

CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

Archaeological Support For The
New Testament



WERE THE AUTHORS ACCURATE?

- A CENSUS, AND QUIRINIUS GOVERNOR AT THE TIME OF JESUS' BIRTH? - Lk 2:1-3
 - IT WAS ONCE ARGUED THAT LUKE WAS IN ERROR...
 - BUT ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES HAVE PROVEN OTHERWISE...



“THERE WAS NO SUCH CENSUS”

- We now know that the Romans:
 - Had a regular enrollment of taxpayers
 - Held censuses every 14 years (begun by Augustus Caesar)



Quirinius was not governor of Syria at that time

- An inscription found in Antioch tells of Quirinius being governor of Syria around 7 B.C. (evidently he was governor twice!)



“People did not have to return to their ancestral home”

- A papyrus found in Egypt says concerning the conducting of a census:



- ***"Because of the approaching census it is necessary that all those residing for any cause away from their home should at once prepare to return to their own governments in order that they may complete the family registration of the enrollment..."***



WHO IS THIS LYSANIAS? (Lk 3:1)

- **THE ONLY LYSANIAS KNOWN TO ANCIENT HISTORIANS...**
 - Was one who was killed in 36 B.C.
- **HOWEVER, AN INSCRIPTION WAS FOUND NEAR DAMASCUS...**
 - It speaks of "Freedman of Lysanias the tetrarch"
 - And is dated between 14 and 29 A.D.



"THE PAVEMENT" (GABBATHA)? (Jn 19:13)

- FOR CENTURIES THERE WAS NO RECORD OF THE COURT CALLED "THE PAVEMENT" OR "GABBATHA"
 - This caused many to say "It's a myth"
 - And, "See, it (the Bible) is not historical"



"THE PAVEMENT" (GABBATHA)? (Jn 19:13)

- BUT WILLIAM F. ALBRIGHT IN "THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF PALESTINE" SHOWS OTHERWISE...
 - This court was the court of the Tower of Antonia
 - The court was destroyed in 66-70 A.D. during the siege of Jerusalem
 - It was left buried when the city was rebuilt in the time of Hadrian
 - And was not discovered until recently!





ICONIUM A CITY OF PHYRIGIA?

(Ac 14:6)

- ARCHAEOLOGISTS AT FIRST BELIEVED LUKE'S IMPLICATION TO BE WRONG...
 - That Lystra and Derbe were in Lycaonia and Iconium was not
 - They based their belief on the writings of Romans such as Cicero
 - Who indicated that Iconium was in Lycaonia
 - Thus, archaeologists said the book of Acts was unreliable!



ICONIUM A CITY OF PHYRIGIA?

(Ac 14:6)

- BUT IN 1910, SIR WILLIAM RAMSAY FOUND A MONUMENT
 - Which showed that Iconium was indeed a Phrygian city
 - Later discoveries continued to confirm this!





WHOEVER HEARD OF "POLITARCHS"? - Ac 17:6

- CONCERNING THE TERM "RULERS OF THE CITY" (GREEK "POLITARCHS")...
 - Since the term is not found in the classical literature of the Greeks...
 - ...it was assumed that Luke was wrong to refer to such an office.



WHOEVER HEARD OF "POLITARCHS"? - Ac 17:6

- **HOWEVER...**
 - Some 19 inscriptions have now been found that make use of this title
 - Five of these are in reference to Thessalonica!



Gallio, the proconsul of Achaëa (Acts 18:12-17)

- 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 . . ."
 - Historians date the inscription to 52 A.D. which corresponds to the time of the apostle's stay in 51



Erastus, a coworker of Paul (Acts 19:22; Rom 16:23)

- 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.



Plubius, “First man of the island.” (Acts 28:7)

- Scholars questioned this strange title and deemed it unhistorical.
 - Inscriptions have recently been discovered on the island that indeed gives Plubius the title of "first man."



- In all, Luke names thirty-two countries, fifty-four cities, and nine islands without error."
 - 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."



GARDEN BURIAL SITE



GOLGATHA



PONTIUS PILATE INSCRIPTION



The Ossuary of James

- This ancient limestone box with a flowing Aramaic inscription could include the earliest mention of Jesus outside the Bible and may turn out to be the most important archaeological discovery since the Dead Sea Scrolls.



The Ossuary of James

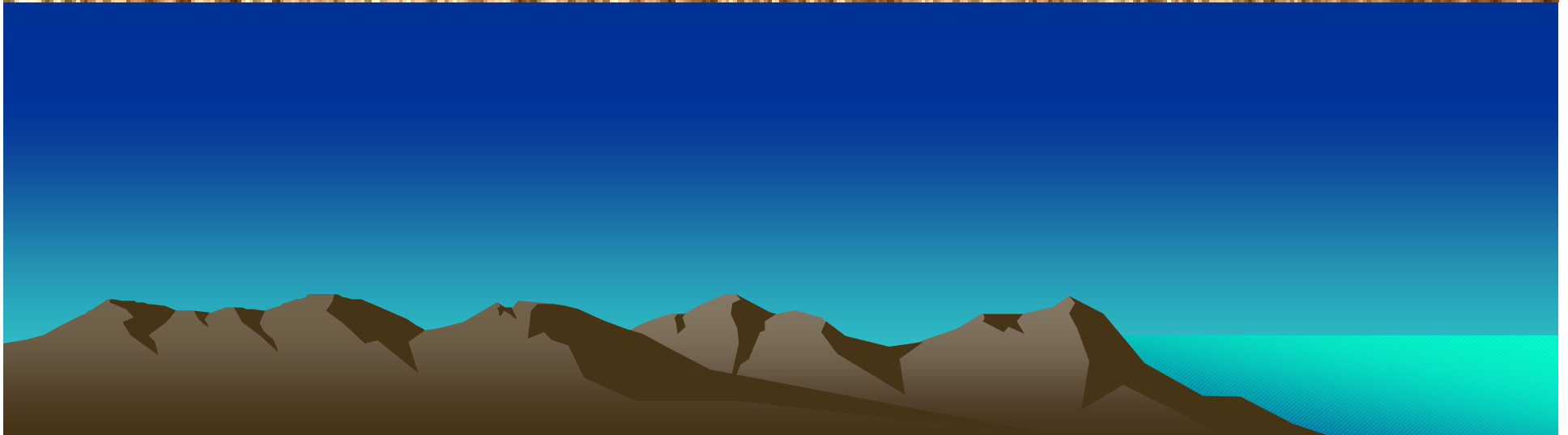


The Ossuary of James

- The rough-hewn ossuary recently discovered is the type of "bone box" as used in 1st century burial rituals in Jerusalem. The Aramaic letters etched into its side reads, from right to left, *"Ya'akov bar Yosef akhui di Yeshua,"* or "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus, and has been dated to about A.D. 63.



The Ossuary of James



The Ossuary of James

- An ossuary is a second burial bone box rectangular in shape, around 1 1/4 feet wide and 2 1/2 feet long.
 - At the time of death, the body was laid in the cave or tomb, and allowed to decompose.
 - A year later the bones would be collected, and put in the ossuary



The Ossuary of James

- It was a ritual driven by necessity.
 - Tombs, which were often carved into rock, were expensive and thus were often reused unless the family was wealthy.
 - The ossuary was then placed in a niche (loculi or kokh) area of the burial cave for permanent storage.
 - These bone boxes or "ossuaries" were used in Jerusalem between the 1st century BC and AD 70.



Impact of the authenticity of the Ossuary of James

- It would add to the biblical evidence of Jesus' existence – though few people today doubt Jesus ever existed.
- it would renew the theologically charged debate about James' relationship to Jesus



Impact of the authenticity of the Ossuary of James (Cont.)

- The traditional Roman Catholic view is that Jesus is the only son of Mary.
 - If Mary continued as the perpetual virgin, the argument goes, then James must actually be a cousin or half-brother or step-brother.
 - The ossuary is the "the nail in the coffin of the 'cousin' argument," says John Meier, a New Testament professor at Notre Dame University.



Just how accurate is the New
Testament in its historical
description?



- **"It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference." -- NELSON GLUECK (noted Jewish archaeologist)**



SIR WILLIAM RAMSAY...

- He was trained in the German historical school of the mid- nineteenth century
- He was taught that the book of Acts was a product of the mid- second century A.D.
- He was firmly convinced of this and started out his career in archaeology to prove it



SIR WILLIAM RAMSAY...

- However, he was compelled to a complete reversal of his beliefs due to the overwhelming evidence uncovered in his research



SIR WILLIAM RAMSAY...

- His conclusion:
 - "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.

SIR WILLIAM RAMSAY...

- His conclusion:
 - "Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, he is possessed of the true historic sense...in short, this author should be placed along with the greatest of historians."

