

Top NT Archaeological Finds

/Ronald Cram

- 1. The Delphi (Gallio) inscription discovered 1905, now in Delphi Museum in Greece Fixed the date of Gallio's service as proconsul as AD 51-52, providing a way of dating the events in Acts 18:12-17 and much of Paul's ministry. http://www.kairos2.com/BL_Gallio.htm
- 2. Mummy Mask Fragment of Mark to be published soon and will be on display at Museum of the Bible in Washington D.C. in 2017 A pharaoh's mummy mask is made of gold but the average Egyptian mummy mask was made of used papyrus. One mummy mask has yielded a fragment of the Gospel of Mark, expected to be the oldest known



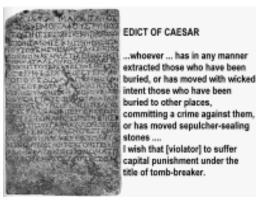
fragment of the New Testament dated between AD 80-90. Mummy masks have also yielded manuscripts of Homer that are much older than previously available. http://www.livescience.com/49489-oldest-known-gospel-mummy-mask.html

- 3. Sergius Paulus inscription discovered 1877 Confirms the existence of Sergius Paulus, proconsul of Cypress encountered by Paul in Acts 13:7. http://www.hwhouse.com/images/4.SERGIUS_PAULUS_INSCRIPTION.pdf
- 4. Politarch Inscription British Museum Many skeptical scholars thought Luke made up the term "politarch" used to describe the leaders of Thessalonica in Acts 17. This inscription confirmed the accuracy of Luke as an historian. Some 32 "politarch" inscriptions from Macedonia are now known. http://bit.ly/PolitarchInscription



5. Lysanias Inscription – Many skeptical scholars thought Luke made a mistake in writing 'Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene' in Luke 3:1 (around the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry in A.D. 27) because the only known Lysanias died in 36 B.C. However an inscription (CIG. 4521) discovered at Abila was found reading "Nymphias, freedman of Lysanias the tetrarch" dated to A.D. 14-29. Sir William M Ramsay took this as strong evidence that Luke is correct. http://bit.ly/1PnN]xr

- 6. Phrygian Altar Inscriptions discovered in 1910 by William Mitchell Ramsay and displayed in the Istanbul Archaeology Museum In Acts 14, Luke writes that Paul and Barnabus left Iconium and entered the region of Lycaonia. A century before Luke, Cicero had written that Iconium was in the region of Lycaonia. This made many scholars think Luke made a mistake like saying someone left London and entered England. The discovery of these inscriptions show the people of Iconium did not speak the Lycaonian language but the Phrygian and Greek languages. This discovery confirms the accuracy of Acts 14 and is one reason William Mitchell Ramsay wrote that Luke "is a historian of the first rank" and "should be placed along with the very greatest of historians." http://bit.ly/PhrygianAltar
- 7. Nazareth Inscription Time and place of discovery unknown This inscription became part of the private Froehner Collection in 1878. In 1925, the Froehner Collection became part of the Paris National Library. More than 20 scholarly papers were published on the inscription by 1932. No scholar doubted the authenticity of the inscription. It was seen as important because it can be read as a special imperial decree related to the apostles taking



Christ's body from the grave. The inscription outlaws removing a body from a tomb and calls for the death penalty. This is a very unusual law because while people rob tombs of artifacts, no one robs a body from a tomb. The inscription specifically mentions a seal on the tomb such as was placed on Jesus's tomb. http://bit.ly/NazarethInscription

- 8. Skeleton of Yehohanan excavated by Vassilios Tzaferis in 1968 Skeptics claimed Romans tied criminals to the cross rather than used nails. Skeptics also claim crucified criminals were buried in mass graves. This skeleton confirms the Bible's description of crucifixion by nails through the hands and feet and legs broken below the knee. Now at the Israel Museum, this skeleton also confirms the fact Romans sometimes allowed crucifixion victims to be buried honorably. http://bit.ly/Yehohanan
- 9. Caiaphas Ossuary discovered 1990 This highly ornate limestone bone box, appropriate for a man of high standing, confirmed the existence of Caiaphas the chief priest and chief antagonist of Jesus. http://bit.ly/CaiaphasOssuary
- 10. Rylands Papyrus (P52) discovered 1920 This small fragment of the Gospel of John (measures 3.5" x 2.5") is the oldest universally accepted manuscript of the

NT. Its words describe Jesus's trial before Pilate. It is dated to AD 125 and was found near the Nile River, a long way from its place of composition in Ephesus. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rylands_Library_Papyrus_P52

11. Bodmer Papyrus II (P66) – discovered 1952 – Discovered in Egypt, it contains most of John's gospel dated from AD 150-200. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus_66

12. Chester Beatty Papyri – acquired 1931-35 – Three papyri dating from AD 200 that contain most of the NT.

http://bit.ly/BeattyPapyri



- 13. Codex Vaticanus Vatican Library, first inventoried in 1481 Dated to AD 325-350 and contains a nearly complete Bible. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex_Vaticanus
- 14. Codex Sinaiticus discovered 1859 Codex contains nearly complete NT and over half of the Old Testament (the earliest books of the Bible appear have been damaged) dated to AD 350. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codex Sinaiticus
- 15. James Ossuary made public in 2002 The Aramaic inscription, translated "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus," was controversial because the last portion "brother of Jesus" appeared to some experts to have been made by a different hand causing some to think it was a recent forgery. The Israeli Antiquities Authority charged the owner, Oded Golan, with forgery but lost the case. Patina shows the entire inscription is ancient. Golan was



declared not guilty of forgery but was convicted of illegal trading in antiquities. http://bit.ly/JamesOssuary

16. Uncensored Talmud (Cod. Hebr. 95) – manuscript is dated to 1343 A.D. and is housed at the State Library at Munich – is thought to have been discovered in France. It is the oldest nearly complete manuscript of the Babylonian Talmud (this manuscript is sometimes called the Munich Talmud). The Talmud contains the oral tradition of Judaism going back to the first century A.D. The uncensored Talmud is a hostile witness to Jesus of Nazareth. It describes him as a teacher who had disciples (five of them) and a healer and miracle-worker (although it claims he did these works through sorcery). These are not Christian interpolations. These descriptions closely match the statements of Jewish leaders in the gospels

in which they said Jesus cast out demons by "Beelzebul, prince of demons." (Matt 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15). http://bit.ly/UncensoredTalmud

17. The Pilate Stone inscription – discovered 1961, now in Israel Museum – Inscription reads "Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judea" confirming the existence and office of Pilate. This find was highly valued at the time of discovery because no other evidence of Pilate was known at the time. Since this time a number of Pilate coins have been found. See #23 below. http://bit.ly/PilotStoneInscription



- 18. Pool of Bethesda discovered in 19th century Described in the Gospel of John has having five porticos, this unusual feature caused many skeptical scholars to say the pool and the story of Jesus healing the paralytic were mythical. The discovery of a pool with five porticos confirms John 5:2-9. http://bit.ly/PoolOfBethesda
- 19. Pool of Siloam discovered 2004 A previously identified Pool of Siloam was proven to be wrong by this discovery. Coins found at this level show the pool was in use during the life of Jesus. This site is identified in John 9:1-11 as the place where Jesus healed the blind man. http://articles.latimes.com/2005/aug/09/science/sci-siloam9
- 20. Temple Warning Inscriptions discovered in 1871 and 1938 In Acts 21:28, Paul was accused of bringing Greeks into the temple. Josephus wrote that an inscription "forbade any foreigner to go in, under the pain of death" (Antiquities, 15:11:5) These inscriptions confirm that capital punishment was posted as the penalty. The 1871 discovery is on display at the Istanbul Archaeology Museum. The 1938 discovery is at the Israel Museum. http://bit.ly/TempleWarningInscription
- 21. Nazareth House Excavated in 2009 Some skeptics claimed Nazareth did not exist during the time of Jesus. The Israel Antiquities Authority announced they found a Nazareth house with artifacts from the first century. Nazareth was a small village of maybe 50 houses in Jesus's time. Most likely, Jesus knew the people who lived in this house.

http://bit.ly/SkepticalOfNazareth http://bit.ly/NazarethHouse



- 22. Capernaum Synagogue Excavation began in 1969 Underneath a 4th century synagogue is the 1st century synagogue visited by Jesus (Mark 1:21 & John 6:59). http://bit.ly/CapernaumSynagogue
- 23. Sea of Galilee boat Nof Ginosaur Museum Discovered 1986 near Tiberias, it measures 30 feet by 8 feet and capable of carrying 15 passengers. It is like the boat Jesus and his disciples used to cross the Sea of Galilee. Carbon 14 dating places the boat between 120 BC and AD 40. http://bit.ly/GalileeBoat



- 24. Gergesa Found Mark 5. Matthew 8, and
 Luke 8 describe the healing of the demon-possessed man. The location appears in
 different manuscripts as Gergesa, Gadara and Gerasa. This may be due to scribal
 error. Gergesa (probably the original reading) was not well-known and scribes
 were likely to substitute better known towns like Gadara and Gerasa. Gergesa
 (modern day Kursi) is located on the other side of the lake from Galilee, has tombs
 nearby, and a steep bank going toward the lake all features used to describe the
 location of the miracle. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gergesa
- 25. Erastus Inscription Stone discovered in Corinth in 1929 The inscription reads "Erastus in return for aedileship laid [this] pavement at his own expense." The stone pavement was found near the large theater in Corinth. The name Erastus is mentioned several times in the New Testament. Many historians think this is the same man. Erastus is not a common name in



inscriptions in Corinth. Paul's letter to the Romans was probably written in Corinth in about 56/57 AD. Paul's Erastus was a city official in Corinth (Romans 16:23).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erastus_of_Corinth

26. Quirinius inscription – discovered by William Mitchell Ramsay and J.G.C. Andersen in Antioch in 1912 - Historians recognize that Quirinius was governor of Syria when a census was ordered in 6 AD, but this does not fit New Testament chronology. Ramsay believes this inscription shows Quirinius was also governor of Syria from 10-7 B.C. One difficulty is that Josephus wrote that Sentius Saturninus was



governor of Syria from 9-7 B.C. Also, Tertullian wrote that Jesus was born when Saturnius was governor of Syria. Ramsay proposed that the authority of Quirinius and Saturnius overlapped. Luke was apparently aware that Quirinius was governor of Syria twice because Luke 2:32 reads "This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria." This seems to indicate that Luke knew a second census was taken when Quirinius was governor the second time in 6 A.D. http://bit.ly/1LF4PE6

27. Pontius Pilate coins – British Museum – Minted by Pilate, this coin names his office as "procurator." On one side of the coin is an image of Roman cultic paraphernalia (a ladle) and on the reverse side an image of a staff. It was minted in the 17^{th} year of the reign of Tiberias - or AD 30-31 -



near the death and resurrection of Jesus. http://bit.ly/PilateCoins

- 28. Freedom of Zion coin discovered at the Temple Mount Sifting Project This is a bronze coin dating to the revolt against Rome (A.D. 66-70). It bears the Hebrew phrase "Freedom of Zion." This revolt against Rome led to the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem and was predicted by Jesus in Matthew 24. http://bit.ly/FreedomOfZionCoin
- 29. Roman Census Papyri British Museum This census took place in AD 104 and was very similar to the census at the birth of Jesus described by Luke. It reads: "Gaius Vibius Maximus, Prefect of Egypt: The census by household having begun, it is essential that all those who are away from their nomes (districts) be summoned to return to their own hearths so that they may perform the customary business of registration..." http://www.kchanson.com/ANCDOCS/greek/census.html
- 30. House of Peter in Capernaum Discovered in 1968 by Virgilio Carbo Between 1968 and 1986, Carbo led 19 digs of the site. Another four seasons of excavations were led by Stanislao Loffreda. The first century home was buried beneath a fourth century church, built to commemorate the site as holy. While slightly larger than most, the first century home was simple. The site became more important when excavators realized that the purpose of the building changed half way through the first century. The main room of the house was completely plastered over from floor to ceiling – a rarity at the time - shortly after the resurrection of Jesus. Excavators believe the building began to function as an early meeting place for Christians, an early church. According to gospel accounts, Jesus performed miracles within these walls.

http://bit.ly/PeterHome

Quotes

Nelson Glueck writes: "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever contraverted a biblical reference" and "Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible." (*Rivers in the Desert: A History of the Negev*, p. 31)

Jonathan L. Reed comments "The many archaeological discoveries relating to people, places, or titles mentioned in Acts do lend credence to its historicity at one level; many of the specific details in Acts are factual." (*The Harper Collins Visual Guide to the New Testament: What Archaeology Reveals about the First Christians*, p.100)

John McRay writes: "It should be remembered that only about two hundred sites out of the approximately five thousand sites in the Holy Land have been excavated." (*Archaeology and the New Testament*, p.22)

William Mitchell Ramsay found the archaeological evidence compelling: "I may fairly claim to have entered on this investigation without any prejudice in favour of the conclusion which I shall now attempt to justify to the reader. On the contrary, I began with a mind unfavourable to it for the ingenuity and apparent completeness of the Tubingen theory had at one time quite convinced me. It did not lie then in my line of life to investigate the subject minutely but more recently I found myself often brought in 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." (*St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, p.8)

Ancient historian Paul Barnett concludes: "...archaeology neither proves nor disproves the New Testament. It does, however, endorse the narratives at many points, especially in the case of inscriptions, which by their nature are specific. Here we meet characters secondary to the main story – the Herods, the high priest and several Roman governors. Moreover, through archaeology we are able to fill in background details that enhance the narratives in both the Gospels and in the book of Acts. Archaeological findings have confirmed that the texts of the New Testament are from first to last historical and geographical in character." (*Is the New Testament Reliable?*)