

Week 7: Scientific & Archeological Evidence

Case For Christ ch. 5; Historical Jesus Ch. 8

Archeology involves the uncovering of artifacts, architecture, art, coins, monuments, documents, and other remains of ancient cultures

- Archeology can show us that the history and geography of the Bible is accurate though it can't prove the Bible as the Word of God
- It helps confirm the accuracy of the authors of the Bible

1. Luke- is he accurate as a historian?

- a. Luke 2:1-5 makes claims that during the time period in which Jesus was born there was a census/tax taken that required every person to return to their own home. Is this historically accurate?
 - a. It has been established that a census being taken during this time of Christ's birth was quite common.
 - b. *Titulus Venetus* – Latin term that indicates a census took place through Syria and Judea.

Luke continued

- a. Luke 3:1 Mentions Lyranias in Abilene which was thought to be incorrect, and caused many to say Luke wasn't accurate, but an inscription was found from the time of Tiberius which names Lyranias as tetrarch in Abila near Damascus which establishes the accuracy of Luke.
- b. Acts 17:6 mentions "*politarchs*" (*city officials*) in Thessalonica. People thought Luke was wrong because they never found any evidence of the term. However, an inscription was found on a 1st century arch that said "In the time of the *politarchs*...", and now more than 35 inscriptions have been found that mention the term.

John & Mark

- John 5:1-15 mentions the pool of Bethesda which has been found and verified
- John 9:7 The pool of Siloam
- John 4:12 Jacob's Well
- John 19:13 The Probable location of the Stone Pavement near the Jaffa Gate where Jesus appeared before Pilate

3 Puzzles

- The Census: Could the Government really force People to go back to their birth place? Is there an archeological evidence that can verify this?
 - Document dating from AD 104 that was an official governmental order that talked about the taxing of the people and mentions requirement of people returning to their own homes.
- Existence of Nazareth: People claim the city of Nazareth never existed during the time when the NT says Jesus spent his childhood.

No mention of this city by the apostle Paul, the Talmud (which references 63 other Galilean cities), or the historian Josephus (though he mentions 45 other cities in the area of Galilee). There is no mention of this city by historians or geographers until the 4th century A.D.

Dr. James Strange has researched Nazareth, and says that it was a very small town, about 60 acres, which had a max population of about 480 people at beginning of 1st century. After the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, priests were relocated since the temple was destroyed. Archeologists have found a list in Aramaic that describes where these priests relocated, and 1 “family” of priests registered as moving to the tiny village of Nazareth. Digs have uncovered 1st century tombs. Two tombs contained objects like pottery, lamps, glass vessels, and vases from the first, third, and fourth centuries.

Slaughter at Bethlehem: Is there any evidence that Hero tried to kill all babies under 2 years of age at the time of the birth of Christ? Josephus and other historians make no mention of this kind of slaughter.

- 1) Bethlehem was a small town (probably no bigger than Nazareth) so there likely weren't that many babies under the age of two in a population of only 500-600 people. So we are only talking about a few and not hundreds of babies.
- 2) Herod the Great was a bloodthirsty king, killing members of his own family while in power, so his killing of a few babies was probably not a big deal in this bloody Palestinian time.
- 3) There was no mass media at that time, so it would have taken a while for people outside of the area to have heard about this event, and in that day and age it was likely not that big of news for a historian to record.

Dead Sea Scrolls

- Found in 1947 in caves 20 miles east of Jerusalem
- Hundreds of manuscripts dating from 250BC to AD 68 were hidden by a strict sect of Jews before the Romans destroyed their settlement.
- Though Jesus is not directly mentioned in any of the scrolls, they do give us insight in to Jewish life and customs.
- One scroll, 4Q521, is written in Hebrew and dates back to 30 years before Jesus was born. It contains a version of Isaiah 61 that includes the missing phrase “the dead are raised.” that Jesus included where John the Baptist asked if he were the Messiah or if another would come. (Matt 11:4-5) Jesus was claiming to be that same Messiah.