

# Reliable, Part 3

## Archaeology and History

Pastor Steve Berger    October 25, 2015

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### What the Bible claims about itself

- **2 Timothy 3:16-17**
  - All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.
- **2 Peter 1:21**
  - ... holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

*Q. Is there sufficient proof of that? Is there a preponderance of evidence to support that? Consistent enough in message, reliable enough in its manuscripts, is it accurate enough in its history, supernatural enough in its prophecies, is it statistically impossible for it NOT be the Word of God?*

A. **YES to all!** We will give more than enough proof to the open and honest heart to answer those questions!

*Last week we saw the overwhelming evidence that validates the reliability of the manuscripts from both the Old and New Testaments!*

Today we continue our sermon Road Map: **1) Manuscripts; 2) Archaeology and history; 3) Prophecy; 4) Statistics**

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### Archaeology and history

- **Psalm 85:11**
  - Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven.
- **Luke 19:40**
  - But He answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."

*Interesting... these passages and not only poetic and symbolic, but also true, as the unearthing of archaeological discoveries are proving the certainty and reliability of the Bible. Truth is springing up out of the ground. The stones of the earth of the earth are crying out, "Jesus is who He said He is."*

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### Accuracy of Archaeology

"There have been plenty of claims that things contradict the biblical account, but the Bible has a habit of being proved right after all."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Clifford Wilson, Archaeologist

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Carl Wieland, *Interview with Dr. Clifford Wilson*, (<http://creation.com/archaeologist-confirms-creation-and-the-bible>)

"The excessive skepticism of many liberal theologians stems not from a careful evaluation of the available data, but from an enormous predisposition against the supernatural. . . . On the whole, however, archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the scriptural record." <sup>2</sup>  
Dr. Millar Burrows, Yale University

### **Dead Sea Scrolls –**

- a) Greatest archaeological discovery in 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Included entire book of Isaiah, thousands of fragments from all other O.T. books, except for Esther
- b) written between 200-100 BC; found 1947 in Qumran, Judean desert.
- b) Masoretic Text, written about 916 AD was previous oldest extant copy of Old Testament – in 1,000 years – both were 95% same, 5% exception of spelling and grammar – ZERO theological, doctrinal, historical discrepancies!

**Dead Sea Scrolls proves Old Testament you have is as reliable and accurate as the oldest known copies of Old Testament!  
Not to mention the 99.5% purity of the New Testament manuscripts!**

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### **Old Testament...**

- **Hittites** mentioned nearly 50 times – for centuries no evidence of such a people.
- in 1906, the Hittite capital was uncovered about 90 miles east of Ankara, the capital of Turkey
- **Daniel 5 – Story of Belshazzar**, handwriting on the wall – no Belshazzar found in history – until tablets found supporting biblical record in 1954 by Sir Henry Rawlinson
- Ancient city of **Ebla, 1960's-70's** in Northern Syria have brought to light a wealth of historical material that supports the biblical record.
- An article in **Time magazine** reported, “their discovery does more than provide documentary evidence of a little known kingdom that existed between 2400 and 2250 BC; it also provides the best evidence to date that some of the people described in the Old Testament actually existed” <sup>3</sup>

### **More...**

- **Pharaohs** mentioned in scripture – validated by archaeology
- **Israel existed** as nation before 1200 BC by **Israel Stele** (*tall inscribed pillars*)
- **Israel's Kings** – King **David Tel-Dan Stele 1993-94, "House of David" 900 BC**, written by King of Damascus
- **King Hezekiah** – tunnels existing, 2Kings 20:20
- **Ahab**, Stele of Shalmanaser III 852BC; found 1861
- **Foreign Kings** in scripture – **Sargon** King of Assyria; **Senecharib** King of Assyria; **Nebuchadnezzar** King of Babylon; **Esarhaddon** King of Assyria; **Mesha** King of Moab; **Cyrus** King of Persia, etc., – validated by archaeology – truth from ground – stones cry out!

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. Millar Burrows, *What Mean These Stones?*, (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 258-9

<sup>3</sup> Briton Hadden, Henry Robinson Luce, (Time Inc., Volume 108, October 18, 1976), 63

- "There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition."<sup>4</sup>  
Dr. William F. Albright

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## New Testament

- A biblical skeptic, Sir William Ramsay, trained as an archaeologist set out to disprove the historical reliability of this the book of Luke in the New Testament. However, through his painstaking Mediterranean archaeological trips, he became converted as — one after another — of the historical statements of Luke were proved accurate!<sup>5</sup>
- “On the whole ... 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. Archaeology has in many cases refuted the views of modern critics.”<sup>6</sup> – Dr. Millar Burrows, Professor of Archaeology, Yale University
- **Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, Nero** Caesar(s) — validated by archaeology
- **Pontius Pilate** — 1961 inscription Prefect of Judah
- **Herod's Tomb** — Herodium, outside Bethlehem, where he tried to kill baby Jesus is where he's buried!
- **More Kings and Government Officials** — Antipas, Aretas, Governor Antonius Felix
- **Caiaphas** — High Priest of Jesus time; ornate ossuary (bone box) found 1990, "Joseph son of Caiaphas"
- **Towns** — Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Capernaum, Magdala, Decapolis, Thessalonica, etc.
- “It may be stated categorically that NO archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference.”<sup>7</sup>  
Nelson Glueck, Jewish archeologist
- "...there exists today not one unquestionable find of archaeology that proves the Bible to be in error at any point"<sup>8</sup>  
Dr. Henry Morris

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## Accuracy of history

- **Secular historians** like the **Jewish Josephus** (before A.D. 100); the **Roman Tacitus** (around A.D. 120); and **Pliny Secundus** (A.D. 100-110) make direct reference to Jesus or affirm one or more historical New Testament references.
- **Skeptical secular historians** prove there is strong external evidence to support the Bible manuscripts reliability.
- **Josephus**- Testimonium Flavianum- amazing corroboration of Jesus' life, miracles, death, and resurrection.

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<sup>4</sup> Dr. William F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religions of Israel* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956), 176

<sup>5</sup> Sir W.M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (New York, NY: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915)

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Millar Burrows, *What Mean These Stones?*, (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 258-9

<sup>7</sup> Billy Graham, *The Reason for My Hope: Salvation*, (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, October 22, 2013), 90

<sup>8</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Bible and Modern Science*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1956)

- "About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvelous things about him. And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared."<sup>9</sup> Josephus in *Testimonium Flavianum*
- **At the very least** — Jesus was wise teacher, with large, lasting following, martyred leader of church in Jerusalem, crucified under Pontius Pilate.
- **At most** — those plus — He was a miracle worker, fulfillment of prophets, resurrected Christ!
- **Tacitus** —
  - "In A.D. 115 explicitly states that Nero persecuted the Christians as scapegoats to divert suspicion away from himself for the great fire that had devastated Rome in A.D. 64."
  - "Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. 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 Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome. ... Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty: then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind."<sup>10</sup>
  - Why is this reference important?
    - Tacitus was an unsympathetic witness
    - he corroborates the success and spread of Christianity, an 'immense multitude'
    - based on a historical figure—Christus—
    - who was crucified under Pontius Pilate
    - they held so strongly to their beliefs that they were willing to die rather than recant
- **Pliny Secundus** (the Younger) — 111 AD, Governor of Bythinia, northwest Turkey
  - "I have asked them if they are Christians, and if they admit it, I repeat the question a second and third time, with a warning of the punishment awaiting them. If they persist, I order them to be led away for execution; for, whatever the nature of their admission, I am convinced that their stubbornness and unshakable obstinacy ought not to go unpunished. ... They also declared that the sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this: they had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately amongst themselves in honor of Christ as if to a god, and also to bind themselves by oath, not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery, and adultery. ... This made me decide it was all the more necessary to extract the truth by torture from two slave-women, whom they called deaconesses. I found nothing but a degenerate sort of cult carried to extravagant lengths."<sup>11</sup>
  - this attests to
    - the rapid spread of Christianity, both in the city and in the rural areas
    - among every class of persons, slave women as well as Roman citizens
    - talks about the worship of Jesus as God
    - that Christians maintained high ethical standards
    - they were not easily swayed from their beliefs

<sup>9</sup> Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1998)

<sup>10</sup> Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ/Case for Faith Compilation*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006)

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*

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## **“What, then, does a historian know about Jesus Christ?”**

- “What, then, does a historian know about Jesus Christ? He knows, first and foremost, that the New Testament documents can be relied upon to give an accurate portrait of Him. And he knows that this portrait cannot be rationalized away by wishful thinking, philosophical presuppositionalism, or literary maneuvering”<sup>12</sup> John Warwick Montgomery

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## **“What, then, does an archaeologist know about Jesus Christ?”**

- “Of the hundreds of thousands of artifacts found by the archeologists, not one has ever been discovered that contradicts or denies one word, phrase, clause, or sentence of the Bible, but always confirms and verifies the facts of the biblical record.”<sup>13</sup> Dr. J. O. Kinsman

**Truth has sprung up from the ground —  
the stones have and are crying out —  
the biblical record is reliable —  
and Jesus Christ, the Bible’s central figure,  
is real, ready and waiting to love, forgive and save  
anyone who will call upon Him!**

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## **House of Prayer**

**Click on "House of Prayer" on [www.gracechapel.net](http://www.gracechapel.net) to fill out a prayer request.  
We pray for requests for one month, and at our weekly prayer meetings.  
Please come join our House of Prayer,  
Tuesday, October 27th at 6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary.**

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<sup>12</sup> John Warwick Montgomery, *History and Christianity*, (Bethany House Publishers, 1986) 40

<sup>13</sup> Christopher H.K. Persaud, *God in Our Midst*, (Xlibris Corporation, September 25, 2003) 182