



CLASSICAL HISTORY—MESOPOTAMIA

The ancient world was centered in the area that we now call the Middle East. The first cities were built near rivers because they depended on a reliable source of water for drinking, bathing, water crops, and for travel to trade with other cities.

The first recorded civilization was centered in the fertile lands between the Tigris River and the Euphrates River. Later, historians referred to this area as Mesopotamia, a compound Greek word from *mesos* meaning “middle” and *potamos* meaning “rivers.” Thus, the name means “between two rivers.” Sometimes history books will also refer to this area as the Fertile Crescent due to the variety of crops made possible by the soil. This area gave birth to the city-states of Sumer and Babylon. Mesopotamia is the land into which Abraham was born, and the account of his life mentions some of the early cities like Ur.

Other ancient kingdoms included Egypt, the Indus River Valley, Crete, and the Shang Dynasty in China. These ancient peoples developed tools, architecture, temples, systems of writing, and metalwork. We know about these societies from the artifacts they left behind such as pottery, clay tablets with written records, and paintings. Archeologists have spent many years uncovering these treasures and decoding the languages of these ancient peoples. Archeology has helped to establish that the histories recorded in Scripture are accurate.

Further Reading

- *Classical Conversations* [Classical Acts and Facts History Cards](#) - #1, #4
- *Kingfisher History Encyclopedia* (pp. 8-19)
- *Streams of Civilization* (pp. 33-50)
- *Victory Journey Through the Bible* (pp. 18-19)

Activities

[Coloring Sheet of a Ziggurat](#)

[Instructions for Making a Clay Tablet with Cuneiform Writing](#)

[Learn about Iraq](#)

For older students wishing to learn more about the intersection of archaeology and the Bible:

[Examine the archaeological evidence supporting the Exodus](#)

[Archaeological discoveries bearing on the Exodus-Judges period](#)

General Resources for Studying Ancient History

1. A chronological timeline of Ancient History

- *Classical Conversations* [Classical Acts and Facts History Cards](#)

2. A history encyclopedia (there are many excellent choices, but these two are comprehensive)

- *Kingfisher History Encyclopedia*
- *Usborne Internet-Linked Encyclopedia of World History*

3. History Text Spine

- *Story of the World (for younger students)*
- *Streams of Civilization (for older students)*

4. Picture Books

- Keep a stock at home or use the local library.