

Excavations At Nineveh

Nineveh was one of the great cities of antiquity. It was a capital of the Assyrians, rulers of the Near East from about 900 to 600 B.C. Nineveh is well known in the Bible as the place where God sent Jonah to preach. It is also mentioned a number of times in connection with the Assyrians and their rulers. The city met its downfall in 612 B.C. when the judgments of God fell on it as predicted by Nahum and Zephaniah.

Nineveh is located on the east side of the Tigris River in northern Iraq, opposite the modern city of Mosul. The site has been excavated almost continuously since Englishman Henry Layard first explored it in 1843. The ruins fall into three major areas:

1. The city wall with its various gateways and towers, enclosing an area of approximately 1800 acres.
2. The mound of Kuyunjik covering Sennacherib's palace and a number of other palaces and temples. Scholars say that this one mound is so vast (a mile wide at its broadest point and 90 feet high) that it will never be completely explored.
3. The Mound of Nebi Yunus covering a palace and several other buildings. Because an old cemetery is located on the mound, excavations have not been carried out here to any extent.

As at Babylon, the Directorate General of Antiquities has been conducting excavations and restoration activities at Nineveh over the past few years. Their most recent report told of accomplishments for the seasons of 1968–1969 and 1969–1970. According to the report, the restoration activities are “intended to turn the ancient city into a center of attraction for tourists and those interested in Iraqi archaeology, reflecting to them the past glories of the people of Mesopotamia”. The work has been under the leadership of Dr. T. A. Madhloom, Director of Assyrian Research for the Directorate General of Antiquities. Three city gateways are being excavated and restored, as well as several rooms in Sennacherib's Palace.

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The three gateways being rebuilt are the Shamash Gate in the eastern wall, the Mashki Gate in the western wall, and the Adad Gate in the northern wall. At each, the gateway, the adjoining wall, and a number of towers either side of the gate are being uncovered and restored. While clearing the entrance of the Mashki Gate, a number of stone slabs lining the lower parts of one wall were uncovered. The faces of the slabs, measuring six and one-half by four feet, were engraved with cuneiform inscriptions giving the name of King Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.), who ordered the construction of the gate.

Probably the most noteworthy work at the site is in Sennacherib's Palace in the mound of Kuyunjik. Henry Layard, the first excavator of the palace, estimated ...

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