

The Stone

Mike Moore



Perhaps it is hard to believe, but the discovery of an ancient carved stone once stirred excitement throughout the world. Sometimes things which appear insignificant have a big impact. Such is the case of the Rosetta Stone.

The stone has opened doors previously closed.

On July 19, 1799, a twenty-eight year old Frenchman named Francois Bouchard, a scholar who accompanied Napoleon to Egypt, received a large stone while he was serving in the Middle East. When the stone was discovered during construction work, Bouchard understood it could be important. After the British defeated the French in Egypt, they took possession

of the stone.

Thomas Young, a British scientist, studied the stone and was able to figure out some of the writing. A Frenchman, Jean-Francois Champollion, also studied the inscriptions. He found that the writing on the Rosetta Stone was a decree by Ptolemy V of Egypt and was written about 196 B. C.

The artifact was discovered near a town named Rosetta, close to the Nile River. It is now in the British Museum and is the most visited item in that place. It is of black granite, weighs 1,680 pounds, is about four feet high, about two and one-half feet wide, and one foot thick.

The huge importance of the stone is the fact that the inscriptions on it are in three languages: Egyptian hieroglyphics, another ancient Egyptian language called Demotic, and Greek. Demotic came into use about 800 B. C. The first two languages were no longer being used and were forgotten. All three languages say the same thing. Experts who knew Greek could now figure out what the ancient languages said. It was a real breakthrough, since before the stone's appearance, the ancient languages were unknown.

With the stone in the three languages, much more is now known about Ancient Egypt. Experts are able to learn things about countries near Israel and arrive at conclusions in the study of events in Bible history.

Sources: Halley's Bible Handbook, Christian Institute.