

THE RUINS OF BIBLE CITIES: THEIR SCENES AND ASSOCIATIONS

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The Ruins of Bible Cities: Their Scenes and Associations by Ebenezer Davies

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EBENEZER DAVIES

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THE RUINS OF EPHESUS--REMAINS OF THE GREAT THEATRE.—See page 207.

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THEIR
SCENES AND ASSOCIATIONS.

BY
EBENEZER DAVIES.

LONDON:
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1868.

P R E F A C E.

THE Ruins of Ancient Cities are the stand-points of history, and the demonstrations of its truth. They present a pictured chronicle of great events, and of the habits and customs of nations that have long since passed away. The present century has been remarkable for the unexpected discoveries of such ruins. Those discoveries have been made in the East and in the West, in the Old World and in the New. In Italy—to say nothing of Herculaneum and Pompeii, partly unshrouded before this century commenced—Etruria presents the remains of a people who had attained a high degree of civilisation before even Rome herself was founded. On the northern coast of Africa, Carthage, once the rival of Rome, has been uncovered. In Mexico and Peru we have been startled to find remains, which, in design and execution, strikingly resemble those that had astonished us in the East.

To the Christian, however, no remains are so interesting as those of the cities referred to in the Sacred Page—the scenes of events, the earliest and the most stupendous in the annals of mankind. In this little volume the author has endeavoured to bring the scattered lights of History and Topography to bear as vividly as possible upon the remains of a few of those cities. From some of them—NINEVEH, BABYLON, PETRA, and the CITIES of OG—the mist of centuries has

been, in our day, rolled off, and they exhibit the most remarkable illustrations of the accuracy of Scripture records, and of the fulfilment of Scripture prophecy. Others—such as BETHLEHEM, NAZARETH, and JERUSALEM—with their matchless memories, are associated with our most devout thoughts and holiest aspirations. Those renowned Greek cities—ANTIOCH, ATHENS, CORINTH, and EPHESUS—help us to form an idea of the types of civilisation and the systems of polytheism with which in its infancy our holy religion had to meet in frequent and fierce encounters.

The Author has not in every case stopped to draw the moral, or to point out the lessons suggested by the various objects. His aim has been rather to put his readers in a position to see things with their own eyes, and to draw conclusions according to their own judgments. He has endeavoured to represent the various ruins, not only as they now exist, but as they once were—peopled with the busy thousands who then worked and played, bought and sold, loved and warred, within their walls.

To the Author, and the Publishers of the "Giant Cities of Bashan"—the Rev. J. L. Porter, A.M., and Messrs. Thomas Nelson & Sons—the writer is under special obligation for the very kind manner in which they allowed him to extract freely from that Work—the best and most recent on those marvellous old cities.

LONDON, *March*, 1868.

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RUINS OF BIBLE CITIES.

SODOM AND GOMORRAH.

God "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."—THE APOSTLE PETER.

The Dead Sea, its size and peculiarities—Thirty-seven centuries ago—Evening aspect from western hill—Character of population—One good man—Morning aspect from eastern hill—Appearance of six persons, three abreast—Last view of the Vale of Siddim—The catastrophe—Physical confirmation of Scripture account—United States Expedition in 1848—Storm on the Dead Sea—Supposed sites of Sodom and Gomorrah—Startling discovery.

THE River Jordan, flowing southward, empties itself into a large inland lake, called the DEAD SEA. That lake or sea is about forty-five miles in length, and about ten in breadth. It lies in a deep chasm, bounded on the east and on the west by gigantic walls of precipitous mountains, which seem to frown defiance at each other across its tranquil surface. That surface is 1312 feet

below the level of the Mediterranean Sea—an amazing depression, when we consider that the Caspian, the largest inland lake in the world, 760 miles by 278, is only fifty or sixty feet below the level of the Black Sea. The water of the Dead Sea holds an immense quantity of salt in solution, and is, therefore, buoyant beyond a parallel. Josephus says, “It is so light (or thick) that it bears up the heaviest things that are thrown into it; nor is it easy for any one to make things sink therein to the bottom, if he had a mind so to do. Accordingly, when Vespasian went to see it, he commanded that some who could not swim, should have their hands tied behind them, and be thrown into the deep, when it so happened that they all swam, as if a wind had forced them upwards.” This is easily accounted for. The weight of water increases in proportion to the quantity of salt it contains in solution. Ordinary sea water has about 4 per cent. of salt, whilst that of the Dead Sea contains more than 26 per cent.

“Two of us,” says Dr. Robinson, of America, “bathed in the sea, and although I could never swim before, either in fresh water or salt, yet here I could sit, stand, lie, or swim in the water, without any difficulty.” Another traveller says, “A muscular man floated nearly breast high, without the least exertion.”

Containing such superabundance of salt, the water is so acrid and nauseous as to be destructive of both vegetable and animal life. The fish that are forced into it by the Jordan, speedily die. Birds are not often seen, there being no fish nor other food on which they can live.