

BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY TODAY

INSTRUCTOR: GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

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I. Introduction

(Rome, Coliseum, Forum)

Glad to have you along. I'm excited about some of the neat stuff I have found to share with you all.

Relax, listen, no sleeping!

Ask questions when necessary.

I love archaeology and am familiar with some of the terms which you may not recognize. Be sure you stop me if you don't understand.

Hope your faith in God's Word will be strengthened.

Since the introduction is a bit long, some may say boring! We will start with some ancient inscriptions to whet your appetite for more.

Before we start, let's ask God to be with us.

1. Some ancient inscriptions which confirm the Bible Text

A. Babylonian...Gen. 14:1

B. Moabite Stone

C. Cyrus Cylinder

D. Taylor Prism

E. Israel Stele

F. Black Obelisk

G. Nebuchadnezzar, brick

H. Nabonious/Belshazzar/Daniel

2. Archaeology illuminates a text...2 Cor. 2:17

In the foreword to John McRay's book *Archaeology and the New Testament*, Lawrence Geraty relates the story of a fascinating discovery he made which directly illuminated a NT text.

He was digging in the West Bank village of Khirbet El-Kom when he uncovered foundations and floors of a dwelling from the Hellenistic age (approx. 350 BC). On one of the floors there were pieces of ostraca (broken pieces of pottery used for writing) belonging to a peddler. He knew this because one of the ostraca recorded an Edomite and Greek account of a transaction between an Edomite and a Greek. The Greek man borrowed 32 drachma from the Edomite, who was called a kapelos. This word occurs only once in the Bible at 2 Cor. 2:17. The KJ translates it as "corrupt". The NAS translates it as "peddling".

The word kapelos is well known in Greek literature, inscriptions, and papyri. It is normally translated "retailer", "shopkeeper", "peddler" or "huckster". Since the group of ostraca Geraty found only mentioned money and not commodities, he

realized that the definition of kapelos should include money-lending as well as retailing.

In this example we see how archaeology opened up a window on the language of the NT which scholars did not have before this find.

Before we consider the subject of Biblical Archaeology today, we need to lay a few ground rules.

3. Does archaeology "prove" the Bible?

First, we need to realize that archaeology does not prove the Bible. The message of the Bible is primarily a spiritual one. In the pages of the Bible the great God Jehovah reveals Himself to mankind. The pages of the Bible contain historical information, but the Bible is not a textbook on history. The historian sets out to record completely and accurately the accounts of whatever he is writing about. It is his duty to be true to the facts. We would expect to be able to verify the facts he gives us. While the Bible is not a textbook on history, it is always true and accurate when it records history. Its historical record might not be complete, because that is not its purpose. Its history is always accurate.

The same is true of science, geography and customs. When the Bible treats these subjects it is always accurate in what it says about them.

What this means to us as students of God's Word is simply that we don't look to archaeology to "prove" the Bible's account on those subjects. The God of the bible is the Self-Existant One. He needs no proof from us. He exists as the Sovereign God of the universe above all proofs that could be offered for Him.

While archaeology does not prove the bible it can confirm the Bible's statements about people, places and things.

The archaeologist can go to places named in the Bible and find confirmation of the biblical account. The archaeologist can find listed on inscriptions people and

events listed in the biblical text. He can find confirmation of biblical customs and cultures from extra-biblical sources which again confirm the biblical text (Explain).

Just a few examples of this confirmation. Places like Caesarea, Capernaum, Hazor, Jericho, Megiddo, and Lachish are not simply names in a book, but today in the lands of the Bible, archaeologists have identified and excavated these very sites.

People of the Bible like King David, King Jehu, Pontius Pilate and Hezekiah have been found listed on ancient inscriptions.

King Herod the Great is well-known to us today because of the many magnificent buildings he built which have been excavated by the spade of the archaeologist.

4. Book of Mormon

This ability to stand up to the facts of archaeology is unique to the Bible. Just for comparison consider the Book of Mormon. Not for the purposes of degrading it, but to compare its archaeological record with the Bible's.

The Book of Mormon lists at least 28 major sites which should have left archaeological remains. Yet, to date, there has been absolutely no archaeological confirmation of any of those sites.

Walter Martin in his book *The Kingdom of the Cults* provides the following quotes from the Book of Mormon:

A. Quotes

"The whole face of the land had become covered with buildings, and the people were as numerous almost, as it were the sands of the sea" (Mormon 1:7)

"...fine workmanship of wood, in buildings, and in machinery, and also in iron and copper, and brass, and steel, making all manners of tools..." (Jarom 1:8 and 2 Nephi 5:15).

"...grain, silks...cattle, oxen, cows...sheep...swine...goats...horses...asses...elephants..." (See Ether 9:17-19)

"...did multiply and spread—began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east" (Heleman 3:8)

"...two million Jaredites slain..." (See Ether 15:2)

"...their shipping and their building of ships, and their building of temples, and of synagogues and their sanctuaries..." (Heleman 3:14. See also 2 Nephi 5:15, 16 and Alma 16:13).

"...tens of thousands of the Nephites slain" (See Momon 67:10-15)

"...swords...cimeters...breastplates...arm-shields...shields...head-plates...armor" (See Alma 43:18, 19; 16:13 and Ether 15:15).

"...multiplied exceedingly, and spread upon the face of the land, and became exceeding rich..." (Jarom 1:8).

"...cities and inhabitants sunk in the depths of the sea..." and "cities and inhabitants sunk in depths of the earth..." (See Nephi 8:9, 10, 14 and 9:4,5,6,8).

B. How much archaeology?

In addition to these statements, The Book of Mormon lists some 38 cities. The people of the land (North and South America) are depicted as "mighty civilizations!"

One would expect vast amounts of archaeological evidence to be left from all of this civilization. But not only is there absolutely no evidence, but leading

archaeological researchers have provided considerable evidence to show that the accounts given in The Book of Mormon are impossible.

Rev. R. Odell Brown, while researching the Mormons, wrote to the Dept. of Anthropology at Columbia University in New York City. A Mr. Duncan Strong from that institution wrote Dr. Brown the following letter:

C. Letters

(1) Columbia University

Dear Sir:

Pardon my delay in answering your letter of January 14, 1957. The question which you ask concerning the Book of Mormon is one that comes up quite frequently....However, I may say that I do not believe that there is a single thing of value concerning the prehistory of the American Indian in the Book of Mormon and I believe that the great majority of American archaeologists would agree with me. The book is untrue Biblically, historically and scientifically.

Concerning Dr. Charles Anthon of Columbia University, I do not know who he is and would certainly differ with his viewpoint, as the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) tell it. What possible bearing Egyptian hieroglyphics would have on either the Book of Mormon or the prehistory of the American Indian I do not know....I am,

Very sincerely yours,

Wm. Duncan Strong (Signed).

(2) Smithsonian Institute

The Smithsonian Institution has added its voice against the archaeological claims of the Book of Mormon.

There is no correspondence whatever between archeological sites and cultures as revealed by scientific investigations, and as recorded in the Book of Mormon....

It can be stated definitely that there is no connection between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the Book of Mormon...The Smithsonian Institution has never used the Book of Mormon in any way as a scientific guide. Smithsonian archeologists see no connection between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the book....

I may say that thus far no iron, steel, brass, gold and silver coins, metal, swords, breast-plates, arm shields, armor, horses and chariots, or silk have ever been found in pre-colonial archeological sites....

Furthermore, cattle, sheep, swine, horses and asses, such as we know them, were introduced in the Americas by Europeans in post-Columbian times. No actual elephants have been found in any archeological site....I do not know of any case where an archeological site has been identified with any of the names of the cities mentioned in the Book of Mormon....

None of the main workers in the field have made any reference to the possibility of one of the well-known ruins being those of a city mentioned in the Book of Mormon....

—(Letters from the Smithsonian Institution as recorded in the Book of Mormon Examined by Arthur Budvarson, Utah Christian Tract Society, 1959, pages 35 and 36).

Walter Martin writes,

"Quote"

From this evidence, it is clear that the cities mentioned in the Book of Mormon are imaginary, that elephants never existed on this continent, and that the metals described in the Book of Mormon have never been found in any of the areas of contemporary civilizations of the New World. Here is not a theologian attempting to discredit the Mormons on the basis of their

theology, but recognized archaeological experts challenging the Book of Mormon on the basis of the fact that its accounts are not in keeping with the findings of science. Mormon missionaries are generally reluctant to discuss these areas when the evidence is well known, but evidence it is and from most authoritative sources.

"End of quotation"

5. Minimalist vs. Maximalist

How different is the field of Biblical archaeology.

But we aren't out of the woods yet. Today there are two schools of scholars in the field of archeology. They are called the maximalist and the minimalist. As you might imagine, the maximalist believes the Bible record is true and tries to find confirmation for this in archaeology.

The minimalist on the other hand, takes a low view of Scripture. He sees little or no correlation between the printed text and the archaeological record.

The March/April 2000 Biblical Archaeology Review magazine has this caption on its front cover: "The Search for History in the Bible". The title lead in for the article is, "It's the hottest debate in the field, so we've devoted three articles to it; Does the Bible preserve a reliable historical memory or is it an ideological document without historical value?"

In the first article titled "What Separates a Minimalist From a Maximalist? Not Much," there is a description of an archeological conference which was called to discuss "a 'crisis' in the study of history as described in the Bible."

This crisis was provoked by a group of scholars who are skeptical of the value of the "...Bible in reconstructing the history of the period that the Biblical author is describing (as opposed to the value of the Biblical text for reconstructing the period when the text was composed, hundreds of years later)."

"Not a single speaker at the conference defended the historicity of the patriarchal narratives in Genesis."

"Again in the words of Sommer, 'The Conquest Model...has suffered grave criticisms since the early 1970's and few scholars continue to espouse [it].'"

"The historicity of the united monarchy— the period of David and Solomon— is a much debated issue among scholars today."

"No one even suggested that the Pentateuch or Joshua and Judges (which recount the Israelite conquest of, and settlement in, Canaan) were written contemporaneously with the events they describe or even within a couple hundred years thereafter...."

"On the archaeological side, the people we may now identify as historical Israel are generally agreed to have emerged at the beginning of the Iron Age (about 1200 B.C.E) and to have been indigenous to Palestine...."

"These people did not descend from a single ancestor who came from outside the land; they did not escape from Egypt, nor did they enter the land with a religion received during a wilderness trek. They did not exterminate the indigenous inhabitants or even try to...."

"Whether these people yet called themselves "Israel," I have no idea. If so, it is not an Israel that we would recognize from the Pentateuch."

A. Quotes from BAR

As you can see, the Biblical archaeologist comes against a very liberal school of scholars who place little or no value in the Bible as an accurate historical document.

6. Definition

Perhaps this would be a good time to provide a definition of and some terms used by the Biblical archaeologist.

A. Archaeology- A study of the past based upon the recovery, examination and explanation of the material remains of human life, thought and activity; coordinated with available information concerning the ancient environment. Biblical archaeology searches for correlation between excavated items and Bible events, people and teachings. Excavated items include remains of buildings, cities, graves, inscriptions, papyri, clay tablets and ostraca.

7. Tells

In Israel today there are thousands of raised hill-like areas where ancient peoples lived. People tended to live in the same place. They rebuilt over ruins of the previous settlement.

A. Ancient Settlements

- (1) Water
- (2) Good ground

(3) Location, Trade route, Road

B. Layer cake

(1) Older, deeper

(2) Messed up (nature, man).

C. Dating

(1) Pottery

(2) Coins

(3) Inscriptions

D. Step

E. Squares

(1) Bulks

F. Record keeping/Publication

8. Glossary

- A. Acropolis: Citadel or highest elevation of a city. Often the setting for the city's most striking temples and other public structures.
- B. Agora: In Greek cities, an open market or square for public affairs, corresponding to the Roman forum
- C. Artifact: Any material object altered by human intervention for some purpose; a stone or metal knife, clay formed and fired to a figurine, coin, and so on.
- D. Basalt: A kind of dense, greenish, dark gray or brownish-black igneous volcanic rock. Much basalt is found in the mountains of Galilee.
- E. Basilica: An elongated rectangular building with a central nave and side aisles. Roman basilicas served as business and legal buildings.
- F. Bedouin: Tribal nomadic Arabs that inhabit the desert regions in the Near and Middle East. Members of the Ta'amireh tribe were responsible for discovering many of the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as other archaeological artifacts from tombs in the West Bank and Jordan.
- G. Bema: A speaker's raised platform, often used as a place of judgement. It is used in this way in the New Testament for the place of the believer's final judgement (Greek, "the bema-seat of Christ"—2 Corinthians 5:10)
- H. Bulla (Bullae): Seal impression stamped on a lump of clay or other plastic material, used in antiquity to seal documents.
- I. Capital: The topmost section or member of a classical column or pilaster.
- J. Casemate: A room built within a defensive wall. A casemate wall is a double wall with a row of casemates between its outer and inner faces; a double wall with partitioned compartments, sometimes used for storage or dwellings.

- K. Ceramic Typology: The observation of changing patterns or forms in ancient ceramic pottery, used to establish chronological sequence in dating.
- L. Codex (Codices): Ancient manuscript(s) bound in the form of a book (especially a Bible) rather than a scroll; book of laws in the Byzantine period.
- M. Cuneiform Script: The wedge-shaped writing originally developed from about 3000 BC by the Sumerians in southern Iraq to write on clay tablets. It was later adapted for writing a number of other languages (Sumerian, Hurrian, Urartian, Hittite, Elamite, Ugaritic, and most notably Akkadian), spoken by the earliest Semitic inhabitants of Iraq, and then used as the international diplomatic language until superseded by Aramaic under the Persian Empire. At Ras Shamra (Ugarit) it was specially modified to write the local language in a wedge-shaped alphabet. Cuneiform was written by pressing the end of a flat stylus, or stick, into moist clay tablets. This produced wedge-shaped impressions, since the writer tended to press his stylus harder on one side.
- N. Cursive: Rapid, handwritten form of a script.
- O. Cylinder Seal: Cylinder (usually of stone) carved with figures, designs, or writing; when the seal is rolled onto a soft substance, a continuous band of relief is imprinted; a typical Mesopotamian object, usually pierced for suspension.
- P. Forum (Fora): In Roman cities, an open square for public affairs; marketplace. In Greek cities it was known as the agora.
- Q. In Situ (Literally, "at the site," "in place"): Used to designate the precise position in which artifacts and architectural fragments were originally found.

- R. Lachish Letters: Ostraca inscribed in Hebrew, found at Lachish, and dated to the last days of Judah. The ostraca contain important information about this period.
- S. Maximalist (Biblical): A biblical scholar who gives maximum authority to the biblical text as a source for historical and factual information about the past.
- T. Minimalist (Biblical): A biblical scholar who minimalizes the biblical text as an authoritative source for reliable historical and factual information about the past.
- U. Miqveh (Miqvaot) (Hebrew "ritual bath"): Facility for Jewish ritual bathing, either public or in a private home.
- V. Ossuary: A box, urn, or other receptacle for the bones of the dead after the flesh has decayed (secondary burial).
- W. Ostrakon (Ostraca): Greek for "potsherd"; used by archaeologist to describe any fragment of pottery, bone, or wood that has writing on it. Because papyrus was expensive, ostraca were commonly used in Egypt and Palestine for everyday writing purposes in the local cursive scripts, but not the cuneiform script.
- X. Papyrus (Papyri): A writing material or paper made from the papyrus reed growing in the Nile River. Widely used in ancient times.
- Y. Parchment: Refers to writing paper that, in ancient times, was made from animal skins or vellum.
- Z. Potsherds: Broken pieces of ceramic pottery found in excavations. It's typically the most abundantly preserved evidence in archaeological remains.
- AA. Stele (Stelai): an upright slab or stone pillar used for inscriptions, reliefs, and tombstones. Stelai served a variety of purposes in the ancient

world: as funerary monument, as monuments commemorating royal victories, and for dedications to gods.

AB. **Stoa:** A long, covered walk or hall with columns in front; a colonnade or portico; Greek freestanding building, usually one story high, consisting of a long rear wall and a row of columns in front bearing a sloping roof.

AC. **Stratification:** The layers of a mound created by successive destructions; superimposed occupational layers as they are uncovered in excavation.

AD. **Stratigraphy:** The process of observing, interpreting, and recording the layers of a mound created by successive destructions. This is one of the major interpretative principles of field archaeology borrowed from geology. It depends on the fact that where one deposit of debris overlies another, the upper must have accumulated after the lower, since the latter could not have been inserted beneath it. In practice there are numerous modifications to this general rule, for many acts of nature, from earthquakes to burrowing animals, will disturb any orderly sequence of deposits as will interference by man (pits, graves, fills, foundation trenches, and so on). It is the modern archaeologist's main purpose to distinguish one deposit from another by its texture, color, or contents (which may of course include intruders from other levels), and to draw diagrams (sections) of a site's stratigraphy so that others may check the interpretation. The various layers of debris so recognized are conventionally called either levels or strata.

AE. **Stratum (Strata):** A layer of soil containing artifacts and debris representing a particular time and culture at a site; the combination of all loci belonging to one construction, habitation, and destruction cycle, representing one historical and cultural period of habitation at a site;

usually distinguished from one another by differences in soil makeup, architecture, artifacts, and so on.

AF. Tell (Tel): The Arabic word (with one l in Hebrew) used in reference to the unnatural mounds created by the repeated destruction and rebuilding of ancient cities and villages on the same site. The word is now used in most languages for such mounds throughout the Near East. This same word appears in the Hebrew text of Joshua 11:13: "cities that stood on their tells."

II. Ancient languages unlocked

There were for many years groups of biblical languages which scholars had no idea how to translate. Thousands of clay tablets and inscriptions were found written with cuneiform characters. This wedge-shaped writing was impressed on soft clay with a stylus. It was then allowed to harden, and in the dry climate of the Middle East it was practically indestructible.

There were two discoveries which helped archaeologists unlock these ancient languages.

1. Rosetta Stone

A. Napoleon

Ancient Egypt had many inscriptions and writings. Walls of tombs and temples were adorned with them. Monuments and obelisks were written in Egyptian hieroglyphics. No one knew how to read them. Then an amazing discovery by Napoleon Buonaparte's army provided the key to these ancient texts. Napoleon had invaded Egypt in 1798 hoping to make it a French colony and a base for future

attacks on India. He didn't do so well militarily. The British fleet destroyed the French fleet, but he had taken along 175 French scientist who mapped and described the land. Eventually they published 24 volumes describing the history, culture, and inscriptions of Egypt. One of the stones they found was the Rosetta Stone. The stone was eventually taken to London.

appo. 3'9" X 2'4" X 11" thick

The stone is written in 3 languages, each describing a decree of King Ptolemy V. At the top are 14 lines in hieroglyphics. Then there are 32 lines in an Egyptian handwriting. At the bottom there are 54 lines written in Greek.

B. Champollion

C. Languages

(1) Hieroglyphics

(2) Egyptian

(3) Greek

It was a Frenchman who cracked the code. His name, Jean-Francois Champollion. He was a gifted child. At the age of 11 he studied Latin, Greek and Hebrew! He turned all his energy to the study of ancient languages and the history of Egypt. At 17 when he read his paper Egypt Under the Pharaohs to the staff at the Grenoble High School, he was made a faculty member on the spot. In the fall of 1822 he announced to the world that he had unlocked the secret of the stone. He, and others, were able to apply this information to other ancient Egyptian writings and decipher them. He was highly honored but died of exhaustion at the age of 41 in 1832.

2. Behistun Rock

A. Location

B. Rawlinson

(1) Great danger

C. Unlocked Assyrian/Babylonian

Another group of languages which baffled scholars were the inscriptions found in the area of ancient Babylon. These were the cuneiform writings. A key to these writings was discovered high up on a rock cliff in present-day Iran. Close to the town of Behistun 300 feet above the ground is a carving of 12 men. No one knew who they were. Some guessed Christ and the 12 disciples. Some, a school master and his class. Beside the picture the rock was smoothed and was covered with arrowhead marks cut into the stone. Major General Sir Henry Rawlinson was one of the great pioneers in deciphering Babylonian cuneiform writings. He was employed by the East India Company in 1837 at the age of 17. He served in Persia and became interested in the ancient languages. From 1836 to 1847 he spent time making copies of the writings on the rock. The work was very dangerous. He describes his work with ladders. The foot ledge was only 18"-24" wide, so a ladder high enough would not slope enough. In order to get enough angle on his ladder he shortened it so he had to stand on the top rung without anything to hold onto. He steadied his body with his left hand while holding the notebook in that hand. He copied with his right hand! He said, "In this position I copied all the upper inscriptions, and the interest of the occupation entirely did away with any sense of danger." He told how a ladder he was using to bridge a chasm came apart and left him hanging over a precipice till he was rescued by friends!

There were three kinds of writing on the stone. They describe King Darius I's victory over rebel forces. The three languages are old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian. Scholars were able to decipher the writings and this led to unlocking the secrets of the records of ancient Assyria and Babylon.

III. Herod the Builder (Great)

Matt. 2:1..."Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King." Herod was an incredible builder. The land of Israel abounds in monuments to his life and kingdom.

Herod delighted in buildings which seemed impossible to construct. His engineers hung a magnificent 3-story palace on the sheer rock face of Masada. Herodian was literally built into a mountain. A nearby hill was leveled and moved to surround and cover the buildings of the Herodium.

At Caesarea Herod's engineers used huge concrete blocks to create an enormous, beautiful harbor many times larger than the modern harbor. One of the blocks found by archaeologists is appo. 39' wide X 49' long X 5' thick, estimated to weigh appo. 50 tons. He constructed two enormous breakwaters to enclose the harbor, south appo. 2000', north appo. 1000', 60' gate into harbor. On the breakwaters he built walls with huge statues at the harbor entrance.

The city was one of the most modern in the Roman world. It had streets laid out in a grid fashion. There were magnificent buildings, a theater, a hippodrome and a warehouse complex consisting of appo. 100 vaulted storage buildings. From the theater to the harbor was a magnificent colonnade street paved with marble. Shops and stores lined both sides of this street. A system of underground sewers was kept clean by the action of the sea. Many of the buildings were built of or faced with beautiful marble.

He had a magnificent palace built on a point of land between the theater and the seaport. The palace was built right out into the sea so visitors could call directly from the port. There was a large swimming pool in the center of the palace.

The city was the most modern and sophisticated city in Israel. The seaport brought great wealth and military power to the city. The Romans used the port to import and export goods and troops into Israel.

Herod was an excellent administrator and politician. Several times he skillfully switched sides and allegiances to different rulers. He reigned for appo. 40 years. He was an Idumean (Edomite). The Jews never liked him for that. They considered

him a usurper who had no right to be on the throne. Because of all these factors, and more, Herod was very paranoid. When Matthew records that at the coming of the wise men Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with him, he was not jesting.

Herod was absolutely ruthless in killing his supposed enemies. If you aroused his suspicion, you were a dead man or woman.

Herod had hundreds / thousands killed. Augustus is said to have quipped, "It is better to be Herod's pig than his son."

Herod had at least 10 wives during his reign.

He was one of the most cruel rulers in history.

William Hendriksen in Survey of the Bible says,

"Quote"

The name of Herod is associated in the minds of most people with wanton cruelty. This appraisal is correct in every way. Words fail to describe his well-nigh insane jealousy, unrestrained egoism, and dark suspicion. In his opinion somebody was always plotting to deprive him of power. It had taken a long time before he was fully established as "king of the Jews." Hence, let no one attempt to deprive him of this distinction! It is in this light that one should view Herod's consternation when very shortly before his death wise men came from the east, saying: "Where is he that is born king of the Jews?" See Matthew 2.

"End of quotation"

He killed the boy babies at Bethlehem. He killed his brother-in-law, his wife's grandfather, her mother, his favorite wife and her two sons. Mariamne was his favorite wife. He killed her because he suspected she had been unfaithful to him—After her death he almost went mad from grief.

He had a third son executed shortly before his death because he thought he was plotting to take the throne. His palace was constantly filled with intrigue and backstabbing.

But he was a great builder / administrator. He built in 20+ sites in Israel and at least 13 sites outside Israel's borders. Aside from the remains of his buildings, there is inscriptional evidence to support the biblical account of Herod. In 1967 a stone weight was purchased from an antiquities dealer. It is inscribed, "Year 32 of King Herod the Benefactor, loyal to Caesar. Inspector of Markets. Three minas."

Josephus the Jewish historian extols the building programs of Herod. He says that Athens and other cities are filled with Herod's offerings. Two inscriptions have been found in Athens which bear this out.

Inscription 1:

The people erect this monument to King Herod Lover of Romans, because of the benefaction and good will [shown] by him.

Inscription 2:

The people erect this monument to King Herod, devout and lover of Caesar, because of his virtue and benefaction.

We will look at

Masada,
Herodium,
Caesarea

1. Masada

A national shrine in modern Israel. There is almost a religious reverence for it because of the 960 Jewish zealots who chose to take their own lives in 73 AD rather than submit to slavery/torture by the Romans. The Israeli Defense Force swears in its recruits on the rock of Masada. Part of the ceremony consists of a shouted declaration by those young Hebrew men and women, "Masada shall not fall again while I am living!"

Masada is a symbol of commitment, patriotism, religious zeal and determination.

Masada is not mentioned directly in the Bible, although a good case can be made for it in the story of David. After David killed Goliath, King Saul became more and more jealous of him. After ducking several javelins and realizing he was not safe in Saul's palace, he fled.

1 Sam. 23:24-29 records David's escape from Saul. In v. 25 "the rock" is listed. In v. 28, "the rock of escape." In v. 29, "the strongholds of En Gedi".

In 1 Sam. 24, v. 22, David went up to the stronghold.

Psm. 18, vv. 1 & 2... "fortress" from Heb. root word for Masada.

Josephus the Jewish historian tells us the rock was first fortified by a man named Jonathan. There are various opinions about who Jonathan was, but it was Herod the Great who made Masada famous. Herod was ever-fearful of his subjects. They didn't like him very much. To the south, in Egypt, Queen Cleopatra made no secret of her desire for Herod's kingdom.

Herod was never sure when Rome would turn him out so he built a series of palace fortresses south of Jerusalem to allow him to escape back to Idumea if necessary. Masada was one of these fortresses. It is appo. 23 acres in area. Appo. 2 miles from the Dead Sea. it is a huge, boat-shaped rock appo. 1900' long and 650' wide.

Herod built double casement walls around the entire top. Josephus says they were 18' high, 14' apart with 110 store/living rooms between them. The walls were 4,590 feet long. 38 towers, 4 gates. The sides of the rock on N-S-E are very steep, appo. 1300 feet high. On the west a promontory rises to within appo. 300' of the surface.

Herod spared no expense. He built a 36,000 sq. ft. official palace. Huge storerooms, smaller residential and administrative buildings. On the north cliff he built a remarkable 3-tiered private villa.

On top was a spacious private living quarter for Herod and his guests.

Appo. 65' below he built a circular villa. It had magnificent painted frescos and columns. Stairs carved into the rock connected it to the top building. Appo. 50' below the circular villa, Herod built a bath complex. Hot, warm, cold baths with the equipment to heat them.

On the top there was an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

You may ask, "Where did the water come from?"

Herod's engineers solved the water problem with a brilliant plan. It only rains about 2-3 times a year at Masada. When it rains, the wadis become raging torrents for a few hours. Herod's engineers dug a series of huge cisterns in the side of the rock. Then they dammed up the wadis and built aqueducts to the cisterns. When it rained the dams quickly filled, sending the precious water through the aqueducts into the cisterns. Servants and slaves carried the water appo. 300' up the cliff, in containers, to supply the water needs on top. Herod stocked the storehouses with food, weapons and raw materials. It is estimated that there were enough supplies to feed and equip 10,000 men for 10 years.

Appo. 100 years after Herod's death, the zealots who captured Masada from the small Roman force there found barley, wheat, olive oil, honey, wine, dates, walnuts. The dry climate had preserved these foodstuffs so well that the zealots were able to use them.

In 70 AD the Romans destroyed Jerusalem (General Titus).

In 73 AD the entire land was subject to Rome except Masada. Some zealots who escaped from Titus at Jerusalem made the long, hazardous journey and joined the zealots on Masada. They turned it into a base to harass and ambush the Romans. In 73 AD, Rome got tired of this Jewish resistance and sent General Silva with the crack troops of the 10th legion. Silva established 8 camps around the base of Masada. He built a wall appo. 6' high and over 2 miles long completely around the rock to prevent escape.

Then he pondered his options.

He chose to build a huge siege ramp from the west. It was constructed of earth, stones and timber. Its top surface was flat and smooth. It was 645' long and over 200' high. It was built with the help of Jewish slaves and Roman soldiers.

The zealots fought back. They did everything in their power to harass and destroy the enemy and his equipment. After many months the Romans rolled a siege engine up the ramp and positioned it against the wall. They began to batter down the wall. The zealots built a double wall of timber filled with packed earth and the more the Romans pounded, the tighter it got.

Finally the Romans were able to set the wall on fire. The fire blew back threatening to burn their siege machine, but before long it blew into Masada again.

They succeeded in breaching the wall and retired for the night, expecting to attack in the morning.

960 zealots had held off 15,000 crack Roman troops for 7 months. That night the zealot leader sat on the wall pondering his options. Far below the campfires of 10,000 soldiers winked at him. He knew that in the morning those troops would quickly overwhelm his small band of defenders. He reached a decision. In a stirring speech recorded by Josephus, he persuaded them that death by their own hands was preferred to Roman torture and slavery.

Each man killed his family, then 10 men were chosen to kill all the men. Then one was chosen to kill the 10. After he had set fire to the palace and other buildings, he ran his sword through his abdomen and died beside his family.

960 zealots perished. 2 old women and several children hid in a cistern and survived.

There is certainly no justification for suicide. But there is an incredible lesson here of commitment, of patriotism, of love for God.

Passion for freedom

Freedom of our hearts to choose to serve God.

Does our zeal/devotion match these brave men/women?

Are we prepared to give our lives for our God?

2. Herodium

The site of Herodium is rich in Bible history.

Lies close to Bethlehem.

Close to where Jacob buried Rachel.

Close to where the story of Naomi, Boaz and Ruth took place.

Jesus born in Bethlehem.

Magnificent palace fortress.

Built on top of mountain. (7 stories). Inner and outer walls. Living spaces between. Courtyard, gardens in center. 4 towers- N-S-E-W.

3rd largest palace in the world at the time.

Herod had a nearby hill leveled and piled around the palace.

It was approached by a flight of 200 marble steps.

Below large building complex. Pools, gardens, and a racing course.

Herod was a powerful king. His word was law. The land cowered before him. In Bethlehem a baby was born and you were asked to believe that one day this baby would be more powerful, influential than King Herod. The baby is heir to David's kingdom. Today Herod's buildings lie in ruins. Jesus left nothing that we know of, but his kingdom marches on. Look at what he left behind.

3. Caesarea

Today as you walk the beach, it is littered with marble fragments. Herod's dream lies scattered on the beach.

Herod built for Herod with marble/pride. What's left is ruins.

David used slingstone made of limestone.

Goliath fell dead—

David did it so the whole world would know who is God—

Some of us given marble/some limestone

Talents/influence. The question for each of us,

Who will you live for?

What will be left of our dreams? What legacy will we leave?

Are you building for you or for God?

4. Jerusalem

Temple covered appo. 35 acers.

The Wailing Wall is all that remains.

Western wall appo. 60' high.

200' long.

Extends below ground appo. 70'.

It is holiest spot in Israel to the Jew.

From 1948 to 1967 no Jew was allowed to come near the wall.

The wall was captured by Israel during the '67 war.

Monday, June 5, 1967:

Major General Uzi Narkiss had been ordered to maintain a defensive position outside Jerusalem.

He was bitterly disappointed. He had hoped to see action on the Golan Heights or in the Sinai Peninsula.

He thought he was parked where there would be no fighting, but as God would have it, Jordan attacked Jerusalem, and Narkiss' troops were in the heat of the battle.

He was ordered to take the old city, and at 9:50 AM they reached the temple mount.

On the way way he passed Brigadeer General Rabbi Goren and offered him a ride. He refused saying, "No, for 2000 years we have waited for this moment. Now I am not going to the wall in a Jeep! I'll walk!" Later Narkiss wrote his feelings as he stood by the sacred wall.

Catch the emotion, pathos!

Remember, this was a moment Judaism had waited 2000 years for!

Narkis said, "quote"

It was as though I was in another world...I felt a part of the whole Jewish people, who for 2,000 years had longed for this moment. It was an emotion far bigger than myself, bigger than the whole generation. I stood there before the Wall and I didn't know what to do. When the Rabbi arrived, he

knew what to do. He prayed and blew the shofar (ram's horn). I then seized myself and led in the singing of the National Anthem....

"End of quotation"

IV. Capernaum

Northwest shore of Sea of Galilee. Appo. 2 ½ miles west of the entrance of the Jordan River.

Mentioned 16X in the gospels.

It was Jesus' home base while in Galilee. Peter lived here, apparently it was Peter's house where the paralytic was healed— (When they took up the roof).

Called a city— More than a fishing village.

On a major E-W trade route

A military garrison was there.

A customs station located there.

Apparently home to Peter, Andrew, Matthew (James and John maybe).

Exciting find under the 3rd-4th-century white limestone synagogue—

Black basalt (native) stone walls have been found under the floor of the 3rd-century synagogue.

Not in line with 3rd-century building— so not the foundation—

Much too thick for private house. A cobblestone floor contemporary with the black walls has been found. Coins and pottery date into the 1st century.

Luke 7:1...Centurion who loved the Jews! Rare breed. Luke 7:1-8.

Peter's house—

84' south of the synagogue lies an octagonal building— usually to mark a site of great religious fame.

In the mid first century the large room was plastered— no other houses plastered. (At least twice)

During the mid first century pottery ceased to be domestic variety.

Only storage jars and oil lamps.

Two pillars were erected to support a high ceiling.

The center of the octagonal church was built directly over the room.

Synagogues were built on highest spot in town— Rebuilt over same site.

Octagonal buildings were erected to commemorate/memorialize important Christian sites.

V. Chorazin

Matt. 11:21... **Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.**

Luke 10:13 (very similar ref.)

Located in Galilee appo. 2 miles north of Capernaum.

An important town in Jesus' day, but by the 2nd half of the 3rd century it had ceased to be inhabited.

VI. Dan

VII. Hezekiah

VIII. Lachish

IX. Inscriptions with Bible names

X. Misc.

Syria

Luke says the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. The city lies on the Orontes River appo. 20 miles from the Mediterranean at the m of Syria. The city was beautified by the Roman emperors Augustus and Tiberius and by Herod the Great. Josephus calls the city the third city in the Roman Empire. Rome and Alexandria were greater. It was a beautiful city, but it had a very low moral reputation.

Archaeologists started working at Antioch in 1932. They have uncovered many remains from Roman times and later. Many spectacular floor mosaics have been found. It was from Antioch that Paul and Barnabas were sent out on Paul's first missionary journey.

Acts. 13:1-3

Selucia (Syria- 9 ancient towns with this name.)

At the mouth of the Orontes River, Actually 5 miles north of the river. 15 miles from Antioch. Founded by Seleucus Nicator in the beginning of the 3rd century BC. At the time of Paul it was a Roman free city. The ancient harbor has silted up and is a large marshy area with ruins scattered around it. In Paul's day it was an important seaport. It was the gateway to Antioch. It was very useful to the Romans in times of Jewish revolts. It was remote from the war-torn areas. The Romans could unload there in safety and go across land to the battle area. Caesarea, the only other major port on the Palestinian coast, was much more dangerous for them. Today you can go to the area where Selucia stood and see the ruins of the town and the harbor. Paul and Barnabas sailed from here to Cyprus on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:4).

Cyprus Acts 13:4

Cyprus is a large island in the Mediterranean Sea appo. 140 by 53 miles in area. It lies appo. 80 miles west of the coast of Palestine. In appo. 58 BC it was conquered by Rome, and in 22 BC it was transferred to the control of the Roman

senate. Its governor was titled "proconsul", which Luke correctly uses in Acts 13:7 (Sergius Paulus).

Paul and Barnabas landed at Salamis which lies on the east side of the island. Acts 13:5 says Salamis was the island's largest city. In v. 6 they went through the whole island and in v. 7 they meet the proconsul. In v. 12 we are told that he believed. They sailed from Paphos which was the administrative capital of the island. It was on the west side of the island.

Pisidian Antioch. (Acts 13:14)

The city lay at the base of a range of mountains on the Great Road which connected Syria and the Ionian coast. It rest on 7 hills in Modern Turkey.

A frieze stone carving from the temple of Augustus has been found. Remains show that this temple was very elaborately decorated—

Iconium, Lystra and Derbe

Two inscriptions have been found with the name of Derbe:

"The council and the people of Claudio-Derbe for Cornelius"

"The Most God-Loving Michael, Bishop of Derbe"

An inscription naming Lystra has also been found (picture).

Perga

Paul landed here when he left Cyprus.

Archaeologist have uncovered many striking features here.

A Greco-Roman theater seating about 14,000 has been found.

A palestra measureing appo. 250' square with a dedicatory inscription to the Emperor Claudius, who reigned when Paul visited, has been found.

What's a palestra? An ancient Greek public place for exercise, wrestling and athletics.

Ephesus

Demetrius was worried. He and other craftsmen at Ephesus made their living by making and selling little silver shrines and idols. The images were of Diana or of her temple. People bought the shrines to carry with them on journeys for good luck. They put them in their houses. They even buried them with the bodies of dead relatives. Now many of the Ephesians, who had been Demetrius' customers, were becoming Christians.

When they became Christians they no longer bought or used the idols. Demetrius called a council of his fellow silversmiths. He got them really excited and they spilled out into the streets of Ephesus shouting, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

Soon a mob was formed and they grabbed two of Paul's friends, Gaius and Aristarchus, and drug them into the theater.

For two hours they shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" Finally the mayor of the town quieted them. He said, "Men of Ephesus, everyone knows how great Diana is. Why are you shouting like this? If Demetrius and his friends have a problem, they should take it to court. We are in danger of punishment from the Roman authorities. If the Roman governor asks me why this riot happened, I won't know what to say." Quickly the people dispersed.

from Tells, Tombs and Treasures by Robert T. Boyd:

When God employed the science of Archaeology, he gave to the champions of Scripture a new weapon to attack the "critics" of the Word—those who question the authenticity and trustworthiness of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. Just as the "heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork," so the evidence...triumphantly confirms the authority of God's Holy Word. Today,

it is the critic who is on the defensive and behind the times—not the Christian!....

Though the believer accepts the Scriptures simply by faith, what a "spiritual shot in the arm" archaeological evidence has been in times like ours when unbelief is so popular. It has shown the critic that events recorded in the Bible actually happened, thus confirming its historical accuracy. It has further shown the critic that names of kings and nations mentioned in the Bible are not fictitious, that people mentioned did indeed exist, and that customs, so unfamiliar to us and appearing to be false, were in fact reality!....

THE ANVIL—GOD'S WORD

Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door,
 And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
 Then looking in, I saw upon the floor,
 Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.
 "How many anvils have you had," said I,
 "To wear and batter these hammers so?"
 Just one," said he, and then, with twinkling eye,
 "The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

And so, thought I, the anvil of God's Word,
 For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;
 Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
 The anvil is unharmed—the hammers' gone.

And the Word of God will continue to stand the test of time, no matter how many hammers future critics may wield! The believer can rest in God's promise, "Truth shall spring out of the earth" (Ps. 85:11). May God, then, help us to...contend for the faith like the early New Testament saints (Jude 3), and use all the evidence at our disposal to confirm the accuracy of God's Word—The Bible.

