water would long ago have been obliterated. These marks are as fresh looking as if the water had been here only a few centuries ago. The marks of the Romans over much of the Island of Great Britain are less distinct than the handwriting of the ocean in its retreat from off the great plains region at the foot of the Rockies.” (*George McCready Price, Geological Ages Hoax. Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1931, pp.28ff*)

The Grand Canyon

Volumes of water, laden with rocks, gravel and debris, running over newly-deposited, still unconsolidated soft ground, could easily scoop out a Grand Canyon in a short time.

Concerning the Grand Canyon, however, it is more likely that it started as a crack in the earth during the latter part of the Flood.

Grand Canyon seems to be part of a crack in the earth’s crust. It starts in Mexico and runs underground all the way up to Yellowstone Park.

It seems likely that the retreating Flood waters poured down into the crack from all directions in great abundance.

Could the river now flowing through this crack have been at a much higher level when explorers first discovered it? Now that’s a staggering thought!

On the front page of *The Phoenix Gazette*, on April 5, 1909, there appeared a most intriguing news report.

G.A. Kinkaid, an explorer working with Professor S.A. Jordan of the Smithsonian Institution, discovered a network of caverns, artificially hewn into the side of the Grand Canyon.

His report began as follows:

“First, I would impress that the cavern is nearly inaccessible. The entrance is 1,486 feet down the sheer canyon wall.... I was journeying down the Colorado river in a boat, alone, looking for mineral. Some forty-two miles up the river from the El Tovar Crystal canyon, I saw on the east wall, stains in the sedimentary formation about 2,000 feet above

the river bed. There was no trail to this point, but I finally reached it with great difficulty. Above a shelf which hid it from view from the river, was the mouth of the cave. There are steps leading from this entrance some thirty yards to what was, at the time the cavern was inhabited, the level of the river. When I saw the chisel marks on the wall inside the entrance, I became interested.” (*David Hatcher Childress, “Archaeological Cover-Ups?”, Nexus Magazine, April-May 1993, pp.36-39*)

Following several hundred feet of passage, the explorer found himself in a network of passages and hundreds of rooms radiating from a central point like spokes in a wheel. The relics seen (some of which he photographed by flashlight) were astonishing. There were mummies, images and artefacts of a high technology. And an unknown grey metal resembling platinum. Everywhere he looked, hieroglyphics were to be seen.

It’s an intriguing report. But the point to be made is the elevation of this site some 2,000 feet above the present river bed, with steps leading a short distance to what must have been at that time the level of the river.

Of course, the entire story could be an elaborate newspaper hoax. However, the fact that it was on the front page, named the prestigious Smithsonian Institution, and gave a highly detailed story that went on for several pages, lends a great deal to its credibility. It is hard to believe such a story could have come out of thin air.

If the report is genuine, then these early post-Flood visitors were in a canyon whose water run-off was still copious, the Flood-laid sediments still relatively soft.

And in the few millennia since that time, the river has dropped 2,000 feet lower. It has not taken millions of years. A fascinating possibility.

We’re talking about the trapped Flood waters on the continents, their retreat, and the consequent drying out.

Death Valley

Death Valley, now one of the most hellish places on earth, once contained a hundred mile lake. Fossil and skeletal evidence show that this desolate area was once a tropical garden of majestic palm trees where a race of giants lived and enjoyed palatable foods taken from the local lakes and forests.

In that same valley lie the ruins of a city more than a mile in length. The streets are still traceable, running at right angles. There are stone buildings reduced to ruins by the action of some great heat that passed over. All the stones are burnt, some of them almost cindered, others glazed as if melted. In my book *Dead Men's Secrets*, there is more mention of ancient cities in this now-desert region.

As the rainfall decreased, widespread forests gave way to grasslands.

Year by year, the imprisoned Flood remnants dwindled. Finally, the dry-out broke the grass cover, exposing the soil to wind action. Very likely, terrible dust storms arose at this time. Desert conditions gradually crept over this early dominion of man.

Even in our time, so much fertile farmland has had to be abandoned for lack of water along the interstate highway between Tucson and Phoenix, Arizona, that by the latter half of the twentieth century dust storms were frequently sweeping across the road. I heard that the state had to install expensive warning lights to tell motorists of dust storms ahead.

A once-flooded world dries out

In a nutshell, then, this is the picture.

At the termination of the Deluge year, large amounts of water were stranded in the interior basins. Such bodies of trapped water existed all over the planet. And rain continued to be abundant.

As man spread out to repopulate the globe, cities sprang up where there was water.

However, in the global post-Flood changes, local precipitation has now been maintained.

Consequently, over the centuries since, large areas have been drying up.

Now many of them have become creeping deserts.

Over one third of the globe's land surface is now menaced by perpetual desert. It is estimated that 80 percent of the dry rangelands, 60 percent of the rain-fed croplands and a third of all irrigation lands on earth are already affected by the march of the deserts.

Deserts everywhere are spreading relentlessly and with alarming speed – often emerging in places separate from existing wasteland. Thanks largely to man's own folly, desertification now threatens the fragile existence of over 900 million people. A Hiroshima-size calamity occurs every two days as 70,000 people starve to death through desertification.

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2

DROWNED CITIES

A HIGH-SPIRITED FILLY, WAS THE PRINCESS. She could down alcohol with the best of them. The binge had gone on all afternoon.

I don't know what triggered the idea. It may have been a dare. Or just plain and simple curiosity. In any case, what I shall relate to you shortly is almost beyond belief...

.....

Gradually rising seas

For 4,000 years, the world's sea level has been inching up.

This has been caused by

- (a) the melting of the post-Flood ice and
- (b) the gradual evaporation or outflow of inland basins to the sea.

The gradual rise of the oceans is thus another clear relic of the Deluge. Flood waters left behind on the land, in the form of ice or inland lakes, have been gradually returning to the oceans. The result has been not only a drying out of the land, but a corresponding rise in sea level.

The Hadji Ahmed map of 1559, whose original source dates back thousands of years, shows a landbridge between Siberia and Alaska, which existed when the original map was drawn. If the ocean between these two land masses were lowered 100 feet today, there would be a dry-land path between them.

According to some oceanographers and geologists, the ocean level may have been as much as 500 feet lower than today.

Ireland was connected with England; the North Sea was a great plain; Italy was joined to Africa, and exposed land cut the Mediterranean into two lakes.

Since then, the rising seas have engulfed coastal land and islands, turning isthmuses into straits and large islands into underwater plateaus.

Along many of the world's shorelines are lost islands, now deep below the sea, with remains of cities, palaces and temples.

The continental shelf

In fact, most of the continental shelf, which marks the true boundaries between the ocean basins and the continental areas, now lies under a mean depth of 430 feet of water. (It ranges from 300 feet to about 1,500 feet.)

The present continental shelf probably defines the edge of the oceans as they developed during the post-Flood glacial peak. With the ice melt and the draining or evaporation of inland basins, the seas rose, with minor fluctuations, to their present level.

“The ocean basins can thus be characterized as overfull – water not only fills the ocean basins proper, but extends out over the low margins of the continents.” So notes a panel of geologists. (*J.V. Trumbull, John Lyman, J.F. Pepper and E.M. Thompson, “An Introduction to the Geology and Mineral resources of the Continental Shelves of the Americas”, U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin 1067, 1958, p.11*)

Oceanographers and geologists generally agree that a dramatic, rapid rise of water occurred several thousand years ago. This has slowed to about 1.5 feet per century.

Undersea canyons

Around the world's coastlines are undersea river canyons, which were once above the ocean. Such canyons cannot be cut underwater.

* The submerged Hudson Canyon, one hundred miles long and hundreds of feet deep, could only have been formed above water when this extension of the Hudson River was dry land.

* Off the coast of Europe are the Loire, Rhone, Seine and Tagus canyons. The drowned Rhine Valley runs under the North Sea to disappear

between Norway and Scotland – showing that the North Sea was dry land.

* Numerous other canyons were cut at the edge of the former ocean basin (now submerged) : La Plata in Argentina, the Delaware and St. Lawrence in North America, the Congo in West Africa. Off the African west coast are submerged river canyons whose rivers no longer exist in the now-arid land.

All these canyons were cut out above water. Now they are submerged.

Ancient maps show now-drowned islands

The curious Buache map was copied from sources whose origins are lost in antiquity. This ancient “treasure map” portrays correctly the location of the Canary Islands and the correct outline of an underwater plateau which formed their extended shape before the oceans rose.

Anciently, the Greek islands would have been larger and more numerous, as well. The Ibn Ben Zara map of 1487 (likewise copied from charts apparently thousands of years old) does in fact show many islands which are now under water.

Drowned cities

In the Mediterranean, earth movements resulting from earthquakes and volcanoes account for most of the submerged cities, but not all.

Because of the general rising of the water level of the Mediterranean, large sections of cities well known to history are now under water. Among these are Baise (a sort of ancient Las Vegas), numerous points along Italy’s western coast, cities along the Adriatic coast of Yugoslavia, parts of Syracuse in Sicily, Lepis Magna in Libya, as well as the ancient harbours of Tyre and Caesarea.

Helike is believed to lie on the sea bottom near Corinth. In ancient times this sunken city was a tourist attraction for Roman visitors to Greece. They used to pass over it in boats, admiring the ruins visible through the clear water. The statue of Zeus, still standing, was clearly visible on the bottom.

Roads disappear into the deep

A thousand feet offshore from the island of Melos are the ruins of an ancient city at a depth extending to 400 feet. From it there branch out roads, descending even deeper – to unknown destinations.

Jacques Costeau found on the sea bottom another paved road far out in the Mediterranean.

Sicily was once joined to Italy by land over which ships now sail.

Drowned mines

Five miles directly offshore from Marseilles, on the French Riviera, at a depth of 80 feet, divers have found horizontal and vertical mining tunnels, smelting facilities and slag heaps lying outside the shafts.

Hannibal's drowned camp

The camps that Hannibal used as a staging area prior to his invasion of Rome lie under shallow water off Peniscola, on the eastern coast of Spain.

Gigantic submerged relics

Off Morocco, on the Mediterranean side of Gibraltar, marine archaeologist Dr. J. Thorne has investigated an undersea wall. The wall extends for 9 miles atop a submerged mountain 120 feet below the surface. Some of its stones are each larger than 2-story houses (about as large as those used in the gigantic foundation of the Baalbek temple of Lebanon). Dr. Thorne observed roads going down the mountain further into unknown depths.

Atlantic Ocean ruins

Off Spain's Atlantic coast, 2½ miles out at sea from Cadiz, in 95 feet of water, sunken walls and pavements have been photographed on several

occasions. Eleven miles offshore are evidences of roads and large columns, some with concentric spiral motifs.

Late in 1942, a pilot engaged on military flights between Recife, Brazil, and Dakar, Senegal, reported sighting a city beneath the waves of the mid-Atlantic. The crew saw what appeared to be clusters of buildings just below the ocean, on the western slope of a submarine mountain near the St. Peter and St. Paul Rocks (1°N, 30°W). It was in the late afternoon sun, when the water was still and clear. The rays of the sun struck the water at such an angle that they penetrated diagonally to a considerable distance. This clarity would occur only once in a thousand flights or more.

Others flying the same route have since noticed what appear to be shallow underwater stone walls and ruins at about 6°N, 20°W, near the Sierra Leone Rise.

The Piri Reis map (another map with ancient origins) traces an island no longer indicated on modern maps. This large island appears exactly where the tiny St. Peter and St. Paul Rocks are now located – about 700 miles east of Recife.

Here are some other discoveries:

- * Off the Cape Verde Islands, a drowned city and market place;
- * Off the Canary Islands, on the 50 foot deep sea bottom, wide engraved stone steps and a central pavement;
- * Off Madeira, at a depth of about 600 feet, a wall containing large stone slabs, as well as a stone staircase cut into the cliff;
- * Off Greenland, submerged forests, as well as buildings on former low islands.

In 1985, several hundred miles east of the Azores, a Russian submarine under the command of Nikolai Seleznev, was filming the ocean floor with a special deep-diving camera, when, at a depth of 120 feet, they noticed a string of stone columns and then a massive dome-topped building.

“We couldn’t believe our eyes,” he said. “We were viewing an entire city with magnificent boulevards and avenues and they were lined with what looked like temples and halls, government buildings and homes.”

Suddenly their power flickered. The engines shut down on their own and then the needles on the instruments, including clocks, began to quiver and run backward. Many of the crew began to hallucinate. The terrifying experience ended as suddenly as it began, after about 15 minutes. (*Australasian post, January 30, 1986*)

Other explorers have reported a mysterious energy field in the area.

Europe

Today one of France's most celebrated tourist sites is Mont Saint-Michel. Now almost a mile offshore, the 237 foot high cone shaped islet is crowned by a medieval abbey church, which supplanted a much older building. It is not generally known that the whole Saint-Michel mound is artificial. That's right. Thousands of years ago a pyramid was built here. Much later the pyramid was partially covered with earth to make it into a mound. Then a building was erected upon it. When you push aside the gorse growing on the slopes, the stone steps of the original pyramid can be seen. The fine masonry interior includes a long circular wall and crypts.

Now for the point I wish to make. Originally this structure stood on an inland plain, surrounded by forest. By the tenth century, the rising sea had encroached on and obliterated the forest. Today it is surrounded by a great expanse of sand. And twice daily the high tide comes racing over the sands. You would need to run at the speed of a galloping horse to avoid being caught in it.

In Brittany, ancient avenues of huge upright stones go down to the Atlantic shore, then continue on under the sea.

An exceptional neap tide in 1970 exposed what looked like piles of dripping stone ruins. These were so far from shore that observers could not visit them before the tide returned.

All these sites are in France.

The prank that killed a city

The sunken city of Ys is placed traditionally close to the French coast. Here was played out an intriguing story of juvenile delinquency. It is reputed that Dahut, the daughter of Gradlon, king of Ys, during a

drinking bout with her lover, opened the city floodgates with a stolen key, to see what would happen....

(In case you haven't guessed, the sea rushed in and the whole city went under, forever!)

.....

There is evidence that there were forests where now the North Sea extends. On the Dogger Bank in the middle of the sea are stumps of trees with their roots still in the ground. Divers have brought up stone axes and mastodon bones, from the time when the North Sea was land. Off the isle of Heligoland, parallel rock walls 45 feet underwater have been discovered, constructed of black, white and red rocks. Pollen analysis of the sea bottom suggests that this sea, in its present shape, originated within "recent" times. The date of 1500 B.C. is often selected.

The day the sea broke through

England was once part of the European mainland, with a land bridge between present-day Dover and Calais. During this initial early period, settlers probably trekked across the intervening valley unimpeded. But soon the rising sea level became noticeable.

I can imagine a grandfather standing one day on a hilltop with his grandson. They look down on the valley below. The old man points and says, "The sea comes further up that inlet now, than when I was a boy."

Perhaps that grandson lived to see that first, historic high tide go roaring all the way through the valley, scouring out its sides, joining the North Sea with the Channel.

In locations all around England and Wales are submerged forests. Trawlers have brought up fragments of oak trees in their nets. The oaks grew where now are 60 fathoms of stormy water.

Ruins under Loch Ness

Under the waters of Scotland's Loch Ness, sonar photography has traced ancient stone ruins. Unlike most lakes, Loch Ness connects underground to the sea. These ruins were evidently submerged as the sea level rose to form the lake.

Staircase

More ruins lie on the ocean bed off the Irish coast; also a mammoth staircase descends 5 miles into the deep sea.

Indian Ocean

Off Mahabalipuram, Madras, India, lies another sunken city.

Southward from the River Indus, there extends under the Indian Ocean a large oval of shallow water. Often, when water and sky conditions are favourable, fishermen report sighting submerged structures. The ruins commence at about 21°N and extend almost to the equator.

Shri Lanka has traditions that the rising waters of the Indian Ocean cut it off from the Indian mainland.

Pacific Ocean

On Panope Island, in the Carolines, are the buildings of a mysterious dead city, Nan Madol. Eleven square miles of structures continue off the land into the sea and eventually disappear in the depths of the Pacific.

Japanese pearl divers claim to have seen buildings, streets and sunken columns encrusted with coral in the deep waters off Nan Madol.

In recent years, the Universities of Ohio and Oregon and the Pacific Studies Institute (Honolulu) have undertaken expeditions. Giant stone columns were discovered submerged, as well as a system of tunnels through the coral reef.

Swimming along the underwater streets among sharks, author and adventurer David Childers found columns up to four stories high in 60 to 100 feet of water. There was evidence of ruins descending to depths of over 200 feet. His team discovered underwater inscriptions – “geometric designs such as crosses and rectangles.”

Aerial photographs reveal straight lines running hundreds of metres and turning at right angles in the coral reef, forming what appear to be city blocks encrusted with coral.

New Zealand's continental shelf shows evidence that it was once dry land with forests and rivers.

North America

Off the Nova Scotia and New England coasts, stumps of trees stand in the sea, where country once forested now lies drowned.

On the ocean floor off Georgia, is a roadway of unknown length; off the Delaware coast a ten mile wall; and off Rhode Island a round tower and walls in sea 40 to 50 feet deep.

Latin America

Among discoveries off South and Central America are these:

- * Off Guayaquil, Ecuador, a drowned city from which statues, lenses and other artefacts have been brought up;
- * Off Venezuela, a 30 foot wall running straight for at least 100 miles;
- * Off Haiti, an entire submerged city;
- * Off Cuba's north coast, submerged streets and buildings white like marble;
- * From Belize, ancient roads on land continue to destinations now under the sea;
- * Off Hispaniola, Mexico, sunken buildings (one of them 240 by 80 feet);
- * At 165 feet underwater, Costeau's "Calypso" expedition discovered a huge grotto with stalactites and stalagmites, which can form only on land.

Cosmul is a jungle island. Once part of Mexico's Yucatan mainland, it is now 12 miles from the shoreline. Yet there is a great highway with its lifted line of trees streaking across the jungle to Cosmul. The roadway, with its huge 9 foot sandstone flagging and hard cement cover, dips down under the waves at the coastline and again reappears on the dry land of Cosmul.

More in the Caribbean

A fairly shallow stretch of clear water between Florida and Haiti is scattered with 700 sunlit islands. This Bahama Banks area was once above water. An extensive cedar forest once grew here.

Under the sea, numerous giant stone constructions extend for miles among the coral and swaying seaweed. When the water is clear and unruffled, successions of architectural patterns are often observed on the seabed by pilots of commercial and private aircraft. There are pyramidal formations, straight and intersecting lines and large rectangular forms; long stone walls or roads, pillars, archways, stone circles and stepped terraces on the ocean floor.

In 1979, a 3,000 foot wide three-ringed circular structure resembling a stadium was discovered near Andros Island. There are also circular walls around freshwater springs – possibly ancient reservoirs. Composition analysis of pillars comprising one structure a mile long near Bimini indicated they were of pink marble, quite foreign to the area.

Near the north end of Andros, covered by sea plants, are the submerged remains of a temple-like building approximately 100 feet by 75 feet in size.

An underwater road or wall runs along the top of an underwater cliff near Cay Lobos. It is possible that the ancient road ran along the cliff when both were above sea level.

Divers who had just discovered a sunken anchor from a Spanish galleon and were scratching the bottom around it found that it was lying on top of a mosaic floor or terrace!

In another location a 1982 expedition found a sunken quarry, complete with shaped blocks of stone still inside it. Heavy surface waves and strong underwater surges foiled attempts to photograph the quarry.

The area of this submerged plateau covered in remains is extensive. Off Bimini and Andros, submerged buildings extend over 38 square miles! Constructions run along the seabed to the drop-off of the continental shelf, up to 100 miles out to sea. They are all encrusted with fossilised shells and petrified mangrove roots.

In 1964, off the coast of Puerto Rico, the French submarine “Archimede”, descending from the continental shelf to lower levels, accidentally bumped against a flight of giant stone steps, cut into the steep sides of the shelf 1,400 feet below the surface. Apparently the stairway once ascended from the sea coast to a high plateau – the present low-lying island of Andros.

The flooding was probably very gradual; many of the submerged walls appear to be dykes, built to protect areas from the rising ocean. But they were not enough. The sea ultimately rolled over the land and a civilisation was lost.

Pyramids under the sea

Southwest of the Cay Sal Bank, a 1978 expedition organised by Ari Marshall, a Greek industrialist, captured a pyramidal shape on videotape. As they neared the area, all the compasses spun wildly. The pyramid rose from a depth of 650 feet to 150 feet from the surface. Marshall recounts:

“We lowered the camera and high intensity lights down the side of the mass and suddenly came to an opening. Light flashes or shiny white objects were being swept into the opening by turbulence. They may have been gas or energy crystals. Further down, the same thing happened in reverse. They were coming out again at a lower level. It was surprising that the water in this deep area was green instead of black near the pyramid.” (*Charles Berlitz, Atlantis. Glasgow:William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1984, p.101*)

Mysterious crystal

In 1970, Dr. Ray Brown of Mesa, Arizona, and four other divers, were off the Berry Islands of the Bahamas when their compasses went berserk and their magnetometers failed.

Suddenly they saw the outlines of buildings under the water. They dived down for a look. Dr. Brown recalls:

“I turned to look toward the sun through the murky water and saw a pyramid shape shining like a mirror. About thirty-five to forty feet from the top was an opening. I was reluctant to go inside... but I swam in anyway. The opening was like a shaft debouching into an inner room. I saw something shining. It was a crystal, held by two metallic hands. I

had on my gloves and I tried to loosen it. It became loose. As soon as I grabbed it I felt this was the time to get out and not come back.” (Ibid., pp.104ff)

In the years following, Dr. Brown has sometimes shown the round crystal to lecture audiences. Inside it, a series of pyramidal forms are visible. A throbbing sensation is felt in the hand when it is held, according to reports.

This underwater pyramid is reportedly surrounded by buildings. The total complex is estimated at 5 miles wide, and even longer.

More recent inundations

Denmark: Off the coast is the small island of Nordstrand. It is the last trace of a large tract of rich farmland that, as recently as 300 years ago, was covered by an inrush of the sea. Six thousand people and their homes were swept away.

Holland: In the thirteenth century, the slowly rising North Sea suddenly rushed inland over parts of low lying Holland and formed the big inlet called the Zuider Zee, destroying 30 villages and 80,000 people. Last century, the Dutch reclaimed this rich land with dykes.

England: During the reign of Henry II, one of the most important seaports of England was Shipden in Norfolk on the east coast. It had a large and beautiful church famous all over England. Five hundred years ago, Shipden was swallowed up by the sea – church, dock and all.

Coastal erosion along a strip of the Yorkshire coast of England has resulted in the loss of 35 towns since Roman times.

Perhaps you have been following with your atlas? On a map showing the narrowest part of the England Channel, namely the Strait of Dover, close to the English coast you may see marked the Goodwin Sands, a line of sandbanks just beneath the water. These sandbanks are all that is left of the vast estate of Earl Godwin, father of King Harold. All this land, with its park, cattle, sheep and deer, sank beneath the waves 900 years ago.

The Dover Strait is still widening by about one foot a year.

There are, of course, places where land has been built up with earth eroded from other sites. But the overall result has been loss of land.

Again, not all underwater ruins resulted from the rising sea level. In some cases the land actually sank under. Nevertheless the rising ocean is still slowly but steadily wearing away the coastlines of the world. Generally the erosion is scarcely noticed. At times, however, the waves suddenly gulp down wide stretches of land without warning.

In fact, I was recently invited to conduct a seminar series the Solomon Islands in the south west Pacific. The news was given me of a low-lying island in the Solomons which was recently abandoned by its inhabitants, who have migrated to land likely to survive longer.

Currently the sea level is rising at the rate of 1.5 feet (45 centimetres) per century. It's a pity... some of our most exotic low-lying tropical islands seem next in line to be swallowed up.

But there's probably no need to rush your travel agent yet.

3

LOST CITY IN THE CLOUDS

The Mystery of Machu Picchu

In 1531, Spanish adventurers came to the faraway land of the Inca empire, looking for treasure.

Led by Pizarro, they advanced from the coast, across the desert and toward the Andes mountains.

From their mountain kingdom the Incas watched the advance of these strangers and permitted them to approach in peace.

Had they been inclined, the Incas might easily have waylaid this insignificant group of foreigners and wiped them out quickly. But the Incas allowed them to progress across the desert and into the green foothills of their empire.

It will help us to understand the situation if we realise that honesty was an integral part of Inca society. Each year, men were called from their farms to labor for the government for a few months. In return, they were well looked after.

When a family was absent from their house for a length of time, they simply angled a stick across their ever-open front door – as a sign of their absence – and they could be certain that no stranger would ever violate their property. Trusting others was a way of life.

So the weary visitors were hospitably received.

The Inca himself came part way to meet the small band of “strangely-dressed” Spaniards. Pizarro and his fortune seekers were invited into the Inca camp. They were offered food on vessels of gold and silver – which, to the Inca, were common metals.

At the sight of such wealth, Pizarro's greed spilled over.

Pizarro determined to take advantage of the unsuspecting simplicity with which the Inca trusted him. So he invited the Inca the next day to be HIS guest.

Next day, the Inca took all morning to get ready, adorning himself in his greatest splendor and magnificence for his meeting with Pizarro.

Then, he set out, preceded by heralds and musicians, and attended by the Virgins of the Sun who strewed their emperor's road with flowers. The Inca arrived, sitting on a throne covered with plates of gold and silver enriched with precious stones – and carried on the shoulders of attendants.

Pizarro's men were waiting to ambush the royal personage. The Peruvians, astonished and defenceless, were cut down in hundreds. And the Inca himself was seized. At first the people could hardly believe what had happened.

The monarch was tossed into a small prison cell.

Soon he was to learn how greedy his captors were for gold. Pizarro visited the Inca in his cell. He promised the Inca that if his subjects would fill up the room with gold, up to a line drawn near the ceiling, the Inca would then be set free.

The Inca responded, sending messages throughout the land. His subjects stripped the temples and palaces.

The prison cell was filled up to the line with gold.

In his kindness, Pizarro thanked the Inca for being so generous and said he would do him a favor in return. The Inca would not die by burning (as was a pagan's fate), but he would be strangled instead– a more merciful reward.

And with the Inca died the empire.

It is claimed that his subjects, suddenly awakening to the greed of the Spaniards, gathered most of their gold and hid it in underground tunnels. So that barely ten per cent of the Inca gold was ever found and seized.

This ten per cent was shipped to Europe. But most of the galleons transporting this gold were sunk by the British and others, as it made its way across the Atlantic. So that only about ten per cent of that shipped gold ever reached Europe. But even then, that small fraction of Inca gold was sufficient to swell Europe's gold wealth by 1,000 per cent.

The descendants of the once great empire today live simply as did their ancestors. But socially and economically they remain poor. The most common trait of the Andes Indian is SADNESS.

As the Spaniards tramped up and down through the land looking for gold, there was one special place they missed... Machu Picchu, a city suspended in the clouds.

Here were secrets the Spaniards never saw. And there were other hidden valleys that they never found.

Why the archaeologist gasped

Would you like to know why American archaeologist Hyatt Verrill gasped when he came upon one such a hidden valley in the Andes?

"It is a human impossibility," he exclaimed.

You are probably wondering, what did this archaeologist discover – which he thought was “impossible”?

In case you have not seen the Andes mountains of South America, let me paint a picture for you.

The giant mountains of the Peruvian Andes are awesome enough—until one gazes up those extremely perilous slopes and perceives death-defying ruins perched on the summits.

The setting is terrifyingly wild—mountains miles high vanishing into the sky, notched with narrow ledges, slashed with ravines and bottomless gorges.

It's so dramatically beautiful, you couldn't help but love it! Waterfalls of an awesome beauty plunge from these immaculate snowy peaks, down into the damp, unknown depths of the canyons. So rare is the air that even the mules are obliged to stop every ten paces to catch their breath.

Here, "at the frontiers of the impossible," a vanished civilization set gems in stone—astoundingly assembled polygonal walls—suspended over the abyss!

They carved practically vertical stairways up stupendous precipices. High in the clouds rises one acrobatic stairway of 64 steps, which had to be carved in a place where one could get only a toehold for support. (Another comprises 600 steps.) Can you imagine it!

These ingenious "jewelers" in rock ascended a dizzying mountain "no wider than the blade of a sword" and topped it with watchtowers and walls pierced with lookouts. The mountain drops away so abruptly that if a workman slipped his body would not be stopped for 3,000 feet.

Doesn't that fill you with wonder?

And these things are still there for you to see! Today on all sides, the ruins of temples, fortresses and towers surmount the peaks and cling to the vertical sides of the canyon like ivy.

Overlooking a waterfall, a splendid palace rises above the fierce abyss—impossible to reach. You may well ask, how was this palace built?

Terraces were "miraculously" inlaid into vertical slopes, perched over the canyon fault. I ask you, how did they hoist up heavy, carved rocks by the thousands?

Site after site is built atop bluffs, which are too steep to be accessible.

Many seem to have been literally hurled up as though the monstrous stones flew there.

Ancient Ruins of Machu Picchu in Peru

Anyway, as I said, the Spaniards tramped through gorges like this, looking for treasure.

My favorite is the Urabamba River canyon. It twists and curls between awesome mountains on its way to the distant Amazon basin. High above, in the clouds, on a razor-back, with the canyon curling around it on three sides, was a pre-Inca fortress. The Incas had built a little city up there over the ruins of the old. At 9,000 feet above sea level, you can't see it if you're down in the gorge 2,000 feet below.

Hiding place of the virgins?

It is thought that the Inca Virgins of the royal palace were finally hustled away to this spot so that the Spaniards would not find them. Most of the graves that have been found are those of females.

You zigzag your way up from the canyon... round a bend... climb a wall... stride ahead between two old stone buildings..

AND THERE IT IS!

Suddenly you are aware of a silence so complete you can hear the Urubamba River flowing 2,000 feet below.

The silence sharpens your imagination... You can almost see Pizzaro's men marching along the river, searching unsuccessfully for Machu Picchu and its treasure.

Two thousand feet above them is the city in the clouds. Safe. Unseen.

You mourn as one by one the inhabitants of this hidden city die out... and the jungle slowly covers Machu Picchu... for 400 long years.

It will sleep, hidden by the jungle until 1911... to be discovered then by Hiram Bingham.

Now you can explore its houses... temples... tombs... peer down from its watchtowers.

It is almost as it was when lived in by the Children of the Sun... the military walls... the round tower... the house compounds and houses...the ceremonial buildings... the flights of thousands of steps which form the steep streets... and the conduits of bright mountain water, with the complicated system of stone water basins. All as they were made.

You notice the terraces, formed with astonishing skill... before they drop into sheer precipices.

Poisonous?

I will never forget that morning. I awoke beside the ruins and went in to explore. On those ancient terraces, now cleared, I saw what looked like strawberries.

Were they safe to eat? I tried just one...and restrained myself not to eat another for half an hour... until I could be sure of the effect. Then, feeling safe, I was soon on hands and knees... in fact, for the next hour or two. That was the biggest feed of strawberries I had ever enjoyed. After 400 years... did they taste good!

An iridescent blue butterfly flitted up from the canyon and winged around the sundial.

Throughout the steep precipice area surrounding Machu Picchu are literally hundreds of miles of stone terracing for ancient agriculture. ...many of them terraces which hang over the cliffs.

Daring? You can say that again!

Let me give you another example.

Still higher above Machu Picchu towers a steep pinnacle. If you look carefully you will see death-defying terraces perched on that vertical peak.

A high, carved niche opens out over the abyss. Under a ridge, shaped like the letter I, the rock was leveled and encrusted with carefully joined stone cubes. Only a daring mountaineer hanging from a rope could possibly reach it. Those "builder magicians," I tell you, had no sense of the impossible.

Everywhere loom buildings that defy the laws of equilibrium and gravity—as well as vertigo.

These are a triumph of human daring and of a technology which almost smacks of science fiction.

I tell you, these people did not know the impossible.

Many gigantic blocks are covered with intricate carvings. No man alive could duplicate such carvings with the stone tools we find.

Perhaps you can understand now why Hyatt Verrill remarks, "It is not a question of skill, patience, time—it is a human impossibility."

I entered one of the houses perched atop the precipice... and looked down into the canyon far below. What a great view from your bedroom window! But you wouldn't want to go sleep walking!

Machu Picchu... forgotten in time.

For sheer majesty the setting of this little city far surpasses them all.

4

CITY FOLK BECOME SAVAGES**Lost cities in the jungle**

The trekkers stood breathless. In the afternoon sun, they had come upon it suddenly.

Down in the ravine, it was like a place enchanted; so many towers and buildings grew out of the green jungle, all made of stone, gleaming white.

They were seized with wonder. After a long pause, one of them spoke. "It must be magic! Is this a fairytale? Am I dreaming?"

They were beholding things never heard or even dreamed about before.

.....

In 1926 or 1927 an expedition led by a doctor from Hamburg travelled in canoes up a tributary of the Rio Negro, into the unknown border country of northwestern Brazil and southern Venezuela. They touched the territories of several tribes of wild Indians. Leaving behind the "green hell" of the jungle and the booming drums of natives they never saw, they began to ascend.

It was weeks later, when they reached a gorge from which they followed an ancient road tunnel through the cliff walls. On the other side, the paved way continued high above a tremendous valley, until they looked down into another large ravine.

What they saw took their breath away: a dead city of towering palaces, splendid ruins, temples, carved pillars and pyramids, mostly swallowed in jungle. There were magnificent gardens with broken fountains, which once must have spouted cool water.

Further along the paved way, they ambushed and caught a dwarfish man, about four feet tall. He was almost naked except for a leather belt with buckles of pure gold. Later they met more of these men – all white-skinned. Their women, likewise nude, had long hair and beautiful classic features. They wore gold bracelets and gold necklets.

The party explored a massive pyramid-temple, whose interior fairly blazed with gold. Pillars, roof and walls were sheathed in it. Strange letters were engraved on the gold plates. Numerous utensils and chains of solid gold were marvellously chased and engraved, as by the finest goldsmiths.

On deep, blue-veined marble altars were traces of ancient blood, or rust(?); perhaps of ancient sacrifices of some horrible cult.

Most parts of the dead city were inaccessible. The intruders entered only the suburbs.

The white tribe had become degenerate, living on the outskirts either in tunnels, rooms in the rock, or little stone houses. Each carried a long, curved knife of pure gold. It was not valued here.

The heavy burden of gold carried out by the expedition led to the death at the hands of hostile Indians, of three-quarters of the party.

Cities lost

Huge stone cities, very ancient, with paved streets and tall pyramids choked with forest, have been sighted in the Amazon jungle by several explorers in recent centuries.

Tantalised by the descriptions, many other explorers, including an entire military expedition, have vanished in the jungle without trace.

These mysterious cities were built when the climate in the Amazon basin was more temperate and the rivers drained a fertile area before the jungle took over.

Unfortunately, if much of Amazonia was covered by the Atlantic around 1200 B.C. (see the chapter on Lost Cities of the Desert) we cannot expect to find significant ancient sites conveniently located along the river

banks. Such sites will likely be in the “green hell” far from the present river courses.

Before the jungle grew

We know something of mankind’s early achievements in the Asia-Africa-Europe region. Little is heard about the Americas. On a subject that could fill volumes, I feel somewhat restrained in these few pages. But I’ll try.

Literally thousands of inscribed stones have been found in the unknown jungles, some of them giving directions to ancient mines now under virgin forest too thick to penetrate.

In the early days, when South America was still free of jungle, the human race had already settled and built a civilisation.

There were wonderful and elaborate cities. The citizens wall-papered their houses with thin sheets of beaten gold. (*See my book Dead Men’s Secrets, pp.130,131,178*) Nothing was so cheap, so common, so easy to get as gold and silver.

Recently a scientific pundit wrote, from his considerable throne in an ivory tower, that the Amazon jungle has been there for millions of years and that only primitive tribes had lived there. He was an “expert”, of course, properly trained and informed. And, he added, writing was unknown. Other “experts” said much the same.

Experts, I fear me, constitute near tragedy.

Little of what is known has found its way into textbooks. The theory of evolution is at risk if it gets out.

There is now overwhelming evidence that South America was well known in antiquity. It was resplendent with great cities. Mighty empires spanned the continent. And global communication in the distant past equalled that of modern times. (*Ibid., pp.77-98*)

It is abundantly clear that history needs to be rewritten.

Destruction of the cities

It was fire from heaven and the earth below that ruined many of the cities. When the earth shook and day turned to night, there came from yawning crevices in the paved roads, beside their splendid palaces and temples, volumes of deadly gases.

Blinded, asphyxiated, maddened by the appalling suddenness of the catastrophe, men and beautiful women, educated and sophisticated, fled out of the shining cities.

Everything was left behind. Bars of gold and silver were thrown to the ground, in panic haste, by men thinking only of how to save their lives.

They fled along paved roads, now cracked, fissured and overwhelmed by great boulders.

An empire of sophisticated people. All gone. We don't even know their name.

Survivors degenerate

When the earthquakes rendered these huge stone cities uninhabitable, the climatic conditions were such that great reptiles, facing extinction in most other parts of the earth, moved in.

Before long, the green forest covered the whole landscape.

Traditions of this ancient race and their continent-wide empire are today crystallised in the oral history of primitive tribes.

Many ancient traditions survive of an advanced culture which flourished thousands of years ago to the north and west of the Brazilian highlands.

Their descendants are now scattered as primitive tribes throughout the jungle.

Primitive descendants retain legacy

The Tapuya, a native Indian race in eastern Brazil, are still skilful workers in precious stones and wear diamonds and jade ornaments.

Spanish missionaries found that primitive Aymara Indians of Lake Titicaca could still write with a script identical to that found carved in a dead city (referred to below) in the Bahia region of Brazil.

Books of wonderfully executed paintings and hieroglyphics were found among naked Panos savages of the deep Peruvian forests near Ucayle, in the Amazon headwaters, in the early nineteenth century. The Indians explained that the books, handed down, contained a history of events in the days of their ancestors.

Modern discoveries

An amazing document, filed in the archives of the old royal public library of Rio de Janeiro, describes an ancient abandoned city accidentally discovered in 1753 by a party of 300 – led by a Portuguese bandeirista.

These early land-pirates reached places in the interior, 400 years ago, that white men, even today, have not penetrated and returned alive to tell the tale.

The manuscript has been badly mutilated by the copim insect. It recounts a trek in search of the famed silver mines of Moribecu. After almost ten years of wandering, the group came upon a mountain pass, from which they spied in the distance a great city on the plain. Cautiously descending, they found it to be uninhabited.

They entered under colossal arches, to paved streets flanked by statues and buildings of enormous size. There were mysterious inscriptions, which they copied down.

A great part of the city lay completely in ruins, dissected by almost “bottomless” crevices. It appeared to have been overthrown by an earthquake.

Once a metropolis of great wealth and grandeur, it was now home to swallows, bats, rats and foxes, not to mention swarms of hens and geese (descendants of poultry once raised by the citizens?).

This dead city lies in the unexplored hinterland of the Brazilian state of Bahia.

On March 23, 1773, the archives of the governor of Sao Paulo record a further accidental discovery of a dead city in the unexplored forest of the Rio Pequery.

Froy Pedro Cieza de Leon, a Spanish soldier-monk, who died in 1560, was one of the first to discover an ancient city with immense buildings in the Brazilian jungle. The local natives called it Guamanaga. It was located on the great Cordillera in Latitude 12°59' S., Longitude 73°59' W.

In 1913, former British Consul-General in Rio, Lieutenant-Colonel O'Sullivan, penetrated to the dead city of the bandeiristas – and survived.

In the following decade, the noted explorer-scientist Colonel P.A. Fawcett, while completing a thorough survey for the Royal Geographical Society of London of a disputed jungle region, entered this lost world. He came out claiming to have sighted such a city in the upper reaches of the Amazon, near the Brazilian border with Bolivia. He attempted a return to it, but vanished.

Peculiar pyramids, rounded at the top, are seen still, today, deep in the jungle. Native traditions speak of a light which was used, akin to our electric bulb.

Thousands of unexplored cities

From Mexico to Chile, literally thousands of ruined towns and cities, buried under dense jungle or desert sands, have never been explored.

North America

Settlers came to North America on the first migration wave after the Flood. Surprisingly (?), what is now the United States once swarmed with populous cities. They were spread out from Florida, through the Mississippi and over into Arizona and New Mexico. There are traces still to be found if one knows where to look.

The Indians of Florida said a white civilisation was there when they arrived. (Examples of surviving white Indian tribes in North America are the Zuni of New Mexico and the Menominees.)

And there were the Mound Builders – who lived in cities and were agricultural. They enjoyed an enlightened system of government. No

idols, known to be such, have been found. All traces of their architecture (wooden, thus impermanent) have disappeared.

According to Mexican and North American oral history, some of the North American cities were wiped out through fiery aerial warfare. (*See Dead Men's Secrets, pp.336,337,342*)

Traces of a buried city appear to lie below 4 square miles of Rockwall County, Texas. Great stone walls, in places up to 49 feet high, are constructed in the manner a modern fine mason would build a wall. The walls are totally regular in appearance. In the 1920s Count Byron Kuhn de Porok, an archaeologist of some fame, noted that the walls resembled those of buried cities he had excavated in the Middle East and North Africa.

The stones, apparently bevelled around their edges, are joined by a mortarlike substance. Four large stones extracted from this underground wall appear to have been inscribed with some form of writing. (*Brad Steiger, Mysteries of Time and Space. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974, pp.52,53*)

L. Taylor Hanson spent considerable time with Red Indian tribes. Dark Thunder, chief of the O'Chippewa people of Michigan, revealed to him:

“Once we had books, but those were times long distant in the past. Books are of such stuff which can be swept into oblivion. Since then we have placed our stories in the chants of our people.” (*L.Taylor Hanson, He Walked The Americas. Amherst, Wisconsin: Amherst Press, 1964, p.70*)

Certain Red Indian tribes chant the stories of long ago when they lived in cities, always near mighty rivers, avenues of ancient commerce. When war came, the people abandoned the cities and took to the forest. (*Ibid., 48,69,78,82*)

However, in the global post-Flood changes, the climate gradually became drier.

I am tempted to ask, if man evolved from beasts, then why is it that there existed among all of the peoples of all continents a long tradition of a Golden Age, instead of that of a savage past?

It's time the truth was out. Here is evidence of men conscious of their civilised background, compelled to use all their technical skill in a savage and hostile environment; men able to make contact with other civilised people once, but afterwards isolated and forced to make use of crude implements for survival.

Speaking of primitive tribes people whose ancestors once lived in shining cities, Colonel Fawcett wrote in his notes:

“I have good reason to know that these original people still remain in a degenerate state... They use script.”

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5

THE CITY THE WORLD FORGOT

This is the amazing saga of a city and a nation that supposedly never existed.

Since the time of Abraham nearly 4,000 years ago, a certain wild and desolate section of Arabian desert has been known as **Mount Seir**.

For centuries, control of this barren region was held by a mysterious hidden city called **Sela**, later known as **Petra**.

The only mention of them was in the Bible. It said that the inhabitants of this region, the **Edomites**, were renegades. And it foretold their doom.

So completely, it seems, were these prophecies fulfilled that modern critics claimed there had never been a Petra. The city had disappeared. Its people were forgotten. Not one of the race remained. And nobody could produce a relic of the Edomites.

So it was that critics ridiculed the biblical writings on this question of Petra. They asserted that the biblical statements were fanciful, poetic and figurative – and that the prophecies concerning its inhabitants were untrue.

For many years, the critics could not be answered.

It appears that those prophecies had been so accurately fulfilled that not only was Edom overthrown, but not one of the race remained. That great and mighty nation disappeared, leaving no trace, and no record in history of the part they had played in world events.

And Petra, the capital city, had dropped from the memory of mankind, its name even forgotten for a thousand years. ...the city the world forgot!

When the Edomites vanished from the earth about 500 BC (except for just a few), Petra became the desert stronghold of the Nabataeans, who plundered the caravan routes until the fourth century AD.

Vague rumors

In its hey-day, Persians, Greek and Romans had tried in vain to break the secret of this desert kingdom.

For hundreds of years, vague tales had been told along the Mediterranean, Red Sea and Indian Ocean of a strange gorge in the Arabian desert which led to a marvellous city of rock.

The few adventurers who set out to solve the mystery had never returned. And a horrible suggestion ran around that they had formed part of the sacrifices that were continually offered up in the city of rock.

Night and day a score of tall, lean, hawk-faced men watched the great gorge, while watchers on the outposts peered and listened above all the lesser ravines.

Then its memory was lost. Petra was first shrouded in mystery... and then, for 1,000 years the legend faded.

Location

The land of Edom was a narrow, mountainous region, 100 miles long by 20 miles wide and averaging about 2,000 feet above sea level. On the east it was flanked by the Arabian Desert and on the west by the land of Canaan (also known as Palestine, Judah or Israel). It extended from the Dead Sea in the north to the Red Sea in the south, where Elath and Ezion Geber were the Edomite ports. The land of Edom straddled both sides of the Arabah (the great geological fault that continues the rift of the Jordan Valley south of the Dead Sea). The country east of the Arabah is characterised by colorful limestone formations.

Edom was a land of deep glens and flat, fertile plains. It had a lovely climate, but the general character of the country was wild and rugged. Although it is semi-desert and sparsely populated today, there is ample archaeological evidence that Edom did once support an extensive population.

The land of Edom was important for two reasons:

1. It contained valuable copper and iron deposits, which its rulers exploited.
2. It controlled the trade route from the desert to western Palestine and the Mediterranean, as well as the great King's Highway running north into Syria.

In those days camel caravans travelled through this now dry and barren land, ruled from the hidden fortress city of Petra.

Petra itself was situated about 50 miles south of the Dead Sea and 80 miles north of the Gulf of Aqaba.

It was a virtually impregnable mountain fortress in a natural amphitheater. Access to it was only through a narrow gorge, known as the Siq, which winds for 1¼ miles between precipitous walls 100 to 160 feet high.

Surprise inscriptions

But for a thousand years this became no more than legend... a legend eventually forgotten.

Then one day archaeologists unearthed a record of the Egyptian pharaoh Rameses III who boasted of his campaigns and the defeat of the Edomites at Seir. Eventually, tablets of Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria and records of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, were discovered, which also mentioned the Edomites and their wonderful city.

These provided the first recognition of the Edomites outside the Bible.

Secret attempt to find the city

With interest rekindled, in 1812 the British Archaeological Society sent a young Swiss explorer to find this lost city.

For safety, he disguised himself as an Arab and travelled throughout Jordan.

But with little success at first. However, he eventually became friendly with some Arabs and aided them medically. In return, he was told of some wonderful ruins that had been discovered.

Equipping himself as best as he could, the explorer set out southward from Amman. The road eventually became a tortuous canyon trail that plunged swiftly downward until it reached a mountain range of red sandstone.

He then entered the Wadi Musa, a dry river bed named after the prophet Moses.

The wadi deepened – and soon he met an enormous wall of rock.

Split in the wall

Splitting the wall was a deep crevice nearly 1,000 feet deep. It was known as El Siq. This crevice was barely wide enough to permit men in single file.

Superstitious, the local Arabs feared to enter it.

However, undeterred, the Swiss traveller plunged into this slot in the granite wall.

The winding passage narrowed until he could touch the two rock walls with outstretched hands. He could scarcely see the top of the mountains above him. At times the towering cliffs completely blotted out the sky above, and he was in darkness.

For about an hour in the saddle, he was in a dream world of murky shadow and eternal silence. The path lay in perpetual gloom, the chilly darkness hiding the fierce rays of the desert sun.

It was so narrow that in places it would be near impossible for two horsemen to ride abreast. This passage provided the most impregnable entrance for any city that might lie beyond. It was the only approach to what was rumored to be the most wonderful natural fortress in the world.

He pressed on. Then without warning.... As he rounded a bend, the path widened – and a flood of sunlight admitted by a gap from above lit up the darkness.

What he saw

Here he looked in amazement! Before him, carved in one piece from the living rose-red sandstone cliff, was a strangely beautiful building!

This was the legendary El Khaznet – Pharaoh's treasury, as the Arabs called it. No ordinary building of wood or brick, but a temple of surpassing beauty, more than 60 feet high, not built of stones, but sculptured from the solid rock of a rose-red mountainside!

It glowed in the sun like a huge cameo cut in the cliff face. Empty... deserted... its beauty forgotten by the world.

He was looking at a city that no European had seen for well over 1,000 years.

From inside the doorway of this temple he could look back into the shadowy passage through which he had come.

Its interior rooms were laid out in the form of a cross. Here, according to legends, travellers coming out from Petra would often stop to ask the pagan goddess Isis to give them a safe journey as they went to the outside world.

At one time it rang with melodious orchestra, colorful ceremonies and exciting processions.

But now the temple stood empty. It had been deserted for centuries.

Deeper still in the mountains lay the main part of the hidden city. Once again the explorer followed the passage as it twisted and turned through the rocky canyon.

The lost city

And finally he came to a valley encircled by cliffs... This basin was about one mile across. And carved into the surrounding cliffs, was a mass of dark doorways. These were the houses, temples and tombs of the lost city of Petra!

This was truly a fortress city – protected by one narrow entrance and with cliff dwellings that would last forever.

The explorer from Europe was speechless. These ruins were not relics of a feeble race. It was evident that a very large city once existed here.

Petra nestles in one of the most rugged places on earth. Ranges are thrown up into weird mountains, like mountains of the moon – forming one of the wildest, weirdest, and most fascinating regions on earth.

The rock itself is tremendously beautiful: yellow through to grey, brown, red, purple and blue. And to top it off, during the course of one sunlit day, Petra presents a kaleidoscope of ever changing color – mustard, gold, amber then copper, culminating beneath a sunset sky into a glorious rich red glow.

It is amazing how a city of perhaps 50,000 people could be carved so largely from the natural rock... over 3,000 ancient structures, mostly cut out from the rocks, have survived. These are in varying stages of preservation. And there are streets also carved out of the rock.

Just imagine it! An amphitheater city, almost completely carved from the sheer sandstone heights that ring the valley – tier after tier of majestic, but empty, tombs, temples, shops, dwellings and palaces – every structure hewn from the living, multi-colored sandstone. Also flights of steps... and temples with beautifully carved pillars. As well as excavated residences of large dimensions. (In one of them is a single chamber at least 60 feet in length.) But now it is a huge, dead city.

The interiors of the buildings are plain, with one dazzling exception – an ancient banquet hall, with walls like glowing tapestries. Petrans very likely gathered here to eat and drink to the dead.

The valley itself is the site of Nabataean and Roman Petra. It was on the heights overlooking this valley that the Edomites lived.

In Roman times, the Nabataeans, a branch of the Arab race, carved out of the rock an enormous Roman style amphitheater which could seat 5,000.

Behind it are tombs excavated from the rock for many of Petra's notables, so that the dead (as they believed) could enjoy the entertainment.

Burial places are among the largest buildings in Petra. They were also more beautifully carved than the houses for the living. The palace tombs that have survived were probably for the dead kings of Petra.

Stone pillars were crowned with beautiful carvings.

The buildings that evidently once covered the valley floor are gone, worn away by the wind and rain of centuries. But here and there small remains can still be seen.

The “Monastery”

High above the city is a massive building, which the Arabs regard as sacred. What it was used for no one really knows, but the Arabs call it Ed Deir, the Monastery.

Incredibly, this structure was NOT carved from the mountainside, but fashioned by hewing away the mountain itself!

From the rugged rock, graceful columns have been chipped and smoothed. There is beauty in style and design. The building was carved out with greatest care.

The Monastery’s measurements are tremendous. It is Petra’s largest structure: 138 feet high, 147 feet wide and with an inner chamber 40 feet square. The doorway was 30 feet high, as if built for a race of giants!

But despite its great size, every inch was cut with the most careful detail.

Topping the temple, there was designed an imposing stone ornament which resembles a vase or urn. This on its own would make any man look small. Yet it also, along with the rest of the building, was cut out from the solid rock of the mountain.

Again, the rock coloring is fantastic and beautiful, with shades of pink and yellow, blue, grey and predominantly red – all laid down in strata of unique design.

The clifftop Edomite capital

We climb to Mount Sela (called by the Arabs Umm El Biyara). This is the most imposing peak in the entire Petra area. Up here the Edomites ultimately built their capital, called in the Bible “Selah”.

It is a flat, plateau-topped peak. It was inaccessible except with the aid of a sort of staircase. In one spot this was built in a passage so narrow that it could be closed with a gate.

The ascent to it is tortuous and dangerous. Towering high above the valley, it takes about one and a half hours to climb.

To get up here, you need to be virtually lifted up from one section of the pathway to another. One slip could mean a dangerous fall to the rocks below. It is easy to see how just one man could have held off an army.

This city was probably a challenge to Israel's King David, himself a mighty warrior (Psalm 108:10).

On the top are great cisterns hollowed from the rock and plastered. In these, the defenders of the fortress stored water for use in case of a prolonged siege. The mouths of these cisterns were cleverly hidden.

When the Edomites received warning of an approaching enemy, they could transfer the weak and old up to this plateau and then live here until the enemy was defeated or driven away.

There have survived a few remains of broken walls and broken pottery. So few people have climbed the peak that pottery evidence remains.

The pottery has been confirmed as Edomite, dating from the 8th to 10th century era, BC. This corroborates the biblical prophecies concerning the destruction of the proud Edomite capital.

According to Old Testament writings, it was captured in war by Amaziah, King of Judah (2 Kings 14:7). This was in 790 BC.

In a later battle, King Amaziah hurled 10,000 to their death (2 Chronicles 25:12).

There are several projections or abrupt cliffs where Amaziah could have done this. But the cliff with the greatest sheer drop is on the side facing the valley city.

The Edomites must have had defences on this mountain even before the time of Amaziah, since they were strong enough to refuse the Israelites passage in Moses' day (Numbers 20:14-18).

Mount of Obelisks

On the south-west of Petra, about a thousand feet above the valley floor, was the most central platform dedicated to sacrifices. This is the largest of several ancient high places.

One ascends past a cave that was decorated with pillars and panels carved on the inside. The human workmanship was excellent, the beautiful colors of the rock the most vivid of all.

The rocky steps continue to the well preserved high place on the Mount of Obelisks. The climb takes about an hour.

It contains two giant obelisks to the sun god – formed not just by carving into the rock, but by cutting off the entire mountain top. These carved pillars are still attached to the rock from which they were carved.

This Nabataean high place was cut out of the solid rock. Here a whole mountain top was carved away to make an outdoor sanctuary for offering animals and some human sacrifices.

There is an altar on which the sacrificial beast was burnt. The altar itself is 9 feet long by 6 feet wide. On the east side four steps lead up to its fire hearth.

In front of the altar is a large rectangular court with an elevated platform in the middle, on which the victim was slaughtered. On one side of this is a long bench on which the sacrifice was prepared as a burnt offering.

There is also a water tank adjacent to the altar. Was this a laver for priests to wash off blood from human sacrifices? An altar for drink offerings is close to the altar of burnt offerings. This altar faces east, in conformity with the practice of worshipping the rising sun. The rock-hewn altar is shaped into a perfect circle symbolizing the sun.

Humans sacrificed to the sun

Here human victims would have been offered to the blazing orb of day. The practice was to stretch out the victim backwards over the sacrificial slab. In Nabataean ritual it was necessary for the heart of the victim to be torn out while the person was still alive. The heart was left pulsating in a special cleft in the rock, as an offering to the sun.

A circular hollow in the center which caught the blood and drained it away, is still to be seen. A channel cut in the rock led to a tank that caught the blood.

Missing, however, are the wooden asherahs (tree stumps), which were objects of worship.

The Petrans practised these frightful rituals after having learned them from the Canaanites.

There is also a snake monument. Serpent and sun worship were intertwined.

Such was the high place of sacrifice... so strange and terrible, the world wiped all memory of it.

Other evidence of sun worship in the land of Edom is seen in the niches of the deity Dusares (or Dusura) among the Nabataeans, the later inhabitants of the old Edomite country.

There is a cave fashioned out of what was originally a natural cave. In it is a large stone pedestal attached to the rear wall and probably considered the throne of the god.

The entrance faces east, so that the morning sun strikes his throne.

Dusura was the principal male deity of the Nabataeans. Identified by the Greeks with Dionysus, or the Roman Bacchus, he was not only a sun god but also a deity of the vine.

The Nabataeans also honored a goddess, named Ka'bu (or Allat), said to be a virgin. She was "mother of the gods", mother-goddess and patron of fertility.

Dusuru was said to be the offspring of the virgin Allat and the only god-son.

At Petra, the festival of his birth was celebrated on December 25 with games and festivities. These were a replica of the spring festivities of Babylon, when the death, burial and resurrection of Marduk were celebrated with weeping, which was exchanged for rejoicing.

The meaning of the Petra ceremony may be inferred from the similar festival at Alexandria in Egypt, where on December 25 an image of a babe was taken from the temple sanctuary and greeted with loud acclamation by the worshippers, who cried out, "The virgin has begotten."

The two pillars on Petra's Mount of Obelisks probably represented both deities (goddess mother and her son).

Another emblem of Dusuru was a pyramid.

Rocks on either side of the Siq are profusely carved with the emblems of Dusuru.

Hebrew prophets declared that this corrupt religion would lead to destruction. They foretold utter desolation both of the country and the family of Esau. And utter desolation is certainly now their condition.

Today no one lives in Petra. The houses are still there, and the temples. But they are empty. And the Edomite nation is extinct.

Here is a city that once throbbed with all the excitement of human life; with the noise of laughter and crying; with the busy hum of trade... a city built to last forever.

Yet we see it today, beautiful, silent, alone. What made Petra die? Why did it become a place of emptiness and desolation?

The Edomite story

According to the biblical account there were two brothers, Jacob and Esau. They were grandsons of the patriarch Abraham. It was predicted that Esau was to have no part in the land of Palestine and the blessings promised to Jacob, because Esau had foolishly sold his rights.

So Esau and his family, who were called Edomites, moved into the rocky desert of the Mount Seir region. When they discovered the hidden valley they drove out the cave dwellers and claimed Petra for their own.

Soon the valley rang with the sound of hammers and chisels as the people carved houses in the rock.

The labor was long, the effort great. The stone resisted the tools that attacked it. But the artisans were patient. Their technique was sure.

The stone cutters were clever men, and they gave their rock city a living splendor, rivalling the beauty of Greece and Rome... a beauty which has endured to our day.

However, they hated their cousins, the Israelites.

When Jacob's descendants, the Israelites, were on their long journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, the Israelite leader Moses requested permission to pass through their territory. Moses even offered to stay on the King's Highway. He promised that his people would touch nothing as they passed through.

The Edomites could have helped them and given them food. Instead, the Edomites refused to let them pass, and Israel was forced to make a long and painful detour over the mountains and enter Palestine through the land of the hostile Moabites.

Refusal of passage by the Edomites must have been backed by enough armed might to deter, for migrating people do not detour out of courtesy.

This was a route of great antiquity, a north-south highway, along the course of which lie the ruins of numerous late second to early first millennium BC cities. The Romans later developed it. After that it became the "Sultan's road". And today it is known as "the road of the Emir".

After the Israelite settlement in Canaan, the Edomites watched with undisguised hatred and envy the growing power of Israel.

Israel's King Solomon exploited their rich mines for copper and iron and built the industrial smelter city of Ezion Geber at the Gulf of Aqaba, where the fleet was based for his Ophir expeditions.

At the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon's army in 586 BC, when Jerusalem was in flames and the Jews were fleeing for their lives, the Edomites did not help their brother nation, but instead plundered.

At the fall of Jerusalem, the Edomites stood by, looking on and shouting, “Raze it, raze it, even to the foundations thereof!” (Psalm 137:7). They even assisted the Babylonians, occupying the gates and stationing themselves at roads leading into the country so as to prevent the escape of fugitives. Then they delivered them up as captives. As a neighbour of Judah, the Edomites were doubtless better acquainted with the escape routes than were the Babylonians.

In his prophecy, the biblical writer Obadiah portrays an ascending climax: first, the satisfied look; then the malicious joy; and lastly the exulting expression of boastfulness and insulting derision (Obadiah 12).

Edom, savagely exulting over the destruction of its rival, and momentarily enjoying an apparent superiority over Israel, stood, nevertheless, at a disadvantage. For Israel there would be a restoration... for Edom only perpetual desolations.

After the fall of Jerusalem and during the 70 year captivity of the Jews in Babylon, the Edomites moved north-westward and occupied many towns of southern Judea.

The prophecies of doom

But prophecies of doom rang out against the rock dwellers and the Edomites of the surrounding country.

According to the Hebrew prophets, the reasons for the coming destruction of the Edomite race were four in number:

1. Their pride (Obad.3; Jer.49:16)
2. Hatred of their twin brother race (Ezek.35:5). Edom was the most closely related of all nations to the Jews, and the most hostile. It is bad to hate an enemy, worse to hate a friend, and still worse to hate a brother.
3. The envy on which their hate rested (Ezek.35:11; Psa.137:7)
4. Violent and cruel outrages to which their hatred led (Amos 1:6,9,11)

The Edomites ignored these warnings. They were sure no one could ever take their city from them. To further safeguard the city, they counted on such easily-defended heights as Ummel Biyara, a mountain with the strength of a fortress.

But Obadiah the “prophet of God” cried out:

“The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord.”

There were countless other prophecies against Petra and the land of Edom in general, beginning as early as 800 BC and continuing for over 300 years.

Such prophecies seemed unlikely of fulfilment.

Petra continued to be on one of the busiest trade routes of the world. Caravans of camels from Arabia travelled past the city, laden with gold, perfume and spices, on their way to the Mediterranean sea, to be shipped to faraway Greece and Rome.

Day by day the high walls of the valley echoed with the shouts of the drivers and the tinkling of camels' bells as the caravans passed through.

Sometimes the rich treasure was unloaded in Petra and stored in rock caves. The Petrans were merchants and traders. And they grew very wealthy.

But, as we have noted, they were proud and cruel.

Defiance

Although their forefather Esau had been taught to worship God the Creator, his family had soon become pagans, erecting pillars in honor of strange gods. On the mountain tops near Petra arose altars where they offered sacrifices, perhaps even human sacrifices.

And in pools nearby they could wash away the blood which had been shed.

Behind the narrow entrance to the city, which a handful of soldiers could guard easily, the Petrans lived their lives and worshipped their idols.

They felt safe and secure. This was THEIR land, THEIR city. No one could punish them for their wrongs. No one could despoil them of their treasures. There was a city which no one could take away from them.

These proud people had hearts as hard as the rocky cliffs in which they lived.

But soon after they occupied southern Judea, they lost the southern part of their own territory to the Nabataeans, a powerful tribe of Arabs.

Judas Maccabees reconquered Judah's lost territory. And about 100 BC the Edomites were forced to adopt Judaism, the Hebrew religion.

From these Judaized Edomites came the royal house of the Herods, spoken of in the New Testament. The hated Herod who slaughtered the Bethlehem babies was an Idumaeon (Edomite).

The Edomites disappeared from history around 70 AD. They had followed Esau all the time, wild and lawless people, living on spoil and plunder.

Despite the disappearance of the Edomites from history, their Arab successors, the Nabataeans kept Petra going strong.

Petra continues...

Indeed, the words of doom against Petra had been uttered. But for long ages Petra appeared safe and secure. No enemy could get in to attack the city.

Centuries passed. And the mighty name of Rome began to echo across the civilized world. Rome extended her power and dominion through the Middle East, but Petra remained rich and powerful. They made friends with the Romans, copying their style in buildings. (The few structures of masonry in the city are built in the Roman style.)

But Hebrew prophets had been emphatic that this proud city would be brought down, that it would be left deserted. How could this possibly happen when it was in such a strategic location – and so well protected?

Surprise ending

The final blast of doom came with unexpected suddenness.

A new caravan route opened. It bypassed Petra in favor of Palmyra, far to the north. This was the blow that cut Petra to the heart. Petra's life blood – her commerce – began to drain away.

No longer did the camels pass through the mountains with their precious cargoes. The great trade center was suddenly cut off from the main highway. And the city was left alone in its rocky wilderness.

Gradually the people left the cliffside homes that had taken years of patient labor to build. They deserted the big arena where they had watched parades and sports. They left their stone temples and the tombs of their dead.

Structures that once throbbed with beauty now sank into dust and decay. Petra, the power and glory of the Middle East, became a lifeless valley.

For their fortress was not strong enough to hide them from the predicted "divine judgment".

No great battles, no mighty armies, were needed to make divine prophecy come true. No, the mere changing of a trade route – and Petra, the city which had been powerful and rich, became a hollow shell, empty of life. In fulfilment of the prophecies, the impregnable city is laid waste and the land left desolate.

Some interesting facts

- The rugged nature of the country, during World War 1, permitted Lawrence of Arabia to use the Petra valley as a base for his attacks on the Turks.
- Around 850 BC, Kings Jehoram of Israel and Jehoshaphat of Judah chose the unguarded round-about route through the wilderness of Edom to re-subjugate the Moabites. (*2 Kings ch.13*)

This necessitated going through the desolate region of the Arabah, south of the Dead Sea. They encountered a water shortage. However, even though there was neither wind nor rain, the prophet Elisha predicted that the dry stream bed would fill with water.

Sure enough, next morning from the direction of Edom, water suddenly flowed down the dry stream bed. (This can happen from rain falling at some point higher up the valley.)

The report states that the Moabite enemy “rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood: And they said, This is blood.” They assumed that Israel and Judah had been fighting one another. So they rushed into the Israelite camp for the spoil. But to their shock “the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them.” (2 Kings 3: 23,24)

The optical illusion was caused by water flowing over the red sandstone which is typical of much of the Edom country.

- This remains a wild land. Quite frequently, Arab bedouin minding their goats in the clefts of the rock will throw stones at anyone who moves in the narrow defiles below. Under the right conditions they may even fire from rifles at a visitor. As I learnt on my first attempt to enter the region.... but that's another story.

6

BELLS THAT RING UNDER THE SEA

During storms, so it is said, the bells of lost churches have been heard pealing as the sea currents surge through the bell towers.

Lost churches under the sea? Bells under the sea?

Have you read about that great city Dunwich? In the days of King Alfred (you've heard of Alfred the "cake-burner"?) Dunwich in East Anglia was a bustling town and in Henry II's reign had a royal palace. Among sailors and merchants its market was known all over Europe.

Dunwich was so important, it used to return two members of parliament.

Imagine this great city being slowly but surely swallowed up by the greedy sea. In 1347, more than 400 houses and as many shops and windmills were engulfed. When Drake was fighting the Spaniards, scarcely a quarter of the fine old city was left.

At last all that remained of Dunwich were the cracked and battered walls of the Church of All Saints, which for years hung poised on the very edge of the cliff – and then one day crashed into the sea beneath.

The low cliffs are still crumbling away by 5 to 6 feet annually.

Once a Roman fort?

The history of the coastline around Dunwich is a fascinating one. And it suggests clues to possible Roman occupation.

It is believed that at one time Dunwich was a Roman fort. And we know that later it became the capital of a Saxon kingdom.

From information we have, the coastline at Dunwich has been eroding for hundreds of years. The average loss of land here during the past 400 years is estimated at 1 meter per year. Assuming this loss has been consistent since the latter part of the Roman occupation, the Roman site would be at least 1¼ miles from the present shoreline.

Roman strategy on Britain's east coast was to position the building of forts for the advantage of the sun behind them. To achieve this, they would select the south bank of a good river estuary.

The Institute of Oceanographic Sciences have established the remains of a two hundred meter wide river bed, about two miles out from the present shoreline. From this discovery it appears that local geography would have been favourable for a fort at Dunwich.

Certainly Romans were active in the vicinity of this place. There is evidence of Roman occupation at nearby Blythburgh between 55 BC and 40 AD. And at Walberswick, Romano-British potsherds have been found on a field surface. At Dunwich itself, there have been found an earthenware pot containing gold and silver coins of the Roman period, as well as other numerous coins, domestic utensils and a scabbard.

Dunwich a royal capital

The Romans left Britain and the Angles, Saxons and Jutes settled here, but no history of Dunwich is recorded until the seventh century.

In 630 AD, when King Sigebert returned from exile in Gaul to reclaim his throne, he established himself at Dunwich, or Donmoc as it was then known. Sigebert was a learned man, so with a monk named Felix he also founded a school. Dunwich quickly became the centre of learning in the area.

In 636 AD, Dunwich was made a bishopric and a city.

Sigebert's successor, a man called Anna, is also said to have had his palace at Dunwich.

Many wealthy merchants settled in Dunwich. The city became a bustling commerce center. The harbour was filled with merchant ships and coastal

barges, the boats of the inshore fishermen and the Icelandic fishing fleet. This shipping brought in the merchandise for the Dunwich daily market.

The citizens of Dunwich grew wealthy from trade.

Half as big as London

By the 11th century Dunwich was one of the greatest ports on Britain's east coast. In fact, it was the tenth largest place in England, with grand public buildings, and even a mint. Dunwich also became a naval base and it was chosen as a port of departure for the crusades.

As a religious centre also, it boasted many large churches, monasteries and hospitals.

At that time - listen to this - Dunwich had half the population of the City of London.

References to Dunwich appeared in Bede and the Domesday Book. A charter was granted to the town by King John.

The Domesday Survey of 1086 makes interesting reading.

It was recorded that the Manor of Dunwich had lost one carucate of land to the sea. The sea was likewise creating havoc with the forest to the south-east of the city. But Dunwich itself had increased in size.

The city, covering an area of approximately one square mile, was enclosed by a wide ditch known as the Palles Deike and a bank of soil surmounted by palings of wood. Four gates (whose names were Bridge gate, Middlegate, Gilden gate and South gate) gave entrance to Dunwich. These entrances were reported to be housed over and strongly gated.

The city on a number of occasions found itself embroiled in the political intrigues of the nation.

In 1173, Prince Henry rebelled against his father, Henry II, and instigated a plot to depose his father. Queen Eleanor encouraged him and his father-in-law, Louis of France, sent 3,000 Flemings to aid his attempt.

He tried to land at Dunwich, but the Palles Deike defence held firm and his landing attempt was thwarted.

However he finally landed at Walton, near Felixstowe to the south. Joining forces there with some other nobles, he marched north to Dunwich to besiege the city from the landward side.

Under the leadership of the Earl of Leicester, the rebel army marched across the county. On the way, they extorted money from the villages. When they reached Dunwich, they threatened the citizens with the loss of their heads if they did not surrender.

“Every citizen will be hanged”

The townsfolk remained steadfast, responding that while they could still stand on their feet they would not surrender. Angered by such resistance, the Earl of Leicester tried to alarm them by erecting gallows.

However, Burghers and Knights of Dunwich sallied forth to the fortifications. Each person knew his own business, some to shoot with bows, others to hurl darts. The strong helped the weak. And inside the city maid and wife alike carried stones to the palisade for throwing.

Whereupon the Earl of Leicester, humiliated, withdrew his troops and marched away to the north. The men of Dunwich had triumphed.

The citizens of Dunwich supported King John (1199 to 1216) in his conflict with the Barons over the enforcement of the Magna Carta. The men of Dunwich fitted out several ships to oppose the French who were supporting the Barons. In gratitude, King John gave the men of Dunwich a royal Charter. This granted them a free Burgh, a Guild of Merchants and numerous other freedoms.

During the reign of Henry II, Dunwich reached its peak of prosperity. There is an old quotation referring to fifty-two churches, chapels, religious houses and hospitals. But evidence currently available is only of twenty-one.

Dunwich's maritime industry was substantial. The city had shipbuilding yards, custom houses and warehouses. Although fishing was the main industry, shipbuilding came a good second. Dunwich shipbuilders were regarded highly.

The port of Dunwich possessed eighty ships, making it the largest port in Suffolk. In 1242 the King especially wrote to the men of Dunwich that he depended upon them for their support by land and sea against the French.

Dunwich harbour continued to be active through the reign of Edward I. Eleven ships of war, sixteen fair ships, twenty barks for trading with Iceland, and twenty-four home fishing boats were maintained at Dunwich.

One of Britain's top ports

The city was favoured with a safe land-locked harbour two miles long by half a mile wide, which had a good deep channel down the middle. There was anchorage and wharfage for a hundred ships, or more if need be.

Between Lynn and London there was no port to equal Dunwich. In fact there were few better ports in the whole of Britain.

All the features of a sea-port of yesteryear were found here... numerous wharves and quays, each with gear for loading and unloading. And there were ship-building yards and slip-ways, sail-yards, rope-walks, warehouses, fish-curing sheds, and so on. You can just imagine the mix of sounds and smells and fascinating sights that went with these.

Of all the numerous imports that flowed through Dunwich, here are a few which got specific mention. There was alum from Spain; there were corn, ashes and pitch from Hamburg; and flax, bowstaves and wax from Prussia. Some of the imported pottery was from Germany. And in the records of the day, there are occasional references to armour and weapons.

It can be assumed that a large number of the Dunwich businessmen were actively engaged in the carrying trade. Commodities transported in Dunwich vessels were shipped to ports all over north-western Europe.

The second quarter of the thirteenth century was beyond doubt the heyday of Dunwich.

In fact, Dunwich was sufficiently important to warrant two Members of Parliament in King Edward's first Parliament held in York.

In 1296, for the defence of Britain, the shipbuilders of Dunwich constructed and equipped eleven ships of war, each of which carried

seventy-two men. It was a tragic day for the town when, off the coast of France, four of these ships were lost in active service.

Their friend, the sea, becomes expensive

The same sea that generated great wealth for Dunwich, also posed some problems for the townsfolk. The first was erosion. There were gradual losses to the sea. The second challenge was that of keeping the harbour free from silt.

These burdens were a continual drain on the finances of the city. So much so that the Bailiffs had difficulty raising the money for the fee-farm rent.

Nevertheless, the three thousand or so good people of Dunwich got on with life's business of fishing, buying and selling, singing and playing, getting and begetting.

12th - 13th centuries

During the 12th and 13th centuries the tides continued to cause havoc. They kept pounding and grinding against the eastern side of the town. This east side of Dunwich was not a cliff but just a gently-sloping spur. At its edges the land was not very much above sea-level.

The only defensive measure anyone could think of was to build a sea wall. But this was such a mammoth undertaking - and involved much labour. It was tremendously expensive.

With so many hundreds of men for so many hundreds of days - even with each man paid only a penny a day - the costs had to be balanced against financial gain from the operation... or at least the appearance of no financial loss.

True to form, in 1222 the Dunwich town council first tried to alleviate the financial shock by sending a petition to the king to aid them in 'enclosing' their town.

The response of the king's advisors was to pull their purse-strings tight and push the problem politely back into Suffolk. But they did send a letter to all 'the earls, barons, knights and all free tenants' in Suffolk county, worded as follows:

“Our honest and faithful men of Dunwich have informed us that the tide of the sea has occupied, and occupies from day to day, a great part of our town of Dunwich and the adjacent land, whereby great loss will result to us and to you unless preventive measures are quickly taken. Therefore we beseech you most earnestly, for love of us and for this our petition, that you render to those honest men speedy aid in this enclosing and embanking, to our honour and commodity as well as yours, that you may have honour and advantage thereby, and we may have reason to reward you with tokens of our goodwill.”

King Henry III (1216-1272) confirmed to Dunwich the Charter granted by his father John. He also reduced the fee-farm rent further. With continuing damage from the sea, more problems were arising for the port. So King Henry granted the sum of £47.10s toward the repair of the harbour. The repair work entailed the construction of a wooden quay on the south side of the inlet and a wooden pier and earth bank on the north side.

Black winter

The year 1286 was remembered with great sadness. Following a severe storm, the whole east coast suffered heavy losses to the sea.

At Dunwich the damage was considerable. Even without this setback, commerce in the port was now becoming more difficult with the silting harbour. And to make matters worse, piracy was rife along this coast. Even some men of Dunwich were involved in a little piracy to their own advantage. This diverted needed commerce from the port.

Life was lived as usual. The sun shone on many a tranquil summer's day. Children laughed and played in cobbled streets. Families took baskets to go blackberrying on the common. Young women picked posies of wild flowers. Everyone enjoyed listening to the trilling of the larks. Young men and maidens fell in love. Old men lounged in the alehouse all through the day then tottered home to their beds, not caring too much about the world and its woes. On festivals and holy-days there was singing and dancing. And every day there was eating, drinking and gossip. Bumper catches of herrings gladdened the heart. Safe returns from the sea helped many a family rest secure.

Through the dull winter of 1285-1286 people retired early to sleep soundly in their beds, light their fires each new morning, and look forward with hope, as ever, to the coming of the spring. They knew that

once winter was past, the worst storms were behind them... until the following winter.

The people of Dunwich knew. But the sea... did it know? Did the wind know?

The storm comes

When the high tide of March 23rd 1286, began to rise higher, blown wilder by a bitterly cold east wind, there was no real surprise. As usual, bedding and furniture in houses bordering the quays (and what was left of the sea-wall), were simply moved into chambers and attics. That was normal.

But the townsfolk began to have doubts when the wind kept up firmly and continued to blow with fury all that day and all the next night, so that the sea could not fall.

In the early morning of the next day the waves were stirred into a frenzy. Not just pounding against the sea-wall, but sweeping right over it in torrents of foam and showers of spray.

Those in houses closest to the sea removed with haste their most precious belongings to safer houses of friends. The market was closed that day. And in many of the taverns there was no drinking. Instead, muddy water was flowing through them, up to three feet deep.

On the quay, crates, barrels and blocks of wood clashed together. Some ships strained at their moorings, buffeting other ships. Others crashed against the submerged wharves, beating upon them relentlessly. Wharf timbers began to part and settle down into the swirling mud. Other ships broke free, to be driven onto the marshy side of the harbour.

And then came a sight that most of Dunwich folk had never seen before. Waves began to sweep right across King's Holme. Church-bells pealed out an alarm. But it was rather futile. The people could do nothing but watch... listen to the sea's never-ending tempestuous roar... and pray.

The residents of Grey Friars monastery were in a serious plight. Their building at the south-east corner of the town stood close to the sea. The first attack of the waves had demolished the sea-wall there - and in its place now was a low cliff. Every minute this cliff was crumbling, then receding, as the waves burst against it relentlessly.

By morning half the monastery had gone.

In the lower town, things eased a bit around midday, as the wind shifted direction and the tide receded just a little. It was an opportunity for the townsfolk to mend breaches in the wall.

There was no lack of material, nor of willing hands. What they were short of was time. As darkness came on again, the hopeless task was abandoned.

Night of the cruel sea

The wind soon whipped up again to gale force. The sea again rose... further this time than before. This was to be the longest night Dunwich had ever experienced.

When dawn finally broke, there were cries of despair. The whole length of the seaward side of the city had been demolished. In its place was a full length hundred-yard-wide strip of devastation...nothing but tangled heaps. The sea-wall was totally gone. By some miracle, the harbour mouth remained.

A cliff of sand and gravel ten feet high had now formed as the borderline between land and sea. On the brink of it teetered a score of houses, as though ready to fall – partly on land, partly hanging over nothing. Even as onlookers stood watching, several slipped gently over the edge.

Other long standing buildings had gone forever.

Grey Friars house was completely demolished. Although the chapel's west wall stood, only that and the graveyard remained.

Pirates become more active

I mentioned piracy a little earlier. This was probably a feature of Dunwich life since the early days of the Saxon invasions, perhaps even earlier. Not piracy from ships at sea, but by men operating from the shore.

Records of medieval Britain between 1299 and 1318 indicate that there was an alarming increase in piracy during the last decade of the reign of Edward I and throughout the reign of Edward II, particularly on the East Anglian coast. And especially in the vicinity of Dunwich.

We might well ask, did this dramatic increase in piracy have anything to do with what was happening to Dunwich? I think it must have.

This once thriving port of Dunwich, was now decaying through circumstances beyond its control. So it was that in anger and frustration, many Dunwich men felt compelled to survive by resorting to robbery.

Erosion continues

Erosion was continuing year by year until a continuous cliff was formed, more or less in a straight line running north-south.

The cliff became higher as it retreated. There was nothing anyone could do about it.

People left money in their wills to save one of the churches that was in danger. But it was no use. They could only watch, as year by year, bit by bit, the sea edged closer. And they resigned themselves to the inevitable.

The old harbour mouth was closed forever... for as long as there was still a harbour.

The 1328 disaster

The year 1327 was almost ended. Just after Christmas Day, the weather changed for the worse. Blustery winds blew in from the north and east. The sea got rougher and rougher. Sleet or snow kept everyone indoors.

On January 14, in the afternoon, a gale blew up just as the high tide was coming.

Toward nightfall, the fury of the wind increased. People in the lower town had already gathered their most precious goods and accepted the hospitality of dwellers in the upper town. This had become a custom in Dunwich. Everyone sat that evening huddled around fires, trying to stay comfortable.

Few slept.

When morning came, red-eyed men and women slowly made their way downhill, leaning against the wind, to a sight even more appalling than they had feared.

Even as they stood aghast, watching, houses dissolved into sodden piles of rubble. The waves were relentless, smashing a house's timber framework, then using the beams as battering-rams to smash the next in line.

The shore-line – it did not exist. Now there was just a “no sea, no land” zone of unrecognisable debris piled high. From vantage points just out of reach of the waves, a thousand people watched. They were too shocked to weep.

Spray from the thundering tempest blew over some of them. Salt tears from the spray trickled down some faces. Lips moved. Few spoke.

Some families, huddling close together, stared long in blank despair upon swirling waters that now hid the site of what had been their home for generations. Hugging each other for comfort, they quickly turned away, and trudged back up the hill. With whatever belongings they still had, they left Dunwich, never to return.

But it was not the end of Dunwich. Yet it was a catastrophe on a scale never before seen in Dunwich, as everyone would soon discover.

The mayor and bailiffs assessed the damage parish by parish.

The parish of St Nicholas had once contained three hundred houses. But during the past forty years erosions had reduced these to less than two hundred. After this storm there were no more than thirty houses left standing. And some of these were now so close to the edge of the cliff that no one would dare to live there.

Of some one hundred houses in St Martin's parish only twenty-five now remained. The sea had made many sites empty. It was unlikely that these would ever again be occupied by man.

It was all so heart-breaking.

The mayor, William Helmeth, and his four fellow administrators continued their survey. Cautiously they picked their way across the piles of debris toward the mouth of the harbour. At first they were filled with bewilderment. Then overcome with despair. There was no haven mouth. Nor could they be sure exactly where it had been. Perhaps millions of tons of rubble now covered the whole area.

The city of Dunwich as a port was no more. The sea had made it... and the sea had destroyed it.

In the aftermath of this overwhelming disaster, a blanket of despair now settled upon the populace of Dunwich. Other times, they had been ready to fight. Now the dominant mood was one of surrender.

Some one hundred families immediately left the town. And many more over the next few months. Still others would depart later.

The battle for seaport supremacy

Commercial activity was resumed to some extent, from the place that Dunwich men would still obstinately call 'the port of Dunwich'.

However, compared with the past, this was now negligible. Despite the potential danger to their ships, many fishermen now chose to conduct their fishing from the open beach.

Of course, possession of a harbour meant income from associated tolls and customs.

So up to the time of this great disaster of 1328 Dunwich was tussling with nearby Southwold and Walberswick for this prize. The rivalry generated violence. Dunwich men went to great lengths to prevent ships from entering Southwold harbour.

But after the 1328 disaster, the volume of water in the river had forced a channel through the spit at a point two miles to the north. This gave Southwold and Walberswick the advantage!

Dunwich petitioned King Edward for help. And to retain Dunwich as the principle port on the east coast, it was decreed by the king that all fish landed at the new port of Southwold was to be sold only in Dunwich market!

The 1347 cataclysm

Storms again ravaged Dunwich in 1347. The loss once more left the town in shock. Four hundred houses, as well as windmills, churches, shops and numerous other buildings were lost in one night.

Dunwich was reduced by 25 per cent of its size. As a result, the city no longer needed to be governed by a Mayor and four Bailiffs. Dunwich from this time on would be governed only by Bailiffs.

It appears that throughout the fourteenth century Dunwich struggled to keep the harbour open. Time after time, cuts were made through the sand spit, then blocked again by the sea.

Whereupon the Dunwich men continued their harassment of ships entering into Southwold until the King finally ordered them to stop interfering with Southwold's trade.

All these problems aside, shipbuilding at Dunwich was continued. In 1338 nine ships were supplied for the King's expedition to Flanders; three years later, eleven ships for war service in Gascony and in 1347 six ships more for the siege of Calais.

The 15th century saw an agreement made for coastal trade between Dunwich and Hull and a number of other ports. The goods traded included cheese, butter, corn, bacon, coal and timber.

However, the decline of Dunwich was quite rapid now.

16th Century

Early in the 16th century, as the sea began to threaten St. John's Church, the Dunwich populace constructed a large protective wall to the east of the church. This wall was not adequate, however, so in about 1540 most of the church was pulled down to prevent it being lost to the sea. Then, in about 1550 the remainder fell onto the beach. It was recorded that many important Dunwich people, including a bishop were buried there.

Further heavy losses to the sea occurred in 1560 and 1570. To compensate for the loss of the port, Queen Elizabeth I gave some financial assistance to the town.

17th century

The erosion continued. By 1602 the city had been reduced to a quarter of its original size.

In 1618 King James intervened. He gave permission for Dunwich, Southwold and Walberswick to raise funds throughout England and Wales for the building of jetties and quays.

In May 1672, soon after England and France had declared war on Holland, the Battle of Sole Bay took place. There was a grandstand view of the battle to be had from the Dunwich cliffs.

The Dutch fleet of 138 ships, including fire ships, with a total of 4,202 guns, confronted the British fleet, assisted by the French, which totalled 156 ships, including fire ships, and with 4,950 guns. The total number of men engaged in the battle was 50,000.

For one standing on the Dunwich cliffs the sight of these vessels must have been spectacular, with the ships extending north towards Lowestoft and south towards Orford. The size of the force probably instilled into the citizens of Dunwich and other East Coast ports a great deal of apprehension.

The Dutch seemed to have the advantage at first, but later found themselves in serious trouble with fire coming at them from several directions.

As night fell, the Dutch, under Admiral De Ruyter, drew off to the south and the battle was over.

The sea continued to swallow up Dunwich. One by one more churches and other important buildings succumbed to the sea.

One large structure was St Peter's Church. It was last used during the year 1614. And soon after this the parishioners removed all moveable material, including, probably, much of the stonework. On December 11, 1688 the east end fell down the cliff onto the beach. The church tower followed nine years later. The ruins today lie on the seabed almost 300 meters from the shore.

A 16th century register from St. Peter's church is held by the British Museum.

18th century

In 1718, ten Burgesses from Dunwich were imprisoned for not paying the King's fee-farm rent. However, court testimony was given of their

helplessness brought about by the encroachment of the sea and the disuse of the harbour, which had resulted in the loss of tolls, customs and dues from the port. Judgment was fairly made that where there was no money the King must waive his right to the rent.

Another devastating storm hit Dunwich in 1740. The damage was of massive proportions. The sea battered the shore, destroying sea walls and flooding the marshes. Enormous waves swallowed the last remains of St. Nicholas churchyard. The great road leading into the town from the quay was devoured forever. A number of old wells from buildings long forgotten were exposed. Sand and shingle ruined pasture and the Cock and Hen hills, 40 feet high, were reduced to ground level.

The sea was unstoppable. It continued to scour away at the coastline... and little of the ancient capital remained.

In 1755 the final service was conducted in All Saints church, the last remaining church of old Dunwich.

19th Century

By 1832 the city was so reduced in population that it was disfranchised. No longer did Dunwich have a Member of Parliament. Then in 1883 the Corporation was dissolved. Whatever property and regalia remained was handed to the Dunwich Town Trust.

The East Anglian coast has been eroding for thousands of years.

Although the 1086 Doomesday Survey mentions serious loss of land at Dunwich, the actual loss up to the mid 16th century is not known.

The loss of land from the 16th century to the present day can be calculated with the assistance of old maps - about 388 meters of ground lost in 386 years, or an average loss of about 1 meter per year.

From *Memoirs of the Geological Survey of England & Wales of 1887*, we know that during the 108 years between 1772 and 1880 only 56 meters of cliffs were lost.

But the erosion between 1880 and 1912 was 33 metres, an average loss of just over a meter each year.

An eyewitness comes to Dunwich

An interesting contemporary description of Dunwich just a century ago comes from the *Daily Chronicle* of 8th April, 1904:

“All men have heard of the strange romantic history of Dunwich, that proud city of the east, whose scanty ruins now totter on the brink of the cliffs, a fleeting monument of the mutability of earthly things.

“Grim relics of that glorious past, dismembered fragments of the bodies of those who were once its proud citizens now cumber the beach and make playthings for the waves of the North Sea. I found a skull of one of these former residents on the shore yesterday.

“What a heyday Dunwich had! In the centuries long gone by, its harbour was filled with shipping, its coffers with gold, and its streets with prosperous citizens, who lorded it over all others in East Anglia...

“But those who built the town were like the men who built a house upon the sands, for the wind blew and the waves beat upon it and it fell. The Harbour, the ships, the streets, the churches, the palaces, the walls of stone and the gates of brass, all have gone.

“A church built well inland in the last century, with radiant primroses in profusion now decking its green graves; and a little street of pleasant gardened dwellings. This is the Dunwich of today ... the ruin of the ancient church of All Saints ... totters on the edge of the crumbling cliff. Trippers make sport on the old graveyard; but the wind and the waves make sport of All Saints. Year by year a slice is swept away. There is a field by its side, ploughed and sown, but it is twenty-eight yards narrower than when it was ploughed last year; the good land has gone into the hungry maw of the sea.

“On the beach below one sees the method of the havoc. There is also a ledge of sand and shingle, but at high tide the waves override it, and gnaw at the soft bottom of the sandy cliff. Then a slip occurs and away comes another part of the foundation of Dunwich's greatness.

“A slip had lately taken place when I was there yesterday morning. The earth was fresh, and black, huge blocks of the old monastery had tumbled with it, and the end of the Chancel wall ‘seemed to hang over above, as though its hour had come.’ But from the black earth and yellow sand gaunt bones protruded - not one but dozens. Every time the earth falls a

tomb opens, and its grisly contents are precipitated on the beach. I counted a score of fragments of human limbs, there a thigh bone, there a part of a pelvis, and there, perched on a mound of earth and masonry, a broken, toothless skull, the sockets where the eyes had been staring out on the restless waters.”

The huge church that went down

The writer mentions All Saints church. It was a long structure (44.8 meters) and in normal use until 1754. It seems to have been used after that date only for baptisms, marriages and burials.

In 1904, when the above article was written, the ruined church could still be seen perched on top of the cliffs. That same year the east end of the chancel fell down the cliff.

Photography was growing in popularity at the time the church became a ruin, so there are many photographs of what remained of the structure on top of the cliffs.

During the storms and high tides of 1911 nearly half the ruins of the church were washed away with the cliff. Five years later, the church tower was lost to the sea.

The church is now under water.

A small portion of what remained above water could be seen on the beach until about 1973.

The ruins of the church lie on the seabed in a gully between the beach and the first sandbank. Normally the ruins are covered by tons of mud and sand.

But there are occasions when storm and tide remove the sand and mud. At such times, if visibility permits, what remains of the church can be seen, scattered over a large area. Some portions rise 2 meters off the seabed.

Again, when there is visibility, the tower, the last part of the church to fall, can be seen lying across the main part of the ruin.

Our time

When I visited the site of Dunwich in the 1990s, part of the churchyard could still be seen on top of the cliff. Weather bleached bones stuck out of the cliff face. Sometimes, I am told, a white skull can be seen staring out to sea. In fact, when pieces of the cliff fall away, bones are strewn in disarray on the beach.

There is a lone gravestone marking the churchyard, which even now is quite extensive. The gravestone is for one John Brinkley Easy, who died in 1862. Another gravestone lies on its side near the monastery wall.

The North Sea has now swallowed up all the remains of Dunwich except for the ruins of the 13th century Franciscan Friary on the edge of the cliff and the Chapel of the Leper Hospital in the church yard.

Today a tiny village of 130 souls sits nearby. There are a few inshore fishing boats, a 17th century pub, a beach café and museum.

What's on the seabed?

Two sandbanks lie offshore. The outermost is about two miles from the shoreline. It's about half a mile wide and lies parallel to the shore. The other sandbank is close to the beach and likewise parallel to the shore. A trough separates the sandbank from the beach.

The base of the seabed is Coralline Crag. Ruins of the former city are often mixed with the crag. This makes identification of material very difficult, especially when underwater visibility is nil.

Clay is also found on the seabed. This is mainly in the northern part of the site, and is often covered with a thin layer of mud or sand.

The mud itself resembles chocolate blancmange. In depth the mud varies from a thin covering to around six feet. It is in this mud that many of the articles recovered have been found.

Most sealife in the area is found in the gullies, and in and around the various ruins. Thousands of crabs of all sizes and types move among the ruins. At certain times starfish cover the seabed.

Diving expeditions

Divers have been searching the seabed since 1971.

In those early years of underwater exploration, the water was much clearer. Seabed visibility of up to 4 meters was normal during a few days in May or June. So divers were able to see most of a ruin in a gully on the seabed, close to the shore, often covered with sponges and the home for thousands of crabs and a few lobsters.

However, today, the whole area is covered with sand and mud and due to bad seabed visibility the same ruin has not been seen for years.

Unfortunately, due to intensive farming methods with use of chemicals as well as an increase in pollution, underwater visibility of any distance is a rare treat. For most of the year seabed visibility near shore is nil.

Divers have to work using touch and hearing rather than sight, in order to locate seabed remains. Despite this, there are divers who return to the Dunwich area again and again, hoping to make a significant discovery.

Because the site of the former city of Dunwich is almost totally submerged in the rather murky waters of the North Sea, under meters of mud and sand, it does not lend itself to the usual form of archaeological investigation.

In 1973, a long search was made during a period of excellent seabed visibility and the ruins of St. Peter's Church, lost to the sea in 1688, were discovered.

Since then, nil visibility on the seabed has hampered any significant results. But some stonework has been recovered.

In 1979 divers reported nil visibility and thick mud. Although tree trunks and crag were detected under the mud, nothing further was found.

In 1981 a large obstruction was located on the seabed, sticking through the sand.

Further search confirmed the presence of a ruin. A considerable amount of hand work, stonework and part of a church window, were found. The exact extent of the site is unknown due to nil visibility.

However, hand-worked limestone, marble and granite were recovered. Scattered over the site were flints, some being flush-work. Recovered from the mud were two 12th century imposts, one in excellent condition and the other badly eroded. About 60 meters north of what appeared to be the central mass of the ruin, part of the top of a stone tomb weighing 139 pounds was discovered.

In 1983, divers carried metal excavators and air jets to move mud and sand. Green leaves, branches and bark were recovered from under the mud and sand. Identification of different species of trees was made.

Large man-made items were marked, then lifted off the seabed using lifting bags. More 12th and 13th century stonework connected with doorways and arches was recovered from the site, much of it in excellent condition.

What about the ringing bells?

I knew you'd ask that question.

Well, church Bells played an important everyday role in early times.

They told the people that it was the time to start work, the time to finish work, the time for prayer, the curfew hour, and so on. The bells tolled to announce a death. The bells pealed for a celebration.

In fact, this ancient custom continued in many rural districts until World War II. Then it was decided that all church bells should be silenced, except to announce invasion by the enemy.

The legend of the bells at Dunwich is that the tolling of bells from a submerged church or churches can be heard at a certain turn of the tide.

In 1856, John Day, a Master Mariner, claimed that he knew his position when making for Sizewell Bank on passage to Bawdsey Haven, by the tolling of a bell from a submerged church at Dunwich.

As an archaeologist I have come to learn that most legends are based on fact. It is quite possible that during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries or earlier, bells could have been heard from the sea.

In actual fact, a bell underwater makes a ‘clanging’ rather than a resonant sound. On the other hand, a bell standing on the seabed would most probably be partially filled with sand and for that reason unable to ring.

If a bell was submerged at certain states of the tide, it could be heard ringing from the surface of the water.

It should be understood that the masonry of early church towers was quite thick and the towers themselves were often circular in construction. This gave them great strength – enough strength to withstand the force of the waves for a considerable period.

On a visit to Dunwich in 1573, the historian Stowe reported that he “beheld the remains of ramparts, downfallen edifices and tottering noble structures” at the water’s edge.

I have a photograph of an old church tower, Eccles Church Tower, all that is left of an old ruin, still standing erect, all 60 feet of it, firm, solid and upright, on the beach.

Now, if such a church tower was standing this same way in the water, its bells could have been rung by the waves as they lapped at the belfry, with the rise and fall of each tide. As time went on and the tower tipped over, this might still occur, but only at very low tides.

Do the bells under the sea still ring? “...the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee”, wrote Moses.

7

THE LOST FIREBALL CITIES

It is early morning. The five cities of the Jordan Plain awaken.

The merchants are opening their shops. Men are going to work, children to school. Mothers are making beds, preparing laundry.

But suddenly, a hush falls over the countryside. The jubilant chatter of the birds and the boisterous crowing of the roosters is silenced.

A man named Lot, his wife and two unmarried daughters are literally dragged from the city of Sodom by the two strangers who arrived in the city the day before. The animals begin to stir uneasily. But no one notices the 'sense of impending doom'...

Without further warning, the sky darkens. To everyone's horror, balls of fire begin to fall. Myriads of them. The sound of a mighty wind is heard... and a tempest of fire begins to rain upon the cities and the surrounding plain.

In an instant, varying-sized missiles of burning sulphur cascade down upon the buildings, setting them ablaze.

The terrified screams of man and beast fill the air. But this continues only for a moment. After a few breaths, all life is asphyxiated.

Everywhere the fire-balls crash, they stick and completely consume whatever they fall upon. Within minutes the entire plain and the cities upon it are reduced to pure ash!

Background information

According to the book of Genesis five cities – Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zoboim and Zoar - sat on a fertile, watered plain near the Valley of Siddim (the present Dead Sea). In ancient times, the region was compared to the Garden of Eden. *(Genesis 13:10).*

There are recorded two interesting events:

1. A battle between these 5 cities and 4 other kings. *"Now the Valley of Siddim was full of tar [bitumen] pits, and when the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some of the men fell into them and the rest fled to the hills"* *(Gen. 14: 10).*

2. The cities' destruction. *"The Lord rained down brimstone and fire [burning sulphur] upon them"* *(Gen.19:24).*

Lot, a nephew of the Hebrew patriarch Abraham, moved into Sodom to live.

The afternoon before the fiery judgment, came two strangers. Lot invited them to lodge in his house overnight.

That evening they disclosed their errand and urged Lot to leave the city. A band of homosexuals banged on the door, demanding that the visitors be surrendered to them.

This fast-action account is charged with emotion. Lot's family has to be literally pulled out of the city for their own safety, leaving behind two sons-in-law, to whom Lot's pleadings are as from one gone mad.

The raining of fire and brimstone (sulphur), in which the land was "smoking like a furnace", utterly destroyed the cities and turned the countryside into desert.

The "Sin of Sodom"

Most people associate Sodom & Gomorrah with only one vice - that of sexual perversion. And they were guilty of that, as are a large number of people not only today, but down through the ages.

However, our most complete source of information about these cities, the Bible, states that their sin was something else:

"Behold, THIS was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, PRIDE, FULNESS OF BREAD, and ABUNDANCE OF IDLENESS was in her and in her

daughters, NEITHER DID SHE STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF THE POOR AND NEEDY. And they were HAUGHTY, and COMMITTED ABOMINATION before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good" (Ezekiel. 16:49, 50).

In the above passage, we learn that the root of their evil stemmed from their great wealth which led them to idleness and a disregard for those less fortunate than they. They were full of pride and haughtiness, thinking they were better than others.

Why were they so wealthy?

The mention of the "slime pits" may provide the answer, since it was a most valuable commodity in those days, being used extensively all over the ancient world. Not only was it used as a coating for burnt mud bricks (as a preservative), it was used in the mortar; it was used to provide a water-tight covering for things such as the famous "reed ark" Moses was placed in as a baby.

Even today, according to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "*In its various forms bitumen is one of the most widely distributed of substances*".

In the ancient Ebla tablets from Syria, one tablet listing some purchases and the price for each item in silver, shows that the highest price was paid for bitumen.

And the people of Sodom and Gomorrah had only to walk out in their "front yard" and gather it. They had no reason to engage in hard work. They had a "gold mine" there just for the taking. This also explains why the kings of other great nations wanted to make them vassals - to participate in their great wealth through the extraction of tribute in the form of bitumen.

Was this bitumen involved in the disaster?

This bitumen could also possibly have provided a hint as to a catalyst in the conflagration which occurred in this plain. Bitumen, or slime pits, result from an underground petroleum reserve oozing through to the surface. And all oil reserves have natural gas associated with them, which also can seep into the air.

All of this is speculation, but the region yields the elements and evidences of an extremely cataclysmic occurrence - one in which a lake was

formed, blocking the river from its continued flow and which devastated the entire plain to the extent that nothing grows there.

The Dead Sea

This is the deepest spot on earth. It dips down between Israel and Jordan, some 1,300 feet (400 metres) below sea level, to what is known as the DEAD SEA.

In this lake no fish can live. The waters are 28 per cent salt, six times saltier than the ocean. Any careless fish that ventures from the River Jordan down into this evil lake chokes to death and is pickled.

In this water you cannot sink. When you jump in, you feel as if you are being thrown out again.

It was too much of a temptation: I just lay back on the water like a floating cork, to read a book.

The scorching sun dries your skin almost at once. The thin crust of salt which the water has deposited on your body makes you look quite white. You must rinse this off quickly, or risk severe burning.

Virtually nothing grows here. The shore is utterly desolate... and in summer it bakes like an oven.

When I first saw this desert, the shallow water close to shore was choked with the stumps of ancient trees, encrusted in salt. There was a bizarre beauty about it.

It is hard to believe that this whole area was once like a beautiful garden, exceptionally fertile.

The cities lost

Tablets from Ebla dated to about 2000 BC named these cities and their kings.

The first century New Testament writer Jude wrote:

“Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange

flesh, are set forth an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire”
(Jude 7).

The Greek word used in Jude’s original letter and translated as “ an example”, is “deigma”, which signifies “a thing shown”, “a specimen”. It comes from the root word “deiknumi”, “to show”. Jude was saying that the ruins were visible in his day.

Also in the first century, the historian Josephus wrote:

“The length of the lake [the Dead Sea] is five hundred and eighty furlongs, where it is extended as far as Zoar in Arabia; and its breadth is a hundred and fifty. The country of Sodom borders upon it...” He goes on to say that the lake “*throws up black lumps of bitumen in many parts of it. These swim at the top of the water...*” Then he adds: “*There are still the remainders [remains made of ash] of that divine fire; and the traces (or shadows) of the five cities are still to be seen...*” (Wars of the Jews, Bk IV, ch. 8, Sec. 4)

It appears that in Josephus’ time the location of these dead cities was known and pointed to. But after the destruction of Judea and the dispersion of the Jews this knowledge was forgotten.

For centuries travellers passed through this desolate waste, oblivious to the fact that the shapeless ruins close by were those of a city, so thorough had been the destruction.

In search of the remains

In our day popular speculations have placed the ruins of these lost cities on the floor of the Dead Sea.

In 1960, an American explorer, with the friendly cooperation of the Jordanian monarchy, attempted to make a search of the north, middle and south end of the Dead Sea bottom.

He located, photographed and displayed a few poorly identifiable objects that he claimed to have found at depths and locations that are incompatible with the actual depths in the named locations.

The only certainties that emerged were that trees once grew on the land now covered by water. And there was no evidence of any remains of cities. But these efforts and published data have led many to incorrectly believe that the cities rest beneath the Dead Sea.

Another attempt has been made more recently, but with similar inconclusive results.

Not under the sea

However, the cities cannot lie under the sea. Here's why.

You recall that in his statement above, Josephus says that:

1. The ruins were **VISIBLE IN HIS DAY – ON THE BORDERS OF THE DEAD SEA**, not hidden under it!
2. The bitumen pits (of the old Vale of Siddim) were **SUBMERGED – BUT NOT THE RUINS OF THE CITIES**.
3. His description of the remains perfectly describes what can be seen in these five ashen sites. They are visible on land. They are all whitish in color; the shadows and shapes display all the visual characteristics of ancient cities and walls.

From surveying, mapping and dating the ancient shore lines in the salt caves of Mount Sedem [Mount Sodom], Hebrew University speleologist Amos Franklin concluded that the **SEA LEVEL** about 2,000 years ago was **HIGHER** than at present. (*A. Frumkin, Holocene Environmental Change Determined from Salt Caves of Mount Sedem, Israel. The Holocene, 1, 1991, pp. 191-200*)

The significance of that find is simply this: If the remains of Sodom and Gomorrah were visible in the first century (when the sea level was **HIGHER**), then the same remains **CANNOT** be underwater today, when the sea level is lower.

Under the drowned plain to the south?

So could the ruins be under the water of the drowned plain to the south of the Dead Sea?

The Jordan River flows into the Dead Sea, but there is no outflow from the sea. Thus, after the destruction of the cities, the level of the sea rose and eventually covered the plain to the south. Scholars hopefully suggested that the cities lay beneath these shallow waters.

More recently, however, Jordan waters have been siphoned off for irrigation purposes. This lowered the lake level and largely exposed the southern plain. But there was no sign of any ruined cities there.

Or the ruins found to the east?

Could the remains of Numeira and Bab edh Dhra on the east side of the Dead Sea be the sites of Sodom and Gomorrah?

The remains of Numeira and Bab edh Dhra represent two of five ruined sites in that area.

There are several reasons – if you believe the biblical account - that these sites do not qualify. The first reason is simply this - they are not "in the plain" but instead on the plateau, some 500 feet above the plain. When William Albright and Melvin Kyle discovered the site of Bab ed-Dra in 1924, they understood immediately that this site was not a candidate for Sodom, Gomorrah or any of the cities of the plain: *“It is most emphatically not a city, but rather a temporary encampment, like Gilgal, or perhaps rather like the somewhat shadowy Baal-peor of Moab. Since the plain of Bab ed-Dra is not suitable for cultivation, and is high above the gorge of the Seil ed-Dra, it would in any case be a very unsatisfactory place for a town. As a festival site for the inhabitants of the oases below it is admirable, since it is situated on the first convenient rise of terrain above the central oasis of el-Mezra'ah, some five hundred feet above the level of the Dead Sea.”* (William Foxwell Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*, 1932, p. 136)

The **second** reason that these sites don't qualify as candidates for the cities of the plain is their size - the largest site, Bab ed-Dra is just 10 acres, while Numeira is only 2! Think about it - that's not large enough to even qualify as SMALL towns.

The evidence shows that these sites were indeed high places, or places visited by pilgrims.

The cemetery at Bab ed-Dra is said to contain over 20,000 graves which hold over 500,000 people. Could that many people live in a 10 acre town? Of course not. But that they may have been high places and cemeteries of the cities of the plain is a possibility.

With the cities completely destroyed, perhaps their cemeteries and high places were spared as a testimony of the fact that an extremely large population once lived in the area.

Thirdly, the apostle Peter mentions the condition of the remains of Sodom and Gomorrah during the time of Christ:

“And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ASHES condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly” (2 Peter 2:6).

This passage tells us that the cities were ASHES.

Adherents to the theory of the five sites on the Jordanian side of the Dead Sea (Bab edh Dhra, Numeira, etc) have failed to note that these are NOT ashen.

These sites do show evidence of being burned. Archaeologists unearthed a thick layer of black ash. But the sites are NOT ash, as the Bible says Sodom and Gomorrah were. They contain a large number of burnt artifacts but they also contain foodstuffs (including carbonised grapes which still have their skins) and other articles that are still intact.

Careful examination of the remains of these show them to be typical of those destroyed in war. Archaeologists have found wood and other flammable materials in VARYING STAGES OF DECAY.

This is not compatible with the destruction of the “cities of the plain” as described in the Bible! There is no evidence whatever that sulphur (brimstone) was involved in their overthrow! There is no evidence of fire from the heavens.

Fourthly, the land east of the Dead Sea was anciently known as Moab, Ammon or Seir (Edom).

Deuteronomy 2:8-12 states that the traditional inhabitants of Moab were Emims and those inhabiting Seir were a group called Horims, who were later dispossessed by the descendants of Esau.

Thus the lands bordering the east side of the Dead Sea were not Canaanite.

Now the “Cities of the Plain” were unquestionably Canaanite cities, since they are listed to define the borders of Canaanite territory (*Gen. 10:19*). The Canaanite territory was to the west of the Dead Sea.

The lost cities located

The identification was made in 1989.

There is a mountain called Mount Sodom. This long, narrow mountain is a salt dome - made entirely of salt. Behind it is the squarish shape of an ancient city. Since the mountain is called SODOM, could this city have been SODOM?

In this region are five sites which share one thing in common. In all the world, only these five sites share this common feature. Within their perimeters everything has been totally burned to ASH.

According to the Bible, five cities which lay in this region were destroyed by falling fire and brimstone (sulphur) and turned to ash.

Of these five cities, Sodom is always listed first. Presumably, it was the most important, or largest, of the five. And of the five sites we have found, the largest is adjacent to Mount Sodom.

Nearby is the smallest of the sites. The biblical record states that when Lot fled Sodom to escape its destruction, he wanted to go to Zoar, which was close by and was just “a little city”. Again, this site has been totally turned to ash.

The second largest, as well as the best preserved of the sites, lies between Masada and the Dead Sea. Since Gomorrah was listed second in the biblical account, we conclude that these ashen remains qualify to be the remnants of Gomorrah.

This has to be the eeriest ghost town on earth. You would experience an oven by day, and at night the stark silence of death

This whole region reeks of some ancient curse.

I still remember vividly my first visit to this haunting place.

A friend from Western Australia had just been with me to an archaeological site in Turkey. We were now bound for Israel. Since

Trevor's air ticket was with Jordanian Airlines, he was obliged to travel via Amman, in Jordan, and come overland to Israel by means of the Allenby Bridge.

I promised to wait in Jerusalem for two days. We would then travel to the remains of Sodom and Gomorrah.

So Trevor flew to Amman, then boarded a bus that would take him to the River Jordan.

There he attempted to cross the border into Israel. But the border was closed! It was a Jordanian holiday. The next day he made another attempt to cross the border - and the border was closed. It was an Israeli holiday. He tried for a third day to cross over the border... and once again the border was closed.

Poor Trevor! ...another Jordanian holiday.

I would have appreciated Trevor's company for exploring inside some of the structures at Gomorrah. My idea had been to tie a rope around my waist, with Trevor holding onto the other end. Since the formations were of ash, it might well be dangerous to enter any of them alone. Who knew whether, after these 4,000 years, a ceiling might suddenly collapse? In that event, Trevor might (hopefully) find me quickly and help get me out.

Not so! With Trevor delayed and my schedule tight, I went to the site alone.

It was two hours before sunset. The lengthening shadows accentuated the shapes of ashen formations rising above the desert. One could make out outlines of walls.

From the start, I was struck by the contrast between brown, stony desert and the white of a city that had been turned to ashes. They were separate and most distinct from each other.

The eeriness

After a preliminary exploration, I located a spot on the ashes to lie down and sleep.

That night, one might have been in a tomb – it was so deathly silent. Time after time I would drop off to sleep, only to almost immediately reawaken. The silence wakens you.

Each time I would stare at the sky overhead and note that the stars seemed hardly to have moved. Eventually the moon peered up above the horizon and crept slowly higher over the Dead Sea.

It was now casting eerie shadows on the remains around me ... structures composed totally of ash. It felt weird, all alone under a full moon in this city of the dead. I could hardly wait for sunrise!

The sun popped up from behind the Jordanian hills, blazing hot. In no time I was perspiring. Soon the plain was a furnace. In this desert the temperature could soar to 49 degrees Celsius in the shade.

This time of the year, the maximum time one could explore would be a mere 30 minutes. Dehydration was quick.

This Dead Sea Valley is an immense oven, in which many have died of thirst in a matter of hours.

I would soon find myself searching for the rare spot of shade - a place to sit down... and drink... drink... drink...

And it might be all of another half hour before one was ready to brave the direct sun again.

Heat reflected up from the ashes.

Structures

There was distinct form here. Remains of buildings, one of them five stories high. All ash now. This place had suffered tremendous destruction.

Periodically there were openings in the walls, entrances to the city, where you see actual “streets”.

These wide avenues had buildings on both sides, and led to other side streets. The large piles of ash made walking difficult down these streets.

Sodom and Gomorrah were Canaanite cities, according to the Bible. And the cities of the Canaanites were constructed with double walls, with buildings atop them.

And were these shapes once windows? One became aware that nothing one's eyes saw was stone... or earth... or sand. Not any more. I was looking here at ash - ash from a tremendous fire.

And there it was - the city wall - a double wall, with buttresses coming out from it at right angles. These had been built to strengthen the wall.

There were traces of sphinxes. And close by the clear remains of a ziggurat, or stepped pyramid. This was built upon a rectangular platform, just as were the ziggurats of ancient Mesopotamia.

One of the interesting features of these sites is the layering present in ALL of the ashen material. Hundreds and thousands of layers are present, none very thick. In very high temperature fires, and/or in very hot flames containing alkali metals or alkaline-earth materials (for example, sodium and calcium) the positive and negative ions attract and repel, resulting in this layering effect.

We know the flames had to be extremely hot in order to completely burn stone and metals; and we know there is a tremendous amount of sodium (salt) in the region - the Dead Sea has the highest concentration of salt of any body of water on earth. And the largest salt dome, Mt. Sodom, is also in the area.

Mary Nell Wyatt reports:

“In 1989, we visited the site just below Masada and took samples of the whitish material which we all discovered broke right off in our hands and disintegrated into particles the consistency of talcum powder. It certainly LOOKED like ash! But what to do about this information was a puzzle. After all, these sites have been right out in plain sight since their destruction in about 1897 BC.

"Samples taken for testing DID prove to be ASH! We were convinced, but we knew there had to be better evidence than just this - evidence that would convince a skeptical world. We began to pray that the Lord would help us to find this (unknown) evidence.”

The Clinching Evidence

Both American explorer Ron Wyatt and myself had separately encountered this experience of going in, not seeing it... then praying... and going back, quite separately, to find that RAIN HAD JUST FALLEN!

In the desert? Yes, rain is a rare occurrence in this area. There is as little as $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch of rain a year (or 6.25 to 12.5 millimeters).

The rain had splashed away the thin film of ash that normally blows on top of the evidence, concealing it from sight.

But now, there they were: embedded in the ash were balls of burnt sulphur - brimstone - probably millions of them! Here was actual evidence that fire and brimstone once rained upon this area!

As I bent to pick up a block of ash, I noticed small yellow balls embedded in it. Each ball was (or had been) surrounded by a black crystalline shell, and around that was a reddish-black ring in the ash.

Prying one of these out, I recognised it as sulphur. Smelling it, I KNEW it was sulphur. Here was the physical evidence. All through the ashen remains were round balls of sulphur encapsulated in burnt (crystalline) sulphur.

As we scanned the site, at first not knowing what to look for, we saw these sulphur balls literally everywhere.

Before, we hadn't been able to see them because the loose ash had covered everything. But now the rain washed away the loose ash and caused a section to fall away, revealing these sulphur balls embedded through the ashen material.

The reddish-black crystalline material surrounding the sulphur balls showed that they had once been on fire.

It happened for me on more than one expedition. Of my eight expeditions to Gomorrah, I believe it was the fifth one that I took some professional cameramen in with me. I wanted so badly for the world to see these unique sulphur balls. And, since I knew that prayer worked – for me it had worked on many occasions – I had prayed again before leaving Australia. This would also be my wife Josephine's first visit. I so much wanted her to see them, too!

It was dark... and about 9 pm. Our 4-wheel drive bumped its way across the desert and entered the ruins. We turned right into a cul-de-sac and stopped.

I was seated next to the driver. In the darkness, I threw the door open and slid to the ground. From her seat behind me, Josephine did likewise. She had a flashlight in her hand. She shone it straight down and screamed!

“Look! It’s been raining! See the impressions in the ash?”

Then she shone the light between my feet.

“There it is! A sulphur ball?” Was she excited!

The cameramen got out and ran around to our side. I picked up the sulphur ball – about the size of a kid’s marble – and examined it.

“Does anyone have a spoon?” I called. Brett the driver fumbled in his bag and handed me one.

“Matches, anyone?” They came fast. Everyone was so-o-oh excited. This was everyone else’s first expedition.

I placed the sulphur ball on the spoon. And struck the match. A purple-bluish light began to grow bigger. It lit up the area around so we could lay out our ground sheets.

Here was something that long, long ago had come out of the sky burning. The ash had then smothered the ball and the fire had gone out. And now 4,000 years later here we were re-igniting and finishing off the fire.

It seems that as these burning balls of brimstone fell from the sky, they set everything ablaze. And they burned right through everything. And as they burned, after a while, molten material surrounding the sulphur cut it off from the oxygen, preserving it in the interior of the ashes.

What we call a "burn ring" surrounds each capsule -suggesting that the ash itself was vitrified.

It appears that as the ashen material erodes and these sulphur balls become exposed to the surface, they fall out of their capsules. Thus they

can be found lying all over the ground. However, we were not able to see them before because they had been covered with the loose layer of ash.

The biblical report claims that "the Lord **rained brimstone** and fire" on the cities. And we might ask, how does rain fall? In drops, of course!

And this burning brimstone DID fall in drops, which landed in the pattern that rain would fall.

This burned sulphur covers the remains of the five cities discovered.

Of course, anyone can deny a find like this, but that does not alter the fact that Ron Wyatt and team have discovered the ashen remains of what must be the cities of the plain - and Jonathan Gray and team have in person confirmed this discovery.

The clinching evidence, I believe, is the pressed powder balls of brimstone inside burn capsules, and surrounded by burn rings embedded in ash – a phenomenon which, as far as can be determined, is found **NOWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD.**

So it was that as the sun arose for the last time upon the cities of the plain, the people thought to commence another day of debauchy and riot. All were eagerly planning business or their pleasure, and the messengers who had visited to warn them were derided for their fears and their warnings. Like a thunder peal from an unclouded sky, fell fire on the doomed capital.

Which accords with the fact that we have balls of brimstone.