

Belleville First Assembly of God

Defending Your Faith - 2017

Topic 10: Archaeology

Class Goal: Equip the believer to respond to common challenges to Christianity in order to evangelize the lost and to disciple those with doubts.

Objectives for Meeting Our Goal: Upon completing this class, the believer should be able to...

1. Recognize common challenges to Christianity, categorize them, and...
2. Prayerfully and gently respond to these challenges (2 Tim 2:23-26; 1 Peter 3:15)

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1. Questions from previous discussions or challenges from skeptics?
 2. Old Testament: Liberals commonly claim a lack of physical evidence in support of Scripture.
 - a. Jericho: wall structure and debris field that date back to time consistent with Joshua's arrival (based on a 1447 BC date for the Exodus).¹
 - b. The Egyptian "Amarna Letters" are possible descriptions of what Canaanite princes loyal to Egypt would have experienced under a foreign invasion of "Habiru", like Joshua's.²
 - c. Pharaoh Merenptah's stele (1227 BC) refers to "Israel" as a people group in Canaan.³
 - d. David and Goliath: consistent with ancient near east tradition of picked combat and with historical accounts of sling stones (size of tennis balls) being delivered in excess of 100 mph with great accuracy.⁴
 - e. David as king: Khirbet Qeiyafa (The Fortress of Elah), the king's palace, the regional balance of power, and the Tel Dan inscription.
 - f. The relief from the Karnak Temple at Thebes records Pharaoh Shishak's invasion of both Israel and Judah, providing evidence for the authenticity of 2 Chronicles 12.⁵
 - g. Assyrian records from the ninth to the seventh centuries BC name an area *mat-Omri* ("land of Omri") and *bit-Omri* ("house of Omri"), which are references to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The "Moabite Stone" also makes references to King Omri and his son Ahab.⁶
 - h. The "Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser" records "the tribute of Jehu, son of Omri", where "son" is used loosely to denote a line of Israelite kings and not biological offspring.⁷
 - i. Assyrian King Sennacherib's annals record the revolt of Judah King Hezekiah by name (and consistent with 2 Kings 18) when he records how the King of Ekron (Padi) was overthrown and brought to Hezekiah. Other finds that support the Scriptural accounts of Hezekiah include the "Siloam Inscription" at Hezekiah's tunnel, and "Sennacherib's Prism", which corroborates the Biblical account of Assyria's invasion of Judah.⁸
 - j. The Cyrus Cylinder: Tells how he freed people from their bonds and restored temples.

¹ Hoerth, Alfred, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Baker, 1998), 209-210.

² Hoerth, 216-219.

³ Hoerth 228-230.

⁴ Hoerth, 255-257.

⁵ Hoerth, 300-302.

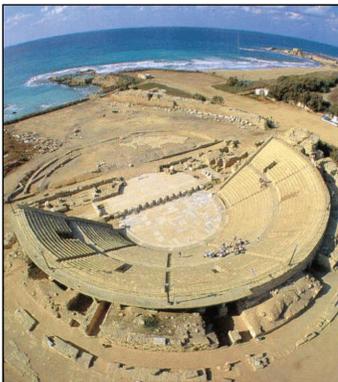
⁶ Hoerth, 306-310.

⁷ Hoerth, 321-322.

⁸ Hoerth, 341-353.

3. New Testament: Liberals commonly claim a lack of physical evidence in support of Scripture.
- a. Mark 10:46 records Jesus as healing Bartimeus as He was *leaving* Jericho. But some have claimed that this contradicts Luke 18:35. Dr. John Bloom suggests that archaeological evidence near Jericho reveals that in Jesus' day, there were actually *two* Jerichos, the city proper (for the commoners), and the "resort" city nearby (for the wealthy), where Herod had a palace.⁹ And the road to Jerusalem passes right through both! Therefore, both accounts are correct. Jesus healed Bartimeus somewhere between both Jerichos. That which critics mean for an attack, a proper exegesis (interpretation) turns into pin-point accuracy!
 - b. When Luke records that Jesus was born during the time of a Roman census conducted by Quirinius, governor of Syria (2:2), archaeology confirms this via a coin bearing the name Quirinius, placing him as the Roman proconsul of Syria and Cilicia from 11 BC until after the death of Herod the Great... obviously a real person during the specific time claimed by Luke.¹⁰ And although there has yet to be any evidence found supporting this specific census, actual Roman census forms for each 14-year census from 104 AD to 6 AD (as Luke records in Acts 5:37 and Josephus corroborates) have been discovered. And separate writings have been found describing these events as times when citizens must return to their birthplaces. Therefore, the census of Luke 2:2 is a very likely event with strong precedence from history and archaeology.
 - c. Historian Colin Hemer has identified 84 historically verifiable aspects in the final 16 chapters of Acts, adding to its veracity.¹¹ Additionally, archaeology has also revealed corroborating facts:

Acts 12:20-23



Acts 21:28-29



“No outsider shall enter the protective enclosure around the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will only have himself to blame for the ensuing death”

- d. While Gallio watched the Jewish beating of Sosthenes (Acts 18:17), his judgment seat was on a platform (*bema*). Archaeologists found this platform and deemed it “...one of the clearest links between Corinth’s archaeology and Scripture.”¹²

⁹ John A. Bloom, *New Testament Times*, Biblical Archaeology lecture at Biola University, 2014.

¹⁰ McRay, John. *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1991), 160 and 154.

¹¹ Geisler, N. and Turek, F., *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*, pp. 255-274.

¹² McRay, 335.

- e. In Romans 16:23, Paul notes Corinth's treasurer/director of public works, Erastus. In the 1800s, an inscription (dated to mid-First Century AD) was found and translated as, "Erastus, in return for his appointment as city treasurer, laid [this pavement] at his own expense."¹³ Most scholars believe this is *the* Erastus of Acts and Romans.
- f. In Ephesus, a 24,000 seat amphitheater was discovered (consistent with Acts 19:29), numerous statues of Artemis/Diana were found, along with columns from the impressive temple (consistent with Acts 19:21-41), and Roman historian Strabo records numerous "people of wealth" in the city, some of whom were elected to leadership positions known as *Asiarchs* (leaders of Asia), which is consistent with Acts 19:31.¹⁴
- g. A large forum (open square of markets and seats of government) has been excavated, with a small crypt with benches that could have easily been used in Paul's day as a prison (Roman prisons were located near forums). Of course, this gives an idea of where Paul and Silas were imprisoned (Acts 16:16-24), if it's not the actual prison itself.¹⁵
- h. Excavations in Thessalonica uncovered an impressive Roman forum (place of government and markets) and inscriptions indicating Caesar worship. Critics questioned Luke's use of the term "politarchs" in Acts 17:6, but numerous inscriptions have recently been recovered that clearly show the governing role that "politarchs" (a board of five prominent locals) played in first century Thessalonica.¹⁶
- i. Ignatius of Antioch (died circa 110 AD) mentions an influential bishop of Ephesus (100 miles from Colosse) named Onesimus. Many theologians embrace the notion that Philemon was included in the canon of Scripture because this Onesimus was the same one mentioned in Philemon, thereby lending pedigree to his position.¹⁷ Secular motivation aside, these two figures may certainly be the same person.
- j. According to the Roman historian, Strabo, Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake once under Augustus and again under Tiberius, and was rebuilt both times with the Emperor's assistance. But when it was destroyed again in 60 AD, citizens in the city rebuilt it without any assistance from Rome, thereby demonstrating its wealth (consistent with Rev 3:17).¹⁸
- k. Laodicea contains a stone inscription erected by a freed slave and dedicated to Marcus Sestius Philemon. Although a direct correlation between Onesimus and Philemon cannot be made, it is still intriguing to note the coincidence in names, dates, locations, and occupations of those involved.¹⁹

3. Conclusion: Despite liberal claims of archaeological evidence disproving Scripture, the Bible has been validated with each new archaeological find. No other sacred text opens itself up to specific names, places, and dates, and is substantiated by actual historical finds.

¹³ McRay, 331 and following.

¹⁴ McRay, 255.

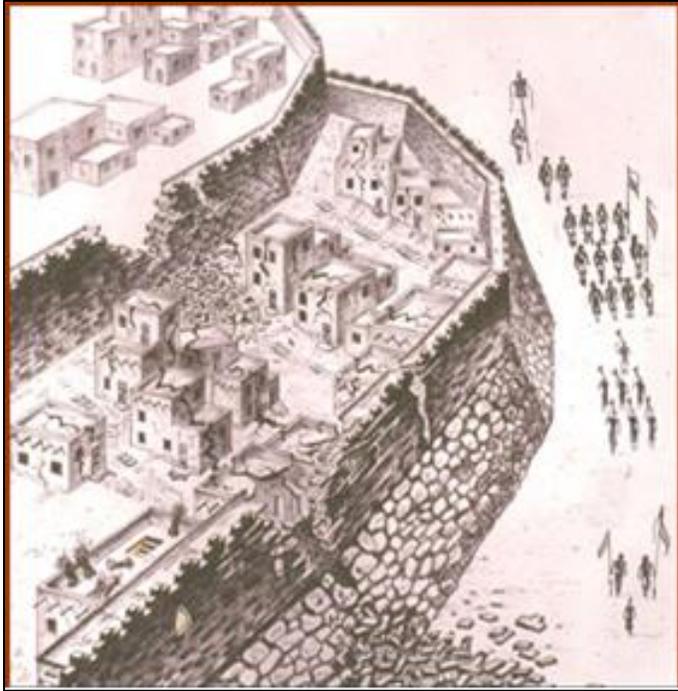
¹⁵ McRay, 288.

¹⁶ McRay, 294-295.

¹⁷ Carson, D. A. and Moo, Douglas, J. *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2005), 590.

¹⁸ McRay, 246.

¹⁹ McRay, 247.



Jericho



Moabite Stone



Tel Dan Inscription



Baruch Bulla



Assyrian Relief



Cyrus Cylinder