

Biblical Archaeology

Kerby Anderson provides an update on recent archaeological finds that corroborate the historicity of the Bible.

One of the most important proofs for the historical accuracy of the Bible can be found in archaeology. Ancient history and archaeology should confirm the accuracy of this record. That is what we find when comparing these finds with the written record of Scripture.

My focus will be to summarize a few of the past archaeological finds that confirm the Bible and then provide an update on some of the newest archaeological discoveries made in just the last few years that are very significant. On the Probe website, we have an excellent summary done twenty years ago of archaeology and the Old Testament (probe.org/archaeology-and-the-old-testament/) and archaeology and the New Testament (probe.org/archaeology-and-the-new-testament/).



Archaeology not only has confirmed the historical record found in the Bible, but it also provides additional details not found in the original writings of the biblical authors. Archaeology also helps explain Bible passages by providing context of the surrounding culture as well as the social and political circumstances.

We must also admit the limitations of archaeology. Although these archaeological finds can establish the historical accuracy of the record, they cannot prove the divine inspiration of the Bible. Also, we must admit that even when we have an archaeological find, it still must be interpreted. Those interpretations are obviously affected by the worldview perspective and even bias of the historians and archaeologists.

Even granting the skeptical bias that can be found in this

field, it is still amazing that many archaeologists acknowledge the biblical confirmation that has come from significant archaeological finds.

Dr. William Albright observed, "There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition."^[1]

Archaeologist Nelson Glueck and president of Hebrew Union College concluded, "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible. And, by the same token, proper evaluation of Biblical description has often led to amazing discoveries."^[2]

Millar Burrows, Professor of Archaeology at Yale University, remarked that "On the whole, however, archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the Scriptural record. More than one archaeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine."^[3]

Old Testament Archaeology

There are so many significant archaeological finds that confirm the historical accuracy of the Old Testament. Perhaps the most famous and most significant find is the Dead Sea scrolls. A young shepherd boy found the first of them in a cave in 1947. Eventually over 800 fragments were found. This includes a complete scroll of the book of Isaiah.

Many of these scrolls are from before the time of Jesus Christ. That is important because it provided a way to check the accuracy of the transmission of the Old Testament. The earliest copies of the Old Testament that we had before this discovery were a thousand years later. When we compare the

Dead Sea scrolls to these later manuscripts, we can see that there were very few variations (mostly due to changes in spelling or grammar). The transmission through the scribe was very accurate.

Another significant find was archaeological documentation of King David. Archaeologists working at one site uncovered an inscription that means "house of David" that dates to the ninth century BC.

Another important archaeological find was the Hittite nation. The Hittites are mentioned nearly 50 times in the Old Testament, but there was no solid archaeological evidence they existed until the 20th century. Some argued that the Bible must be wrong since it mentions this nation but archaeological evidence was lacking.

The Hittites were a major force against the Jews. Israel needed to conquer them in order to enter the Promised Land (Joshua 11:3-4). King David had Uriah the Hittite killed because of his adultery with his wife, Bathsheba (2 Kings 11:3-21). Fortunately, archaeologists did uncover abundant evidence of the Hittites in Turkey. They found a temple, sculptures, a storeroom with 10,000 clay tablets. Later they even uncovered the Hittite capital city of Hattusha.

Archaeologists with the Israel Antiquities Authority digging at Tel Lachish found an ancient toilet that confirms Old Testament history. To understand its significance, we need to look at the record of King Hezekiah. We read in 2 Kings that he removed the Asherah poles from the high places and smashed the sacred stones that were used in the Canaanite cultic worship.

Archaeologists discovered large rooms that appear to be a shrine where four-horned altars were destroyed. They also found a seat carved in stone with the hole in it that was used as a toilet. It was mostly likely placed there as a form of

desecration for the whole room.[\[4\]](#) This correlates with the biblical description in 2 Kings 10:27 that Jehu and his followers “demolished the pillar of Baal, and demolished the house of Baal, and made it a latrine to this day.”

New Testament Archaeology

Jesus spent much of his time in Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee. It is mentioned 16 times in the New Testament. Archaeologists have uncovered evidence of the fishing industry there (anchors, fishhooks), which would have been used by many of the disciples. The houses were one-story buildings, with roofs of wooden beams or branches. This explains how men carried a man to the roof and let him down in front of Jesus (Mark 2:1-4). Jesus taught in the synagogue in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-22, Luke 4:31-36). The remains of a synagogue built in the 4th century sits atop the black basalt foundations of this synagogue that existed at the time of Jesus.

In Jerusalem are many archaeological discoveries from the time of Jesus. That includes the remains of the temple as well as the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-15) and the pool of Siloam (John 9:1-7).

Archaeology (as well as history) verifies the existence of many political leaders mentioned in the New Testament. A Denarius coin shows a portrait of Tiberius Caesar. This is also significant because Jesus asked the people whose likeness was on the coin (Mark 12:17). The name Pontius Pilate was found in an inscription at Caesarea Maritima.

Sometimes archaeology can shed light on what seems like a sharp disagreement in the Bible. In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he recounts what he said to Peter who stopped eating meals with gentile Christians. He argued that Peter lived like a Gentile even though he was a Jew.

The answer lies in the fact that Paul was a devout Pharisee,

who took kosher food laws and purity very seriously. Peter, though Jewish, was not a Pharisee and grew up in Bethsaida on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. Archaeological excavations uncovered some non-kosher evidence. Some were eating wild boar and catfish, which were considered unclean and not to be eaten by Jew following the Torah.{5}

Archaeological finds at Corinth include the city's *bema* seat, where Paul stood trial (Acts 18:12-17) and an inscription with the name Erastus, a city administrator who was an associate of Paul (Acts 19:22; 2 Timothy 4:20; Romans 16:23).

Critics have challenged the historical record of Luke because of alleged inaccuracies. Classical scholar Colin Hemer documents that Luke is a very accurate historian.{6} He identifies 84 facts in the Book of Acts that have been confirmed by historical and archaeological research. This includes nautical details, names of gods, designation of magistrates, and proper names and titles.

These are just a few of the archaeological discoveries in the past that have confirmed the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the next section we will look at some of the most recent archaeological discoveries.

Recent Archaeological Discoveries

Within the last few years, there have been major archaeological discoveries that further confirm biblical history. An article in *Christianity Today* provides a list of the top ten archaeological discoveries.{7} Here are just a few of these important discoveries.

The Israel Antiquities Authority announced the discovery of a limestone column on which the word "Jerusalem" was spelled out in Aramaic. This is the oldest inscription of this nature found so far. You might expect that there would be lots of such inscriptions, but that turn out to be very rare.

The inscription was found in an ancient potter's village that must have served pilgrims making their way to the Temple in Jerusalem. A potter's field calls to mind the one bought by the priests (Matthew 27:7) with the money Judas returned.

The Jewish tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant were located for a time in Shiloh. Excavation there produced a clay pomegranate. In the Bible, the pomegranate was a common temple decoration (1 Kings 7:18; 2 Kings 25:17). Small pomegranates embroidered with blue, purple, and scarlet yarns hung from the hems of the priestly robes (Exodus 28:33). This discovery affirms the sacredness of Shiloh.

Scientists and archaeologists believe they made have found the site of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. They found evidence that a "high-heat" explosive event north of the Dead Sea wiped out all civilization in the affected area. It killed all the people within a 25-kilometer circular area. The fertile soil would have been stripped of nutrients by the high heat. Waves of briny salt would have washed over the surrounding area and spread through hot winds.

The scientists suggest that a cosmic airburst event from a meteor was the reason for the disappearance from the site. It apparently took 600 years for the region to recover before it could once again be inhabited. This fits with the description in Genesis 19, which says that burning sulfur rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah and killed all the people and all the vegetation of the land.

Archaeologist Dr. Stephen Collins says that there was a violent conflagration that ended occupation at the site. There is "melted pottery, scorched foundation stones, and several feet of ash and destruction debris churned into a dark gray matrix as if in a Cuisinart." He and another author in a joint paper conclude that all of this provides "signs of a highly destructive and thermal event that one might expect from what is described in Genesis 19."[\[8\]](#)

Recent Archaeological Discoveries

Above we looked at a few of the most recent archaeological discoveries that confirm the historical accuracy of the Bible. Most of them were found in an article in *Christianity Today*. Here are a few more significant discoveries.

An inscribed piece of limestone discovered in a tomb along the west bank of the Nile was revealed to be a Semitic abecedary (alphabet in ABC order). It dates back to the time of Moses and fits with the statement that “Moses wrote down everything the Lord had said” (Exodus 24:4). It turns out he wasn’t the only one writing in a Semitic script in Egypt at that time.

When ISIS terrorists captured Mosul, they blew up the tomb of the prophet Jonah. This uncovered the remains of a palace of the Assyrian King Esarhaddon. Previous archaeological teams stopped digging in certain sites in Iraq for fear of destroying them. That was a case of the traditional tomb of Jonah, until ISIS started digging beneath it to find artifacts to sell. As one article put it, “ISIS Accidentally Corroborates the Bible.”[\[9\]](#) The tunnels they dug revealed a previously untouched Assyrian palace in the ancient city of Ninevah. Inscriptions found in the old city of Nineveh give an order of Assyrian kings that matches perfectly with the biblical order.

Extra careful processing of dirt from an archaeological dig in the southwest corner of the Temple Mount provided a *beka* weight. This was used (Exodus 38:6) to measure the silver in the half-shekel temple tax that was collected from each member of the Jewish community.

Another seal impression seems to be (a letter is missing) the name “Isaiah the prophet.” It was found near the Temple Mount near another seal impression that says “King Hezekiah of Judah” that was uncovered two years earlier. Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah are mentioned in the same verse 17 times. This

clay seal gives the impression that Isaiah had access to the king's palace as his adviser.

A ring with the name "Pontius Pilate" on it was excavated decades ago but only could be read recently due to advanced photographic techniques. Of course, this is not the first time that his name has surfaced in archaeology, but it is still a significant find. The ring is not fancy enough to have been worn by Pilate. It was probably worn by someone authorized to act on his authority and would use it to seal official communications.

This is an exciting time for archaeological investigation. New finds provide even more evidence of the historical accuracy of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Archaeology has provided abundant confirmation of the Bible.

Notes

1. William F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religions of Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), 176.
2. Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert* (New York: Farrar, Strous and Cudahy, 1959), 136.
3. Millar Burrows, *What Mean These Stones?* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 1.
4. Richard Gray, "The wrong kind throne: Toilet discovered 2-800-year-old shrine," *Daily Mail*, 28 September 2016.
5. Craig A. Evans, "Why Archaeology Matters for Bible Study," *Bible Study Magazine*, March/April 2019, 18-19.
6. Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 1990).
7. Gordon Govier, "Biblical Archaeology's Top 10 Discoveries of 2018," *Christianity Today*, December 27, 2018.
8. Amanda Borschel-Dan, "Evidence of Sodom? Meteor blast cause of biblical destruction, say scientists," *Times of Israel*, 22 November 2018.
9. "ISIS Accidentally Corroborates the Bible," *Facts and Trends*, March 19, 2018.

Authority of the Bible – A Strong Argument for Christianity

Dr. Pat Zukeran examines some of the compelling evidence for the reliability and the authority of the Bible. The uniqueness and astounding accuracy of this ancient text is an important apologetic for Christianity.



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

There are many books today that claim to be the Word of God. The Koran, the *Bhagavad Gita*, The Book of Mormon, and other religious works all claim to be divinely inspired. The Bible claims to be the only book that is divinely inspired and that all other claims of inspiration from other works should be ruled out. Does the Bible confirm its exclusive claim to be the Word of God? The totality of evidences presents a strong case for the divine inspiration of the Bible.

The strongest argument for the divine inspiration of the Bible is the testimony of Jesus. Jesus claimed to be the divine Son of God and confirmed His claims through His sinless, miraculous life and resurrection. The events of His life have been recorded in the four Gospels, which have proven to be historically accurate and written by first century eyewitnesses.[\[1\]](#) Since Jesus is God incarnate, whatever He taught is true, and anything opposed to His teaching is false.



Jesus directly affirmed the authority of the Old Testament and indirectly affirmed the New Testament. In Luke 11:51, Jesus identified the prophets and the canon of the Old Testament. He names Abel as the first prophet from Genesis, and Zechariah the last prophet mentioned in 2 Chronicles, the last book in the Jewish Old Testament (which contains the same books we have today although placed in a different order). In Mark 7:8-9, Jesus refers to the Old Testament as the commands of God. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus states that the Law and the Prophets referring to the Old Testament is authoritative and imperishable. Throughout His ministry, Jesus made clear His teachings, corrections, and actions were consistent with the Old Testament. He also judged others teachings and traditions by the Old Testament. He thus demonstrated His affirmation of the Old Testament to be the Word of God.

Jesus even specifically affirmed as historical several disputed stories of the Old Testament. He affirms as true the accounts of Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:4-5), Noah and the flood (Matthew 24:39), Jonah and the whale (Matthew 12:40), Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 10:15), and more.

Jesus confirmed the Old Testament and promised that the Holy Spirit would inspire the apostles in the continuation of His teaching and in the writing of what would become the New Testament (John 14:25-26 and John 16:12-13). The apostles demonstrated that they came with the authority of God through the miracles they performed as Jesus and the Prophets did before them. The book of Acts, which records the miracles of the apostles, has also proven to be a historically accurate record written by a first century eyewitness.

Prophecy

Many religious books claim to be divinely inspired, but only the Bible has evidence of supernatural confirmation. We have seen that Jesus, being God incarnate, affirms the inspiration of the Bible. Another evidence of supernatural confirmation is

the testimony of prophecy. The biblical authors made hundreds of specific prophecies of future events that have come to pass in the manner they were predicted. No book in history can compare to the Bible when it comes to the fulfillment of prophecy.

Here are some examples. Ezekiel 26, which was written in 587 B.C., predicted the destruction of Tyre, a city made up of two parts: a mainland port city, and an island city half a mile off shore. Ezekiel prophesied that Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the city, many nations would fight against her, the debris of the city would be thrown into the ocean, the city would never be found again, and fishermen would come there to lay their nets.

In 573 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the mainland city of Tyre. Many of the refugees of the city sailed to the island, and the island city of Tyre remained a powerful city. In 333 B.C., however, Alexander the Great laid siege to Tyre. Using the rubble of mainland Tyre, he built a causeway to the island city of Tyre. He then captured and completely destroyed the city.

Today, Tyre is a small fishing town where fishing boats come to rest and fishermen spread their nets. The great ancient city of Tyre to this day lies buried in ruins exactly as prophesied. If we were to calculate the odds of this event happening by chance, the figures would be astronomical. No, it was not by coincidence.[\[2\]](#)

Here's another example. There are nearly one hundred prophecies made about Jesus in the Old Testament, prophecies such as His place of birth, how he would die, His rejection by the nation of Israel, and so on. All these prophecies were made hundreds of years before Jesus ever came to earth. Because of the accuracy of the prophecies, many skeptics have believed that they must have been written after A.D. 70—after the birth and death of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem.

They have thereby tried to deny that they are even prophecies.

However, in 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. These scrolls contained the book of Isaiah and other prophetic books. When dated, they were found to be written from 120 to 100 B.C.,{3} well before Jesus was born. It would have been an incredible accomplishment for Jesus to have fulfilled the numerous prophecies. Some say these prophecies were fulfilled by chance, but the odds against this would be exceptionally large. It would take more a greater leap of faith to believe in that chance happening than in the fact that Jesus is God and these prophecies are divinely inspired.

The record of prophecy is thus evidence for the unique and supernatural origin of the Bible.

Unity

The Bible is the only book with supernatural confirmation to support its claim of divine inspiration. The testimony of Christ and the legacy of prophecy are two proofs for inspiration. A third line of evidence is the unity of the Bible.

The Bible covers hundreds of topics, yet it does not contradict itself. It remains united in its theme. Well, what's so amazing about that? you may ask. Consider these facts. First, the Bible was written over a span of fifteen hundred years. Second, it was written by more than forty men from every walk of life. For example, Moses was educated in Egypt, Peter was a fisherman, Solomon was a king, Luke was a doctor, Amos was a shepherd, and Matthew was a tax collector. All the writers were of vastly different occupations and backgrounds.

Third, it was written in many different places. The Bible was written on three different continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. Moses wrote in the desert of Sinai, Paul wrote in a

prison in Rome, Daniel wrote in exile in Babylon, and Ezra wrote in the ruined city of Jerusalem.

Fourth, it was written under many different circumstances. David wrote during a time of war, Jeremiah wrote at the sorrowful time of Israel's downfall, Peter wrote while Israel was under Roman domination, and Joshua wrote while invading the land of Canaan.

Fifth, the writers had different purposes for writing. Isaiah wrote to warn Israel of God's coming judgment on their sin; Matthew wrote to prove to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah; Zechariah wrote to encourage a disheartened Israel who had returned from Babylonian exile; and Paul wrote addressing problems in different Asian and European churches.

If we put all these factors together—the Bible was written over fifteen hundred years by forty different authors at different places, under various circumstances, and addressing a multitude of issues—how amazing that with such diversity, the Bible proclaims a unified message! That unity is organized around one theme: God's redemption of man and all of creation. The writers address numerous controversial subjects yet contradictions never appear. The Bible is an incredible document.

Let me offer you a good illustration. Suppose ten medical students graduating in the same year from medical school wrote position papers on four controversial subjects. Would they all agree on each point? No, we would have disagreements from one author to another. Now look at the authorship of the Bible. All these authors, from a span of fifteen hundred years, wrote on many controversial subjects, yet they do not contradict one another.

It seems one author guided these writers through the whole process: the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:21 states, "No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the

Holy Spirit spoke from God.” The unity of the Bible is just one more amazing proof of the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible.

Archaeology

We’ve studied the testimony of Jesus, prophecy, and the unity of the Bible as providing supernatural confirmation of the divine inspiration of the Bible. Another line of evidence is archaeology. Archaeology does not directly prove the Bible’s inspiration, but it does prove its historical reliability.

Middle Eastern archaeological investigations have proven the Bible to be true and unerringly accurate in its historical descriptions. Nelson Glueck, a renowned Jewish archaeologist, states, “No archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference.”^{4} Dr. William Albright, who was probably the foremost authority in Middle East archaeology in his time, said this about the Bible: “There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament.”^{5} At this time, the number of archaeological discoveries that relate to the Bible number in the hundreds of thousands.^{6}

Archaeology has verified numerous ancient sites, civilizations, and biblical characters whose existence was questioned by the academic world and often dismissed as myths. Biblical archaeology has silenced many critics as new discoveries supported the facts of the Bible.

Here are a few examples of the historical accuracy of the Bible. The Bible records that the Hittites were a powerful force in the Middle East from 1750 B.C. until 1200 B.C. (Genesis 15:20, 2 Samuel 11, and 1 Kings 10:29). Prior to the late nineteenth century, nothing was known of the Hittites outside the Bible, and many critics alleged that they were an invention of the biblical authors.

However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, archaeologists in Turkey discovered a city which proved to be the capital of the Hittite empire. In the city they discovered a massive library of thousands of tablets. These tablets showed that the Hittite language was an early relative of the Indo-European languages.

Another example is the story of Jericho recorded in the book of Joshua. For years, skeptics thought the story of the falling walls of Jericho was a myth. However, recent archaeological discoveries have led several prominent scholars to conclude that the biblical description of the fall of Jericho is consistent with the discoveries they have made. One of the leading archaeologists on Jericho presently is Dr. Bryant Wood. His research has shown that the archaeological evidence matches perfectly with the biblical record.[\[7\]](#)

Archaeology has also demonstrated the accuracy of the New Testament. One of the most well attested to New Testament authors is Luke. Scholars have found him to be a very accurate historian, even in many of his details. In the Gospel of Luke and Acts, Luke names thirty-two countries, fifty-four cities, and nine islands without error.[\[8\]](#) A. N. Sherwin-White states, For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. . . . Any attempt to reject its basic historicity must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted.[\[9\]](#)

There is no other ancient book that has so much archaeological evidence to support its accounts. Since God is a God of truth, we should expect His revelation to present what is historically true. Archaeology presents tangible proof of the historical accuracy of the Bible.

The Bible Alone Is God's Word

We have given several proofs for the divine inspiration of the Bible. These include the testimony of Jesus the divine Son of God, prophecy, unity, and archaeology. Accepting the divine

inspiration of the Bible leads to the conclusion that all other works cannot be divinely inspired. This does not mean other works do not contain truth. All people are created in the image of God and can articulate principles that are true. However, only the Bible proves to be divinely inspired by God and therefore, other claims of divine inspiration should be ruled out for several reasons.

The Bible is the only book that gives supernatural confirmation to support its claim of divine inspiration. Other scriptures which contradict it cannot, therefore, be true.

The law of non-contradiction states that two contradictory statements cannot be true at the same time. If one proposition is known to be true, its opposite must be false. If it is true that I am presently alive, it cannot also be true to say that I am presently not alive. This is a universal law which is practiced daily in every part of the world. Even if you claim, the law of non-contradiction is false, you are asserting this statement is true and its opposite is false. In other words you end up appealing to the law you are trying to deny thus making a self-defeating argument.

Since we have good reason to believe the Bible is the inspired word of God, any teaching that contradicts the Bible must be false. The Bible makes exclusive claims regarding God, truth and salvation that would exclude other scriptures. The Bible teaches that any deity other than the God of the Bible is a false deity (Exodus 20). Jesus declared that he is the divine Son of God, the source of truth, and the only way to eternal life (John 1 & 14:6).

A look at a few works from other religions illustrates this point. The Hindu scriptures include the Vedas and the Upanishads. These books present views of God that are contrary to the Bible. The Vedas are polytheistic, and the Upanishads present a pantheistic worldview of an impersonal divine essence called Brahma, not a personal God.

The Koran, the holy book of Islam, denies the deity of Christ, the triune nature of God, and the atoning work of Christ on the cross (Sura 4:116, 168). These are foundational truths taught in the Bible. The Pali Canon, the holy scriptures of Southern Buddhism, teach a naturalistic worldview (or pantheistic, as some schools interpret it). It also teaches salvation by works and the doctrine of reincarnation. The worldview of the Pali Canon and its view of salvation contradict biblical teachings. Since these works contradict biblical teaching, we reject their claim to divine inspiration.

The Bible alone proves to be divinely inspired and its exclusive claims rule out the claims of other books.

Notes

1. For more information refer to the articles "The Historical Reliability of the Gospels" (probe.org/historical-reliability-of-the-gospels/) and "The Uniqueness of Jesus" (www.probe.org/uniqueness-of-jesus).
2. Ralph H. Alexander, "Ezekiel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 869.
3. Norman Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, (Chicago, IL.: Moody Press, 1986), 364-367.
4. Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert: A History of the Negev* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Cudahy, 1959), 31.
5. William F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1953), 176.
6. Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out* (Eugene, OR.: Harvest House Publishers, 1997), 25.
7. Ibid., 152-53.
8. Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), s.v., Archaeology, New Testament.
9. Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino: Here's Life Publishers, 1999), 66.

“Did Jericho Have Walls Or Not?”

I was reading your article [Archaeology and the Old Testament](#) which states that Jericho was found to have walls. But I was also reading at <http://www.library.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/jerques.htm> which states that Jericho didn't have walls.

I was wondering if you could elaborate further or perhaps explain this apparent contradiction.

There are three Jericho sites: Old Testament Jericho, New Testament Jericho, and modern day Jericho. When referring to the city of Jericho, one must be sure which one we are referring to. Also, the walls of Jericho are not standing up on the surface. When cities are conquered in the Middle East, they are often abandoned and are buried by the sands, and often a new city is built on top of them. So the walls of Ancient Jericho are today below the surface. Two outstanding archaeologists on the site are Dr. Bryant Wood, and Randal Price. Randal Price's web site is www.worldofthebible.com. Thanks for reading the article.

Pat Zukeran

“Evidence that Jesus Didn’t Become the Christ Till Centuries Later?”

I was recently at the A&E (aande.com) website when I came across a set of videos that they offer. One of them titled “Unknown Jesus” caught my eye. I read the short description and they claim to have found evidence that Christ wasn’t assigned the title of Christ until many centuries later by the Greeks and that he may not have existed until a couple of centuries after his proclaimed death. This is supposed archaeological evidence also. Can someone please write me back with your comments please? Thank you.

Thanks for your question. Although I have not seen the tapes, I am familiar with similar arguments. Unfortunately, these men are presenting poor and biased research. The claims they make will not be taken by any serious historian.

Jesus definitely existed in the first century. We have several Jewish and Roman sources clearly telling us so. Josephus, a Jewish historian, recorded the events of Israel for the Roman Empire from 37-100 AD. Not a follower of Christ, he wrote, “Now there appeared about this time Jesus, a wise man if it be lawful to call him a man. He was a doer of wonderful works ... He was the Christ and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had him condemned to the cross...” Tacitus, a Roman historian who wrote in 115 A.D., recorded Nero’s persecution of the Christians. He wrote, “Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of the procurators, Pontius Pilatus...”

Here these historians confirm the existence of Jesus and even give him the title “Christ” in the first century. There are

several other historical accounts outside the New Testament that verify the existence of Jesus. Pliny the Younger, Thallus, Suetonius, etc... We also have the gospels which were circulated in the first century. We have a fragment of the book of John dating as early as 125 A.D. This fragment proves how early the books were written and circulated by the first century. Finished copies of the gospels were around as early as 70 A.D. The gospels base their entire account on a historical person: Jesus and his acts, they clearly claim, happened in the context of history. If their claim was false and Jesus never existed, the gospels would have been refuted by the enemies of Christianity and they would never have lasted because their claims would be proven false. They were written in the generation of the eye witnesses who could have easily disproven their accounts. It is amazing no one doubts or questions the historical existence of Jesus until many centuries later. It is not that Jesus did not exist till centuries later, it is the critics who make this assertion whose arguments do not appear till centuries later. If Jesus never existed, why was this argument not around in the first or second century?

Whatever new archaeology has been found, I do not believe can counter the overwhelming evidence for Jesus being a first century person.

Thanks for writing. I hope this helps.

Patrick Zukeran
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Evidence of Jesus' Existence?

Rusty Wright responds to the 2002 news about the ossuary (bone box) with the very intriguing and unusual inscription "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus."

Rarely these days does Israel make headlines for something other than conflict. But a recent (Fall 2002) announcement about an ancient artifact there attracted wide attention.

Biblical Archaeology Review revealed that a stone ossuary (bone receptacle) has an inscription reading "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus." If authentic, this would be the earliest archaeological find that corroborates biblical references to Jesus.

Andre Lemaire, a French expert on ancient writings from the Sorbonne, suspected the ossuary's significance when he saw it in the owner's private collection.

Time magazine claims that if the ossuary is authentic and the inscription refers to the biblical James, "this would be the most important discovery in the history of New Testament archaeology."

The New Testament in several places refers to James, Jesus' brother. In Matthew 13:53-55, citizens of Jesus' hometown Nazareth mention "His brother...James..." Paul, an early expositor of the faith, refers to "James, the Lord's brother" (Galatians 1:19), a leader of Jerusalem's Christians.

Is the ossuary a first-century antiquity or a later forgery? The Geological Survey of Israel subjected it to rigorous tests. It is made of Jerusalem-area limestone quarried from the first or second century A.D. Its patina (sheen) bears evidence of centuries in a cave and shows no evidence of modern chemicals or disruption. Survey scientists conclude it's not a later forgery.

Paleography, the science of ancient writings, supports the early date. Johns Hopkins paleographer P. Kyle McCarter says the "script is consistent with a date in the middle of the first century A.D." Josephus, a first century Jewish historian, put James' death in 62 A.D.

Does the inscription refer to the biblical James, Joseph and Jesus? Lemaire's statistical analysis argues that in mid-first-century Jerusalem "there were probably about 20 people who could be called 'James son of Joseph brother of Jesus.'"

Only one other known ancient Jewish ossuary inscription mentions a brother. Was this Jesus, James' brother, mentioned because he was well known? Lemaire sees a 90 percent chance that the ossuary's James is the biblical brother of Jesus.

The case has critics. We know nothing of the ossuary's original location; evidence might have been compromised. At least one scholar disagrees with Lemaire's paleographic dating of the box. Some question his statistical basis for eliminating other possible Jameses in Jerusalem and feel that Lemaire overstates his case. But at least one feels he understates it.

Christianity, Judaism and Islam claim historical foundations. Historical and archaeological confirmation – or contradiction – of their writings affects their credibility.

Christian faith does not stand or fall on the authenticity of this ossuary. But if genuine, the ossuary supports the conclusion of the late, renowned Jewish archaeologist Nelson Glueck, who asserted "the almost incredibly accurate historical memory of the Bible, and particularly so when it is fortified by archaeological fact."

Duke University Judaic Studies professor Eric Meyers, while advising caution on the James ossuary, feels "there is a strong possibility that the artifact is what Lemaire says it is: the oldest extra-biblical archaeological evidence of

Jesus.”

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“The Archaeological Evidence for the Bible is Non-Existent!”

The archaeological evidence of the Bible is scarce. In fact, it is non-existent. After 200 years of Christian archaeologists digging up the whole Middle East, they haven't found any proof of the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt, Hebrew Slaves or the Ten Plagues. NONE!!! And this from a nation of people who wrote EVERYTHING down in stone!! And Sinai has no proof of any large group of people travelling through it EVER!!! The first evidence correlating to the biblical story doesn't appear in Canaan archaeology until around 100 years before the Babylonian Captivity (around 600 BC).

This lack of evidence includes persons such as David and Solomon who should be recorded in other nations and supposedly lived relatively close to those who wrote the Bible in the Babylonian Captivity around 500 B.C.

In the words of Shakespeare, “Methinks thou dost protest too much.” It is true that we would like to have more archaeological evidence than we now have. But of course, from an archaeologist's perspective, this is always the case. Further, your assertion that *no* evidence exists, is an overstatement which cannot be substantiated. And it is not accepted by the majority of those scholars who are active in the Levant. I would suspect that you are reading a narrow

spectrum of archaeologists who support your desired conclusions. And there are many European and Israeli archaeologists along with Christian ones who do not share your opinion nor that of those you apparently are reading. Let me give you some examples from these scholars who feel there is substantial evidence mitigating against such a pessimistic stand.

Egypt

I will start here, because there is no doubt that we see clear evidence of Egyptian culture, language, etc., imbedded in both the Old Testament and archaeology. As you may know, the *lingua franca* (official language) used by Heads of State and commerce was Akkadian cuneiform. Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt all conversed with each other in this language. It is a northern Semitic language. If the Israelites actually spent 400 years as slaves in Egypt, we would expect this familiarity of Egyptian language and culture among the Israelites. And if Moses was a real person—a Hebrew brought up in the Royal Egyptian family—he would have probably been tri-lingual, and able to converse in Hebrew, Egyptian and Akkadian.

Exodus, Sinai

We find abundant evidence of an Egyptian heritage and influence throughout the Pentateuch, Joshua, and Judges. As stated above, we would like more archaeological corroboration to clearly identify Biblical names, places, events, etc. For some areas the evidence is strong. For others, it is either sparse, or nonexistent. I will elaborate on this later in considering Jerusalem, but will state here the premise that an *absence* of archaeological data does not necessarily mean there is none. Perhaps we have the *wrong site* (historical Mt. Sinai is an example). Or perhaps we just haven't dug in the *right place*. To argue vigorously from "silence" is not strong proof.

We do have some indications of Egyptian influence on two

biblical elements: the Tabernacle/construction described in Exodus 25-27; 36-38, and the arrangement of the Israelite travel/military camp. The order of the camp and the order of the march are laid out in great detail in Numbers 2. Much of what Egyptian archaeologists have discovered pertaining to the above find many similarities in the structures/construction/arrangement of the various war camps of the Pharaohs.

The desert Tabernacle of the Bible (Exodus 26) is described as one of elaborate design of gold, silver, bronze, wood, linen, goats' hair and leather. It so happens that this desert tent is also the centerpiece of every Egyptian war camp, but it serves as Pharaoh's personal, special tent, not a religious shrine.

The best example comes from a famous battle (at Kadesh) between Ramesses II and the Hittite nation around 1275 B.C. This is one of the most momentous battles in antiquity and the best documented...at Thebes, Karnak, Luxor, Abydos and Abu Simbel—on papyrus and stone, in both poetic and prose forms. The best pictorial is found at Abu Simbel. The parallels between Ramesses' camp and the biblical Tabernacle, beginning with the dimensions, are striking.

- *The camp forms a rectangular courtyard twice as long as it is wide.*
- *The main entrance is located in the middle of the short walls.*
- *A road from the entrance leads directly to a two chamber tent: a reception compartment and directly behind it Pharaoh's chamber. It too has a 2:1 ratio.*
- *The tent and camp lie on an east/west axis with the entrance on the east.*
- *In pharaoh's inner tent is representation on each side of the winged falcon god Horus.*
- *Their wings cover the pharaoh's golden throne in the*

same manner that the wings of the Cherubim covered Yahweh's golden throne/ark (Exodus 35:18-22).

Given your assumption that the Old Testament didn't materialize until the Persian period (fifth century B.C.), we would expect Mesopotamian influence, but we do know from several palatial reliefs found at Nineveh that the Assyrians had a *very different* form of military camp. The camp's perimeter is always *oval* in shape and the form of the king's tent bears little resemblance to the Tabernacle. Where would these sixth century B.C. "authors" come up with this accurate, Egyptian-oriented detail/description seven centuries removed?

I won't elaborate on this (unless you want documentation), but the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, its design, materials, and portability, so graphically designed in Exodus 25:19-22, is also mirrored in Egyptian funerary structures to a high degree of detail.

Another remarkable example is to compare three cities mentioned in Numbers 22 (Dibon); Numbers 13:22; Joshua 10:36,37; Judges 1:10 (Hebron); and Judges 4-5 (Qishon). These passages all describe a well-known, well-traveled road (the Arabah) in the Transjordan from the southern tip of the Dead Sea to the plains of Moab (opposite Jericho). This is not to be confused with the great north-south Kings Highway (also mentioned in the Bible) which stretched from northern Arabia to Syria.

Although Thomas Thompson and other "Rejectionists" claim these cities didn't exist in the late Bronze Age II (1400-1200 B.C.), we have extra-biblical evidence that they *did*. You may know that the Pharaohs recorded, along with their achievements and military exploits, maps and the names of roads, geographical data, etc. We get a rather full picture of this road over time by several pharaohs who mention/describe this specific road on their victory monuments.

The first comes from Thutmosis III (1504-1450 B.C)., who mentions four towns/cities along this road which are also found in the Bible: Iyyim, Dibon, Abel, and Jordan. The second and third come from Amenophis III (1387-1350 B.C.) and Ramesses II (c. 1379-1212 B.C.)—found on the west side of the great hall at Karnak. He mentions two of the names found in the Bible. Further evidence comes from the Moabite stone (ninth century B.C.).

I could go into more detail about this if you are interested, but to summarize what I'm saying, there is evidence from independent and varied sources that such places existed several centuries *before* the proposed dates of the Exodus. Consider this comparison:

Late Bronze Egyptian Name	Biblical Name	Modern Name
(Yamm) ha-Malach	Melah ("Salt")	Yam ha-Melach
Iyyin	Iyyin	Ay
Heres/Hareseth	Heres/Hareseth	Kerak (CH = K)
Aqrabat		al-Aqraba
Dibon/Oartho	Dibon	Dhiban
Iktanu		Tell Iktanu
Abel	Abel-shittim	Tell Hammam
Jordan	Jordan	Jordan (River)

If you will look at Numbers 33:45-50, you would have to say in light of the above that this is a pretty impressive and credible piece of ancient historical writing, and most Bible scholars still consider it so. Its exacting specificity and precision of detail strongly indicates that the ancient historian who wrote it had at least had *sources* that accurately preserved the memory of a road (and cities along its route) used in very early times dating clear back to Late Bronze Age II.

On the face of it, we would have to reject Thomas Thompson (et

al.)'s conclusion that *no* such cities existed at the proposed time of the Exodus. The places mentioned in the Biblical accounts did in fact exist at the time. None of these pieces of information were fabricated centuries later. There would be no purpose to include them (or make them up).

Israelites

I am not going to spend any time trying to convince you that Moses was an historical person, but I would like to refer you to an Egyptian stele in the temple at Thebes which gives us the earliest known mention of Israel. It is a 7.5 foot high funerary monument of Pharaoh Merneptah, who ruled from 1213 to 1203 B.C. As you may know, these monuments outlined a Pharaoh's lifetime accomplishments and were written (or dictated) by him for his tombstone prior to his death. He refers to conquering Israel (among others) and says, "Israel is laid waste, his seed (people) is not." Israel is referred to as "a people," that is, they were already known and acknowledged as a distinct ethnic group at that time! In my mind, this reference provides persuasive, early evidence against those who argue that there was not a distinct people called the Israelites until after the Babylonian Captivity in the sixth century B.C. (600 years later—ridiculous!)

I will be discussing the Amarna Letters (14th century B.C.) in another context later, but will here state that a people designated as the "Hab(or p)iru" (i.e., Habiru) in the Amarna Letters (14th Century B.C.) is still considered by many scholars to be a possible, additional mention of the Hebrews.

Another substantial line of evidence comes from discoveries of a new community in the central hill country of Canaan which sprang up late in the 13th to the 11th centuries B.C. Some 300 small, agricultural villages are now known. They are new in the archaeological record and have certain identifying characteristics which include the layout of the village and the signature (Israel: four-room houses, pottery, and the

absence of pig bones, which are numerous at other sites in trans-Jordan, and the coastal towns [Philistines, Phoenicians]). The above layouts of village and town fit exactly the biblical descriptions found in Joshua, Judges, and Samuel. These newcomers also brought with them new agricultural technology not evidently known heretofore by the Canaanites living there when the Israelites arrived. And it has been pointed out that this new community did not evolve over time (natural, gradual population increase), but rather, migrated into the area more rapidly, and they almost exclusively chose *new* sites to build, instead of taking over existing Canaanite dwellings, and well away from their urban areas.

This new people introduced the terracing of hills for their agricultural needs, which were carefully designed with retaining walls (rock) to take advantage of all rainfall (as well as available springs) coming down to these areas of rocky, sloping terrain. These villages stretch all the way from the hills of the lower Galilee in the north to the Negev in the south. Population estimates at the end of the Bronze age in this area numbered 12,000 (13th century) but grew rapidly to about 55,000 in the 12th century B.C., and then to about 75,000 in the 11th century B.C.

As I mentioned above, another uniqueness in these settlements is that their food system was found by archaeologists to be void of pig bones in excavated remains. This is another indication of a particular, ethnic/religious community. And religiously, there is also a complete absence of any kind of temple, sanctuary, or shrine, and also of any stone idols (deities). This assemblage is sufficiently homogeneous and distinctive to warrant *some* kind of designation, or label. If not Israel, *WHO?* Archaeologist William Dever has suggested naming this 12th to 11th century assemblage of individuals as "proto-Israelites."

David, Solomon, and Jerusalem

As you may know, there is a hot debate going on among archaeologists concerning the tenth century B.C., the purported time of the United Kingdom under David and his son, Solomon. Are they historical figures, or did some author(s) invent these mythical persons centuries later? And what can be said about Jerusalem? There is very little archaeological evidence to substantiate that it existed in the tenth century B.C. as described in the Bible. This has led a small group of archaeologists to conclude David and Solomon never existed, and Jerusalem was not the thriving royal capital of the Israelites. I will develop this in more detail later, but I first want to say again that an *absence* of evidence does not necessarily and automatically bring us to conclude *nothing* was going on in the tenth century B.C. at Jerusalem. This is an argument from silence. There are alternative explanations. First of all, the most likely place where Jerusalem's public buildings and important monuments would be located is on the Temple Mount, which for obvious reasons (Arab occupation), cannot be excavated. Thus, the most important area for investigation to uncover possible confirmation for David and Solomon is off limits to us.

Secondly, even those areas which *are* partially available to excavate—the ridge known as the City of David, for example—was continuously settled from the tenth to the sixth centuries B.C. Destructions leave a distinct mark in the archaeological record. But where there is continuous occupation (i.e. conqueror after conqueror) we would not expect to find remains of earlier building activity for the simple reason that Jerusalem was built on terraces and bedrock. Each new conqueror destroyed what was underneath, robbed and reused stones from earlier structures, and set its foundations again on solid rock.

We mostly have Herod to thank for our present inaccessibility to what lies underneath the flat, massive platform of today's Temple Mount when he began construction in 20/19 B.C. To

accomplish this task of leveling, it is estimated that roughly 1.1 million cubic feet of rock was removed from the northeast corner and was used in the southeastern corner to first fill in a portion of the Kidron Valley and then raise up 150 feet from bedrock with fill to level that side!

So we would not expect to find abundant remains of earlier strata (though there are a few indications [capitals, columns, masonry] of Herod's Temple). For these reasons it is dangerous and misleading to draw negative inferences from the lack of archaeological evidence.

Fortunately, however, we *do* have another means of testing what was happening in Jerusalem even *before* the tenth century B.C. It comes from the Amarna Letters (14th century B.C.) where Jerusalem (referred to as "Urusalim") is specifically mentioned. These 300 documents, written in Akkadian cuneiform, are mostly diplomatic correspondence from local rulers in Canaan to two Pharaohs—Amenophis III [1391-1353] and Amenophis IV (also known as Akhenaten) [1353-1337]. At this time Canaan was under Egyptian hegemony, and Jerusalem was ruled by a local king, or vassal.

It is clear from these documents that 400 years *before* our century in question (tenth century B.C.), Jerusalem was a capital city over a considerable area, and we are told it had a palace, a court with attendants and servants, a temple, and scribes who had charge of diplomatic correspondence with Egyptian authorities. Six letters were sent by the king of Jerusalem to the pharaohs, which confirm a diplomatic sophistication of his court and the quality of his scribe.

Apart from these crucial letters, we find the *archaeological* evidence to confirm this history both *opaque* and *nil*. Scholars would never have guessed from their excavations of Jerusalem that any scribal activity took place there in Late Bronze Age II. We should not be surprised at this, however. From the standpoint of location, elevation, climate, water sources, and

defense, Jerusalem is, and always has been, by far the most choice and desirable place for occupation and settlement. That being the case, we should be surprised if we found *no* indication of ancient activity there.

The truth of the matter is we must realize how little has been recovered; and perhaps how little can ever be recovered from ancient Jerusalem. There is very little from the 17th century, the 16th century, 15th, 14th, 13th, 12th, 11th, 10th, or the 9th century B.C.! Or to put it in other terms, we have little archaeological evidence of Jerusalem for the Late Bronze Age or Iron Age I or from the first couple of centuries of Iron Age II—a period of a *thousand* years!

But it isn't totally void of evidence. The "Stepped Stone" Structure on the eastern ridge of the city of David, the oldest part of Jerusalem, is a mammoth, five-story support for some unknown structure above it. It measures 90 feet high and 130 feet long. The dates given to it by archaeologists range from the late 13th to the late 10th centuries. But whatever the exact date will turn out to be within these centuries, this structure shows that Jerusalem could boast of an impressive architectural achievement(s) and had a population large enough to engage in such huge public works projects. This structure dates to David's time, or earlier. Contrary to some archaeologists who claim "no evidence," some 10th century pottery has been found, though not in great abundance (which holds true for all the other centuries at Jerusalem). Milat Ezar also dates a black juglet found which dates to the tenth century. Ezar also dates the fortifications and gate just above its location as also tenth century B.C.

Granted, the Jerusalem of the United Monarchy was not as grand or glorious as Herod's Jerusalem, but the alternative conclusion that the city was abandoned for a thousand years on the basis of the paucity of archaeological evidence, seems to me to be very improbable. And I reach this conclusion, not on any Biblical evidence, but quite apart from it.

A further example comes from the fifth century B.C., and specifically the rebuilding of the Temple and walls of Jerusalem by Ezra and Nehemiah after the Babylonian captivity (when the Persians allowed the Jews to return). The Temple is assumed not to have been anything beyond a very modest structure. In fact, it was never even referred to by the Jews as the "Second Temple" and was demolished when Herod began his project in the first century B.C. But there is little doubt that Nehemiah's wall was constructed, even though almost no trace of it has been found in excavations. Jerusalem of the Persian period is known only from fills and building fragments and is mainly identified because it is sandwiched between the debris from the Iron Age and the Hellenistic periods. This is another example of the difficulty in recovering strata that developed peacefully and did not end with some catastrophic construction, and thus another caution against drawing negative conclusions from negative archaeological evidence. I will come back to this with some conclusions after we have considered David and Solomon.

David and Solomon

With respect to David, until recently no historical, archaeological evidence has been available to deny or confirm if he lived. But in 1993, the discovery by excavator Avraham Biran of a stone slab (and two additional fragments of same) at the ancient Tel Dan near Mt. Hermon contains an extra-biblical reference to David. The specific words are "Beth David," or, "House of David." This is a formulaic term frequently used, not just by Israel, but by all peoples throughout the Levant to describe a particular dynasty—their own, or other States (political entities). A small group of archaeologists have rejected it out of hand, and some have even suggested that it is probably a forgery *planted* by Avraham Biran himself! In reality, the inscription was found, *in situ*, in *secondary* use, that is, reused and inserted into the outer wall of a gate that was destroyed in the eighth

century B.C. by the Assyrians. Paleographically, experts date it to the ninth century B.C.

The discovery of this artifact presents a terrible problem for the archaeologists you appear to have been reading, because this is a non-Israelite source, outside the Bible, that refers to the dynasty, or "House" of David.

There are two other possible indications (not yet conclusive) which mention David. Kenneth Kitchen (University of Liverpool) makes a strong case for a mention of David by pharaoh Sheshonq I in the tenth century B.C. It is in the temple of Amun at Karnak. This pharaoh is mentioned in I Kings 14:25 (Hebrew: *Shishak*). The exact letters are *dvt*. In the transliteration of words from one Semitic language to another, **d** and **t** are often used interchangeably. We have a clear example of this from the sixth century B.C. in a victory inscription of an Ethiopic ruler who is celebrating his triumphs. He quotes two of David's Psalms (19 and 65), and the reference is *unmistakably* to the Biblical king David. Here too the **t** is used rather than the **d**. Granted, this is sixth century, but it shows an Ethiopic king was aware of and refers to David as a real person and two of his literary efforts.

An additional reference comes from the Moabite Stone (which is not yet completely deciphered). It is also called the Mesha Stele, which is contemporaneous with the Tel Dan inscription (ninth century B.C.) Andre Lemaire, the eminent French paleographer, believes he has detected a reference to the House of David on the Mesha Stele.

With respect to Solomon, we can pretty well document when he ruled (and) died by comparing the King Lists of the Assyrians and the Egyptians with each other as well as with various kings of Judah, of Israel, of Egypt, and Assyria mentioned in Kings, Chronicles, and the Prophets of the O.T.

Astronomy helps us here. The Assyrians recorded a solar

eclipse during the reign of Assur-dan III, and modern astronomers have calculated a firm date that it occurred in 763 B.C. We have from Assyria a record of 261 continuous years, with names and dates of kings as well as the noting of any important events which occurred during each year. We thus have a "peg" for a long line of Assyrian rulers from 910 to 649 B.C.

There is no controversy about the *Divided* kingdom. At some historical time (Solomon's death—930 B.C.) the United Kingdom split, with Rehoboam, Solomon's son, ruling as king of Judah in the south, and simultaneously, Jeroboam I assumed rule of northern Palestine and became the first king of Israel.

Solomon's son, Rehoboam (his reign: 931-913 B.C.) is not mentioned by name in Egyptian or Assyrian records (like Ahab, Jehu, and Jeroboam, etc), but we have a very clear and accurate Egyptian chronology of the ten kings of the XXII Dynasty, beginning with Shoshenq I (Shisack in Hebrew)'s invasion of Israel (926, 925 B.C.) during the time of Rehoboam's reign. (Cf. I Kings 14:35,36; II Chronicles 12:1-9 where this king and this event are recorded.) Both Egyptian and Bible chronologies mirror one another!

We are talking history here. The Bible records this invasion during Rehoboam's reign. Shoshenq chronology confirms the event. And if we can point with accuracy to an event which occurred at the very time the Bible designates Rehoboam and his reign, what assumptions should we come to about the history immediately preceding it? If Rehoboam is an historical figure, why do we assume arbitrarily that his father (Solomon) is a fictitious/mythical character just because we haven't yet been fortunate enough to find archaeological confirmation? Until recently we have said the same thing for a time about many of the items/people/places mentioned above. Again, lack of evidence does not equal "myth."

In the ninth century B.C., Shalmaneser III (859-824 B.C.)

mentions two kings of Israel: Ahab (872-853 B.C.) in 853 B.C. and Jehu (841-818 B.C.) in 841 B.C. Using the Assyrian dates, we can count back the years from 853 B.C. 78 years and arrive at the year of Solomon's death and the beginning of the reigns of both Rehoboam and Jeroboam I (931/930 B.C.) The Biblical chronology *mirrors* these dates. Now, without written records of some kind, how could this clever author(s) of the fifth century B.C., who purportedly conjured up all of this, create such a detailed chronology with such accuracy?

I am not going to go into more detail about Solomon which ties into the hot debate over the tenth century B.C. These involve for example Megiddo, Gezer, and Hazor which the Bible attributes to Solomon with their impressive renovations during this century. We are told in the Bible that Solomon married pharaoh's daughter and gave Gezer to him as her dowry (1 Kings 3:1; 7:8; 9:16,24; 11:1). This Pharaoh was probably Siamun (979-960 B.C.).

In summary, all indications are that Solomon's life took place in the middle of the tenth century B.C. (970-930). Using the Egyptian and Assyrian king lists, which agree with the Biblical royal chronologies, we can pinpoint Solomon's death: 930/931 B.C. We find at this time that the pharaohs were marrying their daughters to various foreign rulers. There is no reason to reject the premise that mini-empires such as David's and Solomon's could flourish in the centuries between 1200-900 B.C. when the power of the two great empires (Egypt and Assyria) began to and did wane.

I do not think one can make a good case that some Hellenistic writer from 300 B.C. would possess the resources/information at that late date to write with such accuracy of the United Kingdom as we find from the biblical sources.

I have borrowed liberally from a host of archaeologists to respond to your question. I have not taken the time to document/footnote all this material which has come from

numerous, well-known archaeologists from Europe, Israel, and the U.S.A.

If you would read a wider spectrum of scholars you will find the vast majority reject your major premise on these areas. I can document all of this if necessary.

Jimmy Williams
Probe Ministries

A (Not So) Brief Defense of Christianity

Faith

Everybody has faith. From the meticulous scientist to the most irrational religious fanatic, everyone believes in something, and everyone acts on that belief somehow. The question is not whether we WILL have faith; it is whether or not the things we believe are true. Unfortunately, many people never evaluate the basis for their beliefs. They go with the flow of society, which today is dominated by the idea of *religious pluralism*. Religious pluralism means that we look at one another's beliefs and in effect say, "I'm OK and you're OK." A remark often heard, especially on campus is, "I don't think it really makes much difference what you believe as long as you're sincere."

Truth

Many of us are hesitant or feel it's wrong to make distinctions between people or their ideas. This is because we feel it is arrogant, exclusionary, undemocratic, or socially inappropriate. We want people to like us, so we try not to be

disagreeable. Ironically, this very pluralistic environment creates a hesitancy to express personal convictions for fear of offending another. In reality, this creates an atmosphere where all views held are of equal value and are therefore "true." It also may explain why so many people today regard themselves as atheists or agnostics. Viewing so many "religious" options which profess to be THE truth, they become agnostics or atheists, disclaiming the religious idea of "faith" altogether. Some militant atheists propose philosophical and scientific "proofs" to explain away the existence of God, hoping to convince others logically. Other atheists and agnostics have not come to their beliefs logically, but rather believe what they do simply because they prefer or are more comfortable with it.

The Need for Apologetics

A committed, thinking Christians desire must be to challenge that complacency. If there is such a thing as truth, and if different worldviews do contradict one another, then we need to make sure that the one we choose is the right one and that we have good reasons for believing it to be so. Further, 1 Peter 3:15 tells us that we are to be ready always to give a "defense" (*apologia*), to give answers, reasons for why we believe as we do. This particular outline is designed to provide some of those answers: thus, the title, "A Brief Defense of Christianity." There are three primary reasons why such apologetical information is important:

1. The religious pluralism rampant in our culture demands it. Many today are spiritually hungry and looking for truth in a culture of "isms" very similar to what we find in the Graeco-Roman world of the New Testament. It was in this kind of cultural environment that Christianity came, flourished, and ultimately dominated Western Civilization for 15 centuries. It has been said that Christianity prevailed because the first Christians "out-thought" and "out-loved" the ancient world. Many contemporary Christians are so enamored of having a

personal “experience” with God in the safety of their various religious enclaves they have little time left to defend the faith and convert the pagans. *Mind Games* is designed to help us better connect with the wider world through solid thinking and loving care.

2. In the light of Peter’s admonition above, Christians are to prepare themselves to share their faith with others and help remove the obstacles to faith which hinder some non-Christians from giving serious consideration to Christ and His claims upon their lives. Apologetics can help remove these obstacles and demonstrate the “reasonableness” of Christianity.

3. Apologetics can also serve to strengthen the faith of young Christians as well as provide them with the discernment necessary to identify and counter non-Christian thinking and worldviews. This enhances personal spiritual growth and better equips the Christian for more effective evangelism. Finally, we noted above that EVERYONE has faithatheist, agnostic, and Christian. The real issue is not to have faith, but rather to have a worthy OBJECT for our faith. As you walk out on a frozen pond, which would you prefer, a LITTLE faith in a sheet of ice two-feet thick, or a LOT of faith in 1/4 inch of ice? Faith is important, but the object of our faith is all-important. The material in this outline is designed to help assure you that to stand upon Christ and the world view which He taught is to rest upon an object most worthy of your faith. To demonstrate this, we are going to ask and then answer some basic questions concerning the truthfulness of the Christian faith.

SECTION I: THEISM

What is the most reasonable worldview?

Metaphysical options

We have stated that the most basic philosophical question is not that NOTHING is here, but rather SOMETHING IS HERE, and it demands explanation. I am a part of some kind of reality. I have consciousness. Something is happening and I am part of it. Where did it come from? Did everything come from nothing? Or has the material universe always been here and things just accidentally got started? Or is there something or someone that transcends the material universe and is responsible for bringing it into being, and us with it? All of these questions relate to the philosophical concept of *metaphysics*. Webster defines it thusly: "That division of philosophy which includes ontology, or the science of being, and cosmology, or the science of the fundamental causes and processes in things."

When we seek to answer these basic questions, then, we are thinking "metaphysically," thinking about the origin and causes of the present reality. And we really have few options, or possible answers to consider:

1. The idea that "something came from nothing." (Most reject this view, since the very idea defies rationality).
2. The idea that matter is eternal and capable of producing the present reality through blind chance. This second view has spawned two basic worldviews: *Materialism* (or *Naturalism*) and *Pantheism*. Both hold to the idea that nothing exists beyond matter. Materialism is therefore atheistic by definition. Pantheism is similar with the exception that since God does not exist, nature becomes "god" in all its parts.
3. The idea that Someone both transcends and did create the material universe of which we are a part (*Theism*). THERE ARE NO OTHER LOGICAL EXPLANATIONS. Christians of course would embrace this third view, theism, as the most reasonable explanation for what we believe AND for what we find to be true in ourselves and in reality at large. These ideas will be

developed more fully in the section on the arguments for the existence of God.

In order to argue for the truth of Christianity, therefore, we must begin with the existence of God. Christianity is a theistic religion. That is, we believe that there is one God who created all things. This is not simply a statement of blind faith. There are sound and rational reasons for preferring this view above the others. We will begin to explore those, but first, let's briefly evaluate atheism and agnosticism.

Atheism and Agnosticism

Atheism

Ever since the "Enlightenment" in the eighteenth century, philosophers have argued that ALL of reality is to be observed only in space and time. Any notion of a God who is transcendent, eternal, and not bound by natural laws has been largely rejected as "unscientific" or "unprovable." Since we cannot "prove" the existence or the non-existence of God, they reason, there is no real benefit or practical value in considering theism as a metaphysical option. An atheist is a person who makes the bold assertion, "There is no God." It is bold because it claims in an absolute manner what we have just said was not possible: i.e., the existence or non-existence of God cannot be proven. It is also bold because in order to make such an assertion, the atheist would have to be God himself. He would need to possess the qualities and capabilities to travel the entire universe and examine every nook and cranny of the material world before he would even begin to be qualified to come to such a dogmatic conclusion.

The most brilliant, highly-educated, widely-traveled human on earth today, having maximized his/her brain cells at optimum learning levels for a lifetime could not possibly "know" 1/1000th of all that *could* be known; and knowledge is now

doubling by the years rather than by decades or centuries! Is it possible that God could still exist outside this very limited, personal/knowledge experience of one highly intelligent human being? By faith, the atheist says, "No." Another curious thing about the atheist is that before he can identify himself as one, he must first *acknowledge* the very idea, or concept, or possibility of God so he can then *deny* His existence! David saw the fallacy of this long ago when he said, "Only the fool has said in his heart, 'there is no God.'" (Psalm 14:1). (Note: For those who desire additional, more formal material on the existence of God, see the Appendix at the end of this outline, where this subject is addressed in greater detail by such philosophers as Anthony Flew, Ludwig Feuerbach, and David Hume).[Editor's note: Anthony Flew disavowed his atheism in 2005 after grappling with the impossibility of DNA arising from purely naturalistic, random forces.]

Agnosticism

By definition, agnosticism takes the position that "neither the existence nor the nature of God, nor the ultimate origin of the universe is known or knowable" (Webster). Here again are some bold statements. The agnostic says, "You can't know." What he really means is, "I can't know, you can't know, and nobody can know." Leith Samuel in his little book, *Impossibility of Agnosticism*, mentions three kinds of agnostics:

1. *Dogmatic*. "I don't know, you don't know, and no one can know." Here is a person who already has his mind made up. He has the same problem as the atheist above he must know everything in order to say it dogmatically.
2. *Indifferent*. "I don't know, and I don't care." God will never reveal Himself to someone who does not care to know.
3. *Dissatisfied*. "I don't know, but I'd like to know." Here is a person who demonstrates an openness to truth and is willing

to change his position if he has sufficient reason to do so. He is also demonstrating what should be true about agnosticism, that is, for one who is searching for truth, agnosticism should be temporary, a path on the way to a less skeptical view of life.

Theism

Those who have not found atheism and agnosticism philosophically, scientifically, or personally satisfying may, at some time in their lives consider the third alternative, that of theism. They may come to ask our next question:

“Is it reasonable to believe that God exists?”

Theism is a reasonable idea. Theologians have traditionally used several philosophical proofs in arguing for the existence of God. These arguments are not always persuasive, but that probably says as much about us as it does about the arguments. People most often reject God for reasons other than logic. These arguments, however, do provide insights that, while not PROVING the existence of God, do provide insights that may be used to show EVIDENCE of His existence.

The Cosmological Argument

The cosmological argument is quite similar to one that the Bible uses in Psalm 19, Psalm 8, and Romans 1. The existence of the “cosmos,” the creation, strongly suggests the existence of a Creator. Central to this argument is the following proposition: If anything now exists, something must be eternal. Otherwise, something not eternal must have emerged from nothing. If something exists right now, it must have come from something else, come from nothing, or always existed. If it came from something else, then that something else must have come from nothing, always existed, or come from something else itself. Ultimately, either something has always existed, or at some point something came into being from nothing.

Someone may argue that it is possible that nothing now exists. That is both absurd and self-defeating, because someone must personally exist in order to make the statement that nothing exists. Therefore it is undeniable that we ourselves exist.

Therefore, if I exist, then something must be eternal. If something is eternal, it is then either an eternal being or an eternal universe. Scientific evidence strongly suggests that the universe is not eternal, but that it had a beginning. In addition, if the non-personal universe is that which is eternal, one must explain the presence of personal creatures within that universe. How does personal come from non-personal? If something is eternal and personal while the universe is finite and non-personal, then there must be an eternal being. If there is an eternal being, that being must by definition have certain characteristics. He must have always existed, and he must be the ultimate cause of all that we can see. He must possess infinite knowledge, or else he himself would be limited, not eternal. Similarly, he must possess infinite power and an unchanging nature.

We do not have to go very far with these arguments to realize that we are describing the God of the Bible. One of the questions asked most frequently concerning this cosmological argument is, "Where did God come from?" While it is reasonable to ask this question about the universe, since as stated above, the strongest evidence argues for a universe which had a beginning. Asking that same question of God is irrational, since it implies of Him something found only in the finite universe: time. By definition, something eternal must exist outside both time and space. God has no beginning; He IS (Exod. 3:14).

The Teleological Argument

Another philosophical argument for the existence of God is the teleological argument. This comes from the Greek word *telos*, meaning "end" or "goal." The idea behind this argument is that

the observable order in the universe demonstrates that it functions according to an intelligent design. The classic expression of this argument is William Paley's analogy of the watchmaker in his book, *Evidences*. If we were walking on a beach and found a watch in the sand, we would not assume that it washed up on the shore having been formed through the natural processes of the sea. We would assume that it had been lost by its owner and that somewhere there was a watchmaker who had designed it and built it with a specific purpose.

Some evolutionists maintain that the argument from design has been invalidated by the theory of natural selection. Richard Dawkins, a scientist at Oxford, even speaks of evolution as "The Blind Watchmaker," saying that it brings order without purpose. However, the theory of evolution faces major obstacles in scientific circles to this day, and it is grossly inadequate in its explanation of the ordered species of animals in this world. The best explanation for the order and complexity that we see in nature is that the divine Designer created it with a purpose and maintains all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17).

The Moral Argument

The moral argument recognizes humankind's universal and inherent sense of right and wrong (cf. Rom. 2:14,15) and says this comes from more than societal standards. All cultures recognize honesty as a virtue along with wisdom, courage, and justice. These are thought of as absolutes, but they cannot be absolute standards apart from an absolute authority! The changeless character of God is the only true source of universal moral principles; otherwise all morality would be relative to culture preferences (See ["Rights and Wrongs"](#) outline). Each of these arguments follows the same basic pattern. What we see in the creation must have come from a sufficient cause. This is the argument of Romans 1, and it is the argument used by Paul in Acts 14 and 17. God has provided us with a witness to Himself in the creation, and we are

called upon to believe in Him on the basis of what we have seen Him do: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20).

Pantheism

Pantheism offers a self-defeating alternative. Pantheism is the belief that all is god. Pantheists maintain that there are no real distinctions between persons, creatures, or objects; that all is divine. For many years, the only pantheists most of us would have been exposed to were Buddhists. However, with the rise of the New Age movement, which is extremely pantheistic, pantheism has become a very popular worldview in North America. The hope of pantheism is an irrational one. Evil is regarded as an illusion, however real it may seem, and the cruel actions of others are attributed to their misunderstanding, or non-enlightenment. Shirley MacLaine, an actress who has been one of the most popular spokespersons for the New Age movement, writes, "There is no such thing as evil or good. There is only enlightened awareness or ignorance."

Since all is one and all is divine, there are no real contradictions. There are no black-and-white distinctions between truth and falsity. Instead, reality consists of that which seems contradictory, but really is not. Buddhists are sometimes encouraged to meditate on "the sound of one hand clapping." There can be no sound with just one hand, and that's the point. For the pantheist, reality is irrational. Since there are not distinctions and all is divine according to pantheists, Shirley MacLaine and others believe themselves to be perfectly justified in declaring, "I am God." This "realization" is thought to be the key to unlocking one's true potential, for to realize you are God is to realize that you have no finite limitations. But that is the precise problem with the claim. If God does not have limited knowledge and abilities, why would we have to grow in knowledge if we are

God? Why would we even have to come to the conclusion that we are divine? If we are unlimited, why are we so limited that we do not always realize we are unlimited? If New Age pantheism violates reason, as it obviously and admittedly does, then how can it be defended? We are told that the concepts cannot be adequately comprehended apart from one's personal experience of them, but the fact is that reality is logical. To argue that logic does not apply to reality would be self-defeating, because one cannot make the claim without using logic. Reality IS logical, and there are distinctions in our world. I am not you, and you are not me. Common sense tells us that as we converse. The pantheistic option, then, is both illogical and self-defeating. It is tragic that it has become such a popular viewpoint in our day.

The Possibility of God

Some five hundred years ago the rise of modern science initiated a process we could call the "demythologizing of nature," the material world. Superstition and ignorance had ascribed spirit life to forest, brook, and mountain. Things that were not understood scientifically were routinely designated as the hand of supernatural forces at work.

Theistic Skepticism

Slowly, the mysterious, the spiritual dimension was drained away as scholars and scientists provided natural explanations and theories for how and why things worked quite apart from supernatural forces. Man and earth were now no longer at the center of the universe with the sun, the planets, and the stars revolving around this uniquely important globe. Human significance diminished in the vastness of the cosmos, and only time, not God, was needed to explain the totality of the natural order.

Re-emergence of the Spiritual

Ironically, the same science which took God away then, is

bringing the possibility of His existence back today. Physics and quantum mechanics have now brought us to the edge of physicality, to the extent that the sub-atomic particle structure is described by some as characterized more as spirit, ghost-like in quality. Neurophysiologists grapple with enigmatic observations which suggest that the mind transcends the brain. Psychology has developed an entirely new branch of study (parapsychology) which postulates that psycho-spiritual forces (ESP, Biofeedback, etc.) beyond the physical realm actually function. Molecular biologists and geneticists, faced with the highly-ordered and complex structures of DNA, ascribed a word implying "intelligence" to the chaining sequences: "the genetic CODE." Astrophysics has settled on the "Big Bang theory," one which seems to contradict the idea that matter is eternal, but rather that the universe had a definite beginning. Huge as it is, the universe appears to be finite.

The Reasonability of Theism

It certainly seems more reasonable to believe that God exists than to suggest the alternatives explored above. And this brings us to the next important question.

III. If God does exist, how could we know He is there?

Introduction

Herbert Spencer, an agnostic, once pointed out that no bird ever flew out of the heavens and therefore concluded that man cannot know God." What Spencer is saying is that man in his finiteness, like the bird, can only go so far and no farther. There is a ceiling, a veil which separates us from God, and we are helpless to penetrate it from our side and find Him. Tennessee Williams, in his drama, "Sweet Bird of Youth," was making the same point when his character, the "Heckler," comes on stage and says, "I believe that the long silence of God, the absolute speechlessness of Him is a long, long and awful

thing that the world is lost because of, and I think that it is yet to be broken to any man." These statements hit on a crucial point of epistemology (how we know). If God does not exist, then knowing can come to us only through one of two avenues: experience (empiricism) or reason (rationalism).

The Possibility of Revelation

What both of these men are saying is simply that if God does exist, man cannot make contact with Him through any effort of his own. But both have forgotten one other very important possibility. If God exists and so desires, would He be able to penetrate the veil from HIS side and make His presence known? Of course He could. The next question would logically be, "Has He ever done so?" Christians would answer a resounding, "Yes!" God did so in the Person of Jesus Christ. "The Word Who was with God and was God became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory" (John 1:1,14). Theologically, this event is called the Incarnation. If true, humans have an additional source of knowing truth—revelation.

Who Was Jesus?

There have been many great and outstanding men and women of history. But Christian and non-Christian alike would have to agree that Jesus of Nazareth has had the greatest and most far-reaching impact on earth than any person who ever walked the planet. One anonymous writer said,

*All the armies that ever marched,
all the navies that ever sailed,
all the parliaments that have ever sat, put together,
have not affected life on this planet as much as has that
One Solitary Life.*

What do we really know about this Jesus? Some think Him merely

a man, the founder of a religion, like Muhammad or Zoroaster. Others believe He lived, but His followers embellished the story and made a god out of him. Or they postulate that He was either a clever “con man” who purposefully engineered His personal circumstances toward Messianic ends, or a paranoid schizophrenic with “delusions of grandeur.” Still others don’t even believe He was ever an historical person. For them Jesus is a mythological figure. Before we can examine His Person, His Work, and His extraordinary claim to be the Son of God in human flesh, we must first determine if He every actually lived, and if so, what can the source materials tell us about the kind of man He was and about the things He did or said.

Was Jesus a Historical Person?

Introduction

Let us begin by saying that Christianity is rooted in history. Christ’s birth was counted in a Roman census, and his death was no doubt recorded in the Roman Archives. What do we know about Him? We are solely dependent upon the accuracy and the validity of the sources handed down to us. But what do we know about Julius Caesar? Charlemagne? George Washington, or any other person of history? We must rely on those sources which have survived and give information concerning their lives.

Extra-Biblical Sources

Ignoring for the moment the reliability of the biblical documents concerning Jesus, we will examine other sources from antiquity which verify that Jesus actually lived in the first century.

Jewish Sources

Josephus (37-95 A.D.). “And there arose about this time Jesus, a wise man . . . for he was a doer of marvelous deeds, a teacher of men who receive the truth with pleasure. He led away many Jews, and also many of the Greeks. . . . And when

Pilate had condemned him to the cross on his impeachment by the chief men among us, those who had loved him at first did not cease . . . and even now the tribe of Christians, so named after him, has not yet died out."

Rabbinical Writings. After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Jewish religious scholars began to codify the legal and theological traditions of Jewry based on the Old Testament. The Mishnah (legal code) and the Gemara (commentaries on the Mishnah) developed in the early A.D. centuries to form The Talmud which was reduced from an oral tradition to writing about 500 A.D. There are a number of statements or allusions to Jesus and Christianity contained within. F. F. Bruce points out that while most of these references were hostile, they all refer without question to Jesus as a historical person. He says, "According to the earlier Rabbis whose opinions are recorded in these writings, Jesus of Nazareth was a transgressor in Israel, who practiced magic, scorned the words of the wise, led the people astray, and said he had not come to destroy the law but to add to it. He was hanged on Passover Eve for heresy and misleading the people. His disciples, of whom five are named, healed the sick in his name."

Roman Sources

Cornelius Tacitus (55-117 A.D.). (Regarding Nero and the burning of Rome in 64 A.D.): "Hence to suppress the rumor, he falsely charged with the guilt and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius. . ." (Annals, XV.44).

Seutonius (). In his work, *Life of Nero*, Seutonius also mentions the Christians in conjunction with the Great Fire of Rome: "Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men addicted to a novel and mischievous superstition."

Another possible reference to Christians may be found in his *Life of Claudius*: "As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome."

Pliny the Younger (). In 112 A.D. Pliny Secundus, governor of Bithynia in Asia, wrote to Emperor Trajan requesting advice about how to deal with the "Christian" problem: "they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang an anthem to Christ as God, and bound themselves by a solemn oath not to commit any wicked deed, but to abstain from all fraud, theft and adultery, never to break their word, or deny a trust when called upon to honor it; after which it was their custom to separate, and then meet again to partake of food, but food of an ordinary and innocent kind."

Archeology/Artifacts

Ossuaries. Hebrew University professor E. L. Sukenik found in 1945 what he believed to be the earliest record of Christianity: two inscriptions scratched on two ossuaries (containers for human bones) found near Jerusalem. One was a prayer to Jesus for help; the other prayed Jesus would raise from the dead the person whose bones were contained therein.

Name of Pontius Pilate. While Josephus and Tacitus both name Pontius Pilate in their writings, artifacts are stronger evidence. In 1971, Pilate's actual name was found in Caesarea Maritima by archeologists. "Found in a step of the theater, it was originally part of a nearby temple. The Latin reads, 'Pontius Pilate, the Prefect of Judea, has dedicated to the people of Caesarea a temple in honor of Tiberius.'

The Cross. For Paul and the other New Testament writers to speak of the cross as a symbol of faith, would be the equivalent of our doing the same thing today with the electric chair. Yet Tertullian (145-220 A.D.) speaks of its early

prominence in the Christian community: “In all travels and movements, in all our coming in and going out, in putting on our shoes, at the bath, at the table, in lighting our candles, in lying down, in sitting down, whatever employment occupies us, we mark our forehead with the sign of the cross.”

Conclusion

Without the aid of the biblical documents, we here find a Christianity and a Jesus with which we are familiar, a perspective that moves from “a good and wise man, a doer of wonderful works” to one who “practiced sorcery and beguiled and led astray Israel.” From the annals of history, we know that this man, Yeshua, underwent trial and persecution by the reigning religious and Roman authorities (including the name of the Procurator (Pilate) who pronounced sentence upon him), was executed by crucifixion, and that his teachings became the foundation for a “cult” of religious worshippers called Christians. These sources corroborate, rather than contradict, the Jesus portrayed in the biblical documents. We now turn to the crucial question of how reliable these documents are.

SECTION II: ARE THE BIBLICAL DOCUMENTS RELIABLE?

Introduction

How do we know that the Bible we have today is even close to the original? Haven't copiers down through the centuries inserted and deleted and embellished the documents so that the original message of the Bible has been obscured? These questions are frequently asked to discredit the sources of information from which the Christian faith has come to us.

Three Errors To Avoid

1. Do not assume inspiration or infallibility of the

documents, with the intent of attempting to prove the inspiration or infallibility of the documents. Do not say the bible is inspired or infallible simply because it claims to be. This is circular reasoning.

2. When considering the original documents, forget about the present form of your Bible and regard them as the collection of ancient source documents that they are.

3. Do not start with modern “authorities” and then move to the documents to see if the authorities were right. Begin with the documents themselves.

Procedure for Testing a Document's Validity

In his book, *Introduction in Research in English Literary History*, C. Sanders sets forth three tests of reliability employed in general historiography and literary criticism.[\[1\]](#) These tests are:

Bibliographical (i.e., the textual tradition from the original document to the copies and manuscripts of that document we possess today)

Internal evidence (what the document claims for itself)

External evidence (how the document squares or aligns itself with facts, dates, persons from its own contemporary world).

It might be noteworthy to mention that Sanders is a professor of military history, not a theologian. He uses these three tests of reliability in his own study of historical military events.

We will look now at the bibliographical, or textual evidence for the Bible's reliability.

The Old Testament

For both Old and New Testaments, the crucial question is: "Not having any original copies or scraps of the Bible, can we reconstruct them well enough from the oldest manuscript evidence we *do* have so they give us a true, undistorted view of actual people, places and events?"

The Scribe

The scribe was considered a professional person in antiquity. No printing presses existed, so people were trained to copy documents. The task was usually undertaken by a devout Jew. The Scribes believed they were dealing with the very Word of God and were therefore extremely careful in copying. They did not just hastily write things down. The earliest complete copy of the Hebrew Old Testament dates from c. 900 A.D.

The Massoretic Text

During the early part of the tenth century (916 A.D.), there was a group of Jews called the Massoretes. These Jews were meticulous in their copying. The texts they had were all in capital letters, and there was no punctuation or paragraphs. The Massoretes would copy Isaiah, for example, and when they were through, they would total up the number of letters. Then they would find the middle letter of the book. If it was not the same, they made a new copy. All of the present copies of the Hebrew text which come from this period are in remarkable agreement. Comparisons of the Massoretic text with earlier Latin and Greek versions have also revealed careful copying and little deviation during the thousand years from 100 B.C. to 900 A.D. But until this century, there was scant material written in Hebrew from antiquity which could be compared to the Masoretic texts of the tenth century A.D.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

In 1947, a young Bedouin goat herdsman found some strange clay

jars in caves near the valley of the Dead Sea. Inside the jars were some leather scrolls. The discovery of these "Dead Sea Scrolls" at Qumran has been hailed as the outstanding archeological discovery of the twentieth century. The scrolls have revealed that a commune of monastic farmers flourished in the valley from 150 B.C. to 70 A.D. It is believed that when they saw the Romans invade the land they put their cherished leather scrolls in the jars and hid them in the caves on the cliffs northwest of the Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea Scrolls include a complete copy of the Book of Isaiah, a fragmented copy of Isaiah, containing much of Isaiah 38-6, and fragments of almost every book in the Old Testament. The majority of the fragments are from Isaiah and the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). The books of Samuel, in a tattered copy, were also found and also two complete chapters of the book of Habakkuk. In addition, there were a number of nonbiblical scrolls related to the commune found.

These materials are dated around 100 B.C. The significance of the find, and particularly the copy of Isaiah, was recognized by Merrill F. Unger when he said, "This complete document of Isaiah quite understandably created a sensation since it was the first major Biblical manuscript of great antiquity ever to be recovered. Interest in it was especially keen since it antedates by more than a thousand years the oldest Hebrew texts preserved in the Massoretic tradition."[2](#)

The supreme value of these Qumran documents lies in the ability of biblical scholars to compare them with the Massoretic Hebrew texts of the tenth century A.D. If, upon examination, there were little or no textual changes in those Massoretic texts where comparisons were possible, an assumption could then be made that the Massoretic Scribes had probably been just as faithful in their copying of the other biblical texts which could not be compared with the Qumran material.

What was learned? A comparison of the Qumran manuscript of Isaiah with the Massoretic text revealed them to be extremely close in accuracy to each other: "A comparison of Isaiah 53 shows that only 17 letters differ from the Massoretic text. Ten of these are mere differences in spelling (like our "honor" and the English "honour") and produce no change in the meaning at all. Four more are very minor differences, such as the presence of a conjunction (and) which are stylistic rather than substantive. The other three letters are the Hebrew word for "light." This word was added to the text by someone after "they shall see" in verse 11. Out of 166 words in this chapter, only this one word is really in question, and it does not at all change the meaning of the passage. We are told by biblical scholars that this is typical of the whole manuscript of Isaiah." {3}

The Septuagint

The Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, also confirms the accuracy of the copyists who ultimately gave us the Massoretic text. The Septuagint is often referred to as the LXX because it was reputedly done by seventy Jewish scholars in Alexandria around 200 B.C. The LXX appears to be a rather literal translation from the Hebrew, and the manuscripts we have are pretty good copies of the original translation.

Conclusion

In his book, *Can I Trust My Bible*, R. Laird Harris concluded, "We can now be sure that copyists worked with great care and accuracy on the Old Testament, even back to 225 B.C. . . . indeed, it would be rash skepticism that would now deny that we have our Old Testament in a form very close to that used by Ezra when he taught the word of the Lord to those who had returned from the Babylonian captivity." {4}

The New Testament

The Greek Manuscript Evidence

There are more than 4,000 different ancient Greek manuscripts containing all or portions of the New Testament that have survived to our time. These are written on different materials.

Papyrus and Parchment

During the early Christian era, the writing material most commonly used was *papyrus*. This highly durable reed from the Nile Valley was glued together much like plywood and then allowed to dry in the sun. In the twentieth century many remains of documents (both biblical and non-biblical) on papyrus have been discovered, especially in the dry, arid lands of North Africa and the Middle East.

Another material used was *parchment*. This was made from the skin of sheep or goats, and was in wide use until the late Middle Ages when paper began to replace it. It was scarce and more expensive; hence, it was used almost exclusively for important documents.

Examples

1. Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus

These are two excellent parchment copies which date from the 4th century (325-450 A.D.). Sinaiticus contains the entire New Testament, and Vaticanus contains most of it.[\[5\]](#)

2. Older Papyri

Earlier still, fragments and papyrus copies of portions of the New Testament date from 100 to 200 years (180-225 A.D.) before Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. The outstanding ones are the Chester Beatty Papyri (P45, P46, P47) and the Bodmer Papyri II, XIV, XV (P66, P75).

From these five manuscripts alone, we can construct all of Luke, John, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Hebrews, and portions of Matthew, Mark, Acts, and Revelation. Only the Pastoral Epistles (Titus, 1 and 2 Timothy) and the General Epistles (James, 1 and 2 Peter, and 1, 2, and 3 John) and Philemon are excluded.{6}

3. Oldest Fragment

Perhaps the earliest piece of Scripture surviving is a fragment of a papyrus codex containing John 18:31-33 and 37. It is called the Rylands Papyrus (P52) and dates from 130 A.D., having been found in Egypt. The Rylands Papyrus has forced the critics to place the fourth gospel back into the first century, abandoning their earlier assertion that it could not have been written then by the Apostle John.{7}

4. This manuscript evidence creates a bridge of extant papyrus and parchment fragments and copies of the New Testament stretching back to almost the end of the first century.

Versions (Translations)

In addition to the actual Greek manuscripts, there are more than 1,000 copies and fragments of the New Testament in Syria, Coptic, Armenian, Gothic, and Ethiopic, as well as 8,000 copies of the Latin Vulgate, some of which date back almost to Jerome's original translation in 384 400 A.D.

Church Fathers

A further witness to the New Testament text is sourced in the thousands of quotations found throughout the writings of the Church Fathers (the early Christian clergy [100-450 A.D.] who followed the Apostles and gave leadership to the fledgling church, beginning with Clement of Rome (96 A.D.)).

It has been observed that if all of the New Testament manuscripts and Versions mentioned above were to disappear

overnight, it would still be possible to reconstruct the entire New Testament with quotes from the Church Fathers, with the exception of fifteen to twenty verses!

A Comparison

The evidence for the early existence of the New Testament writings is clear. The wealth of materials for the New Testament becomes even more significant when we compare it with other ancient documents which have been accepted without question.

Author and Work	Author's Lifespan	Date of Events	Date of Writing*	Earliest Extant MS**	Lapse: Event to Writing	Lapse: Event to MS
Matthew, <i>Gospel</i>	ca. 0-70?	4 BC – AD 30	50 – 65/75	ca. 200	<50 years	<200 years
Mark, <i>Gospel</i>	ca. 15-90?	27 – 30	65/70	ca. 225	<50 years	<200 years
Luke, <i>Gospel</i>	ca. 10-80?	5 BC – AD 30	60/75	ca. 200	<50 years	<200 years
John, <i>Gospel</i>	ca. 10-100	27-30	90-110	ca. 130	<80 years	<100 years
Paul, <i>Letters</i>	ca. 0-65	30	50-65	ca. 200	20-30 years	<200 years
Josephus, <i>War</i>	ca. 37-100	200 BC – AD 70	ca. 80	ca. 950	10-300 years	900-1200 years
Josephus, <i>Antiquities</i>	ca. 37-100	200 BC – AD 65	ca. 95	ca. 1050	30-300 years	1000-1300 years
Tacitus, <i>Annals</i>	ca. 56-120	AD 14-68	100-120	ca. 850	30-100 years	800-850 years
Seutonius, <i>Lives</i>	ca. 69-130	50 BC – AD 95	ca. 120	ca. 850	25-170 years	750-900 years
Pliny, <i>Letters</i>	ca. 60-115	97-112	110-112	ca. 850	0-3 years	725-750 years

Plutarch, <i>Lives</i>	ca. 50-120	500 BC – AD 70	ca. 100	ca. 950	30-600 years	850-1500 years
Herodotus, <i>History</i>	ca. 485-425 BC	546-478 BC	430-425 BC	ca. 900	50-125 years	1400-1450 years
Thucydides, <i>History</i>	ca. 460-400 BC	431-411 BC	410-400 BC	ca. 900	0-30 years	1300-1350 years
Xenophon, <i>Anabasis</i>	ca. 430-355 BC	401-399 BC	385-375 BC	ca. 1350	15-25 years	1750 years
Polybius, <i>History</i>	ca. 200-120 BC	220-168 BC	ca. 150 BC	ca. 950	20-70 years	1100-1150 years

*Where a slash occurs, the first date is conservative, and the second is liberal.

**New Testament manuscripts are fragmentary. Earliest complete manuscript is from ca. 350; lapse of event to complete manuscript is about 325 years.

Conclusion

In his book, *The Bible and Archaeology*, Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, former director and principal librarian of the British Museum, stated about the New Testament, “The interval, then, between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.”[\[8\]](#)

To be skeptical of the twenty-seven documents in the New Testament, and to say they are unreliable is to allow all of

classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as these in the New Testament.

B. F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort, the creators of *The New Testament in Original Greek*, also commented: "If comparative trivialities such as changes of order, the insertion or omission of the article with proper names, and the like are set aside, the works in our opinion still subject to doubt can hardly mount to more than a thousandth part of the whole New Testament."[\[9\]](#) In other words, the small changes and variations in manuscripts change no major doctrine: they do not affect Christianity in the least. The message is the same with or without the variations. We have the Word of God.

The Anvil? God's Word

Last eve I passed 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 all 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 hammer's gone.

Author unknown

Notes

1. C.Sanders, *Introduction in Research in English Literacy* (New York: MacMillan, 1952), 143.
2. Merrill F. Unger, *Famous Archaeological Discoveries* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), 72.
3. R. Laird Harris, *Can I Trust My Bible?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1963), 124.
4. Ibid., 129-30.
5. Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Handbook* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967), 892.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Sir Fredric Kenyon, *The Bible and Archaeology* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940), 288ff.
9. B.F. Westcott, and F.J.A. Hort, eds., *New Testament in Original Greek*, 1881, vol. II, 2.

SECTION III: WHO WAS JESUS?

Jesus Was a Man of History

Having established above the overwhelming historical reliability of the extra-biblical and biblical source

documents concerning His life, only dishonest scholarship would lead one to the conclusion that Jesus never lived. From the evidence, there is a high probability that He did, and we can therefore discard the notion that He is only a mythological figure, like Zeus or Santa Claus.

Jesus Is the Unique Man of History

But there seems to be a problem for many with the portrayal of Jesus in the source documents. He does things which defy our rationality. He is born of a virgin. He makes strange statements about Himself and His mission. After years of obscurity, He appears for a brief time in a flurry of public ministry in a small and insignificant province of the Roman Empire. He loves and heals and serves. He is a master teacher, but all of His teaching points to Himself, to His identity. The following claims which He makes concerning Himself are extraordinary.

The Claims of Christ

1. Able to forgive sins (Mark 2:5-10).
2. A Healer of disease (Mark 5:21).
3. Allows others to worship Him (Matt. 14:33, 28:9; cf. also Acts 10:25,26;14:12-15).
4. Claims to be "other worldly" in origin and destiny (John 6:38).
5. Performs miracles over nature (Luke 9:16,17).
6. Claims He has absolute, moral purity (John 8:46, 2 Cor. 5:21).
7. Claimed to be God, Messiah, and the way to God (Mark 14:61,62; John 10:30; 14:6-9).
8. Claimed to be the fulfillment of all Messianic prophecies

in the Old Testament (John 5:46-7; Luke 24:44).

9. Allowed others to call Him God and Messiah (John 20:29; Matt. 16:15-17).

Responding to the Claims

The wide divergence of opinion about who Jesus really was is not based, as we have seen, on a lack of good and adequate historical evidence; it rather comes from grappling with His unique and audacious claims listed above. There is no intellectually honest way to carve up the documents according to our own liking and philosophical preferences. Many have done this, including a great American patriot and president, Thomas Jefferson. He admired Jesus as a moral man, but would have nothing to do with the supernatural elements found in the documents. Using scissors and paste, the Sage of Monticello left on the cutting floor anything, he felt, which contravened the laws of nature. Jefferson entitled his creation, *The Life and Morals of Jesus*. Only 82 columns, or little more than one tenth of the 700 columns in the King James Bible remained. The other nine tenths of the gospel record were discarded. His book ended with the words, "There laid they Jesus (John 19:42) . . . and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre and departed (Matt. 28:60)." One way to deal with the claims is to remove the historical material which is offensive to us, such as Jefferson did. The other option is to honestly accept the historical accuracy of the documents and come up with a plausible explanation. Our choices are reduced to one of four: He was either a Liar, a Lunatic, a Legend, or our Lord.

Considering the Options

Liar. Everything that we know about Jesus discourages us from selecting this option. It is incomprehensible that the One who spoke of truth and righteousness was the greatest deceiver of history. He cannot be a great moral teacher and a liar at the same time.

Lunatic. Paranoid schizophrenics do not behave as Jesus did. Their behavior is often bizarre, out of control. They generally do not like other people and are mostly self-absorbed. Nor do they handle pressure well. Jesus exhibits none of these characteristics. He is kind and others-centered, and He faces pressure situations, including the events leading to and including His death, with composure and control.

Legend. The greatest difficulty with this option is the issue of *time*. Legends take time to develop. Yet most of the New Testament, including Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, and all of Paul's Epistles were written by 68 A.D. An equivalent amount of time today would be the interval between President Kennedy's assassination in 1963 to the present. For people to start saying Kennedy claimed to be God, forgave people's sins, and was raised from the dead would be a difficult task to make credible. There are still too many people around who knew Jack Kennedy . . . and know better.

Lord. In his book, *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis said,

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse."

Other than the fact that the Liar, Lunatic, and Legend choices are not persuasive as explanations for who Jesus was, we are still faced with the question of why we should accept Him as Lord. During the latter days of His ministry, Jesus was confronted by a hostile crowd which posed this question to Him: "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you." Jesus answered, "An adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in

the belly of the great fish, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:38-40). Here we are led to understand that Jesus pointed to His bodily resurrection as THE authenticating sign by which He would confirm His own unique claims. Later on, the Apostle Paul, in speaking of the importance of this event to the faith of a Christian would say, "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain. . . . If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins (1 Cor. 15:13-17)." We now turn to explore the possibility of such an event occurring.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a Historical Fact

There are really two points that we must prove in order to demonstrate the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. First, the tomb of Jesus Christ was found empty on the third day after His death. Second, the tomb was empty because Jesus was alive.

The tomb of Jesus Christ was found empty on the third day.

Many people have denied that Jesus' tomb was found empty on the third day after His death, but their reasons have generally been theological or philosophical. It's extremely difficult to argue against the empty tomb on the basis of historical evidence. Here are some historical facts that support the idea that Jesus' body was no longer in the grave.

Christians have argued that the tomb was empty on the third day since the beginning.

It usually takes at least two generations for false legends to develop, for the simple reason that it takes about that long for those witnesses who might contradict the tale to die off.

By all accounts, however, the followers of Jesus began proclaiming *right away* that he had been raised from the dead. The books of the New Testament were written early enough that eyewitnesses could have still contradicted them, and those books at times reveal oral traditions (in the form of early creeds, songs, or sayings) that show the church's belief in the resurrection to be even older. There does not appear to have been sufficient time for a legendary account to have developed the resurrection was talked about immediately after the death of Christ.

Even the opponents of Christianity believed that the tomb was empty. If Jesus' body had still been in the tomb, it would have been pretty easy for the opponents of Christianity to discredit the resurrection. They could have simply produced the corpse, paraded it around town, and put an end to any further speculation. Why didn't they do it? Because the body wasn't there. The Gospel of Matthew records one of the arguments that the religious leaders of the day used to explain the fact of the empty tomb. Apparently the story was widely spread among the Jews that the disciples had stolen the body from the tomb while the guards were sleeping (Matt, 28:13-15). They did not deny that the tomb was empty. They simply offered another explanation for the disappearance of the body! Some may suggest that the body of Jesus was never buried in a recognizable tomb, and that the opponents of Christianity simply were unable to locate the corpse when Jesus' disciples began talking about the resurrection. However, the earliest historical accounts maintain that He was placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy member of the Sanhedrin. There is no reason to question the credibility of this testimony, which is very ancient and contains a number of specific details. As Craig writes,

Even the most skeptical scholars acknowledge that Joseph was probably the genuine, historical individual who buried Jesus, since it is unlikely that early Christian believers would

invent an individual, give him a name and nearby town of origin, and place that fictional character on the historical council of the Sanhedrin, whose members were well known.

Jesus was buried in a known tomb, but the tomb was empty the third day. This is a fact that even the opponents of Christianity recognized, and it's one that Christians can appeal to in their arguments for the gospel (Acts 26:26).

If the tomb had not been empty, it probably would have been treated as a shrine. It was common in first-century Judaism to regard the graves of holy men as shrines, but there is absolutely no suggestion that the grave of Jesus was ever treated in that way. His followers did not come back again and again to the place to worship, nor did they treat it with any special esteem. There was no reason to, because there was nothing inside.

If the tomb was occupied, what would make the disciples of Jesus risk their lives by saying that it was empty? Jesus' followers clearly believed His tomb was empty, for they were persecuted from the very beginning for their testimony to that effect. That doesn't prove that what they said was true, but it does strongly suggest that they believed what they said. People have died for lies, but only because they believed them. What would make the followers of Jesus believe that His tomb was empty? Their own writings state that they believed it because they went to see the tomb and found that His body was no longer there. They did what you and I would do. They checked it out, and it was empty.

The tomb of Jesus was empty because He had been resurrected from the dead.

There is very little question that the tomb of Jesus was found empty on the third day after His death. This is a fact that was widely proclaimed at a time when it would have been easily discredited had it not been true. Even the opponents of

Christianity agreed that the tomb was empty, and therein lies the crux of our next problem.

Given that the tomb was empty, what happened to the body of Jesus? There have been several suggestions, only one of which can be true.

Did the disciples steal the body? As noted above, this was one of the earliest skeptical explanations for the empty tomb. It may be early, but it isn't very credible. For the disciples to steal the body, they would have had to overcome guards who were stationed there specifically to prevent its theft. At the same time, they would have had to manifest a tremendous amount of courage, which is some thing they apparently did not have when they fled the night Jesus was arrested. If the disciples had stolen the body, they obviously would have known that the resurrection had not really taken place. The fact that these men suffered in life and were then killed for their faith in the resurrection strongly suggests that they believed it really happened. They did not give their lives for what they knew was a lie. The disciples did not steal the body of Jesus.

Were the disciples deceived? Some have suggested that the disciples really did believe in the resurrection, but that they were deceived by hallucinations or religious hysteria. This would be possible if only one or two persons were involved, but He was seen alive after His death by groups of people who touched Him, ate with Him, and conversed with Him. Even more to the point, the tomb really was empty! If the disciples didn't steal it, even if they did only imagine that they had seen it, what happened to the body of Jesus?

Did the Jewish leaders take it? If the Jewish leaders had taken the body of Jesus, they would have certainly produced it in order to refute the idea that He had been raised from the dead. They never did that, because they didn't have the body.

Did Jesus really die? When left with no other credible option,

some have suggested that Jesus did not really die, that He only appeared to be dead, was revived, and then appeared to the disciples. This makes a mockery out of the sufferings of the cross, suggesting that a beaten and crucified man could force his way out of a guarded tomb. At the same time, it portrays Jesus as the sort of person who would willingly deceive his disciples, carrying off the greatest hoax of all time. That the disciples would believe Him to be resurrected in triumph over death would be even more surprising if He was in fact on the edge of death after a severe beating. Jesus was truly killed, He was actually buried, and yet His grave was empty. Why? It is extremely unlikely that anybody took the body, but Jesus' disciples offered another explanation.

Jesus was raised from the dead. Since the other explanations do not adequately explain the fact of the empty tomb, we have reason to consider more seriously the testimony of those who claimed to be eyewitnesses. The followers of Jesus said that the tomb was empty because Jesus had been raised from the dead, and many people claimed to have seen Him after the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul identifies a number of individuals who witnessed the resurrected Christ, noting also that Christ had appeared to over five hundred persons at one time (v. 6). He tells his readers that most of those people were still alive, essentially challenging them to check out the story with those who claimed to be eyewitnesses. The presence of such eyewitnesses prevented Paul and others from turning history into legend.

Alternative explanations are inadequate, and eyewitnesses were put to death because they continued to maintain that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Christianity exists because these people truly believed in the resurrection, and their testimony continues to be the most reasonable explanation for the empty tomb of Jesus Christ.

The Resurrection Demonstrates the Truth of Christianity

It is no exaggeration to say that the Christian faith rests on the fact of Jesus' resurrection. Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament, said that his entire ministry would be worthless if the resurrection had not taken place. "If Christ has not been raised," he wrote, "then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. . . . If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:14, 17). On the other hand, if Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, then Paul's message is true, faith has meaning, and we can be freed from our sins.

That's essentially what we have been arguing. It makes good sense to believe in the teachings of Christianity, because those teachings are based on a simple historical fact the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. If Jesus was raised from the dead, then what He said about himself must have been true. When the religious leaders of His day asked for some proof of His authority, Jesus told them that the only proof they would be given would be His resurrection from the dead (John 2:18 19; Matt. 12:38 40). When He was raised from the dead, that proof was provided.

What was proven through Jesus' resurrection? Here are some of the things that Jesus said about Himself, all of which were affirmed by His resurrection from the dead:

"I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

"I am the light of the world; he who follows me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

"Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM" [a claim to be God himself] (John 8:58).

“I am the door; if anyone enters through me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture” (John 10:9).

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me shall live even if he dies” (John 11:25).

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me” (John 14:6).

If these statements are true, then anything that contradicts them cannot also be true. In other words, if it is true that Jesus is God, then anyone who says Jesus is *not* God must be wrong. If it is true that Jesus gives eternal life to those who believe in Him and that He is the only way to the Father, then anyone who says that there are other ways to salvation must be wrong. How do we know that what Jesus said about Himself is true? We know by His resurrection, which He offered as definitive proof for all that He did and said. What this means is that the statements quoted above demonstrate the uniqueness of Jesus, but they also demonstrate the uniqueness of Christianity. If what Jesus said about Himself is true, then Christianity is true, and any contradictory religious belief must be false. That’s not a very popular message in today’s pluralistic culture, but the fact is that there are genuine differences between worldviews. Only one can really be correct. If Jesus Christ was actually raised from the dead, there’s little need for further debate. He alone is the way, the truth, and the life.

Jesus is the Lord of History

The material in this outline forms the foundation for a Christian worldview. It is on these critical truths Christians have stood over the centuries. When someone asks us the REASONS for the hope that is within us that is, why we hold to

the Christian faith, these are the reasons. We prefer to believe that the universe and man were created, rather than being the products of blind chance in a closed, material world. We believe that God not only created, but that He communicated, revealed Himself to humankind, through His prophets, apostles, and finally through His Son (Heb. 1:1). We believe that Jesus lived, and that His life and mission, outlined most extensively in the biblical documents but corroborated by extra-biblical documents, are what they have purported to be over the millennia: the seeking and saving of the lost through His sacrificial death. We believe that Christianity cannot be acceptably explained, historically, by leaving a dead Jew hanging on a cross. Only His resurrection from the dead adequately explains the boldness and commitment unto death of His disciples, the forsaking of worship on the Sabbath in preference to Sunday, and the exponential growth of the church which began immediately, and has continued to this day. Every mighty river on this planetthe Mississippi, the Nile, the Volga has its source. Each one begins somewhere. Every Christian church or community in the world also has an historical source. It flows from Palestine, from Jerusalem, from a hill called Golgotha . . . and a nearby empty tomb. We said in the beginning that everyone has faith, but also pointed out that faith must have an object. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the most worthy of all objects to which we could entrust our lives, our purpose, and our destiny.

For Further Reading

Theism

Boa, Kenneth and Larry Moody. *I'm Glad You Asked: In-depth Answers to Difficult Questions about Christianity*. Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1982.

This is a small book, but it is surprisingly thorough. It is exceptionally clear, accurate, and very helpful. A leader's guide is available for those who want to use this book in small group study. Highly recommended.

Brooks, Ron and Norman L. Geisler. *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook on Christian Evidences*. Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1990.

This book addresses a variety of issues in Christian apologetics, from the existence of God to the authority of the Bible and the nature of humanity. It is very readable, and its handbook format makes it easy for the reader to find answers to specific questions without searching through the whole book.

Geisler, Norman L. *Christian Apologetics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1976.

This is a textbook for courses in Christian apologetics, so it is very detailed and at times rather tedious reading. It presents a complete defense of Christianity from a philosophical viewpoint and can be very helpful.

McGrath, Alister E. *The Sunnier Side of Doubt*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990.

It may seem odd to include a book on doubt here, but it really is appropriate. Like the Yancey book noted below, this is written to believers who are having doubts about their faith. It is very readable and very encouraging. Highly recommended.

Montgomery, John W., ed. *Evidence for Faith: Deciding the God Question*. Richardson, TX: Probe, 1991.

This is a collection of essays by scientists who argue that their various disciplines actually provide more evidence for Christianity. As with any multi-author work, some chapters are better than others, but it is extremely thought-provoking and should be very helpful in a college environment.

Moreland, J. P. and Kai Nielson. *Does God Exist? The Great Debate*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1990.

This book consists of an actual debate between a theist (J. P. Moreland) and an atheist (Kai Nielson). It includes responses from two other theists (William Lane Craig and Dallas Willard) and two other atheists (Antony Flew and Keith Parsons). All of these men are philosophers, so the debate can be rather challenging at times, but it is a very helpful work for those who want to explore these issues in some depth.

Watkins, William and Norman L. Geisler. *Perspectives: Understanding and Evaluating Today's Worldviews*. San

Bernardino, CA: Here's Life, 1984.

This book examines seven different worldviews and argues for the truth of Christianity. It is very readable and very helpful.

Yancey, Philip. *Disappointment With God: Three Questions No One Asks Aloud*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988.

This is a wonderful book that asks some of the hard questions of life. Is God unfair? Is God silent? Is God hidden? For those whose faith in God is being stretched by doubts or trials, this book should be required reading. It is sensitive, biblical, and extremely insightful. Read it!!

The Resurrection of Jesus

Craig, William Lane. *The Son Rises: The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus*. Chicago: Moody, 1981.

This is an excellent book that thoroughly defends the resurrection of Jesus from a historical perspective. It is well-reasoned and very readable. Highly recommended.

Morison, Frank. *Who Moved the Stone?* London: Faber & Faber, 1930. Reprint. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1958.

This book was written by a man who intended to disprove the resurrection. In his studies he became convinced that it had actually occurred, and this book presents the evidence that changed his mind.

The Authority of the Bible

Bruce, F. F. *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1960.

This is a helpful book by a highly respected New Testament scholar. He argues for the historical authenticity and reliability of the New Testament.

Geisler, Norman L. and William E. Nix. *A General Introduction to the Bible*. Chicago: Moody, 1968.

This book is titled appropriately, for it provides a general overview of the nature of the Bible, the meaning of inspiration, and the reliability of the biblical manuscripts. It is very helpful and very readable.

Goodrick, Edward W. *Is My Bible the Inspired Word of God?*

Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1988.

This book describes the difference between the original autographs of Scripture, currently available manuscripts, and modern translations. It is very clear and encourages the reader to have confidence in the Scriptures.

McDowell, Josh. *Evidence that Demands a Verdict: Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith*. San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1972.

One of the most helpful apologetics books available, this work discusses the uniqueness of the Bible, demonstrates the strength of its manuscript support, and also examines the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

_____. *More Evidence that Demands a Verdict: Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith*. San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1975.

This sequel to McDowell's first book focuses on higher criticism and scholarly attempts to undermine the authenticity of the biblical text. Very thorough and very helpful.

Yamauchi, Edwin. *The Stones and the Scriptures: An Introduction to Biblical Archaeology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1972.

Quite thorough for an introduction, this book argues that archaeological discoveries continue to support the truth of the biblical text.

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Archaeology and the New Testament

Dr. Patrick Zukeran shows that numerous people, places and events described in the New Testament have been verified by archeology.



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

There is an ongoing debate among scholars regarding the historical accuracy of the Bible. Some feel that the Bible is a fictitious work and should be read as a work of literary fiction. Others feel it is an accurate historical work divinely inspired by God. Archaeology has played a major role in determining the trustworthiness of the Bible. In a [previous article](#), we discussed archaeological confirmations of the Old Testament. In this one, we will look at the archaeological discoveries that have confirmed the historical accuracy of the New Testament. There is a great deal of evidence outside of the Bible that confirms the account of Jesus as written in the Gospels.

It is important to realize, however, that it is unrealistic to expect archaeology to back up every event and place in the New Testament. Our perspective is to look for what evidence exists and see whether or not it corresponds with the New Testament.

Historical Confirmation of Jesus

The first evidence comes from the four Gospels which, themselves, are proven to be accurate.^{[\[1\]](#)} Outside the biblical text are several witnesses as well. Jewish historian Josephus (37 A.D.100 A.D.) recorded the history of the Jewish people in Palestine from 70 A.D. to 100 A.D. In his work *Antiquities*, he states:

Now there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the gentiles. He was the Christ and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him. For he appeared alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand

other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct to this day.{2}

Although he mentions Jesus in a sarcastic way, Josephus confirms the facts that Jesus did do many great miracles, drew a following, was crucified, and was proclaimed alive on the third day.

Pliny the Younger, Emperor of Bythynia in northwestern Turkey, writing to Emperor Trajan in 112 A.D. writes:

They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang an anthem to Christ as God, and bound themselves by a solemn oath not to commit any wicked deed, but to abstain from all fraud, theft and adultery, never to break their word, or deny a trust when called upon to honor it; after which it was their custom to separate, and then meet again to partake of food, but ordinary and innocent kind.

One of the most important Romans historians is Tacitus. In 115 A.D. he recorded Nero's persecution of the Christians, in the process of which he wrote the following:

Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judea, . . . but even in Rome.{3}

There are over 39 extra-biblical sources that attest to over one hundred facts regarding the life and teachings of Jesus.

Accuracy of the Gospels

The accuracy of the Gospels has been supported by archaeology. The names of many of the Israelite cities, events, and people described in them have now been located. Here are a few

examples.

The Gospels mention four neighboring and well-populated coastal cities along the Sea of Galilee: Capernaum, Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Tiberias. Jesus performed many miracles in the first three cities. Despite this testimony, these cities rejected Jesus and therefore were cursed by Him (Matt. 11:20-24; Luke 10:12-16). These cities eventually disappeared from history and their locations remained missing for centuries. Their demise fulfills the prophetic condemnation of Jesus.

Only recently has archaeology recovered their possible locations. Tell Hum is believed to be Capernaum. (A “tell” is a mound or elevated land that has arisen by repeated and long-term rebuilding of the same site. Layers of civilizations can be found at different strata). The locations of Bethsaida and Chorazin still remain unconfirmed, but the present site at a tell 1.5 miles north of the Galilean shoreline is believed to be Bethsaida, while Tell Khirbet Kerezah, 2.5 miles northwest of Capernaum, is thought to be Chorazin.

Matthew 2 states that Jesus was born during the reign of Herod. Upon hearing that a king had been born, the frightened Herod ordered all children under the age of two to be killed. His slaughter of innocents is consistent with the historical facts that describe his character. Herod was suspicious of anyone whom he thought may take his throne. His list of victims included one of his ten wives, who was his favorite, three of his own sons, a high priest, an ex-king, and two of his sister’s husbands. Thus, his brutality portrayed in Matthew is consistent with his description in ancient history.

John’s accuracy has also been attested to by recent discoveries. In John 5:1-15 Jesus heals a man at the Pool of Bethesda. John describes the pool as having five porticoes. This site had long been in dispute until recently. Forty feet underground, archaeologists discovered a pool with five

porticoes, and the description of the surrounding area matches John's description. In 9:7 John mentions another long disputed site, the Pool of Siloam. However, this pool was also discovered in 1897, upholding the accuracy of John.

Evidence for Pontius Pilate, the governor who presided over the trial of Jesus, was discovered in Caesarea Maritima. In 1961, an Italian archaeologist named Antonio Frova uncovered a fragment of a plaque that was used as a section of steps leading to the Caesarea Theater. The inscription, written in Latin, contained the phrase, "Pontius Pilatus, Prefect of Judea has dedicated to the people of Caesarea a temple in honor of Tiberius." This temple is dedicated to the Emperor Tiberius who reigned from 1437 A.D. This fits well chronologically with the New Testament which records that Pilate ruled as procurator from 2636 A.D. Tacitus, a Roman historian of the first century, also confirms the New Testament designation of Pilate. He writes, "Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus. . . ."

Confirmation Regarding the Crucifixion

All four Gospels give details of the crucifixion of Christ. Their accurate portrayal of this Roman practice has been confirmed by archaeology. In 1968, a gravesite in the city of Jerusalem was uncovered containing thirty-five bodies. Each of the men had died a brutal death which historians believe was the result of their involvement in the Jewish revolt against Rome in 70 A.D.

The inscription identified one individual as Yohan Ben Ha'galgol. Studies of the bones performed by osteologists and doctors from the Hadassah Medical School determined the man was twenty-eight years old, stood five feet six inches, and had some slight facial defects due to a cleft right palate.

What intrigued archaeologists were the evidences that this man had been crucified in a manner resembling the crucifixion of Christ. A seven-inch nail had been driven through both feet, which were turned outward so the nail could be hammered inside the Achilles tendon.

Archaeologists also discovered that nails had been driven through his lower forearms. A victim of a crucifixion would have to raise and lower his body in order to breathe. To do this, he needed to push up on his pierced feet and pull up with his arms. Yohan's upper arms were smoothly worn, indicating this movement.

John records that in order to expedite the death of a prisoner, executioners broke the legs of the victim so that he could not lift himself up by pushing with his feet (19:31-33). Yohan's legs were found crushed by a blow, breaking them below the knee. The Dead Sea Scrolls tell that both Jews and Romans abhorred crucifixion due to its cruelty and humiliation. The scrolls also state it was a punishment reserved for slaves and any who challenged the ruling powers of Rome. This explains why Pilate chose crucifixion as the penalty for Jesus.

Relating to the crucifixion, in 1878 a stone slab was found in Nazareth with a decree from Emperor Claudius who reigned from 41-54 A.D. It stated that graves must not be disturbed nor bodies to be removed. The punishment on other decrees is a fine but this one threatens death and comes very close to the time of the resurrection. This was probably due to Claudius investigating the riots of 49 A.D. He had certainly heard of the resurrection and did not want any similar incidents. This decree was probably made in connection with the Apostles' preaching of Jesus' resurrection and the Jewish argument that the body had been stolen.

Historian Thallus wrote in 52 A.D. Although none of his texts remain, his work is cited by Julius Africanus' work, *Chronography*. Quoting Thallus on the crucifixion of Christ,

Africanus states, "On the whole world, there pressed a most fearful darkness, and the rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down." [\[4\]](#) Thallus calls this darkness, "as appears to me without reason, an eclipse of the sun." [\[5\]](#)

All the discoveries made are consistent with the details in the crucifixion account given by the writers of the Gospels. These facts lend indirect support for the biblical accounts of Jesus' crucifixion and that the tomb was empty.

Historical Accuracy of Luke

At one time, scholars did not view Luke's historical accounts in his Gospel and Acts as accurate. There appeared to be no evidence for several cities, persons, and locations that he named in his works. However, archaeological advances have revealed that Luke was a very accurate historian and the two books he has authored remain accurate documents of history.

One of the greatest archaeologists is the late Sir William Ramsay. He studied under the famous liberal German historical schools in the mid-nineteenth century. Known for its scholarship, this school taught that the New Testament was not a historical document. With this premise, Ramsay investigated biblical claims as he searched through Asia Minor. What he discovered caused him to reverse his initial view. He wrote:

I began with a mind unfavorable to it [Acts], for the ingenuity and apparent completeness of the Tübingen theory had at one time quite convinced me. It did not then in my line of life to investigate the subject minutely; but more recently I found myself often brought into contact with the Book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth. [\[6\]](#)

Luke's accuracy is demonstrated by the fact that he names key historical figures in the correct time sequence as well as correct titles to government officials in various areas: Thessalonica, politarchs; Ephesus, temple wardens; Cyprus, proconsul; and Malta, the first man of the island.

In Luke's announcement of Jesus' public ministry (Luke 3:1), he mentions, "Lysanius tetrarch of Abilene." Scholars questioned Luke's credibility since the only Lysanius known for centuries was a ruler of Chalcis who ruled from 4036 B.C. However an inscription dating to be in the time of Tiberius, who ruled from 1437 A.D., was found recording a temple dedication which names Lysanius as the "tetrarch of Abila" near Damascus. This matches well with Luke's account.

In Acts 18:12-17, Paul was brought before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia. Once again archaeology confirms this account. At Delphi an inscription of a letter from Emperor Claudius was discovered. In it he states, "Lucius Junios Gallio, my friend, and the proconsul of Achaia . . ."[\[7\]](#) Historians date the inscription to 52 A.D. which corresponds to the time of the apostle's stay in 51.

In Acts 19:22 and Romans 16:23, Erastus, a coworker of Paul, is named the Corinthian city treasurer. Archaeologists excavating a Corinthian theatre in 1928 discovered an inscription. It reads, "Erastus in return for his aedilship laid the pavement at his own expense." The pavement was laid in 50 A.D. The designation of treasurer describes the work of a Corinthian aedile.

In Acts 28:7, Luke gives Publius, the chief man on the island of Malta, the title, "first man of the island." Scholars questioned this strange title and deemed it unhistorical. Inscriptions have recently been discovered on the island that indeed gives Publius the title of "first man."

"In all, Luke names thirty-two countries, fifty-four cities,

and nine islands without error.”[\[8\]](#) A. N. Sherwin-White states, “For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. . . . Any attempt to reject its basic historicity must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted.”[\[9\]](#)

The Shroud of Turin

The Gospels record that after His crucifixion Jesus was wrapped in a long linen cloth and placed in the tomb (Matt. 27:59). John records that when Peter investigated the empty tomb, he found the burial cloth folded neatly next to where Christ once laid (20:6-7).

A linen shroud called the Shroud of Turin, on display at the Vatican, has been claimed to be that burial cloth. It is 14.25 feet long and 3.5 feet wide. On it is an image with pierced wrists and ankles believed to be that of Christ.

The shroud first appeared for public display sometime after 1357 in Lirey, France. A knight named Geoffrey de Charny brought the shroud to France. In 1453 de Charny’s granddaughter gave the shroud to the Duke of Savoy who then in 1578 brought it to Turin, Italy. In 1983, it was willed to the Vatican.

In 1898, Secondo Pia photographed the shroud and believed the image was a negative image like that of a photograph. This added to the mystery of the shroud since photography had not been invented during medieval times. In 1973 a group of experts confirmed the fact that no pigment of paint was found even under magnification. For many, this was proof of the shroud’s authenticity.

The most extensive study was undertaken in 1977. An international team of Swiss, American, and Italian scientist studied the shroud for five days at the Savoy Royal Palace at Turin. They used six tons of equipment and 2.5 million dollars

for their research. It has been one of the most intensely studied artifacts of all time.

The study could not determine the authenticity of the fabric. Experiments that followed proved the image contained blood as well as aragonite, a particular calcium carbonate that is found in Jerusalem's first century tombs. Swiss criminologist Max Frei found forty-eight samples of pollen, of which seven could have come from plants in Palestine. The weave of the cloth was herringbone twill, a style that existed in ancient times.

Although these findings supported the authenticity of the shroud, other findings testified otherwise. In 1987, the shroud was carbon 14 tested to verify its date. Laboratories in Oxford, Zurich, and the University of Arizona tested the cloth. The result indicated a fourteenth century date for the shroud. This conclusion continues to be challenged and future tests are sure to follow. Another problem is that coins minted by Pontius Pilate were placed over the eyes of the figure. This was not a Jewish custom, nor does it seem likely that Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus would have placed on Jesus' eyes a coin with the image of the leader who condemned him.

Despite the fourteenth century date, scientists are still unable to explain how the negative image was created. The shroud remains a mystery as well as a lesson for us as believers that we should not put our faith in mysterious articles.

Notes

1. See "[Authority of the Bible](http://probe.org/authority-of-the-bible-a-strong-argument-for-christianity/)" at probe.org/authority-of-the-bible-a-strong-argument-for-christianity/.
2. Josephus, Book 18, Chapter 3:3
3. Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44
4. Julius Africanus, *Chronography*, 18:1.
5. Ibid.

6. William Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1982), 8.
7. John McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Books, 1991), 227.
8. Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Books, 1999), 47.
9. A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 189.

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