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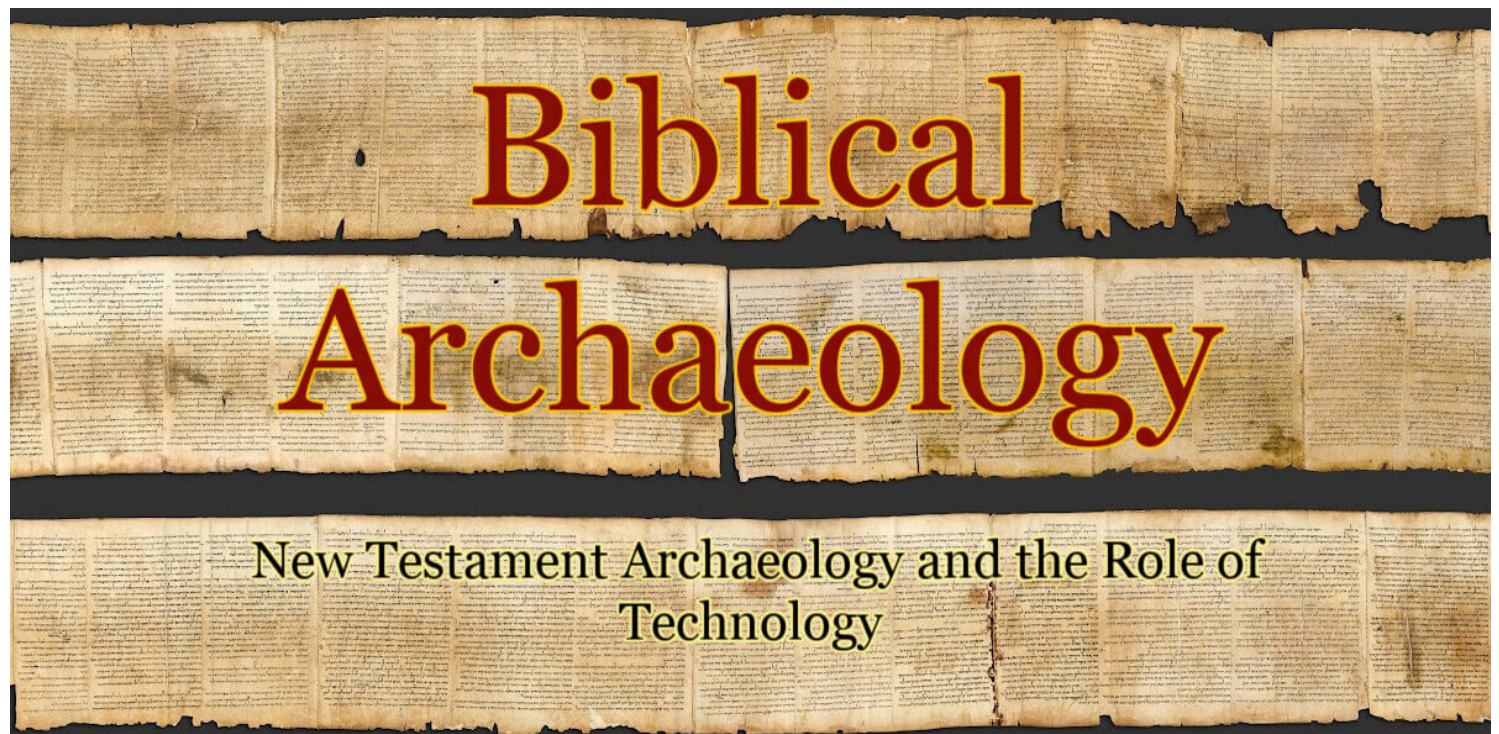
Posts published on September 12, 2026, with Category: Biblical Archaeology, from vachristian.org.

Printed on September 12, 2026 using Print My Blog

Expedition Abraham: From His Birthplace to the Promised Land

APRIL 8, 2026

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY



What would it really have looked like for Abraham to obey God's call—to leave everything familiar and walk into the unknown by faith alone? ***Expedition Abraham*** answers that question by doing something few have ever attempted: physically retracing the patriarch's journey from **Ur of the Chaldeans** to **Shechem**, following the ancient waterways, trade routes, and landscapes that shaped one of the most important faith journeys in human history.

Produced by **Expedition Bible**, this remarkable documentary takes viewers across more than a thousand miles and through five modern nations—**Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Jordan, and Israel**—bringing Genesis 12 off the page and into real-world geography. With over **547,000 views since its January 17, 2026 release**, the response has been overwhelming, and for good reason.

Abraham's obedience was not symbolic—it was costly, irreversible, and dangerous. This expedition captures that reality. From the ruins of Ur, where God first appeared to Abram, to the Euphrates River routes that made survival possible in the ancient world, every step of the journey is anchored in archaeology, Scripture, and historical context. The result is a deeply immersive experience that changes how Genesis is read and understood.



EXPEDITION ABRAHAM: From his birthplace to the Promised Land!

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=f7-RQZavU3U>



As the team navigates checkpoints, war-torn regions, modern borders, and real physical danger, the viewer gains a sobering appreciation for the magnitude of Abraham's faith. This was not a short walk across friendly terrain—it was a one-way departure from homeland, culture, and family gods, undertaken without knowing the destination, guided only by the voice and promise of God.

The documentary also sheds light on key biblical locations often skimmed over in reading: **Haran**, where Abram's family lingered; the moon-god worship centers tied to Terah's past; the **hills of Gilead**; the **Jabbok River**, where patriarchal routes turn west; and finally **Shechem**, the place where Abraham first entered the Promised Land. Each site is examined with archaeological evidence, on-location footage, and clear biblical connections.

What makes *Expedition Abraham* especially powerful is that it never treats archaeology as a replacement for faith—but as a witness to it. Hebrews 11:8 comes alive as the journey unfolds: “*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place he would later receive as an inheritance. He went out, not knowing where he was going.*” Standing in these places, that verse takes on weight, texture, and consequence.

By the end of the film, one truth becomes unmistakable: Abraham may not have known where he was going—but he knew **who** he was following. That same call echoes forward to believers today. Just as Abraham left the old life behind, followers of Christ are called to trust, obey, and walk by faith toward promises they cannot yet see.

If you want to understand Scripture more deeply, see the Bible grounded in real places, and grasp the cost—and beauty—of genuine obedience, *Expedition Abraham* is essential viewing.

Don't forget to **subscribe** to the Expedition Bible channel, explore additional videos, and consider supporting future projects. Links are also available to order *Where God Came Down: The Archaeological Evidence* and to make a **tax-deductible donation** that directly funds the production of more content like this.

This is biblical archaeology at its best—faith affirmed, Scripture illuminated, and God's Word shown to be rooted in real history, real geography, and real obedience.

Buried Beneath Jerusalem: A 2,000-Year-Old Witness to Biblical Truth

DECEMBER 31, 2025

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY



the Second Temple period, served the Jews
Ash. Stone. Water. History frozen in time.

What archaeologists just uncovered beneath the Western Wall doesn't just confirm Scripture—it makes it tangible.

Archaeologists in Israel have unearthed something absolutely breathtaking beneath the Western Wall Plaza in Jerusalem. Hidden under layers of dirt and debris, they've discovered a ritual immersion pool—a mikvah—that served Jewish worshipers during the Second Temple period. But this isn't just another archaeological site. Inside this ancient bath, researchers found the biological remnants of one of history's most devastating events: the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

For skeptics who claim the Bible is myth, this discovery is a problem. For believers who trust Scripture as history, it's confirmation. Once again, archaeology doesn't contradict the Bible—it validates it.

As Israeli tour guide **Yoav Rotem** puts it, this is an “Instagram moment”—a frozen snapshot in time where destruction and life collide, leaving no doubt about what happened nearly 2,000 years ago.

Watch the Full Discovery

Join CBN’s Raj Nair and Israeli tour guide Yoav Rotem as they explore this stunning find beneath Jerusalem—and explain why it matters for believers today.



Archaeologists Uncover Shocking Evidence of Jerusalem’s Destruction

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=AP4CCpkZQdk>



Video courtesy of the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN)

What Is a Mikvah—and Why Does It Matter?

Before we dive into the ash and stone, let's understand what archaeologists actually found.

A mikvah is a ritual immersion pool used in Jewish tradition for ceremonial purification. In the days of the Second Temple, before entering the Temple Mount—the holiest site in Judaism—worshippers were required to be ritually pure. This wasn't about physical cleanliness. It was about spiritual preparation to stand in the presence of God.

Mikvahs were strategically placed throughout Jerusalem, especially near major roads, public buildings, and residential areas. This particular mikvah sits just 200 feet from the Western Wall—the retaining wall of the Temple Mount built by King Herod the Great.

Here's what makes this discovery extraordinary:

This wasn't just a pool. It was active during the time of Jesus. When Christ walked through Jerusalem, preached in the Temple courts, and cleansed the Temple, Jewish pilgrims were using mikvahs like this one to prepare themselves spiritually.

As Yoav Rotem explains, "This ritual immersion pool, this mikvah, is in action during the time of Jesus. When Jesus goes into Jerusalem, this is happening."

The Ash Layer: Biological Proof of Biblical History

What sets this mikvah apart from other archaeological finds is what was discovered inside it: a thick layer of ash and charred debris from the year 70 AD.

In that year, the Roman army—led by Titus—besieged Jerusalem, breached its walls, and burned the Second Temple to the ground. The Jewish historian Josephus recorded the horror in vivid detail. Jesus Himself prophesied this devastation in Matthew 24:2:

“Do you see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.”

The ash found in this mikvah isn’t symbolic. It’s not abstract. It’s the biological remnant of that destruction. When you touch it, you’re literally holding the physical evidence of one of the Bible’s most documented events.

As Raj Nair reflects, “When you feel the ash, you’re literally feeling the biological remnant of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. It shows you that it’s not that far removed.”

This isn’t ancient myth. This isn’t folklore passed down through generations and embellished over time. This is history locked in stone.

Layers of Jewish History: A Timeline Beneath the Western Wall

The mikvah discovery is part of a larger excavation beneath the Western Wall Plaza that has been ongoing for over a decade. What archaeologists are uncovering is nothing short of stunning: layer upon layer upon layer of Jewish history in Jerusalem.

Here’s what they’ve found in the same excavation site:

- Remains of Jewish houses from the 8th century BC (the time of King Hezekiah)
- The mikvah from the Second Temple period (active before 70 AD)
- A synagogue from the 8th-9th centuries AD (after the Islamic conquest)
- Jewish workplaces and artifacts from the 12th-13th centuries AD (medieval Jewish presence)

Yoav Rotem describes it best: “What we’re seeing over there is a timeline of Jewish existence in Jerusalem. Jews are always there. They’re always attracted there. There is a strong connection between these people and the city, especially the Temple Mount. Every time there’s a destruction, the Jews will come back and rebuild again.”

This destroys the false narrative that Jews were expelled in 70 AD and didn't return until 1948. Archaeology proves that Jews never left. They've been in Jerusalem for over 3,000 years continuously.

The Bible as History Book: Archaeology Never Contradicts Scripture

Here's a truth that bears repeating: No archaeological discovery has ever disproven the Bible. Not one.

Critics have tried for centuries to dismiss biblical accounts as myth, exaggeration, or religious propaganda. But every time the spade hits the dirt in Israel, what emerges? Confirmation.

Archaeological confirmations of Scripture:

- The City of David (exactly where 2 Samuel says it was)
- The Pool of Siloam (where Jesus healed the blind man in John 9)
- The Pilgrimage Road (where Jesus and millions of pilgrims walked to the Temple)
- Hezekiah's Tunnel (built exactly as 2 Chronicles 32:30 describes)
- The Tel Dan Stele (confirming the House of David)
- The Dead Sea Scrolls (proving the accuracy of Old Testament manuscripts)
- And now, this mikvah—frozen in the ash of 70 AD

The Bible isn't just a spiritual text. It's a historical document—and archaeology keeps proving it.

As Raj Nair observes, “We're living in really beautiful, incredible prophetic times. God made certain promises to the Jewish people that were beyond reason, that were impossible—and yet He's keeping those promises and He's keeping those covenants.”

God's Covenant Faithfulness on Display

There's something deeply prophetic about this discovery.

For 2,000 years, the Jewish people were scattered across the globe. Empires rose and fell—Babylon, Rome, the Ottoman Turks, Nazi Germany. Each one tried to eradicate the Jewish people. Each one failed.

Meanwhile, the Jews preserved their identity, their faith, and their yearning to return to Jerusalem. Every Passover, they declared: “Next year in Jerusalem.”

In 1948, against all odds, Israel was reborn as a nation. In 1967, Jerusalem was reunited under Jewish control for the first time since 70 AD. Today, Jewish archaeologists are uncovering their own history beneath the city their ancestors never stopped loving.

This isn't luck. This isn't coincidence. This is covenant.

God promised Abraham in Genesis 12:7: "To your descendants I will give this land."

God promised the Jewish people in Ezekiel 36:24: "I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land."

And He's doing it—right before our eyes.

An "Instagram Moment" Locked in Time

Yoav Rotem uses a powerful phrase to describe this discovery: an "Instagram moment."

What does he mean?

This isn't a static artifact. It's a frozen moment—a snapshot captured in ash and stone that preserves a single point in history with absolute clarity.

The Jews were using this mikvah. They were preparing to worship at the Temple. And then—destruction. Fire. Chaos. The Roman army tore through Jerusalem, burned the Temple, and left this mikvah buried under the debris of a shattered city.

But that moment didn't disappear into myth or legend. It was locked beneath the ground, waiting to be uncovered so that 2,000 years later, we could stand in that exact spot and say: "This happened. Scripture is true. History is real."

As Yoav says, "We're seeing a moment in time where there's no doubt about it. The destruction of the Second Temple combined with something that was alive—and this moment of destruction has been caught by ashes and been locked down there."

The Apologetics Answer: Jews Are Indigenous to Judea

There's a modern narrative that tries to rewrite history. It claims that Jews have no historical connection to the land of Israel, that they're European colonizers who showed up in 1948 with no legitimate claim to Jerusalem or Judea.

Archaeology obliterates that lie.

As Raj Nair states plainly, “The idea that somehow the Jewish people are not indigenous to Judea is just unequivocally historical fallacy. It’s not even a debate.”

The evidence is overwhelming:

- 3,000 years of Jewish presence in Jerusalem
- Temples, synagogues, homes, mikvahs, coins, inscriptions
- Continuity through Babylonian exile, Roman occupation, Islamic rule, Crusader invasions, Ottoman control
- Return and restoration exactly as the prophets foretold

This mikvah is just one more piece of that unbroken chain. Jews didn’t vanish in 70 AD. They didn’t abandon their homeland. They were driven out, scattered, persecuted—but they never stopped being connected to this land.

And now, they’re home. Digging up their own history. Confirming their own Scriptures.

The Jewish Yearning: “Next Year in Jerusalem”

For centuries, Jewish families ended their Passover Seders with the same declaration: “Next year in Jerusalem.”

It was a prayer. A hope. A refusal to let go of the promise.

Even when Jerusalem was controlled by Romans, Byzantines, Muslims, Crusaders, Ottomans, and British—Jews never stopped longing for it. They prayed toward it three times a day. They wept over its destruction. They dreamed of its restoration.

As Yoav Rotem reflects, “Jews are always there. They’re always attracted there. There is a strong connection between these people and the city.”

That connection isn’t political. It’s not colonial. It’s covenantal.

God promised this land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He promised to bring the Jewish people back after exile. And every discovery like this mikvah is another fulfillment of that promise.

Come and See for Yourself

This mikvah isn’t open to the general public yet—it requires a special VIP tour to access. But the excavations beneath the Western Wall Plaza are ongoing, and more discoveries are being made every month.

For those who have the opportunity to visit Jerusalem, standing at the Western Wall and knowing what lies beneath is a powerful experience. You're not just visiting a historic site. You're standing on the physical proof of God's faithfulness.

As Yoav urges, "Come see it with your own eyes. It's exciting. We're seeing destruction, but the destruction symbolizes life that were taken—and we're seeing an Instagram moment, something where there's no doubt about it."

Scripture Conclusion

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever."
— Isaiah 40:8 (NKJV)

Key Takeaways

- A 2,000-year-old mikvah was discovered beneath the Western Wall Plaza in Jerusalem
- The mikvah contains ash from the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD
- This biological evidence makes biblical history tangible—you can literally touch the remnants
- Archaeology has never contradicted the Bible—only confirmed it
- Layers of Jewish history (8th century BC to 13th century AD) prove continuous presence
- The narrative that Jews "appeared in 1948" is historically false
- God's covenant promises to Israel are being fulfilled before our eyes
- The Bible is not just a spiritual text—it's a historical document validated by the spade

Where to Learn More

Watch the Full Discovery:

Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) – Buried Beneath Jerusalem: Ancient Mikvah Discovery

Explore Biblical Archaeology:

- **Archaeology and the Birth of Christ: Top Ten Discoveries**
- **The Pilgrimage Road: Unearthing the Path Jesus Walked**
- **Cave Inscription Reveals Archaeological Evidence for Jesus**
- **Archaeology & Prophecy: The Unearthed Ruins of Sodom**

By Jeff Bayard, Ghostwriter & Editorial Content Manager, Virginia Christian Alliance

Archaeology and the Birth of Christ: Top Ten Discoveries That Affirm Christmas

DECEMBER 23, 2025

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY



The Birth of Christ in History, Not Myth

Every Christmas, the birth of Christ is celebrated around the world. Yet many today dismiss the biblical nativity account as symbolic tradition rather than historical reality. In this special episode of *Digging for Truth*, archaeology is brought to bear on the Christmas story, demonstrating that the Gospel accounts are firmly grounded in the real world of the first-century Roman Empire.

Hosted by Henry Smith with longtime guest **Bryan Windle**, this presentation explores ten archaeological discoveries that directly intersect with the nativity narratives recorded in Matthew and Luke. Together, they show that the world described in Scripture is not mythical, but historically accurate.

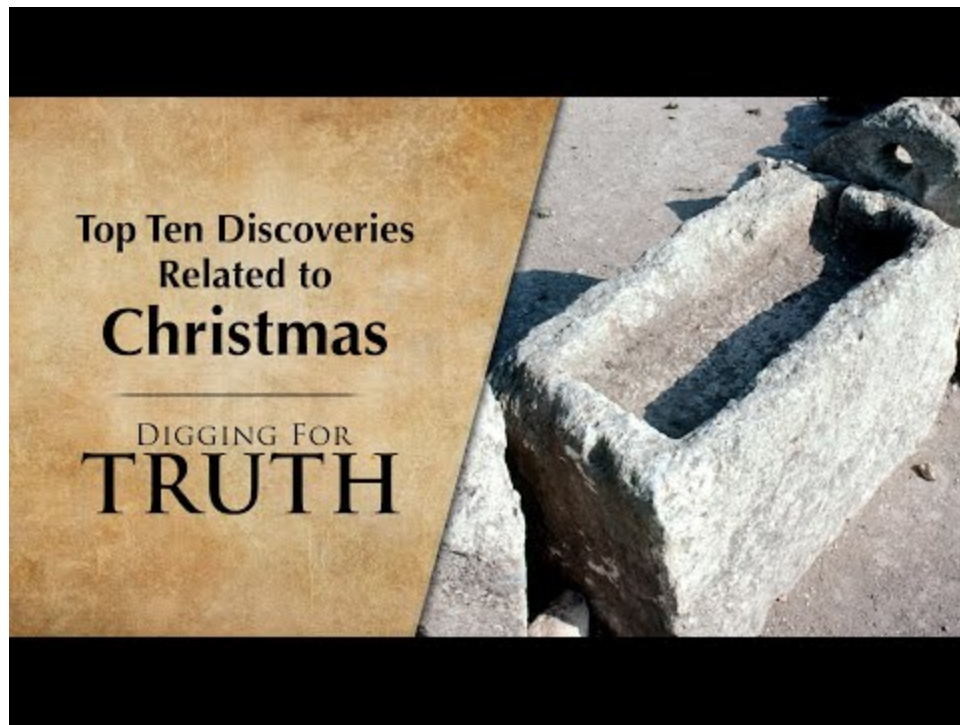
Below is a structured outline following the YouTube presentation, with Scripture references and historical context. For readers who want deeper documentation, photos, and excavation details, a full in-depth article is linked below.

Watch the Video: Top Ten Discoveries Related to Christmas



Top Ten Discoveries Related to Christmas: Digging for Truth Episode 223

https://youtube.com/watch?v=jVzgl0tUM_U



Read the In-Depth Archaeology Article (With Photos)

This video presentation is based on a comprehensive article originally published by Bible Archaeology Report:

Top Ten Discoveries Related to Christmas

Author: Bryan Windle

10. Messianic Prophecy Preserved Before Christ

Scripture: Matthew 1:22–23; Micah 5:2

The Dead Sea Scrolls, including the Great Isaiah Scroll, confirm that messianic prophecies existed centuries before the birth of Christ. These texts demonstrate that Matthew’s use of Isaiah and Micah was rooted in long-standing, widely circulated Hebrew Scripture.

9. Caesar Augustus and the Roman Census

Scripture: Luke 2:1

The *Res Gestae* of Caesar Augustus records multiple empire-wide censuses, confirming Luke’s statement that a decree went out requiring registration throughout the Roman world.

8. Quirinius and Roman Administration

Scripture: Luke 2:2

The tombstone of Q. Aemilius Secundus documents Quirinius overseeing a census in Syria, demonstrating that Luke's description fits the known administrative practices of Roman governance.

7. Roman Census Edicts and Travel Requirements

Scripture: Luke 2:3

Papyrus 904 preserves a Roman edict requiring individuals to return to their home districts for registration. This explains why Joseph traveled with Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

6. Nazareth Existed in the Time of Jesus

Scripture: Luke 1:26–27; Matthew 2:23

Archaeological excavations at Nazareth have uncovered first-century homes, pottery, and domestic structures, directly refuting claims that Nazareth did not exist during the time of Christ.

5. Bethlehem Was a Living Village

Scripture: Luke 2:4

Despite limited excavation due to modern development, archaeological surveys near the Church of the Nativity confirm Bethlehem was inhabited during the early first century, exactly as the Gospel accounts state.

4. Mangers Were Stone, Not Wooden

Scripture: Luke 2:6–7

Archaeology reveals that mangers were commonly carved from stone and located inside domestic homes. This clarifies that Jesus was likely born within a family dwelling rather than a detached barn.

3. Herod the Great's Palace

Scripture: Matthew 2:1–3

Remains of Herod's palace in Jerusalem align with the Gospel account of the Magi meeting Herod after Jesus' birth, confirming the political setting of the nativity story.

2. Frankincense, Myrrh, and Ancient Trade Routes

Scripture: Matthew 2:11

Archaeological evidence of Nabataean trade routes explains how valuable gifts such as frankincense and myrrh were transported from Arabia to Judea, fitting the biblical account precisely.

1. The Church of the Nativity

Scripture: Luke 2:11

Historical writings and archaeological excavations confirm that the Church of the Nativity was built over a cave long identified as the birthplace of Jesus, preserving a continuous tradition dating back nearly two millennia.

Conclusion: Christmas Rooted in Truth

Archaeology does not prove the supernatural elements of the birth of Christ, but it does confirm that the Gospel narratives are historically accurate and firmly set in the first-century world. The birth of Christ is not legend layered onto history—it is history itself.

Christmas celebrates the moment when truth entered time.



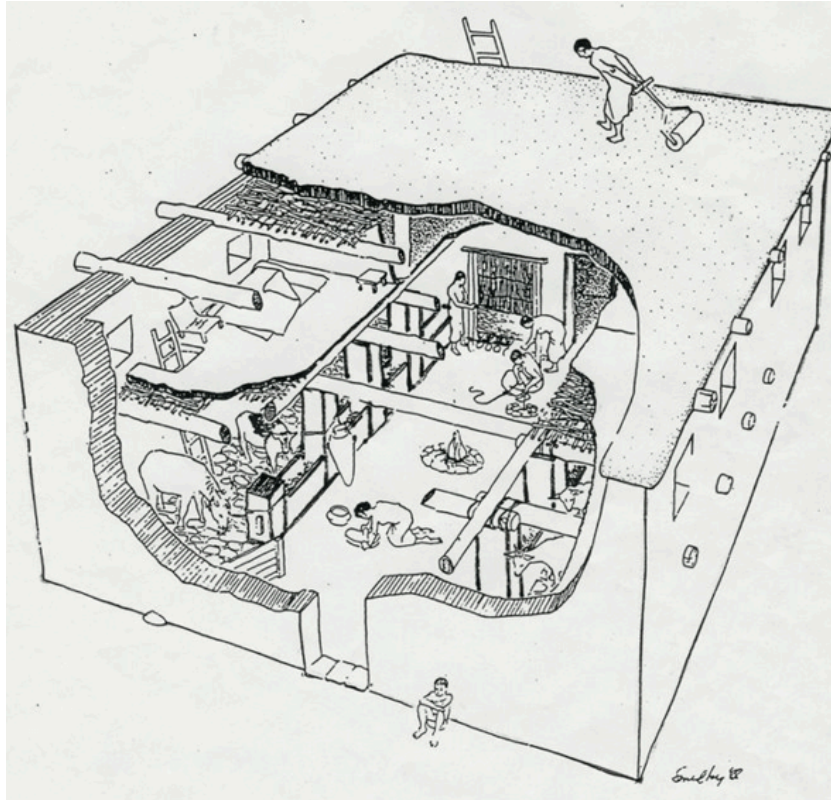
“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” — John 1:14

Away in a Manger, But Not in a Barn: An Archaeological Look at the Nativity

DECEMBER 23, 2025

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, CITY OF DAVID, GOD'S WORD



Gary Byers MA | Associates for Biblical Research ([ABR](#))

Of the four Gospels, only two discuss events surrounding the birth of Jesus. Matthew tends to focus on Joseph with events before the birth (Matthew 1) and afterwards (Matthew 2). Luke, on the other hand, focuses on Mary (Luke 1) discussing events before His birth (Luke 2) as well as those following (Luke 2). It is also in Luke 2 where we read what happened the day Jesus was born.

Bethlehem for the First Christmas

As a descendant of King David, Joseph journeyed to his ancestral home in Bethlehem, with his espoused wife, Mary, to participate in a mandatory Roman census (Luke 2:3). In the ancient Near East, a family's historic ties to their hometown were of utmost importance. Being a member of the royal family of David, it is not unlikely that space within the family's ancestral home would have been made available for Joseph and Mary upon their arrival in Bethlehem. Even in Roman times, the Davidic connection to Bethlehem was so strong that it was still known as the "city of David" (Luke 2:4, 11).

As a descendant of King David, Joseph journeyed to his ancestral home in Bethlehem, with his espoused wife, Mary, to participate in a mandatory Roman census (Luke 2:3). In the ancient Near East, a family's historic ties to their hometown were of utmost importance. Being a member of the royal family of David, it is not unlikely that space within the family's ancestral home would have been made available for Joseph and Mary upon their arrival in Bethlehem. Even in Roman times, the Davidic connection to Bethlehem was so strong that it was still known as the “city of David” (Luke 2:4, 11).

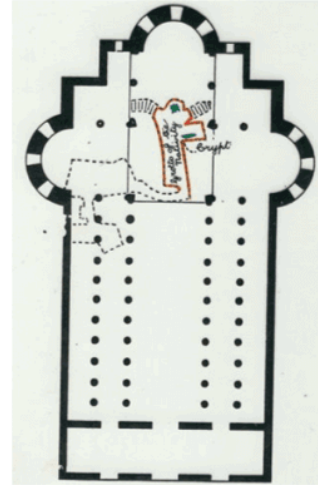


Photo Credit: Michael Luddeni; plan by Gustaf Dalman (1935). Sacred Sites and Ways: Studies in the Topography of the Gospels. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge While a cruciform structure facing east today (as constructed by Justinian in 530 AD) the original Church of the Nativity, dedicated by Constantine in 339 AD, was octagonal in form with the Nativity Grotto beneath the chancel. It was built over a cave which had a tradition dating back to the middle of the 2nd century AD identifying it as the place where Jesus was born. Because of the continuous occupation of the immediate area, the confines of New Testament Bethlehem are not known, although it is believed the church does sit within what would have been the walled Old Testament city. Because of the minimal evidence in the biblical text, it is impossible to say that this is the location. If so, the cave could have been used as an underground domestic stable – although not a common situation. In the photo, the small opening at the base of the wall in the lower left is the entrance to the western end of Constantine's cruciform church. The grotto is beneath the chancel on the eastern end.

Mary's situation as Joseph's espoused wife and also being close to giving birth (Luke 2:6) probably did not deter a son in the direct line of King David from having appropriate accommodations made available – especially assuming Joseph explained what God had been doing in their lives (Luke 1, Matthew 1). As Luke noted earlier, Mary also had priestly relatives nearby in the “hill country of Judea” (Luke 1:39) and it is not unreasonable that appropriate alternative arrangements could have been made available there, if necessary.

Mangers and Inns

Although no barn is mentioned in the text, the “manger” (*phatna*) is prominent (Luke 2:7, 12, 16). Obviously, wood-constructed mangers like we know from our Nativity would not survive for modern archaeologists to find, but stone-carved and plaster-lined mangers are known from

excavations to be on the ground floor of domestic structures in Israel throughout biblical times (see I Samuel 28:24; Judges 11:31; Luke 13:15). Historians and anthropologists have also noted the practice of keeping animals in the house among a variety of cultures down through history. While flocks were kept in sheepfolds out in the fields (see Luke 2:8), valuable or vulnerable animals – ox, donkey, sick or pregnant sheep and goats – would be brought into the house’s ground floor domestic stable. In such a location baby Jesus would have been laid in a manger.



Photo Credit: Michael Luddeni Behind the woman on the right is the set of stairs usually designated for people to take from the ground floor of the Church of the Nativity down to the Grotto of the Nativity, directly below the chancel. While a natural cave, it has been “beautified” over the centuries with marble flooring and tapestries. On the floor of a space that makes me think of a “fireplace” is the ‘Star of Bethlehem’, a 14-point silver star marking the traditional location where Jesus was born. Behind the woman, and to the right of the stairway, is the Chapel of the Manger where, by tradition, the manger was located.

Luke records, “there was not room for them in the inn” (*kataluma* Luke 2:7). The only other New Testament reference to *kataluma* was the upper chamber “guest room” of a Jerusalem house where the Last Supper was held (Luke 22:11 – along with its parallel in Mark 14:14; ESV, NIV, NASB, NKJV). There is no reason why Luke’s use of *kataluma* in 22:11 (“guest room”) on the last night of Jesus’ life should be different from his use of the same term in 2:7 (“inn”) on the first night of His life. In fact, there may even be some symbolism with these “guest rooms” serving as bookends to His life and ministry. There was no room for Him in a *kataluma* on the first night of His life and He presided over a meal (probably a Passover meal) in a *kataluma* on the last night of His life.

Luke's statement "no room for them in the inn," suggests the "guest room" of the house where Mary and Joseph were now staying was already full. The NIV's 2011 revision acknowledged this fact, changing "inn" to "guest room" (2:7). It may well be that older relatives were already settled there and/or Mary preferred not climbing to an upper floor or appreciated a bit more privacy in the domestic stable below.

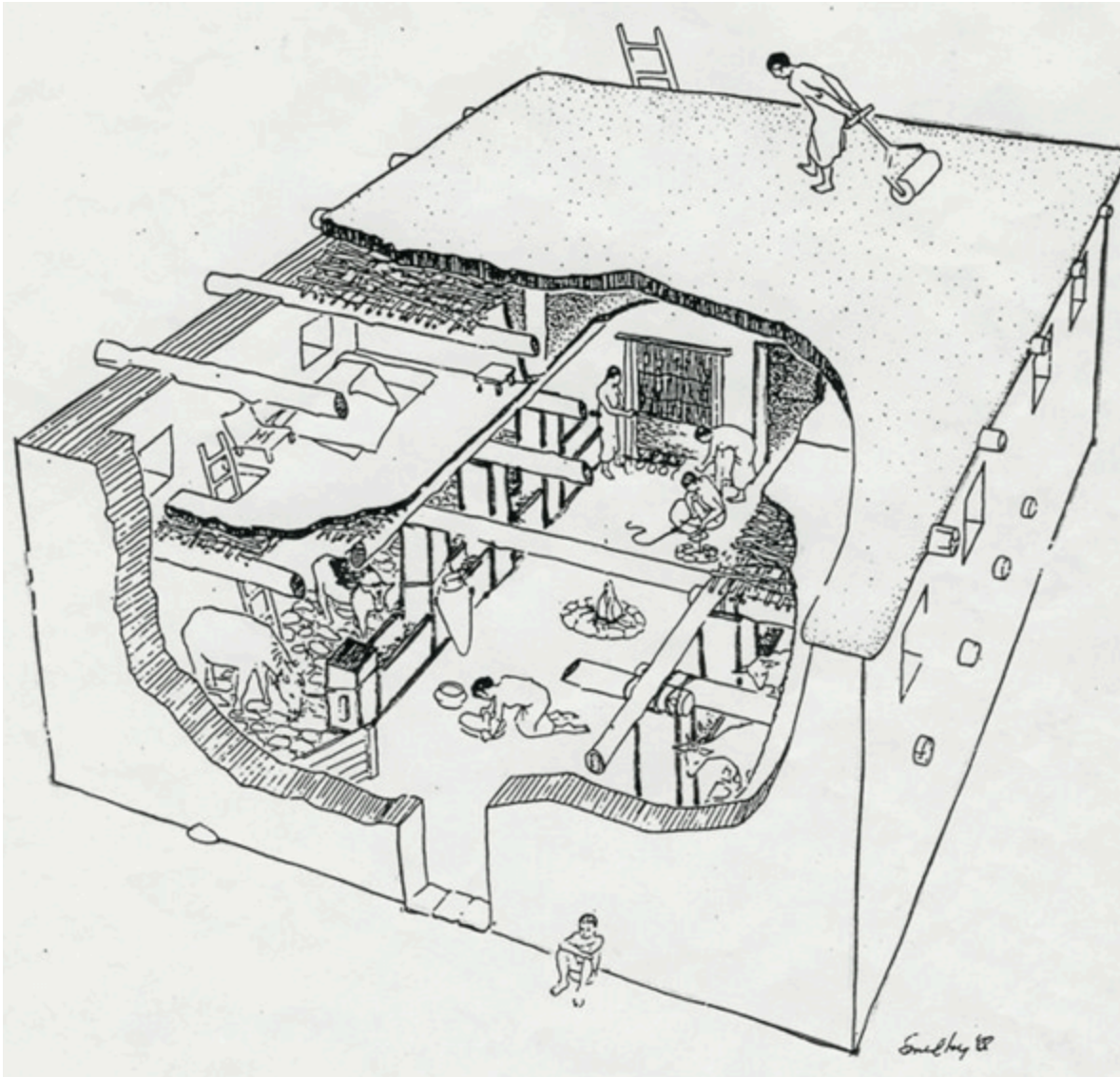


Photo Credit: Larry Stager 1985. The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel. Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research 260: 1-36

A traditional Israelite "four-room" house which became a standard house plan during the Iron Age in Canaan – from the 10th century (United Monarchy) to the beginning of the 6th century BC (Babylonian exile of the Kingdom of Judah). While not always four rooms, there was a general plan of a main entrance in one of the two short walls of the house – typically opening into a courtyard (likely unroofed). From one to three long rooms extended from that short wall to a rear broad room which extended the full width of the house. The long rooms are typically divided from each other by lines of stone pillars or wooden post on stone bases. There may have been low curtain walls between the pillars, sometimes including mangers – as pictured in the drawing's left and right side rooms. While kept in these some rooms at night, animals would generally be taken out during the day. The second floor room in this drawing would be representative of the upper "guest room" (kataluma) in the Christmas story (Luke 2:7).

Inns and Innkeepers

Additionally, Luke knew what a public inn was, using that term in the account of the Good Samaritan at an “inn” (*pandocheion*; 10:34) with an “innkeeper” (*pandocheus*; 10:35). His use of *kataluma* in the nativity account indicates a different space than a public inn – the “guest room” of a domestic home (likely within an upper story) and, I suggest, within the same house where the *phatna* (“manger”) was in the ground floor domestic stable.

Conclusion

Thus, Luke’s nativity account references neither a barn nor any statement made by an innkeeper, nor even the mention of an innkeeper. I will suggest that the story did not have a public “inn” either! Instead, we should think of that first Christmas with baby Jesus placed in a manger on the ground floor of David’s ancestral home in Bethlehem because the upstairs “guest room” was already full.

While His Heavenly Father could orchestrate events any way He chose, I propose that baby Jesus did not spend that first Christmas with Mary and Joseph alone in the barn of a public building there in Bethlehem but in a domestic stable surrounded by family. Family has always been important to God (1 John 1:3; 3:10) and He wants us all to be connected to our biological family – or, if that’s not possible or reasonable, to our spiritual family (see Matthew 12:46-50). Even this Christmas He wants His children connected with their families – biological or spiritual. So, this year let’s try to do it like the first Christmas — spending some time with our families (biological and/or spiritual), too!

SOURCE: **Associates for Biblical Research**

This is an expanded version of an article written by the author and appearing in the *Harvest Handbook of Bible Lands* (2020)

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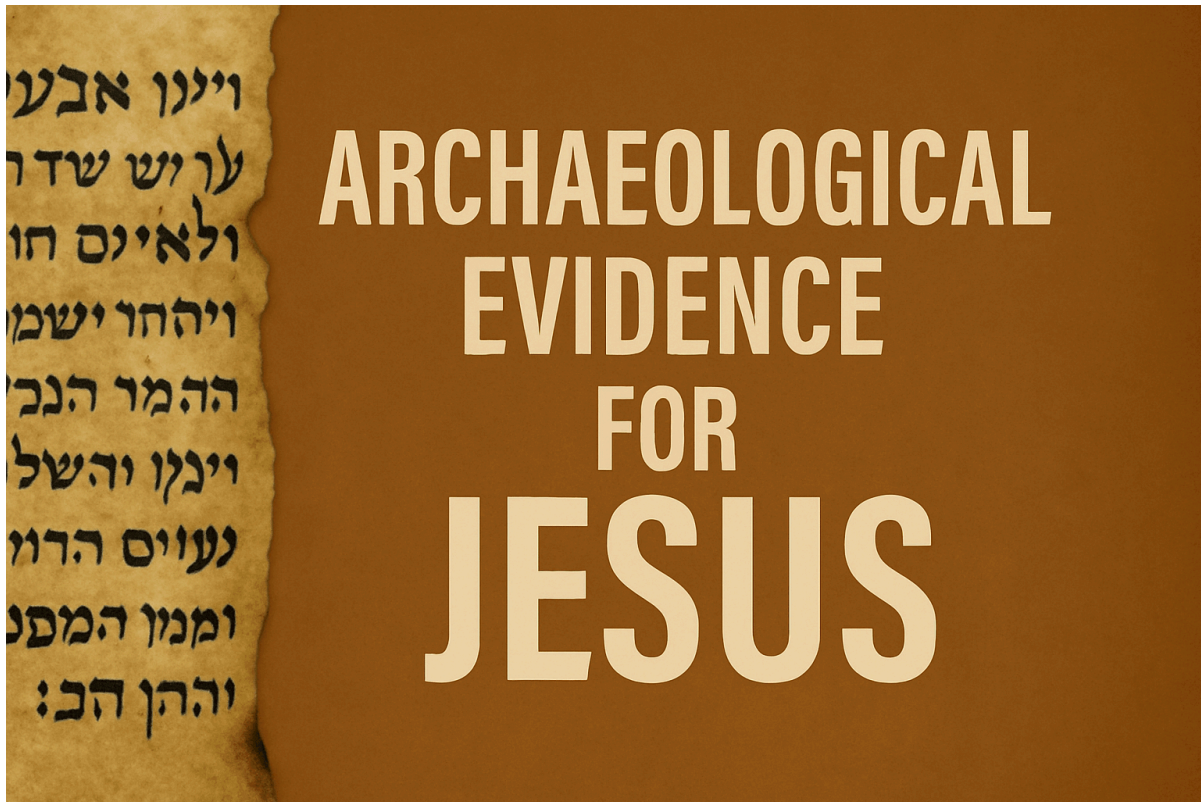
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Cave Inscription Reveals Archaeological Evidence for Jesus

DECEMBER 13, 2025

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY



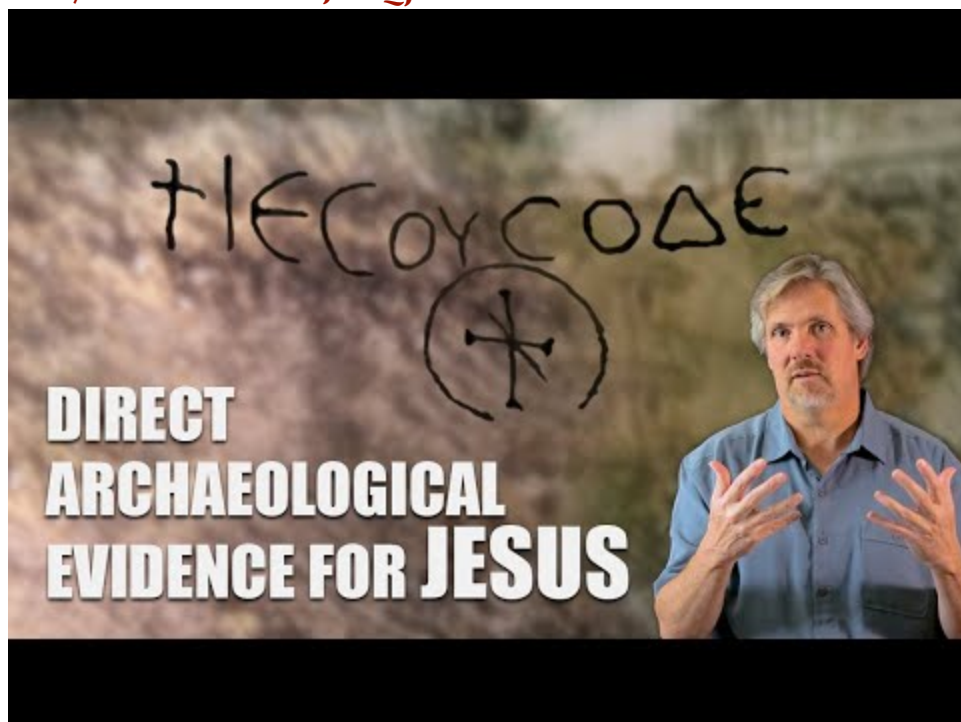
For decades, skeptics have confidently claimed that there is *no archaeological evidence for Jesus of Nazareth*. That assertion is often repeated in lecture halls, textbooks, and documentaries as if it were settled fact. But archaeology has a way of quietly overturning confident assumptions—sometimes not with monumental ruins, but with inscriptions hidden deep underground.

In a compelling video from **Expedition Bible**, biblical archaeologist **Joel Kramer** takes viewers into a little-known cave in the Judean foothills where an ancient Greek inscription provides **direct, extra-biblical archaeological evidence for Jesus**. This discovery does not rely on later church tradition or medieval manuscripts. Instead, it comes from the stone walls of a persecuted Christian gathering place dating back nearly 1,800 years.



Cave Inscription Reveals Archaeological Evidence for Jesus

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=cH6BJDxQjAU>



A Hidden Cave Near Ancient Judea

The site is located at **Beth Loya**, an archaeological area southwest of Jerusalem and east of Lachish. The region is riddled with caves carved into soft limestone hills—many of them used for refuge, storage, or worship throughout antiquity. One such cave, partially concealed by a fig tree growing from its opening, holds an inscription of extraordinary importance.

To enter the cave, one must literally climb through branches and leaves, descending into a space where persecuted believers once gathered. On the limestone wall inside is a **large Greek inscription**, so sizable that Kramer walks in front of it on camera to demonstrate its scale. This is no casual scratch or graffiti—it is deliberate, bold, and unmistakable.

The Inscription: “Jesus Is Present”

The inscription begins with a simple cross, followed by two Greek words written in uppercase letters. The first word translates to “Jesus.” The second translates to “present.” Together, the message reads plainly:

“Jesus is present.”

Beneath the words is another cross—more elaborate in design—believed to have been added later. Archaeologists date the original inscription to the late second century AD or early third century AD, roughly the late 100s to early 200s. That places it among the earliest known inscriptions ever to mention Jesus by name.

This alone makes the discovery remarkable. But its context makes it even more powerful.

Why Is the Inscription Underground?

The answer lies in history. This inscription dates to a time of **intense Roman persecution of Christians**. Open worship could mean imprisonment or death. As a result, believers often met secretly—sometimes literally underground.

Caves like the one at Beit Loya served as hidden gathering places where Christians could pray, worship, and remember the truths of their faith without fear of immediate arrest. The location itself testifies to the cost of discipleship in the early church.

How Do We Know This Refers to Jesus of the New Testament?

Some skeptics might argue that the name “Jesus” alone is insufficient proof. But the cross symbols framing the inscription remove any serious doubt. The cross was not a generic religious symbol in

the Roman world—it was a uniquely Christian confession.

The Bible teaches that all humanity is separated from God by sin, and that God, in His love, took on flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross as a substitute for sinners and rose from the dead on the third day, conquering sin and death. The cross, therefore, is not merely an execution device—it is the central symbol of Christianity.

The inscription’s message, “Jesus is present,” aligns perfectly with Christ’s own words:

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matthew 18:20).

Archaeology and the Historical Jesus

Joel Kramer closes by addressing a claim he has heard repeatedly—that there is no archaeological evidence for Jesus. As this cave inscription demonstrates, that claim is simply **not true**. While archaeology does not prove theology, it does confirm history. And here, history confirms that early Christians believed Jesus was real, crucified, risen, and spiritually present among them.

This inscription is not the only archaeological reference to Jesus, but it is one of the most personal and powerful. Nearly 1,800 years later, its message still echoes from stone walls hidden underground:

Jesus is present.

Why This Discovery Matters Today

In an age of skepticism and revisionist history, discoveries like this matter. They remind us that Christianity is not built on myth, but on real people, real places, and real events. The cave at Beth Loya stands as quiet testimony that faith in Jesus existed early, endured persecution, and left its mark—quite literally—on history.

If you’ve ever been told there is no archaeological evidence for Jesus, this video is worth your time.

Explore More Archaeology with Expedition Bible

This powerful cave inscription is just one example of the careful, on-location work Joel Kramer brings to Expedition Bible. Kramer is not a studio commentator speculating from afar—he is an archaeologist who has lived, excavated, and taught in the very lands where the Bible unfolded.

Raised in the Middle East and shaped by an adventurer's spirit from a young age, Kramer's journey eventually led him back to Jerusalem, where he lived for nearly a decade. There, he earned a Master's degree in Archaeology, participated in excavations in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Ai, and immersed himself in the historical and geographical context of Scripture. That experience culminated in his book *Where God Came Down: The Archaeological Evidence*, a work grounded in firsthand research and field study.

Today, Kramer lives in Amman, Jordan, continuing to explore biblical sites while teaching and producing content that bridges archaeology and Scripture. His videos consistently combine scholarly rigor with visual clarity, making complex discoveries accessible without sacrificing accuracy. In an age marked by biblical skepticism, Expedition Bible approaches archaeology from a clear conviction: the Bible is trustworthy and historically reliable.

If this video challenged what you've heard about Jesus and archaeology, it's worth taking time to explore more of Kramer's work. Expedition Bible offers a growing library of well-produced, field-based videos that invite viewers on what Kramer calls "the greatest adventure you can undertake"—knowing and trusting the Word of God.

For anyone interested in biblical archaeology, historical evidence for Scripture, or the real-world settings of the Bible, **Expedition Bible is a resource well worth following.**

By Jeff Bayard, Content Manager, Virginia Christian Alliance

Archaeology & Prophecy: The Unearthed Ruins of Sodom and the Coming Judgment

NOVEMBER 10, 2025

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, PROPHECY



What If the Ashes of Sodom Still Whisper God's Warning?

For centuries, scholars and skeptics alike have wondered where the infamous cities of **Sodom and Gomorrah** once stood. According to Scripture, **God wiped Sodom and Gomorrah off the face of the earth with fire from heaven** (*Genesis 19*).

Now, a stunning **biblical archaeology Sodom discovery** near the **southeastern shore of the Dead Sea** is reigniting that ancient question — offering powerful confirmation that the Bible's record is both historically and prophetically reliable.

Watch Dr. Mark Hitchcock explain this discovery:



The Most Explosive Discovery of the Decade

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=uJG24XtWMxs>



You can explore more of Dr. Hitchcock's teaching at [Marking the End Times on Substack](#).

Unearthing Sodom and Gomorrah

The search for Sodom and Gomorrah has spanned generations. Guides in Israel once told tourists that these cities were lost forever. But recent archaeological work — especially that of **Dr. Titus Kennedy** — may have changed that.

By retracing **Lot's flight** from Sodom to Zoar (*Genesis 19:20–23*), researchers located what appears to be the **ancient city of Zoar** on the southeastern side of the Dead Sea — a key clue narrowing the site of Sodom and Gomorrah to within a single day's walk.

Ancient sources such as **Josephus**, **Eusebius**, and the **Madaba mosaic map** from A.D. 542 all point to the same region. What archaeologists are finding there now matches the biblical account in astonishing detail.

Physical Evidence of Sudden Judgment

Charred Cities and Sulfur Balls

Excavations reveal **massive charred ruins** where fires began on rooftops and burned downward — a pattern consistent with fire raining from above.

Clusters of **sulfur (“brimstone”) balls**, some golf-ball to tennis-ball sized, are embedded in the soil. These highly flammable deposits are unlike any natural fire residue found elsewhere.

Burials Frozen in Time

Human remains discovered in collapsed structures were **never buried in tombs**, suggesting a sudden catastrophe. Entire skeletons were found intact — reminiscent of Pompeii's tragic preservation.

Cities Never Rebuilt

Sites such as **Bab edh-Dhra** and **Numeira** — sounding strikingly like “Gomorrah” — show extensive destruction and have **never been re-inhabited**, just as Scripture foretold (*Deuteronomy 29:23; Jeremiah 49:18*).

The Bible Proves Archaeology

Skeptics often say archaeology *proves* the Bible, but Dr. Hitchcock reminds us:

“Archaeology doesn’t prove the Bible — the Bible proves archaeology.”

Each discovery supports the reliability of God’s Word. The events in *Genesis 18–19* were not an allegory or a myth. They were **recorded in history**, and their ruins still stand as a silent testimony in the desert sands.

Prophecy, Judgment, and the God Who Warns

Sodom’s destruction is not just an ancient story; it’s a prophetic picture of God’s justice.

“Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms... will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah—she shall never be inhabited.”

— *Isaiah 13:19–20*

When God judged Sodom, He displayed both holiness and mercy — holiness in punishing sin, and mercy in rescuing Lot. The same God who fulfilled His warnings then will fulfill every prophecy yet to come.

The Hope Beyond the Ashes

The blackened ruins near the Dead Sea are not just reminders of judgment — they point to **grace**.

Dr. Hitchcock reminds us that God’s justice and mercy meet at the Cross.

“Jesus Christ bore our judgment when He died there on the cross. Through Him we can have life, forgiveness, and eternal hope.”

Just as surely as Sodom fell, Christ’s promises stand firm:

“Whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” — *John 3:16*

The stones cry out — not only of destruction, but of redemption. The same God who judged sin offers salvation through His Son.

Related Scriptures

Genesis 18–19 • Deuteronomy 34:3 • Isaiah 13:19 • Jeremiah 49:18 • Revelation 7 & 14 • Ezekiel 38

Closing Thought

Archaeology affirms it. Prophecy confirms it. The Gospel completes it.

The God who judged Sodom is the same God who sent His Son to rescue us — and the evidence still speaks from the sands of the Dead Sea.

Archaeologists Shocked by Rare Find in Jerusalem

AUGUST 21, 2025

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY, CITY OF DAVID



Archaeologists in Jerusalem could barely contain their excitement when they unearthed an **extremely rare golden coin** in the City of David. This extraordinary discovery sheds new light on a mysterious period in Zion's history—a time just a few hundred years before the birth of Jesus, when little is known about Jerusalem's life and significance. **Watch the CBN Interview with Raj Nair & Israeli tour guide Yoav Rotem**



Archaeologists Shocked by Rare Find in Jerusalem

https://youtube.com/watch?v=w_BaUwHrWp4



A Golden Coin from Egypt in Jerusalem

The find was made in the Givati Parking Lot excavation, one of the most fruitful digs in the City of David. What archaeologists uncovered was no ordinary coin.

It was a **gold quarter-drachma minted 2,200 years ago** in Egypt under the Ptolemaic dynasty, descendants of one of Alexander the Great's generals. On one side, the coin bears the image of **Queen Berenice II of Egypt**, while the other side depicts the “horn of plenty”—a cornucopia symbolizing prosperity and fertility.

The **Israel Antiquities Authority** confirmed that this coin is 99.3% pure gold, and only about 20 such coins are known worldwide. Even more significant, this is the **first time one has been found outside Egypt**, and in a controlled archaeological excavation. Its presence in Jerusalem testifies to the city's importance during a largely overlooked time in history.

Filling in the “Silent Years”

Much is known about Jerusalem in the days of the First Temple through biblical accounts and prophets like Isaiah. Much is also known from the time of Jesus through the Gospels, Josephus, and Roman records. But the **Hellenistic period**, between the Old and New Testaments, often feels like a blank page in history.

This was the era after the Babylonian exile and return (Ezra–Nehemiah), when Alexander the Great's conquests divided the land between Greek rulers in Egypt (the Ptolemies) and Syria (the Seleucids). The Seleucid oppression later gave rise to the Maccabean revolt and the miracle of Hanukkah (John 10:22–23 records Jesus Himself being in Jerusalem at the Feast of Dedication).

Until now, archaeology revealed little about Jerusalem's role during this 2nd–3rd century BC window. The golden coin proves that Jerusalem was not an insignificant backwater but a city of influence and wealth—engaged in the wider currents of the ancient world.

Why This Matters for Christians

For Christians, this discovery shines a light on the “**fullness of time**” Paul describes in Galatians 4:4:



“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son...”

The so-called “silent years” were not silent to God. He was preparing the world stage for the arrival of Jesus. Greek language and culture, Roman roads and government, Jewish expectation of deliverance—all of these converged to make the first century the perfect time for the Gospel to spread.

This coin is a reminder that God’s covenant people were still in the land, still connected to Jerusalem, and still part of His unfolding plan. Even in a season when the prophetic voice seemed absent, God was writing history, ensuring that the Messiah would come to a people and a city deeply rooted in the world’s story.

The City of David: Truth from the Ground Up

Finds like this continue to confirm both the **historical accuracy of the Bible** and the **deep roots of the Jewish people in the land of Israel**.

As Israeli guide Yoav Rotem noted:

“The findings merge together and fit exactly and perfectly with the Scriptures. They show my people’s connection to this land across generations—exile, return, destruction, and rebuilding.”

The City of David excavations are giving us an unfolding story. From the First Temple to the time of Jesus, and even through the “silent” centuries in between, layer after layer testifies to the enduring presence of God’s people in His chosen city.

For Christians, it is one more witness that the God of the Bible is faithful to His promises, weaving together history and prophecy, until all is fulfilled in Christ.

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The Pilgrimage Road: Unearthing the Path Jesus Walked in Ancient Jerusalem

JULY 5, 2025

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY



Rediscovered Beneath a Burst Pipe

In 2004, a routine water pipe repair in Jerusalem's ancient City of David led to an extraordinary archaeological discovery. Beneath a quiet garden just south of the Old City, workers uncovered a wide flight of ancient stone steps. What they found was the southern edge of the **Pool of Siloam**—a vast mikveh used by Jewish pilgrims 2,000 years ago to purify themselves before ascending to the Temple Mount.



Israel Underground: UNCOVERING the Pool of Siloam & Jerusalem's Ancient Pilgrimage Road | TBN Israel

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=hox3hGKrWDA>



Further digging revealed something even more astonishing: a massive paved road stretching uphill toward the Temple, dating back to the time of **Pontius Pilate**. This road, known now as the **Pilgrimage Road**, is the very path walked by Jewish worshipers—and almost certainly by **Jesus Himself**—during the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

From the Pool of Siloam to the House of God

The Pilgrimage Road begins at the Pool of Siloam, a site made famous in **John 9**, where Jesus healed a man born blind. Archaeologists have now confirmed that this was not only a biblical site, but also a massive purification center capable of handling thousands of pilgrims during major feast days.

Once purified, the pilgrims would begin their spiritual and physical ascent. The road stretches **600 yards uphill**, connecting the Pool to the **Temple Mount**. Along the way, pilgrims would walk between homes and shops that lined the route. According to Jewish law, residents of Jerusalem were expected to offer food, water, and lodging to the visiting faithful.

“This is one place where I can say with 100% certainty—Jesus walked here.”

The road’s width—roughly 12 to 13 yards—confirms it was designed to accommodate multitudes. The Hebrew term for this journey, *Ma’alot Regel*, literally means “going up by foot.” And it was no metaphor. The incline is real. So was the awe.

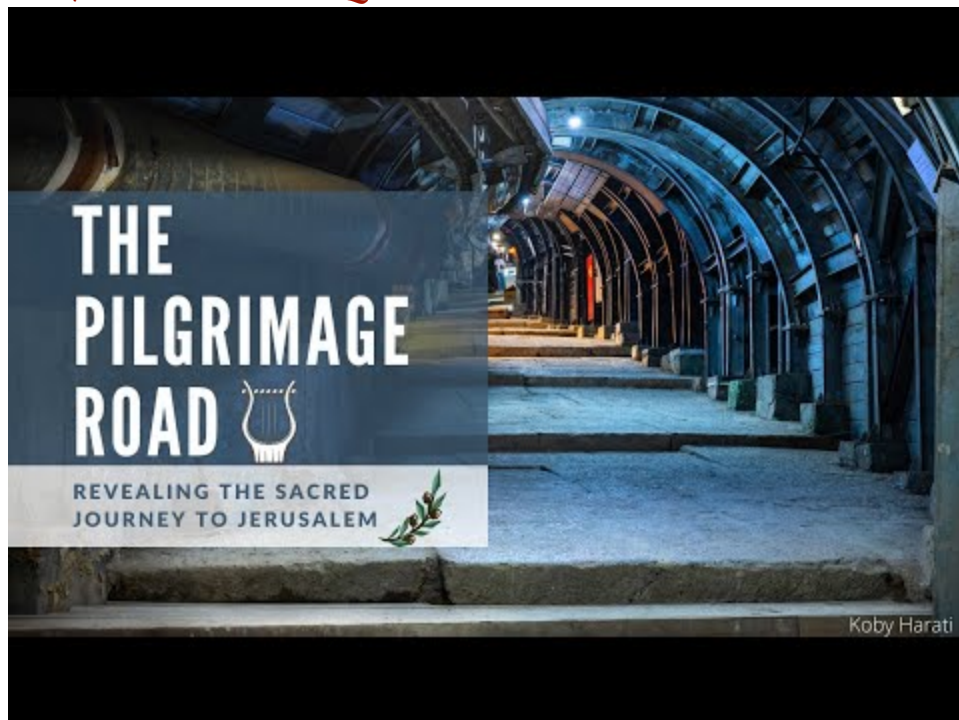
*In our next post, we will explore how Psalm 119 mirrors this pilgrimage—not in stone, but in spirit.
Each Hebrew letter may mark a step on the journey of the heart.*

The Architecture of Devotion



Uncovering the Pilgrimage Road to Jerusalem - Revealing the Sacred Ancient Journey

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=XTkCrQHBF0o>



The road's stones remain remarkably well-preserved. That's partly because they were buried under centuries of debris and only recently uncovered. The steps are intentionally uneven—some long, others short—forcing pilgrims to walk **mindfully**, not in haste. As one guide explained, “Pilgrimage is not a race. It's a sacred act.”

Underneath the road, a **drainage tunnel** ran the full length of the route. Incredibly, it was in this hidden tunnel that archaeologists found the most haunting relics: cooking pots, oil lamps, and **coins minted by Jewish rebels** during the Roman siege of 70 A.D.

One coin bore the words: “**For the Freedom of Zion – Year 3**”—a powerful symbol of Jewish resistance during the Great Revolt. These artifacts are not just historical; they are emotional. They testify to the desperation and faith of Jerusalem's final defenders.

The Final Ascent and the Fall of a City

Josephus, the first-century historian, wrote **that the road flowed with blood when Titus and the Roman legions destroyed the city**. The Temple was burned, the people slaughtered, and the Jewish presence in Jerusalem was erased for nearly 2,000 years.

Yet these stones remained.

Today, you can walk on the same path. The **City of David Foundation**, along with Israeli archaeologists, has made much of the Pilgrimage Road accessible to visitors. Eventually, the full route—from the Pool of Siloam all the way to the **Western Wall**—will be open.



“When you're in the place where the Bible happened, the words of the Bible come to life.”

Faith That Stands on Stone

For skeptics, the Pilgrimage Road is a challenge. It was hidden for centuries, yet exactly where the Bible said it would be. It connects the dots—from David's city, to Hezekiah's tunnel, to Jesus' miracle, to the Temple Mount itself.

This is not myth. This is not metaphor. This is **fact**.

And for believers, it's more than a site—it's a reminder: our faith is not built on fables. It's built on **stone**, on **testimony**, and ultimately on the **Person** who walked this road, healed the blind, and gave His life at the end of that uphill journey.

Let the stones speak. They are crying out.

An Archaeological Hanukkah Miracle: Unearthing Hasmonean History in the Jordan Valley

JANUARY 11, 2025

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW, CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW



The following article from ***Patterns of Evidence*** is fascinating, as it intertwines history, faith, and archaeology in a way that underscores the enduring legacy of biblical and intertestamental events. Here are some reflections from a biblical and Christian perspective:

Historical Validation and Faith Connection

The discovery of Hasmonean coins is an incredible reminder of the historicity of events described in the Bible and other ancient texts like 1 and 2 Maccabees. While these books are not canonical in the Protestant Bible, they provide a valuable historical context for understanding the period between the Old and New Testaments, especially the backdrop for the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah), mentioned in John 10:22-23. This discovery strengthens the connection between archaeological evidence and Scripture, affirming the Bible's role as a historical document.

God's Providence in History

The timing of the find, during Hanukkah, is striking. While secular historians might see it as coincidence, from a Christian worldview, it's an example of God's sovereignty in revealing truths at moments that carry symbolic weight. This discovery during a celebration of deliverance and dedication could serve as a reminder of God's faithfulness throughout history, even in turbulent times.

Relevance of the Hasmonean Period

King Alexander Jannaeus's reign was a pivotal time for Jewish self-rule, leading up to the Roman occupation. This period helped shape the sociopolitical and religious environment of Jesus' time. The tension between Jewish independence and foreign domination is a recurring theme that echoes in the New Testament, particularly in the longing for the Messiah as the ultimate deliverer.

Archaeological Miracles

While the phrase "archaeological Hanukkah miracle" is metaphorical, the unearthing of this "time capsule" reinforces the precision and richness of archaeological work. The coins' inscriptions and imagery provide a window into the past, allowing us to visualize the culture, economy, and leadership of that era.

Spiritual Application

For Christians, the story of Hanukkah carries themes of dedication, faithfulness, and miraculous provision—principles that resonate with our faith in Christ. The Maccabean Revolt, a battle for religious purity and devotion to God, prefigures the spiritual battles believers face in standing firm in a secular world.

Outreach and Witness

This discovery could serve as a bridge for dialogue with Jewish friends and neighbors, sharing the mutual heritage of the Old Testament and its fulfillment in Jesus, the Messiah. The Feast of Dedication reminds us of Jesus' declaration as the Light of the World, a message that aligns with the menorah's symbolism.

The article is a beautiful example of how archaeology can bring the biblical narrative to life, inspiring both believers and seekers to explore God's unfolding story throughout history.

Please click and read on Patterns of Evidence:

Coin Discovery Called an “Archaeological Hanukkah Miracle”

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A Journey Underneath Jerusalem from the City of David Down to the Gihon Spring

JANUARY 1, 2025

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY, CITY OF DAVID



Jerusalem—a city where history treads its pavements and where biblical stories come alive. This ancient city, born as the capital of Israel on a small hill over 3,000 years ago, has been the spiritual center of the world, disseminating foundational beliefs and universal values to the world. Yet, Jerusalem’s journey has been fraught with challenges, from battles and scars to complete destruction in 70 CE.

The lost city was rediscovered in 1867 by British explorer Charles Warren. Warren uncovered evidence of its ancient water system buried beneath the ruins. Today, the City of David is one of the most significant and actively researched biblical archaeological sites, where history and faith converge. Thanks to the dedication of the **City of David Foundation**, this ongoing work continues to provide wonderful discoveries.

The **City of David Foundation** is committed to preserving and sharing this historic site through its various locations, including the City of David National Park ([link](#)), Emek Tzurim National Park ([link](#)), the Peace Forest ([link](#)) and significant others on their website.

Visitors can walk through tunnels carved thousands of years ago, explore drainage channels, and even sift through soil to uncover archaeological treasures. These experiences connect us to the vibrant heart of Jerusalem and the legacy of King David's city.

This blog post is inspired by a video created by the City of David Foundation. The video highlights how the ongoing discoveries at this remarkable site substantiate the Bible's historical record.

The City of David: A Journey Beneath Jerusalem

In the heart of modern Jerusalem lies the City of David, an archaeological wonder that continues to substantiate the historical records of the Bible. Hidden beneath the bustling streets and ancient homes lies a treasure trove of discoveries, each whispering tales of a civilization that shaped the history and faith of billions. This exploration reveals how biblical accounts align with the remnants of Jerusalem's earliest days.

King David's Conquest and the Water System

One of the most compelling narratives involves the ingenious water systems built to secure Jerusalem's survival. The Bible recounts in 2 Samuel 5 how King David conquered the city by entering through a "water pipe"—a tunnel system excavated to provide access to the only water source outside the city walls. Archaeologists have uncovered these very tunnels, complete with ancient chisel marks that date back 4,000 years. The retractable staircase above the water system served as a clever defensive measure, allowing inhabitants to secure the city in times of siege.

The Gihon Spring: Life and Legacy

The Gihon Spring, Jerusalem's vital water source, has flowed steadfastly throughout history. This spring was central to the city's existence and features prominently in biblical events. In 1 Kings 1, King Solomon was anointed as king at this very spring, marking the beginning of his reign. Standing where Solomon was anointed is a powerful connection to a moment that shaped the lineage of Israel's kings.

Defying Assyrian Conquest

The Bible records in 2 Kings 19 and Isaiah 37 the miraculous survival of Jerusalem during King Hezekiah's reign when Assyria's mighty army besieged the city. Archaeological evidence corroborates these accounts. King Hezekiah's efforts to redirect the Gihon Spring's water flow into a secure tunnel system played a pivotal role in Jerusalem's defense. Remarkably, Assyrian inscriptions even acknowledge that Jerusalem was the one city they could not conquer.

Living History Beneath the City

Beneath the City of David, archaeologists have uncovered homes, tools, and even soot marks on cave ceilings from fires lit thousands of years ago. These remnants speak of families who lived through pivotal biblical events, including the reigns of David, Solomon, and Hezekiah. In one ancient home, shelves carved into the stone and a smoke-stained ceiling vividly depict life in Jerusalem during these times.

Connecting the Past to the Present

Every discovery in the City of David enriches our understanding of Jerusalem's role in biblical history. These findings affirm the historical reliability of the Bible and offer a tangible connection to the stories of faith and resilience passed down through generations. As the Gihon Spring continues to flow, it serves as a testament to the enduring legacy of Jerusalem and its people.

The City of David is more than an archaeological site; it is a living narrative of the Bible brought to life. From King David's conquest to King Solomon's anointing and King Hezekiah's defense against Assyria, the discoveries unearthed here provide a compelling testament to the Bible's historical accuracy. For believers and history enthusiasts alike, the City of David offers an unparalleled journey into the heart of Jerusalem's biblical past.

Explore the City of David in the embedded video below and witness the Bible's history unfold before your eyes.



A Journey Underneath Jerusalem from the City of David Down to the Gihon Spring
<https://youtube.com/watch?v=izEvnRua3Y>



Artifacts at Shiloh and Their Connection to the Biblical Tabernacle

AUGUST 24, 2024

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY



In our coverage of **biblical archaeology**, we explore recent archaeological discoveries that bolster the historical authenticity of biblical narratives. In this post, we delve into Artifacts at Shiloh and their connection to the Tabernacle, uncovering their significance and providing insights into the ancient world as described in the Bible. Stay tuned as we continue to bridge the past with the present, revealing the rich history that supports our faith.

Introduction

Recent archaeological excavations at Shiloh have uncovered remarkable artifacts that shed light on the site's historical significance and connection to the Biblical Tabernacle. These discoveries provide invaluable insights into ancient Israel's religious and cultural practices. This post delves into the findings at Shiloh, exploring their historical and Biblical significance.

LATEST FROM SHILOH'S DIG



The Bible Comes Alive at Ancient Shiloh | Jerusalem Dateline July 5, 2024

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=yr5o0q-w2V8>



The Discovery Shiloh, located in the heart of ancient Israel, served as the religious center for the Israelites for centuries. Archaeologists, led by Dr. Scott Stripling, have unearthed artifacts such as small ceramic pomegranates, which are significant in Biblical tradition, symbolizing fruitfulness and blessing. These finds and other artifacts prove the site's connection to the Tabernacle (**The Times of Israel**) (**Bible Archaeology Society**).

Historical Context: The Tabernacle at Shiloh

The Bible records that the Tabernacle, a portable dwelling place for the Divine Presence, was set up at Shiloh after the Israelites entered the Promised Land. This site served as the central place of worship for Israel until the establishment of Jerusalem as the religious capital. The story of Samuel and the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 4:12) highlights Shiloh's significance.

Biblical Account and Significance of Pomegranates

Pomegranates were an important symbol in ancient Israel, used in decorating the Tabernacle and later the Temple. The discovery of ceramic pomegranates at Shiloh suggests a direct connection to the religious practices described in the Bible. These artifacts offer tangible evidence supporting the Biblical account of the Tabernacle's presence at Shiloh.

Archaeological Techniques and Methods

Dr. Stripling's team employed advanced techniques such as residue analysis on pottery sherds and wet sifting, which recovers smaller artifacts missed in earlier excavations. These techniques have led to the discovery of numerous coins, clay sealings, and other artifacts, providing a clearer picture of daily life in ancient Shiloh.

Key Objectives of the Shiloh Excavation

The Shiloh Excavation is one of ABR's most important research projects, with several core goals:

1. Investigate the location of the Biblical Tabernacle and any associated structures.
2. Uncover evidence of the Biblical sacrificial system.
3. Understand daily life in Israel during the Conquest and the period of the Judges.
4. Introduce new technologies like wet-sifting and computerization in the field.
5. Equip students and volunteers with the knowledge and skills needed for scientific excavation in the Land of the Bible.
6. Build on the regional understanding of life in the Highlands of Israel gained by ABR's previous excavations at Khirbet Nisya and Khirbet el-Maqatir.

Implications for Biblical Scholarship

The artifacts uncovered at Shiloh provide a deeper understanding of the Israelites' cultural and religious practices during the time of the Tabernacle. This discovery highlights Shiloh's significance as a central place of worship and offers insights into the historical context of biblical narratives.

Conclusion The ongoing excavations at Shiloh reveal this ancient site's rich history and its significant role in Biblical narratives. The artifacts discovered provide a deeper appreciation of the historical and spiritual significance of the Biblical accounts, bridging the past with the present in our continuous quest for understanding.

Further Reading For more detailed information on the discoveries at Shiloh and their implications, check out the articles from **Times of Israel** and **Biblical Archaeology Society**. More detailed reports can be found at **Associates for Biblical Research – Shiloh Excavations**.

References

1. Times of Israel. (2024). At Shiloh, Archaeologist Finds Artifacts Hinting at Biblical Tabernacle. [Link to article](#)
2. Biblical Archaeology Society. (2024). Recent Discoveries in Biblical Archaeology. [Link to article](#)
3. Associates for Biblical Research. (2024). Shiloh Excavations. [Link to site](#)

By exploring these archaeological findings, we gain a deeper appreciation of the historical and spiritual significance of the Biblical accounts, bridging the past with the present in our continuous quest for understanding.

Further Reading:

- Armstrong Institute: **Uncovering the Bible's Buried Cities: Shiloh**
- Patterns of Evidence:
Shiloh Discovery Matches Biblical Altar
Biblical Tabernacle: New Dig Seeking Evidence to Confirm Location

The Discovery of Joshua's Great Witness Stone at Shechem

AUGUST 16, 2024

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY



Introduction

In the heart of the Promised Land, nestled between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, lies the ancient city of Shechem—a site rich with biblical history. Here, under the oak near the holy place of the Lord, Joshua erected a large stone to witness Israel's renewed covenant with God (Joshua 24:26). The significance of this moment cannot be overstated. The recent discovery of what many believe to be this very stone adds a profound layer of authenticity to the biblical narrative. This post explores the discovery of Joshua's great witness stone, its journey through the ages, and what it means for biblical archaeology today.



The Discovery of Joshua's Great Witness Stone at Shechem

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=mnis257Rd3E>



The Biblical Context of Shechem

Shechem is paramount in the Bible, serving as a stage for pivotal events in Israel's history. After entering the Promised Land, Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel at Shechem, where he renewed the covenant between God and the people. As a symbol of this covenant, Joshua set up a large stone under the oak near the holy place, declaring it a witness against the people should they forsake the Lord (Joshua 24:27).

This stone, therefore, was not just a physical marker but a spiritual witness, carrying the weight of the covenant between God and His people. The significance of this event, as detailed in the Book of Joshua, underscores the stone's role as a tangible reminder of Israel's commitment to God.

The Archaeological Discovery

Joel Kramer, a biblical archaeologist featured on the YouTube channel Expedition Bible, brings to light the story of this remarkable discovery. Standing amidst the ruins of ancient Shechem, Kramer shares the incredible journey of how this witness stone was unearthed and nearly lost again through the site's tumultuous history.

In 1926, German archaeologist Ernst Sellin excavated a massive stone at the site of Shechem, which he initially interpreted as a sacred standing stone or *matsebah* in Hebrew. Although broken, this stone matched the description and location of the stone mentioned in Joshua 24. As further excavations revealed, this stone was not merely a marker but likely the very witness stone set up by Joshua.

Sellin's team also discovered the foundations of what was once a grand temple at Shechem, further linking the site to the biblical narrative. The stone, initially believed to be a water trough, was later confirmed to be the base of the sacred stone, solidifying its connection to the biblical account.

Challenges and Triumphs in Archaeology

The journey of this stone did not end with its discovery. The excavation site at Shechem was a battleground of interpretations. Dr. Gabriel Welter, a member of the German excavation team, strongly opposed Sellin's identification of the stone as the biblical witness stone. In a dramatic turn of events, Welter, upon assuming control of the excavation, toppled the stone from its base and discarded it down a slope, further damaging it.

This act of defiance could have led to the permanent loss of this significant artifact. However, archaeologist G. Ernest Wright recovered the stone in 1960. Wright recognized its importance and

painstakingly restored it to its original location. Wright's work ensured that the stone could once again stand as a testament to the historicity of the biblical account.

The Significance of the Witness Stone

The discovery of Joshua's witness stone is a profound example of how archaeology can affirm the reliability of Scripture. Without the biblical text, the significance of this stone might have been lost to history. Yet, the rocks come to life when the Bible is brought into the archaeological equation, revealing their true purpose and meaning.

This stone, now standing once more at Shechem, is a broken yet enduring witness to a covenant made thousands of years ago. Its story, from its biblical origins to its near destruction and eventual restoration, mirrors the journey of the covenant itself—a powerful reminder of humanity's tendency to stray from God and the enduring call to return to Him.

Conclusion

The discovery of Joshua's great witness stone at Shechem is more than just an archaeological find; it is a tangible connection to the events of the Bible, offering evidence of the historical accuracy and divine inspiration of Scripture. As Joel Kramer eloquently presents in his video on "Expedition Bible," this stone stands as a testament to the enduring truth of God's Word, a reminder that what was written in the Bible was not merely myth but recorded history, verified by the very stones unearthed in the Promised Land.

For those interested in exploring the intersection of archaeology and biblical truth, the "Expedition Bible" channel, recommended by the Virginia Christian Alliance, offers an invaluable resource. Through the lens of archaeology, we are invited to delve deeper into the Bible, gaining a richer understanding of its historicity, authenticity, and authority.

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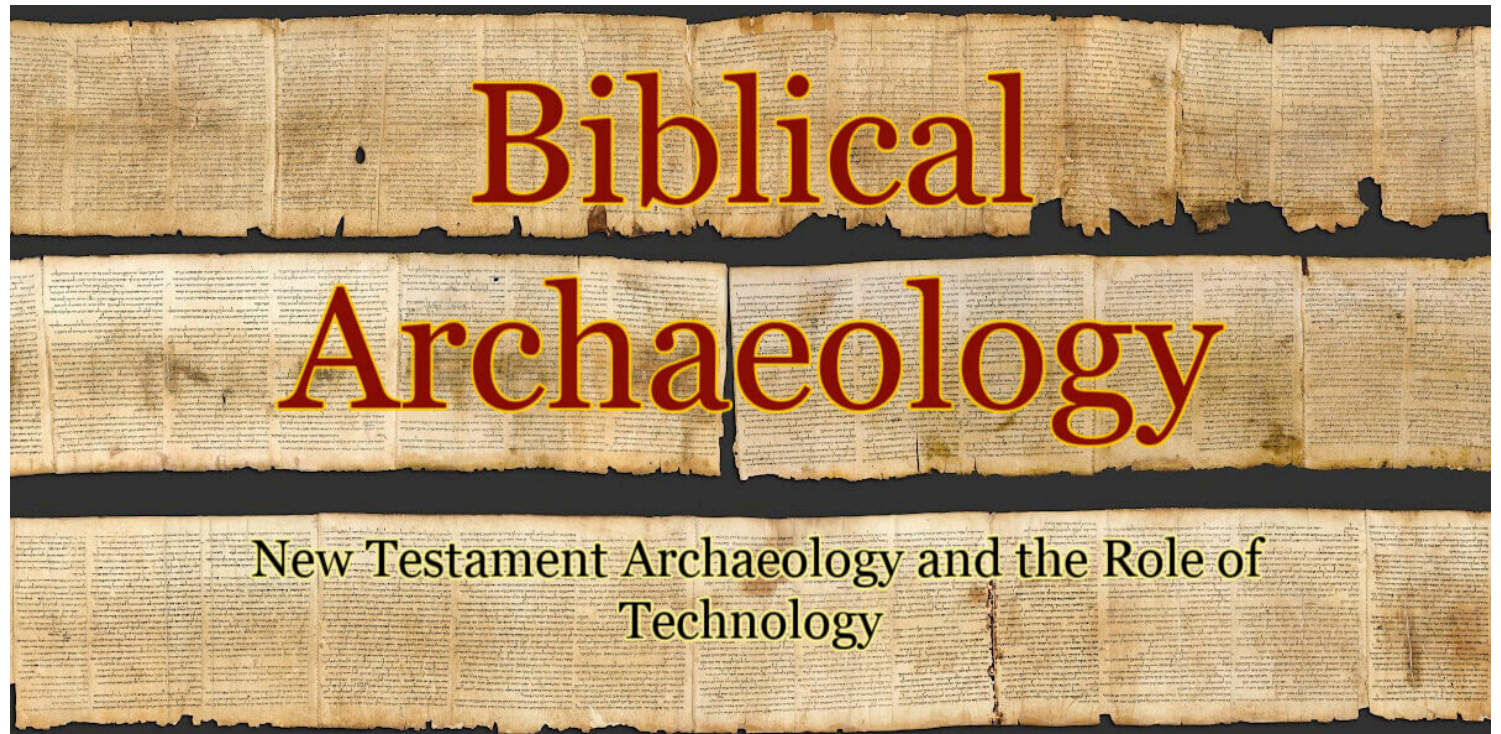
1. **Biblical Archaeology: Virginia Christian Alliance**
2. **Biblical Archaeology Society** – Explore detailed discussions on ancient Shechem and its biblical significance [here](#).
3. **Expedition Bible: YouTube Channel** and [website](#)

New Testament Archaeology and the Role of Technology

AUGUST 9, 2024

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY



Introduction

In our **previous posts**, we introduced Biblical archaeology and explored significant Old Testament discoveries. We examined ancient writings and historical documents that support the Biblical narrative. Today, we focus on New Testament archaeology and technology's role in uncovering the New Testament's historical context. We will explore discoveries illuminating the life and times of Jesus and the early church, providing additional evidence of the Bible's authenticity.

New Testament Archaeology

New Testament archaeology focuses on uncovering physical evidence related to events, people, and places described in the New Testament. These discoveries offer valuable insights into the historical and cultural context of the early Christian era.

Nazareth Inscription (Early 1st Century AD)

This **marble tablet**, discovered in Nazareth, contains an edict from an unnamed Roman emperor prohibiting the removal of bodies from tombs. Some scholars believe this edict responds to Jesus's resurrection and suggests concern about grave robberies in the region where Jesus was buried.

The Pool of Bethesda (John 5:2)

Excavations in Jerusalem have revealed the remains of the **Pool of Bethesda**, described in the Gospel of John as the site where Jesus healed a paralytic man. The discovery of the pool and its five porticoes confirms the detailed description provided in the New Testament.

Peter's House in Capernaum

Archaeologists have identified a house in Capernaum that many believe is the **home of the Apostle Peter**. This house, which later became a site of Christian worship, aligns with the New Testament accounts of Jesus' activities in Capernaum (Matthew 8:14-16).

The Ossuary of James

This limestone burial box, inscribed with the words "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus," has sparked significant debate. While some question its authenticity, many scholars believe it provides direct archaeological evidence of Jesus' family.

The Role of Technology in Biblical Archaeology

Modern technology has revolutionized Biblical archaeology. It allows for more precise and noninvasive exploration methods, leading to discoveries and a deeper understanding of ancient sites.

Ground-penetrating radar (**GPR**)

GPR uses radar pulses to image the subsurface, enabling archaeologists to detect and map buried structures without excavation. This technology has been instrumental in identifying ancient buildings and tombs, including the potential location of David's palace in Jerusalem.

3D Imaging and Reconstruction

3D imaging technology allows for the digital reconstruction of ancient sites and artifacts. This technique provides detailed visualizations of archaeological finds, helping researchers and the public better understand their original appearance and context.

Satellite Imaging

Satellite imagery identifies potential archaeological sites from space. This technology has been particularly useful in difficult-to-access regions, such as remote areas of the Sinai Peninsula and the Arabian Desert, where possible evidence of the Exodus route has been explored.

Carbon-14 Dating

Radiocarbon dating remains crucial for determining the age of organic materials found at archaeological sites. This method has been used to date artifacts and remains from the New Testament period, providing a chronological framework for historical events.

AI in Archaeological Analysis

Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a transformative role in archaeology by enhancing the precision and scope of research. AI algorithms can analyze vast datasets, such as satellite imagery and geospatial data, to predict the locations of undiscovered archaeological sites. For example, in a study of ancient Mesopotamian sites, AI successfully identified potential areas of interest with 80% accuracy, guiding researchers to new sites that might otherwise remain hidden. Furthermore, AI is instrumental in reconstructing fragmented artifacts, using machine learning to piece together ancient objects accurately. This innovative application of AI accelerates archaeological discoveries and deepens our understanding of past civilizations.

Conclusion

New Testament archaeology, aided by modern technology, continues to uncover compelling evidence that supports the Bible's historical accuracy. Discoveries such as the Pool of Bethesda, Peter's house, and the Nazareth Inscription provide tangible connections to the events and people described in the New Testament. Moreover, using advanced technologies like ground-penetrating radar, 3D imaging, satellite imaging, and carbon-14 dating enhances our ability to explore and understand these ancient sites.

In our next post, we will address the controversies and debates in Biblical archaeology. We will explore the challenges and differing interpretations within the field and discuss how faith and scholarly inquiry coexist in pursuing historical truth.

Further Reading:

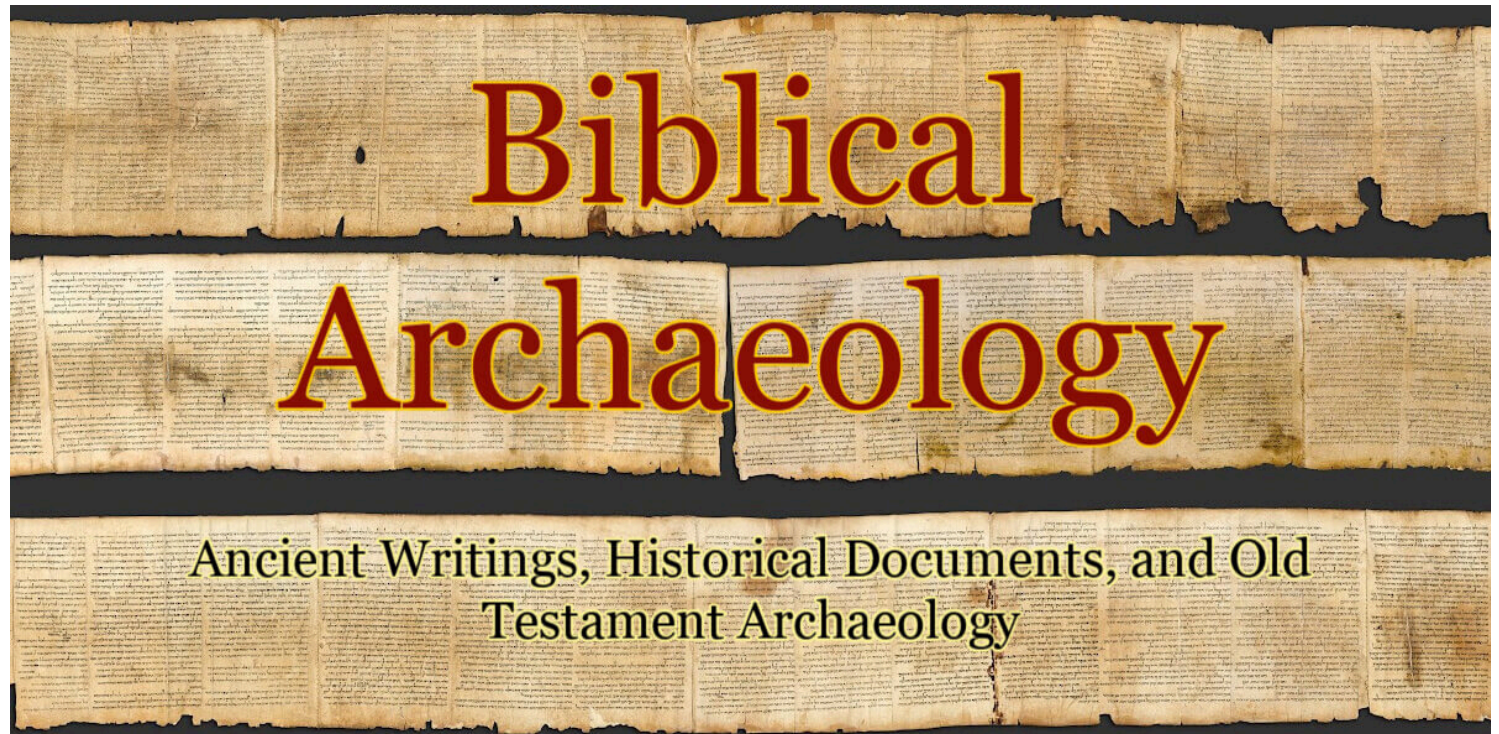
- **Introduction to Biblical Archaeology and Major Discoveries**
- **Revealing the Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Old Testament**

Revealing the Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Old Testament

AUGUST 3, 2024

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY, CITY OF DAVID



Introduction

In our **previous post**, we introduced the fascinating field of biblical archaeology and highlighted some significant discoveries that affirm the Bible's historical reliability. Today, we delve deeper into ancient writings and historical documents that support the biblical narrative, focusing specifically on Old Testament archaeology. These ancient texts and findings validate the Biblical accounts and provide a broader historical context that enriches our understanding of the Scriptures.

Ancient Writings and Historical Records

Ancient manuscripts and historical records are more than just physical artifacts and structures. They are a treasure trove in Biblical archaeology. These texts, written by historians, scribes, and contemporaries of Biblical events, offer invaluable insights and external validation of the Biblical narrative. They leave us in awe of the depth of our historical knowledge and spark our curiosity for more.

The Merneptah Stele (circa 1208 BC):

This ancient Egyptian stele, discovered in Thebes, contains the earliest known reference to Israel outside the Bible. The inscription, commissioned by Pharaoh Merneptah, mentions a people called 'Israel' residing in Canaan, providing evidence of Israel's presence in the region during the late 13th century BC. Learn more about the Merneptah Stele: [Basil Library](#).

The Mesha Stele (circa 840 BC):

Also known as the Moabite Stone, this stele was found in Dhiban, Jordan. It contains King Mesha of Moab's inscription detailing his victories over Israel, a narrative that aligns with the Biblical account of Moab's rebellion against Israel described in 2 Kings 3. This stele, with its detailed account of the events, provides a strong external validation of the events described in the Old Testament, particularly the account of Moab's rebellion against Israel. For more details on the Moabite Stone, visit the [Biblical Archaeology Society](#).

The Babylonian Chronicles (circa 600-500 BC):

The Babylonian Chronicles, dating back to the 6th and 5th centuries BC, are a collection of ancient cuneiform tablets that chronicle the history of Babylon. These tablets contain events that align with the Biblical accounts of the Babylonian conquest of Judah and the exile of the Jewish people, providing substantial external evidence for the events described in the books of Kings, Chronicles, and Daniel, reinforcing our confidence in the historical accuracy of the Bible.

Archaeology and the Old Testament

The Old Testament is rich with historical events and figures that archaeological discoveries have substantiated. These findings not only affirm the Biblical narrative but also significantly enhance our understanding of the historical and cultural context of the ancient Near East, enriching our knowledge and appreciation of history.

The City of David:

Excitingly, ongoing excavations in Jerusalem have unearthed significant structures and artifacts from the First Temple period, including the remains of King David's palace and the ancient water system described in 2 Samuel 5:8. These discoveries provide tangible evidence of Jerusalem's importance during David's reign, adding new layers to our understanding of history.

The Tel Dan Inscription:

As mentioned in our previous post, this stele references the 'House of David.' Discovered in northern Israel, it provides the earliest known extrabiblical evidence of King David's dynasty, confirming the historical reality of his reign and the prominence of his lineage. Learn more about the Tel Dan Inscription on [Biblical Archaeology Society](#).

The Hezekiah Tunnel:

This ancient water tunnel, known as the Hezekiah Tunnel, was carved during the reign of King Hezekiah, as described in 2 Kings 20:20 and 2 Chronicles 32:30. Discovered in Jerusalem, the tunnel served as a crucial defense measure during the Assyrian siege, a historical event described in the Old Testament. The Siloam Inscription within the tunnel provides a firsthand account of its construction. For more details, visit the Hezekiah Tunnel in [HistoryHIT](#).

The Lachish Letters:

These ancient Hebrew inscriptions, discovered at the site of Lachish, date back to the Babylonian siege of Judah. The letters provide insights into the final days before the fall of Jerusalem, supporting the accounts of the Babylonian conquest described in the books of Kings and Jeremiah. Additional information on the [Lachish Letters on Wikipedia](#) and more in-depth links for further study can be found.

Conclusion

Ancient writings, historical documents, and archaeological discoveries offer compelling evidence supporting the Old Testament narrative. These findings not only validate the historical accuracy of the Bible but also provide a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical context in which these events occurred.

In our next post, we will explore New Testament archaeology and technology's role in uncovering the New Testament's historical context. We will examine the discoveries illuminating the life and times of Jesus and the early church, providing further evidence of the Bible's authenticity.

Stay tuned as we continue our journey through the fascinating world of Biblical archaeology, where faith and history intersect to reveal profound truths about our ancient past.

For further reading:

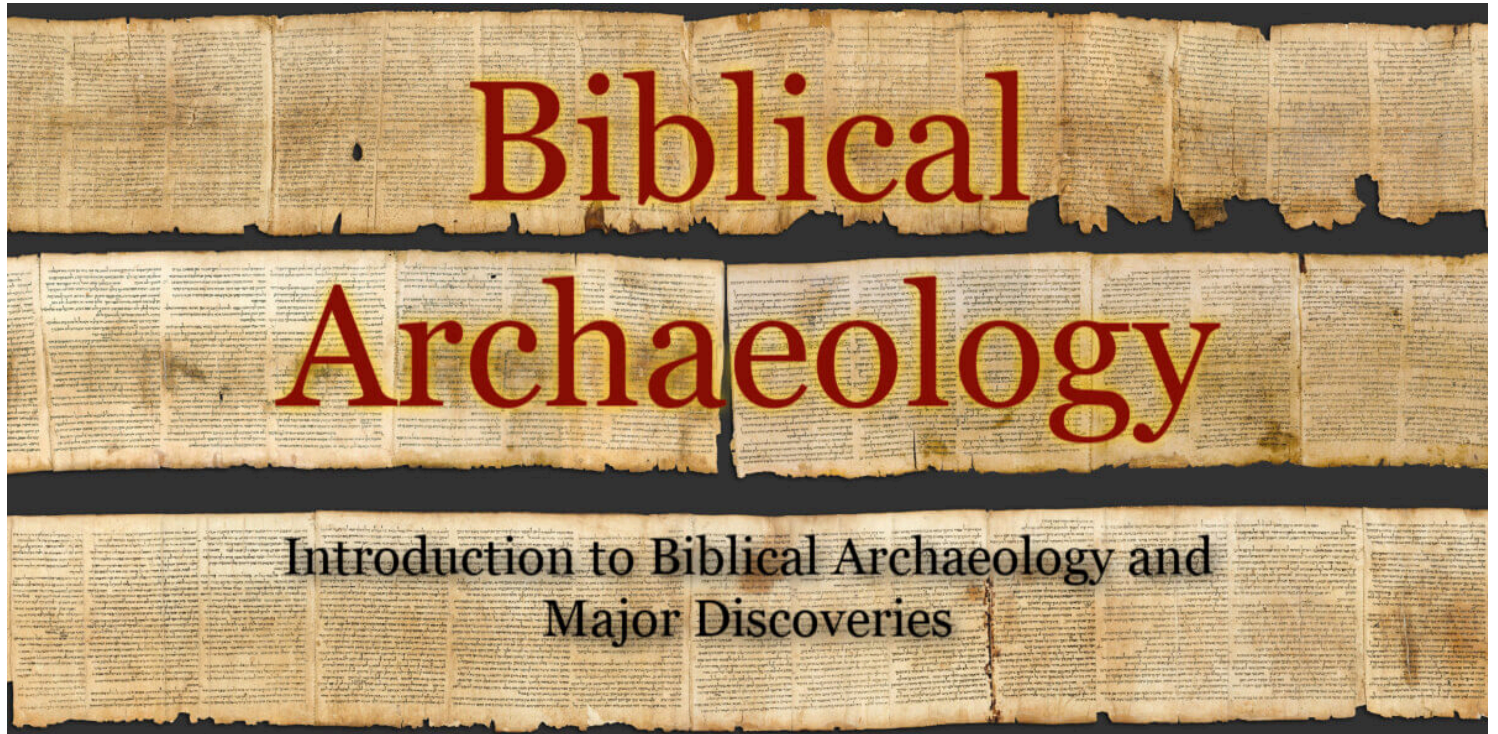
Largest ever Second Temple era quarry discovered in Har Hotzvim Hi-Tech Park, Jerusalem
([JPOST](#))

Introduction to Biblical Archaeology and Major Discoveries

JULY 21, 2024

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY



Introduction to Biblical Archaeology

Biblical archaeology is a fascinating field that merges the disciplines of archaeology and Biblical studies to uncover the physical evidence of the stories, places, and people described in the Bible. This discipline not only strengthens the faith of believers but also provides valuable insights for secular historians and archaeologists. The goal of this series is to explore significant archaeological discoveries and their implications for both the Biblical narrative and our understanding of ancient history.

The Importance of Biblical Archaeology

Biblical archaeology plays a crucial role in validating the historical accuracy of the Bible. By uncovering artifacts, inscriptions, and ancient structures, archaeologists provide tangible evidence that supports Biblical accounts. These discoveries bridge the gap between faith and history, offering a deeper appreciation of the Bible's historical context. For both Christians and secular readers, the findings of Biblical archaeology offer compelling insights into the ancient world and the authenticity of the Biblical narrative.

Major Discoveries in Biblical Archaeology

Over the past several decades, numerous significant discoveries have been made that affirm the historical reliability of the Bible. These findings span various time periods and locations, providing a rich tapestry of evidence that enhances our understanding of Biblical events. In this post, we will summarize some of the most impactful discoveries made in the last 25 and 50 years.

Significant Discoveries in the Last 25 Years

1. **The Pool of Siloam (2004):** Archaeologists discovered this ancient pool in Jerusalem, which the Gospel of John mentions. Jewish pilgrims used it for ritual purification before entering the Temple. This discovery provides a direct link to the New Testament narrative and the practices of the Second Temple period.
2. **Herod's Tomb (2007):** Archaeologists discovered the tomb of King Herod the Great at Herodium, a fortress and palace complex southeast of Bethlehem. This finding confirms historical accounts of Herod's grandiose building projects. It offers insights into his significant role in the New Testament.
3. **Megiddo Church (Early 2000s):** Archaeologists discovered one of the oldest known Christian churches in Megiddo, Israel. It dates back to the third century and contains a mosaic floor with a Greek inscription, providing early evidence of organized Christian worship.

Groundbreaking Discoveries in the Last 50 Years

1. **Tel Dan Stele (1993-1994):** This basalt stele, discovered in northern Israel, contains an inscription referring to the "House of David." It is one of the earliest references to King David outside the Bible, confirming his historical existence and the prominence of his dynasty.
2. **Caiaphas Ossuary (1990):** An ornate limestone box discovered in Jerusalem is inscribed with the name of Caiaphas, the high priest who played a central role in the trial of Jesus. This find provides a direct archaeological link to a key figure in the New Testament.
3. **Shroud of Turin Research:** Scientists continue to analyze the Shroud of Turin, which many believe to be the burial cloth of Jesus, generating significant interest and debate. While people still contest its authenticity, the shroud remains one of the most studied and intriguing artifacts in Biblical archaeology.

Conclusion

The field of Biblical archaeology offers a wealth of evidence that enhances our understanding of the Bible and its historical context. From ancient inscriptions and structures to artifacts and tombs, these discoveries provide a tangible connection to the events and people described in Scripture. In the next post, we will look deeper into the ancient writings and historical documents that support the Biblical narrative, offering further insights into the rich tapestry of Biblical history.

Stay tuned for more exciting explorations in our series on Biblical archaeology, where faith and history intersect to reveal the profound truths of the ancient world.

Related:

The Bible as a Tool in Archaeology

The Assyrian Military Camp and the Angelic Intervention

JUNE 26, 2024

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, UNEARTHING HISTORY



In our coverage of **biblical archaeology**, we explore recent archaeological discoveries that bolster the historical authenticity of biblical narratives. In this post, we delve into the Assyrian Military Camp and the Angelic Intervention, uncovering their significance and providing insights into the ancient world as described in the Bible. Stay tuned as we continue to bridge the past with the present, revealing the rich history that supports our faith.

Introduction In a groundbreaking archaeological discovery, an Assyrian military camp has been unearthed near Jerusalem, dating back to the reign of King Sennacherib. This discovery has profound implications for understanding the historical context of one of the Bible's most dramatic events: the angelic intervention that killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers as described in 2 Kings 19:35 and Isaiah 37:36. This post delves into the archaeological findings and explores their significance in confirming Biblical narratives.

The Discovery The Assyrian military camp was discovered in the vicinity of Jerusalem, an area known for its rich historical and biblical significance. The site includes remnants of military fortifications, weaponry, and various artifacts that indicate a large-scale military presence.

According to archaeologists, this camp dates back to the time of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in 701 BCE ([Archaeology News Online Magazine](#)) ([Bible Archaeology Society](#)).

Historical Context: The Siege of Jerusalem The siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib is a well-documented event in both Assyrian and Biblical records. Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, launched a massive military campaign against Judah, which is vividly described in the Bible. The Assyrian forces surrounded Jerusalem, and the situation appeared dire for King Hezekiah and the inhabitants of the city.

Biblical Account of the Angelic Intervention According to the Bible, King Hezekiah prayed fervently for divine intervention. In response, the angel of the Lord went out and struck down 185,000 soldiers in the Assyrian camp. The next morning, when the people arose, they found the camp filled with dead bodies. This miraculous event forced Sennacherib to withdraw his forces and return to Nineveh (2 Kings 19:35-36, Isaiah 37:36-37).

Archaeological Evidence and Its Significance The discovery of the Assyrian military camp provides compelling support for the Biblical narrative, though it does not confirm the supernatural elements. The presence of such a large military encampment near Jerusalem during Sennacherib's reign aligns with historical accounts and the Biblical description of the siege ([Archaeology News Online Magazine](#)).

Archaeologists found various artifacts, including Assyrian weaponry, armor, and even inscriptions that mention Sennacherib. These findings corroborate the historical records of an Assyrian siege and underscore the significant military threat faced by Jerusalem at that time.

Implications for Biblical Scholarship This discovery is significant for both historians and biblical scholars. It provides tangible evidence of the events described in the Bible and helps to contextualize the dramatic deliverance of Jerusalem. While the archaeological evidence does not confirm the angelic intervention, it does validate the historical setting of the Biblical account.

Conclusion The unearthing of the Assyrian military camp near Jerusalem is a remarkable discovery that enriches our understanding of ancient history and Biblical narratives. It offers a fascinating glimpse into a pivotal moment in Judah's history, where faith and archaeology intersect. As scholars continue to study the site, we may uncover even more insights into this extraordinary event.

Further Reading For more detailed information on this discovery and its implications, search [Archaeology Magazine](#) and [Biblical Archaeology Review](#).

References

1. Archaeology Magazine. (2024). Assyrian Military Camp Found Near Jerusalem. [Link to article](#)
2. Biblical Archaeology Review. (2024). Recent Discoveries in Biblical Archaeology. [Link to article](#)
3. The Times of Israel. (2024). At Shiloh, Archaeologist Finds Artifacts Hinting at Biblical Tabernacle. [Link to article](#)

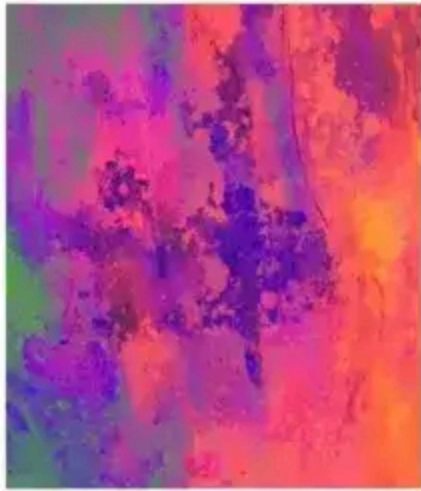
By exploring these archaeological findings, we gain a deeper appreciation of the historical and spiritual significance of the Biblical accounts, bridging the past with the present in our continuous quest for understanding.

The author generated this text in part with GPT-4.0, OpenAI's large-scale language-generation model. Upon generating draft language, the author reviewed, edited, and revised the language to their own liking and takes ultimate responsibility for the content of this publication.

Medieval “Christ” Tattoo Found on 1,300-Year-Old Body in Sudan

FEBRUARY 20, 2024

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY



And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. – Acts 13:39 (ESV)

Lora Gilb | **Evidence**

Chi-Rho Symbol of Christ

Kari Guilbault, a bio-archaeologist at Purdue University, was studying the body of a 1,300-year-old man, discovered at a burial near an ancient monastery in Sudan, when she observed a mark on the body’s right foot. Further examination revealed that it was a rare tattoo combining the Greek letters, *chi* and *rho*, a common symbol of Christ at that time. This is only the second time a medieval tattoo has been ever found during excavation in the region of Nubia.

“It was quite a surprise to all of a sudden see what appeared to be a tattoo when I was working with the Ghazali collection,” Guilbault said in a statement from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw (**PCMA**). “At first, I was not certain, but when the images were processed and the tattoo was clearly visible, any initial uncertainties were removed.”

Even though Guilbault is a specialist in medieval tattooing practices, she called the finding “totally serendipitous” because she was not looking for tattoos at the time but taking photos for documentation.

Once the mark was discovered, Guilbault employed full-spectrum photography and specialized image editing software, techniques originally meant for studying cave paintings, to better reveal the details of the tattoo.

The small tattoo contains a Christogram, a religious symbol that first appeared around 324 AD. Besides the *chi-rho* monogram abbreviation of Christ, the tattoo also depicts the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, *alpha* and *omega*, a representation of the Biblical belief that God is the beginning and the end of everything.

Medieval Nubia Tattoos

The mysterious and rare tattoo sparked various theories. Perhaps it was a marker of a spiritual journey, according to Dr. Robert Stark, the leader of the bio-archaeological study of the Ghazali remains. The orientation of the tattoo, facing the owner, suggests it had a private meaning rather than public. The location of the tattoo on the man’s right foot may have been a reference to Christ’s death on a cross, as his foot would have been pierced with a nail.

When studying ancient remains, there is usually no way to know about an individual’s faith. Guilbault pointed out that, “one of the big questions is how can we tell someone was religious and this is one of those tangible markers of their Christian faith. This is a really fine example of how a person’s faith was a part of their life and their body.”

It is astonishing that the man’s foot tattoo lasted over a thousand years but because of the arid conditions of Sudan many of the Ghazali cemetery remains have been naturally mummified. Fortunately, for the preservation of the tattoo, the part of the man’s body that had been mummified included his legs from the knees down.

Researchers are unsure if the man was a monk or not. His grave was not in the cemetery of the monastery’s monks but in one nearby, perhaps used by people living in the surrounding area. Estimates for the man’s age of death are between 35 and 50 years old.

This discovery overturns a previous theory that only women had tattoos in medieval Nubia, as the only other ancient tattoo ever found in the area was on a woman who had a monogram of Saint Michael on her inner thigh.



Modern restoration of the fresco containing the Christian Chi-Rho symbol along with the Greek letters alpha and omega, from the Roman Villa at Lullingstone, British Museum, London. (credit: I, Udimu, **CC BY-SA 3.0**, via Wikimedia Commons)

Ghazali Archaeological Site

The monastic site of Ghazali is one of Sudan's best-preserved archaeological sites. Besides the tattooed man, there have been other interesting finds, including two terracotta monk figurines of fired clay. Also, many inscriptions have been uncovered, making Ghazali the source of the second-largest known collection of inscriptions in Sudan. On the walls of the northern church within the **monastery**, 137 inscriptions have been recorded, along with 93 funerary inscriptions from the cemeteries.

The site is located in the Northern Province of **Sudan** in the Wadi Abu Dom region of the Bayuda desert, about 12 miles from the modern town of Karima and almost 10 miles from the Nile River. When the monastery was in use, the area was called Nubia and included land that is now part of Southern Egypt and Northern Sudan.



Ghazali Monastery. (credit: **Mapcarta**)

Excavations began at the Ghazali site in the 1950s and were led by Peter Shinnie, Neville Chittick, and Sayed Nigm ed-Din Sherif, on behalf of the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (previously the Sudan Antiquities Service). After two archaeological seasons the team was able to clear the church, dining area, and several other rooms.

Between 2012 and 2018, Prof. Artur Obłuski led an investigation of the site with a Polish-Sudanese team from the **PCMA**. His team unearthed a second church and a complex of sanitary rooms, a feature never before found in Nubia. These discoveries provided evidence that the size of this monastic community was considerable and the site played a role as a pilgrimage center.

Four cemeteries with more than 2,000 burials were also recorded by the team. The graves differed in their architectural forms and contained many inscriptions. Cemetery 2 with around 800 graves was labeled the burial place of the monks who lived at the monastery. The man with the tattoo was found in Cemetery 1.

Currently, Dr. Robert Stark of the PCMA and his colleagues are studying and cataloging the human remains from hundreds of graves in the area to learn more about the background of the local population who lived there in medieval times.



Monastic site, Ghazali Archaeological Site Presentation Project. (credit: Polish Center of Mediterranean Archeology University of Warsaw)

Monasticism in Nubia

Christianity quickly spread into north Africa in the first centuries of the 1st millennium. Monasticism appeared in Nubia soon after the country converted to Christianity between 540 – 570 AD. Nubian monks modeled their lives after the monks of Egypt, Palestine, and Byzantium by living, praying, eating, and working together.

Researchers uncovered separate areas that served various purposes including churches, dormitories, dining halls, and kitchens. They also found a mill with silos and an oil press, the first ever discovered in Nubia.

Along with daily spiritual activities of prayer and worship, the monks also participated in manual labor. An **iron-smelting** site was unearthed outside of the monastery, as well as evidence of a garden which grew medicinal plants for healing. The area also contained the remains of a small village.

The *Alpha* and *Omega* of the Monastery

The medieval Christian monastery was most likely founded between 680 and 720 AD by King Merkurios and was in use until the 13th century. The population was the largest during the mid-10th and mid-12th centuries, numbering around 72 or more people. Researchers base this

estimate on the number of seats in the enlarged dining room, the number of toilets in a new extension, and a possible upper level in the living quarters.

The monastery gradually fell into decline in the second half of the 12th century and by the end of the 13th century ceased to function. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the site was a famous landmark for travelers including Linant de Bellefonds, Richard Lepsius, Sir John Gardner Wilkinson, and Pierre Trémaux.



The ruins of a monastery at the Ghazali archaeological site, as depicted in a 19th-century painting by Karl Richard Lepsius. (credit: scan by NYPL, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons)

The Bible and Tattoos

Tattoos have been the subject of controversy within the Christian faith in modern times. While the New Testament is silent on the subject, there is a passage in the Old Testament that some have pointed to claiming that getting tattoos is wrong.

You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or tattoo yourselves: I am the LORD. – Leviticus 19:28 (ESV)

This command was given after Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt. God wanted his people to be set apart from the nations around them. If we look at this particular command and the

reason for not making cuts or tattoos on one's body, the phrase "for the dead" stands out. Many commentators think it most likely refers to the pagan practice of tattooing connected with idolatry and superstition.

While Christians today do not follow all aspects of the Mosaic Law, we can still take an important principle from this command about being careful if we choose to get a tattoo. Thinking about why we want a certain tattoo and what message will the tattoo send are good questions to think about. For example, a tattoo honoring a false god, idol or superstition, would not be a good witness or be pleasing to God.

Conclusion

This discovery highlights the spread of Christianity's influence during the first centuries. Additionally, "Documentation of this tattoo from Ghazali brings forth numerous questions about the practice of tattooing and signs of faith in medieval Nubia," notes the PCMA statement. As the study of the human remains from the graves of Ghazali continues, who knows what other surprises will emerge, giving more clues about the people who lived there during medieval times. So far, the most interesting discovery has been the Christ tattoo, but what else is waiting to be found?

The site will be turned into a tourist-friendly monastery with support from a grant by the Qatar-Sudan Archaeological Project, making it a destination worth a visit and a moment of contemplation. Keep Thinking!

SOURCE: **PATTERNS OF EVIDENCE**

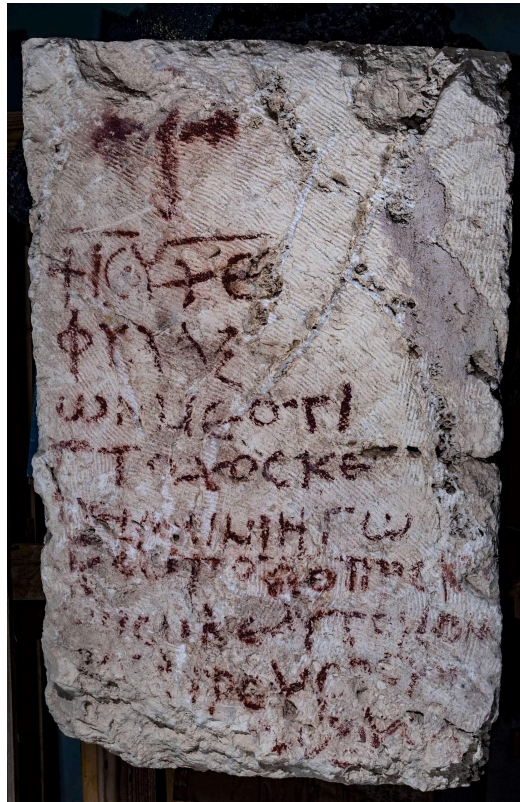
TOP PHOTO: Christian *Chi-Rho* tattoo image of top side of the right foot. The picture was taken with a full spectrum camera and digitally enhanced using ImageJ software with a DStretch plugin. (credit: Kari Guilbault, Polish Center of Mediterranean Archeology University of Warsaw)

Ancient Inscription from the Book of Psalms Discovered at Judean Desert Fortress

OCTOBER 17, 2023

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY



Archaeologists from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem have unearthed an inscription from the book of Psalms dating to the Byzantine era at Hyrcania in the Judean Desert. Hyrcania, located ten miles southeast of Jerusalem, was constructed in the first or second century BC by the Hasmonean ruler John Hyrcanus or his son Alexander Jannaeus.

It was enlarged by Herod the Great, but was abandoned after his death. Finally, it was occupied by a small Christian monastery at the end of the fifth century AD. The Byzantine-era inscription was discovered on the side of a large building stone and is written in Koine Greek. It adapts Psalm 86:1–2 addressing it to Jesus; below a red cross and inscribed in red ink are the words, “Jesus Christ, guard me, for I am poor and needy. Guard my life, for I am faithful to you” (as quoted in the Times of Israel article below).

The original psalm of David reads, “Hear me, Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Guard my life, for I am faithful to you; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God” (NIV).

The find may be the first Koine Greek rendering of a psalm ever discovered inscribed on stone rather than on parchment or papyrus.

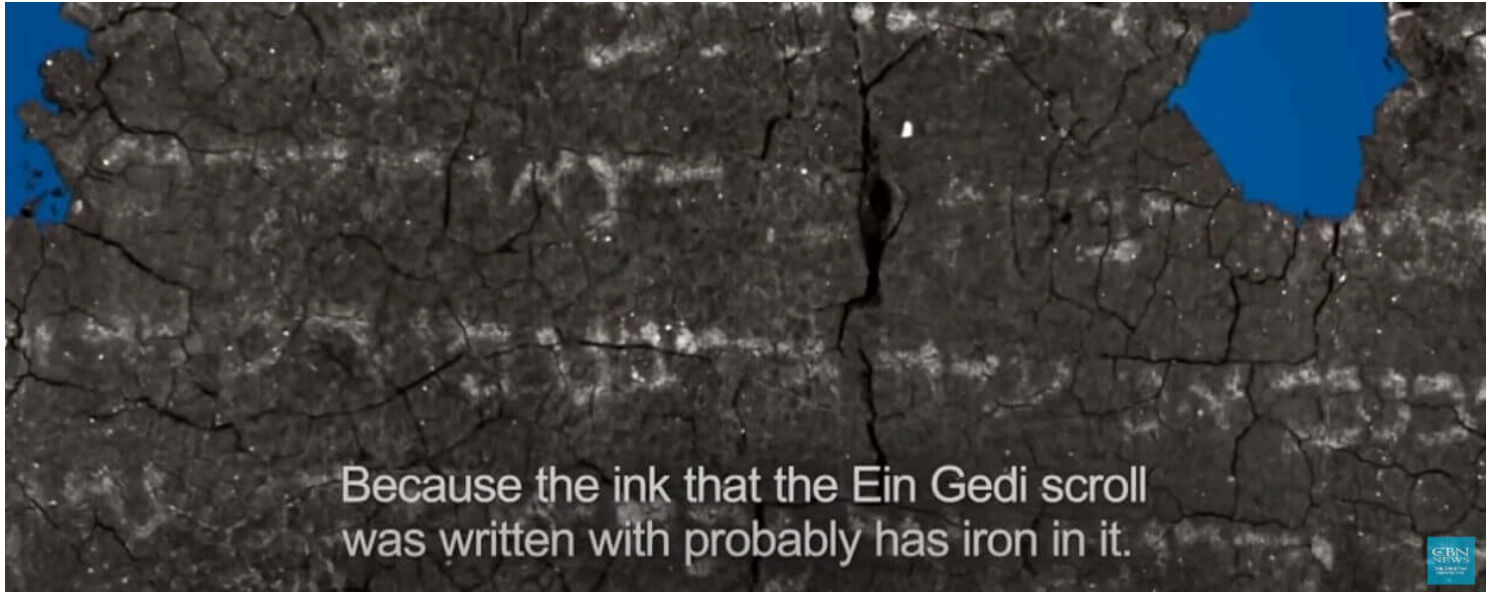
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The Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

APRIL 8, 2023

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: BIBLE, GOD'S WORD, OBEDIENCE TO GOD



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INTRODUCTION

Something happened over 1,970 years ago that changed the course of world history. This event turned men of fear into men of faith. This event explains the existence of the Church and changes in the lives of millions of believers. It is an event that Christians remember each Sunday as they gather together for worship. This event is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Josh McDowell was a skeptic before he examined the gospels for himself. A student asked Josh, “Professor McDowell, why can’t you intellectually refute Christianity?” Josh McDowell responded, “For a very simple reason. I am not able to explain away an event in history-the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” After studying the subject for a long time, Josh McDowell was forced to the conclusion that either the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest hoax ever given to man or it is the most fantastic fact of history.¹

Is it possible to verify the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus? What is the correct historical method to approach the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus in the gospels? What criteria should

be used to determine the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus? What historical evidence do the gospels present for the resurrection of Jesus? This article is the first in a two-part series that will attempt to answer these questions and summarize the main arguments for the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

TESTING HISTORICAL EXPLANATIONS

Historiography

Historiography is the “narrative presentation of history based on a critical examination, evaluation, and selection of material from primary and secondary sources and subject to scholarly criteria.”²

Why is historiography important? In this day of historical revisionism, it is important for evangelical scholars to defend the historicity of events described in the Bible. Many liberal scholars would have us believe that the gospel writers invented various events in the life of Jesus (i.e., his miracles and resurrection) to encourage people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. They would reject the historicity of these events and say that they never really happened. Instead they would describe these events as “legends” or “myths.” Evangelical scholars who accept the literal interpretation of the Bible reject this liberal historical revisionism. We believe that the miracles performed by Jesus and the bodily resurrection of Jesus were literal events in history.

How can evangelical scholars “prove” the historicity of these events recorded in the gospels? How does one actually do the work of the historian? How is such research to be conducted? Gary Habermas writes:

The occurrence of past events can usually be discovered (within a certain probability) by a careful investigation of the facts. These former events are only accessible by a study of the available historical evidence. Although the historian usually did not personally participate in what he is studying (assuming he wasn't originally there), he can inspect the relevant data such as the eyewitnesses, written documents, and various other records, structures, and archaeological finds. Upon such confirmation the historian must build his case. Such tools comprise the working principles of historical research.³

Habermas points out that “historical data must be available if the historian is to investigate the past in such a manner. These sources are often divided into two types: primary and secondary. Primary sources are underived, firsthand, or contemporary with the event and are much more crucial. They may consist of eyewitness testimony given in various forms. Secondary material witnesses to primary sources, directed to past persons and events.”⁴

The Criteria of Authenticity

The science of historiography involves the application of scholarly criteria to the study of a particular event or time in history. These criteria are sometimes referred to as the criteria of authenticity. Darrell Bock writes:

Sometimes how the criteria are named reveals a great deal. To call them the criteria for authenticity suggests that a saying needs to pass these tests to be seen as authentic. To speak of criteria of authenticity simply notes that these tests can help us argue for a saying's authenticity, without arguing that passing such a test is a necessary qualification to establish authenticity.⁵

Craig Evans believes that the same criteria used to establish the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus can also be used to establish the miraculous deeds of Jesus.⁶ What are the criteria of authenticity? The three main criteria of authenticity are multiple attestation, dissimilarity, and coherence.

Multiple Attestation

Multiple attestation involves the agreement of two or more sources on a particular fact of history. An event in history is viewed as more probable to have occurred if there are two or more eyewitnesses to it. In the study of the synoptic gospels, an event that is found in the triple tradition (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) or double tradition (either Matthew and Luke agreement, Matthew and Mark agreement, or Mark and Luke agreement) has multiple attestation and is viewed as authentic.

One major problem with the criteria of multiple attestation for the biblical historian is that it rules out almost the whole gospel of John because the gospel of John contains 90% unique material. Since John is regarded by most scholars to be late,⁷ it cannot be connected to the earlier synoptic gospels and so the eyewitness testimony of the apostle John is excluded. The Jesus Seminar views the gospel of John and the resurrection narratives in the gospel of John as non-historical myths. An event should not be labeled as myth just because it occurs in only one gospel.⁸ Evangelical scholars would accept the historicity of John's gospel because it was given by an eyewitness to the events surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus.⁹

Dissimilarity

Dissimilarity is the criteria in which the sayings and actions of Jesus are evaluated to determine in what ways they are like or unlike Judaism and Christianity. Those actions that are dissimilar from Judaism and the practices of Christianity are viewed as authentic to Jesus. Usually it is the

difference from Judaism that receives the most attention. If there is evidence of reform from Jewish teaching or practice, then the teaching or practice likely goes back to Jesus.

Bock points out a major problem with this criteria of authenticity:

This criteria is actually a helpful one in determining where Jesus differs from his cultural heritage. But two problems exist with its rigorous application. First, if both sides of the dissimilarity are affirmed, so that Jesus differs from both Judaism and the early church, then Jesus becomes a decidedly odd figure, totally detached from his cultural heritage and ideologically estranged from the movement he is responsible for founding. One wonders how he ever came to be taken seriously.¹⁰

Coherence

Coherence argues that whatever coheres with the application of the other two criteria should be viewed as authentic. Bock observes that one problem of this criteria as used by the Jesus Seminar is that it limits the amount of sayings attributed to Jesus to some short statements and parables.¹¹ The same could be said for how the Jesus Seminar treats the acts of Jesus. Coherence becomes a difficult criteria to use if one accepts the historical methods used by the Jesus Seminar scholars.

HISTORICAL METHODS OF JESUS RESEARCH

A Critique of John Dominic Crossan's Historical Method of Jesus Research

John Dominic Crossan has written over a dozen books on the historical Jesus in the last twenty-five years including *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (1991), *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (1994), *Who Killed Jesus?* (1995), *Who is Jesus? Answers to Your Questions about the Historical Jesus* (1996), and *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately After the Execution of Jesus* (1998). He is the former co-chair of the Jesus Seminar, and he is chair of the Historical Jesus Section of the Society of Biblical Literature. Crossan is Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at DePaul University in Chicago.

Crossan rejects the historicity of the burial and resurrection of Jesus because of a lack of multiple independent accounts of the exact sequence of what happened at the end of Jesus' life. Crossan believes that the apocryphal *Gospel of Peter* has within it the most primitive gospel of all, which he calls the Cross Gospel. Crossan states that the author of the gospel of Mark supposedly used the Cross Gospel to write his gospel. He then invented additional details of the death and burial of Jesus based on Old Testament passages which Crossan calls "historicized prophecy." Mark then retrojected the Cross Gospel's resurrection appearance back into this gospel in the form of Jesus' transfiguration.

Crossan believes that the canonical gospel of Mark was not the original form of the Cross Gospel. He believes that canonical Mark is based on an earlier secret gospel of Mark. This secret gospel of Mark supposedly ended with the Roman centurion's confession in Mark 15:39. Mark supposedly made changes to the secret gospel of Mark and then added Mark 15:40-16:8. The other canonical gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John are supposedly based on the Cross Gospel and canonical Mark.

William Lane Craig gives this evaluation of Crossan's historical method:

On the basis of this reconstruction, Crossan identifies several strata of tradition and, in reconstructing the historical Jesus, adopts the methodological principle of refusing to allow as authentic any passage not attested by multiple, independent sources, even if that passage is found in the first stratum of tradition. This ensures agnosticism concerning Jesus' burial and resurrection since, on Crossan's view, we lack multiple independent accounts of the exact sequence of what happened at the end of Jesus' life.

Given this idiosyncratic approach to the Gospels, it is small wonder Crossan comes to conclusions so radically diverse from the majority of critics, who deny the existence of the hypothesized 'Cross Gospel,' reject any dependence of canonical Mark on a *Secret Mark*, hold that the Gospel traditions concerning the burial and empty tomb of Jesus are rooted in history rather than the Old Testament, regard the *Gospel of Peter*, even if it contains some independent tradition, as a composition basically compiled from the canonical Gospels, and maintain that multiple attestation is not a necessary condition of judging a passage to be authentic.¹²

A Critique of Robert Funk's Historical Method of Jesus Research

Robert Funk is the founder of the Jesus Seminar and Director of the Westar Institute in Santa Rosa, California. He has served as Annual Professor of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem and as a chair of the Graduate Department of Religion at Vanderbilt University. His many books include *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (1993), *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (1996), and *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (1998).

In *The Acts of Jesus*, Funk records the results of the Jesus Seminar that evaluated the works of Jesus in the gospels. *The Acts of Jesus* presents its findings by color coding the gospel texts, providing a visual guide to the Jesus Seminar's view on the historical authenticity of the accounts of Jesus' life and deeds. The colors used and their significance are: (1) red-refers to what they believe are the authentic acts of Jesus, (2) pink-refers to a close approximation of what Jesus did, (3) gray-refers to stories that show minimal historical traces, and (4) black- stories that are improbable or fictive.

Funk explains how the book *The Acts of Jesus* is organized:

The gospels that report acts of Jesus are the four New Testament gospels-Mark , Matthew, Luke, John-along with the Sayings Gospel Q, the Gospel of Thomas, and the Gospel of Peter. The Sayings Gospel Q reports very few deeds of Jesus, as its name suggests. Yet the few acts it does record are among the earliest written stories about Jesus that have survived. Because Q is believed to be the earliest of the gospels, Q stories of Jesus' activities are treated first in *The Acts of Jesus*. ... Like Q, the Gospel of Thomas contains very little narrative material. Where it does include a brief narrative or narrative framework, we have cited and color coded it in connection with parallels in the New Testament gospels. We have not reproduced Thomas in its entirety as a separate gospel. In *The Acts of Jesus*, as in *The Five Gospels*, the New Testament gospels appear in an unconventional order. Mark is placed first because most scholars (inside and outside the Seminar) believe that Matthew and Luke used Mark as the narrative base for their gospels. As a consequence, the three share a common view of the words and acts of Jesus and so are called synoptic gospels. Mark is followed by Matthew and Luke. The Gospel of John with its many eccentricities and deviations from the synoptic picture comes next. The Gospel of Peter follows the Gospel of John. The fragmentary remains of the Gospel of Peter consist of the concluding events of Jesus' trial and execution, along with a depiction of the resurrection and the story of the empty tomb. The gospel, discovered only in 1886 as a part of a small papyrus codex, at many points parallels the passion story reported by the New Testament gospels. It is also attested in two tiny Greek fragments that came to light more recently and were published in 1972. We have introduced two further innovations in this report. We have detached the empty tomb and appearance stories from the gospels and collected them into a self-contained section following, with their own introduction. We have also gathered the birth and infancy stories into the final section of the report, again with their own introduction. By locating accounts of the resurrection and the miraculous birth after stories about the public life of Jesus, we are simply reflecting the chronological order in which these elements developed.¹³

Funk and the Jesus Seminar scholars reveal their approach to Jesus research in the way they have organized the book *The Acts of Jesus*. First, the Jesus Seminar views the apocryphal gospels of Thomas and Peter as being as historically authentic as the four gospels. The Gospel of Thomas has nothing to say about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Peter, on the other hand, has a fanciful view of the resurrection. Both of these accounts do not compare with the historical record of the resurrection of Jesus found in the canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But these apocryphal gospels are given equal weight and authority to the canonical gospels by the Jesus Seminar.

Second, the Jesus Seminar has detached the accounts of the resurrection from the gospels in which they were found because they reject the historicity of the resurrection. Funk gives this

concluding analysis of the resurrection account in Matthew 28:1-18:

Here, as elsewhere, Matthew improves the image of Jesus' disciples, who appear to be such failures in the Gospel of Mark. Because the empty tomb story developed so late in the gospel tradition, and because of the fantastic elements that embellish the story-the appearance of the angel, the miraculous rolling away of the stone, and the earthquake-the Fellows agreed that the entire scene was the product of early Christian imagination. The designation was accordingly black.¹⁴

Third, the Jesus Seminar dismembers the gospel tradition that was passed on to Paul according to 1 Corinthians 15:3. In the Jesus Seminar's Scholars' Version the only sections that are written as red (viewed as historically authentic by the Jesus Seminar) in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 are "Christ died" and the phrase "Last of all, like the freak of nature I am, he appeared to me as well." The statement "for our sins according to the scriptures, and was buried, and rose on the third day according to the scriptures" is written in black (viewed as fiction) along with the phrase "and then to all the apostles." "He then appeared to Cephas" is written in pink letters (a possible historical event). The phrase "and later to the twelve ... then he appeared to James" is written with gray letters (minimal historical traces).¹⁵ The Jesus Seminar divides the tradition that was given to Paul and that he passed on to the Corinthians.

An Evangelical Historical Method

It is my conviction that the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus can be found in the four canonical gospels. Two of the gospels (Matthew and John) were written by eyewitnesses of the risen Jesus. These two apostles did not see Jesus literally rise from the dead on that Resurrection Sunday, but they did see Jesus with their own eyes after his resurrection. Matthew and John were selected by Jesus to be his apostles. They were eyewitnesses of the risen Jesus on more than one occasion. Matthew and John saw the risen Jesus on Resurrection Sunday night (Luke 24:33-43; John 20:19-25), eight days later along with Thomas (John 20:26-29), in Galilee when Jesus gave the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20), and at his ascension (Luke 24:49-53; Acts 1:4-11). John actually saw the empty tomb of Jesus "and believed" (John 20:3-10). John also had the opportunity to see the risen Jesus by the Sea of Galilee when Jesus provided a miraculous catch of fish for seven of his disciples (John 21:1-14).¹⁶

Luke did some research on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus before writing his gospel. In his prologue (Luke 1:1-4), Luke writes:

Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

In writing his gospel Luke used sources that were written by eyewitnesses of Jesus. His purpose in writing was to write down a narrative of the things that had been fulfilled among them. He wrote an orderly account (not necessarily chronologically arranged) in order that Theophilus would be certain of the things he was taught.

Though Mark was not an apostle and did not personally see the risen Jesus, he was associated with the apostle Peter who did see the risen Jesus. Mark lived in Jerusalem and possibly heard Jesus preach. The church fathers believed that Mark got his information for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus from Peter. Papias writes:

Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. ... Wherefore Mark made no mistake in thus writing some things as he remembered them. For of one thing he took especial care, not to omit anything he had heard, and not to put anything fictitious into the statements.¹⁷

Clement of Alexandria agrees with Papias as he writes,

Mark, the follower of Peter, while Peter publicly preached the Gospel at Rome before some of Caesar's knights, and adduced many testimonies to Christ, in order that thereby they might be able to commit to memory what was spoken, of what was spoken by Peter wrote entirely what is called the Gospel according to Mark.¹⁸

As we compare the four gospel accounts of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, various pieces of evidence surface that can be used to substantiate the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE EMPTY TOMB OF JESUS

The Moved Stone

One fact we know is that on the Sunday after Jesus was crucified, the huge stone which was rolled in front of the entrance to the tomb of Jesus had been moved. All four gospels mention that the stone had been moved away from the tomb entrance (Matt 28:2; Mark 16:4; Luke 24:2; John 20:1). This large stone had been rolled in front of the entrance of the tomb by Joseph of Arimathea after he had wrapped and placed the body of Jesus into it (Matt 27:60; Mark 15:46).

Large stones were placed in front of the entrance of tombs in first-century Israel.¹⁹ Josh McDowell writes in *The Resurrection Factor*, “In the Mark 16:4 portion of the Bezae manuscripts in the Cambridge Library in England, a parenthetical statement was found that adds, ‘And when He was laid there, he (Joseph) put against the tomb a stone which 20 men could not roll away.’”²⁰

If the stone weighed that much, how then could Joseph of Arimathea roll the stone into place by himself? Probably the stone was on an incline and wedged maybe with another stone. After finishing the burial of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea would have removed the wedged stone, pushed the large stone down the incline, and let it roll into place in front of the entrance to the tomb.

When the women came to the tomb they discovered that the stone had been rolled away (Mark 16:4). The Greek word for “rolled away” (apokekuvlistai) indicates that the stone had been moved away from the entrance to the tomb altogether.²¹ The stone had not been pushed open a crack. There was some distance between the huge rock and the tomb entrance. It is interesting that John uses a different Greek word (hrmevnon) in John 20:1. This word means “to pick something up and carry it away.”²²

Who then moved the stone? First, the Roman guards did not move the stone. They were on duty to make sure that no one broke into the tomb of Jesus and stole his body. They had also placed the seal of the Roman emperor on the stone (Matt 27:66). This was to indicate that the contents of the tomb were not to be tampered with since they belonged to Caesar. The Roman guards knew that if they moved the stone, they would have been executed. Second, the women who came to the tomb didn’t move the stone. They were asking themselves as they went to the tomb about who would move the stone for them (Mark 16:3). They realized that they were not physically strong enough to move the stone. Third, the disciples did not move the stone. They did not learn that the tomb of Jesus was empty until the women came and told them (Luke 24:9).

Matthew records what happened early in the morning on Resurrection Sunday. A great earthquake occurred, and an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from the entrance to the tomb and sat on it (Matt 28:2). The Roman guards were afraid of this angel whose appearance was like lightning and whose clothes were white as snow. Matthew writes that the guards “became like dead men” (Matt 28:4). The guards did not literally die. They probably fainted at the sight of this angel and his fantastic feat of moving the huge stone from the entrance to the tomb of Jesus.²³ This event occurred before the women came to visit the tomb. Since the text does

not say that the women met the Roman guards, we must assume that the Roman guards left the tomb after this event and went back to the city to report to the Jewish authorities.

The Eyewitness of the Women

Mark identifies for us three women who went early Sunday morning to the tomb of Jesus: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome (Mark 16:1). Mary Magdalene became a disciple of Jesus after she was delivered from seven demons (Luke 8:2). The other Mary was the mother of the apostle James the Less and Joses (Matt 27:56; Mark 15:47). Salome was the mother of Zebedee's sons, James and John (Matt 27:56; Mark 15:40).

Matthew identifies the time of their visit as Sunday, the day after the Sabbath: "Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week" (Matt 28:1). Mark writes that they came "when the Sabbath was past" (Mark 16:1). Mark also writes, "And very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen" (Mark 16:2). Luke says that it was "on the first day of the week, at early dawn" (Luke 24:1). John agrees that it was "on the first day of the week" (John 20:1), which would have been Sunday. Since the Sabbath was officially from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday, the dawning of the first day of the week would point to early Sunday morning as the time when the women went to the tomb of Jesus.

Mark identifies the purpose for their trip to the tomb. The women brought spices "to anoint him" (Mark 16:1). Matthew says that they went to "see the sepulcher" (Matt 28:1). Luke also mentions that the women took spices that they had prepared (Luke 24:1).

Mark is the only gospel writer to record what the women were discussing as they walked to the tomb: "They were saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?'" (Mark 16:3). The women apparently realized that they were not strong enough to roll the huge stone that was placed in front of the entrance to the tomb of Jesus. When they came to the tomb, they discovered that the stone was rolled away from the tomb. Mark writes that the women entered the tomb and were amazed when they saw a young man sitting on the right side who was dressed in a white robe (Mark 16:5). Luke writes in his gospel that the women went in and did not find the body of Jesus (Luke 24:3).

The Testimony of the Angels

While the women were perplexed about not finding the body of Jesus in the tomb, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. The women were frightened by them and bowed their faces to the ground (Luke 24:4-5). Luke's mention of two men does not contradict Mark's mention of one. If there were two, then there must have been one. Mark emphasizes the one that was sitting on the right side (probably at the place where the body of Jesus had been laid). Matthew identifies the "men," writing that "the angel said to the women" (Matt 28:5). Whenever angels appear on earth they appear as men and not women (cf. Gen 19:1-5).

The gospel of Mark records several statements by the angel. First, the angel told the women to not be amazed (Mark 16:6). Second, the angel announced that the one they were seeking, Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, had risen from the dead and was not there (Mark 16:6). Third, the angel told them to see the place where they had laid him (Mark 16:6). Fourth, he told them to go and tell his disciples and Peter that the risen Jesus was going before them to Galilee and that they would see him as he had told them (Mark 16:7).

Matthew confirms Mark's account of the angel about the empty tomb of Jesus. The angel said, "He is not here, for he has risen. Come see the place where he lay" (Matt 28:6). Matthew also includes the command given by the angel to the women to go and tell the disciples (Matt 28:7) and the announcement that the risen Jesus would go before them to Galilee (Matt 28:7).

Matthew gives us some added details regarding the angel's words to the women. First, the angel told the women to not be afraid (Matt 28:5). Second, the angel told the women to tell the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead (Matt 28:7).

Luke also supports the tradition that the angel told the women, "He is not here, but has risen" (Luke 24:6). Luke adds some details to the announcement of the angels to the women. First, the angels (referred to as "men" in Luke 24:5) asked the women, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" Second, Luke records that the angels told the women to remember the crucifixion and resurrection predictions made by Jesus while he was in Galilee (Luke 24:6).

The Women's Report to the Disciples

Mark does not indicate that the women obeyed the angel's command. He writes, "So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were terrified" (Mark 16:8). Many scholars believe that this is the end of the gospel of Mark.

Matthew writes, "So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word" (Matt 28:8). Matthew's account of the women's reporting to the disciples seems to give a contradiction to Mark's account which says that the women "said nothing to anyone." A possible solution to this apparent contradiction is that the women initially said nothing because they were terrified at seeing the angel. Then later they ran to bring the disciples word. Luke writes, "Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest" (Luke 24:9).

John focuses attention on one of the women: Mary Magdalene and her report to Peter and John. He writes, "Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciples, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him'" (John 20:1-2).

Mary's statement reveals that the body of Jesus was not in the tomb. Though Mary was mistaken in her view that some men had taken the body of Jesus (notice she said "they" but did not give specific names), she was correct that the body of Jesus was not in the place where it had been laid when he was buried by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Possibly, Mary thought that the men (who were in reality angels) had taken the body of Jesus somewhere. Her statement using "we" indicates that she along with the other women who came to the tomb (Mary, the mother of James the Less and Joses along with Salome) were unsure of the location of Jesus' body.

The Witness of Peter and John

Peter and John ran to the tomb of Jesus when they heard from Mary Magdalene that the body of Jesus was gone. John outran Peter and came to the tomb first (John 20:4). John stooped down and peered into the tomb and saw the linen cloths, but he didn't go in (John 20:5). Then Peter came and went into the tomb and saw the linen cloths and the handkerchief that had been around the head of Jesus, not lying with the linens but folded together in a place by itself (John 20:6-7). John then went in and he believed (John 20:8). John was the first apostle to believe in the resurrection. John makes note that they (the other apostles) did not know the Scripture that He must rise from the dead (John 20:9; cf. Ps 16:10).

A CRITIQUE OF EXPLANATIONS FOR THE EMPTY TOMB OF JESUS

Josh McDowell has written a defense of the resurrection of Jesus Christ entitled *The Resurrection Factor*. He writes, "Many theories have been advanced attempting to show that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a fraud. ... Historians have to become anti-historical in order to invent some of their ideas."²⁴

Unknown Grave

Charles Guignebert in his book *Jesus* writes, "The truth is that we do not know, and in all probability the disciples knew no better, where the body of Jesus had been thrown after it had been removed from the cross, probably by the executioners. It is more likely to have been cast into the pit for the executed than laid in a new tomb."²⁵

John Dominic Crossan believes that the body of Jesus was never placed in a tomb. He thinks that the body of Jesus was taken down from the cross and thrown into a pit for common criminals and that the disciples didn't know where he was buried. He asserts:

If, as I maintain, Jesus' followers had fled upon his arrest and knew nothing whatsoever about his fate beyond the fact of crucifixion itself, the horror was not only that he had been executed but that he might not even have been decently buried.

... With regard to the body of Jesus, by Easter Sunday morning, those who cared did not know where it was, and those who knew did not care. Why should even the soldiers themselves remember the death and disposal of a nobody?²⁶

The beliefs of Guignebert and Crossan are contrary to the eyewitness accounts several individuals recorded in the gospels. There is multiple attestation of both sources and eyewitnesses for the burial of Jesus in the tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea (Matt 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42). Joseph of Arimathea did not bury Jesus by himself. The gospel of John tells us that Nicodemus helped Joseph take the body, bind it with linen cloths and spices, and lay it in the tomb (John 19:39-42). Some of the eyewitnesses of the burial of Jesus were women who sat opposite of the tomb. Mark writes, "Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid" (Mark 15:47). Matthew writes, "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the sepulcher" (Matt 27:61). Luke writes, "The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and saw the tomb, and how his body was laid" (Luke 23:55). The triple tradition of Matthew, Mark, and Luke supports the view that the body of Jesus was placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea after it was taken down from the cross. The Roman soldiers knew where the tomb was located as well, as they were sent by Pilate to guard the tomb of Jesus to prevent the disciples from stealing his body (Matt 27:62-66).

In June of 1968 an ossuary was discovered in a buried cave at Vi'at ha-Mivtar in northern Jerusalem. It contained the bones of an adult male who had died by crucifixion sometime during the first half of the first century. Initial study of the skeletal remains indicated that the nail was driven through each of his forearms at the hand and a single iron nail had been driven through his heel bones. The latter nail was found still embedded in his heel bones.²⁷ This archaeological discovery is an argument against Crossan's view that crucified criminals were thrown into a common pit after they died on crosses. The fact that the man was crucified did not prevent those who cared for him from burying him in an ossuary box.

Wrong Tomb

Professor Kirsopp Lake advocates the wrong tomb theory. He writes in his book *The Historical Evidence For The Resurrection of Jesus*:

It is seriously a matter for doubt whether the women were really in a position to be quite certain that the tomb which they visited was that in which they had seen Joseph of Arimathea bury the Lord's body. The neighborhood of Jerusalem is full of rock tombs, and it would not be easy to distinguish one from another without careful note. ... It is very doubtful if they were close to the tomb at the moment of burial. ... It is likely that they were watching from a distance, and that Joseph of Arimathea was a representative of the Jews rather than of the disciples. If so, they would have had but a limited power to distinguish between one rock tomb and another close to it. The possibility, therefore, that they came to the wrong tomb is to be reckoned with and it is important because it supplies the natural explanation of the fact that whereas they had seen the tomb closed, they found it open. ... If it were not the same, the circumstances all seem to fall into line. The women came in the early morning to a tomb which they thought was the one in which they had seen the Lord buried. They expected to find a closed tomb, but they found an open one; and a young man ... who guesses their errand, tried to tell them that they had made a mistake in the place. 'He is not here,' said he, 'See the place where they laid him,' and probably pointed to the next tomb. But the women were frightened at the detection of their errand, and fled.²⁸

There are several problems with the wrong tomb theory: (1) Some women did see where Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus buried the body of Jesus (Matt 27:61; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55). (2) When the women were coming to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, they were discussing the problem of the huge stone that was rolled in front of the entrance to the tomb (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:1-4; Luke 24:1-2; John 20:1). The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John specifically mention that Mary Magdalene went to the tomb of Jesus early in the morning and she was present when Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus buried the body of Jesus. (3) If the women went to the wrong tomb, then the Jews or Romans could have gone to the right tomb and produced the body of Jesus and that would have stopped the story that Jesus had risen from the dead. The fact that the Jews bribed the Roman guards to say that the disciples of Jesus stole his body while they slept at night is evidence of the fact that they could not produce the body of Jesus because it was gone.

Legend

Some argue that the resurrection accounts in the gospels are just legends that were invented by the church a few decades after Jesus' death. Robert Funk and the Jesus Seminar identifies the resurrection accounts in the gospels as legends. He writes:

Legends may be subdivided into two sub-types: biographical legends and cult legends. A biographical legend is a story that casts a supernatural aura around the hero. The temptation story is a biographical legend. A cult legend accounts in story form for the establishment of some ritual practice in the Jesus movement. The depiction of the last supper is also just such a cult legend.²⁹

Funk lists the following resurrection accounts as legends in table 7 in the book *The Acts of Jesus*: empty tomb, bribing of the guards, appearance to Mary of Magdala, appearance to two in the country, appearance to the eleven, doubting Thomas, appearance to seven, appearance to James, ascension.³⁰

The resurrection accounts in the gospels are not legends. Two of the four gospels were written down by eyewitnesses (Matthew and John) and the other two gospels (Mark and Luke) were associated with two apostles who lived during the time of Jesus (Peter and Paul). Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 15:6 that there were 500 eyewitnesses of the risen Christ and that some were still alive at the time of his writing of the book of 1 Corinthians, which most scholars date around A.D. 55. Funk and the Jesus Seminar have labeled the resurrection accounts as “legends” because they look at the gospels from a naturalistic perspective that rejects any possibility of supernatural miracles. Their liberal bias prevents them from seeing the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Resurrection

The spiritual resurrection view is that Christ’s resurrection was not a real physical, bodily resurrection. Proponents of this theory assert that Christ’s body remained in the grave and that his resurrection was spiritual in nature.

This view can be refuted by looking at what the risen Jesus did after his resurrection. The risen Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene. When she recognized Jesus by his voice, she apparently began to cling to Jesus. She could not have clung to a ghost. Jesus told her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, and to My God and your God’” (John 20:17).

The risen Jesus startled his disciples when he appeared before them on Resurrection Sunday night. The disciples were terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. Jesus said to them, “‘Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.’ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet” (Luke 24:38-40). Jesus himself told his disciples that he was not just a spirit. He told them that his resurrection body has “flesh and bones.” He also showed his disciples his hands and feet. Why would he do that? To prove to them that he was the same Jesus whose hands and feet were nailed to the cross. The resurrected body of Jesus has the scars or marks of the crucifixion in it. Jesus even ate a piece of broiled fish and some

honeycomb before the disciples so they would understand that he was not a ghost, but that he was a resurrected person with a resurrected, glorified body (Luke 24:41-43).

Jesus proved to his disciples that he had risen from the dead on more than one occasion. When the apostles told Thomas that they had seen the Lord, Thomas said, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe” (John 20:25). Thomas was a skeptic who refused to believe unless he could see with his own two eyes the resurrected Jesus. Eight days after Resurrection Sunday, the disciples were gathered together behind shut doors when Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst. Jesus said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at my hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing” (John 20:27). The text does not say if Thomas did what Jesus told him to do, so we don’t know from John’s gospel if Thomas touched Jesus at the place of his crucified marks. Thomas did acknowledge who was standing before him. He spoke to Jesus and said, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).

Theft by Disciples

Probably the earliest fabrication explaining the empty tomb of Jesus was the lie that the disciples stole the body of Jesus from the tomb. Matthew 28:11-15 says:

Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, “Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole Him while we slept.’ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.” So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Could the disciples have stolen the body of Jesus? Is this explanation valid? There are several problems with this view. First, the tomb of Jesus was well guarded. There were possibly four to sixteen Roman soldiers protecting the tomb of Jesus. Each Roman soldier was trained to protect six feet of ground. Four men would be placed in front of what they were to protect, while the other twelve would sleep in a semi-circle in front of them with their heads pointed in towards the other guards. To steal the body of Jesus, the disciples would have had to walk pass the sleeping Roman soldiers without waking them, and then fight off the other four experienced soldiers, move the huge stone, steal the body of Jesus, and leave the graveclothes, and then somehow slip past the guards with the body of Jesus.

Second, the Roman soldiers were bribed to tell the story that the disciples came and stole the body. Why would the chief priests pay this bribe to the Roman soldiers? They had to be bribed because by telling a lie they would be putting their lives on the line. The Roman soldiers knew

that to say that they were asleep when they should have been awake doing their duty would be to incriminate themselves. The penalty for a Roman soldier who slept while on guard was death. That is why the chief priests say that if the news reached the governor's ears, they would appease him and make the soldiers secure. The fact that the soldiers were accountable ultimately to Governor Pilate shows that these were Roman soldiers and not just some Jewish temple police who were guarding the tomb of Jesus.

Third, the Roman soldiers could not have known that the disciples stole the body of Jesus if they were sleeping. How could sleeping soldiers know what happened? Also, would it be likely that all of the Roman soldiers would sleep at the same time? Probably not. How could they not have heard the disciples move the huge stone that was placed in front of the entrance to the tomb of Jesus? Their story was contradictory.

Finally, the disciples were not in a psychological state to try to steal the body of Jesus from the tomb. The disciples fled from Jesus when he was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane. Peter denied that he knew Jesus. On the Sunday night after Jesus was crucified, the disciples were behind locked doors and not out in the open. Why? They were afraid of the Jews (John 20:19).

Theft by the Authorities

This theory doesn't make sense. If the Jewish or Roman authorities had the body of Jesus, why did they bribe the guards to accuse the disciples of stealing it (Matt 28:11-15)? They could have stopped the resurrection story cold by simply producing the body of Jesus and showing it around Jerusalem. Instead, the Jewish authorities scolded the apostles for filling Jerusalem with their teaching, arrested them, and beat them (cf. Acts 3-5). They became so upset with Stephen that they stoned him to death (Acts 7).

Resuscitation

The resuscitation view (sometimes called the swoon theory) teaches that Jesus never really died on the cross. He only swooned or fainted. Later, he revived in the cool air of the tomb and left. The disciples supposedly saw then a resuscitated or revived Jesus.³¹

This theory completely ignores the evidence for the death of Jesus on the cross. There is no evidence that Jesus was drugged. When the Roman soldier offered Jesus wine mixed with myrrh, Jesus turned down the common painkiller that was usually given to crucifixion victims (Mark 15:23). Just before his death he was given a sip of sour wine to relieve his parched throat, but that was not enough to drug him. Jesus experienced a heavy loss of blood as a result of his flogging before crucifixion and on the cross as a result of his hands and feet being nailed to the cross. John observed that when the Roman soldier thrust his spear into his side that water and blood immediately flowed out (John 19:34). Usually the Roman soldiers would break the legs of the crucified to hasten death. The legs of Jesus were not broken by the soldiers because the soldiers

recognized that Jesus was already dead (John 19:33). Pilate asked for assurance that Jesus was really dead before releasing the body for burial (Mark 15:43-45). The fact that Pilate permitted Joseph of Arimathea to take the body of Jesus after obtaining confirmation of Jesus' death from the Roman centurion is another proof of the death of Jesus. Jesus was embalmed in about 75-100 pounds of spices and bandages and laid in a sealed and guarded tomb (Matt 27:60-66; John 19:39-40). Even if he did wake up in the tomb, he could not have unwrapped himself, rolled the huge stone back up the side of the carved out track, overcome the guards, and escaped unnoticed.

Medical doctor William Edwards writes:

Clearly the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to His side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby insured his death. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge.³²

A second major problem for the resuscitation view is the undisturbed linen wrappings of Jesus in the tomb. Jesus would have had to pull off a magic trick like Houdini to get out of the wrappings and then leave them undisturbed in the place where he was laid by Joseph of Arimathea. This would have been an impossible task for the person who was wrapped, let alone for two or more people who would try to pull this trick off. Peter noticed that the face cloth which had been on his head was not with the linen wrappings but was rolled up and in a place by itself. When John saw this, he believed that Jesus was raised from the dead (cf. John 20:5-8).

CONCLUSION

Paul Maier made this observation about the evidence for the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus:

Accordingly, if all the evidence is weighed carefully and fairly, it is indeed justifiable, according to the canons of historical research, to conclude that the sepulcher of Joseph of Arimathea, in which Jesus was buried, was actually empty on the morning of the first Easter. And no thread of evidence has yet been discovered in literary sources, epigraphy, or archaeology that would disprove this statement.³³

This article has attempted to show that the biblical account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ found in the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John meets the criteria of authenticity used by skeptics in historiography. The resurrection of Jesus meets the criteria of multiple attestation

as the multiple sources (the four gospels) each contain multiple witnesses of the empty tomb of Jesus. The story of the resurrection of Jesus was not invented by just one person. The resurrection of Jesus also meets the criteria of dissimilarity. The Jews and the early Christians were surprised by the empty tomb of Jesus. No one anticipated it, even though Jesus predicted that he would rise from the dead. Finally, the biblical account of the resurrection of Jesus meets the criteria of coherence as there are no facts given in the gospels' narratives of the resurrection of Jesus which contradict one another. The resurrection narratives found in the biblical gospels do not contradict each other, but complement one another. The Jesus Seminar's rejection of the historicity of the resurrection reveals a naturalistic bias against the historical foundation for Christianity. The empty tomb of Jesus is best explained by the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Without the historical bodily resurrection of Jesus, there would be no Christianity.

Part Two of this article can be found here: [The Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ Part Two](#).

Endnotes and Source of this article is found on [ABR](#)

1. Josh McDowell, *The Resurrection Factor* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life, 1981), 6-7.
2. *The Random House College Dictionary* (1980), s.v. "historiography."
3. Gary Habermas, "Appendix One: Historiography," in *The Historical Jesus* (Joplin, MO: College, 1996), 270.
4. *Ibid.*, 271.
5. Darrell Bock, "The Words of Jesus in the Gospels: Live, Jive, or Memorex?" in *Jesus Under Fire*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 99.
6. Craig Evans, "Life of Jesus Research and the Eclipse of Mythology" *TS* 54 (1993): 21-33.
7. The gospel of John was probably the last gospel written. It was written around A.D. 90, some sixty years after the resurrection of Jesus.
8. The apostle John is the only gospel writer to record that the risen Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene (20:11-18) if the authenticity of Mark 16:9-11 is rejected. John is the only gospel writer to give us details regarding the risen Jesus' appearance to eleven disciples, including Thomas, in the upper room (20:26-31). This event could have multiple attestation if one agrees that Paul is referring to this event when he says that Jesus appeared to "the twelve" (1 Cor 15:5b—the "twelve" would be the common designation given to the group of apostles but would exclude Judas Iscariot who had hung himself). John is the only gospel writer to refer to the risen Christ appearing to seven disciples by the Sea of Galilee (21:1-25).

9. The apostle John was an eyewitness of the death of Jesus on the cross, the empty tomb, and the risen Jesus. John wrote that he saw “blood and water come out” of Jesus’ body when the Roman soldier pierced him with his spear. John then said, “And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe” (19:34b-35; NKJV used here and throughout). John was also the first apostle to see the empty tomb of Jesus. John ran to the tomb and looked in and saw “the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in” (20:5). After Peter went into the tomb of Jesus, John went in “and he saw and believed” (20:8). John was present in the upper room when the risen Jesus first appeared to the disciples (20:19-25) and when Thomas was present eight days later (20:26-29).

10. Bock, “Words of Jesus,” 91.

11. Ibid., 93.

12. William Lane Craig, “Did Jesus Rise From The Dead?” in *Jesus Under Fire*, ed. Michael J. Williams and J. P. Moreland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 167-68.

13. *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus*, ed. Robert Funk (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 38-39.

14. Ibid., 469.

15. Ibid., 453.

16. John 21 does not say if Matthew was present on that occasion. John 21:2 identifies the seven disciples as Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee (a reference to James and John), and two other unnamed disciples.

17. Papias, *Fragments of Papias* 6 (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:154-55).

18. Clement Alexandrinus, *Fragments* 1, quoted by Cassiodorus (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:573).

19. In 1978 I had the privilege of going to Israel and while in Jerusalem I saw several rock-hewn tombs with large round stones that were placed over the entrances to these tombs.

20. Josh McDowell, *Resurrection Factor*, 53.

21. The Greek word *ankekuvlistai* is a perfect passive indicative of *anakulivw* and indicates that the stone was in this position as a result of a completed action by the angel.

22. The Greek word *hrmevnon* is a perfect passive participle and indicates that the stone was taken away from the entrance to the tomb and that was its position when Mary Magdalene came

to the tomb of Jesus. The Greek prepositional phrase *ek tou' mnhmeivou* shows that it was not in front of the entrance to the tomb of Jesus.

23. The Gospel of Peter gives a fanciful story of the resurrection which defies the law of cause-effect. The Gospel of Peter 9:4 says “The stone that had been pushed against the entrance began to roll by itself and moved away to one side; then the tomb opened up and both young men went inside” (quoted in *The Acts of Jesus*, p. 462).

24. Josh McDowell, *Resurrection Factor*, 76.

25. Charles Alford Guignebert, *Jesus* (New York: University Book, 1956), 500.

26. John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 392-94.

27. J. B. Green, “The Death of Jesus,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 147.

28. Kirsopp Lake, *The Historical Evidence For The Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (New York: Putnam’s, 1907), 250-253.

29. Robert Funk, *The Acts of Jesus*, 15-16.

30. *Ibid.*, 17.

31. Barbara Thiering, in her book *Jesus the Man: A New Interpretation from the Dead Sea Scrolls*, argues that Jesus was crucified in Qumran rather than Jerusalem, was drugged while on the cross, was revived in the tomb with an antidote of aloes supplied by Simon Magus, and then later revealed himself to his disciples as alive.

32. William D. Edwards, “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ,” *The Journal of the American Medical Society* 255 (21 March 1986): 1463.

33. Paul Maier, “The Empty Tomb as History,” *Christianity Today* (28 March 1975), 6.

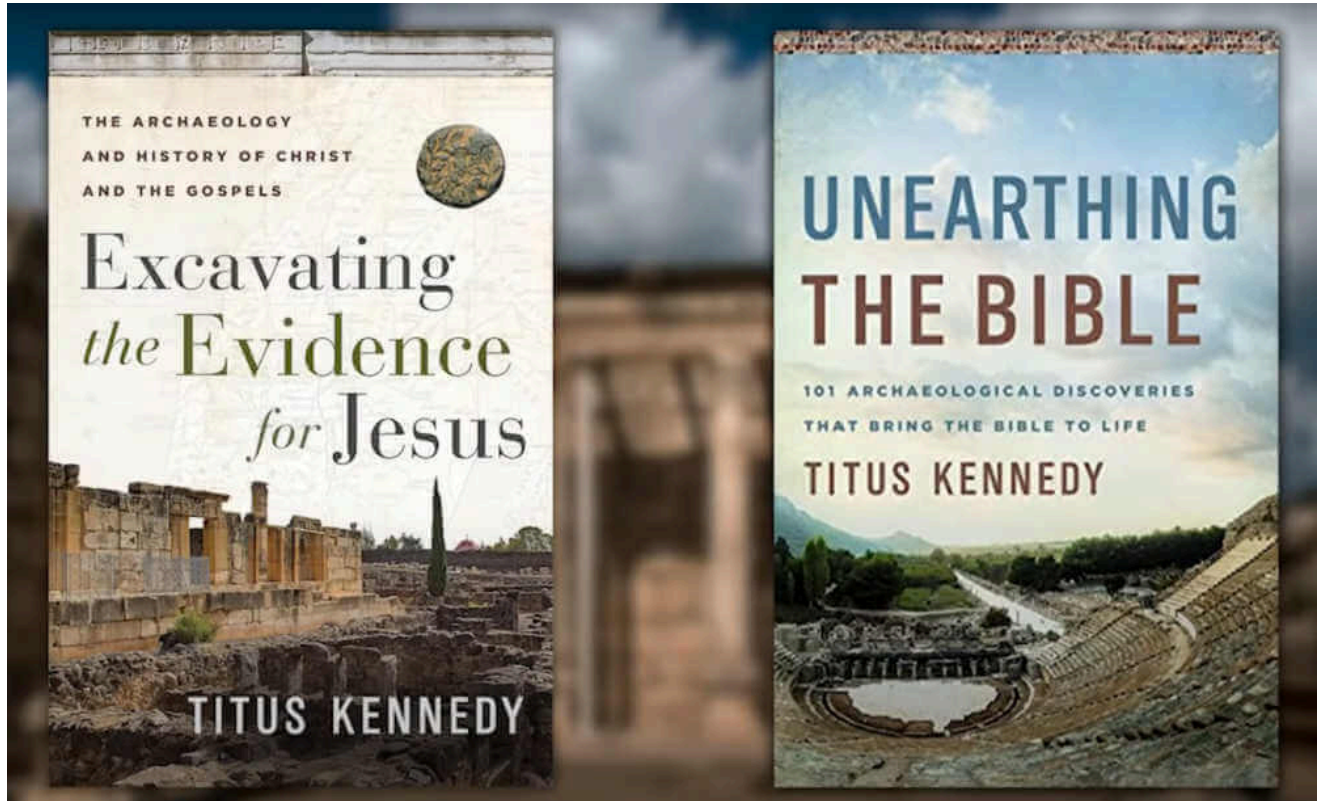
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Archaeological Evidence of the Resurrection!

APRIL 4, 2023

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD



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Daniel-The Top Ten Archaeological Discoveries: Digging for Truth Episode 194

MARCH 4, 2023

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY

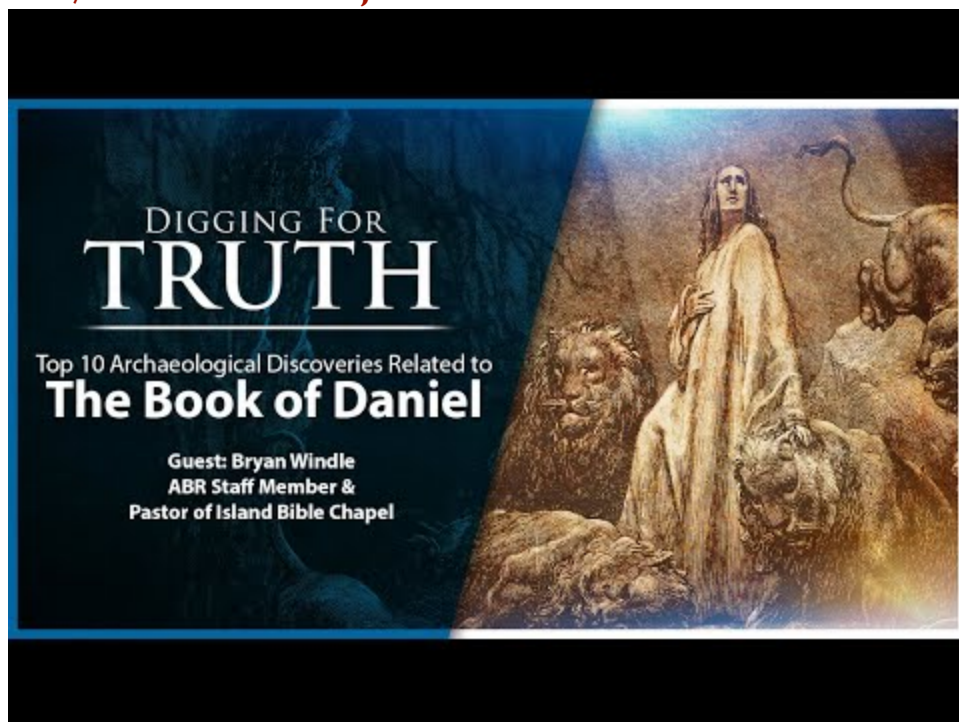


Bryan Windle joins us to count down the top ten discoveries related to the book of Daniel. The Bible says Daniel was written in the 6th century BC. Critics say Daniel was written in the 2nd century BC, and then the author pretended to predict events that had already come to pass. Was Daniel a pretender, or a prophet who was given visions of the future by the God of Scripture? Find out on this powerful episode of Digging for Truth!



Daniel-The Top Ten Archaeological Discoveries: Digging for Truth Episode 194

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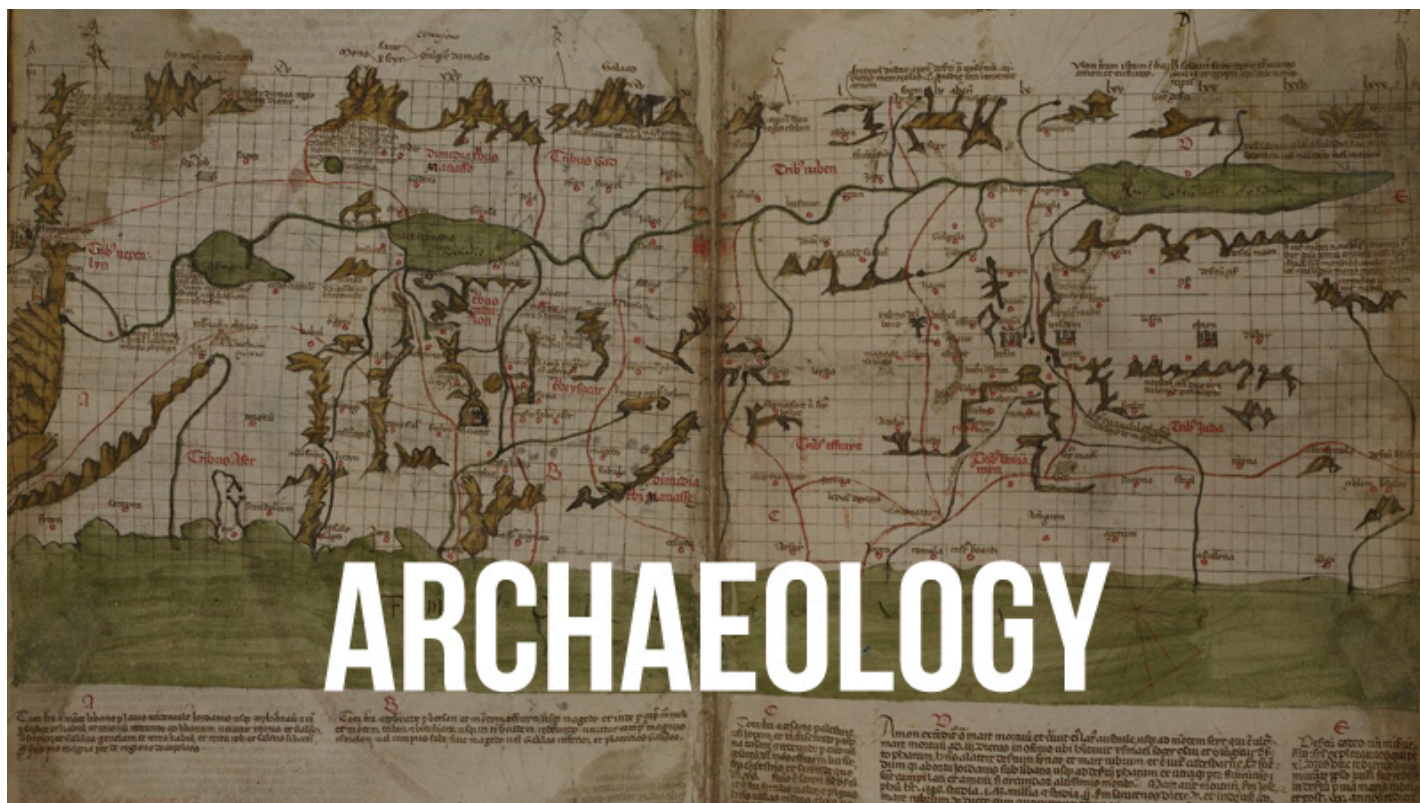


SOURCE: **ABR**

Newly discovered Egyptian Relic Witnesses to Biblical King

JANUARY 14, 2023

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY



A large slab of sandstone covered in superbly preserved hieroglyphic inscriptions was recently unearthed by an Egyptian farmer working in his fields.¹ The slab is 230 cm (91 in) long, 103 cm (41 in) wide, and 45 cm (18 in) thick.² It was discovered near the town of Ismailia (which, incidentally, I visited in 1999, during my time in the seismic industry in Egypt) on the west bank of the Suez Canal.

The stone slab, technically known as a stele or stela, is dedicated to a 26th Dynasty Egyptian pharaoh called Wahibre Haaibre (see box on ‘Pharaonic names’). This ruler is recognized by scholars as none other than the Egyptian king mentioned in **Jeremiah 44:30** as Hophra.³ He was also known as Apries by the Greeks, notably by the historians Herodotus (c. 484–c. 425 BC) and Diodorus (c. 90–c. 30 BC). Alternate Greek and Egyptian spellings of Uaphris and Wahibprê are attributed to the Egyptian historian Manetho (c. early third century bc).⁴

How do scholars know these different names refer to the same person? For one thing, the names don’t look the same; or do they? Egyptologists recognize that the biblical writers often used abbreviated forms of pharaonic names, leaving out the various lengthy formal titles. This was done for Hophra, whereby his personal Egyptian name was transliterated into Hebrew letters, but

with minor changes (see box again). This may have been deliberately done to make a pun on his name, which in Hebrew sounds like a combination of two words: 1) *ḥepha* ‘to cover/veil one’s head in sorrow, particularly before execution’⁵ and 2) *ra`* ‘evil’.<sup>6</sup> The combined words mean something like ‘to have one’s head covered by evil before execution.’ This suits the context of what Jeremiah prophesied would happen to Hophra. Another wordplay involves the fact that the *ra`* in Hophra’s name, which happens to sound, as indicated above, just like Hebrew for ‘evil’, denotes the Egyptian sun god.

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Pool of Siloam to Be Fully Excavated

JANUARY 9, 2023

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, CITY OF DAVID



Bryan Windle

The Israel Antiquities Authority, the Israel National Parks Authority, and the City of David Foundation recently announced plans to fully excavate the entire Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem.

The steps of the Pool of Siloam were discovered in 2004 during repairs to a drainage system. The pool was then partially excavated by Eli Shukron and Ronny Reich. The new excavations will be carried out in full sight of visitors, as the site is part of a tourist route.

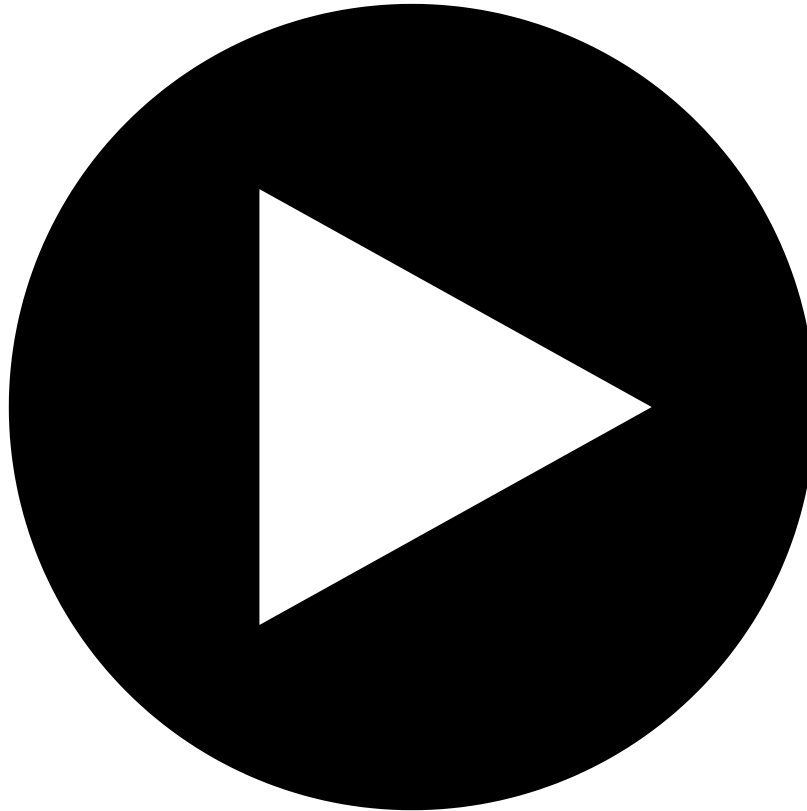
The Pool of Siloam was originally constructed by King Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:20) and was later expanded and renovated during the Second Temple era. Jesus healed a blind man by anointing his eyes with mud and telling him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam (John 9:1–7).

OFF-SITE LINKS:

- <https://www.jpost.com/archaeology/article-725901>
- <https://www.israel365news.com/364499/biblical-siloam-pool-next-to-temple-mount-to-be-fully-excavated/>
- <https://fb.watch/hIpcFcDQPJ/>

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EDITOR'S NOTE ADDED FOR CONTEXT PURPOSE:



If It Were Not Uncovered No One Would Believe It..

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THE EARTH IS SUDDENLY REVEALING BIBLICAL SECRETS



O Little Town Of Bethlehem: Digging For Truth Episode

DECEMBER 29, 2022

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE HISTORY, GOD'S WORD



CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY AN AERIAL VIEW OF THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY IN BETHLEHEM FROM THE SOUTHEAST

Photo: Bill Schlegel/BiblePlaces.com

Pastor Bryan Windle joins us from Canada to discuss the birthplace of Jesus, the little town of Bethlehem. Bryan will provide an overview from an archaeological perspective, an exciting discovery from 2012, Jesus' birth there, and the Church of the Nativity. Don't miss this fascinating journey to the birthplace of our Savior.



O Little Town of Bethlehem: Digging for Truth Episode 189

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=AuyORnfufNE>



SOURCE: **ABR**

Biblical Heroines, Deborah and Jael, Mosaics Found in Israel

JULY 31, 2022

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD, PANDEMIC



Summary: Ancient mosaics depicting the earliest known images of biblical heroines from the book of Judges, Prophetess Deborah and Sisera-slayer Jael, have been uncovered in a Jewish synagogue in Israel.

Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment. – Judges 4:4 (ESV)

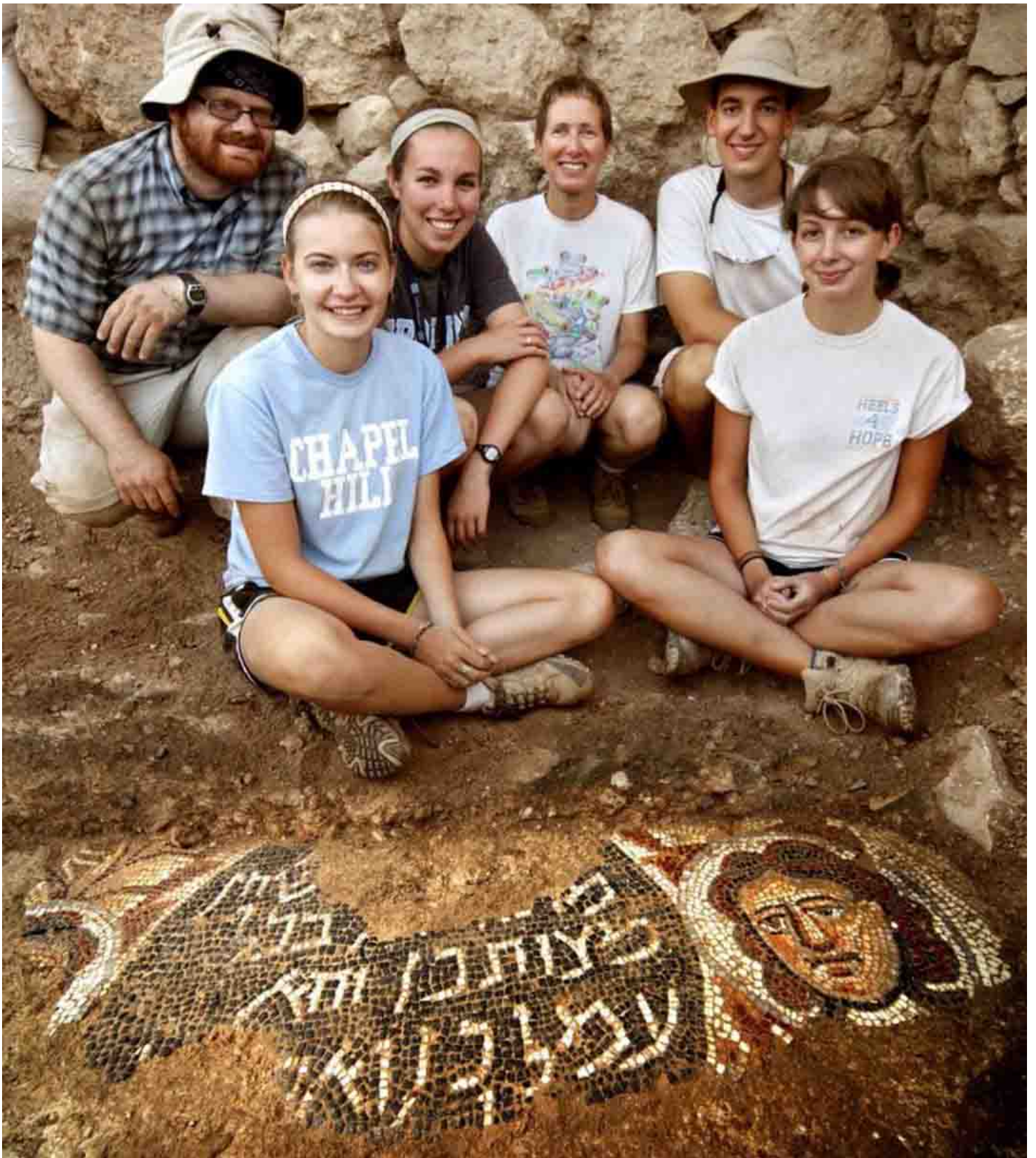
And behold, as Barak was pursuing Sisera, Jael went out to meet him and said to him, “Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking.” So he went in to her tent, and there lay Sisera dead, with the tent peg in his temple. – Judges 4:22 (ESV)

First Known Depictions of Heroines from the Bible

Unprecedented mosaics have been uncovered in the ruins of a Late Roman period synagogue in the ancient Jewish village of Huqoq in northern Israel. So far, the group has discovered “the first known depiction of the biblical heroines Deborah and Jael as described in the book of Judges,” according to a press release from the University of North Carolina (UNC). The sensational find is exciting because portrayals of biblical accounts with female heroes are exceptionally rare.

The **Huqoq Excavation Project**, led by Jodi Magness, returned this summer to the 1,600-year-old site for its 10th season of exploration after a 2-year pause for the COVID pandemic. The team consists of archaeologists, academics and students from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The focus this year has been the synagogue’s southwestern portion, built between the late fourth and early fifth century AD. Previous seasons have investigated the building’s main hall and aisles. Many firsts in the history of ancient Jewish art have been revealed due to the mosaics discovered, including the earliest non-biblical scene in synagogue art.



UNC professor Jodi Magness (center) and UNC students (left to right) Brian Coussens, Caroline Carter, Jocelyn Burney, Jonathan Branch, and Kelly Gagnon, with a Huqoq mosaic uncovered in 2012. (credit: Jim Haberman, UNC Chapel Hill)

Deborah, Jael and the Slaying of Sisera

The **Huqoq mosaic** is extensive, covering the entire floor of the ancient Galilean synagogue. The newly discovered section, made up of the 3 horizontal registers, is dedicated to the account written in Judges 4 where the prophetess and judge Deborah joins military commander Barak in leading Israelite forces to victory over General Sisera's Canaanite army.

"The Bible relates that after the battle, Sisera took refuge in the tent of a Kenite woman named Jael (Yael), who killed him by driving a tent stake through his temple as he slept," UNC's release said.

"The uppermost register of the newly-discovered Huqoq mosaic shows Deborah under a palm tree, gazing at Barak, who is equipped with a shield. Only a small part of the middle register is preserved, which appears to show Sisera seated. The lowest register depicts Sisera lying deceased on the ground, bleeding from the head as Jael hammers a tent stake through his temple."



Jael Shows to Barak, Sisera Lying Dead, c. 1896-1902. (credit: James Tissot, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons)

This example is "the first depiction of this episode and the first time we've seen a depiction of the biblical heroines Deborah and Jael in ancient Jewish art," Jodi Magness said in a statement.

“Looking at the Book of Joshua, chapter 19, we can see how the story might have had special resonance for the Jewish community at Huqoq, as it is described as taking place in the same geographical region—the territory of the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun,” added Magness.

Several other scenes from the book of Judges are represented in the Huqoq mosaics, including **Samson and the foxes** (Judges 15:4) and Samson carrying the gate of Gaza on his shoulders (Judges 16:3). Other biblical scenes portrayed are Noah’s Ark, the Tower of Babel, the Exodus, Jonah and the Fish, and the four beasts from the apocalyptic vision in Daniel 7.



Mosaic of Samson in the Bible, carrying the gate of Gaza on his shoulders. This is the second Huqoq mosaic found that depicts Samson. (credit: Jim Haberman, UNC Chapel Hill)

First Non-Biblical Stories Portrayed in a Synagogue

In addition to the biblical mosaics, the team also uncovered a fragment of a dedication inscription in Hebrew, surrounded by a wreath and bordered by panels showing two vases that hold sprouting vines, measuring 6 feet tall and 2 feet wide. “The vines form medallions that frame four animals eating clusters of grapes: a hare, a fox, a leopard and a wild boar,” according to the university’s release.

The project has unearthed “the first non-biblical story ever found decorating an ancient synagogue.” That work is thought by the excavators to depict the legendary meeting between Alexander the Great and the Jewish high priest, Simon the Just, at the gates of Jerusalem. Other scenes portray the aftermath of a battle including elephants and an image of the Helios-zodiac cycle.

Lessons Learned from the Unique Art

The Huqoq mosaics offer unique views into the themes and motifs of **early Jewish art**. “The mosaics decorating the floor of the Huqoq synagogue revolutionize our understanding of Judaism in this period,” said Magness in a 2018 press release.

“Ancient Jewish art is often thought to be aniconic, or lacking images. But these mosaics, colorful and filled with figured scenes, attest to a rich visual culture as well as to the dynamism and diversity of Judaism in the Late Roman and Byzantine periods.”



Mosaic depicting a fox eating grapes in the ancient synagogue at Huqoq. (credit: Jim Haberman, UNC Chapel Hill)

Nearly 75% of the original mosaic floor is still intact compared to similar mosaics in a nearby synagogue at Wadi Hamam which have been largely destroyed. Due to the unparalleled preservation and diverse content, they were named one of *National Geographic's* **“100 Archaeological Treasures of the Past”** joining a list that includes famous sites such as Pompeii, Stonehenge and Easter Island.

Conclusion

The Huqoq Excavation Project is scheduled to keep digging through summer 2023. All mosaics salvaged this season “have been removed from the site for conservation, and the excavated areas have been backfilled.” We can’t wait to see what will be discovered next. Keep Thinking!

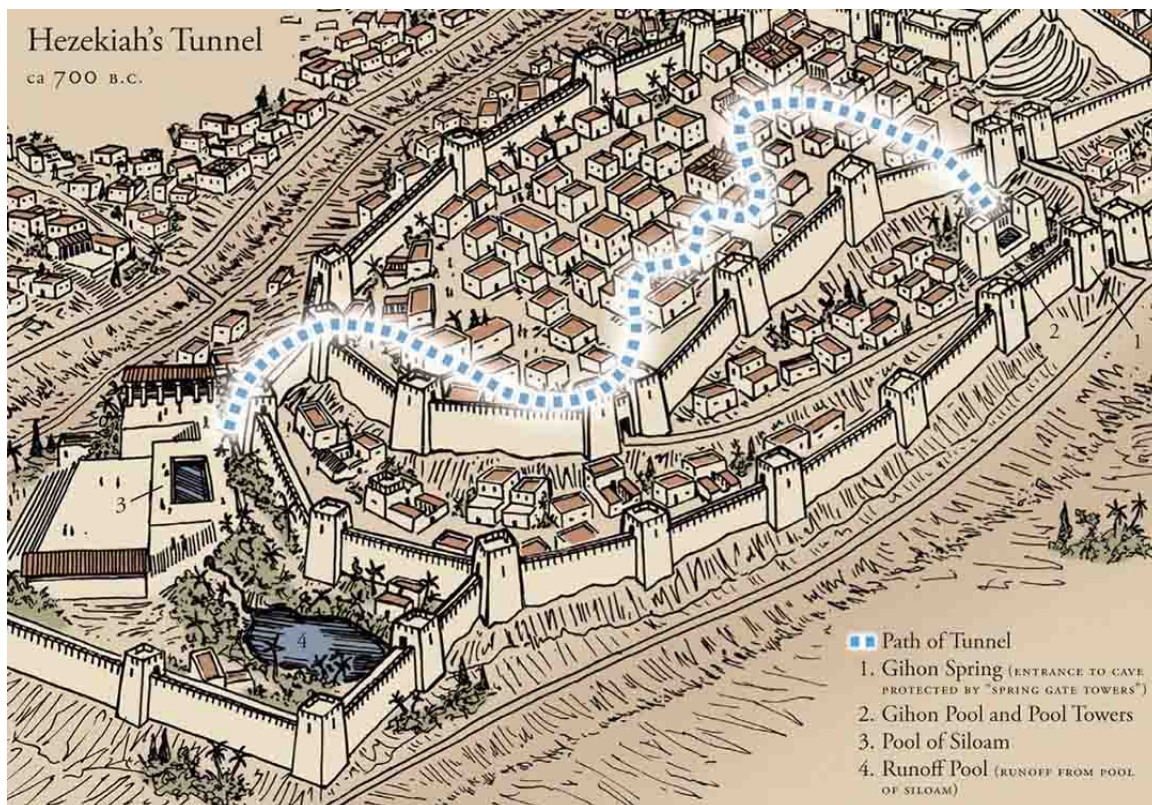
SOURCE: **PATTERNS OF EVIDENCE**

Ingenious Sluice Gate Found in Hezekiah's Tunnel

JULY 17, 2022

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, CITY OF DAVID, GOD'S WORD



Seeing the Bible Come to Life: The natural, ever-flowing spring of Gihon was Jerusalem's fresh-water source and, along with the Siloam Pool, a significant element of biblical history. Gihon was the place where Solomon was anointed king after his father David (Kings 1:32-40). And in John 9 we read that the Siloam Pool was where Jesus told the man born blind to wash after putting mud on his eyes and he was healed. The places of the Bible are real and it's thrilling to keep finding evidence demonstrating its reliability...

Summary: Evidence discovered inside King Hezekiah's tunnel shows an amazing gate system used to control water flow that helped Jerusalem function while it was besieged by the Assyrians.

As for the other events of Hezekiah's reign, all his achievements and how he made the pool and the tunnel by which he brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? – 2 Kings 20:20 (NIV)

Oldest Sluice Gate Found

King Hezekiah is best known for building the 1,750-foot-long tunnel under Jerusalem connecting the Gihon Spring with the Siloam Pool in an effort to block the water source from the invading Assyrians and direct it into the city. One problem the tunnel presented though was lowering the water levels in the upper parts of Jerusalem. According to a recent report, exciting evidence of an ingenious sluice gate for controlling water flow was discovered inside Hezekiah's tunnel. The advanced technology of this gate solved the water level problem and gives us unique insight into this chapter of biblical history.



An ancient (Middle Ages) sluice gate crossing a village stream in Morland, Cumbria UK. Note the hand crank on the upper left of the frame. (credit: lindamphotos.wordpress.com)

King Hezekiah's Preparations for the Assyrian Siege

King Hezekiah was the 13th successor of King David and reigned in Judah from approximately 715 to 686 BC. He had a close relationship with the **prophet Isaiah**. He is recorded as a king who “did

right in the eyes of the Lord,” initiating a series of reforms against **idolatry in Judah**.

During the 8th century BC, Assyria was the dominant power of the ancient Near East and was intent on expansion. In 722 BC, Samaria, the capital of the northern Kingdom of Israel, had been attacked and all but destroyed by Assyrian invaders. Many Israelites had been taken into captivity. While Hezekiah was focused on the threat of the Assyrians, it would ultimately be the Babylonians who would overcome Judah more than a century later, **fulfilling a prediction** by Isaiah.

When Hezekiah became king, Judah was already a vassal of Assyria. However, he made a stand and refused to pay the annual tribute. In response, Assyria’s King Sennacherib attacked Jerusalem.



King Hezekiah in a 17th century painting by unknown artist in the choir of Sankta Maria kyrka in Åhus, Sweden.
(credit: public domain, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons)

In preparation for the impending siege, **King Hezekiah** rebuilt Jerusalem’s fortifications, secured a defense treaty with Egypt, made weapons, built storehouses and carved the famous underground tunnel to ensure that Jerusalem would have water.

And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and intended to fight against Jerusalem, he planned with his officers and his mighty men to stop the water of the springs that were outside the city; and they helped him. A great many people were gathered, and they stopped all the springs and the brook that flowed through the land, saying, “Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?” He set to work resolutely and built up all the wall that was broken down and raised towers upon it, and outside it he built another wall, and he strengthened the Millo in the city of David. He also made weapons and shields in abundance. And he set combat commanders over the people and gathered them together to him in the square at the gate of the city and spoke encouragingly to them, saying, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him, for there are more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles.” And the people took confidence from the words of Hezekiah king of Judah. – 2 Chron. 32:2-8

Hezekiah closed the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed them down to the west side of the city of David. – 2 Chron. 32:30



Map of the Neo-Assyrian Empire under Shalmaneser III (dark green) and Esarhaddon (light green). (credit: Ningyou – Based on a map in ‘Atlas of the Bible Lands’, C S Hammond & Co (1959), public domain, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons)

Carving the Tunnel and the Incredible Inscription

The Gihon Spring was the only water source in Jerusalem and was essential for life in the city. Hezekiah stopped the channel of the Gihon Spring that sent water outside the City of David and had a new tunnel dug to divert water from the spring to the Siloam Pool inside the city.

Hezekiah's tunnel, also called the Siloah Tunnel, is considered one of the greatest works of water engineering technology in the pre-Classical period. The slope of this incredibly long passageway is a gentle 0.06 degrees, making the exit just under a foot lower than the entrance.

An inscription found inside the tunnel explains that while carving it, two teams began from opposite ends and met in the middle.

One theory is that the miners may have followed a natural crack in the rock called a karstic system. A karst is formed from the dissolution of soluble rocks and creates drainage systems underground with sinkholes and caves. This would explain the curved path of the tunnel. However, recent research has called this thinking into question. How the two teams working from the north and the south were able to meet at precisely the same level is difficult to fathom.



Inside Hezekiah's water tunnel. (credit: Tamar Hayardeni תמר הירדני, **CC BY 3.0** via Wikimedia Commons)

In 1838, the tunnel was rediscovered by Edward Robinson. Later in 1880, 16-year-old Jacob Eliahu noticed the inscription near the tunnel exit at Siloam Pool. It had been missed earlier because the accumulated mineral deposits made it hard to see.

The inscription was dug out of the rock in 1890 and is now on display at the Istanbul Archaeology Museum. During the removal, the engraved rock cracked into six pieces and several letters were destroyed at breaking points. A copy of the inscription was put in the original location inside the tunnel in 2010.

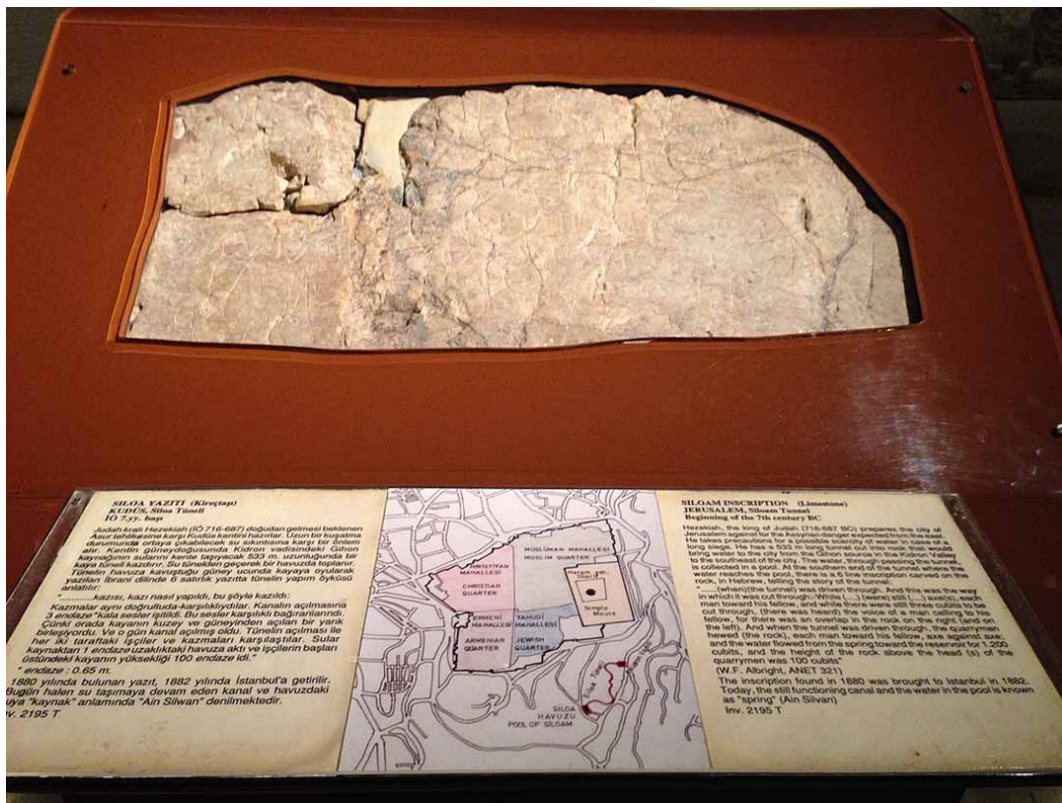
The words of the inscription are separated by dots. The first of the six lines of the carving is damaged, but the message can still be understood.

The passage reads:

1. ... the tunnel ... and this is the story of the tunnel while ...
2. the axes were against each other and while three cubits were left to (cut?) ... the voice of a man ...
3. called to his counterpart, (for) there was a cleft (?) in the rock, on the right ... and on the day of the
4. tunnel (being finished) the stonecutters struck each man towards his counterpart, ax against ax and flowed
5. water from the source to the pool for 1,200 cubits. and (100?)
6. cubits was the height over the head of the stonecutters ...



Copy of the Siloam Inscription, placed in Hezekiah's Tunnel. (credit: Tamar Hayardeni תמר הירדני, **CC BY 3.0**, via Wikimedia Commons)



Siloam inscription as displayed at the Istanbul Archaeological Museums. (credit: public domain, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons)

Sluice Solves Tunnel Challenge

There was one problem the builders of the tunnel needed to solve that researchers have wondered about for a long time. The redirection of the Gihon Spring would lower the water levels in the tunnels leading to the upper parts of the city.

A recent study suggests that the water level problem was solved by an advanced movable blocking wall also called a sluice. This report was published in April in the academic journal *Archaeological Discovery* titled “A Sluice Gate in Hezekiah’s Aqueduct in Jerusalem: Archaeology, Architecture and the Petrochemical Setting of Its Micro and Macro Structures,” written by Aryeh E. Shimron, Vitaly Gutkin and Vladimir Uvarov—researchers from the Geological Survey of Israel and Hebrew University’s Center for Nanoscience and Nanotechnology.

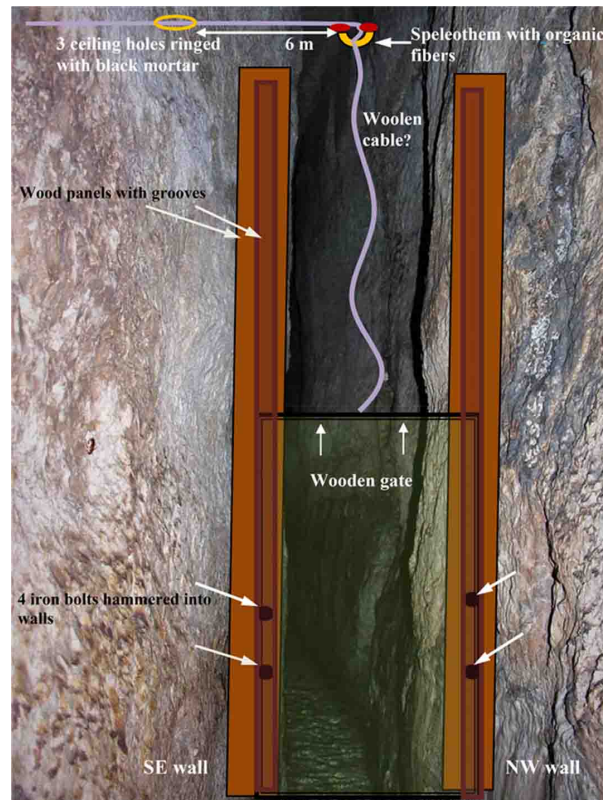
“Hezekiah’s engineers were well aware that such a diversion of water from the northern spring source south into the Siloam pool would lower the water level not only in the immediate environs of the Gihon spring cave but also from the main reservoirs and water conduits,” the researchers wrote.

“It would thereby threaten the water sources supplying the city’s religious and political heart. To deal with the problem, a ‘device’ to control the water level in the new aqueduct and thereby also

the spring environ was designed and eventually constructed about 71 m. from the tunnel's southern exit."

Evidence for the Sluice Gate

The evidence for a sluice gate is substantial. Four symmetrically placed iron bolts were discovered hammered into the bedrock walls at the tallest part of the tunnel. The badly corroded bolts were a little over 3 inches long. The researchers were able to retrieve two of the four bolts and found that they bore cedar wood slivers that had been petrified to iron hydroxide.



Postulated sluice gate in Hezekiah's tunnel. (credit: **Scientific Research, an Academic Publisher**)

It is thought that the bolts attached wooden panels to the tunnel walls. A sliding gate would then be placed in the panels and could be raised and lowered with ropes or cables to control the water level.

Three round holes ringed with layers of black mortar were found carved into the ceiling above the sluice and were most likely used to hold some metal device for guiding a rope to lift and lower the gate. The significant height difference in this part of the tunnel would have been necessary to sufficiently house the tall, vertically-sliding gate.

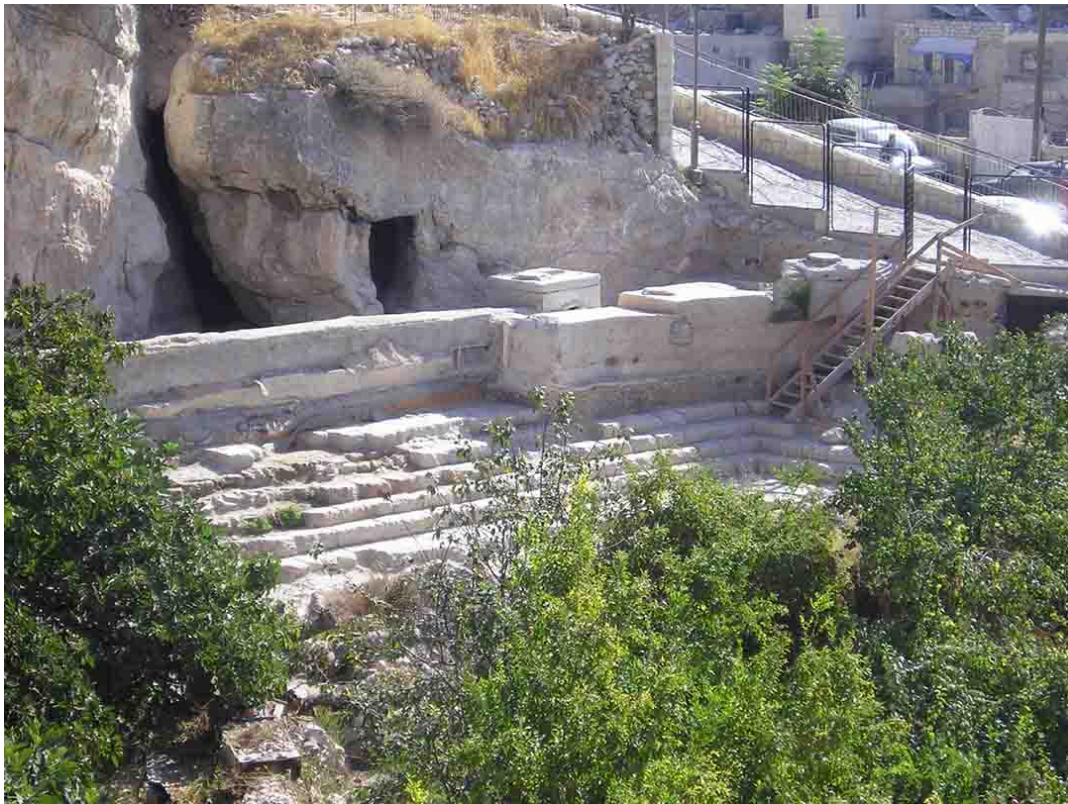
The sluice would allow selective control over water levels for the upper and lower parts of the city, diverting the water to the section of the city which needed it most at any given time. The effects

of the sluice are still visible today as a waterline remains, in some sections of the tunnel, high above the current knee-deep water level.

Based on carbon dating of the plaster used to seal the tunnel and the fine sedimental laminae along the tunnel walls, the researchers dated the sluice gate to sometime between the 8th and 4th centuries BC.

Seeing the Bible Come to Life

The natural, ever-flowing spring of Gihon was Jerusalem's fresh-water source and, along with the Siloam Pool, a significant element of biblical history. Gihon was the place where Solomon was anointed king after his father David (Kings 1:32-40). And in John 9 we read that the Siloam Pool was where Jesus told the man born blind to wash after putting mud on his eyes and he was healed. The places of the Bible are real and it's thrilling to keep finding evidence demonstrating its reliability.



Pool of Siloam – Jerusalem. (credit: Abraham, September 2005, public domain, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons)

Interestingly, sluice gates may also be alluded to in several places in the Bible. Nahum speaks of river gates or sluice gates in relation to his prophecy of the overthrow of Nineveh, which was Assyria's capital at the time of Sennacherib.

The sluice gates are opened; the royal palace is deluged and dissolves. – Nahum 2:6 (NET)

A similar expression is used In Isaiah 24:18:

Whoever flees at the sound of terror will fall into a pit; whoever climbs out of the pit will be caught in a snare. The floodgates of the heavens are opened, the foundations of the earth shake. – Isaiah 24:18 (NIV)

While most Bible versions use “windows” instead of “floodgates” in the Isaiah passage, the same phrase is used in Genesis 7:11 where about half of the translations use “flood gates” and half use “windows” to describe the beginning of the Great Flood. The Hebrew term *aruba* can mean either window or sluice with openings for water (flood gates).

In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. – Genesis 7:11 (NIV)

Hezekiah’s tunnel can be walked through today. It is about a 30 minute hike. The average water height is a little over 2 feet but near the exit it gets almost waist deep. At 63 degrees Fahrenheit, the temperature of the water can feel chilly. The narrowest part of the tunnel is a little less than 2 feet and the lowest part is 5 feet so if you are claustrophobic you may want to forgo this hike and just check out videos or pictures. Hezekiah’s tunnel is part of the City of David Archaeological Site.

Conclusion

The authors of the sluice study noted that not only would Hezekiah’s gate structure have been a significant innovation in its own right, but it would also signify “to the best of our knowledge, the oldest sluice gate known.”

When considering such things as the abilities of the ancients to craft astonishing engineering wonders, and the connection of flood gates to biblical messages, it should cause us all to Keep Thinking!

TOP PHOTO: A cut-away of the City of David revealing the path of King Hezekiah’s Tunnel. (credit: Dr. John DeLancey, Biblical Israel Ministries & Tours)

SOURCE: **PATTERNS OF EVIDENCE**

Turtle Dove: A Bird in Season

JUNE 5, 2022

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD



Streptopelia turtur

by **Colin J. Mitchell** on June 4, 2022

Abstract

Turtle doves in the **Bible** are significant as a sacrifice, a symbol for Israel, and a bird in season. This paper sets out to help us appreciate the sight and sound of these birds in spring. Archaeology and ornithology unsurprisingly corroborate what we read in the Scriptures. First, we will consider some of the benefits of watching and listening to birds. Then we will reflect on the disturbing consistency of the persecution of this bird from the Talmud in AD 200 to the present day in Europe. Ultimately, the final reference in Luke's **Gospel** causes us to consider **Jesus**.

Why Should We Consider Birds?

1.) To instruct us.

We are very conscious of the suffering of **God's** people in many parts of the world today. In the context of his own extreme trial, Job spoke the following: "But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you" (**Job 12:7**).

2.) To reflect on how birds help us understand the invisible attributes of God from what we can clearly see.

Paul's opening persuasion in his letter to the Roman **church** informs us, "For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the **creation** of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse" (**Romans 1:20**). Observing and listening to the turtle dove is one of the great joys of observational science—in this case, ornithology—helping us understand those attributes. So, recalling the words of King Solomon in **Ecclesiastes 3:11**: "He has made everything beautiful in its time," we can see two of God's attributes: namely, that he has given us beauty to observe, and his creation consistently demonstrates order.

CONTINUE TO AIG FULL ARTICLE

ABR Researchers Discover the Oldest Known Proto-Hebrew Inscription Ever Found

MAY 14, 2022

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD

Folded lead tablet from Mt. Ebal



Photograph by Michael C. Luddeni

Fascinating how today's technology can actually read the inscriptions of the inside of a folded lead tablet that you can not physically open.

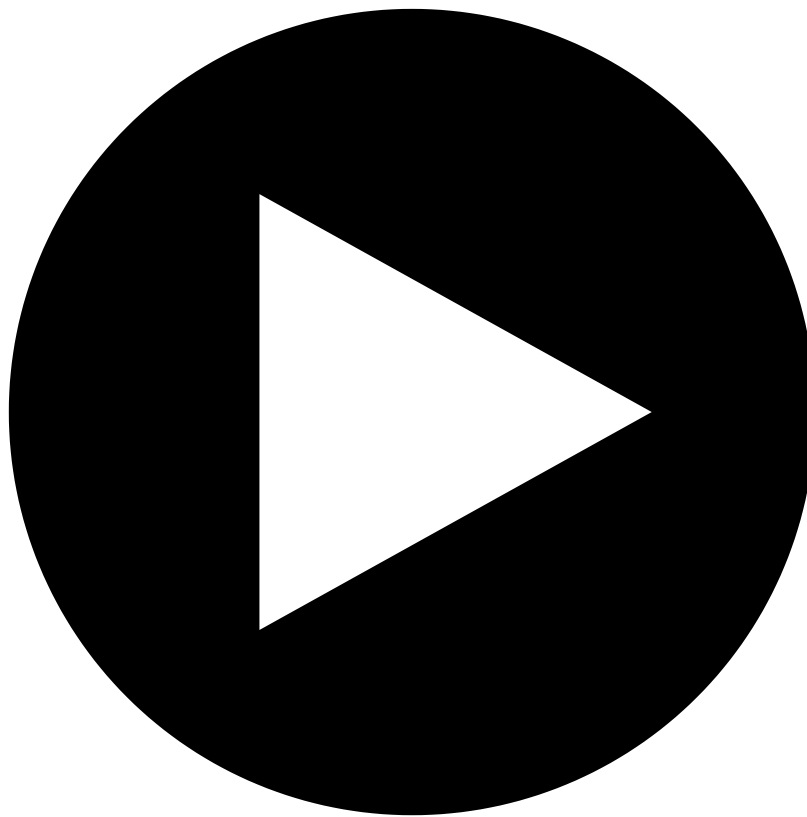
Associates for Biblical Research (ABR) announce the discovery of a formulaic curse inscription recovered on a small, folded lead tablet. The ancient Hebrew inscription in proto-alphabetic script consists of 40 letters and is centuries older than any known Hebrew inscription from ancient Israel.

It reads:

Cursed, cursed, cursed – cursed by the God YHW. You will die cursed.
Cursed you will surely die. Cursed by YHW – cursed, cursed, cursed.

The defixio came to light in December 2019 when Scott Stripling, ABR's Director of Excavations and the Director of the Archaeological Studies Institute at The Bible Seminary in Katy, Texas, led an ABR team to wet sift the discarded material from Adam Zertal's excavations (1982–1989) on Mt. Ebal.

Stripling formed a collaboration with four scientists from the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and two epigraphers (specialists in deciphering ancient texts): Pieter Gert van der Veen of Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz and Gershon Galil of the University of Haifa.



Oldest Known Proto-Hebrew Inscription From Mount Ebal Discovered by ABR - Press Conference

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=GUzBXZdpfLo>

The divine name YHW
from Mt. Ebal
in proto-alphabetic script



The scientists employed advanced tomographic scans to recover the hidden text. In collaboration with Stripling, Galil and van der Veen deciphered the proto-alphabetic inscription

According to Stripling, “These types of amulets are well known in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, but Zertal’s excavated pottery dated to the Iron Age I and Late Bronze Age, so logically the tablet derived from one of these earlier periods.

Even so, our discovery of a Late Bronze Age inscription stunned me.”

Almost immediately Galil recognized the formulaic literary structure of the inscription: “From the symmetry, I could tell that it was written as a chiastic parallelism.” Reading the concealed letters proved tedious, according to van der Veen, “but each day we recovered new letters and words written in a very ancient script.”

Daniel Vavrik and his colleagues from Prague ensured the accuracy of the raw data which the team interpreted. According to Deuteronomy 27 and Joshua 8, Mt. Ebal was the mountain of the curse. Joshua **8:30** indicates that Joshua built an altar on Mt. Ebal.

The defixio derived from previously excavated and discarded material from a structure Zertal believed was Joshua’s altar. An academic, peer-reviewed article is in process and will be published later in 2022.

The collaborative team consists of Scott Stripling, Gershon Galil, Ivana Kumpova, Jaroslav Valach, Pieter Gert van der Veen, Daniel Vavrik, and Michal Vopalensky. More information can be found at: <https://biblearchaeology.org/current-...>

Press Conference Video Courtesy of Lanier Theological Library:

<https://www.laniertheologicallibrary....>

The Amazing Search for the World's Oldest Bible

MAY 11, 2022

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD



Alexander Schick | **Patterns of Evidence**

Summary: The fascinating account of Constantin von Tischendorf's discovery of the world's oldest Bible. Part 1 of a 2-part series. See Part 2 on Patterns of Evidence [here](#).

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. – Isaiah 40:8 (ESV)

Codex Sinaiticus, the World's Oldest Complete Bible Manuscript

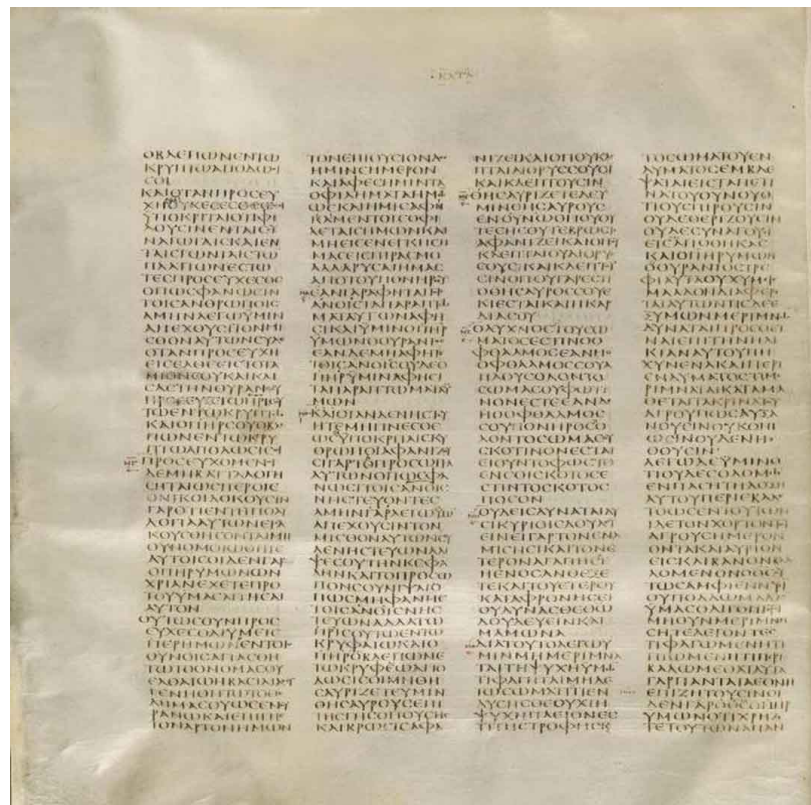
The Codex Sinaiticus, one of the most precious Bible manuscripts in the world, is available today on the World Wide Web with a few clicks (www.codex-sinaiticus.net/en). Digitizing the **ancient parchment manuscript** is one of the most extensive and expensive research projects of the Internet age, costing over 5.5 million dollars.

The 1600-year-old Bible manuscript contains large parts of the Old Testament in Greek (Septuagint) and the entire New Testament. The Codex (book) dates from the 4th century AD and

ranks next to the Codex Vaticanus (4th century AD) and the Codex Alexandrinus (5th century AD) as one of the three oldest full Bibles (OT and NT) in the world. But only the Codex Sinaiticus can claim to be the oldest completely preserved manuscript of the New Testament! At least three original writers have drawn up this Bible translation in Caesarea Maritima or Egypt.

The ultra-thin parchment was made of calf- or sheepskin. It is estimated that 350 animals had to give their hides for it. A whole cow or goat herd for a single Bible! A writer copying the Bible could rightly say of it, “holy cow!”

The leaves are 38 cm (15 in.) high and 34 cm (13 in.) wide, making them the largest of the Bible manuscripts. It is estimated that the original number of leaves totaled 739 (1,478 pages). Unfortunately, only 411 sheets have been preserved. Each page has four columns (with the exception of books of poetry, such as the Psalms, which have only two columns). Each column normally has 48 lines.



Page of Codex Sinaiticus with text of Matthew 6:4-32. (credit: public domain, via Wikimedia Commons)

Although the leaves of the Codex are “virtually” united online and are all available together, they are in reality spread over the entire world. The lion’s share of the manuscript (347 sheets) has been in safekeeping at the British Library in London since 1933. It spans most of the Old Testament according to the canon of the Septuagint, including the Apocrypha, as well as the whole New Testament. The number of New Testament books corresponds with our best present Bible editions. Only the arrangement is different; Hebrews falls after 2 Thessalonians, and Acts after Philemon and before James.

In addition, the Codex Sinaiticus also contains the two early Christian writings: The Shepherd of Hermas and the Epistle of Barnabas. These Bible pages were stored in the Czar's library in St. Petersburg/ Leningrad until 1933, when Stalin sold them to the British for 100,000 pounds. This corresponded to the value of 3 Gutenberg Bibles, or in today's currency, about 28 million dollars.

The second largest portion (43 sheets) is kept at the Leipzig University Library, and contains parts of 1 Chronicles and 2 Esdras, Esther (complete), Tobit (one side), a part of Jeremiah, and a part of Lamentations.

Parts of 4 sheets are in St. Petersburg, namely fragments of Genesis, Numbers, and Judith, as well as from the Shepherd of Hermas.

Eighteen sheets (partially fragmentary) are kept in Saint Catherine's Monastery. They contain parts from all five books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, 1 Chronicles, Joshua 1, and the Shepherd of Hermas.



Saint Catherine's Monastery, Sinai, Egypt. (credit: Berthold Werner, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#) , via Wikimedia Commons)

Constantin von Tischendorf

The discovery of these parchment leaves is a true research crime thriller of Bible history, and is inseparably connected with the name Constantin von Tischendorf.

Tischendorf was born over 200 years ago on January 18th, 1815 in Lengenfeld, Vogtland (Saxony, Germany). Even in school, the young boy showed a talent for classical language. He was an

outstanding student and was always the best in his class at the University of Leipzig, where he graduated in 1838 with his Ph.D.

While studying theology, Tischendorf, whose mother had shown him the way to the Christian faith, was also faced with liberal theology and violent attacks against the Christian faith. These attacks were partly based on the method of transmission of the New Testament, and it is here that Tischendorf wanted to act because of his excellent knowledge of ancient languages.

It formed in his mind a desire to embark on a search for the oldest copies of the New Testament, in order to evaluate them for a new translation. The textual tradition of the New Testament should therefore be established on firm ground, and the rug pulled out from under the feet of the critics. But why was that necessary?



Alexander Schick shows Timothy Mahoney a copy of Erasmus's New Testament. (© 2018 Patterns of Evidence LLC)

Shortly before Luther's epochal translation of the New Testament (1522), Erasmus had published for the first time a printed Greco-Latin version of the New Testament (1516), which Luther used as an "original text edition" for his translation at Wartburg. But Erasmus had used very few (7) and very late Greek manuscripts from the 12th to the 15th centuries as the basis of his printing of the New Testament.

These Greek texts from the medieval manuscripts were reprinted again and again in the following decades, and through further revisions were known since 1633 as "Textus Receptus" (the text adopted/received by all).

For centuries, it was the basis for translations of the Bible (including the famous 1611 King James Version or Luther 1545/1912). But this “Textus Receptus” was not old enough for Tischendorf. He wanted older, much older manuscripts as a basis for a new critical edition in Greek, because—in Tischendorf’s point of view—the older the copy is and the closer it is to the date of the Gospels’ composition, the lower the odds that the texts had been falsified. For him, it was clear that in the search for the original text of the New Testament, it was necessary to proceed from the oldest manuscripts, even though great age is also not always a guarantee that it is the best representative text.

So Tischendorf went in 1839/40 on research trips to libraries in southern Germany and Switzerland. Already in the following year (he was 26 years old at the time!), published his first edition of the New Testament in Greek, under the title “Novum Testamentum Graece,” for which he had evaluated the manuscripts available at the time.

Over the course of his short life—Tischendorf died in 1872 at the age of 59—he had plans for 23 other editions of the New Testament in Greek to follow. He concerned himself with eight basic editions. The preface to the edition of his first New Testament in 1841 was also his postdoctoral thesis, which gave him the right to lecture at the University of Leipzig.

But instead of going to the University, Tischendorf took off to Paris, where over the course of two years he deciphered and immediately published the Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus, a previously unreadable fragmentary Bible manuscript from the 5th century AD. This work made him known in the professional sector with a bang. At just 27 years old, he was awarded an honorary doctorate for this work.

Shortly after completing his studies, he fell in love with a charming pastor’s daughter. Although she was eagerly awaiting his return to the vicinity of Leipzig, he was not satisfied with this success. He wrote to his Angelika, “Fate is dragging me violently away; I must follow.” Angelika was willing to wait for him, and wrote to her Constantin: “Beloved heart, wander spryly and happily wherever your inner voice calls you.” She didn’t know that it would be more than four years before she was able to see him again.

During his time in Paris, he toured Holland and England. There he went to work in libraries in London (the British Museum), Cambridge and Oxford. When he had finished his studies in Paris, in 1843 he passed through Strasbourg to Basel, then Bern, Geneva, Lyon, Avignon, and Marseille.

A year of research in Italy followed: Rome (working in the Vatican library), Naples, Florence, Venice, Modena, Verona, and Milan. At that time, there were neither aircraft nor cars or railways. He covered all of these long distances by stagecoach! And something else must be imagined: there was neither scanner nor digital photography, so Tischendorf worked daily under extreme workloads and time constraints to copy the old Bibles in Greek.

But he also explored the Latin translation, the so-called Vulgate. In Florence lay a manuscript in giant format, 50 x 34 x 20 cm (19 x 13 x 7 in.), the Codex Amiatinus, which was considered one of the most important textual witnesses for the Vulgate.

Tischendorf had to compare 1,040 sheets of parchment; that is to say, completely copy them. This required incredible efficiency. Over the course of his life, he completely copied the Bible approximately 50 times in Greek and Latin!

Journey to Saint Catherine's Monastery

In addition to the libraries of Europe, Tischendorf especially wanted to explore the monastic libraries of the Middle East. The Bible originated in the Middle East. Here he hoped to find more ancient texts.

So he went by steamer to Egypt. In addition to the Coptic monasteries in the Libyan desert and the libraries in Alexandria and Cairo, he wanted at all costs to visit St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai: it is the oldest monastery in the world, erected under the Emperor Justinian around 550 AD. The reputation of the monastery library was already legendary.

It was at St. Catherine's that he would make his momentous discoveries. But that is a story that will have to wait for Part 2 of the series next week. Until then, keep thinking!

TOP PHOTO: Constantin von Tischendorf. (credit: Alexander Schick, *Midnight Call* Magazine, July 2017, pg 8)

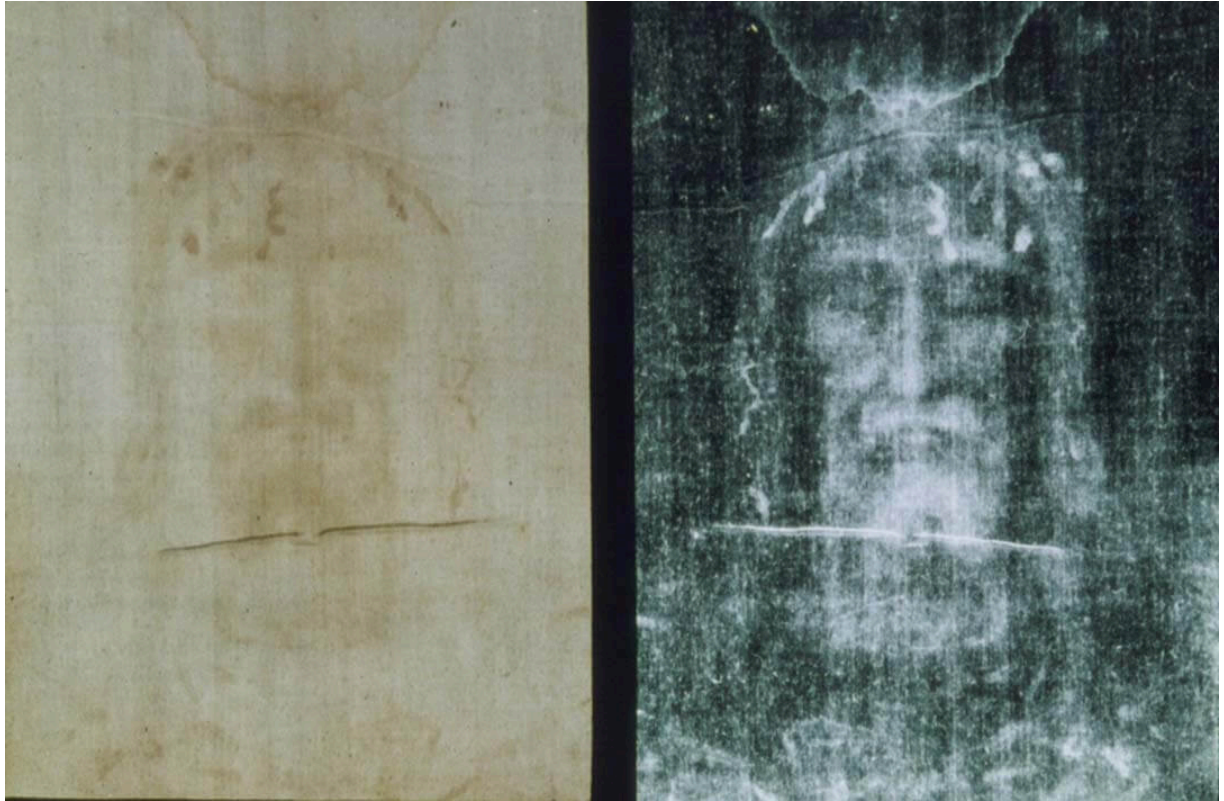
NOTE: Not every view expressed by scholars contributing Thinker articles necessarily reflects the views of Patterns of Evidence. We include perspectives from various sides of debates on biblical matters so that readers can become familiar with the different arguments involved. – Keep Thinking!

Patterns of Evidence for Jesus' Shroud of Turin

APRIL 19, 2022

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD



Dr. Fred Baltz | **Patterns of Evidence**

Summary: The preponderance of evidence in favor of the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin becomes part of a still larger pattern of evidence that speaks to the truth of the entire Bible.

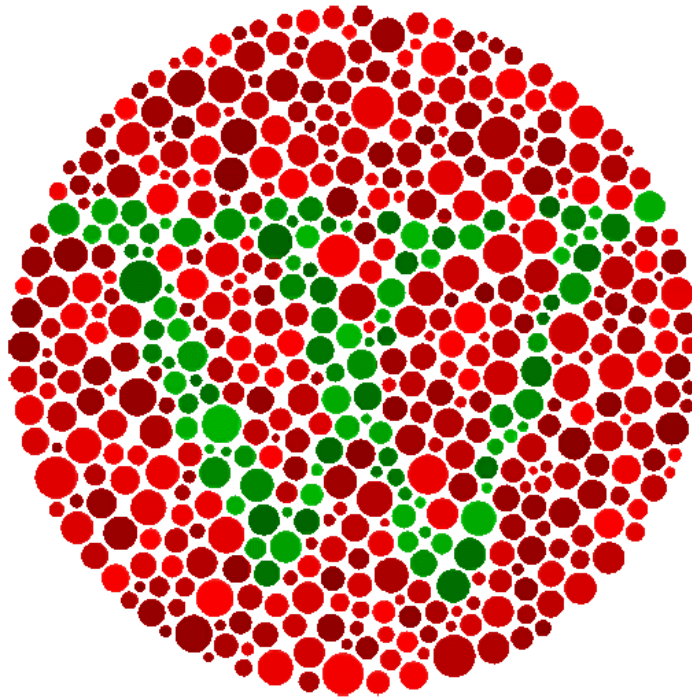
When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away. – Matthew 27:57-60 (ESV)

Patterns...

Common to all definitions of “pattern” is the idea of repetition. A seamstress pins a paper pattern on cloth so she can repeat that pattern on the material she will make into a dress. A foundry

worker packs a wooden pattern of a gear into special sand so the cavity left by the pattern can be filled with molten metal, thus repeating the pattern.

A pattern like the one pictured below uses repeated colored dots to form something larger which can be recognized, a “W” in this case. With patterns of this kind, the more dots there are, the clearer the “W” will be for those who can distinguish colors. The existence of the “W” becomes undeniable.



This pattern of colored dots is used to determine color vision. If you can recognize the green dots, you can also recognize the pattern they form, a large “W”. In a similar way, individual items of evidence can form a larger message when taken together and recognized. (credit: Dan-yell, Ishihara-Test.svg. **CC BY-SA 3.0** via Wikimedia Commons)

As archaeological discoveries which affirm biblical accounts happen repeatedly, along with textual and even astronomy-related discoveries, these form something larger, just as the repeated dots become the “W”. The pattern formed by the repetition of text-affirming discoveries tells a larger truth, that the Bible is true by its nature.

In this Thinker Update we take up what has been called the single-most-studied object in the world, The Shroud of Turin. Millions continue to believe it is the burial shroud of Jesus Christ.

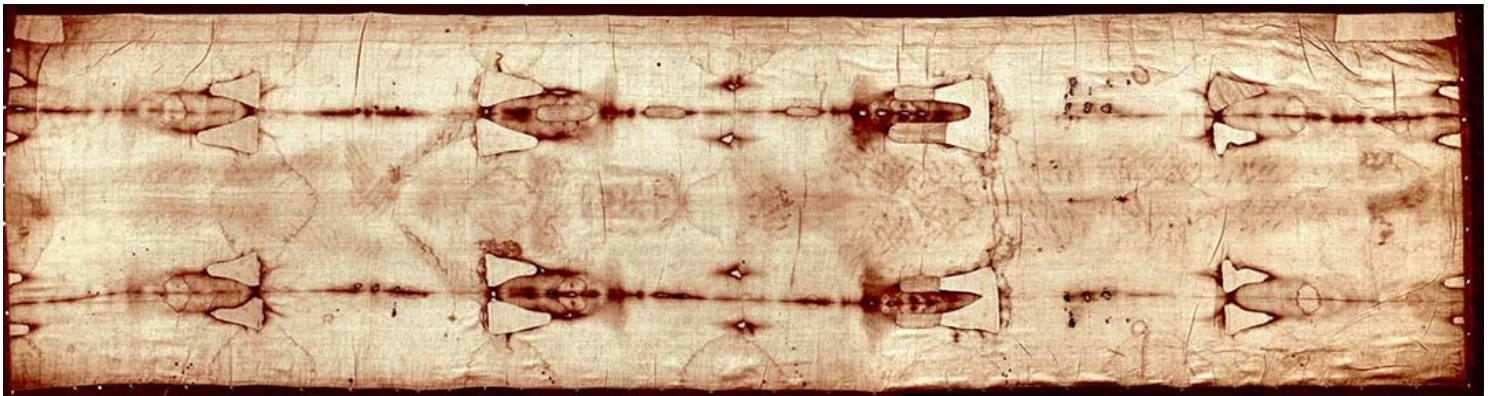
The matter of patterns is most relevant to a discussion of the Shroud. Patterns of evidence discovered and undeniably present within the Shroud weigh heavily in favor of the claim that it is Jesus’ burial cloth.

Absolute proof that the Shroud is genuine will never be established, because no chain of custody exists for the Shroud before the Middle Ages. But we live our lives without absolute proof of many

things. We rely on the preponderance of evidence, and we make our decisions.

Researchers have discovered many individual patterns of evidence within the Shroud itself, and these form a larger pattern when taken together. Space considerations allow us to speak to some, though not all of them, here.

He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. – Acts 1:3 (ESV)



The Shroud of Turin, kept in the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Turin, Italy. The Shroud presents an image of a crucified man in great detail. Millions believe that this is the cloth which wrapped Jesus Christ in his tomb, and that the image is his. (public domain)

The Patterns in Cloth

The Shroud of Turin is made of fine linen, woven in a three-to-one herringbone pattern. The direction of the twist of the strands rules out Egypt as the country of origin and affirms Palestine. The Shroud's length and width are in even cubits, a unit of measurement not used in medieval Europe where critics say the Shroud was faked, but in ancient Israel. The unusual weave reflects a wealthy owner, and Joseph of Arimathea was certainly that. (Matthew 27:57)

In 2002, conservation measures were taken secretly for the Shroud in Italy. With the 16th Century backing cloth removed from the Shroud for the first time, textile expert Mechthilde Flury-Lemberg discovered a rare type stitch on the back side of the Shroud which was known from only one other place, the **Masada Fortress in Israel**, which fell to the Romans in the Jewish revolt less than a generation from Jesus' time.



Masada, the fortress overlooking the Dead Sea which became the last stand for Jews in the First Jewish Revolt. Only here, from the time and place of Jesus, has another example been found of a rare stitch discovered on the back of the Shroud in 2002. (credit: Andrew Shiva, CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikipedia)

The Pattern in the Image

The image on the Shroud of a man crucified is its greatest mystery. To this day, after exhaustive scientific study and numerous attempts to duplicate the figure of the man shown on it, no one has been able to do this at the microscopic level of the linen fibers. The image is on the outermost layers of those fibers as discolorations. They are microscopic pixels. The image is not painted, despite the continued claims of people who simply repeat this explanation over and against the verdict of the experts from the Shroud of Turin Research Project (STURP), and others before and since.

The only traces of paint are from duplicates of the Shroud that were pressed against the Shroud to sanctify the duplicates in earlier centuries. These are tiny flakes of paint. The linen fibers themselves show no trace of brush strokes, binder or pigment. Nothing has soaked in; nothing is present to soak in.

Only in very recent times have scientists found a way to discolor linen strands as they are found in the Shroud of Turin, discolorations penetrating only to a tiny fraction of the width of a human hair. It was done with microbursts from high energy lasers. A burst of high energy! This carries suggestions of its own about the man of the Shroud, because if it is Jesus, he is proclaimed to be raised from the dead. Is the Shroud a “snapshot of the resurrection?”



Visitors to St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Galena, Illinois, inspect a full-size replica of the Shroud of Turin during Holy Week. Parents and grandparents explain to their children what happened to Jesus as together they study the cloth. (credit: Dr. Fred Baltz)

Anyone who has seen the actual Shroud, or a full-size, high detail reproduction of it, knows that the image of the crucified man is a negative, rather than a positive, image. How or why an alleged forger did that has no answers. But to recognize the image, one must be six or eight feet back from the Shroud. Any closer and the image on the cloth is lost. This fact further argues against a forger. How could such an image be created by someone working up close?

The Pattern of the Body and the Wounds

The proportions of the body are perfect according to artists like Dame Isabel Piczek. Wounds appear on the image which science has established to have been present on the cloth prior to the presence of the body image itself. If you will imagine hand-writing a message on a sheet of paper, but dotting the “i’s”, crossing the “t’s”, and inserting all the commas and periods before you wrote any words on the paper, you have an analogy to what an alleged forger must have done, putting blood on all the **wounds** before the wounds were located on the cloth. And the blood has been shown to be actual human blood, type AB.

Normally, blood becomes brown as it ages. The blood of the Shroud is red, which seems impossible if it is two thousand years old. This has been advanced as evidence of fakery. But blood chemists know of changes in the blood of persons under great stress or suffering, like a crucifixion victim.

Bilirubin is a pigment that enters the blood with the breakdown of red cells. It causes blood to hold a red color. Did a forger use actual human blood, and torture his donor so the blood would remain red for centuries, then paint the blood on the linen cloth before there was an image, all in order to fool people centuries later?

*Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed. – Isaiah 53:4-5 (NIV)*



Left: a reproduction of a Roman spear point. John's Gospel says a soldier drove his spear into Jesus' side to insure that he was dead on the cross. Blood and water exited from the wound (19:35). A corresponding chest wound with blood and clear fluid appears on the Shroud of Turin. The blood and water point to red cells separated from clear fluid within a chamber of the heart, meaning the heart had stopped beating. **Right:** an example of the scourge used on victims before they were crucified. The image on the Shroud of Turin shows marks corresponding to the lead balls of a scourge. They run the length of the body, front and back. (credit: photos by Dr. Fred Baltz)

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. – John 20:6-7 (ESV)

The Patterns of Soil Content and Pollen

When soil traces from the foot region of the Shroud were analyzed for their composition with a scanning ion microprobe at Chicago's Enrico Fermi Institute, the graph of the results almost completely matched the graph read-out for the aragonite soil of Jerusalem. This was literally pattern matching pattern.

Pollen grains adhering to tape samples pressed against the Shroud indicated that the Shroud had been present in the Jerusalem area, then northern Syria, Anatolia, Constantinople, and Europe. This matched the pattern of travel hypothesized by Shroud students, based on ancient references to an Edessa Cloth which found its way to Constantinople, and then as a result of the Fourth Crusade, came to France. If the Shroud were just a fake, the presence of all the non-European pollens is inexplicable.

An Israeli botanist, Dr. Avinoam Danin of Hebrew University, Jerusalem, asserted that he had found patterns of flowers on the cloth—flowers that bloom in Jerusalem in the Spring. Professor Danin had no religious motivation to authenticate the Shroud.

The Pattern of the “Poker Holes”

In four places an “L”-shaped set of burns appears on the Shroud. These are damage from before the first known fire of 1532. The burns are often called the poker holes.

An illustrated book called the *Hungarian Pray Manuscript* is kept in Budapest. A painting of Jesus' burial that certainly seems to portray the Shroud is contained in that manuscript. Not only does the figure of Jesus match the Shroud's crucified man (hair, beard, arms crossed), but the herringbone weave is shown on the cloth. And there, too, are the poker holes.

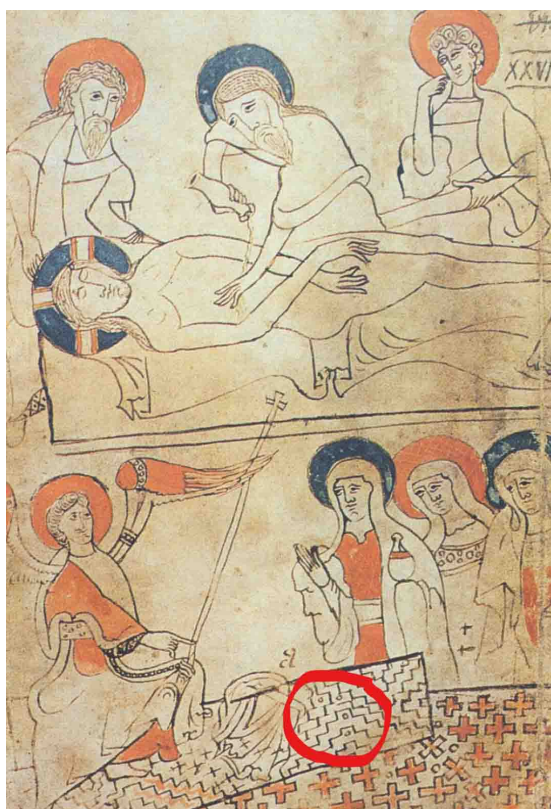
The *Pray Manuscript* is dated to 1192. This poses a great problem for those who would dismiss the Shroud as a fake because of the Carbon 14 dating of the Shroud that happened in 1988. Many people stopped paying attention to the Shroud of Turin when they learned that the Carbon 14 determined possible dates for the Shroud were from 1260-1390.

Newspaper headlines said the Shroud was proved a fake. But the *Hungarian Pray Manuscript* testifies to the Shroud, already in existence at least seventy years before the earliest

possible Carbon 14 date.

There's more to be said about the Carbon 14 dating of the Shroud of Turin, much more than we can cover here. But the samples tested all came from an edge. One of the STURP scientists, Raymond Rogers, wrote in a peer-reviewed article before his death that the weave of the edge from which the sample was taken showed anomalies. The material there was cotton, not linen, and it had been colored with agents to match the rest of the Shroud.

The conclusion drawn by many since that time is: the Shroud was repaired on its frayed edge. To restore the pattern of the cloth, colored cotton threads were invisibly woven into the cloth. Since these were younger than the rest of the Shroud, they gave a reading from the Middle Ages. Now three other tests for the age of ancient textiles all indicate that the Shroud of Turin is not a product of the Middle Ages, but much older.



From the *Hungarian Pray Manuscript*. The image of Jesus in the upper illustration corresponds to the appearance of the man on the Shroud. In the lower illustration the herringbone pattern of the cloth is clearly apparent, and something matching the poker holes seen on the Shroud are present within the red circle. The *Pray Manuscript* is securely dated to seventy years before the earliest possible date for the Shroud given by the Carbon 14 dating done in 1988. That is one of several indicators that the Carbon 14 dates are incorrect. (credit: public domain)

The Evidence Against

Shroud skeptics bring forth what evidence they can muster against the Shroud, and there isn't much. Basically, only two challenges merit consideration.

One of these is the *D’Arcis Memoranda*, written in the Middle Ages by Bishop Pierre D’Arcis, who claimed the Shroud being displayed then was a “cunningly painted” fraud.

The other is the Carbon 14 testing from 1988. We have only introduced the problems with those C14 tests; there are more. As for the Bishop, he was either wrong or dishonest. There is no trace of paint on the Shroud forming the image.

Returning to Patterns

When I once photographed a copy of the Shroud of Turin, my camera recognized the face, and imposed a red square around it in the viewfinder. The face stands out, and not only to the camera. The man on the Shroud has had the life beaten out of him, the blood drained away from him, and the breath suffocated from him.

But despite all that, his face manifests a serenity. The man of the Shroud seems to have been in charge, unconquered throughout the torture he endured. He looks like a person who has faithfully completed a most difficult and deadly mission. He looks like a man who knows **his story isn’t over**. He looks like Jesus Christ. Jesus, after all, is the one whom Christians have claimed for centuries to have fit the patterns of the prophetic words of the Old Testament.

*After he has suffered,
he will see the light of life and be satisfied;
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,
and he will bear their iniquities. – Isaiah 53:11 (NIV)*

Conclusion

There are so many “dots” arising from the study of the Shroud of Turin. That they form a pattern is difficult to deny. No one should place all their faith in the Resurrection of Jesus on this cloth alone. But as Norm Geisler said when he titled his book: *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*. It takes a dogmatic faith in skepticism, against the great preponderance of evidence, to dismiss the Shroud of Turin.

The Shroud of Turin becomes one “dot” in a still-larger set of “dots” which form a pattern telling us the entire Bible is to be trusted, Old Testament and New Testament. Believing is not foolish, but reasonable. Believers do not sin against common sense. Multiple patterns of evidence direct us to the truth and that’s more reason to keep thinking.

SOURCE: **PATTERNS OF EVIDENCE**

You can see more from Fred Baltz at his website: www.fredbaltz.com

TOP PHOTO: Left: This is the face from the Shroud. This photograph was taken in 1931 by Giuseppe Enrie. In 1898, Secondo Pia had become the first to photograph the Shroud. Both men discovered that their negative plate produced an image which was a positive (Right). Notice that there is no outline to the image. (public domain)

NOTE: Not every view expressed by scholars contributing Thinker articles necessarily reflects the views of Patterns of Evidence. We include perspectives from various sides of debates on biblical matters so that readers can become familiar with the different arguments involved. – Keep Thinking!

Amulet with Possible Hebrew Inscription Discovered on Mt. Ebal

JANUARY 31, 2022

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD



Bryan Windle | [Associates for Biblical Research](#)

An amulet that was recently recovered from the site known as Joshua's Altar on Mt. Ebal appears to contain the Hebrew letter aleph, along with a mark resembling a lotus flower. The amulet, was discovered during the Mt. Ebal Dump Salvage project conducted by Associates for Biblical Research under the direction of Dr. Scott Stripling in December 2019 – January 2020.

The project included wet-sifting of the dump material from Adam Zertal's excavations on Mt. Ebal in the 1980's. Zertal excavated a rectangular altar, which dated to the 13th century BC, but discovered an earlier, round altar underneath it and at the exact geometric center, which may date to the time of Joshua.

This would be consistent with the biblical record, which states, "At that time Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal" (Josh. 8:30). The lead amulet is roughly 2 cm by 2 cm (slightly larger than 3/4" by 3/4") in size and was folded in half, hiding the inscription.

In order to avoid destroying it by trying to open it, the amulet was analyzed by a lab in Prague which performed sophisticated photography and the construction of a three-dimensional model

of it. Their findings, which are yet to be published, revealed the possible Hebrew letter and the image of the lotus flower, an important symbol in the ancient Near East, particularly in Egypt.

OFF-SITE LINKS:

– <https://www.jpost.com/archaeology/article-694662>

– <https://www.israelhayom.com/2022/01/26/talisman-inscribed-with-ancient-hebrew-script-found-at-joshuas-altar/>

VIEW THIS PRESENTATION BY DR. SCOTT STRIPLING, DIRECTOR OF THE MT. EBAL DUMP SALVAGE PROJECT, IN WHICH HE DISCUSSES THE ALTAR ON MT. EBAL AND THE DISCOVERY OF THE LEAD AMULET:



YouTube video player
<https://youtube.com/watch?v=>



Read more **BREAKING NEWS** articles here: <https://biblearchaeology.org/current-events-list>

SOURCE: **ASSOCIATES FOR BIBLICAL RESEARCH**

Sodom's Big Bang: Caused by Meteor or Earthquake?

Part 2

JANUARY 30, 2022

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD



Deborah Hurn | **Patterns of Evidence**

Summary: Was Sodom in the Jordan Valley, and was this site destroyed by a cosmic airburst? In Part 2 of this **2-part series** we consider evidence from inside and outside the Bible to close in on the true location of Sodom's spectacular destruction.

Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven. – Genesis 19:24 (NRSV)

Biblical Clues to Sodom's Location

Some years before their fiery overthrow, the five cities of the Plain were conquered by an alliance of four northern kings led by Chedorlaomer of Elam who were in turn pursued and defeated near Damascus by Abram and his own private army. The record is rich in geographical data, as is the

account of Israel's crossing the southern Jordan Valley on their way into Canaan some four hundred years later. Both stories help to fill out the 'dossier' on Sodom's location and must be taken fully into account along with the details of the destruction.

Four Northern Kings

David Barrett of the Bible Mapper blog recently posted about "The Battle at the Valley of Siddim." His map came just in time for me to correct a section of my dissertation on the geographical regions of the Israelite journeys for which I had to consider the Genesis 14 campaign amongst other biblical data.

CONTINUE TO FULL ARTICLE ON PATTERNS OF EVIDENCE

“We Saw His Star in the East”: Thoughts on the Star of Bethlehem

JANUARY 27, 2022

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD



Rick Lanser MDiv | ABR

¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ²“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”

³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

*⁶‘AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH,
ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH;
FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER
WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.’”*

⁷Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. ⁸And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him.”

⁹After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way... ¹⁶Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi.

—Matthew 2:1–12, 16 NASB

Introduction

A good number of books, videos and Internet articles have been published on the Star of Bethlehem. Some authors have apparently seen the story as profitable, vigorously marketing their materials and often using websites like infomercials to entice people to buy them. Others have websites where they provide their information free of charge, simply because they believe their view is correct.

Whatever the motives, in the end any suggestion is only as good as its starting assumptions. I am well aware that this caveat applies to the proposal I make in this article as well. I offer it for the reader’s consideration as an alternative to the better-known theories for three reasons:

1. It fits seamlessly together with an article I wrote in 2018, “**Pinpointing the Date of Christ’s Birth**”;
2. No one else whose work I’ve read has taken quite the same approach; and
3. I believe it has real value in providing a science-grounded explanation for the Star of Bethlehem that may be of value in defending the factuality of the Christmas story to a skeptic, because it does not require positing supernatural phenomena or extraordinary celestial events.

CONTINUE TO FULL ARTICLE ON **ASSOCIATES FOR BIBLICAL RESEARCH**

The Search for Biblical Sodom: Part 1

JANUARY 23, 2022

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD



Deborah Hurn | **Patterns of Evidence**

Summary: Numerous media reports have recently claimed the biblical city of Sodom was located north of the Dead Sea and destroyed by a ‘cosmic airburst’ from a meteor. Part 1 of this 2-part update examines these proposals more closely.

New Evidence for the Destruction of Sodom?

On September 20, 2021, the open access journal *Scientific Reports* published a paper by a team of twenty-one scientists led by Ted Bunch of Northern Arizona University. The paper is entitled “A Tunguska Sized Airburst Destroyed Tall el-Hammam a Middle Bronze Age city in the Jordan Valley near the Dead Sea”. Tunguska in Siberia is where, in 1908, a massive blast flattened some 2000 square kilometers of uninhabited forest. No crater was discovered, so scientists explain the strange phenomenon as the result of a meteor explosion some 5-10 km above land.

Tall al-Hammam, the subject of the above paper, is a large city-mound on the eastern side of the southern Jordan Valley in the modern state of Jordan. Bunch and his coauthors make the case that the ancient town was destroyed in a cosmic airburst above the northern basin of the Dead Sea.

Intriguingly, the paper cites the Bible as possibly containing a written record of the destruction: “We consider whether oral traditions about the destruction of this urban city by a cosmic object might be the source of the written version of Sodom in Genesis.” This sensational proposal tying cosmic science to biblical history led to the paper being widely featured and discussed across many media outlets.

Since 2005, archeologist Steven Collins at Trinity Southwest University has been director of excavations at Tall al-Hammam. Within a few years, Collins was confidently identifying the tell as the biblical city of Sodom, and, by 2014, proposing its destruction by meteor.

According to the biblical narrative of **Abraham’s life-story**, God destroyed Sodom and three neighboring towns in a fiery cataclysm because of their godless lifestyle (Gen. 18:20-21; 19:24-25).

CONTINUE TO FULL ARTICLE ON PATTERNS OF EVIDENCE

Important Biblical Archaeological Discoveries in 2021: An Update from Dr. Bryant Wood

NOVEMBER 22, 2021

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD



Bryant G. Wood PhD | **Associates for Biblical Research** (ABR)

June and July were busy months for archaeological discoveries. Perhaps the most significant was a sandstone inscription of the Egyptian king Hophra, one of six pharaohs mentioned by name in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 44:30). It was accidentally discovered on June 4 by a farmer working in his field near Ismailia in the eastern delta of Egypt.

Hophra ruled from 589 to 570 BC and was involved in events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in July, 587 BC. His Egyptian name was Wahibre, rendered in Greek as Apries. What is amazing about the artifact is that it appears to be completely intact.

The inscription was carved on a stone slab (stela) about 7.5 ft high and 3.4 ft. wide. At the top is a winged sun disk; below that is the cartouche (name ring) of Pharaoh Hophra, followed by 15 lines of hieroglyphic text.

Continue to full article

Three Things in Babylon Daniel Likely Saw

OCTOBER 11, 2021

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD



Bryan Windle

The Babylonian Exile & the Persian Period 587-334 BC

In 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar II, King of Babylon, attacked Jerusalem and took as captive some of the royal family and nobility. Among these exiles was a group of young men named Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Dan. 1:6). They were taught the language and ways of the Babylonians to prepare them for service in the King's courts (Dan. 1:4). For the next 65+ years in Babylon, Daniel lived in Babylon through the reigns of successive Babylonian Kings and into the reign of the Persian King, Cyrus (Dan. 1:21;6:28) in 539 BC.

Babylon was a spectacular city! Nebuchadnezzar had initiated a vast building program and improved the city's fortifications, raising its magnificence to new heights. At the time Daniel lived there, it was the largest city in the world, covering over 10 square kilometers (4 square miles).¹

Serious investigation of the ruins of Babylon began in the late 1800's, first with industrial-scale digging by the British Museum from 1879-1882, and then with systematic and scientific excavations led by Robert Koldewey of the German Oriental Society.² Over the course of 18 seasons, Koldewey excavated numerous parts of the city, including the Ishtar Gate, the

Processional Way, which led to the Temple of Marduk, and the palaces of Nebuchadnezzar. Here are three things which Koldewey unearthed that Daniel would have seen in Babylon.

Please continue to ABR for this wonderful account, including images from then and now.

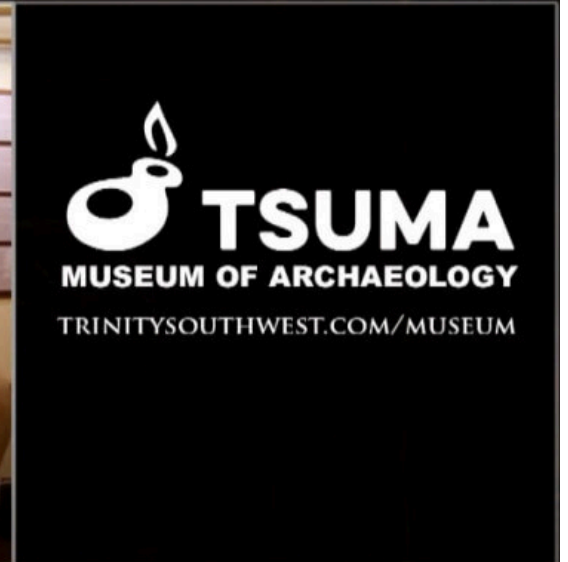
Associates for Biblical Research keeps you informed on the latest discoveries. Furthermore, we also provide a Biblical perspective for the significance of each discovery.

Digging for Truth Episode 119: Sealed by God

JULY 28, 2021

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD



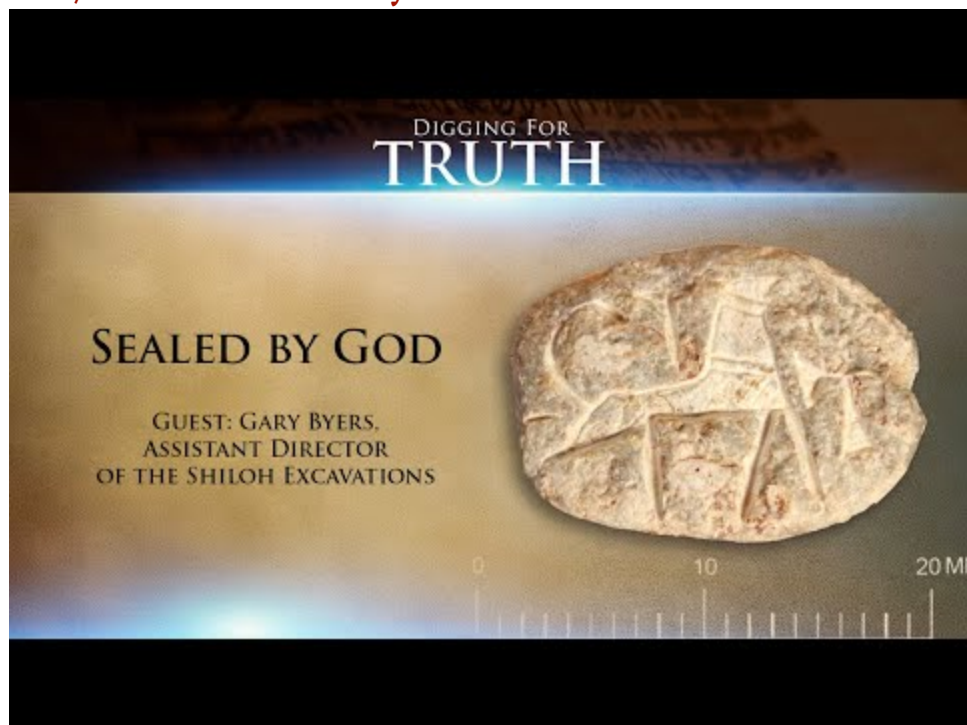
Henry B Smith Jr MA MAR

Archaeologist Gary Byers joins us from New Mexico to talk about ancient seals in archaeology and the Bible. Topics include: the 15th century BC scarab from Joshua's Ai, bullae, signet rings, and God's seal of salvation.



Sealed by God: Digging for Truth Episode 119

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=H2I1rMOyCoY>



Herod's Dance Floor that Doomed John the Baptist Discovered

FEBRUARY 13, 2021

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD



Summary: The discovery of a throne platform beside a courtyard at Herod's palace has prompted archaeologists to conclude they have found the spot where John the Baptist's death sentence was given.

But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod, so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. – Matthew 14:6-7 (ESV)

Archaeologists Believe This is Where John the Baptist Was Sentenced to Death in the Bible's Account

It is a dramatic and gruesome account recorded in two of the Gospels of the New Testament. Herod Antipas, son of King Herod the Great, had John the Baptist executed after promising to grant any request of a woman who had pleased him with her dance. She asked for the head of John.

According to Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (AD 37-100) these events took place in AD 29 at Herod's mountaintop citadel of Machaerus. The remains of Machaerus sit above the Dead Sea's east shore in modern Jordan. Now, a Hungarian Franciscan team of archaeologists headed by excavation director Győző Vörös think they have discovered the pavilion at Machaerus where the deadly dance of Salome, the daughter of Herodias, elicited the fatal pronouncement.

[READ MORE](#)

LITERACY IN ANCIENT ISRAEL – NEW FINDINGS SHOW MORE EDUCATED THAN PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT

NOVEMBER 2, 2020

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH



Steven Law | **Patterns of Evidence**

Summary: New evidence of an inkwell and reassessments of past evidence of messages from the Judean fort of Arad reveal that reading and writing was not as rare in ancient Israel and Judah as many scholars had previously believed.

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children ... You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. – Deut 6:6-9 (ESV)

Literacy, Judah and the Bible

Last week we profiled new archaeological evidence, that was a surprise to many, showing that Judah was a very robust centralized kingdom in the 7th century BC, supporting the biblical

account of conditions at this time. Now, new evidence is coming forward indicating that literacy rates in different periods were not as low as previously thought.

The question of literacy rates in ancient Israel has long been debated by archaeologists. The Bible paints a picture that seems to indicate literacy was at least somewhat widespread – even among common people. But because of the lack of evidence (written documents) many scholars hold the view that literacy was rare – perhaps confined to a very small group of priests and royal scribes. This skepticism not only affects views about the accuracy of the Bible, but also opinions about when its books could have been written or compiled.

CONTINUE TO **FULL ARTICLE**

Magnificent First Temple Era Palace Found in Jerusalem

OCTOBER 17, 2020

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, CITY OF DAVID



Steven Law | **Patterns of Evidence**

Summary: The new discovery of a First Temple era palace along with the best-preserved capitals to date, confirms the Bible's account of a thriving Kingdom of Judah in the 7th century BC.

But Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah. And Hezekiah had very great riches and honor, and he made for himself treasuries for silver, for gold, for precious stones, for spices, for shields, and for all kinds of costly vessels; storehouses also for the yield of grain, wine, and oil; and stalls for all kinds of cattle, and sheepfolds. He likewise provided cities for himself, and flocks and herds in abundance, for God had given him very great possessions. – 2 Chronicles 32:26-29 (ESV)

Archaeological Evidence of the Biblical Kingdom of Judah

Archaeologists in Jerusalem have uncovered rare majestic capitals (column heads) along with other “evidence of a magnificent” palace that they believe was built during the time of King Hezekiah (c. 700 BC) or soon afterward. The finds match the Bible’s account of conditions in the kingdom of Judah during the famous king’s reign and point to the under-appreciated influence it had on surrounding cultures, including ancient Greece.

Many in the archaeological community doubt the Bible’s version of a strong and centralized Israel in the days of kings David and Solomon and through much of the First Temple Period. Instead, they propose these accounts are largely exaggerations and that Israel’s early kings were merely rustic tent-dwellers ruling over a clans of herdsman. However, archaeological findings such as this continue to push back the dates for highly robust and cosmopolitan kingdoms in the land of Israel.

The finds were made in the Armon HaNatziv neighborhood on a strategic hill just south of Jerusalem’s Old City. At a little over a mile from the Temple Mount it had a commanding view of the city and Temple. The excavation team from the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), directed by Yaakov Billig made the announcement recently. It is unknown whether the palace was built by a king or by a family of nobility and wealth.

“The level of workmanship is the best seen to date, and the degree of preservation is rare,” IAA archaeologists said in a statement. “These stone artifacts are made of soft limestone, with decorative carvings, and among them are capitals of various sizes in the architectural style known as ‘Proto-Aeolian,’ one of the most significant royal building features of the First Temple period.”



The capitals being uncovered. (credit: Shai Halevi, IAA)

New Building in Jerusalem After the Assyrian Threat was Averted

The Book of 1 Kings chapters 18-20 tells of the invasion of Judah by the Assyrians in the 14th year of King Hezekiah's reign. The Assyrians, fresh off their conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel, soon defeated all of Judah's major cities and laid siege to Jerusalem. However, Hezekiah humbled himself and cried out to the Lord for deliverance. The Assyrians broke off the attack, ushering in a period of renewed growth and expansion in Judah, especially Jerusalem. This rejuvenation is reflected in several recent 7th century BC finds in the area.

" indicates the restoration of Jerusalem after the Assyrian siege of the city in 701 BC, during the reign of King Hezekiah, a siege which the city barely survived. Along with a palace previously uncovered in Ramat Rachel and an administrative center found on the slopes of Arnona, attests to a new revival in the city and a somewhat 'exit from the walls' of the First Temple period, after the Assyrian siege," archaeologists stated. (See the huge **Kingdom of Judah complex** discovered nearby from the same period.)

Billig explained that all these finds "reveal villas, mansions and government buildings in the area outside the walls of the city. This testifies to the relief felt by the city's residents and the recovery of Jerusalem's development after the Assyrian threat was over."

The site was always seen as strategic, since it received its modern name (Governor's Palace) because it housed the seat of the British High Commissioner during the mandate period.



Magnificent remains of a royal structure from the time of the Kings of Judah were discovered || IAA

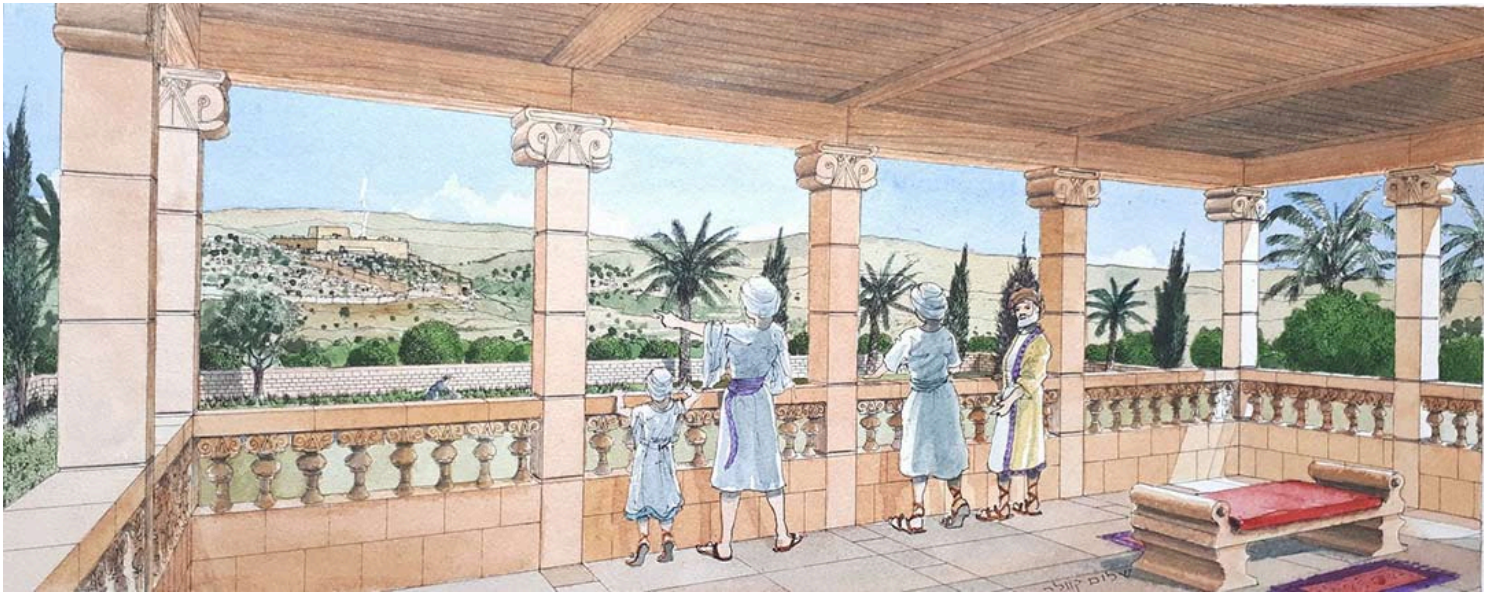
<https://youtube.com/watch?v=5hJ9CNmVnJQ>



Video on discovering the magnificent remains of a royal structure from the time of the Kings of Judah – IAA.

Proto-Aeolic Capitals – “The Most Beautiful and Impressive ...to Date”

The most significant finds were three medium-sized proto-Aeolic capitals. Capitals are the stylized uppermost part of a column. “Proto” means “first” and the Aeolic style would later become important in classical Greece. However, dozens of capitals of this style have been found in Israel’s First Temple period, long before they developed in Greece.



Artist's rendering of the royal estate's balcony that featured proto-Aeolic capitals and ornate balusters. (Shalom Kveller, City of David Archives)

Commenting on the capitals, Billig said, “This is a very exciting discovery. This is a first-time discovery of scaled-down models of the giant proto-Aeolian capitals, of the kind found thus far in the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel, where they were incorporated above the royal palace gates. The level of workmanship on these capitals is the best seen to date, and the degree of preservation of the items is rare.”



A modern five-shekel coin compared to a capital found at Armon HaNatziv. (credit: Yaniv Berman, IAA)

These Proto-Aeolic capitals feature two spiral volutes. This design was a hallmark of the monarchy of Judah is very familiar today to Israelis – it adorns the modern five-shekel coin, which pays tribute to this First Temple era motif.

Many scholars call this a palm motif. This style and accompanying columns may have gone back to the time of Solomon's building of the Temple.

On them he carved cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, and he overlaid them with gold evenly applied on the carved work. – 1 Kings 6:35 (ESV)

He also made two capitals of cast bronze to set on the tops of the pillars. The height of the one capital was five cubits, and the height of the other capital was five cubits... Now the capitals that were on the tops of the pillars in the vestibule were of lily-work, four cubits. – 1 Kings 7:16, 19 (ESV)

Also found were smaller versions of the capitals that are believed to have adorned the balusters of lavish window frames. These “are the most beautiful and impressive that have been uncovered to date,” according to the IAA.



One of the baluster columns from a window of the ancient palace. (credit: Israel Antiquities Authority)

Capitals Purposely Hidden

Building materials were typically repurposed whenever a structure was destroyed in the ancient world. This leads to the conclusion that some of these elements were purposely hidden.

“It was a great surprise that two of the three capitals were found neatly buried, one on top of the other and in excellent condition. The rest of the building was destroyed, probably in the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in around 586 BC,” said Billig. “At this point it is still difficult to say who hid the capitals in the way they were discovered, and why he did so, but there is no doubt that this is one of the mysteries at this unique site, to which we will try to offer a solution.”

In the face of the invading Babylonians, perhaps someone sought a memorial that would function as a kind of time capsule to preserve this symbol of the glory of Judah’s kingdom for future generations to find. (See evidence for the **confirmation of the unlikely Bible prediction** that the Babylonians would destroy Jerusalem.)

The Bible Matching Archaeology

The Bible speaks of lavish buildings like these being constructed all the way through to the end of the kingdom. The prophet Jeremiah spoke against the unrighteous methods by which many of

these were built.

“Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice, who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing and does not give him his wages, who says, ‘I will build myself a great house with spacious upper rooms,’ who cuts out windows for it, paneling it with cedar and painting it with vermilion. Do you think you are a king because you compete in cedar?,,, – Jeremiah 22:13-15 (ESV)

The archeological discovery of this palace with beautifully carved proto-Aeolic capitals in the style of the Kingdom of Judah matches the situation the Bible describes in remarkable ways. In addition, like the world’s first alphabet, many aspects of cultural influence may have gone from Israel to Phoenicia and then to the Greek world – and not the other way around. We look forward to exploring what other things this may have included. – KEEP THINKING

TOP PHOTO: Director Yaakov Billig with two proto-Aeolic capitals discovered at the Armon HaNatziv excavation. (credit: Yoli Shwartz, Israel Antiquities Authority)

Ancient Egyptian Monument Records the Name “Israel”

SEPTEMBER 22, 2020

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH



SUMMARY: An Egyptian inscription found near the banks of the Nile records the name “Israel.” In this excerpt from the book *Patterns of Evidence: The Exodus*, Tim Mahoney discusses his visit to the site with Egyptologist David Rohl to discuss the significance of this evidence.

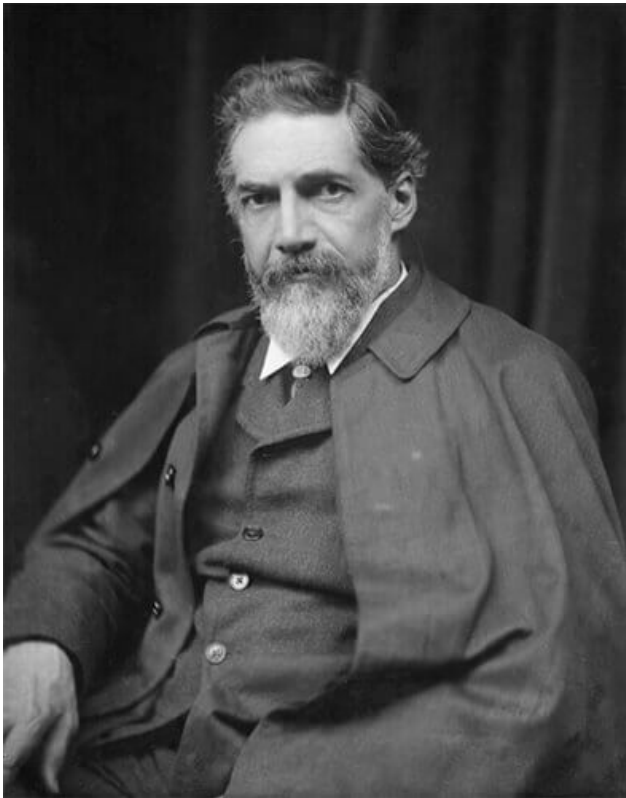
And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you. – Deuteronomy 28:10 (ESV)

Merneptah Stele: The First Mention of Israel in Egypt

Pharaoh Merneptah of Egypt’s 19th Dynasty was the son and successor of Ramesses II. Ramesses was one of Egypt’s most powerful kings and is thought by many to be the pharaoh of the Exodus. But was Ramesses or someone in his family really the pharaoh who thrust the Israelites out of Egypt?

Merneptah is best known for erecting a stone monument, or stele, that mentions the nation of Israel. Commonly called the Merneptah Stele, it was uncovered in 1896 by an English pioneer in Egyptology, Sir Flinders Petrie, who considered it his most important discovery because of its connection to the Bible. The stele was found in King Merneptah's funerary chapel in Thebes, the ancient Egyptian capital on the west bank of the Nile. On the opposite bank is the Temple of Karnak. The original stele stood here for thousands of years before it was taken to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. I have filmed at both locations.

Merneptah erected this monument just a few years after his father's death. Egyptologist David Rohl and many others believe that the victory poem on this stele demonstrates that neither Ramesses II nor his son Merneptah could be the pharaoh of the Exodus. I was anxious to know why.



Sir Flinders Petrie in 1903. The Merneptah Stele was thought for over a century to be the oldest and only mention of Israel in ancient Egypt. It commemorates Egypt's victories over its enemies and was erected by Pharaoh Merneptah (1213- 1203 BC) in his 5th year. Recently the Berlin Pedestal has been proposed to have an older mention of Israel. (Petrie: public domain, Merneptah Stele © 2014 Patterns of Evidence, LLC)

It was 117 degrees Fahrenheit the day Rohl took me to see the Merneptah Stele. I knew it was hot when the Egyptians were looking for shade, but there was no shade as we approached the stele in the open courtyard. In one corner stood the stone artifact with its back against the wall that surrounded the courtyard. Rohl surveyed the ten-foot- high slab. "So this is the famous Merneptah Stele, or what we call the Israel Stele, and it actually belongs to the king, Merneptah. Up there at the top you can see him facing the god Amun."

"What does it say?" I asked.

"It's like a summary of the achievements of the dynasty, and he lists here, in a poetic form, all the different conquered nations, the nations that are at peace. But right at the bottom, you have three crucial lines, because this is where we find a link to the Bible."

"So that's why you brought me here?"

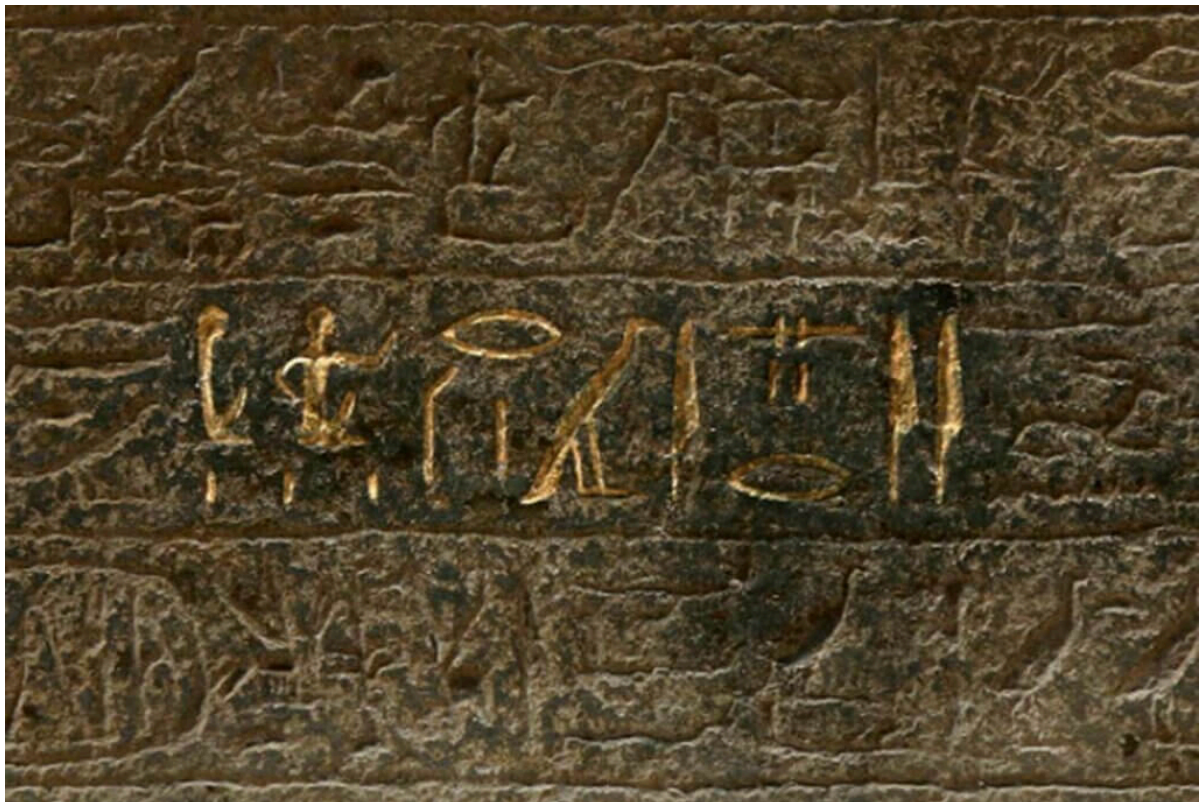
Rohl knelt and pointed to the lower portion of the monument. "I brought you here to see this. In particular, one name. You have the two reeds. That's the sound "e" or "ee", okay? Then the bolt of cloth, which is "s", then an "r", an "a" and an "l". Is-ra-el."

"Israel." I was fascinated. After all I had heard about the lack of biblical evidence, here in the middle of Egypt was an inscription with the name that came from the Bible, Israel.

"Israel," Rohl echoed. "This is the only time that we see this name on an Egyptian monument."



Egyptologist David Rohl and Mahoney at the Merneptah Stele replica. (© 2012 Patterns of Evidence, LLC)



The name Israel graphically enhanced on the Merneptah Stele followed by the people or nation determinative (read right to left). (© 2012 Patterns of Evidence, LLC)

“This is very significant, isn’t it?”

“It’s hugely significant.” Rohl then directed me to focus on the hieroglyphs next to the name Israel. “After the name Israel are these two seated figures of a woman and a man, and three strokes underneath.”

“What does that mean?”

Rohl explained, “These three strokes mean plural. So it means the people or nation of Israel. And then this is the interesting bit. It says Fekty bin peret f. That means ‘Israel is laid waste, his seed is no more.’”

“Does it mean that they were literally no more?”

“No. It’s a sort of poetical way of saying they’d been overcome, defeated.”

“Or pacified?” I asked.

“Yes. All these phrases are like that; it’s a poetical phrase effectively.”

The Merneptah Stele and the Ramesses Exodus Date



The four major nations along with the four cities of Merneptah’s poem. (© 2014 Patterns of Evidence, LLC)

Rohl continued his argument by directing me to look more closely at the pattern of the “victory poem” on this monument. “What we have are two introductory lines, then we have two major entities, the Libyans and the Hittites, then we have four towns, then we have two more major entities, Israel and Syria. And we finish off with two more lines to close the poem.”

“The way the pattern of the poem works tells us that Israel was a major entity at the time. So it’s effectively the nation of Israel, and it’s out there in the northern part of the world outside Egypt. They seem to be a political entity.”

The princes are prostrate, saying 'Shalom!'
Not one raises his head amongst the Nine Bows
Desolation is for Tjehenu
Hatti is pacified
Plundered is Pa-Canaan with every evil
Carried off is Ashkelon
Seized upon is Gezer
Yanoam is made non-existent
Israel is laid waste, his seed is no more
Hurru has become a widow because of Egypt
All lands together are pacified
Everyone who was restless has been bound.

Merneptah’s Poem: According to David Rohl, the pattern of the victory poem written at the bottom of the Merneptah Stele shows that Egypt considered Israel to be established as one of the great powers of the day – just like Libya (Tjehenu), the Hittite kingdom (Hatti), and Syria (Hurru). “Shalom” is the Hebrew word for peace, and the “Nine Bows” were Egypt’s traditional enemies.

The reflection of the Egyptian sun off the stele was blinding. Its heat was like a furnace. I could feel sweat trickling down my face. But none of that mattered at this moment. What Rohl had just revealed I knew was very important to this question of whether Ramesses is the pharaoh mentioned in the Bible. “How significant is this then to the story of the Exodus?”

Rohl drew himself up beside the stele and looked at me. “Well, for me it’s very important, because if we’re talking about Ramesses II or Merneptah being at the time of the Exodus with Moses and Joshua, this just doesn’t fit the pattern. It makes no sense at all.”



The Merneptah Stele was made in Merneptah's 5th year. If the Israelites had left Egypt around 1250 BC, the stele would have been carved during the second year of the Conquest, which matches neither Israel's establishment as a nation nor the idea of a major conflict between Israel and Egypt at this time. (© 2015 Patterns of Evidence, LLC)

I could see that this poses a problem for the Ramesses Exodus Theory. The Bible states that the Israelites didn't even begin to conquer Canaan until 40 years after they left Egypt. So how could Merneptah be the pharaoh of the Exodus if Israel was already established in the land of Canaan by the fifth year of his reign? According to the biblical information, it's just not possible. (See more on the **book *Patterns of Evidence: The Exodus***)

NOTE: References to the Israelites spending 40 years in the wilderness after the Exodus can be found in Numbers 14:26-34, Deuteronomy 2:7 & 14, and Joshua 5:6. For most of the Judges Period, a span of about 350 years that followed the Conquest, the tribes were fairly independent and not an established and unified nation, sometimes even warring against each other (Judges 20:20).

Red Sea Miracle Film Critique and Response – Part 1

AUGUST 30, 2020

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH



Pieter Gert van der Veen PhD, habil and Glen Fritz PhD | August 28, 2020 | Interviews

Two scholars with two very different views of the Red Sea Miracle have written critiques of the first film of the 2-part series. Representing the Egyptian approach is Pieter Gert van der Veen, a Dutch archaeologist and biblical scholar at the University of Mainz in Germany. Representing the Hebrew view is geographer Glen Fritz who was featured in the film. Let the debate begin in this week's Thinker Update..... **READ MORE**

Biblical Places on Modern Maps: Sudan

AUGUST 15, 2020

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH



The ancient Kingdom of Kush covers much of modern-day Sudan. Photo credit: The British Museum

Bryan Windle | **Associates for Biblical Research**

When we speak of the “Lands of the Bible” we really need to do so in the plural. While many people think only of the modern-day country of Israel as the Land of the Bible, much biblical history occurred in the surrounding countries, including Egypt, **Jordan**, Lebanon, **Saudi Arabia**, Iraq, Iran, and Sudan.

Thinking about biblical places on modern maps helps me to contextualize what I read in the pages of Scripture. It is a reminder that the stories of people and events in the Bible are actual historical accounts, rooted in real places, many of which have been excavated archaeologically.

Today we’re going to look at the ancient Kingdom of Cush/Kush, which is mentioned frequently in the Bible.



The ancient Kingdom of Kush covers much of modern-day Sudan. Photo credit: The British Museum

The boundaries of ancient kingdoms do not often follow our modern-day country borders. Cush extended from southern Egypt into much of Sudan on modern maps. This nation was named after Cush, one of Ham's sons, one of Noah's grandsons (Gn 10:6). His descendants moved into the region of Nubia, and became the dark-skinned people known to this day as Nubians.

So who were some famous Cushite people in the Bible?

1) Moses' wife – Many know that Moses was married to Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, the Priest of Midian. The Bible seems to indicate that Moses also married another woman – a Cushite. In Num. 12:1 we read, “Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman.” It's most likely that Moses had taken another wife – a dark-skinned woman from the modern-day country of Sudan...

Who Wrote and Hid the Dead Sea Scrolls?

JULY 18, 2020

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH



Dr. R. Brian Rickett | July 10, 2020 | **Evidence**

Summary: A recent flurry of interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls creates opportunity for fresh evaluations.

A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. – Isaiah 40:3 (ESV)

Revisiting the Essenes: A Brief Update on Qumran

Just one mile from the Dead Sea – the lowest place on earth by elevation, a lonely, isolated, and abandoned settlement sits in the dust. The landscape is famously rugged, and the harsh climate makes survival difficult. Yet, it is precisely because of this remote solitude that a group of ascetic Jews established a monastic community here in antiquity.

The name of the place is Qumran, and within view of the settlement there are caves long-forgotten until 1947 when they began yielding one of the greatest archaeological finds of all time.

The Qumran Caves Scrolls, also known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, were discovered by accident when teenage Bedouin shepherds entered one of the caves reportedly after hearing the sound of breaking pottery from a thrown rock.

The scrolls and their fragments were preserved because they had been contained in earthenware storage jars, some of which were still intact. They were made up of various religious writings including extensive sections of books from the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) that were the oldest known copies by about 1,000 years. Although the Qumran settlement had previously been explored in the 19th century, the caves and their treasures had remained unknown.



‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware vessel, that they may last for a long time. –
Jeremiah 32:14 (ESV)

The inhabitants of the community at Qumran have long been connected to the Jewish religious sect known as the Essenes. This view has dominated since Qumran Cave excavating pioneer Roland de Vaux published his findings in *Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls* in the middle of the 20th century. Recently, however, new questions have surfaced about the source of the Dead Sea Scrolls.



A section of the Great Isaiah Scroll found in Cave 1 at Qumran, which contains nearly the entire book of Isaiah. (© 2018 Patterns of Evidence, LLC.)

CONTINUE TO FULL ARTICLE ON **PATTERNS OF EVIDENCE**

THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD SEGMENT OF HEBREW BIBLE DISCOVERED – PART 1 and 2

APRIL 12, 2020

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD





Summary: A recent publication on the 2017 rediscovery of a Hebrew manuscript from Cairo, Egypt of a large portion of the Bible has generated excitement over recent months. Here, we look at Part 1 of a 2-part installment on its discovery, subsequent loss, and rediscovery 112 years later.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. – Psalm 1:1, 2 (ESV)

A Crown Rediscovered in Egypt

In 2017, an Israeli historian and University Professor named Yoram Meital was in Cairo as part of a project to survey and document the city's numerous synagogues. While in the monumental Moussa Der'i Synagogue, he observed several packages wrapped in white paper and lying on the lower shelves of a bookcase. Written on the cover of one of these in Hebrew lettering, was the phrase, "Gottheil 22."

The historian had somehow managed to stumble upon a package bearing the name of a famous scholar who had examined and documented dozens of manuscripts in Cairo in 1905. Meital described the experience of the discovery in a recently published article. He stated:

"While trying to locate the book, I came upon a bookcase that was facing the right entrance door. I noticed several packages on one of its lower shelves, wrapped in white paper, the type that is

sometimes used as a table covering at inexpensive restaurants. On the back cover of the first wrapping someone had written in Hebrew ‘Gottheil 22.’ I was utterly overwhelmed when, as I unwrapped the dusty cover, hundreds of parchments were exposed.”

What Meital had discovered, or rediscovered, was the “crown” of Zechariah Ben Anan written almost a thousand years earlier. It was one of the oldest and best-preserved copies of the Hebrew Bible’s third division, known as “The Writings.” Bibles of the class encountered by Meital were the actual reference works, or guidebooks for professional copyists of the Hebrew Bible, or the Old Testament, in its original language during the late classical through medieval era.

These complex tools give us a glimpse into the process of how the text of Genesis-Malachi was preserved and transmitted from antiquity, and the mechanics of how accuracy was maintained. By comparing these to more ancient manuscripts, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, we are able to observe the checks and controls that were utilized to ensure the fidelity of text during the pre-modern era.

The manuscript discovered by Meital was one of those reference books. It had originally been documented in the early 20th century, but had gone missing decades earlier. This is its story.

CONTINUE TO Part 1 of 2 on **PATTERNS OF EVIDENCE** and Part 2 **HERE**

Part

Top 10 Artifacts Show Biblical Exodus was Real History

JUNE 2, 2019

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH



SYNOPSIS: The Bible's exodus account is foundational to biblical history, yet viewed as mostly fictional by mainstream scholars. Could this skepticism be the result of looking for the exodus in the wrong time period? This list of ten remarkable pieces of evidence supporting the biblical account suggest the exodus happened centuries earlier than the standard date.

Then Moses said to the people, “Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the LORD brought you out from this place... – Exodus 13:3 (ESV)

CHALLENGES TO THE BIBLICAL EXODUS FROM MAINSTREAM ACADEMIA

Few topics produce as much controversy as the question of whether or not the biblical account of the Israelite exodus from Egypt was an actual historical event. Widespread skepticism about the exodus pervades the field archaeology, but might this view be the result of looking for evidence in entirely the wrong time period?

- Merneptah Stele
- Mittelsaal House at Avaris
- The Bahr Yussef
- Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions
- Brooklyn Papyrus
- Shasu of YHWH Name Ring
- Berlin Pedestal Stone Inscription
- Palace, Tomb and Statue of a Semitic High Official
- Ipuwer Papyrus
- Walls of Jericho

CONTINUE TO ARTICLE ON PATTERNS OF EVIDENCE

Lachish City Wall Discovery Tied to King Solomon's Son

MAY 18, 2019

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH



SYNOPSIS: The existence of a strong centralized kingdom at the time of Solomon as described in the Bible is something that is disputed by many scholars. A recent discovery of fortification walls at the important biblical city of Lachish now challenges that view, in more ways than you might think. The Lachish city wall discovery lends support to the biblical account.

Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Libnah to Lachish and laid siege to it and fought against it. And the LORD gave Lachish into the hand of Israel, and he captured it on the second day and struck it with the edge of the sword, and every person in it, as he had done to Libnah. – Joshua 10:31-32 (ESV)

FORTIFICATION WALL AT BIBLICAL LACHISH POINTS TO THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

The ancient city of Lachish has a long biblical history. As Judah's second-most important city after Jerusalem, it has been the scene of many battles and destructions over the centuries. A newly discovered fortification wall at Lachish, dated to the 10th century BC adds to the debate among archaeologists as to whether Judah was a strongly centralized kingdom in the days of David and Solomon as the Bible claims.

[READ MORE...](#)

12 Tribes of Israel on a Seal from Egypt?

SEPTEMBER 18, 2018

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH

A Filmmaker's Journey

of PATTERNS EVIDENCE —EXODUS—

Then Jacob called his sons and said, “Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come. – Genesis 49:1 (ESV)

Steve Law | **Patterns of Evidence**

Last week's Thinker Update showed how archaeological evidence for worship of foreign gods and idols among ancient Israelites actually fits the picture painted by the Bible. This week's update will apply that reality to cover an intriguing interpretation of an impression made by a cylinder seal found at Avaris.

Could the symbols found on this seal be evidence that it belonged to Joseph's family during their time in Egypt?

The find was uncovered from the ancient city of Avaris, modern Tell el-Daba, in Egypt's northeast Nile delta. Excavations by the Austrian Archaeological Institute of Cairo at the site were conducted for several years in the 60s and then from 1975 onward until today. Manfred Bietak was

the director of the digs from 1966 – 2009. In 1979 his team discovered an intriguing little cylinder seal on the floor level of the Middle Kingdom palace.

Seals were very common in the ancient world and were typically used to press into clay or some other soft substance to put an owners stamp on commercial and legal documents or products, and for tamper-proofing whatever was inside a container. Seals were often worn around the neck or as rings by officials or their representatives. They could bear a single image (as would be the case with a ring) that would require only a single push into the soft clay (bulla), or they could be in the form of a small cylinder that would be rolled on the clay to impress a longer sequence of images.

The fact that this seal was discovered in association with the Middle Kingdom palace is significant, because this was the period highlighted in the film ***Patterns of Evidence: The Exodus*** when Jacob, Joseph and the first generation of Israelites lived in Egypt. This was before their exodus from that land under the leadership of Moses.

READ MORE

God's Wife? – Idol Worship In Ancient Israel

SEPTEMBER 8, 2018

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH





The Golden Calf by James Tissot. (public domain – from Wikimedia Commons)

Steve Law | **Patterns of Evidence**

The people of Israel again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites, and the gods of the Philistines. And they forsook the LORD and did not serve him. – Judges 10:6 (ESV)

Archaeological evidence of idol worship from the area of ancient Israel in recent years continues to give us better understandings of folk religion during Israel's early history. In some circles, these finds are being used for claims that the biblical account is unreliable and does not fit real history. But this begs the question, does this evidence really contradict what the Bible says about idol worship among the Israelites?

The setting was Jerusalem's Albright Institute in June of this past summer. Filmmaker Timothy Mahoney was interviewing the widely respected Austrian Egyptologist Manfred Bietak. For most of his career, Bietak was known for directing the excavations at Tell el-Daba. This was the site of Avaris, an ancient city in Egypt's Nile Delta that lay underneath the southern district of the city of Ramesses, the location the Bible mentions as a center of Israelite activity in the centuries before the Exodus.

Over 30 seasons of digging at Tell el-Daba, archaeologists found evidence showing the site began and quickly expanded during Egypt's 12th and 13th dynasties to become the most populated city of its day. After Egypt's power fell, the city became known as Avaris, the capital city of the foreign

Hyksos who ruled much of northern Egypt for more than a century during Egypt's Second Intermediate Period before being ousted by the first New Kingdom pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty.

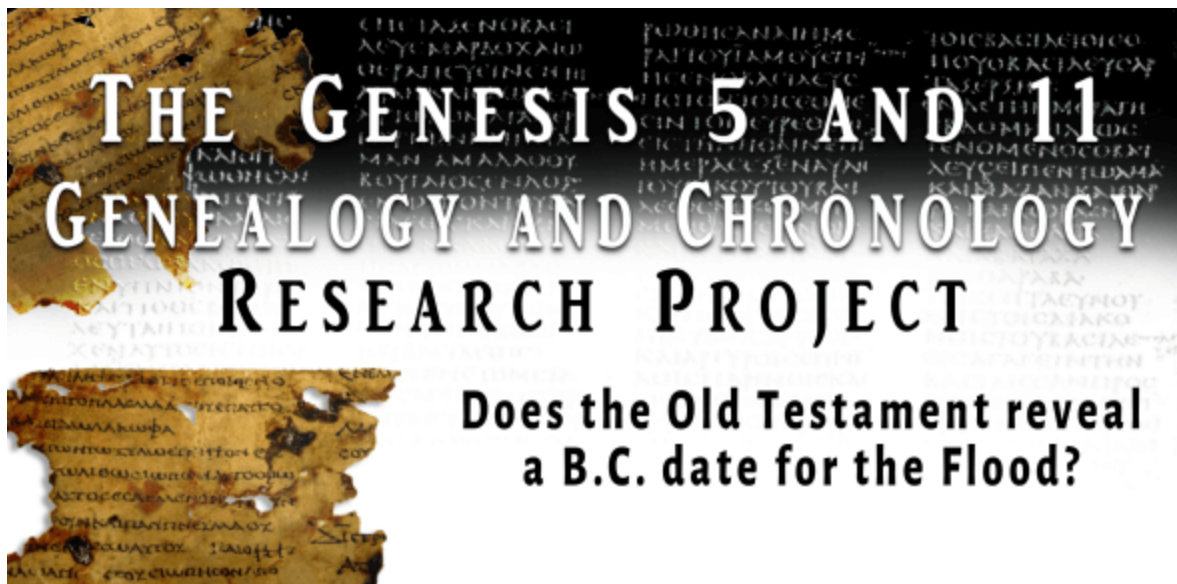
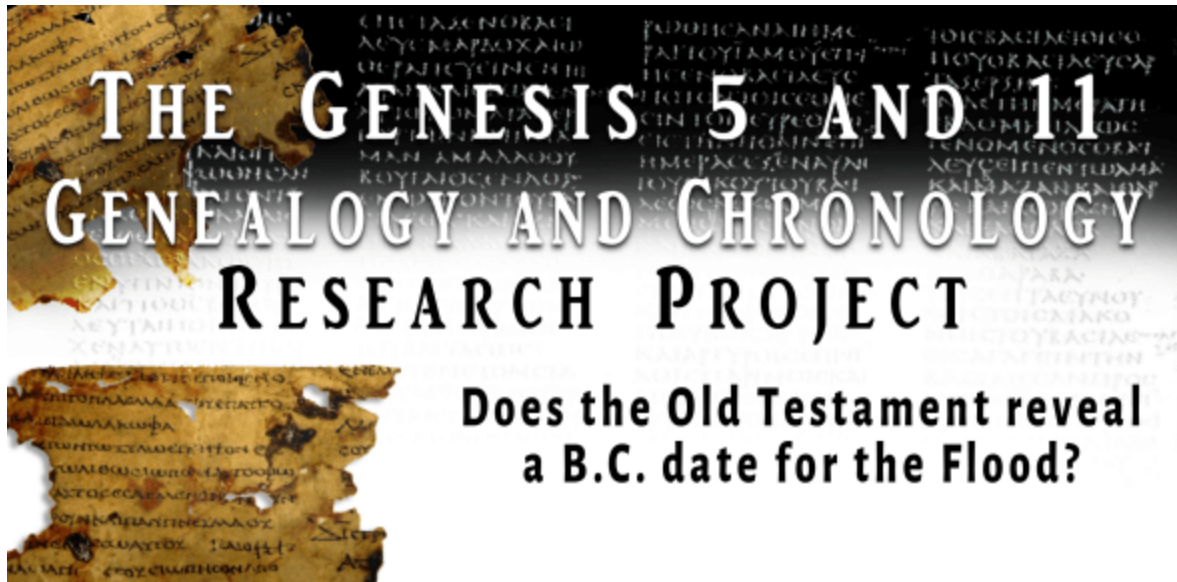
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From Adam to Abraham: An Update on the Genesis 5 and 11 Research Project: Dec. 16, 2017

SEPTEMBER 6, 2018

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH



Henry B Smith Jr MA MAR

EXCERPT The goal of this article is to update the ABR community of supporters and other interested readers on the present state of the Genesis 5 and 11 Research Project. The project officially began in 2016 (with its unofficial roots extending back to 2010). The research has produced substantial fruit, and as a result, ABR is pleased to announce plans to publish our first book, tentatively titled, "From Adam to Abraham: The Case for the Septuagint's Chronology in

Genesis 5 and 11.” This update will survey the goals of the project, describe new developments and the present direction of our research, answer some questions we have received about Genesis 5 and 11 from supporters, and briefly outline plans for publication(s).

Project Goal: [The Genesis 5 and 11 Genealogy and Chronology Research Project](#)

To determine if Genesis 5 and 11 and other directly relevant biblical texts yield a calculable chronology of human history from Adam to Abraham. If such a chronology can be constructed, a main goal of the project will then be to establish a BC date for the creation of Adam, the Flood, and a biblical chronology for the time-period between the Flood and Abraham (Genesis 11:10-32). These dates can then be correlated with historically grounded, non-carbon 14 based archaeological data from this time period, serving an important apologetic purpose.

[READ MORE](#)

The Bible as a Tool in Archaeology

AUGUST 21, 2018

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

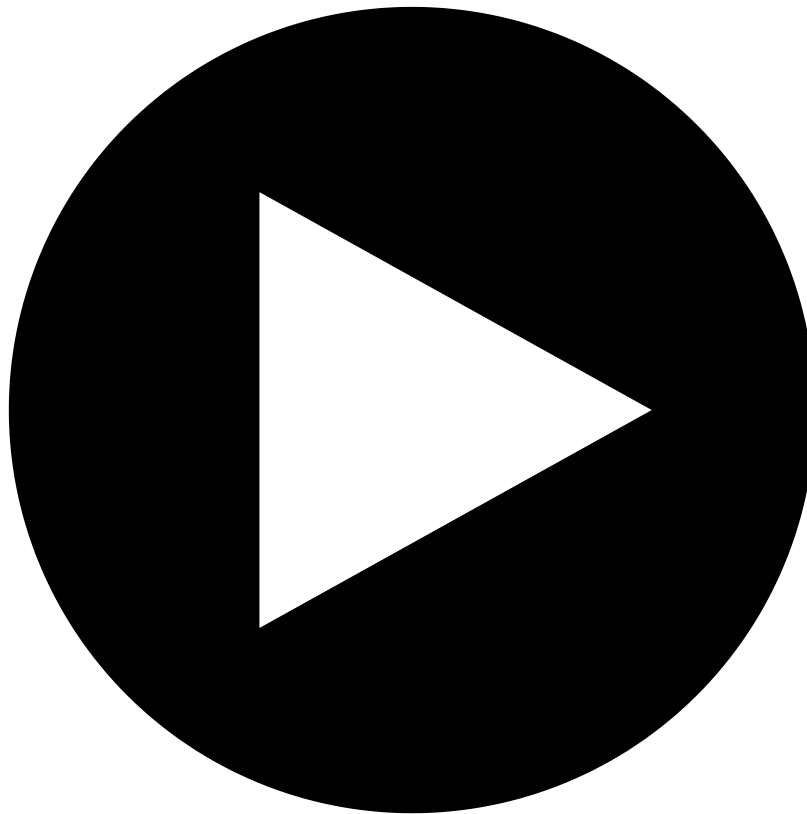
TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD



From Apr 23, 2015

The “*Archaeology*” in the title is what you would expect, the study of the physical remains that ancient people have left behind. The “*Biblical*” part of the name, however, doesn’t mean adhering to the teachings of the Bible, but rather using the Bible as the main ancient text from this part of the world—the “Biblical” lands. Biblical Archaeology = doing Archaeology in the lands referred to in the Bible.

While many archaeologists reject the spiritual authority of the Bible and even argue about the details of the history it presents, it is important to remember the big picture reality — even secular archaeologists use the Bible as a tool in their excavation work. Why? Because Biblical Archaeology is at work digging up the lands and locations that the Bible talks about. And often the Bible is the **ONLY** ancient text that gives the historical record about the people who lived in those lands and describes the events that took place there. Without the Bible, Archaeology would be digging blind, guessing the story behind the artifacts, without any way to correctly reconstruct the history it unearths.



The Bible as a Tool in Archaeology

<https://vimeo.com/102467248>



So if, as many secular minds would say today, the Bible is not a strong and lasting witness of the past, then why is there a specific field within archaeology distinguished as Biblical Archaeology? The answer is simple. The Bible IS historical and accurate...and therefore as necessary and useful to the field of Biblical Archaeology as a pick and a spade!

For more about the ministry of Joel Kramer and his family, visit: [Sourceflix](#)

Secrets of the Bible: The Fall of Jericho with Dr. Bryant Wood

AUGUST 4, 2018

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH, GOD'S WORD



The battle of Jericho is one of the bloodiest episodes of the Old Testament. It's a fantastic tale of victory through faith but is there any truth behind story? Archaeologist, Dr. Bryant Wood, believes the physical evidence indicates the biblical account is true.

In the biblical version of events, Joshua and his men lay siege on the fortified city for seven days. On the seventh day, they blow their trumpets and its walls come crashing down. The Israelites raze the city, killing every man, woman, and child.

Today, the city of Jericho lays claim as one of the oldest cities in the world. Here, archaeologists have unearthed the remains of over twenty settlements, including an ancient city dating to the late Bronze Age that shows clear signs of destruction. However, the widely accepted scholarly opinion was that it was destroyed in 1550 BCE- long before the time of the Israelite conquest. If there was no city at the time of Joshua, is the story mere fiction?

For Bryant Wood, Jericho is an archaeological puzzle waiting to be solved. On re-examining the evidence that was excavated, Wood, an expert in Canaanite pottery, dated its destruction to 1450 BC- the time of the Israelite conquest. But his investigation didn't stop there, incredibly he also discovered evidence that he believes corroborates numerous aspects of the biblical version of events.

Re-examining the Israelite conquest from a military perspective is military historian Professor Richard Gabriel. Drawing on clues within the biblical narrative, he is able to paint a portrait of Joshua as a brilliant strategist and perhaps, one of the greatest military commanders of the ancient world.



The Fall of Jericho with Dr. Bryant Wood: Secrets of the Bible

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=e5Fjth9T12U>



SOURCE: ASSOCIATES FOR BIBLICAL RESEARCH

The Associates for Biblical Research keeps you informed on the latest discoveries. Furthermore, they also provide a Biblical perspective for the significance of each discovery. Visit **their website** today.

Gates of Biblical City Unearthed – Site of Jesus' Miracle of Feeding 5000

JULY 14, 2018

CATEGORIES: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

TAGS: ARCHAEOLOGY, BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY, BIBLE HISTORY, BIBLICAL RESEARCH





Steve Law | **Patterns of Evidence**

The city gate at Bethsaida/Zer, Israel. Courtesy of The International Studies and Programs | **Bethsaida Excavations Project**

And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. – **Mark 8:22** (ESV)

Local authorities in Israel's northern Golan Heights region reported a major find by archaeologists in recent weeks. The entrance gate of a large fortified city just north of the Sea of Galilee has been excavated, leading some to claim it is additional evidence supporting the site being Bethsaida, the city of three of Jesus' disciples and associated with his famous miracle of the loaves and fishes. The early phase of the city may also have an intriguing connection to the Bible's King David, who reigned around 1000 BC.

The remains of the entrance gate, standing about 10 feet high, were unearthed at a place called et-Tell by the **Bethsaida Excavations Project**, which just wrapped up its 2108 season. The director is Professor Rami Arav from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, who has excavated the site for nearly 30 years.



“It is the largest and the best preserved city gate,” Arav told the **Times of Israel**. “Likewise, this year’s excavation provides evidence that Bethsaida, an Aramean settlement, houses one of the earliest towers incorporated in city walls in Israel,” he said. “In the entire archaeology of the Land of Israel from 10-8th century BCE, there are no towers on city walls. Israelites did not have this feature.

This is the first example of towers surrounding a city in Israel,” Arav added. This “unusual feature” of guard towers were placed every 20 meters around the city wall.

*A model of the city gate of Zer under construction. Courtesy of The International Studies and Programs | **Bethsaida Excavations Project***

The gate is believed by archaeologists to have been used from the 11th century BC down to about 920 BC. As reported in the **Jerusalem Post**, Professor Arav stated, “There are not many gates in this country from this period. Bethsaida was the name of the city during the Second Temple period, but during the First Temple period it was the city of Zer.” Pointing to **Joshua 19:35**, he continued, “The fortified towns were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Kinnereth.”

These were the fortified cities in land allotted to the tribe of Naphtali after the conquest of Canaan. If this was the site of Zer, there should be even older remains, under the current dig levels, from the period of Israel’s conquest of Canaan.



The inner gate floor from the 11th-10th century BC at Bethsaida/Zer. (Hanan Shafir, the Bethsaida Archaeological excavations)

The city of Zer (or “Tzer”) was also possibly the historical capital of Geshur, which at the time of King David was an independent Aramean kingdom just northeast of Israel. The area may have been referenced in the famous Tel Amarna letters between Pharaoh Akhenaten and city leaders in Canaan. The Bible says one of David’s wives was Maacah the daughter of the king of Geshur, apparently a politically-driven marriage to unify the two kingdoms.

the third, Absalom, whose mother was Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur... – 1 Chronicles 3:2 (ESV)

The **Times of Israel** points out that Maacah (or “Maachah”) was the mother of Absalom, who fled to his mother’s homeland of Geshur after murdering his half-brother (**2 Samuel 13:37-38**). The close ties between the two kingdoms were renewed when Absalom’s daughter, also named Maacah, married Solomon’s son Rehoboam, king of Judah (**1 Kings 14:31-15:2**). These facts cause Arav to speculate that King David may have walked through this very gate to claim his bride. He amusingly recounted his impression of the royal courtship in the Time articles:

‘King David entered the gate to meet the king of Geshur to ask for the hand of his daughter. Maachah looked at him like a “hillbilly” mountain guy, but for the sake of inclusion into the Bible, went through with it. “So we’re digging the gate where David entered,” said Arav, laughing.’

In past seasons, evidence from many different periods was found, evidence that this site had significance for millennia. Among the finds was a decorated pottery shard from 300 BC showing

the birth of the Greek goddess Athena from the head of her father Zeus. Also found was a rare Roman coin issued in AD 85 by Agrippa II with the phrase “Judea Capta” (or “Judea is captive”), commemorating the crushing of the Jewish rebels and their temple in AD 70.

Judea Capta coin with the head of Domitian found at Bethsaida, dated to AD 85. (photo credit: Hanan Shafir)

This year, archaeologists from 20 international institutions joined Arav in the dig sponsored by the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. The size of the site confirms the Bible’s account of the significance of Geshur at the time of David.

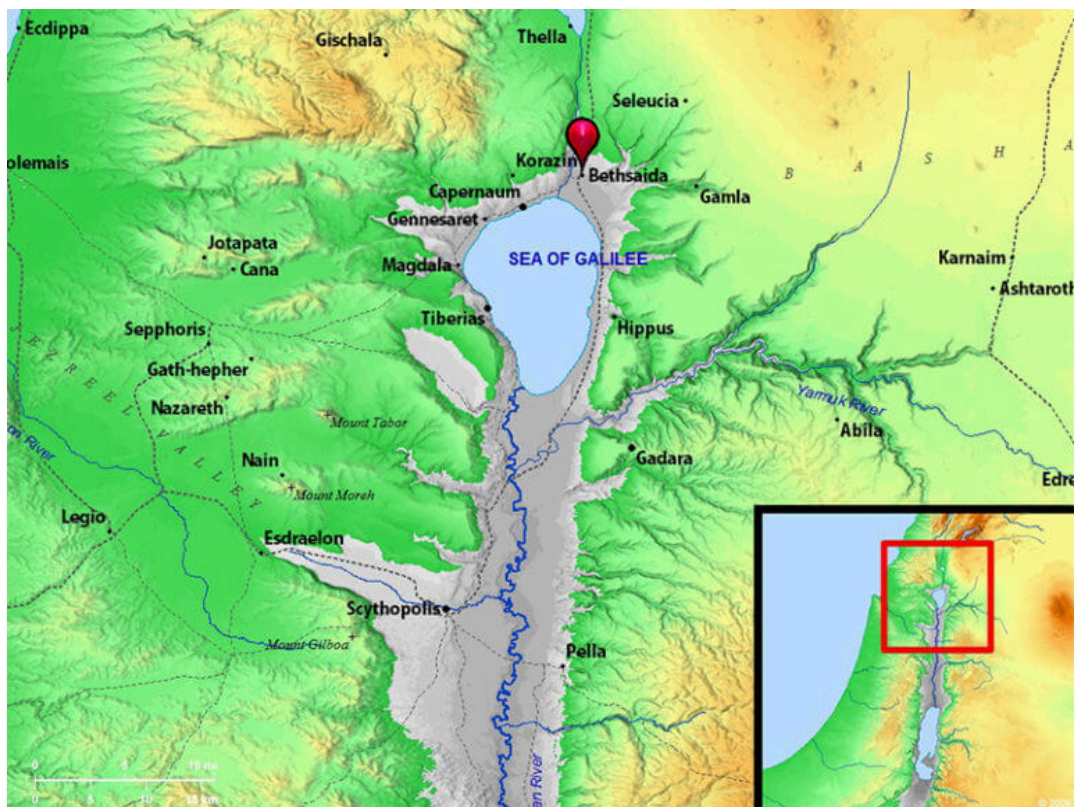
The Connection to Jesus

The recent finds also join other archaeological evidence in the debate over whether this really was the site of Bethsaida at the time of Jesus. For nearly thirty years, et-Tell has been designated by Israel as Bethsaida, one of the holiest sites to Christians, but for that entire time, this has long been a disputed issue.



*Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. – **John 1:44** (ESV)*

Bethsaida’s importance in the Gospels can be seen in that it is the third most referenced city after Jerusalem and Capernaum. The Book of John mentions that Bethsaida had been home to the apostles Peter, Andrew and Philip. Other passages make it clear that after his marriage, Peter had moved his family into the house of his mother-in-law in nearby Capernaum. The majority of Jesus’ Galilean ministry took place in the area around Bethsaida, Capernaum and Chorazin – three cities within three miles of each other near the northeast coast of the Sea of Galilee. Because of confusing descriptions in the Gospel accounts, some scholars have proposed that there were two cities named Bethsaida on the shores of Galilee.



Map courtesy of biblos.com (bibleatlas.org)

The miracle of Jesus feeding 5,000 men plus women and children from five loaves and two fish is said by the Gospel of Luke to have taken place in a wilderness area near the town of Bethsaida.



The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes – James Tissot between 1886 and 1894 (Public Domain – Wikimedia Commons)

*On their return the apostles told him all that they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida. When the crowds learned it, they followed him, and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing... And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces. – **Luke 9:10-11**, 16-17 (ESV)*

This miracle, along with many others done in the area (including the healing of a blind man in **Mark 8:22**), is the reason behind Jesus' stern rebuke for the unbelief of the local population in the chapter following the account of the miraculous feeding.

*“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. – **Luke 10:13** (ESV)*

The important place these events have in the Gospels draws throngs of Christians to sites in this area every year. Avi Liberman, director of the Jordan Park in which Bethsaida is located, said, “The staff at the Jordan Park and the Golan Tourism are happy for the tens of thousands of visitors who visit the park every day. The wonderful park is also an impressive archaeological site. I am amazed each time by the arrival of thousands of evangelical visitors to Bethsaida. I am confident that the latest discoveries will bring more visitors to the park from around the world and from Israel” reported the **Jerusalem Post**.

The Controversy

Despite the confidence of the team under Arav at et-Tell, the exact location of Bethsaida in Jesus' time is contested. There are actually two leading candidates for the site of Bethsaida; the site of et-Tell where the entrance gate was recently discovered, and a site called el-Araj.



A team excavating at el-Araj under the direction of Steven Notley of Nyack College is currently in their 3rd season of digging. Last August, **National Geographic** reported the team's discovery of extensive Roman finds including a bathhouse with a mosaic floor, roof tiles, and vents, from the era of the 1st to 3rd centuries AD.

This fits with the 1st century writings of the Jewish historian Josephus, who wrote that Philip, the son of Herod the Great, “elevated the village of Bethsaida on Lake Gennesaritis to the status of city by adding residents and strengthening the fortifications” (*Antiquities* 18:28). This occurred in AD 30 when Philip renamed Bethsaida “Julias” in honor of the wife of Caesar Augustus, the mother of Tiberias.

Both sites are located near where the Jordan River empties into the Sea of Galilee. El-Araj is located right on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, while et-Tell is located nearly two miles inland. The proponents of El-Araj maintain that this favors their site because it makes no sense for a fishing village to be away from the shore.

In the past, the debate featured the points that et-Tell site appeared to have poor remains from the Roman period, and no Roman fortifications, which would not fit well with the testimony of Josephus. On the other side, El-Araj was said to be too small, at only 2 acres, with no evidence for a Galilean fishing village. Et-Tell is about 20 acres.

Both the evidence of supposed fishing equipment found at et-Tell, and the idea that the shores of the lake once reached near to that location were contested by their competitors at el-Araj.



Archaeologist at biblical city of Zer. (et-Tell) (photo credit: Hanan Shafir)

Recently, archaeologists at et-Tell have found what seemingly is the floor of a Roman temple that matches one said to have been built by Herod's son Philip, which he dedicated to Julia. They have also discovered coins, beads, jugs, house keys and a shield that belonged to a Roman soldier. An important find was a coin dated to 35 BC minted in Acre on the occasion of the arrival of Cleopatra and Marc Antony. Only 12 of these coins have ever been found.

On the other hand, the el-Araj site has yielded finds showing that it is larger than previously thought, along with apparent evidence of towers from Roman fortifications on the surface, waiting to be explored. 5th-century walls and gilded-glass mosaics were also found. Such mosaics would only appear in "ornate, important churches," Notley observes. This seems to fit accounts of Medieval pilgrims visiting a major church that had been built at Bethsaida early in the Byzantine period in honor of Peter and Andrew.

SOURCE: **PATTERNS OF EVIDENCE**

It will be fascinating to see how this contest plays out in the seasons ahead. It appears that both sites will be producing numerous finds from the current levels of their excavations that will help determine which is the right location for Bethsaida. Regardless, the earlier First Temple period city gate is a spectacular find. A similar issue will be addressed in our upcoming film series titled ***Patterns of Evidence: Moses***. Have pilgrims been visiting the wrong location for Mount Sinai for centuries, or will the traditional site win the day? We look forward to unpacking many questions as we continue our investigation into the events of the Bible. Keep Thinking!