

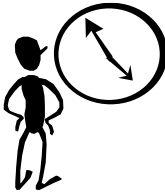
THE BATTLE CREEK BULLETIN

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Time of Assembly



Sunday:	
Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
(Or every other week)	
Bible Study	4:00 p.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday:	
Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

The Bible and Archaeology

By Jefferson David Tant

The world has countless religious faiths—Buddhism, Shintoism, Zoroastranism, Islam, etc, and of course there is Christianity. It should be obvious to most everyone that all these religions cannot be true. They are based on documents that contradict one another, and have deities that also contradict one another. We know that truth does not contradict itself. Thus, the question for the seeker of truth is, “Is there any way to confirm the truthfulness of any of these religious systems?” And the answer is a definite “Yes!”

The evidence supporting the Christian faith and its book of doctrine, the Bible, is beyond doubt and uncertainty. There is no other book of doctrine that can begin to compare with the Old and New Testaments that compose the foundation of the Christian’s faith. There are various evidences that stand firm, and following is evidence found in archaeological discoveries concerning places and dates that have been discovered corroborating the Bible’s mention of these things in the New Testament. There are similar cases in the Old Testament, but in this article we will only be dealing with the New Testament.

Herod’s Temple – King Herod the Great was the ruler at the time Jesus was born in the first century. He ruled from 37 B.C. until 4 A.D., and began construction of the Second Temple in 20 BC. The remains of the temple are located today in the foundation of the Muslim mosque in Jerusalem. Mention of this temple is found in Luke 1:8-9: “Now it came about, while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.”

Herod’s Palace – Herod was a builder, and in addition to the temple, he built magnificent palaces. The remains

of one of his palaces has been found, and it was to this palace that the wise men came seeking information about the birth of Christ. "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and have come to worship Him" (Matthew 2:1-2).

The Herodium (probable site of Herod's tomb near Bethlehem) – It is located a few miles from Jerusalem, and is a major archaeological site. The research of this site began in 1972 by Ehud Netzer. "But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,..." (Matthew 2:19).

Masada – Masada was a strong fortress built in the hills outside of Jerusalem. When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman army in 70 A.D., many fled to this fortress. It was designated a World Heritage spot by UNESCO in 2001. "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city" (Luke 21:20-21).

Early Synagogue – Synagogues were meeting places for the Jews on the Sabbath. The remains of such a place have been uncovered in Capernaum. The word "synagogue" is composed of two words - "sun" and "ago," which literally means "to come together." "And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach" (Mark 1:21).

Pool of Siloam – This pool in Jerusalem was discovered in 2005 by a repair team that was excavating a damaged sewer line. This was a freshwater reservoir where Jews gathered while making religious pilgrimages to the city. It is where Jesus cured a man who was blind from birth. "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). And so he went away and washed, and came back seeing" (John 9:5-7).

Pool of Bethesda – Which means "House of Mercy," or "House of Kindness." It was a pool or fountain near Jerusalem's temple, with an open building over or near it, to accommodate the sick who came to try the healing efficacy of the water. This pool was excavated late in the 1800s, but it took some 100 years for archaeologists to accurately identify and interpret the site. "After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep [gate] a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.] Now there is in Jerusalem by the

sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes” (John 5:1-4).

Pilate Inscription – The Pilate stone is a damaged piece of carved limestone with a partial inscription mentioning Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect of Judaea from 26 to 36 A.D. It was discovered at the site of Caesarea Maritima in 1961, thus confirming that the Pilate mentioned in the Bible was a real person of history. It is located in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. The transcription from Latin to English reads “To the Divine Augustus (this) Tiberium...Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea...has dedicated (this)...” “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene” (Luke 3:1).

Inscription - Gentile entrance of Temple sanctuary – It was forbidden for Gentiles to enter the Temple sanctuary, as it was only for Jews to enter. An inscription has been discovered on a Greek tablet forbidding Gentiles to enter the temple. They could only enter the Court of the Gentiles. On one occasion, Jews surmised that Paul had brought the Greek Trophimus into the temple, for they had seen them together in the town, but had no evidence of them being together in the temple. “And when the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, [began] to stir up all the multitude and laid hands on him, crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people, and the Law, and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple” (Acts 21:27-29).

Skeletal remains of a crucified man – The tomb of Yehohanan contains the first physical evidence of crucifixion in antiquity. The Biblical account of Jesus’ crucifixion is obviously well known, but there were no physical remains relating to that form of death. But in 1968, archaeologist Vassilios Tzaferis excavated a tomb in Jerusalem that contained the bones of a crucified man named Yehohanan. This discovery demonstrated the brutal reality of this torturous death. “And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left” (Luke 23:33).

Peter’s House – Italian archaeologists claim to have discovered the house where Jesus stayed in Capernaum, which would have been Peter’s house. Proof positive is lacking at this time, but all signs point to the likelihood that this is the home where Christ stayed for a time. It is near the authentic relic of Capernaum’s synagogue. “And when Jesus had come to Peter's home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever” (Matthew 8:14).

Jacob's well – John relates the story of Christ's encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. The well and its location are well known, and Adam Clarke's commentary has some information on it. "The well is covered at present with an old stone vault, into which you are let down by a very strait hole; and then, removing a broad flat stone, you discover the well itself. It is dug in a firm rock, is about three yards in diameter, and thirty-five in depth, five of which we found full of water. Jacob would have dug this well some 1,700 years previously. "So He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour" (John 4:5-6).

Dear Reader, the foregoing examples are but a few of the archaeological finds that serve to firmly establish the truthfulness of the Bible, a foundation which no other religious book of doctrine can claim. There is ample evidence also in the Old Testament. We are thankful for the words that Paul wrote to Timothy: "Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," (II Timothy 2:19). "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). The word "assurance" is from the Greek "hupostasis," which refers to that which "stands under," thus referring to a firm foundation. The King James version renders the last phrase as "the evidence of things not seen." What has been presented is just such evidence.

Suffering with Fools

By Jeffrey W. Hamilton

No one wants to be thought of as a fool ...

(Wesley Chapel, Florida, 1995) Joseph Aaron, 20, was hit in the leg with pieces of the bullet he fired at the exhaust pipe of his car. When repairing the car, he needed to bore a hole in the pipe. When he couldn't find a drill, he tried to shoot a hole in it.

(Ontario, Canada, 1996) A man cleaning a bird feeder on his balcony of his condominium apartment in this Toronto suburb slipped and fell 23 stories to his death, police said Monday. Stefan Macko, 55, was standing on a wheeled chair Sunday when the accident occurred, said Inspector Arcy Honer of the Peel regional police. It appears the chair moved and he went over the balcony, Honer said. One of those freak accidents. No foul play is suspected.

We will go to great lengths to avoid doing foolish things ... And still, we manage to do so many things that are just plain dumb. If only we only thought about the situation more. If only we realized the more obvious consequences of our actions. Perhaps if we learn why some people are foolish, it will prevent us from following after them.

A Fool Doesn't Want to Learn

"How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge" (Proverbs 1:22). A fool doesn't want to take the time to learn, thinking that the knowledge he currently has is sufficient. Oh, he may act as if he is listening, but because his behavior doesn't change, we know he wasn't truly listening. *"But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall"* (Matthew 7:26-27). How could one be more foolish than to come to the Lord for His words and then give no thought for the future?

Oh, and you can't force a fool to learn. *"Though you grind a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his foolishness will not depart from him"* (Proverbs 27:22).

Inevitably the fool reveals his true nature. Foolishness is not something that is easily hidden. *"Every prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool lays open his folly."* (Proverbs 13:16).

A Fool is More Interested in His Own Words

When a fool enters a discussion, he is not interested in learning. He just desires an opportunity to spout off what little he knows. *"A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart"* (Proverbs 18:2). And once the fool's mouth starts flapping, we are given full proof as to how little is there. *"A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims foolishness"* (Proverbs 12:23). This is why wise men speak as little as possible (Proverbs 10:19). The more you say, the more likely you will make a mistake. But such does not concern the fool. *"The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness"* (Proverbs 15:2).

Since a fool's conversation doesn't have much in the way of content, he makes up for the lack with a large number of words. *"A fool's voice is known by his many words"* (Ecclesiastes 5:3). Watch the next time you see a politician interviewed. When the interviewer trips him up with questions he wasn't expecting, words will just pour out of his mouth as he frantically tries to think of a reasonable sounding answer. By the time he gets done babbling, you have forgotten what was the question. Meanwhile, it appears no harm has been done as he hasn't said anything of consequence anyway.

Fools are Led by Their Emotions

"The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps." (Proverbs 14:15). It is easier to just accept what you are told. It takes effort to weigh the value of each word. Hence, a foolish person is easily led into sin (Proverbs 7:6-27). The wise person realizes that Satan and his followers lie (John 8:44).

Fools want to be right, but they don't have the ability to reason from the truth. Therefore, when they are caught in the wrong, their impulsive reaction is to fight. *"A*

fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calls for blows. A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul" (Proverbs 18:6-7). He gets carried away by the emotional desire to win at any cost. *"It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel"* (Proverbs 20:3).

Nothing labels a man a fool better than a man's anger. *"Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools"* (Ecclesiastes 7:9). Yet a man's anger rarely solves problems (James 1:20). Righteous living requires consideration and thought. There are far too many traps laid for us by Satan. To give replies without careful consideration is unwise (Proverbs 18:13). A man caught up in the emotions of anger is not looking for the traps.

Not all fools blast out in their anger. Some hide their feelings and use subtle backstabbing to gain their revenge. *"Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool"* (Proverbs 10:18). But it doesn't matter if a person's anger is dramatic or subtle, the anger of men rarely leads to righteousness.

Fools are Arrogant

"He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered" (Proverbs 28:26). The foolish man always believes he is right. He doesn't seek the advice of others. Hence, the fool doesn't really believe he can sin. This is what led to the downfall of Israel (Judges 17:6).

"Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is favor" (Proverbs 14:9). Even when caught in sin, the fool will try to minimize the impact by saying that the sin wasn't really so bad. They will excuse themselves by pointing out that others do the same thing. Some will go so far as to declare that the sin really isn't a sin. In the end, the fool makes a mockery of the seriousness of sin. Sin becomes a sport to the fool (Proverbs 10:23). Think about the young men who call fornication "scoring." Or, gambling institutions who want their wares to be called "gaming."

Without the belief that he can sin, the foolish man plows through life ignoring the signs of danger up ahead. *"A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, But the simple pass on and are punished"* (Proverbs 22:3). The fool won't let such a minor thing as sin stop him from reaching for his goal.

Ultimately, a Fool Denies God

Because a fool refuses all restraint on his actions, he will ultimately turn against God. *"The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity; there is none who does good"* (Psalm 53:1). They use their own standards and emotions to judge whether actions are right or wrong. They no longer consider God's thoughts on any matter. Soon God never enters their minds (Romans 1:20-22).

It is not that the evidence of God's existence is not available to them. The evidence is obvious, but to accept the evidence means to acknowledge that God is over them. Such men would much rather create gods to please their whims than to submit to the one, true God.

Why should any want to be such a fool?