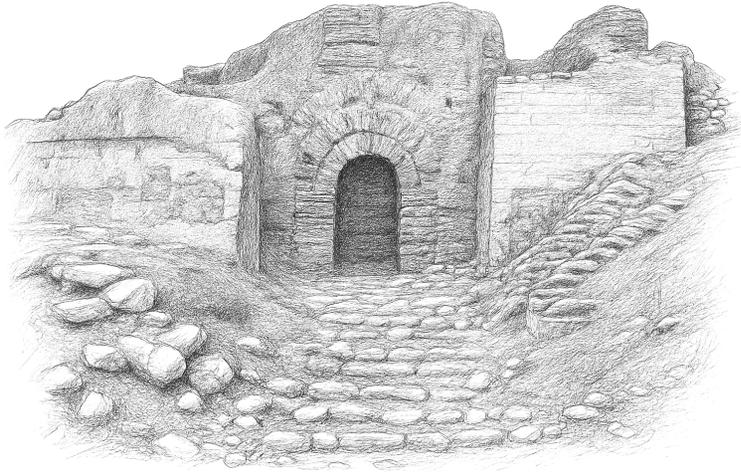


# ANCIENT WORLDS *of the* BIBLE

Study Guide 3

by Pastor Daniel McFeeters



Abraham's Gate at Tel Dan

## Good Creator, Bad World?

One of the biggest philosophical challenges that we face with creation is aligning our observations of death with the goodness of God as recorded in the Bible. On the 6th day of creation, “God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31) Yet we see death and destruction—which the Bible says is the result of sin (Genesis 3). Evolution teaches that death and extinction is the *means* of creation—making this view incompatible with the Biblical account of a perfect creation.

## We're still searching...

When we peel back the layers of the earth through archaeology, we uncover many answers — glimpses into ancient civilizations, lost cities, and forgotten stories. Yet with every discovery, we also unearth new questions. It's the same when we explore the origins of life and the universe. Science and Scripture reveal strong evidence for design and purpose, but challenges remain — like interpreting radiometric dating results that suggest an ancient earth, or grappling with distant starlight and the ordering of the fossil record. These mysteries invite humility, reminding us that our understanding is still unfolding. Yet through it all, the Bible lights our path, assuring us that behind every question stands a faithful Creator.

## Peeling Back the Layers

At the northern tip of Israel, near the lush springs of the Jordan, rises Tel Dan—a mound that looks quiet and unremarkable. But as archaeologists peeled back its layers, they uncovered a buried world: Canaanite walls, Israelite temples, and even a gateway dating back four thousand years. Known as the Abraham Gate, it ties directly to Genesis 14, where Abram pursued the captors of his nephew Lot “as far as Dan.”

Layer by layer, Tel Dan reveals that what seemed like myth was grounded in history. Far to the south, the layers in another mountain tell a far more tragic story. Herod built Masada as a stronghold, but decades later Jewish rebels turned to it as their last refuge against Rome. Their leader, Eleazar ben Ya'ir, convinced his followers that they could hold out against Rome. With unyielding resolve, they resisted until the Romans scaled the mountain with their great siege ramp. Only then did the rebels realize that their fortress couldn't save them. There, in the face of certain defeat, Eleazar urged his nearly one thousand followers—men, women, and children—to a tragic end rather than surrender. The ruins that remain tell the story of their lives and stand as a stark reminder of the importance of this one question: *Who and what will you trust?*

Digging deeper into the earth, we discover layers that seem to tell a story stretching much further back than recorded history. Geologists and paleontologists interpret these layers as evidence that the world and life emerged gradually, through unguided natural processes stretched across vast ages. Yet as we explore these same layers through the lens of Scripture, we discover evidence of sudden, cataclysmic events—massive flooding, rapid rock formation—fitting the very accounts preserved in Scripture. How we interpret these layers—whether we trust man's story or God's Word—has consequences just as real, just as ultimate, as those faced at Masada!

## Questions for Reflection & Discussion

### Designed by a Creator

When we look closely at the world around us — from the stars above to the cells within — we find overwhelming evidence of design. Science itself points us to the fingerprints of a Creator.

Consider these amazing truths:

- **Fine-Tuning of the Universe:**  
The laws of physics are incredibly precise — perfectly balanced to allow life. This precision speaks of a wise Designer.
- **Information in DNA:**  
Inside every living cell is a complex code, far more advanced than any human technology. Information always points back to an intelligent source.
- **Irreducible Complexity:**  
Some biological systems need every part to function. They could not have evolved step-by-step, but show the careful planning of a Master Engineer.
- **The Mystery of Life's Origin:**  
After decades of research, scientists still cannot explain how life could arise by chance. Life's beginning bears the marks of God's creative hand.
- **The Privileged Planet:**  
Earth is uniquely suited not only for life but for discovery — a place designed for us to live and to explore God's creation.

#### The Bible reminds us:

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork."

(Psalm 19:1)

Today, whether we gaze at the stars or study the smallest cell, let's remember: We are not accidents. We are part of God's beautiful design!

**SCRIPTURE:** "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works..." Psalm 139:14

**REFLECTION:** When you realize that you were especially created by God, how does that affect your view of yourself? How does that impact the way you want to live your life in the future?

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**QUESTION:** How does your view of origins affect the way you value other people around you? Do you think some people are more valuable, more important or somehow better than others? Or is everyone the same?

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**EXPERIENCE:** What has been the most interesting study or experience that has helped you answer this question of origins? Perhaps reading a book, watching a documentary, or taking a trip?

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**QUESTION:** How do you personally see the relationship between science and the Bible, particularly in relation to this question of Creation versus Evolution, and the Bible account of the flood? Do you think science is in conflict with the Bible or in agreement?

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**QUESTION:** Do you think there is life on other planets in the universe? How would that change the way you see yourself, our world, and the message of the Bible?

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**RESPONSE:** Do you want to love the God who created this world and formed you in His image?

