

LIBERTY UNIVERISTY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Biblical Archaeology as an Effective Apologetic

A Thesis

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Chapter 1-Introduction

“The problem of the Scripture’s truth and validity cannot be solved...In the end, we can never measure this Biblical reality with reality itself, whether we attempt this measurement in the field of value or in the field of fact.”¹ One would think this is a phrase coming from a skeptical agnostic. Surprisingly, this statement actually comes from George Wright, a colleague of the famous biblical archaeologist William Fox Albright who argued for the historicity of Scripture. Wright was a believer in Christ, not a skeptic. Wright further stated, “God has not committed his truth to respond adequately to our tests.”² The relationship between Biblical archaeology and Christian apologetics has been a notable one. Some have used the findings of archaeology to support the Bible as a trustworthy source of history. Others have stated that archaeology can help shed light on the historical background of Scripture, but it cannot be used as an apologetic argument for faith. There are also those who would attempt to argue that the findings of archaeology do not confirm the Bible as accurate, and that the lack of archaeological support for the Bible is actually an argument against Christian belief. The following work will attempt to show that Biblical archaeology can be used to defend the historicity of the Biblical accounts.

Christian scholars have been cautious with how much emphasis they put on archaeology’s ability to defend Christian belief. For example, John Walton and Andrew Hill have argued that archaeology has “limited” apologetic value, noting that Ancient Near Eastern archaeology cannot prove God’s sovereignty over history: “Archaeology can authenticate history, but it cannot authenticate theology, and from the biblical perspective, history devoid of

¹ George Wright, *Sprunt lectures published as The Old Testament and Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 70.

² Ibid.

theology is meaningless.”³ David Graves states that the primary purpose of Biblical Archaeology is not apologetic, it is instead “hermeneutic.”⁴ Biblical archaeology can be used to help clarify the original context of the Scriptures, but it can by no means “prove” the biblical accounts. Some would argue that such matters are an aspect of “faith.” When it comes to faith, that which is “unseen” is being dealt with. As stated in Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see (NIV).”

Other scholars have gone even further than this, with archaeologists like Israel Finkelstein claiming that archaeology does not support the history that the Bible presents.⁵ The biblical minimalists will argue that archaeology simply does not line up with the historical accounts that are given in the Bible. The position of biblical minimalists is that there was no “biblical Israel.” These are mythical constructs from a nation attempting to cast itself in a greater light in the Ancient Near East, and the depictions of the People of God can be boiled down to “pious fiction.”⁶ The minimalists will argue that there is no evidence of the Exodus in Egypt led by Moses, there is no evidence of Joshua leading the conquests in the land of the Canaan, and there is no evidence of Solomon’s prosperous kingdom in the 10th century. All of these are simply nation-building myths that have been preserved for religious purposes. They argue the Hebrew Bible is a collection of legends and accounts that were not completely compiled until

³ Andrew Hill and John Walton, *Survey of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 358-359

⁴ David Graves, *Biblical Archaeology: An Introduction with Recent Discoveries that Support the Reliability of the Bible*, (Moncton, Canada: David Graves, 2014), 58

⁵ Israel Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts*. (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2001), 21.

⁶ Graves, *Biblical Archaeology*, 62

sometime after the Exile, and much of the Hebrew Bible is not the work of people who were contemporaries to the reported events.⁷

While biblical maximalists strongly disagree with minimalists, they will grant that archaeology cannot detect some of the historical events of the Bible. So, there is a caution among certain Christian scholars to use archaeology for an “apologetic” purpose. This is due to the limitations of archaeology, and the occasional contradicting data from archaeology with the Bible. However, certain biblical scholars have stated the opposite. They argue that archaeology can be used as an apologetic for the Christian faith. Scholars that have claimed this include Randall Price in his work, *The Stones Cry Out* (1997) and Craig Evans in his work *Jesus and His World: The Archaeological Evidence* (2012). As Evans so brilliantly argues:

“What archaeologists and historians find can also be called verisimilitude, or ‘resemblance to the truth’; that is, resemblance or likeness to the way things really were. This means that the writings of the Bible speak of real people, real places and real events. Many of these things can be corroborated by archaeological discoveries and by other ancient sources.”⁸

The issue at hand is whether or not the Bible’s narrative accounts can be considered truly historical, and if archaeology can be used to demonstrate the historical reliability of the Bible. While it is important not to overstate the case that one can make with archaeology, the relationship between biblical archaeology and the discipline of Christian apologetics should not be understated either. If one can demonstrate that the Bible has shown itself time and time again

⁷ Graves, *Biblical Archaeology*, 63.

⁸ Craig Evans, *Jesus and His World: The Archaeological Evidence*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 1.

to be historically accurate, both with recent and previous discoveries in the field of archaeology, then the case can be made that the Bible is a book with its basis in history and not “myth.”

The purpose of this paper is to argue for archaeology as an effective apologetic for the Bible’s historicity. Findings from ancient Syrian-Palestinian archaeology, for example, show that there is evidence for the Bible’s historical accuracy. However, some other ideas must be established in order to further demonstrate archaeology as an “effective” apologetic. One must have a correct methodology for Christian apologetics in order to understand what makes an apologetic “effective.” Various apologetic methodologies can be implemented when it comes to defending the faith. One can decide to use a more “empirical method” and use archaeology as evidence for Christianity. One can also take a more “presuppositional” approach to this issue and realize that the evidence of biblical archaeology is best understood from the framework of the biblical worldview. Both apologetic methodologies have their advantages and disadvantages. This work will examine the various methods of apologetics so one can understand how to best make the case for Christian belief.

Once the task of “Christian apologetics” is properly defined, this work will help demonstrate connection between biblical archaeology and apologetics. To do this, a brief look into the history and development of archaeology as a scientific discipline will be given. Then, the history of biblical archaeology will be examined, and notable archaeologists and their contributions to the discipline of archeology will be explored. A brief look into the methodologies and limitations of archaeology will also be examined, in order to properly understand the task of archaeology. A refutation to those who are cynical of the possibility of truly knowing history will also be given. The preservation of history is an important concept upheld by Christians throughout church history and should remain upheld by Christians today.

One must also have a proper understanding of the relationship between evidence and faith. Some argue that the beliefs of faith and the beliefs of science oppose one another. However, a closer examination will reveal that science can actually in many cases confirm faith. This is an important point to note as archaeology is a branch of “historical science.”

From this point, various discoveries from notable archaeologists will be examined. There are various discoveries that confirm the historicity of the Old and the New Testament. The discoveries that confirm the historicity of the Old Testament include the “Tel Dan Stele” and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The discoveries that confirm the New Testament includes the discovery of Caiaphas’ ossuary and the Pool of Siloam. The amount of evidence that can be compiled for the historicity shows the discipline of biblical archaeology to be an effective apologetics.

Chapter 2—Defining “Christian Apologetics”

Relevant Bible passages

Mark Twain once famously stated that “faith” is “believing in what you know ain’t so.”⁹ Christian apologetics shows this is not the case. The task of Christian apologetics is to show that faith and reason are not separate entities, and the truth found by faith can be verified by reason. Opposite to what Twain believes, Christian apologetics is the branch of Christian theology that deals with giving good arguments for the truthfulness of the Christian faith. Douglas Groothuis gives a succinct definition of Christian apologetics: “The rational defense of the Christian worldview as objectively true, rationally compelling, and existentially or subjectively engaging.”¹⁰

However, to make an argument using Christian apologetics, one must make an argument *for* Christian apologetics. Some believe that apologetics violates the authority of Scripture. Some will even go as far as saying that Scripture repudiates the idea of apologetics.¹¹ An example that some Christians will use is Luke 21:14-15 where Jesus tells His disciples to “not prepare” what they will say before they are brought before officials. Some will use this to argue that apologetics is a form of “preparing beforehand,” and thus is believed to be disobedience to Christ’s commands.¹² When this example is examined though, it does not hold up. One thing that can be noted is that this is in the context of persecution in which Jesus is encouraging his disciples to

⁹ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2013), 197.

¹⁰ Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academics, 2011), 24.

¹¹ James Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics: what we do and why we do it*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academics, 2011), 134.

¹² *Ibid.*

take courage because He will give His Holy Spirit to them.¹³ Secondly, a closer look at this verse shows that Jesus is emphasizing that His disciples are not to “worry about” what to say beforehand.¹⁴ The point is that the disciples are not to be anxious about the persecution that is coming and about what to say when put on trial. This does not necessarily entail that the disciples are not to prepare their words at all. Lastly, the interpretation that one must not prepare beforehand what to say leads to a *reductio ad absurdum*. If it is the case that Jesus is teaching His followers in Luke 21 that they should never prepare what they are going to say, then it would rule out all forms of Christian study. The study of theology, Scripture memorization, and sermon preparation are all forms of study clearly sanctioned by Scripture. Paul exhorts Timothy to “rightly divide the Word of Truth (2 Tim 2:15 NIV).” So, it cannot be the case that Jesus is saying never study or prepare at all. This leaves room for the study of Christian Apologetics.

Still others feel that Christian apologetics is repudiated in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, which states, “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power (NIV).” Those who are against the use of Christian apologetics will argue that apologetics is an example of “persuasive words,” which is “human wisdom,” and that Christians should simply just “rely on the Holy Spirit” when it comes to evangelism.¹⁵ William Barclay argues as such in his commentary on the Corinthian letters, that Paul completely renounces the use of philosophy and argument in presenting the Gospel. Barclay notes, “He [Paul] had come speaking in simplicity.... on Mars Hill, he had met the philosophers and had tried to speak their

¹³ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 134.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 134-135.

own language (Acts 17:22-31); and it was one of his few failures”¹⁶ However, this idea misses what is actually being said in the original context. Paul in 1 Cor. 2 is stating that he wants to proclaim the Gospel in a simple way by the power of the Spirit, not using the kind of high rhetorical strategies of trained orators like the Rabbis and Greek philosophers of his day.¹⁷ This does not mean that argument and the life of the mind is wholly rejected.

Barclay would argue that Paul abandoned using philosophical argument after his supposed failure in reaching the Athenian Philosophers as noted in Acts 17: 22-31: “For most people, the way to the recesses of a man’s inmost being lies, not through his mind, but through his heart.”¹⁸ While it should be noted that getting through to a person’s heart is of the utmost importance, it should not mean that the life of the mind is wholly neglected. It should also be noted that the Mars Hill sermon and dialogues should not be considered “failures.” Darrel Bock argues against that notion in his commentary on the book of Acts; “While certainly not an overwhelming success, nothing about what Paul does or says is viewed negatively or as a failure...Rather, Luke seeks to make the point that fully engages the culture in its intellectual culture.”¹⁹ Throughout the book of Acts, Paul is seen “reasoning” in the synagogues and public spaces to make a case that Jesus is the true Messiah (Acts 17:2, 18:4, 9, 24:25). So, one cannot use Acts 17 or 1st Corinthians 2 as biblical evidence against apologetics and philosophical argumentation. Intellectual persuasion does have its place in Christian evangelism.

¹⁶ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975), 23.

¹⁷ Beilby, 135.

¹⁸ Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, 24.

¹⁹ Darrel Bock, *Acts: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2007), 572-573.

Another critique that some have for apologetics is that it takes away from the notion of “having faith.” Some see faith as completely separate from reason and philosophy, using Hebrews 11:1 as a prooftext; “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see (NIV).” Some see the assurance for things “that are unseen” as meaning believing without evidence, or as one author put it, “The Greek word in Hebrews 11:1 for those “things” (*pragmata*), of which we are assured and for which we hope, refers to everything that seems to defy common sense.”²⁰ However, this may be an inappropriate understanding of this passage. It is true that Scripture teaches that God is unseen (1 John 4:12), but Scripture also takes into account the fact that the things that are seen can be used as evidence of the unseen. The Apostle Paul states, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—*have been clearly seen*, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse (Rom. 1:20 NIV emphasis added).”

So, Hebrews 11:1 cannot be understood as believing without evidence. One commentator has noted that Hebrews 11:1 should be understood in the context of being the definition used of those who were “heroes of the faith” in the Old Testament, “the heroes of the faith, it should be stressed, do not believe the incredible, nor do they believe blindly without sufficient reason... On the contrary they have reason to believe, and their acts of obedience are the result of their dependence upon the reliability of God’s promises.”²¹ It can be noted that the author of Hebrews is not appealing to blind faith or “wishful thinking.” The author is appealing to a faith that is based on reason and history. He is appealing to the history of known historical figures like Abraham, Moses, and David, to appeal to his Jewish Christian audience to continue to trust God

²⁰ Carl Rascke, “Faith and Philosophy in Tension”, ed. Steve Wilkens, *Faith and Reason: Three Views* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014) 120.

²¹ Donald Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 166.

even in the midst of persecution.²² In other words, he is attempting to build faith in his readers based on previous knowledge, which is a form of “reasoning.” So, a faith that is based on evidence and historical fact is not out of the question in Hebrews 11:1.

Some will attempt to use John 20:29, where Jesus seemingly rebukes Thomas, to support the idea of faith as a belief without evidence; “Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed (NIV).” However, stating that this a rebuke for Thomas because he did not simply “blindly believe” is a misnomer. One thing that can be noted is the fact that Thomas was not believing without evidence, he was rejecting the evidence that has been given to him (the testimony of his fellow apostles). The Apostle John is trying to show his audience that the testimony of Apostles is sufficient evidence for the resurrection and there is no need to ask for these experiences to be constantly replicated for one to believe in Christ as the risen Son of God.²³

A second thing that can be said is that the tactical, visible proof of Jesus is used as a positive argument for a belief in the Christ’s deity and resurrection. In 1 John 1:1 , the apostle appeals to “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life (NIV).” What is most likely going on in 1 John 1:1-4 is a refutation of a “proto-Gnosticism,” which was a belief that Jesus was not fully man but only appeared to be that way and was really an immaterial Spirit.²⁴ John’s language in verse 1 has other implications. As noted by archaeologist and biblical scholar Randal Price, 1 John 1:1-4 shows that the Bible uses

²² Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews.*, 166-168.

²³ J. Harris Murray, Andreas Köstenberger, and Robert W. Yarbough, *John*, (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic Publishing, 2015), 334.

²⁴ Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M. B. Eerdmans’s Publishing Co., 1978), 15.

tactical, tangible evidence for Jesus' resurrection as a positive argument for faith.²⁵ Thus, the Bible cannot be understood as teaching that faith is believing without evidence.

In fact, one can see the Apostle Peter making an appeal for all of the Church to participate in the task of Christian apologetics; "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...But do this with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3:15b NIV)." The word for "answer" is the original Greek is *apologia* (ἀπολογία). Sometimes translated "defense" or "reason," the term understood in its original context means "a well-reasoned reply" or "a speech in a civil defense."²⁶ Wayne Grudem understands this passage as Peter imploring the Church to be well prepared to answer objections to the faith, whether it is in a formal or informal setting.²⁷ This command is still relevant to believers today.

The necessity of Christian apologetics in today's culture cannot be overstated. In a Post-Enlightenment, Post-Christian culture, apologetics is necessary to combat the various false ideas that permeate the culture.²⁸ Apologetics can be used to help remove the intellectual and personal barriers that may be keeping various people from entering into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Further, if the Bible can be defended as a historically reliable document using archaeology, something other religious documents like the Book of Mormon cannot do, it should cause the scientifically minded person to at least consider its claims.

²⁵ Randal Price, *The Stones Cry Out*, (Eugene, OR: Harvest Publishers, 1997), 28.

²⁶ *Strong's Concordance*, BibleHub (2018), biblehub.com, last accessed April 4, 2019, <https://biblehub.com/greek/627.htm>

²⁷ Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter*, (Grand Rapids, MI, W.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 153.

²⁸ Beilby, 152.

As an example, the Book of Mormon claims that ancient native Americans are relatives of the tribes of Israel that sailed to the ancient America. Archaeology has not substantiated this claim. Instead has actually given evidence that Native Americans are descended from east Asian people. Even Mormon scholars have even admitted that Joseph Smith's geography is unrealistic.²⁹ Mormon theologians will appeal to "inner light" in the Mormon's heart to validate their beliefs instead of archaeological evidence, in part because archaeology simply does not support their religious text. As noted by Mormon theologian David S. King, "Notwithstanding the glamor accompanying the ongoing effort of scholars to "prove" the authenticity of the Book of Mormon through archaeological, literary, or any other type of exploration, their efforts must ultimately be recognized as only tangential to our obtaining that special inner spiritual light requisite to reaching a certainty of its truth (Moro. 10:4) External evidence can be fascinating and enlightening, but it cannot alone engender faith.....If the Lord had intended our conversion to the Book of Mormon to depend on irrefutable physical proof, it would have been easy for him to provide such, sprinkled throughout the pages of the book itself."³⁰ However, this is not the case with the Bible. Archaeology does corroborate with the Scriptures. Therefore, Christian Apologetics can be shown to be biblical and necessary for evangelism in the 21st century.

Even with the necessity of Christian Apologetics established, another question remains. This question is what method of Christian Apologetics should be utilized when witnessing to an unbelieving world. These methods include: The Classical method, the Evidential method, the Presuppositional method, and the Eclectic method.

²⁹ Luke Wilson, "Does Archaeology Support the Book of Mormon," *Institute for Religious Research* (December 2011), n.p, last accessed May 28 2019, <http://mit.irr.org/book-of-mormon-archaeology-full>

³⁰ David King, "Proving the Book of Mormon: Archaeology vs. Faith," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, (January 1991): 145-146.

Classical Method

The first method is what is called the “classical apologetic method.” This method sees the theologian making philosophical arguments for classical theism before making arguments for the case for the existence of that God being the same God of the Bible. This method was used by Thomas Aquinas, who employed “five proofs” from the natural world to establish the existence of God. These proofs include the argument from motion, the argument from change in the universe, argument from efficient cause, the argument from design, and the argument from necessary being.³¹ This approach seems to be consistent with what is stated in Romans 1:20, where the apostle Paul argues that the unbeliever knows that God exists because of “that which has been made (NIV).” Modern apologists, like William Lane Craig, follow suit and argue for theism on the basis of the cosmological argument before arguing specifically for the existence of the God of the Bible.³²

Evidential Method

An approach that is similar to the “classical approach” is the “evidential approach.” This approach seeks to take all of the evidences for Christian theism and use them to show that the sheer amount of evidence favors Christian theism more than any other worldview.³³ This approach is utilized by apologists like J. Warner Wallace, a homicide detective turned Christian evangelist. He argues in his book *Forensic Faith*, “I’m confident the claims of Christianity are supported by the evidence, and I believe a forensic faith will comfortably survive in the age of reason.”³⁴

³¹ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 77.

³² Beilby, 97.

³³ *Ibid.*, 98.

The strength of these evidenced based approaches is they have noted the context of the modern culture, which is post-Enlightenment and scientifically based. The apologist of the classical and evidential varieties realize that modern people need good reasons to change their belief systems. However, a weakness to these “evidence-based approaches” is that they only deal in terms of “probability.” Some would argue that probability is not enough to bring one to the commitment that is required of Biblical faith.³⁵ The argument goes that if the weather man gives a forecast of “there is a 90 percent chance of rain”, one cannot conclude that it *will* rain, only that it is *probable* that it will rain.³⁶ If one sees a weakness in any of these Christian evidences, then it makes the Christian faith look less certain than it previously did to the persuaded person. So, some will argue that these approaches give evidences and the human mind too much authority over the Christian Scriptures.

Presuppositional Approach

This leads to the next approach to be discussed, the “presuppositional apologetic approach.” This approach does not put the emphasis on the evidence alone to persuade someone from their previous worldview into the Christian worldview. Rather, this approach seeks to question the grounds of the assumptions of other worldviews to get the unbeliever to realize that Christianity offers the most consistent picture of reality if one accepts its premises. The issue at hand is not that unbelievers are unpersuaded by evidence. It is instead that unbelievers are in active rebellion against God.³⁷ Unbelievers subconsciously know that God exists, yet they reject

³⁴ J. Warner Wallace, *Forensic Faith*, (Colorado Springs, CO: David Cook Publishing, 2017), GoogleBooks, n.p., Last Accessed April 5 2019, https://books.google.com/books/about/Forensic_Faith.html?id=fGKHDgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button#v=onepage&q&f=false

³⁵ Beilby, 105.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

God because of their own sinfulness. This is why the presuppositional method is needed. It seeks to show that when unbelievers choose to believe a different worldview, it contradicts what they know to be true, and shows that they subconsciously know the Christian worldview is true. In other words, the truth of God's Word is self-evident.

This approach is popular among "creation science" ministries like the "Answers in Genesis Ministries." Astronomer and Young Earth apologist Jason Lisle argues for the presuppositional approach this way; it is not that Christian creationists and atheistic evolutionists have different evidences for their worldviews, they have the same evidences with different "interpretations" of those evidences.³⁸ Lisle would be cautious of how much emphasis a Christian should put on "evidences;" "Christians will sometime argue that a neutral and objective evaluation of evidence-apart from any biblical presuppositions, will prove that the Bible is true or at least *probably* true."³⁹ Lisle goes on to argue that the evidential approach undermines the authority of Scripture. He (and other presuppositionalists) would also argue that sinful men will never be able to come to objective conclusion from the evidence because they have a corrupted worldview.⁴⁰

Some strengths of the presuppositional approach includes that it could cause unbelievers to question some of their own assumptions. C.S. Lewis employed this method to expose issues with atheistic presuppositions, by showing that atheism cannot properly explain absolute moral truth or reason. If one wants to argue against the existence of God because there is "too much evil in the world," there is an assumption about absolute moral truth that the atheistic worldview

³⁷ Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics*, 99

³⁸ Jason Lisle, *The Ultimate Proof of Creation*, (Green Forests, AR: MasterBooks Publishing, 2009), 27.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

cannot account for.⁴¹ If one wants to reject a belief in God because it seems “unreasonable,” one is using the faculty of “reason,” something that cannot be explained by naturalism (the atheistic belief that the universe is a closed, cause and effect system).⁴² It is in cases like this that the Christian presuppositional approach can prove to be quite effective.

However, James Beilby points out some weaknesses with the Christian presuppositional approach. First, the proponents overstate their case with how debilitating human sinfulness is to the reason of unregenerate persons. While it can be argued that human sinfulness does affect human reason, to suppose that the unregenerate cannot come to some rational conclusions on the basis of evidence seems to be an unfounded assumption.⁴³ While unsaved men are fallen, they are still made in God’s image, and must be able to come to some conclusions about truth even before becoming regenerated. Secondly, some would object to the use of the presuppositional approach because it commits the “circular reasoning” fallacy. This is when one assumes the conclusion in order to prove it. A presuppositionalist like Dr. Lisle would argue that there are some cases where the cyclical nature of an argument is unavoidable.⁴⁴ However, one cannot help but see that the cyclical nature of some of these arguments would prove unfruitful in persuading many non-believers. Perhaps it would be better to reason with the non-Christian from “common ground” in order to persuade them of the truth of the Christian worldview.⁴⁵

⁴¹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishing, 1942), 38.

⁴² Lewis, *Miracles*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishing, 1947), 49.

⁴³ Beilby, 105.

⁴⁴ Lisle, *The Ultimate Proof of Creation*, 157.

⁴⁵ Beilby, 106.

Eclectic Approach

What James Beilby would argue for is what would be considered an “eclectic” approach to Christian apologetics. This means realizing that a variety of things come into play when it comes to defending the Christian faith, including scientific/historical evidences, philosophical argumentation, examining presuppositions, and personal experience.⁴⁶ The angle that someone uses to argue for the Christian faith may depend on the person arguing or the context of the discussion.⁴⁷ A good example of an “eclectic apologist,” would be the philosopher Alvin Plantinga. Plantinga may appeal to something that would appear to be an argument from Christian presuppositions when it comes to Christian theism being a necessary precondition for reason.⁴⁸ But, Plantinga would also see arguments for the existence of God (like those of the classical approach) as valid ways to argue for the truthfulness of the Christian faith.⁴⁹

It is this “eclectic approach” that will be used when assessing whether or not biblical archaeology can be understood as an effective apologetic for the Christian faith. On the one hand, one can see how scientific evidence/historical evidences play an important role in the “biblical archaeology as an apologetic” argument. If minimalists argue that there was no Davidic Dynasty in the 9th century, the findings of a 9th century Aramaic inscription reading “the House of David” should cause one to question that idea in an objective sense.⁵⁰ On the other hand, one cannot also deny that presuppositions do play a role in the interpretation of evidence. As

⁴⁶ Beilby, *Thinking about Christian Apologetics*, 108.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁵⁰ Daniel Bock, “Israel Ancient Kingdom or Late Invention,” *Israel Ancient Kingdom or Late Invention*, ed. Daniel Bock, (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic Publishing, 2008), 6.

Norman Geisler has pointed out, the issue is not whether someone possess bias, the question is whether or not that bias or prejudice can be demonstrated to be true.⁵¹ So, one must understand that the way one will interpret the findings of biblical archaeology depends on certain presuppositions. This can be shown to be valid if those presuppositions find themselves to be consistent with the evidence presented. It will be argued that there are various findings in Ancient Near Eastern and Classical archeology that are better explained within a Christian presuppositional framework as opposed to an anti-supernatural.

⁵¹ Joseph Holden and Norman Geisler, *The Popular Handbook on Archaeology and the Bible*, (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2013), 180.

Chapter 3- Defining “Archaeology” and “Biblical Archaeology”

Archaeology Defined

The term archaeology comes from two different terms, “archaeos,” which means “ancient” or “old” and “logos” which means “word” or “speech.”⁵² Randall Price defines archaeology as “the branch of historical research that seeks to reveal the past by a systematic recovery of its surviving remains.”⁵³ James Holden and Norman Geisler define archaeology as “study of ancient things” and they see it as an instrumental part of understanding history.⁵⁴ Joukowsky defines archaeology as “the science by which the remains of ancient man can be methodically and systematically studied to obtain as complete a picture as possible of ancient culture and society and there by reconstruct their past ways of life.”⁵⁵ So, when it comes to ancient biblical culture, archaeologists collect the fragments left by the Ancient Near Eastern people to get a better understanding of the world of the Bible. This can be done by a collection of various items from antiquity like pottery, manuscripts, remains of houses, tombs, tools, weapons, etc. J.A. Thompson concurs with this definition, “[archaeology is] to unravel the story of past ages by digging up their material remains.”⁵⁶

One hurdle to get across when it comes to the study of archaeology is the post-modern objection of the study of history. One would object that “history is written by the winners, and a

⁵² Graves, *Biblical Archaeology*, 34.

⁵³ Price, 25-26.

⁵⁴ Holden and Geisler, *The Popular Handbook on Archaeology and the Bible*, 177-179.

⁵⁵ Martha Joukowsky, *A Complete Manual of Field Archaeology*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1980), 2.

⁵⁶ J.A. Thompson, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: W.m. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1959), 11.

true, complete, objective picture of history cannot be created.”⁵⁷ The objectors would say that archaeology is based on fallible human senses, and therefore cannot be trusted.⁵⁸ It is impossible then to create a full picture of the past, only a fragmented one, which means that one can only come to conclusions about history from partial knowledge.⁵⁹ As noted by Richard Parke, postmodern philosophy meant the “end of history;” “These grand narratives (or meta-narratives as they are sometimes called) present themselves as history (historical or ‘real’ descriptions of the world), or a singular truth about the world, always and everywhere true, avoiding any attention to historical or geographic variation, and all the time ignoring their historicity as a statement coming from someone located within a specific discipline or interpretive tradition and holding a particular sociocultural standpoint.”⁶⁰

This “historical agnosticism” is plagued with philosophical issues. It is a “self-refuting” position.⁶¹ If one argues for the post-modern view of history, that person is arguing for a position they have most likely researched. That person has most likely read the writings of past post-modernists come to certain conclusions. That person is also trusting his or her own memories in order to come to certain conclusions. So, the idea of history being unknowable is a self-defeating belief.

The study of historiography is of great importance, both to archaeologists and biblical scholars. Historiography is defined as the attempt to create an accurate representation of the past

⁵⁷ Jeff Myers and David Nobel, *Understanding the Times* (Colorado Springs, CO: Summit Ministries, 2015), 47.

⁵⁸ Hodlen and Geisler, *The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*, 179.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁶⁰ Richard Parke, “No Outside History: Reconsidering Post-Modernism,” *Agora* 49, no. 3 (2014): 6.

⁶¹ Hodlen and Geisler, 180.

by mean of “verbal images and written discourses.”⁶² One scholar argued that the task of historiographer “is to trace ways in which people...have reflected on the past and what these reflections have told them about human life as it passes continuously from the past to the present to the future.”⁶³ The task for the biblical scholars and archaeologists is to have a “biblical histography” that uses the biblical accounts and other sources contemporary to the Bible to give a full picture of the history of biblical people. Archaeology can be immensely helpful to this process, as the findings of archaeology from the time periods of the bible can help shed light on what life was like for the people of the Bible.⁶⁴

Biblical Archaeology Defined

This now leads to how one would define “biblical archaeology.” Randall Price defines biblical archaeology as “the science of excavation, decipherment, and critical evaluation of ancient material records related to the Bible.”⁶⁵ Graves defines it as excavations “from the biblical sites [i.e. the findings from Classical/Mediterranean archaeology and the findings from Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology that overlap with the time and place of the Bible].”⁶⁶ Notable Biblical scholar William Dever would prefer the term “Syro-Palestinian” Archaeology, although he is not entirely sure if the term fully encapsulates the task of biblical archaeology.⁶⁷ Dever notes, “Therefore, in the 1970s, I advocated reviving Albright’s own preferred term, ‘Syro-

⁶² Hayden White, “Historiography and Historiophily,” *The American Historical Review* 93, no. 5 (Dec. 1988): 1193

⁶³ Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, & Modern*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 3.

⁶⁴ Evans, *Jesus and His World*, 1-2.

⁶⁵ Price, 26.

⁶⁶ Graves, *Biblical Archaeology*, 34.

⁶⁷Ibid.

Palestinian archaeology’....Yet I am now forced to concede that the term ‘Syro-Palestinian archaeology’ should be abandoned, because recent events have made it obsolete....Terminology must be accurate as well as pragmatic; and at the moment ‘Palestinian’ is neither.”⁶⁸ Eric Cline defines “biblical archaeology” as: “a subset of the larger field of Syro-Palestinian archaeology—which is conducted throughout the region encompassed by modern Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria....Specifically, it is archaeology that sheds light on the stories, descriptions, and discussions in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament from the early second millennium BCE, the time of Abraham and the Patriarchs, through the Roman period in the early first millennium CE.”⁶⁹ So, one can conclude that biblical archaeology is the branch of archaeology that deals with the excavated remain of the civilizations that interacted with the Biblical narrative.

Maximalism vs. Minimalism

Within the discipline of “biblical archaeology,” there exists two camps: biblical minimalists and biblical maximalists. Eric Cline has stated that there is a “deep polarization” between the biblical archaeologists who identify in either camp, and both camps fall into the tendency to “proselytize” as opposed to being objective with data.⁷⁰ Biblical minimalists are those in the field of archaeology and scholarship who have a rather low view of the Bible in regard to its authority and accuracy. Randall Price notes that this group was birthed out of a group of critical scholars in the early 20th century who believed in the “Documentary Hypothesis.”⁷¹ This group saw the Hebrew Bible as a “post-exilic” document, and thus the

⁶⁸ William Dever, “Whatchamacallit: Why It’s So Hard to Name a Field,” *BAR* 29, no. 4 (July/August 2003), 2.

⁶⁹ Eric H. Cline, *Biblical Archaeology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), Kindle Edition, kindle location 167.

⁷⁰ Cline, *From Eden to Exile*, (Washington, DC: National Geographic Press, 2007), xi.

Hebrew Bible cannot be considered as an accurate source of events that happened long before the Exile.⁷²

The minimalists would argue that there is “little to no historical correspondence between the archaeological data and biblical text.”⁷³ Archaeologist Israel Finkelstien would argue in his work, *The Bible Unearthed*, that the Bible simply does not line up with history recreated by Ancient Near East scholarship, “Questions were raised about the historical existence of the patriarchs and on the date and scale of the Exodus...New theories were also developed to suggest that the Israelite Conquest of Canaan may not have occurred, as the Book of Joshua insists, as a unified military campaign.”⁷⁴ The minimalists will give greater credence to the extrabiblical documents to reconstructing the history of the ancient and classical world than the Bible.⁷⁵ The irony with this position is that the Scriptures’ accuracy are better attested to by manuscript evidence than any other ancient document in history.

Steven Cowan and Terry Wilder note:

“Most historians accept the testimony of ancient historians, for example, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise—even though those historians wrote centuries after the events occurred and their testimony is preserved by only a handful of late manuscripts. The fact that the New Testament writers were decent, moral men who penned their testimonies of Jesus only a few decades after the events to which they refer and the fact that abundant manuscript evidence has enabled modern scholars to restore

⁷¹ Price, *The Stones Cry Out*, 324.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Holden and Geisler, *Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*, 182.

⁷⁴ Israel Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed*, 21.

⁷⁵ Holden and Geisler, 183.

the original text of these documents with a very high degree of accuracy, should demand that historians at least treat these documents with the level of credibility granted these other sources.”⁷⁶

Minimalists are also notorious for dismissing certain Christian scholars for their “religious bias.”⁷⁷ They would argue that certain Christians have a bias and will always interpret the evidence in favor of the Bible being true. The issue with this line of reasoning is that it commits the “Genetic Fallacy,” the error in logic of dismissing an argument because of where it comes from.⁷⁸ Time and time again, the Bible shows itself to be valuable to archaeological research. For example, the Bible has been the only source on historical figures like King David (1-2 Samuel) and Belshazzar (Daniel 5), who were later verified by archaeology.⁷⁹ So, the assumption that the Bible has little to no value in historical studies rightly should be questioned.

This leads to a discussion on the second camp of biblical archaeology, biblical maximalists. Biblical maximalists see the Bible as “historically accurate and see a significant correspondence between the Bible and the archaeological data.”⁸⁰ It should be noted that being a “biblical maximalists” does not necessarily make someone a “fundamentalist” or an “evangelical Christian” by default. One of the most notable biblical archaeologists of the 20th century, William Foxwell Albright may not be considered to be an evangelical, orthodox Christian.⁸¹ Yet,

⁷⁶ Steven B Cowan, and Terry L. Wilder, *In Defense of the Bible: A Comprehensive Apologetic for the Authority of Scripture*, Kindle edition, (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2013), kindle locations 1845.

⁷⁷ Holden and Geisler, 183.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 184.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 185

⁸⁰ Graves,, 63.

⁸¹ Stephen Alter, “From Babylon to Christianity: William Foxwell Albright on Myth, Folklore, and Christian Origins,” *Journal of Religious History* 36, no. 1 (March 2012)

he saw a high correspondence between the Bible and archaeological data, putting him into the “biblical maximalist” camp. If one does hold to biblical presuppositions consistently though, the conclusion should be biblical maximalism. Some Christians and Jewish believers will question the relevancy of the claim, “the Bible is historical.” They argue that perhaps the lack of corroboration for the Exodus in Egypt would show that the event did not happen as the Bible describes it. For these more liberal religious people, historical veracity is irrelevant to religion/faith. What matters is that the moral behind the story is true, even if the account behind it is not *literally* true.⁸² “Progressive Evangelicals” advocate for looking at the biblical text purely for theology and setting aside the questions about the historicity of the texts.⁸³ However, a closer look at these statements causes it to break down. The relationship between history and theology is immensely important. History matters because God presents His work as history in His Special Revelation.⁸⁴ As observed by William Dever in regard to the Exodus, “God’s deliverance of his people from Egyptian Bondage to the Promise land in Canaan...was the very foundation on which the entire biblical edifice was erected.”⁸⁵

⁸² Timothy Mahoney, *Patterns of Evidence: The Exodus Event*, (Thinking Man Films, 2015), DVD, Capital Christian Distribution, 2015).

⁸³ James Hoffmeier and Dennis Magary, *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith? A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 20.

⁸⁴Ibid., 56.

⁸⁵ William Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites, and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmann’s Publishing, 2003), 4.

The remembrance of the Exodus is central to Old Testament Theology. Numerous points in the Old Testament point back to the Exodus as a reminder of God's faithfulness to Israel.

Psalm 77: 13-20 alludes to the Exodus:

“Your way, O God, is holy. What god is as great like our God? You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples. You with your arm redeemed your people,” [a reference to the exodus] “the children of Jacob and Joseph. When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid; indeed, the deep trembled. The clouds poured out water; the skies gave forth thunder; your arrows flashed on every side. The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind; your lightnings lighted up the world; the earth trembled and shook. Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen. You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. (ESV).”

Jeremiah alludes to the Exodus as well as the prime example of God's faithfulness to Israel; “From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day (Jer. 21:23 ESV).” Throughout the Scriptures, the Exodus is used as a reminder of how God has redeemed Israel for His purposes. The event serves as a reminder of God's strength and power against Israel's enemies. In the Old Testament, the Exodus serves as the “Gospel” for the people of Israel.

In the New Testament, the historical event that is constantly recalled is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In fact, Paul argues that historical understanding of the resurrection is of central importance to Christianity; “if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith (1 Cor. 15:14 NIV).” It seems apparent that an understanding of the various narratives of Scripture as historical is imperative in understanding how the original audience understood the text. Scripture should be believed to be historical, because it presents as historical. Christians who believe in biblical authority and inerrancy should come to this

conclusion. However, those who do not have those presuppositions may need more convincing. This is where archaeology can be helpful. The corroboration between archaeology and the Bible helps demonstrate the Bible to be historically reliable.

Methods of Archaeology

Throughout the history of the discipline of archaeology, various methods have been established. When it comes to excavation, the various methods employed include, the British Method (*Wheeler-Kenyon*), The American Method (Architectural), and the Israeli Method. The British Method “uses 6m by 6m squares with meter unexcavated and left in place through most of the excavations on a standing baulk that can be read for the various occupational periods.”⁸⁶ Only the 5m by 5m squares are excavated, soil is removed gradually and carefully, and all artifacts are carefully documented.⁸⁷ The American Method focuses on the architectural remains, and uses the ancient architecture to better expose the stratigraphy and topography of the excavated area.⁸⁸ W.F. Albright was one of the popularizers of this method. When using this method, Albright also emphasized the importance of ceramic dating and the incorporation of other scientific disciplines (such as zoology, geology, and botany).⁸⁹ The “Israeli Method” combines the careful precision of the British method, and the emphasis on architecture and ceramics found in the American method.⁹⁰

Jouskosky notes that there are several things that need to be taken care of before exactions can happen. Pre excavation exploration that notes the geography, topography of the

⁸⁶ Graves, *Biblical Archaeology*, 75-76.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁸⁸ Amihai Mazar and Ofef Bar-Yosef, “Israeli Archaeology,” *World Archaeology* 13, no. 3 (Feb. 1982): 311

⁸⁹ Graves, 76.

⁹⁰ Mazar and Yosef, “Israeli Archaeology,” 315.

land must be done with photogrammetry and stereoscopy.⁹¹ Photogrammetry is the science of taking detailed, vertical photographs from aircraft.⁹² Stereoscopy is when overlapping photos are used are mounted in a plotting device to create a model of the ground.⁹³ Modern methods of photography used for this pre-excavation work also includes the “Structures from Motion” method. This method is “the extraction of three-dimensional data and camera positions from a collection of photographs...It is the computer vision equivalent of a human’s ability to understand the 3d structure of a scene as they move through it.”⁹⁴ This method “enables georeferencing and creation of textured models from the resulting point cloud and creation of digital elevation models.”⁹⁵ Photography of the area and a working knowledge of the land is necessary even before an archaeological survey can be done.

The next step of the process of archaeology is to “survey.” As noted by Joukosky, surveying is “the science that accurately determines the shape, area (size), and the position of the site’s surface by measurements of certain points.”⁹⁶ As noted by David Graves, “a survey is carried out on the site to determine where to excavate, since the entire site is rarely excavated due to the size and time involved.”⁹⁷ After surveying has been completed, the archeologist must take note of the stratigraphy of the site. Stratigraphy is the study of strata. Strata “is the

⁹¹ Joukowsky, *A Complete Manual of Field Archaeology*, 46-47

⁹²Ibid., 47

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Susie Green, Andrew Bevan, and Michael Shapland, “A comparative assessment of structure from motion methods for archaeological research,” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 46, no.2 (June 2014): 173.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 173.

⁹⁶ Joukowsky, 47.

⁹⁷ Graves, 75

accumulation from variations in human living patterns leave sequential layered deposits.”⁹⁸ Understanding the stratigraphy of the Middle East is especially important when it comes to biblical archaeology. When ancient mud-brick structures that fell into disuse, the ancients would level it and build new structures over old debris.⁹⁹ Some strata in the middle east can go as high as thirty feet.¹⁰⁰

There are various dating methods for artifacts found by archeologists. There is of course radiocarbon dating. This method can be noted as being problematic as it has trouble dating artifacts over 5,000 years old.¹⁰¹ There is also the matter of contamination when it comes to determining the accuracy of anything dated with the radiocarbon dating.¹⁰² Another popular way to date archaeological findings is by means of pottery. Archaeologists will use various remains of items that they know are time period specific, and use those findings as means to date the other artifacts found with them.¹⁰³

⁹⁸Joukowsky, *A Complete Manual of Field Archaeology*,150.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 150.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Graves, 49

¹⁰²Ibid., 48.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 43.

Limitations of Archaeology

While archaeology can do much to illuminate the life and culture of ancient people, its limitations must be acknowledged. Archaeology is not an “exact science.”¹⁰⁴ As noted by Walton and Hill, archaeology’s limitations include:

“1. Only a fraction of the evidence survives in the ground. 2. Only a fraction of possible sites has been detected. 3, Only a fraction of detected sites has been excavated. 4. Only a fraction of any site is excavated. 4. Only a fraction of what has been excavated has been thoroughly examined and published. 6. Only a fraction of what has been examined and published makes a contribution to biblical studies.”¹⁰⁵

Archaeology is by nature “fragmentary” and “random.”¹⁰⁶ It is not as if ancient people purposely left items buried in the ground so future archeologist would find them.¹⁰⁷ Randall Price comments that the politics of Israel and the Middle East can make it difficult to do archaeology; “Many of these known sites, however, can never be properly surveyed because of lack of resources or political disputes over territories.”¹⁰⁸ Another limitation for biblical archaeology has to do with funding. Archeology heavily relies on the work of the volunteers. These volunteers can include college students and people from various walks of life.¹⁰⁹ The heavy lifting is sometimes done by the locally hired.¹¹⁰ The local government seldom funds these

¹⁰⁴ Joukowsky, *A Complete Manual of Field Archaeology* 67.

¹⁰⁵ Walton and Hill, *Survey of the Old Testament*, 358.

¹⁰⁶ Anthony Frendo, “The Capabilities and Limitations of Ancient Near Eastern nomadic Archaeology,” *Orientalia Nova Series* 65, no. 1 (1996): 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Price, 46.

¹⁰⁹ Graves, *Biblical Archaeology*, 55

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

archaeological enterprises, so the archaeologists must raise the money themselves.¹¹¹ Many of the volunteers have to pay their own way in order to participate in a dig.¹¹² For many archaeologists, archaeology is not their “day job.”

With the little that is surveyed and excavated, little of those findings find their way into publishing. Kathleen Kenyon’s archaeological survey of Jericho for instance took 30 years to be published.¹¹³ In 1997, Price noted that only 10 percent of 500,000 cuneiform text had been published.¹¹⁴ These limitations may seem discouraging to the Christian who seeks to understand the world of the Bible. The good news is, despite these limitations, many artifacts have been uncovered that corroborate the Bible’s history. These findings will be explored in subsequent chapters.

¹¹¹ Graves, *Biblical Archaeology*, 56.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Price, 47.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Chapter 4- The History of Biblical Archaeology

History of Archaeology

Before it became the discipline that it is now, archaeology was done only by adventurers, treasure hunters, and grave robbers. As noted by Randal Price, “the past began to be explored by adventurous Europeans, relics and souvenirs were carried home to enchant friends and enhance fame.”¹¹⁵ However, those who saw archaeology as a more “scientific enterprise” can be traced back to figures like Napoleon Bonaparte, Thomas Jefferson, Edward Robinson, and Eli Smith.¹¹⁶ The 19th and 20th century saw major discoveries from archaeology that contributed to the study of history and anthropology. One of these discoveries was the Rosetta Stone. Found by Napoleon’s men in 1799, and later moved to the British museum in 1801, the tablet was instrumental in translating Egyptian Hieroglyphics.¹¹⁷ The tablet contained Hieroglyphics and Greek next to each other, and thus scholars were able to translate Hieroglyphics using Greek.¹¹⁸ This was considered a major discovery, and it helped show the value of archaeology as a scientific endeavor.

In the 18th and 19th century, there were many expeditions to the remnants of ancient Mesopotamia. These expeditions included those of the French, who sent Paul Emile Botta (1802-1870), Eugene Napoleon Flandin (1809-1876), and Victor Place (1822-1875) to gather treasures from the ancient King Sargon II.¹¹⁹ One of the most notable discoveries of various

¹¹⁵ Price, *The Stones Cry Out*, 26

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

¹¹⁷ Graves, 36.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Mesopotamian expeditions were those of British explorer Sir Austin Henry Layard, who discovered the statue of Ashurnairpal II, the Enuma Elish (a creation epic), and the Gilgamesh Epic.¹²⁰ These discoveries helped to illustrate the life and culture of the Ancient Near Eastern people from a very early point. The Epic of Gilgamesh is an epic poem where an ancient king, Gilgamesh, is on a quest for immortality.¹²¹ In the epic, one of the stories recalled is that of the “Deluge.” This story looks suspiciously like the biblical account of Noah’s Flood. Some will attempt to use this find as an argument against the Bible, claiming that the Book of Genesis copied the story from The Epic of Gilgamesh. However, others would use it as an argument for the Bible’s accuracy, as the discovery of other flood accounts reveals that the Bible and other ancient people groups are all recalling the same memory.¹²² Discoveries like this began the conversation between the findings of Ancient Near Eastern relics and the Bible.

When it comes of Palestinian expeditions, the leaders of such excursions included: British military officers Charles Wilson (1836-1905), Charles Warren (1840-1927), and Claude Conder (1848-1910), and American scholars like Eli Smith and Edward Robinson.¹²³ Egyptology and Egyptian archaeology was being advanced by scholars like Auguste Mariette (1821-1881) and Sir William Matthews Flinders Petrie (1853-1942).¹²⁴ It was Petrie who advanced the use of stratigraphy in science and archaeology, earning him the name of the “Father of pots.”¹²⁵ With

¹¹⁹ Graves, *Biblical Archaeology* 38.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

¹²¹ N.K. Sandars (translator), *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, (New York, NY: Penguin Classics, 1972), 20.

¹²² John Whitcomb and Henry Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011), 38.

¹²³ Graves, 40.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

the overlap of the areas of the Bible being excavated, the larger conversation of how these discoveries would relate to the study of the Bible was soon to take place. Those who saw the Bible as a myth were certain that its history would not be confirmed. Others saw it as a chance for their cherished faith to “come alive” and become more tangible.

History of Biblical Archaeology: From Albright to Finkelstein

Early Biblical Archaeology was not done by professional archaeologists. It was instead done by theologians and biblical scholars who sought to understand the ancient world of the Scriptures.¹²⁶ These early biblical archaeologists included American ministers Edward Robinson (1794-1863) and Eli Smith (1801-1857), and Captain Charles Warren (1840-1927).¹²⁷ These men helped to popularize using the Bible as a guide for archaeology in the Syrian Palestinian arena. Another popularizer of Biblical Archaeology was William McClure Thomson (1806-1894). McClure was an ordained Presbyterian minister and a missionary to Syria, Thomson developed an interest in Palestinian archaeology and how it related to the Bible during his missionary travel.¹²⁸ Eventually “developing a knack for archaeological research,” Thomson would later publish a book titled *The Land and the Book*. This book helped to popularize Palestinian archaeology among American Christians, as well as promote tourism to the land of Israel.¹²⁹

In the book, Thomson wrote, “it is obvious that we ought not to impose silence upon the thousand witnesses to the veracity of the Bible.... Broken columns, and prostrate temples, and

¹²⁵ Graves, *Biblical Archaeology*, 41.

¹²⁶ Cline, *Biblical Archaeology (A Short Introduction)*, kindle location 225

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, kindle location 225,256.

¹²⁸ Michael Ellingsen, “Dragoman Doctor of Divinity: William McClure Thomson, Early Biblical Archaeology and Nineteenth Century Conceptions of the Near-East in America, 1832-1894,” Master’s Thesis, Trinity International University, 2015): 2.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

cities in ruin, must bear the testimony of prophecy.”¹³⁰ However, the Documentary Hypothesis would soon do away with such optimism towards the Bible’s historical accuracy. The Documentary Hypothesis (or the JEDP theory) was a theory about the Old Testament’s origins proposed by German Biblical literary critics in the late 19th century. The theory claimed that the Bible was not divinely inspired or written by the traditional authors. Instead, the Bible was a byproduct of a long religious evolution, and the Hebrew Bible was compiled mostly after the Exile.¹³¹ In other words, much of the Bible was not written by those who were eyewitnesses. This casted skepticism over the Bible’s ability to give accurate prediction for archaeological research.

William Foxwell Albright’s research helped to combat this skepticism. His research led to his belief that the Bible is historically accurate, “Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details and has brought increased recognition of the Bible as a source of history.”¹³² He made this conclusion by seeing corroboration between the biblical account of the Patriarchs in Genesis and archaeology from the same time period.¹³³ Albright’s students followed in his footsteps, and used the Bible as an accurate guide when it came to doing archaeology in the Syria-Palestinian area.

The pendulum would swing back though due to the work of British archaeologist, Kathleen Kenyon in the 1950s-60s. Kenyon’s excavation’s in Jericho led her to the belief that

¹³⁰ William McClure Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1954), xiii.

¹³¹ Price, 324.

¹³² W.F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, (London: Penguin Books, 1954), 128.

¹³³ Stephen Altar, “From Babylon to Christianity: William Foxwell Albright on Myth, Folklore, and Christian Origins,” *Journal of Religious History* 36, no. 1 (March 2012): 12-14

Jericho was deserted from the Late Bronze age to the Early Iron Age, which does not line up with when biblical scholars date Joshua's conquest.¹³⁴ This served as a devastating blow to biblical maximalists. As noted by Randall Price, thanks to Kenyon's work, "evidence was seldom taken from the biblical and literary texts; rather, all the emphasis was placed on the mute evidence of the excavations."¹³⁵ As noted by Holden and Geisler, "The Jericho she discovered had fortified walls that were burnt, and most likely existed in the sixteenth century BC-far too early for Joshua to conquer."¹³⁶ Thus began the trend of not consulting the biblical text when doing archaeology. This led scholars to make conclusions from excavations that either differed from or contradicted the biblical text.

The pendulum would swing "back and forth" from minimalist to maximalist in the mid to late 20th century. Israel Finkelstein in the 90s led the minimalist charge when it came to research on the time of David and Solomon.¹³⁷ In his best-selling book, *The Bible Unearthed*, Finkelstein rejects biblical maximalism. He expresses caution for using the bible narratives to do archaeology, advocating instead that archaeology should be an "independent source."¹³⁸ Price on the other hand, expressed optimism in the late 90s that the latest discoveries would yield to the conclusion that the Bible was historically accurate.¹³⁹ The constant swing back and forth has

¹³⁴ Cline, *Biblical Archaeology*, kindle location 573.

¹³⁵ Price, 326.

¹³⁶ Holden and Geisler, 183.

¹³⁷ Cline, kindle location 87

¹³⁸ Finkelstein, 21.

¹³⁹ Price, 327.

made many in archaeology want to move beyond the point of whether or not the Bible can be “proven” or “disproven” by archaeology.¹⁴⁰

By 2015, Craig Evans noted that there had been a “maturation” in the field of archaeology; “Part of this is due to the great advances in technology that permits archaeologists to acquire and record data that their predecessors could not have imagined.”¹⁴¹ Now more than ever, more can be known from archaeology than anytime previously. Still, even with this maturation, it is said that archaeologists have “moved past” the question of what archaeology can “prove.”¹⁴² So, the question that remains is “how can biblical archaeology be used as an apologetic if it cannot ‘prove’ that the Bible is true?” To better answer this question, one must carefully examine the relationship between “faith” and “science.”

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Davis, "Faith and Archaeology—A Brief History to the Present" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 19, no. 2 (1993:) 54

¹⁴¹ Craig Evans, *Jesus and the Remains of His Day*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing Co., 2015), 1.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

Chapter 5-The Relationship with Faith and Science

Perhaps one of the most pervasive myths in all of western civilization is that there is a contention between the matters of “faith” and the matters of “science.” During the Renaissance, the discoveries of Galileo and Copernicus helped many to recognize that some of the teachings of the Catholic Church and the discoveries of science contradicted each other. It was discovered that the Earth did not occupy a special place in the universe that all celestial bodies revolved around. Instead, the Earth was merely one planet that revolved around the Sun.¹⁴³ With the coming of Darwin and his theory of common descent, the view of origins as presented by a straight forward reading of Scripture was seemingly challenged. Consequently, many in the modern world began to question the compatibility between science and faith.

Richard Dawkins, author of the *God Delusion*, has seen science as the great defeater of faith. In his view, Darwinism had made it possible to be an intellectually satisfied atheist, removing the designer as an explanation for that which appears to be designed in the natural world.¹⁴⁴ Dawkins defines faith in light of science as “blind trust” and “believing in spite of the evidence.”¹⁴⁵ Some in the Christian community would seem to reiterate this idea of faith and science being incompatible. Christian geologist Kurt Wise has stated, “if all the evidence in the universe turns against creationism, I would be the first to admit it, but I would still be a creationist because that is what the Word of God seems to indicate.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards, *The Privileged Planet*, (Washington, DC: Regency Publishing, 2004), 222-224.

¹⁴⁴ Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker*, (London: Viking Press, 1996), 43.

¹⁴⁵ Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 198.

¹⁴⁶ John F. Aston, *In Six Days: Why Fifty Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation*, (Green Forest, AR: Master, 2001), 35

Many in the Christian community, however, would not see faith and science at odds. Some for instance would attempt to see Darwinian Evolution as the “way” or “method” by which God has created.¹⁴⁷ Others would question the legitimacy of Darwinian Evolution on a scientific level. The vast majority of Christian thinkers, however, would not define faith as “blind trust” or “believing in spite of evidence.” Alistair McGrath argues that faith “commences with the conviction of the mind based on adequate evidence.”¹⁴⁸ Richard Dawkins is simply setting up a strawman when he argues that faith is believing in spite of the evidence of science (he is also setting up a false dichotomy).

Many Christian thinkers would argue that, while science cannot definitively *prove* the faith, Science can *confirm* faith. William Dembski argues this position in his article, “Does the Bible Conflict with Science?” Dembski cautions against believing in a philosophy known as “scientism.” Scientism is where one sees science as the only legitimate source of knowledge.¹⁴⁹ There are numerous examples of things that cannot be proven by science. These include cognitive awareness, moral truth, and the laws of logic.¹⁵⁰ Dembski would argue that faith cannot be “proven” by science the same way a scientific theory can be, but this would not mean that faith is an illegitimate source of knowledge.¹⁵¹ Science can however, *confirm* various aspects of the Christian Faith. As noted by Jason Lisle, “One perfectly appropriate use of scientific and

¹⁴⁷ Alister McGrath, “Has Science eliminated God? –Richard Dawkins and the Meaning of Life,” *Science and Christian Belief* 17, no. 2 (2005), 121.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁴⁹ William Dembski, “Does Science Contradict the Bible,” ed. Steven B Cowan, and Terry L. Wilder, *In Defense of the Bible: A Comprehensive Apologetic for the Authority of Scripture*, Kindle edition, (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2013), kindle locations 7539.

¹⁵⁰ Rene von Wouldenbug, “Limits of Science and The Christian Faith,” *Perspectives on Science and Faith*, 65 no 2 (March 2013): 25-26.

¹⁵¹ Dembski, “Does Science Contradict the Bible,” kindle location 7585

historical evidence is to confirm biblical creation.”¹⁵² For instance, the Bible predicts that the world will be ordered and designed, which is what science finds within a complex universe. The presence of irreducibly complex, programming of DNA can be used to argue that life the result of an intelligent designer.¹⁵³ While science cannot prove the identity of the designer, this discovery is remarkably consistent with the biblical worldview that claims that life is the result of a personal creator.

Price takes a similar approach to archaeology and how it relates to the Bible. Archaeology cannot “prove” the truth of the Bible, but it can confirm the historical reliability of the Scriptures. As noted by Price, “The Bible describes itself as the ‘Word of God’ and therefore it cannot be proved or disproved by archaeology any more than God Himself is subject to the limited evidence of this world.”¹⁵⁴ However, “while it is better not to speak of ‘proving’ the Bible through archaeology, archaeology nevertheless has great value in relation to validating the history of the Bible.”¹⁵⁵ Archaeology can be helpful in a defense of the Bible as it shows that the Bible is a “historical fit” to the time period it reports from. Lee Strobel notes that archaeologists who have used the book of Acts to do their work have demonstrated that Luke was one of the most accurate historians of the first century.¹⁵⁶ So, archaeology can help confirm the veracity of the Bible.

However, some will discredit the Bible’s reports of miracles as inherently non-historical. As noted by Bart Ehrman, “Historians work with all kinds of evidence in order to show what

¹⁵² Lisle, *The Ultimate Proof of Creation*, 108.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁵⁴ Price, 328-329

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 329.

¹⁵⁶ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ/The Case for Faith*, (Grand Rapid, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 101.

probably happened in the past.... The chances of a miracle occurring are infinitesimal.”¹⁵⁷ A miracle would be described as the least likely event to happen due to their infrequency in the present.¹⁵⁸ This is a recycled argument from David Hume. As Hume noted:

It is experience only, which gives authority to human testimony; and it the same experience that assures us of the laws of nature. When, therefore, these two kinds of experience are contrary, we have nothing to do but subtract the one from the other, and embrace an opinion, either on one side or the other, with that assurance which arises from the remainder...no human testimony can have such force as to prove a miracle, and make it a foundation for such for any such system of religion.¹⁵⁹

In other words, miracles are not consistently experienced and are therefore intrinsically the most improbable explanation to appeal to. Norman Geisler disagrees with this line of reasoning. As noted by Geisler, Hume’s argument against miracles happening commits the *ad populum* fallacy by assuming that because most people are not experiencing miracles, all reports of miracles should be discredited.¹⁶⁰ Miracles can be appealed to if they are the best explanation to a historical event. This is what Christian archaeologists conclude from certain findings of the biblical era. The findings of Jericho when reexamined for example, match the biblical account. This should not be discredited just because there are supernatural details in the account. This would be question begging and it would assume the naturalistic worldview. When one examines the findings of archaeology with what the Bible reports, a strong corroboration can be seen.

¹⁵⁷ Bart Ehrman, *Jesus Interrupted*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishing, 2009), 173,175.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁵⁹ David Hume, “Of Miracles,” *In Defense of Miracles*, ed. David Geivett and Gary Habermas, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1997), 41-42.

¹⁶⁰ Norman Geisler, “Miracles and the Modern Mind,” *In Defense of Miracles*, ed. David Geivett and Gary Habermas, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1997), 78

Chapter 6- Historical Veracity of the Old Testament

Epic of Gilgamesh and the Flood of Noah

Perhaps one of the greatest sources of contention among so many is the subject of the historicity of Genesis 1-11. For some, the modern discoveries of science in fields of astronomy, geology, and biology have done away with any sense of these accounts being truly “historical.” So, the logical conclusion for many has been to either discredit the accounts as “myth.” However, archaeology can confirm at least one of these accounts, the global flood from the time of Noah.

A discovery that has further contributed to the discussion of the historicity of Noah’s Flood is the discovery of the “Epic of Gilgamesh.” As observed by the Institute of Creation Research, “The widespread nature of flood traditions throughout the entire human race is excellent evidence for the existence of a great flood from a legal/historical point of view.”¹⁶¹ The tablets containing the Epic narratives was discovered by explorer Austen Henry Layard during an expedition beginning in 1839 to the ruins of the Palace of Nineveh.¹⁶² While there, Layard discovered “a buried library and lost literature,” a find that was even better than he expected.¹⁶³ These finds were later taken to the British Museum and deciphered by various scholars. One of these tablets was translated by George Smith, and it was published under the title *The Chaldean Account of the Deluge* in 1872.¹⁶⁴ In it, Smith included an account of the deluge and the Gilgamesh Epic.

¹⁶¹ Frank Lorey, “The Flood of Noah and the Flood of Gilgamesh,” *Acts and Facts* 26, no. 3 (March 1997): n.p, icr.org, last accessed May 6, 2019 <https://www.icr.org/article/noah-flood-gilgamesh/>

¹⁶² Sanders, *Epic of Gilgamesh*, 9.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 10

The Epic of Gilgamesh was discovered on ancient Babylonian tablets dated back to 2100 BC.¹⁶⁵ The Epic recounts the story of the King of Uruk, Gilgamesh, as he goes on a quest to find immortality. While on his quest, he meets the survivor of the great flood, Utnapishtim, who recounts the Flood. Utnapishtim tells Gilgamesh, “the gods agreed to destroy mankind” and that the gods commanded him, “tear down your house and build a boat, abandon possessions and look for life.”¹⁶⁶ The flood account is found on Tablet XI of the Babylonian epic, and probably preexisted the Babylonians who wrote the account in the form of oral tradition.¹⁶⁷ A similar Sumerian account of the flood has been excavated and dated back to 2000 BC.¹⁶⁸

John Whitcomb and Henry Morris note that the similarities between the Genesis flood and the flood in the Gilgamesh Epic are “astonishing.”¹⁶⁹ The similarities include: The global extent of the flood,¹⁷⁰ the boat of both Noah and Utnapishtim contains “all species of animals,”¹⁷¹ Man’s wickedness is the reason for the flood,¹⁷² The impending “deluge” was revealed beforehand to the hero of the story so he could prepare,¹⁷³ birds are sent out to test if the waters had receded,¹⁷⁴ and both Noah and Utnapishtim make sacrifices to God or “the gods”

¹⁶⁵ Sanders, *Epic of Gilgamesh*, 17.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 108.

¹⁶⁷ Whitcomb and Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, 38

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Lorey, “The Flood of Noah and the Flood of Gilgamesh,” n.p.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Whitcomb and Morris, 38.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

after being saved from the wrath of the Flood.¹⁷⁵ It is for this reason that skeptics will argue that the Bible's account of the Flood is merely a "copy" of the ancient Mesopotamian account.¹⁷⁶

However, significant differences between the two accounts can be observed. The Flood account from Genesis is monotheistic, while the Babylonian account is polytheistic. Utnapishtim claims, "So the *gods* agreed to exterminate mankind."¹⁷⁷ Yet the Book of Genesis, and the whole of the Pentateuch, emphasizes that Yahweh alone is God. As noted by John Oswalt in *The Bible Among the Myths*, "The Old Testament vehemently insists Yahweh is one and that no other being is in the same category with him."¹⁷⁸ Emphatic monotheism can be seen in passages like Exodus 20:3 where Yahweh commands "you shall have no other gods before me (NIV)" and Deuteronomy 32:39 where Yahweh declares, "there are no other gods besides me (NIV)."¹⁷⁹ Yet in the Deluge account on Tablet IX there are an "assembly of gods."¹⁸⁰

Another difference between the two accounts is duration of the flood. In the Epic of Gilgamesh, it is noted that the flood waters lasted for "six days" and ceased on the "seventh day."¹⁸¹ However, in the Book of Genesis, the Flood is said to have lasted for "forty days and forty nights" (Gen. 7:12). The bird scene plays out differently in each account as well. In the Bible, a raven is sent out first, and then a dove (Gen 8:6-12). But in the Epic of Gilgamesh, Utnapishtim sends out a dove first, then a swallow, and then a raven.¹⁸² The reasons for the

¹⁷⁵ Whitcomb and Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, 38.

¹⁷⁶ Price, 64.

¹⁷⁷ Sanders, 108, [emphasis added].

¹⁷⁸ John N. Oswalt, *The Bible Among the Myths*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 64.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Lorey, 39.

¹⁸¹ Sanders, *Epic of Gilgamesh*, 111.

sacrifices are also very different. In the Babylonian account, the gods look to the sacrifices as a source of food and descend upon Utnapishtim's sacrifice "like flies."¹⁸³ In the Bible though, God simply graciously accepts the sacrifice and assures Noah and his family that he will never send a global flood again.¹⁸⁴ The God of the Old Testament does not "need sacrifices" (Psalm 40:6, Psalm 50:8-15). Sacrifices are meant to be an offering, a sign of devotion for God's covenant people. The sacrifices of the Old Testament were also meant to be a shadow of what was to come, Christ as the sacrifice for the sins of the world (Hebrews 10:1-4).

There are various theories to the similarities between the Gilgamesh Epic and the Bible. These include: 1) The Bible copied the Mesopotamian account of the Flood 2) The Mesopotamian account copied the Flood account from the Bible 3) The Bible and the Babylonian account have the same ancient source.¹⁸⁵ The amount of omissions and differences makes it unlikely that either of the two accounts borrowed from each other.¹⁸⁶ As noted by archaeologist Frank Lorey, "the most accepted theory among evangelicals is that both have one common source, predating all the Sumerian forms...The One-source Theory must, therefore, lead back to the historical event of the Flood and Noah's Ark."¹⁸⁷ Both of these accounts are not the only ancient flood stories that exist. Other flood accounts that have been uncovered by historians and archaeologists include: the Mahabharata,¹⁸⁸ a Hindu epic, legends from the Karina

¹⁸² Whitcomb and Morris, *The Genesis Flood*, 39.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Price, 64.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 65.

¹⁸⁷ Lorey, "The Flood of Noah and the Flood of Gilgamesh," n.p.

People,¹⁸⁹ the Flood account from the Aztecs,¹⁹⁰ the Chinese flood account,¹⁹¹ and the Egyptian flood account.¹⁹² Therefore, it is within reason to believe that the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Sumerian account, Genesis, and all of these other accounts are recalling the same historical account, the global flood. So, even with one of biblical archaeology's oldest discoveries, an apologetic defense for Scripture's historicity can be given.

Sodom and Gomorrah

The account of destruction of Sodom from Genesis 18-19 can also be verified by archaeology. Biblical scholars debate the true location of the biblical Sodom and Gomorrah. Dr. Bryant Woods would argue that the city of Sodom is located Bel ebh Dhra, an early Bronze (ca.3300-2000 BC) site on the East side of the Lisan Peninsula."¹⁹³ Dr. Stephen Collins would argue that the biblical city of Sodom was in Tell El-Hammam, which is north of the Dead Sea. Collins concludes this from his reading of Scripture. Collins infers from Genesis 13:3 that, "Abraham and Lot had traveled to the area of Bethel/Ai, on central highlands, about 12 miles north of Jerusalem."¹⁹⁴ Collins further points to the fact that Lot looked to the "Kikkar" of the

¹⁸⁸ Charles Martin, *Flood Legends: Global Clues of a Common Event*, (Green Forest, AR: MasterBooks, 2009), Kindle Edition, kindle location 417.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, kindle location 493.

¹⁹⁰ Robert Schoch, *Voyages from the Pyramid Builders*, (New York: Jeremy Parcher, 2003), 103.

¹⁹¹ James Perloff, *Tornado in a Junkyard: The Relentless Myth of Darwinism* (Arlington, MA: Refuge Books, 1999), 167.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Branyt Woods, "The Discovery of the Sin Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah," *Bible and Spade* 12, no. 3 (1999), n.p. Accessed Jan 26, 2015. <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2008/04/the-discovery-of-the-sin-cities-of-sodom-and-gomorrah.aspx>

Jordan (Gen 13:10). The Semitic term “Kikkar” does not refer to a specific geographical region, but instead refers to a “circular, Flat disk of gold or silver or disk-like loaf of bread.”¹⁹⁵ Collins applies the term to the Southern Jordan Valley north of the Dead Sea, which “widens into a disk-shaped alluvian plain” and notes that “the entire expanse of Kikkar is clearly visible” on the edge of the Jordan Valley.¹⁹⁶

The debate between these two sites primarily has to do with chronology. Bel ebh Dhra has some striking similarities to the biblical city of Sodom. The site is located near the city of “Zoar” the city that the Bible said was spared from the coming judgment (Gen. 19:22-23).¹⁹⁷ Another fact that catches the eye of biblical archeologists is the fact that even the grave sites are burned in Bel ebh Dhra. As noted by Woods, “it seems highly improbable that a conqueror would go into a cemetery located several hundred meters away and systemically set fire to and demolish all burial houses.”¹⁹⁸ However, the issue is the destruction of this site is too early to fit in the chronology of the biblical patriarchs. The site of Bel ebh Drha was destroyed during the Early Bronze age 2650-2350 B.C.¹⁹⁹ Yet, scholars would put the time of Abraham as the Middle Bronze age.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁴ Steven Collins, “If You Thought You knew the location of Sodom of Gomorrah... Think again,” *Biblical Research Bulletin* 7 no.4 (2007): 3.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 3-4

¹⁹⁷ Woods, “The Discovery of the Sin Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah,” n.p.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., n.p

¹⁹⁹ Price, 120

Those wishing to argue for Tel-Hamman have the better argument. The site in Tel-Hamman is dated to be destroyed during the Middle Bronze Era. Counterarguments against the site of Bel ebh Dhra as Sodom can be produced as well. Those wishing to argue that Bel ebh Drha is shown to be the true location of Sodom because Zoar is south of it must contest with the fact that there are three cities also called “Zoar” north of Tel El Hamman.²⁰¹ Stephen Collins is unconvinced by the argument that Be ebh Dhra is Sodom because of the burnt graves. Collins argues, “perhaps an invading army desecrated the local dead by burning the tombs as well as the city.”²⁰² Tel El Hamman is noted to be destroyed by burning as well, with ash and burnt debris excavated from the site.²⁰³ So, given the evidence of a great fiery destruction, the fact that it fits the description of where the Bible states it would be, and the fact that it fits in the chronology of the biblical Patriarchs, Tel El Hamman is the best choice for the location of the biblical Sodom.

Regardless of which place one argues for the proper location, both sites have a “scientific explanation” for the cataclysmic destruction was experienced in the biblical city of Sodom. As noted by David Graves, “both BeD and TeH are located in the Great Rift Jordan Valley along two fault lines which are known to have bitumen/asphalt, Sulphur, tar, and natural gas in this region.”²⁰⁴ So, some kind of earthquake triggering an eruption of “fire and brimstone” to emerge

²⁰⁰ John Bimson, “Archeological Data and the Dating of the Patriarchs,”” edited by Alan R. Millard and Donald J. Wiseman, *Biblical Studies.org.uk*, Intervarsity (1980): 63. Accessed May 15, 2019. http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/epn_3_bimson.html

²⁰¹ David Graves, *Key Facts for the Location of Sodom Student Edition* (Moneton, Canada: Graves, 2014), 89-93

²⁰² Steven Collins, *Discovering the City of Sodom*, (New York: Howard Books, 2013), 152.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 156.

²⁰⁴ David Graves, *Key Facts for the Location of Sodom Student Edition* (Moneton, Canada: Graves, 2014), 84.

from the fault line could be used to explain the fiery destruction of Sodom.²⁰⁵ This does not mean that the supernatural was not present. After all, how would Lot have known to escape at the right time if he had not been forewarned by God? Thus, archaeology can be used to verify the location of an ancient biblical city. This is another example of how the Bible is an accurate reporter of the history it tells.

Exodus-Myth or History?

An argument given against the Bible as history that is often given is that archaeology cannot find any evidence of the event of the Exodus or Israel being enslaved by the Egyptians. As noted by Ernst Breisach, “theological higher criticism and modern archaeology even shed doubt on Israel’s ancestral role for mankind.”²⁰⁶ As Finkelstein points out, “we have no clue, not even a single word, about early Israelites in Egypt: neither in monumental inscriptions on walls of temples, nor in tomb inscriptions, nor in papyri....Israel is absent—as a possible foe of Egypt, as a friend, or as an enslaved nation.”²⁰⁷ When it comes to the forty years of wandering, Finkelstein comments, “Some archaeological traces of their generation-long wandering in the Sinai should be apparent....However, except for the Egyptian forts along the northern coast, not a single campsite or sign of occupation from the time of Ramesses II and his immediate predecessors and successors has ever been identified in Sinai.”²⁰⁸ So, the argument against believing in a literal history of Israel being in Egypt and escaping Egypt around the time of Ramesses II (see Exodus 12:37) has to do with a lack of archaeological verification.

²⁰⁵ Wood, “The Discovery of the Sin Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah,” n.p.

²⁰⁶ Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, & Modern*, 320.

²⁰⁷ Finkelstein, *The Bible Unearthed*, 60.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

Some caution for this view should be given for several reasons. First, one must be careful not to make an “argument from silence,” a fallacy that assumes that one’s position can be proven because no evidence against it can be found. In other words, someone cannot disbelieve in the exodus event just because it cannot be verified by archaeology. With that said, one is not justified in believing in the Exodus simply on the basis that the skeptics cannot disprove it. As archaeologists would say, “the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.”²⁰⁹ The people of Israel at that time would have been nomadic people, which can be difficult to detect by means of archaeology.²¹⁰ Furthermore, the kingdom of Egypt would have been reluctant to mention their own defeat. As noted by Charles Align, “The peoples of ancient Egypt kept historical records to impress their gods and also potential enemies, and therefore rarely, if ever, mentioned defeats or catastrophes.”²¹¹

Yet, there are those who argue that the Exodus can be detected by means of archaeology. The Exodus of Egypt has what one might call “contextual plausibility.”²¹² As noted by Egyptologist Maryl Levine, “The storyline of the Exodus, of a people fleeing from a humiliating slavery, suggests elements that are historically credible... A history of being slaves is likely to bear elements of truth.”²¹³ In other words, the criterion of embarrassment would show that the people of Israel would not present itself in such an unflattering way if these were merely nation-

²⁰⁹ Randal Price, “Biblical Archeology Lecture: Lesson 1,” Liberty University Online (2014), Last Accessed January 2015, Liberty.edu.

²¹⁰ Frendo, “The Capabilities and Limitations of Ancient Near Eastern nomadic Archaeology,” 2-3.

²¹¹ Charles Align, *Egypt and Bible History from Earliest Times to 1000 BC*, (Grand Rapid, MI: Baker Book, 1981), 103.

²¹² Price, *The Stones Cry Out*, 133.

²¹³ Maryl Levine, “Exodus Evidence: An Egyptologist Looks at Biblical History,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 42, no 3 (May 2016): 3.

building myths. Moreover, archaeology and history show that migrations of people from the land of Canaan were happening at the time when Israel would have traveled to Egypt. There are records of Canaanites coming to Egypt in ancient history, and that these foreigners were “causing troubles.”²¹⁴

Finkelstein admits of these parallels as well, stating, “independent archaeological and historical sources tell of migrations of Semites from Canaan to Egypt, and of Egyptians forcibly expelling them. ... This basic outline of immigration and violent return to Canaan is parallel to the biblical account of Exodus.”²¹⁵ Finkelstein will, however, propose a different reason for the various parallels. Perhaps those reconstructing the history of Israel in the 7th century took some remnant of ancient traditions and put a new theological spin on them. “Just as the written form of the patriarchal narratives wove together the scattered traditions of origins in the service of a seventh century national revival in Judah,” comments Finkelstein, “the fully elaborated story of conflict with Egypt—of the great power of the God of Israel and his miraculous rescue of his people—served an even more immediate political and military end.”²¹⁶ So, Finkelstein sees no issue with seeing parallels to the Exodus and these ancient accounts of Canaanite migration while still holding to the Exodus as a myth.

The issue when it comes to verifying the Exodus by archaeology has to do in part with the chronology of the events. Because the City of Ramesses is mentioned in the Book of Exodus, scholars have proposed that the events of the Exodus happened during the reign of Ramesses II in 12000 BC.²¹⁷ Yet 1st Kings 6:1 mentions that the Exodus happened 480 years before the

²¹⁴ Price, *The Stones Cry Out*, 133.

²¹⁵ Finkelstein, 56.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

temple , putting the date of the Exodus in 15000-14000 BC arena.²¹⁸ Support for this view can be found from the first century-Jewish Historian Josephus. Josephus connects the Hyksos rulers from the 15000's as the rulers who "did not know Joseph" in Exodus 1:8.²¹⁹ It is for this reason that traditional biblical scholars date the Exodus at 1446 BC.²²⁰

Finkelstein points out that the Dynasty of Ramesses did not come into power until the 13th century, and believes that it would not make sense for the people of Israel to escape Egypt before the time of Ramesses within the narrative.²²¹ As a result, many scholars will opt for the number of 480 being "symbolic."²²² The Exodus should be thought of as happening during late 13 century (12000's) in Finkelstein's view.²²³ If one argues for the 13th century date, some archaeologists believe verification of an Israelite presence can be found. Manfred Beitak would argue that various huts from the 12000's discovered by the temple of Rameses III must have belonged to "proto-Israelites."²²⁴ However, if one takes the later date for the Exodus, the events of Exodus as described in the Bible most likely did not happen. The lack of archaeological verification would show that. Furthermore, it would not be in synch with the dates of the Conquests as revealed by Bryant Wood's works in Jericho.²²⁵

²¹⁷ Finkelstein, *Bible Unearthed*, 56.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

²¹⁹ William Dever, *Who were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From*, 10

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 11

²²¹ Finkelstein, 56.

²²² *Ibid.*,

²²³ *Ibid.*, 57

²²⁴ Manfred Bietak, "Israelites Found in Egypt," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 29 no. 5 (Sept. 2003): 3.

²²⁵ Holden and Geisler, 235.

Several arguments can be made against the later dating of the Exodus. First the Merneptah Stele, an Egyptian artifact from the 13th century, spoke of Israel as being a land already established in Canaan by 1210 BC.²²⁶ This would not fit with later date of the Exodus in the 13th century, but does fit with the earlier date in 14000's. Second, when it comes to the City of Ramesses being mentioned in Exodus 11, the name of "Ramesses" being invoked does not mean that these events happened during the reign of Ramesses II. Genesis 47:11, the name Ramesses is used to describe the area in the Delta where the Patriarchs and Jacob settled, which happened far before the time of the Patriarchs.²²⁷ "Ramesses" therefore is more of a historical place holder someone at a later time is using when looking back at past events (similar to when a historian would say Julius Caesar crossed the "English channel").²²⁸ So, one is not compelled to date the Exodus at the 13th century.

In fact, if one dates the Exodus at the 1400's, more archaeological verification can be found. For example, the ancient artifact known as the "Ipuwer papyrus" (or the Papyrus Leiden 344), is an ancient Egyptian document that reports events that bear a striking resemblance to the 10 plagues of the Exodus account. The papyrus was written by an Egyptian official sometime before the thirteenth century, which would be consistent with the 15th century dating of the Exodus.²²⁹ It was discovered by Giovanni Leiden in 1828 and was later translated by British Egyptologist Alan Gardiner in 1909.²³⁰ The document mentions that the river was turned to

²²⁶ Holden and Geisler, *Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*, 230

²²⁷ John Bimson and David Livingstone, "Redating the Exodus" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 13, no. 5 (Oct. 1987): 3.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

²²⁹ Holden and Geisler, 223

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 222.

blood throughout the land (matches Ex. 7:20), fire came down from “on high” (matches Exodus 9:22-26), the trees and food sources were destroyed by hail (see E.9:25), the cattle “weep and moan” (see Ex. 9:3), the “children of princes were dashed against the walls” (see “death of the first born” in Ex. 12:30), and the “poor people (slaves) flee into the desert like nomads who live in tents”(see Ex. 12-17, the Israelites flee Egypt).²³¹ This account would appear to verify the historicity of the “ten plagues” that God sent to Egypt to get Pharaoh to “let His people go.” These reasons give credence into believing in an earlier date for the Exodus, and the Ipuwer Papyrus serves as archaeological verification of the Exodus event.

Another argument that can be made for the Exodus being an actual historical event has to do with the fact that it appears to be a product of the time of Egypt and Mesopotamia in the Second Millennium BC. This becomes clear when one compares the Law of Moses to the Code of Hammurabi. As noted by W.W. Davies, “The Discovery of the Hammurabi Code is one of the greatest achievements of archaeology, and is of paramount interest, not only to the student of the Bible, but also to all those interested in ancient history.”²³² The Code was the law established by Hammurabi, the sixth king in the Babylonian sometime in the late 3rd to 2nd millennium.²³³ It was discovered on a diorite stele by famed archaeologist M. de Morgan in 1901, and translated by Father Scheil (a Roman Catholic scholar) in 1902.²³⁴ The discovery served to show the source that inspired the law code that the Patriarchs in Genesis followed. It also helped inspire the Law that Moses gave the people of Israel after fleeing Egypt (in addition to the work of the Holy

²³¹ Holden and Geisler, *Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible* 223-224.

²³² W.W. Davies, *Code of Hammurabi and Moses*, (New York: The Methodist Concern, 1905), 7.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid., 13-14.

Spirit).²³⁵ This gives good reason to believe that Genesis and Exodus are products of the 2nd millennium BC and not a product of the 7th century BC as Finkelstein suggests.

Therefore, the Exodus is shown to be based in history and not a “fable” as the critics suggest. But in order for this argument to be as strong as possible, the question of the history of Joshua’s conquest narratives must also be examined. Understanding when this happened sheds further light on the debate of the time of the Exodus and helps to create a larger picture of the biblical chronology.

Joshua and the Conquests

Archaeologist John Garstang in the 1930’s believed that he found the destroyed Jericho of the Bible, dating his excavations to the 1400’s BC when scholars believed the Exodus and conquests narratives would have taken place.²³⁶ His successor however, Kathleen Kenyon, later gave what some would see as a devastating “death blow” to biblical maximalism. Kenyon dated the destruction of Jericho to ca. 1500 BC, far too early for the Israelites to invade in either proposed date for the Exodus (1400’s or 1200’s).²³⁷ She also attributed the destruction of Jericho to the Hyksos of Egypt.²³⁸ By the time Israel would have arrived, there would have been no city to destroy. Before this discovery, the “conquest model” was vehemently defended by archaeologists like W.F. Albright and George Wright. As noted by Albright, “The Israelites...proceeded without loss of time to destroy and occupy Canaanite towns.... Archaeological excavation and exploration are throwing increasing light on the character of the

²³⁵ Holden and Geisler, *Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*, 232.

²³⁶ Dever, *who were the Early Israelites*, 45.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 45-46

earliest occupation of Canaan.”²³⁹ Albright dated the Exodus and conquests in the 13th century, far too early to corroborate with Kenyon’s dating.²⁴⁰ Thus, Albright’s model was doubted. As noted by Nadav Na’aman, a professor of Jewish history at Tel Aviv University, scholars became more “aware” of the “discrepancies between the conquest stories and the archaeological evidence.”²⁴¹

Thus, alternative theories were given to the origin of Israel’s presence in the land of Canaan. The theories of Israel’s origins are: The Peaceful Infiltration, The Peasants’ Revolt, and the traditional Conquest Model. The Conquest model would argue that the Israelites really did settle in the land of Canaan by the conquests of the various areas that the Bible speaks of in the Book of Joshua. The Peasant’s revolt model, proposed by American biblical scholars in the 1960’s and 1970’s, argues that the Israelites were really just Canaanite peasants in the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age who rebelled against corrupt rulers and separated to form their own unique ethnic identity.²⁴² The Peaceful Infiltration model would state that nomadic people from the Transjordan eventually ended up in the highlands of Canaan in the 12th and 13th century, and the biblical historical accounts were really just nation building “myths” used to create a distinct identity.²⁴³ When it seemed that archeology was not verifying these conquests found in Scripture, these other theories to the origin of Israel in the land became more appealing.

²³⁹ William Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, (Eugene, OR: John Hopkis Press, 1940), 278-279

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 279.

²⁴¹ Nadav Na’aman and Israel Finkelstein *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological & Historical Aspects of Early Israel* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 222-223.

²⁴² Dever, 52-54.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

Bryant Woods disagrees with Kenyon's findings, believing that Kenyon misdated her finds. Woods argues that Kenyon's excavations were not as thorough as they should have been, she based her argument more on what was not found as opposed to what was (in other words, it is an argument from silence).²⁴⁴ Woods also notes that that Late Bronze pottery was overlooked in the excavations.²⁴⁵ Woods also points out that there are various problems with putting the blame on the Egyptians. The excavations from Jericho show that there was an "abundance of food," but Egyptian campaigns were usually fought before harvest times when food supply would have been at their lowest.²⁴⁶ The Egyptians were far more concerned with Mediterranean Coast and areas north of the Jordan valley from a military standpoint.²⁴⁷ So an Egyptian conquest does not seem to fit with the discovered facts.

Woods verifies Garstang's original dating for several reasons. First, the ceramic evidence. Woods argues "Cypriot bichrome ware" would indicate a late bronze occupation, consistent with the date of biblical conquests.²⁴⁸ The debris of the wall have been dated to 1410 BC.²⁴⁹ Other reasons to believe that excavations in Jericho match the Bible's description are as follows. Scott Ashely and Jerold Aust have noted that the walls of Jericho have suspiciously fallen outward from the city, not inward.²⁵⁰ If the destruction had been done by invaders, the

²⁴⁴ Bryant Woods, "Did Israel Conquer Jericho? A New look at the Archaeological Evidence," , " *Associates of Biblical Research* (May 2008), Accessed May 18, 2019. <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2008/05/01/Did-the-Israelites-Conquer-Jericho-A-New-Look-at-the-Archaeological-Evidence.aspx>, n.p.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

walls would have fallen inward by being knocked in. Yet, the walls have fallen outward and formed a ramp for the incoming forces, which is remarkably consistent with what Scripture states in Joshua 6:20, “When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city (NIV).”²⁵¹ Other parallels include the fact that archaeological evidence would suggest that the siege was brief (as indicated by Joshua 6:15), the city was not plundered (as indicated by Josh. 5:17-18), and the attack happened at harvest time (as indicated by Josh. 2:5 and Josh. 5:10).²⁵² So, it seems that these excavations of Jericho would indicate the historicity of the biblical description of the event.

Other excavations of other conquered cities from the conquest narratives of Joshua yield a similar conclusion. Hazor (which is mentioned in Josh. 11) has been excavated and has been shown to be destroyed in the Late Bronze age, which fits within the early and late date of the Exodus.²⁵³ The Israelites are the most likely culprits due to a process of elimination. The excavation revealed that the Canaanite idols had been defaced (something invading Canaanites would never do), Egypt was an ally at the time (making them unlikely invaders), and the Philistines had yet to arrive in the Levant.²⁵⁴ So, the Israelites are the only ones left to be there to destroy Hazor, which fits with what the Book of Joshua states. There is some debate surrounding

²⁵⁰Scott Ashley and Jerold Aust, “Jericho: does the Evidence Disprove or Prove the Bible,” *Associates of Biblical Research*, (Jan. 2009), Accessed Feb. 26 2015, <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2009/01/30/Jericho-Does-the-Evidence-Disprove-or-Prove-the-Bible.aspx>, n.p.

²⁵¹Ibid.

²⁵² Michael A. Grisanti, “Recent Archeological Discoveries that Lend Credence to the Historicity of the Scriptures,” *JETS* 56. Vol. 3 (2013): 480.

²⁵³ James Hoffmeier and Dennis Magary, *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith*, 436.

²⁵⁴Ibid.

the city of Ai. Ai (destroyed in Joshua 8) has been excavated extensively, and its excavations have shown that there was a large city there in the early Bronze era, but nothing was there until the 12th and 11th century when a small village was established.²⁵⁵ Yet the Conquests of the Bible would have happened somewhere in the vicinity of the 15th to 13th century.

There have been several explanations for this discrepancy. One explanation is that the biblical Ai is in a different location. Bryant Wood has suggested that the biblical Ai is located in Khirbet Maqatir.²⁵⁶ Others have suggested that by the Late Bronze age, Ai was a “small squatter’s settlement” and its remains are “in the vicinity of the imposing ruins of the mighty Early Bronze age city.”²⁵⁷ So, when the Bible is used as a guide for archaeology, excavations show remarkable corroboration to the events that the Bible describes.

David and Solomon- United Monarchy or National Legend?

A major dispute that minimalists and maximalists have is how they recall the history of perhaps two of Israel’s most prominent kings, King David and his son King Solomon. Kathleen Kenyon has noted, “to many people it seems remarkable that David and Solomon still remain unknown outside the Old Testament or literary sources derived directly from it.”²⁵⁸ Some would look at these historical figures to be legends akin to King Arthur. As noted by Randal Price, “Historical Revisionists [or minimalists] argued that the ‘David Myth’ had been the literary invention drawn from various heroic traditions to explain the formation of Israel’s monarchy.”²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1990), 437.

²⁵⁶ Hoffmeier and Magary, 437.

²⁵⁷ Ibid 438.

²⁵⁸ Kathleen Kenyon, *The Bible and Recent Archaeology*, (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1987), 85.

²⁵⁹ Price, *The Stones Cry Out*, 162.

According to the minimalists, the priestly school collected various legends to create a persona of a righteous king (David) meant to signify the importance of divine government.²⁶⁰ Of course, this theory does have its flaws. If David's inclusion in the Bible was to promote the need for godly rulers and the centrality of temple worship, then why include the story of David's fall into adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah the Hittite (see 1 Samuel 11-12, Psalm 51)? Ancient people tended to embellish the great things about their leaders and overlook the negative aspects. This criterion of embarrassment could serve to show that this account is not mere legend but rooted in history.

Finkelstein, and Neil Silberman, would argue that there is no archaeological evidence of a prosperous kingdom during the time of David or Solomon, "there is not the slightest evidence of any change to the landscape of Judah until the next century... the population remained few and the villages modest and few."²⁶¹ They conclude that the accounts found in the Hebrew Bible's historical books, like Chronicles, Samuel, and the Book of Kings, must have been "revised history" from "folk traditions."²⁶² However, as previously stated, there is a certain issues with making an "argument from silence" when it comes to archaeology. Negative evidences should not be preferred over positive evidence for a belief.²⁶³ In fact, there are evidences from archaeology that confirm the historicity of David and Solomon.

One of the most significant discoveries that confirmed the historicity of the Davidic monarchy is the "Tel Dan Stele." As Eric Cline points out, "On the Tel Dan Stele is the earliest

²⁶⁰ Price, *The Stones Cry Out*, 162.

²⁶¹ Israel Finkelstein and Neil Silberman, *David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of Western Civilization*, (New York, Free Press, 2006), 96.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁶³ Hoffmeier and Magary, *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith* 483.

extrabiblical inscription ever found that documents the existence of the House of David (Beit David)At a single blow, the finding of this inscription brought an end to the debate and settled the question of whether David was an actual historical person.”²⁶⁴ The Tel Dan Stele is a 3000 year old basalt stele written by one of Israel’s enemies, and was discovered in the 1990’s by Professor Avraham Biran of Hebrew Union College. ²⁶⁵ The fact that it is the Assyrians who mention the “House of David” serves to show that David is a historical figure since that group would have no reason to confirm Israel’s myths.”²⁶⁶ However, Eric Cline does point out that, “The problem is that although the Tel Dan Stele—fragments of which were discovered in 1993 and 1994—now presents us with the first known extrabiblical attestation for the House of David (Beit David), there is little other direct archaeological evidence available for either king at the moment.”²⁶⁷ So, the critics will now admit that a “historical David” exists, but argue that the kingdom he and his son Solomon ruled over was exaggerated by the Bible. Despite the fact that the “argument from silence” is persistently used by skeptics, some positive evidence of this United Kingdom can be discovered in the ruins of Jerusalem and other places in Israel.

Part of the issue that arises yet again is that archeologists like Finkelstein and Silberman are proponents of “low chronology” when it comes to corroboration to the Bible and archaeology. They look at major fortified cities such as Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer, and date them not in the 10th century (the time of David and Solomon), but in the 9th century (even though most scholars in the past have dated these cities to the 10th century).²⁶⁸ Archaeologists have also

²⁶⁴ Cline, *Biblical Archaeology*, kindle location 812.

²⁶⁵ Price, 167.

²⁶⁶ Groothius, *Christian Apologetics*, 669.

²⁶⁷ Cline, kindle location 1056.

noted a lack of large monumental structures (fortifications, palaces, temples) in Jerusalem from 10th century would show that there was no united monarchy as the Bible describes.²⁶⁹ So, archaeologists like Finkelstein will argue that David was nothing more than a chief of a tribe, not a king on the level of majesty as described in Scripture. However, there are issues with believing this. One of the reasons that stands out is fact that 10th century ceramics have been excavated in these fortified cities in layers that were supposedly 9th century.²⁷⁰

Another argument that low chronologists make is that the lack of literacy from the 10th century proves that Judah was a village at a time, not a capital of grand kingdom. However, evidence of writing does exist from this time period in Judah. In Khirbert Qieyafa, pottery dated to the 10th century was shown to have writing on it.²⁷¹ Thus disproving the idea that Judeans were illiterate nomads in the 10th century. There have also been excavations that reveal “monumental architecture” dating back to the 10th century throughout Palestine.²⁷² These structures include stables, storehouses, barracks, and marketplaces,²⁷³ which is not in keeping with the idea of the Israelites being a group of “nomads.” What it does point to is the possibility that Israel was “state-level” society.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁸ Michael Coogan, “Assessing David and Solomon,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 32, no. 2 (August 2006): 3.

²⁶⁹ Hoffmeier and Magary *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith*, 508.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 492,504-505.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 493-494.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 509

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Some archaeologists believe that they have excavated King David's palace. Hebrew University archaeologist, Eilat Mazar, believes that she has uncovered large walls of a palace from Iron Age I (somewhere between 13th to 10th century) in Jerusalem.²⁷⁵ Mazar believes that these large walls, that she labeled the "Large Stone Structures (LSS)," were part of a larger building (which she attributes to be King David's palace).²⁷⁶ While there may not be as much evidence as critics demand, it is certainly not the case that there is an "absence of evidence" for the Davidic Dynasty in the 10th century.

The Divided Kingdom and the Prophets

Various historical people and places after the United Kingdom have been verified by archaeology. In 2 Kings 10:20-34, King Jehu is portrayed as a righteous king who sought to rid Israel of Baal worship. This historical figure has been verified by the excavation of a six-foot-tall monument called "The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III." This monument was excavated in 1846 by Sir Henry Layard, and it depicts Jehu bowing down to King Shalmanasher II of Assyria (implying that the Assyrian king ruled over him).²⁷⁷ This serves as the only extrabiblical evidence of this king's existence.

In 2 Samuel 2:13 and Jeremiah 41:12, there is mention of a place called the "Pool of Gibeon." In 2 Samuel 2:13, it is the first place where those who fought for the House of David met those who fought for the House of Saul. In Jeremiah 41:12, it is the place where army officials of Judah met to confront the Ishmael, a corrupt official who killed King Gedaliah. The Pool of Gibeon was first identified by archaeologist Edward Robinson in 1833 in the Palestinian

²⁷⁵ Avraham Faust, "Did Eilat Mazar Find David's Palace?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38, no. 5 (September 2012): 48, 50.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁷⁷ Cowan and Wilder, *Kindle* location 4564.

village of el-Jib.²⁷⁸ Further excavations by James Pritchard in the 1950's and 60's verified that Robinson was right, the village was in fact Gibeon.²⁷⁹ Pritchard discovered two separate water systems in the village, where one was "a pool or reservoir measuring thirty-seven feet in diameter and eighty-two feet in depth."²⁸⁰

Another archaeological confirmation of the Bible is Sennacherib's Prism. King Sennacherib is mentioned in the Scriptures as the Assyrian King who threatened the well-being of Judah under the reign of King Hezekiah. In the Scriptures, Sennacherib invades Judah (2 Chron. 32:1) and arrogantly boasts:

Do you not know what I and my predecessors have done to all the peoples of the other lands? Were the gods of those nations ever able to deliver their land from my hand? Who of all the gods of these nations that my predecessors destroyed has been able to save his people from me? How then can your god deliver you from my hand? Now do not let Hezekiah deceive you and mislead you like this. Do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or the hand of my predecessors. How much less will your god deliver you from my hand!" (2 Chron 32:13-15 NIV)

Yet, because Hezekiah and the Prophet Isaiah prayed and asked the Lord to deliver them, they were spared (2 Chr. 32:20). The Lord sent an angel who "who annihilated all the fighting men and the commanders and officers in the camp of the Assyrian king (2 Chr. 32:21 NIV)." This account has actually been verified by archaeology with the discovery of Sennacherib's Prism. The Prism was discovered in 1830 in Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh and has been dated back to 701 BC.²⁸¹ The prism mentions that 46 of Hezekiah's strong cities were sieged, and

²⁷⁸ Cowan and Wilder, *In Defense of the Bible*, kindle location 4578.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., kindle location 4564

²⁸¹ Geisler and Holden, 267.

Sennacherib made Hezekiah a prisoner in Jerusalem, “like a bird in a cage.”²⁸² What makes this suspicious though is that, despite the fact the Sennacherib took down surrounding cities with relative ease, he could for some reason not take down Jerusalem. There is simply no natural explanation to this.²⁸³ This serves as perhaps a confirmation of the supernatural deliverance that Judah experienced during the reign of King Hezekiah. Sennacherib boasted of his invasion of Judah, yet mysteriously could not lay waste to Jerusalem and capture Hezekiah. He could only keep Hezekiah within the city walls. This is consistent with the biblical account of Sennacherib’s siege as noted in 2 Kings 18, Isaiah 36, and 2 Chronicles 32.

Throughout the years, various biblical characters have been confirmed by various inscriptions uncovered by archaeology. King Ahab (1 Kings 16, 21-22) is mentioned in the Mesha Stele.²⁸⁴ Stamp seals (or “bullas”) have been excavated bearing the name of different kings and royal officials from Israel’s and Judah’s history, including Ahikam (2 Kings 22), Amariah (2 Chronicles 31), Eliakim (2 Kings 18-19), Hazael (2 Kings 8, 12), and Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23, 1 Chronicles 3, 2 Chronicles 36), just to name a few.²⁸⁵ Lawrence Mykytiuk notes that at least 50 people from the Bible have been confirmed by archaeology.²⁸⁶ Not only has archaeology confirmed the various kings and officials of Israel and Judah, archaeology has also demonstrated that the Bible has accurately preserved the memory of various pagan rulers. The Cryus Cylinder confirms Cryus II’s royal decree to let the Jew’s return to the homeland, which is

²⁸² James Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1969), 288.

²⁸³ Geisler and Holden 268.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 283.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 285-286.

²⁸⁶ Lawrence Mykytiuk, “Archaeology Confirms 50 People in the Bible,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 40, no. 2 (April 2014): 42-50.

found at the “end of the Hebrew Bible.”²⁸⁷ Cryus II is not the only Persians ruler in the Bible to be confirmed by archaeology. Other rulers include Darius I, Xerxes, Artaxerxes I and Darius II.²⁸⁸ The Bible continually demonstrates itself to be a reliable source on the history it reports.

Those who seek to argue that the Hebrew Bible is full of “myth” and “legend” must contest with the fact that the Bible accurately portrays the history it reports. Archaeology has given ample reason to see the narratives of the Patriarchs and the Exodus as historical fits in the Middle to Late Bronze Era. Archaeology has also shown that there is good reason to believe that the Bible is accurately reporting the United and Divided Kingdoms of Israel. Thus, the notion that the Hebrew Bible is merely a collection of unsubstantiated legends written after the Exile is an idea that is not supported by archaeology, past or present.

²⁸⁷ Mykytiuk, “Archaeology Confirms 50 People in the Bible,” 45.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

Chapter 7- Archaeology and the New Testament

The archaeology of the New Testament can also be used as an effective apologetic to those skeptical of the Christian faith. The following arguments from archaeology may be useful for apologetic purposes. First, the manuscript evidence can be used to argue that the New Testament has been accurately preserved throughout history. Second, archaeology can be used to comment on the level of literacy that existed in first century Palestine, which speaks against the idea that the disciples could not have possibly written the gospels. Third, various people and places in the New Testament have been corroborated by archaeology. These finds include Caiaphas's ossuary and the Pool of Siloam.

Manuscript Evidence

Some will try to cast doubt on the accuracy of the Bible by noting that it has been copied over and over again for thousands of years. Using the analogy of the "game of telephone," skeptics will say that the meaning of various texts certainly must have been lost in transmission. However, for the New Testament this can be argued against because of the number of manuscripts that have survived through the ages. As noted by Cowan and Wilder, "There is extensive manuscript evidence for the Bible, including at least 300 Hebrew manuscripts and 5,800 Greek manuscripts, as well as more than 20,000 ancient manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments written in various languages, and more than 30,000 scriptural quotations in the early church fathers which help confirm the accuracy of Scriptures."²⁸⁹ The sheer abundance of various manuscripts allows scholars the ability to do good textual criticism. Textual criticism is when one collects the various textual manuscripts, and notes the differences and similarities

²⁸⁹ Cowan and Wilder, *In Defense of the Bible*, Kindle location 2809.

between the textual variants in order to come to the conclusion of what the original manuscripts of the Bible²⁹⁰ When one compares and contrasts the wide array of texts, the differences in text due to scribal errors or intentional changes made by scribes can be detected.²⁹¹ With the wide arrays of manuscripts available “Fewer than four thousand of the original four hundred thousand textual variants have any real significance at all to the meaning of the verse....what we have in the New Testament today, with 99 percent accuracy, is essentially what was written then.”²⁹²

Not only do scholars have an abundance of New Testament documents, they also have early manuscripts and papyri of the New Testament. In the Sackler Library Papyrology Room at the University of Oxford, two of the oldest papyri of the New Testament are housed. Papyrus Oxy. 3523 contains portions of the Gospel of John and is dated to the second century.²⁹³ Papyrus Oxy. 4404 contains sections of the Gospel of Matthew and is also dated to the second century.²⁹⁴ These early papyri show that the New Testament documents were well in circulation after the first century. Bruce Metzger has noted that there are 306 early Greek manuscripts dating back as far as the third century.²⁹⁵ Sir Fredrich, former director of the British Museum has stated, “in no other is the interval of time between the composition of the book and the earliest manuscripts so

²⁹⁰ William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2004), 120.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.* 120-121.

²⁹² Jeff Myer, *Understanding the Faith*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Summit Ministries, 2015), Kindle edition, kindle location 1816.

²⁹³ “P90.” *The Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts*. http://www.csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA_P90 (Accessed May 22, 2019)

²⁹⁴ “P104.” *The Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts*. http://www.csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA_P104 (Accessed May 22, 2019)

²⁹⁵ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ/The Case for Faith*, 66.

short as in that of the New Testament.”²⁹⁶ Thus, the manuscripts of the New Testament, both in their abundance and age, attest to how well preserved the New Testament is. Anyone who picks up a New Testament today can be assured that they have an accurate recreation of what the original manuscripts would have said.

Literacy and New Testament Authorship

An objection that skeptics will give to the idea that the New Testament was written by eyewitnesses to the life of Christ is that the disciples were mostly illiterate. Since many of the disciples were Jewish “peasants,” it seems unlikely that they would have been the authors of the New Testament. Thus, many books that Church tradition has claimed were written by disciples (John, 1 and 2 Peter, Matthew, Mark) were not actually written by the person the book is named after. As noted by critical biblical scholar Bart Ehrman, “Illiteracy was widespread throughout the Roman Empire....at the best of times maybe 10 percent of the population was roughly literate.”²⁹⁷

There are several Christian apologists with adequate responses to this. One is the possibility that the New Testament authors could have used scribes.²⁹⁸ Another possibility is that Ehrman and others overstate the case that they make on the illiteracy of the time. Craig Evans gives some counterpoints in his book, *Jesus and the Remains of His Day*. First, when it is said in Scripture that the disciples were “unlearned and ignorant (Acts 4:13),” that does not necessarily mean they were illiterate. It simply meant that they lacked “scribal training.”²⁹⁹ In fact, literacy

²⁹⁶ Frederick Kenyon, *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1912), 5.

²⁹⁷ Ehrman, *Jesus Interrupted*, 105.

²⁹⁸ Andreas J Kostenberger, Darrel Bock, and Josh Chatraw, *Truth in a Culture of Doubt*. (Nashville, TH: B&H Academics, 2014): 144.

²⁹⁹ Craig Evans, *Jesus and the Remains of His Day*, 68.

and education was a concern for first century Jews and it was encouraged for boys to learn from a young age.³⁰⁰ In a similar way, Paul says that he is “unskilled” at speaking because he was not formally trained in rhetoric (1 Cor. 14:16, 23-24), but it is evident from the Scriptures that Paul could preach in a way that effectively reached people.³⁰¹ So, while it is true the disciples did not receive scribal training, it would not necessarily mean that they could not read and write.

Disciples like Peter and Matthew for instance would need to have been able to read and write to do business in first century Palestine.³⁰²

In fact, archaeology has shown that literacy was more widespread than critics of the Bible have believed. As noted by Evans, archaeological evidence of literacy among those in the public and lower classes in the Roman Empire includes “public inscriptions, private inscriptions, correspondence, business papers, . . . records, graffiti and magical texts on papyrus . . . in short, wherever people lived, we find—climate and other relevant factors permitting—substantial evidence of literacy.”³⁰³ Not only is literacy found in Roman remains, they are found in Jewish remains as well. In Masada, remains for Jewish rebels dated from 66-73 CE were excavated, revealing ostraca with lists of names designating ownership, designation of tithes, and lists of goods, as well as various copies of Hebrew Scriptures.³⁰⁴ From the Herodian period, 895 ossuaries have been discovered with inscriptions on them.³⁰⁵ These inscriptions are noted to have “poor penmanship” and “idiosyncratic spelling,” leading scholars to believe that these inscriptions were

³⁰⁰ Kostenburger, Bock, Chatraw, *Truth in a Culture of Doubt*, 141.

³⁰¹ Evans, 68.

³⁰² Kostenburger, Bock, Chatraw, 142.

³⁰³ Evan, 76.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

done by those in the lower classes, not the educated “elites.”³⁰⁶ Thus, while it may not be the case that everyone in first century Palestine was literate, literacy was widespread to the point where eyewitness could have written down what they experienced during Jesus’s ministry, or at least told someone who could (see Luke 1:1-3).

People and Places of the New Testament confirmed by Archaeology

Archaeology not only gives good reason to believe the New Testament has been accurately preserved, and good reason to believe that there were literate people able to report the life of Christ in first century Palestine, it also has confirmed the historicity of numerous people and places from the New Testament. One of the most famous examples of this is the ossuary of Caiaphas, the high priest. Caiaphas is noted to be instrumental in sentencing Jesus to death in the Scriptures (see Matthew 26). Josephus noted that the name “Caiaphas” was actually a family nickname, his true name being “Joseph.”³⁰⁷ For most of history, Josephus and the New Testament were the only sources on this historical figure (as well as some Mishnah and Rabbinic writings). This changed in the early 90’s with the discovery of a bone box, or “ossuary,” in a first century tomb in Jerusalem. In November 1990, construction workers making a water park in Peace Forest in Jerusalem stumbled upon an ancient family tomb filled with 12 ossuaries.³⁰⁸ One of these ossuaries had two inscriptions that read “Qafa,” and “Yehosef bar Qayafa” (translated to “Caiaphas,” and “Joseph son of Caiaphas”).³⁰⁹

³⁰⁶ Evans, *Jesus and the Remains of His Day*.

³⁰⁷ Steven Feldman and Nancy Roth, “The Short List: The New Testament Figures Known to History,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 28, no. 6 (November/ December 2002): 37.

³⁰⁸ Price, 305.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

The ossuary contained the box of six individuals: “four young people, an adult woman and a man about 60 years old.... The last is likely to have been the high priest who appears in the New Testament.”³¹⁰ The finds have been dated to the first century due to “coin found in one of the other ossuaries was minted by Herod Agrippa (37–44 C.E.)....The two Caiaphas ossuaries might be as early as the beginning of the [first] century.”³¹¹ This find serves as an exciting confirmation of the New Testament’s historicity.

Another exciting find is an inscription bearing the name of “Pontius Pilate,” the Roman prefect who (reluctantly) oversaw the death sentence of Jesus of Nazareth. As noted by archaeologist Steve Feldman, up until 1961, “our knowledge of Pilate outside the New Testament came from the writings of Josephus, a first-century C.E. Jewish historian; from Philo, a first-century C.E. Jewish philosopher; and from the Roman historian Tacitus (c. 55–120 C.E.).”³¹² This changed when excavators in Caesarea uncovered a limestone block which reads “Tiberieum, Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judaea”³¹³ This was most likely part of a monument that Pilate erected to honor Emperor Tiberius.³¹⁴ Coins minted by Pilate have also been discovered in the same area.³¹⁵ So, two men who played instrumental roles in the gospels have been verified by archaeologists.

³¹⁰ Feldman and Nancy Roth, “The Short List: The New Testament Figures Known to History,” 37.

³¹¹ Ronny Reich, “Caiaphas Name Inscribed on Bone Boxes,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 18, no. 5 (September/ October 1992): 42.

³¹² Feldman and Nancy Roth, 36.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Another exciting find for biblical archaeologists has been the discovery of the ossuary of James, the brother of Jesus. In October 2002, the public was made aware of a first century ossuary with the inscription “Ya’akov bar Yosef akhui di Yeshua,” translated to “Jacob (or James), son of Joseph, brother of Jesus.”³¹⁶ The find is so astounding, that critics have argued that the ossuary’s inscription must have been forged. In fact, the Israel Antiques Authority and the State of Israel put the owner of the artifact, Oden Golan, on trial for possible forgery.³¹⁷

However, various Israeli geologists, paleographers, and experts in Aramaic have examined the artifact and found the inscription to be authentic.³¹⁸ Some will still doubt that the ossuary belongs to James the brother of Jesus from the Bible, because names like “James,” “Joseph,” and “Jesus” were very common names in first century Palestine. However, Tel Aviv University professor of statistics, Camil Fuchs, calculated the probability of all of those names being in the inscription in first century Jerusalem. He concluded, “Based on the frequency of these names among the 241 male names on the ossuaries in the catalog, the statistical probability of the three names appearing together is 0.006787 percent.”³¹⁹ So, there is good reason to believe that this really is James, the brother of Jesus, and the author of the Epistle of James. This serves as yet another extrabiblical piece of evidence of a New Testament character from archaeology. Other characters to be discovered from excavated inscriptions include Asiarch (Acts 19:31), Gallio Pronscul of Achaia (Acts 18:12-13), and Erastus the City Treasurer in Corinth (Acts

³¹⁶ Holden and Geisler, *Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*, 310-311.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 311.

³¹⁸ Hershel Shanks, “‘Brother of Jesus’ Inscription is Authentic!” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38, no. 2 (August 2012): 26-28.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

19:22, Romans 16:23).³²⁰ Archaeology continues to corroborate the history the New Testament reports.

Archaeology has also verified various places from the New Testament. For some time, because it could not be found, skeptics would claim that the “Pool of Bethesda” was probably a myth (John 5:19). However, in 1968, a large pool had been excavated on the grounds of St. Anne Church in Jerusalem.³²¹ This served as archaeological confirmation of the account from John 5. In 2005, the Pool of Siloam (John 9) was excavated, serving as further archaeological confirmation of the accurate historical memories in the Gospel of John.³²²

Archaeology has also confirmed the location of Peter’s house. In 1838, Edward Robinson surveyed the area of Capernaum and made note that there were remains of a synagogue there.³²³ Later in 1866, Charles Wilson identified this as the synagogue that was built by the Roman centurion in Luke 7:5.³²⁴ Later in the 1960’s, excavations revealed that there was a house nearby, and the Franciscan scholar there deemed it to be Peter and Andrew’s house.³²⁵ This is argued to be Peter’s house in part because Scripture seems to indicate that Peter and other disciples used Capernaum as a base of operation (see Mark 1:29, 2:1, Luke 4:23, 7:1). The house is noted to have ancient fishhooks found in the pavement and is observed to have been converted into a “house church” with a baptistry added.³²⁶

³²⁰ Holden and Geisler, *Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*, 353-354, 356, 358.

³²¹ Cowan and Wilder, kindle location 5010.

³²² *Ibid.*, kindle location 5032.

³²³ Evans, 35.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

There is some debate surrounding the exact location of Jesus's tomb. Some will argue for where the Catholic Church has traditionally argued the location of the tomb is; under the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.³²⁷ However, some will argue that the true location of Jesus' empty tomb is the "Garden Tomb," a cave discovered by General Charles Gordon in 1883.³²⁸ Several arguments can be made for both locations. For the Church of the Holy Sepulchre location, archaeologists have noted that the location was outside first century city walls, although by the fourth century new walls were put up and the location was inside the walls of Jerusalem.³²⁹ The Gospels mention that Jesus was buried outside the city (See John 19:20). What makes this interesting is that Constantine's mother, Helen, named The Church of the Holy Sepulchre's location to be the site of Jesus' burial despite the fact that when she came there it was inside the city in a populated area.³³⁰ This is a curious choice if they had no prior knowledge of where the city walls used to be. Thus, scholars argue that she must have found those who had accurately preserved the memory of where Jesus' tomb was despite the changes in the layout of the land.³³¹

Arguments for the Garden Tomb location are as follows. General Gordon believed that near the site he found the hill of Golgotha, in part because the hill looked vaguely like a skull to him.³³² This is significant because of what is observed in John 19:41-42, "At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever

³²⁷ Gabriel Barkay, "The Garden Tomb: Was Jesus Buried Here?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 12, no. 2 (March/April 1986): 40.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

³²⁹ Dan Bahat, "Does the Holy Sepulchre Church Mark the Burial of Jesus?," 12, no 3 (May/June 1986): 37.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

³³² Barkay, "The Garden Tomb: Was Jesus Buried Here," 45.

been laid....Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there (NIV).” So, the place where Jesus was crucified was near the place where he was buried.³³³ The tomb is also located north of the walls of the Old City, which is in keeping with Jesus being crucified and buried outside the city.³³⁴ However, some arguments can be made against the Garden Tomb as the true location of Jesus’ empty tomb. Archaeologists have demonstrated that the Garden Tomb is part of a series of tombs that date back to Iron Age II.³³⁵ This is an issue for it being a contender for Jesus’ tomb because John 19:41 also notes that Jesus had been laid in “new tomb.”³³⁶ The tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre does date back to the first century though.³³⁷ This makes the tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre much more likely to be the location of Jesus tomb.

Some skeptics of the resurrection will argue that Jesus’ body was moved, and that his remains can be found today in a family tomb. As noted by Evans, “The claim made in 2007 that a tomb in East Talpiot, located between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, was the tomb of Jesus and his family throws the discussion of the burial and resurrection of Jesus into a whole new light.”³³⁸ A family tomb had been discovered with ossuaries with various names like “Joseph,” “Mary,” “Matthew,” and “Jesus.”³³⁹ One of the ossuaries has an “X” next to the name “Yeshua, Son of

³³³ Barkay, “The Garden Tomb: Was Jesus Buried Here,” 47.

³³⁴ Ibid., 45.

³³⁵ Price., 313.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Evans, *Jesus and His World: The Archaeological Evidence*, 144.

³³⁹ Ibid., 144.

Joseph,” and critics will point to the X as a symbol of the cross.³⁴⁰ However, there are several issues with believing that this is the ossuary of Jesus of Nazareth. First, the symbol of the X can be shown not to be a Christian symbol. Evans points out:

“The much-talked-about X-mark on the end of the ‘Jesus, son of Joseph’ ossuary is not a cross. It is not a symbol of anything, rather it is a stonemason’s mark indicating which end of the lid goes with which end of the box. Because lids were heavy and because these hand-made ossuaries are not symmetrical, the person struggling with the lid would like to know which end goes with which end. The stonemason’s mark, usually an X, though sometimes an upside-down V (similar to a pointed gable).”³⁴¹

The second problem with believing the tomb to be Jesus of Nazareth’s tomb is the location of the tomb and the wealth displayed by the tomb. Rich aristocrats and ruling Jewish priests were buried in the Talpiot area where the tomb is located.³⁴² The tomb is adorned with sophisticated architecture that denotes those buried in the tomb belong to a higher social class of Jewish people than those in Jesus of Nazareth’s family.³⁴³ These facts, and the fact that “Jesus” and “Joseph” were very common names at the time (it is more likely these names be coupled together than the James ossuary find), gives good reason to believe that Jesus of Nazareth is not buried in the family tomb in Talpiot.

Jesus’ empty tomb can be argued as a historical fact. The fact of the matter is the Roman and Jewish officials could have stopped the formation of the new Christian faction if they could

³⁴⁰ Evans, *Jesus and His World: The Archaeological Evidence*, 144

³⁴¹ Ibid., 146.

³⁴² Ibid., 147

³⁴³ Ibid.

have produced the body and proven that Jesus of Nazareth had not risen from the dead.³⁴⁴ Yet they could not. Any naturalistic explanation for this fact is lacking. The disciples did not have good motivation for wanting to steal Jesus' body. Moreover, they were willing to die for their new found faith. People tend to die for what they believe in, but not for what they do not. This is one good reason to believe in Jesus' literal, bodily resurrection. The tomb that he arose from has been uncovered by archaeologists and historians, and it is still empty.

Archaeology can be a very effective aid in apologetics of the New Testament. The sheer abundance of manuscripts gives good reason to believe in the New Testament's accurate preservation. No "game of telephone" has been played with the New Testament when it comes to its transmission throughout history. The wide spread literacy of first century Palestine gives good reason to believe that the disciples of Christ are the authors of many of the New Testament books. Furthermore, various people and places have been verified by archaeology. These include Caiaphas, Pilate, James, The Pool of Siloam, the Pool of Bethesda, and even Jesus' tomb. Archaeology is an invaluable tool for theologians and apologists alike.

³⁴⁴ Gary Habermas and Mike Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications), 76.

Chapter 8- Conclusion- What Archaeology can for Apologetics

While archaeology cannot “prove” beyond a shadow of a doubt that all of the Bible is history, it can be used to confirm various people and places from the Bible. When one understands that the best apologetic method is an eclectic one (a method that understands that people still need evidence to substantiate their beliefs, while also recognizing that people work from certain presuppositions), biblical archaeology can be a great aid to Christian apologetics. If one comes to the archaeology of Palestine and other biblical places with biblical presuppositions, the Bible can be used as an excellent guide for archaeologists because it shows that numerous biblical propositions are corroborated by archaeology.

Archaeology is not an “exact science.” It is not the case that ancient people buried certain artifacts in the ground hoping archaeologists would find them later on. Moreover, the politics of Palestine can make archaeology in that area difficult. Also, a lack of funding can impede archaeological research. Even with these limitations though, discoveries have been made that verify the Bible’s history. While minimalists like Finkelstein and Kenyon would deny this, maximalists like Randal Price and Craig Evans would affirm this, and the various discoveries that maximalists report would affirm this as well.

These discoveries include: extrabiblical accounts of the global flood, an extrabiblical account of the 10 plagues of the Exodus, the fallen walls of Jericho, the Tel-Dan Stele, the ossuary of Caiaphas, and the excavation of Peter’s house in Capernaum. These discoveries serve to show that the Bible is rooted in history and are certainly not in the category of “myth” As the

dean of Liberty University School of Divinity, Ed Hindson would say, “The Bible is about real people, in real places, reporting real events, that actually happened.”³⁴⁵

³⁴⁵ Ed Hindson, “Introduction to Old Testament,” lecture, August 2012. Liberty University.

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