

Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

Archaeology And Biblical Inspiration

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by

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Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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The thesis project topic is on Inspiration and Bible Archaeology. The project's main reason is a perceived lack of confidence in the Bible's stories being real. The project addresses this worldview, which causes this belief to influence our church members. The study includes an explanation of the post-modern world view concerning the certainty of historical events. A Biblical viewpoint is addressed, and the relationship with this to Bible inspiration is explored. A survey is given to individual members of the congregation, which gives questions concerning these issues. Two interventions are then presented, one in which the debates concerning the United Monarchy of Israel is presented to show the differences between the minimalist's and the maximalist's view of these historical issues in the field of Biblical archaeology. The second intervention is presented to show historical matters as they apply to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Then it will be explained how this is important to spiritual growth and confidence because of the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible. This apologetic issue is vital in challenging the church in understanding the issues that cause people to lose confidence in the Holy Scriptures. It includes examples of how to address these issues.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis project aims to encourage and train the church to be more competent in defending the Christian faith. The Bible challenges Christians to be able to "give an answer to everyone who asks concerning the hope." (I Peter 3:15)¹ The Bible also is the inspired Word of God. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17) The proposal is to explore the use of Biblical archaeology to show more significant evidence and give confidence in the inspiration of the Bible.

Ministry Context

The church context is a small, rural congregation in south-central Kentucky. The historian has noted that religion was one of the more significant influences on culture in the south. Religion in this region is seen in two ways. First, the South as a region is characterized by the term 'Bible Belt.' One looks at the region in a nostalgic sense, with small rural churches and people having singings, revivals, baptisms at the creek, weddings and funerals where the whole community would come out and eat dinner on the ground. This congregation is a part of that significant history and region.²

¹ All Scripture used is ESV

² Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), xi.

The congregation that is now the Horton Chapel Church of Christ dates to 1912. An evangelist named Jack Hines conducted a revival at the Union Ridge Baptist church building. It lasted a few weeks, and some were converted and baptized at the local creek. One of those local farmers was Bill Horton and his wife. In 1931 Bill Horton donated the land to construct what is now known as the Horton Chapel Church of Christ. The members then set up a sawmill on the property, cut the trees, put the logs together, and took turns driving the nails, and built the original church building. The seats were made of rough-cut lumber and the church began meeting in the new building in 1932.

Brother C.K. Watkins preached to a full house at the first service. There was no electricity, and the lighting came from coal oil lanterns. The heat came from a pot-bellied stove, and in the summer, open windows provided the cooling along with hand fans. In the late 1940s, there the congregation built two new classrooms. Then a few years later, two other classes were added at the front of the building. Another addition added at the front of the building was a baptistry, nursery, and more restrooms. In April of 1968, there a classroom annex and two additional classrooms and an office was built. In 1986, a fellowship hall was built on the grounds, making dinner on the ground obsolete.

During the early years, the preachers rode horseback and often would speak to one congregation on one Sunday and another the next Lord's day. Numerous men have served as elders and deacons of the church, and their families are mostly still worshiping here. The church has a cemetery where the original members as well as family of many current members are buried.

The church has always had preachers who would preach the Bible stories entirely true and accurate. The revivals would have the preachers using Bible illustrations and stories in their

preaching. There was never a doubt that these stories were right because they were “God’s Word.” The life of Jesus and the Apostles were preached and taught. The sermons in Acts were repeated numerous times during Bible class and Sunday preaching, emphasizing the Old Testament stories and prophecies contained therein. They would preach that Jesus was prophesied about as coming and would be the “Lamb of God,” which would take away the “Sins of the World” (Isaiah 53).

We have members who said these Bible stories were taught to them on a flannelgraph board as small children. There was never any doubt expressed about the truthfulness of the Bible stories. If one was heard of teaching otherwise, they were considered a “liberal” or “false teacher”. The importance of education for the Gospel Preacher in the church's earlier days was not an issue of concern. As young preachers, we were told we did not need any more “schooling.” To go on to graduate education or seminary is looked down on among many. To use another version of the Bible except the venerated King James Version was looked down on with some. The perceived fear would be that one would get to a point where they doubted the teachings of Scripture. As many members would put it, we were a “sound” church as contrasted with those who disbelieved any part of the Bible story.

The church is in the hills and valleys of Kentucky's coalfield country. Situated in a rural part of Muhlenberg County, Kentucky is where the building sits. The 2010 census gave the population at 31,499. During the 1970s and 1980s, the county was one of the largest coal-producing regions in the state and the nation.

Many of the original members were farmers and coal miners. As the second and third generations have arrived, many are professional people, with some still farming on the side. The county seat is 12 miles away, and the community where the church sits is all farmland and small

houses. The cities of Bowling Green and Owensboro are both around fifty miles away to the east and north, respectively.

The congregation consists of numerous professional people and several high school and college students. The professions represented are an elementary school principal and a school librarian. Attending are four retired teachers, an agriculture high school teacher, and FFA sponsor. Included in the congregation is a policeman and physician assistant, as well as an optometrist. In the church body, we have the county school technology supervisor and a school secretary. We have two EMTs and a nurse, a plumbing business owner and four farmers, a school counselor, and two preschool paraprofessionals. Other church members include a shop foreman, a bank officer, an executive at a large factory, and a city worker. We have had four college graduates in the past two years, and two more are graduating this year. All of our elders and their wives are current or retired educators.

The congregation has maintained steady attendance and has gained 12 members in the last four years. Some few have been lost because of death and by moving away. The church sponsors some mission work and, since 2005, sponsored the director of a school of preaching and missionary in Tanzania. Since 2014 it has supported a missionary couple in Tanzania.

The Minister served the congregation as the preacher from 1978-1986. He then worked as a youth minister, a minister of a small-town church in west Georgia, and later a missionary in Latin America and Tanzania. During this time, a seminary degree and a graduate degree in history was earned, and an opportunity presented itself to become an archaeologist in the Middle East. The call was presented to serve as the Minister of Horton Chapel in 2014.

In teaching and preaching, the Minister noticed the congregation did not have any training as far as history and archaeology are concerned. Further, the congregation did not have any training in using these studies to defend the faith. Teaching the historicity of the events of Scripture as to develop a deeper faith was considered needed. He speaks at three to five local churches in the summer and is teaching Bible classes weekly at the Nashville School of Preaching in Nashville, Tennessee. He also does a Television show for the Gospel Broadcasting Network on Bible Archaeology from time to time. The Minister travels every year to the Evangelical Theological Society and the Near Eastern Archaeological Society meetings and has been on ten archaeological digs in the Holy Land.

The situation at the congregation is the influence of our postmodern worldview. This viewpoint challenges the credibility of the Bible. Students and professionals told that the Scriptures are not reliable concerning people, places, and events mentioned in the biblical story. This challenge needs addressing. These critics and unbelievers proclaim such things as Abraham did not exist, the United Monarchy was a myth, and David never had a kingdom. Critics teach that the New Testament documents were composed many years after the events of Jesus and the early church and, thus, untrustworthy.

There are numerous popular books, documentaries, and even novels that strive to present the fact that the Bible is a document that cannot be trusted to offer the truth. Their method is primarily not concerned with the Biblical text. They feel there is a "minimum" of credible history from the biblical materials themselves. The Bible is mainly fiction, as they view it, consisting of myth and legend. Instead, they appeal to what they see as more objective, scientific sources of historical data, namely, the results of archaeological and social science. In turn, their ideology

rests on a philosophical hermeneutic towards discounting the Bible as a reliable source in matters historical.³

The historic doctrines of the Christian faith are under attack by numerous groups in the postmodern world. The members are taught that the Bible contains mistakes and historical inaccuracies, and this needs correcting. The church needs to become better equipped to answer these attacks against the faith.

A study of how the meaning and writing of history changed from the early Christian era, specifically troubling characteristics have become embedded in our modern era for the believer. In his classic book on historiography, Breisach calls the 18th century the quest for new historiography. "In contemporary histories the Old Testament was doubted as accurate history, direct divine intervention was relegated to rare occasions, Divine Providence was reduced to a vague concept, ecclesiastical history was divorced from secular history, and the milestones of sacred history-Creation, Christ's life and death, and the expectation of the Last Judgement- were used less and less as markers in world histories by historians who increasingly preferred the theologically neutral scheme of ancient, medieval, and modern periods."⁴ Thus, this new historiography that is chronicled here is a denial of the scriptures historical accuracy. For centuries the integrity and accuracy of the scriptures were respected and honored by western civilization. There was a worldview of understanding that the Bible was from God and taken at face value. However, something happened that caused a shift in the thinking of western civilization. Olson notices the change in how history was perceived as the modern and

³ Garnett H. Reid, "Minimalism and Biblical History," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155:620 (Oct 1998): 395-6.

⁴ Ernst Breisach. *Historiography: Ancient Medieval, and Modern* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1983.) 199

postmodern eras came about. “Christianity following Judaism saw history as the great events performed by God in time. Its frame was explicitly theological, based on trust in God’s revelation about what He was doing and not derived from observing humans in history.”⁵ The author sees in Olsen’s explanation that the human viewpoint is becoming paramount in evaluating our world. Thus, the worldview is changing as we come into the late modern era. Before, God was viewed as Creator, and is in control of history in the modern mind; but, to some, this is no longer the case. As pointed out by the historian, Breisach, the current viewed the Old Testament now as presenting inaccurate history. The focus of creation and the life of Christ was replaced with a new modern nomenclature and divine providence, God working in human lives ignored. Bruce Shelly also notices this trend in contemporary thought. “Most modern students of history, driven by ‘scientific’ considerations, have rejected the Christian belief in fulfilment (eschatology) and the Christian appraisal of human nature as so much theological smoke which blurs the vision of a careful observer of human events.”⁶

Ignoring the teachings of Scripture and dismissal of anything that speaks of God and His working in our universe is a challenge to Christians in this late modern era. This challenge presented to the Christian is perceived by Albert Mohler when he evaluates the scene today. “The task of apologetics is complicated by the postmodern condition. How do you defend the faith to persons unwilling to make any judgment concerning truth?”⁷ Timothy Keller explains why this blurring of the truth in the historical record and God’s part in it by the modern era’s

⁵ Glen W. Olsen, “Toward a Post Modern Christian Historical Hermeneutic,” *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 17:2 (Spring 2014): 77) 77.

⁶ Bruce Shelly, “The Meaning of History: Posing the Problem,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (07.4 (Fall 1964): 101-110), 103.

⁷ Albert R. Mohler, Jr., “You are Bringing Strange Things To Our Ears: Christian Apologetics For a Post Modern Age,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, (05:1 (Spring 2001), 18-26), 19.

worldview. “Late modernity picked up on the idea of historical progress (hence the term ‘progressive’) but detached it from any idea of divine control. Now history is seen as automatically making progress in every stage.”⁸

In explaining the progression of the changes, Chatraw and Allen show in the premodern era, people believed in God, for the most part. They saw purpose in the universe and tradition, and they respected religious institutions. There was a close-knit society, and faith was practiced for the community’s good.⁹ The belief that only the self-evident things are reality began in the modern period. Charles Taylor sees this applying to history. He states that “until the end of the eighteenth century there was sufficient intellectual homogeneity for men to share certain assumptions. In varying degrees man accepted the Christian interpretation of history.”¹⁰ There began a movement that would continue to today, in which there is no universal truth that one could depend upon is believed. In the mind of significant thinkers, this concept was imagined of the period. “Humankind, the modern asserted, had come to age, and such authority figures as the church, tradition and the scriptures were no longer needed to guide them. People were now obligated to substantiate the beliefs they held by reason alone.”¹¹

⁸ Timothy Keller. *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2015). 130

⁹ Joshua D. Chatraw and Mark D. Allen. *Apologetics at the Cross: An Introduction For Christian Witness*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018.), 202.

¹⁰ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991)84-5.

¹¹ Chatraw and Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross*, 203.

All this thinking also applies to how history is viewed, as David Dilling explains. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the idea of God's providence in humanity's working was replaced by the idea of progress that man was the author of. He goes on to say that this idea of progress "came to be understood as a strictly determinate operation and as such susceptible to rigorous scientific investigation after the model of the physical sciences."¹²

Nash evaluating this change in the late modern man's thinking explains that the theory of progress that focuses on man's enlightenment was flawed. "The theory of progress that developed in the thinking of eighteenth-century proponents of the Enlightenment amounted to a thorough secularization of the Christian pattern of history. Any possibility of God's intervention in the ways of the world disappeared."¹³

Veith sees the late modern view of history as lacking any objectivity. "They no longer see it as a record of objective facts, but as a series of metaphors which cannot be detached from the institutionally produced languages which we bring to bear on it."¹⁴ The scholar is pointing that since there is no objective truth, history is written according to the group's needs, not an objective study of the facts of the past. So, we have Marxist history, feminist history, displaced person history, which is written to propagandize the perceived needs of the different groups involved.

The idea that all things modern are better and a valid reason for taking God out of the equation is not based upon correct reasoning and the proper understanding of scripture.

¹²David R. Dilling, "The Emergence of the Idea of Scientific Historiography," *Grace Journal*, (09.2 Spring 1968), 24.

¹³ Ronald H. Nash *The Meaning of History*. (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 78.

¹⁴ Gene Edward Veith Jr., *Post Modern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1994), 50.

However, our friends, neighbors, co-workers, and church members are influenced by this worldview. How this applies to the church is to be addressed in the study.

Problem Presented

The problem is that the local congregation members have lost confidence in the Scripture's historical accuracy and do not know how to answer the critics concerning this issue competently. The ancient doctrines of the Christian faith are under attack by numerous groups in the postmodern world. The members incorrectly taught that the Bible contains historical inaccuracies is a challenge to overcome. The church needs to become better equipped to answer these attacks against the faith.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the DMin Thesis project teaches the congregation how to defend the Faith against skeptical teaching concerning the Scriptures' historicity. It will proceed with a series of questions that will measure how much these false beliefs have permeated the church's minds. Then research will be done to defend the Bible against its critics and allow the preacher to be confident in supporting the faith in this area.

Basic Assumptions

The researcher is a gospel minister and historian. He is the Minister of the church, and he believes in the inspiration and authority of the scriptures. The church, the body of Christ, is called for in Matthew 28:18-20. To grow, the congregation must have confidence in the word of God. It must also be able to answer the skeptics who deny the truth of the gospel. Archaeology and historical study are a tool that can be used to defend the Christian faith. Gary L. McIntosh expresses a general assumption that is believed by the author. He says the research into subjects

of science and history is God's truth also. This is included in the category of General Revelation. This truth, such as discovered in archaeology, must always be judged under the objective teachings contained in God's Word.¹⁵

In his excellent study entitled, *Can We Believe the Bible*, noted scholar, Craig Blomberg defines these issues. This is what the author believes concerning these issues. Speaking of inspiration, he begins by explaining that the deductive approach to inspiration begins with the conviction that God cannot err, and that God's word is accurate. Also, one's belief in Jesus as divine comes into question in this discussion. Jesus believed in the reliable, authoritative God-given scripture and the Holy Spirit's continued role in leading the followers of Jesus to write the rest of the Bible. Thus, he concludes by noting, "if one professes to follow Jesus as one's divine master, then, one will acknowledge the scriptures as reliable."¹⁶

This confidence in the belief that the Bible is the inspired word of God is the author's assumption in doing this study. The challenges of our postmodern age and the lack of confidence in the Biblical stories' historicity are the studies rational. The lack of confidence is what we are accessing in a group of church-going people, and if modern society has influenced their thinking, it needs to be addressed in the local church setting.

Definitions

Biblical Archaeology: The study of archaeology which is involved in the lands of the Bible. It is a branch of history in which human artifacts excavated are studied. It is to illuminate and

¹⁵ Gary L. McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work With God to Build a Faithful Church*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 40.

¹⁶ Craig L. Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible: An Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary Questions*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014), 121-22.

illustrate the Scripture. It is many times used to answer the skeptics concerning the Biblical narrative using correct reasoning. In using archaeology, there are important considerations of how it can be interpreted. One of the crucial uses of archaeology is in understanding the historical backgrounds of the text being studied. Archaeology offers the best way of dealing objectively with such problems.¹⁷ Eric Meyers sees the validity of the study of Bible archaeology for the Christian scholar. “Similarly, it is simply foolish for the modern biblical scholar to ignore the results of pertinent archaeological research. Examining the history of any human community in light of archaeological evidence provides historians with many more questions and possibilities than they would have were they to approach the study from the perspective of literacy history alone.”¹⁸

In defining the meaning of Biblical archaeology, H. Darrell Lance explains it as follows. “Biblical archaeology is that subspecialty of biblical studies which seeks to bring to bear on the interpretation of the Bible all the information gained through archaeological research and discovery.”¹⁹

Inerrancy of the Bible: The belief or doctrine that the Bible is valid in all of its teaching. Inerrancy teaches that the Bible, which includes a detailed treatment of scientific and historical details, is entirely true and accurate.²⁰

¹⁷ James K. Hoffmeier, *The Archaeology of the Bible*, (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2008), 31,

¹⁸ Eric M. Meyers, “The Bible and Archaeology,” *Biblical Archaeologist* vol 47 no.1 March 1984), 39-40.

¹⁹H. Darrell Lance, “American Biblical Archaeology in Perspective,” *Biblical Archaeologist* Vol 45 No.2 Spring 1982), 100.

²⁰ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 222.

The inspiration of the Bible: The Bible is the Word of God. It is inerrant in its autographs. In matters of history, it is true and accurate. (II Timothy 3:16) As explained by Millard J. Erickson, “inspiration of the Scripture is the belief that through the work of the Holy Spirit the writers of the Bible were supernaturally led to write an accurate narrative which thus is the actual Word of God.”²¹

Minimalist: those who view the finds of archaeology as showing the Bible as fiction. They view the historical narrative in Scripture as contradicting the archaeological data.²²

Maximalist: believe that the archaeological data should speak for itself before combining it with literary data, rather from the Bible or any other document.²³ Maximalists believe that in using the Bible, the literary data and the archaeological data a more complete record of ancient history are achieved.

Limitations

This thesis’ focus will be the local congregation, the Horton Chapel church in Belton, Kentucky. The study will be limited to twenty-five members, believers of the congregation. This will include the leaders and those who make a difference in the life of the church. These participants are highly involved not only in the church but in the community. They will be chosen for the survey information that can make a difference in the church's faith development and spiritual growth. The limitation imposed is because these individuals are highly interested in

²¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 199.

²² Randall Price. *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 20.

²³ Price, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology*, 21.

the study. They are a small enough group known to the researcher, which can form a study group to research the problem presented.

The selected members will receive a series of questions. The survey participants will consist of two of our elders, four deacons and their wives, three college students, and five active members. The total number of participants will be around twenty-five. The rationale for this is that these are the leaders and future leaders of the congregation.

Delimitations

The delimitations will be the group will consist of only a small part of the congregation and a small group of students that the researcher knows. These are the leaders of the church and future leaders who can make a difference in the church's growth. The second delimitation will be that the study will only include the survey questions to address the project. Knowing these are faithful members will make the study one they possibly would already agree with. One purpose of the project though, is to provide a study that will make them less vulnerable to challenges to Christianity and more confident witnesses to the gospel.

A delimitation will be that the project will only look at the lack of confidence in the Scriptures' historical accuracy. The study will include the resurrection of Jesus. It will not have a discussion of the alleged mistakes in the Bible and other apologetic challenges. These are issues that will be explored at a later time in our church.

Thesis Statement

Suppose information concerning Bible history using biblical archaeology is presented to the congregation. In that case, they will have a stronger grasp of biblical accuracy and will be able to articulate this as they defend the Christian faith. The main research question is whether the study of history and Biblical archaeology help answer objections to the faith? Can knowledge of the teaching of the Bible be better understood if current historical and archaeological research presented to the participants help with their faith?

Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

This literature review looks at the problem of Christians in the congregation that need greater confidence in the historicity of the Bible stories. These Christians do not feel comfortable in defending the Scriptures against biblical skeptics. The purpose of the literature review is to review scholars' writings and see how they have addressed the topic of Biblical Archaeology as it applies to Bible inspiration.

Literature Review

The Problem Addressed

James Hoffmeier speaks of addressing the question of whether the Bible is history or myth.²⁴ There is confusion on that even among the believers. The media has been a part of creating this false impression concerning the historicity of the Bible. Many times, the specials on TV have atheistic and agnostic producers who are creating the shows that attack the Bible stories.

During the last thirty years scholars have noticed that there has been a shift to skepticism concerning the Bible historically. Hoffmeier states, "historical minimalism is known for treating the Bible's narratives with suspicion and viewing the contents as ideologically and theologically

²⁴ James K. Hoffmeier, *The Archaeology of the Bible* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2008), 11.

shaped to the point that the stories contain little or no historical information."²⁵ Other scholars see this and report that some go so far as saying that Moses, David, and the patriarchs did not exist. They report that those were just stories made in the Israelites' minds that are presented to give a history to Israel.²⁶ From an apologetic perspective, Holden and Geisler see this skepticism of the Biblical narrative as a problem that affects the church's belief, especially among the younger generation. The Bible's reliability, which includes the persons and events chronicled here, is believed now to be antibiblical. Those who feel the stories are not historical lead to a worldview characterized by unbelief and skepticism.²⁷ Walter Kaiser speaks of this generational divide when he sees the modern and then the postmodern person asking the question of are the claims, events, persons, and teachings of the Old Testament reliable?"²⁸ Apologist Douglas Groothuis explains the changes that have led to this skeptical approach to Biblical history. In the 1970s, the stories of the patriarchs were considered as untrue. Then in the 1980s and 90s, the rest of the Old Testament was supposed to be not reliable by many mainstream scholars.

Randall Price explains this crisis of belief, which affect the young people in the church as he compares Bible archaeology to the skeptic's beliefs. "The School of New Archaeology rooted in cultural anthropology and renouncing the historical orientation of traditional archaeology, views biblical studies as the albatross of an older religiously oriented and less scientific generation."²⁹

²⁵ Hoffmeier, *The Archaeology of the Bible*, 22.

²⁶David E. Graves, *Biblical Archaeology: An Introduction with Recent Discoveries that Support the Reliability of Bible*, (Toronto: Electronic Media, 2017), 61.

²⁷Joseph M. Holden and Norman Geisler, *The Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*, (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 2013), 13.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out: What Archaeology Reveals About the Truth of the Bible*, (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1977), introduction.

Noted Israeli archaeologist, Amihai Mazar, speaks of what he calls earlier and later, modern archaeology. The early archaeologists desired to understand the Bible. This is the reason for excavating in the lands of the Bible. They would use the things that they found in excavations to illustrate the Biblical story. Siegfried Horn speaks of this phenomenon when he sees how early archaeologist to the Biblical lands felt like they had their faith strengthened by the finds uncovered.³⁰ But as explored, that has changed in the current era and the church is called upon to face this crisis.

Different Views of the Maximalist and Minimalist

The researcher's literature review has seen where the belief concerning the accuracy and belief of the Bible's history falls into two major viewpoints or worldviews. Wiseman and Yamauchi speak of how archaeological excavation provides essential data for the biblical world's ancient history.³¹ Merrill Tenney emphasizes that the Bible is connected with history and interprets the historical events found in Scripture.³²

As surveyed, the literature review shows the history of the rise of skepticism pertaining to the truth and historical accuracy of the people, events, and times the Bible speaks of. The terms used to describe the opposing beliefs are the Minimalists, who do not see an accurate historical presentation in the Scriptures. The second term is the Maximalists, those who do have confidence in the historicity of the Bible. Albert Mohler speaks of the historical change in worldview illustrated in these two belief systems. He says that as the modern era shifted to the

³⁰ Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, (New York: Doubleday, 1985), xv.

³¹ Donald J. Wiseman and Edwin Yamauchi, *Archaeology and the Bible*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 4

³² Merrill C. Tenny, "The Bible and History," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* JETS 14:2 (Spring 1971) 75-80), 76.

postmodern, and the minimalist, "reject the very possibility of truth." He further explains that they believe that no claim for an event being true can be absolute, universal, or exclusive.³³

Gary Gromacki presents the minimalist beliefs and states that there is no archaeological evidence for an Exodus or a Conquest. Their position says that there was no literal belief in Abraham, Moses, or David. But when contrasted with the biblical archaeologist's belief, the maximalist, they will state that any absence of evidence about a biblical event does not logically conclude that it did not happen. The biblical archaeologist feels that they have confirmed the biblical text by their discoveries. A biblical archaeologist starts with the belief that the Bible is inspired, and thus, it follows that the Bible is historically accurate as they explore the finds.³⁴

Walton and Hill asked the critical question of how hard are you willing to reconcile data with the Bible? Those who do not consider the Bible as reliable are not concerned when there appear to be contradictions. "In contrast, those who consider the Bible to be reliable will seek out solutions (hopefully plausible ones) for whatever difficulties might arise."³⁵ G. Ernest Wright reminds us in viewing the Biblical events that the archaeological data is mute. "Fragmentary ruins, preserving only tiny fraction of the full picture of ancient life, cannot speak without someone asking questions of them."³⁶ He explains that archaeology can establish a physical time and place

³³Albert Mohler Jr, "You are Bringing Strange Things to Our Ears: Christian Apologetics For a Postmodern Age," *Southern Baptist Theological Journal* 05:1 (Spring 2001) 18-26), 20.

³⁴Gary R. Gromacki, "The Battle for Old Testament History and Archaeology," *Journal of Ministry and Theology*, 13:2 (Fall 2009) 24-54), 29, 54.

³⁵John H. Walton and Andrew E. Hill, *Old Testament Today: A Journey from Original Meaning To Contemporary Significance*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004) 199.

³⁶G. Earnest Wright, "What Archaeology Can and Cannot Do?" *Biblical Archaeologist* (Vol. XXXIV September 1971 No. 3&0-76), 73.

for the writers of the Bible and the people mentioned. This presents a positive view of the evidence of the Biblical story.

Reason for the Difference: Worldviews

The skeptical view of the historicity of the Biblical story is a part of the postmodern worldview. This postmodern culture causes less confidence in the teachings and stories of the Bible.³⁷ Garnett Reed also points out that the minimalist view comes from a postmodern theory of history. "Their ideology, in turn, rests on a philosophical hermeneutic inclined toward discounting the Bible as a reliable source in matters historical."³⁸ Norman Geisler reminds us that the most essential thing in understanding the difference in worldviews is the "interpreters' presuppositions and worldview."³⁹ For many interpretations will be against the Christian belief. In looking at this change in worldviews one sees how earlier people could have confidence in the Bible's historicity. In this modern era many do not believe in the truthfulness of parts of the Bible story. Walton and Hill explain until the Enlightenment ones, worldview was largely supernaturalistic. With the Enlightenment and the philosophies of Machiavelli, Descartes, Spinoza, Hume, Voltaire, and Hegel, a significant shift occurred. In the skepticism of God's role in history a modern historian who is influenced by this worldview is going to look at Biblical historiography as not reliable and is not worthwhile.

But, in contrast to the worldview of Israel, the direct activity of God is the main part of the story. They saw God's occurrences in both the supernatural and natural occurrences.

³⁷Todd S. Beall, "Evangelicalism, Inerrancy, and Current OT Scholarship," *Bible and Spade* 28:1 (Winter 2015) 18-24), 23.

³⁸Garnett H. Reid, "Minimalism and Biblical History," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155:620 (Oct 1998) 394-410), 395.

³⁹ Norman Geisler, *When Skeptics Ask*, (USA: Victor Books, 1990), 179.

Everything was God's plan, and he was the driving force of history. They conclude by saying, "that is, God took it upon himself not only to act but also to provide an interpretation of his acts, communicating why they were both done and what purposes they served."⁴⁰

Kaiser in speaking of the change in worldview about history notes that, "used to presume that history would rest primarily on textual accounts from the past, supplemented by contemporary inscriptions and artifacts from archaeology."⁴¹ He reviews two modern fallacies that historians fall into, which leads them to discount the biblical story. The first is that history cannot include the unique, the miraculous, and the intervention of the divine. This will discount any intervention of God in the story. It is an arbitrary definition of history that is decided by modern man.⁴²

The second fallacy is the postmodern belief that history cannot include anything that does not have external documentation. "Often the absence of evidence, such as the uncertainty of archaeological periods on some tells, may not be a lack of evidence at all. It may indicate the randomness of knowledge of the past, or a telltale sign that methodologies for recovering the past are still in need of development."⁴³

Example of an Intervention: United Monarchy

The literature of evidence for the United Monarchy of David and Solomon is extensive. New discoveries are being presented regularly. Tomoo Ishida in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon* has various and detailed discussions of the issues involved. K.A. Kitchen in his

⁴⁰ John H. Walton and Andrew E. Hill, *Old Testament Today: A Journey From Original Meaning to Contemporary Significance*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 174-8.

⁴¹ Walter C. Kaiser Jr. *A History of Israel: From the Bronze Age through the Jewish Wars*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998) 2.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 6.

magisterial work on *The Reliability of the Old Testament*, has done scholars a service in discussing the problems regarding the historicity of the Old Testament. The minimalist view of the United Monarchy is expressed in the article in the *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* by Niels Peter Lemche and Thomas L. Thompson.

A useful study of the Old Testament's historicity is Iain V. Provan, Philips Long and Tremper Longman III in their *A Biblical History of Israel*. Judy Siegel-Itzovich wrote an insightful article in *Artfax* entitled "Tel Rehov Excavation Support Biblical Account." Bryant Wood writing in *Bible and Spade* shows further evidence for the United Monarchy's historicity in his "House of David Again! Another Extra Biblical Reference to the Dynasty of the Great King of Israel". One of the most exciting finds concerning this period is the reporting that was done by Eilat Mazar in *Biblical Archaeology Review* entitled "Did I find King David's Palace." Dr. Dale Manor speaks of the evidence for the United Monarchy in his article on Beth-Shemesh in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Archaeology*.

Example of an Intervention: Resurrection:

Paul Barnett, in his work entitled *Is The New Testament Reliable* addresses the issues of the historical accuracy and how evidence is evaluated from this period. The classic study by F.F. Bruce is, *The New Testament Documents Are They Reliable?* It further addresses the issues with a study of Bible inspiration highlighted. Craig Blomberg's work *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* addresses the historicity of the Bible story well.

Gary Habermas, in his book the *Historical Jesus and the Risen Christ and Future Hope* does a magisterial job in discussing the issues involved. Paul Maier, as an ancient historian, shows how

the time of the life of Christ follows all the evidence of historical accuracy, and G.R. Osborne in his dictionary article on the Resurrection, addresses all the current nuances of the study.

Belief in Biblical Inspiration

The literature review pointed out the importance of understanding the different perspectives of those who see in Scripture the hand of God and view the Bible as trustworthy in its historical descriptions. Those who have no confidence in the historical evidence will have a different conclusion concerning Scripture's trustfulness. As expressed by the apologist Josh and Sean McDowell this is an essential component of the research. "Therefore, from an evidential apologetic angle, this question insists upon careful attention to the preconceptions and methods that enter into research: a defense of biblical credibility in the historical arena must offer evidences that a reasonable mind would accept as a plausible demonstration of the facts in the case."⁴⁴

As one explores the literature review, the summary evangelical scholars' work concerning biblical inspiration is presented. "Evangelical scholars have demonstrated how the vast majority of all the supposed contradictions or errors have been dealt with in a reasonable compelling fashion. Especially if one grants the biblical authors at least as much benefit of the doubt as classical historians have typically granted other documents of the ancient Near East and the ancient Mediterranean worlds."⁴⁵ Leon Morris, in his work on Biblical Inspiration, has a guideline for the believer. "We may not be able to explain just how the teachings of the Bible is

⁴⁴ Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict: Life Changing Truth for a Skeptical World*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 416-17.

⁴⁵ Craig I. Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible: An Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary Questions*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014), 124.

to be related to the latest findings of science. But that does not mean that we surrender the teachings of the Bible. They have proved themselves over and over in the areas we can understand, and we dare not abandon them in the places where we find difficulty.”⁴⁶

Summary of the Two Major Beliefs

The literature review has confirmed that there are two central beliefs concerning the truth of Scripture as pertaining to its historical accuracy. In the inspiration of Scripture, believers see the archaeological evidence pointing to its truth in matters of history. Skeptics, as seen in the literature review, are following the postmodern view of history, which teaches the Bible does not present an accurate portrait of the events of the past. This review raises questions that need answering for the Christian believer. This would constitute a gap in the literature. First, why did this radical change in worldview concerning the validity of history come about? Second, how can this change be addressed as a danger to the faith and then create a program to build the believers’ confidence in the church? Third, how can the current climate toward skepticism be addressed in the church?

Theological Foundations

The Scriptures teach that they come from God. God led men to write the words in the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21) Thus, Christians believe that the scriptures when speaking about history are true, for all scripture is inspired. The Christian must be trained to understand the issues involved in understanding Bible inspiration.

⁴⁶ Leon Morris, *I Believe in Revelation*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 138.

Earlier in history, from the Christian period to the late modern times, the affairs of history were understood to be under the control of God. This changed from the classical period, where history was considered cyclical with no direction or purpose. Then the view of history changed, the Christians viewed history as moving toward a destination, toward fulfillment headed towards judgement and ‘the new heavens and the new earth.’ (Revelation 21:1, 4) The Christian view of history, was that it was making progress, it was under the control of God; it had a purpose. But, in the late modern age this idea of history making progress was continued with one big difference: the hands of God no longer guided it.

For centuries, the integrity and accuracy of the Scriptures were respected and honored by western civilization. There was a worldview of understanding that the Bible was from God and taken at face value. But something happened that caused a shift in the thinking of western civilization. Christianity, which came from God just as the Hebrew religion, saw history as great events performed by God in time. Its structure was explicitly theological.”⁴⁷

The author sees in Olsen’s explanation that today the human viewpoint is becoming paramount in evaluating our world. Thus, the worldview changed from history coming from God to leaving God out of the story as we come into the late modern era. Before, God is viewed as Creator, and He is in control of history; but, in the modern mind, this is not the case anymore. Bruce Shelly also notices this trend in contemporary thought. “Most modern students of history, driven by ‘scientific’ considerations, have rejected the Christian belief in fulfillment

⁴⁷ Glen W. Olsen, “Toward a Post Modern Christian Historical Hermeneutic,” *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 17:2 (Spring 2014): 77) 77.

(eschatology) and the Christian appraisal of human nature as so much theological smoke which blurs the vision of a careful observer of human events.”⁴⁸

Mohler challenges the Christian scholar by expressing the challenge that is before us. “Externally, the Gospel must be defended against secular atheism, postmodern relativism, naturalistic scientism, materialism, and current syncretism’s. The gospel must be proclaimed in the face of rival systems of belief and alternative worldviews new and old.”⁴⁹

As the archaeologist Price notes, today’s generation has not inherited a worldview that the early modern and Christian world of western civilization believed in. This post-modern generation believes in an evolutionary process as far as history is concerned. This is completely at odds with the world view of the Judeo-Christian Bible. The ancients believed in a God that had control over human history. The evolutionary world view disagrees with this.⁵⁰

The thesis’ theological focus is that archaeology is an indispensable study for the Christian historian for as one unearths data it does support the historical reliability of the Bible. This will show that the current post-modern worldview of the skeptical mind of some is incorrect.⁵¹ Kaiser sees the issue of the historicity and accuracy of the Bible as a theological one. The problem is rather, or not, one sees God as the author of the Holy Scriptures. He sees that archaeology does

⁴⁸ Bruce Shelly, “The Meaning of History: Posing the Problem,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (07.4 (Fall 1964): 101-110), 103.

⁴⁹ Albert Mohler, “*You are Bringing Strange Things*,” 21.

⁵⁰ Randall Price, *The Stones Cry Out*, 337.

⁵¹ Joseph M. Holden, *The Popular Handbook of Archaeology*, 201.

not 'prove" the Bible, but it illuminates the Biblical story. Thus, archaeology builds confidence in placing the events in history. ⁵²

So, if we will to be disciples of Jesus in our local congregation, what are we seeing when people are growing up in these spiritual influences? The majority of church growth and spiritual formation writings mention the priority of the Word as a major factor of spiritual growth. Paul told the young disciple Timothy that “he should continue in what you have learned and firmly believed knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

In studying church growth, McIntosh has found that if a church has a low view of the authority of scripture the less likely it will be experiencing growth. “Biblical church growth begins with the right premise—the Word of God. Simply stated, life growing churches have a strong commitment to the authority of God’s Word.”⁵³ Thus, in evaluating a church’s potential for growth the viewpoint of the scriptures’ authority is critical.

In research of the factors attracting the unchurched to become disciples of Jesus, Thom Rainer notes the importance of the Bible is stressed in their responses. “Now we are hearing from the formerly unchurched that preaching that truly teaches the Bible in its original context is a major factor in reaching the unchurched.”⁵⁴ This is telling us that teaching and preaching of

⁵² Kaiser, *Old Testament Documents*, 98.

⁵³ McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 37.

⁵⁴ Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights From the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 58.

the Scriptures will lead to numerical and individual growth. In looking at the early church Green makes this point. “The word is a major theme in the book of Acts. It occurs more than thirty times, and it means God’s self-disclosure through the ancient Scriptures of Israel and the recent fulfilment in Jesus Christ. This is the message to which they were committed. This is the message through which the church grows.”⁵⁵ This is seen at the very beginning of the church. Peter showed his audience that God had shown that Jesus is the means of his plan to redeem man by Jesus’ miracles. Peter showed Jesus as the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy and he was shown to be the Son of God by God raising him from the dead after his death on the cross. So, Peter ends his presentation of the gospel with the statement, “Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” (Acts 2:36) Then we see the church grew. “So those who received the Word were baptized and there was added that day about three thousand souls” (2:41) Later, we read, “And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that Jesus is Christ.”(Acts 5:42)

Our congregations and individual people must be well versed in the knowledge and respect for the Scriptures. Along with prayer and the Holy Spirit guidance, what is stressed in the inspired History the priority the early Christians gave to teaching the Word. Green tells us “There is no mistaking the reverence they gave these oracles of God, the direction they derived

⁵⁴ Thom S. Rainer, *Surprising Insights From the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 58.

⁵⁵ Green, *Thirty Years that Changed the World*, 273.

from them and the confidence they placed in them. We have seen in numerous research that there is a tremendous hunger for the knowledge of God through the story of Jesus contained therein.”⁵⁶

Rainer gives churches that wish to facilitate growth this challenge, “The formally unchurched told us that they were attracted to strong biblical teaching and to understand Christian doctrine. Pastors who understand this and who communicate doctrine clearly are among the leaders whose churches are reaching the unchurched.”⁵⁷

The leaders, preachers, and all members of the body of Christ all must devote themselves to learning and understanding the Sacred Word of God. As Peter puts it at the end of his inspired writing, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 3:18.) Again, as challenged by the scriptures we receive the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Then we see the result of this searching of the Scriptures? “Many of them therefore believed.” (Acts 17:11-12) When Philip the evangelist met the Ethiopian, studying the Old Testament scriptures, we find the model of how we are to evaluate our spiritual growth.

What did Philip as a disciple of Christ do? The Scripture says, “Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.” (Acts 8:35) This is one of the many examples we have of the necessity of knowing and sharing the Word of God. The apostle Paul asked this question. “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how shall they hear without someone preaching?” (Romans 10:14-15) The resulting growth in

⁵⁶ Ibid., 273.

⁵⁷ Rainer, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*, 58-9.

churches of the ministry of the Word is of supreme importance in our evaluating the spiritual factors of church growth. “When you study it, you know you are built up. When you expound it, you know you are feeding those who hear. God’s Word is food, it is light, it is a sword, it is a fire. It is the supreme instrument of Christian growth. That is why the disciples made it such a priority.”⁵⁸ When we give ourselves to the reading, study, meditation and contemplation of the Scriptures we are showing our commitment to both growth in numbers and growth in our own personal spiritual development.

The teaching and preaching of the Scriptures are important in the local church body. The study and reading and meditating of the Word are important to the body individually in our personal spiritual disciplines. The high view of Scripture, and the strong committed belief in the Bible’s inspiration are another factor in spiritual growth. This importance is stressed by Michael Green. “We are not at liberty to change ‘the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints’ (Jude 3). We must interpret it, relate it to the contemporary culture, apply it, of course; but we have no right to change its content.”⁵⁹

The committed Christian would have such a respect for the word of God that he would never want to try to ‘grow a church’ without a devout passion for knowing the will of God. The Christian leader as he preaches and teaches the Scriptures, has this major thesis at the back of his mind as he makes the priority of the Word a part of the work of the church. God alone is the source of all knowledge and truth. And God has chosen to reveal Himself to us in two ways. The general revelation of knowledge such as the study of science and history. Then God has revealed

⁵⁸ Green, *Thirty Years*, 274.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 275.

Himself in a special revelation, the Bible.⁶⁰ The revelation of God in Christ, the revelation of God in the Bible is how the Creator instructs us. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”(John 1:14) “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets; but, in these last days, he has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed Heir of all things, through whom He created the world.” (Hebrews 1:1-2)

Another factor in evaluating and nourishing the growth of the church is after learning and being fiercely committed to following the dictates and message of the scripture, we see then the disciples committed to building up and edifying the body, the church. Paul is our example showing the necessity of the new disciples to be built up in the faith. Speaking to the church at Ephesus he tells of special leaders God has called to do this nourishing. “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:11-13)

Using an example of Paul’s discipling technique, his approach to the Great Commission, and his emphasis on spiritual growth, David Detwiler explains, “Paul’s missionary activity in Acts 14:21-23 makes a strong case for fulling the Great Commission not only by preaching the good news (although this is the necessary first step), but also by nourishing new disciples and organizing them into churches that can eventually provide for their own growth in

⁶⁰ McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 38.

discipleship.”⁶¹ That passage speaks of Paul returning to the churches he has established and strengthening them to continue in the faith. “When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith...” (Acts 14:21-22)

Thus, Paul in the classic verse of Bible inspiration, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, points out the importance of the Scriptures in a Christians life. Timothy learning from his teachers (v. 14) is paralleled with knowing the Holy Scriptures. (v. 15) Timothy’s confidence in what his teachers taught (v. 14) parallels with his confidence in what he learned from the Scriptures (v. 15). “Holy Scriptures” (v. 15) is paralleled with “all Scripture” (v. 16). The function of the Holy Scriptures, “to make you wise for salvation” (v. 15), is paralleled with the function of all Scripture, “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, training and equipping.” (v. 16) Paul’s expectation that Timothy would pass on to others what his teachers taught is parallels with the Scriptures being useful for teaching. (3:16–17 and 4:2)⁶²

As Ryan reminds one, “The doctrine of inspiration is not something theologians have forced on the Bible. Rather it is a teaching of the Bible itself, a conclusion derived from the data contained in it. And whatever one may think of the Bible, it, like any other witness, has the right to testify on its own behalf.”⁶³

⁶¹ David F. Detwiler, “Paul’s Approach to the Great Commission in Acts 14:21-23,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, (152:605 (Jan 1995): 33-41), 41.

⁶²Walton, J. H., & Sandy, D. B. (2013). *The Lost World of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture and Biblical Authority* (p. 268). Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press.

⁶³ C.C. Ryrie, C. C. *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press.1999), 76.

In discussing 2 Timothy 3:16, one notes “*All Scripture, the entire Bible, is inspired and profitable*. This is the extent of inspiration. The New Testament uses this word “Scripture” fifty-one times and always in reference to some part of the Bible. Sometimes it refers to the entire Old Testament (Luke 24:45; John 10:35); sometimes, to a particular Old Testament passage (Luke 4:21); sometimes, to a particular New Testament passage (1 Tim. 5:18); and sometimes to a larger portion of the New Testament (2 Peter 3:16, referring to Paul’s writings).⁶⁴ The believer’s challenge is to believe that the Bible is inspired in all of its parts and to study to show this is the case. Archaeology is an excellent tool to help accomplish this task.

Theoretical Foundations

The justification for this research is to see in the congregation to what degree the belief of the lack of trust in the historicity of the Bible permeated the minds of the members. The direct influence of the modern world view on the Inspiration of the Bible, and intervention presented to teach the church of the correct Biblical doctrine of inspiration with archaeology. God has declared his will through history. In his sermon in Acts 17 to the Athenian skeptics, the Apostle Paul speaks of God’s revelation in the world's history.⁶⁵

At the beginning of Luke's gospel, the disciple speaks of doing research, interviews, and study to accomplish his task of teaching Jesus' life. “It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you most excellent

⁶⁴ Ibid., 77.

⁶⁵ Gary L. McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 30

Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.”(Luke 1:3-

4) The research Luke does in the writing of his books, is using history in the way the Scripture dictates.

Some in the postmodern era believe any supernatural act mentioned simply did not happen. It is a legend with no factual basis. Others view the writings of the historical events in Scripture is a matter of faith not fact. This is not the Biblical idea of faith. Our faith is rooted in the historical events of the Bible. The presence of historical proofs gives confirmation of our belief. Luke is the model of this action. Luke stated that he wished to write an “orderly account” of the events recorded. He stressed that his research for these events was correct. Luke stated that was accurate what he was saying. As an eyewitness during some events and interviewing other eyewitnesses carefully, he proceeded. He based his work on careful observation.

All of this “indicates a concern to provide reliable history, confirming previous accounts and based on sound evidence.”⁶⁶ The New Testament scholar Darrell L. Bock says the historical-critical method is indispensable to any adequate and accurate understanding of the Bible but only when it is used with the openness and belief that there was supernatural causation in the historical process. This is the process of the Biblical authors being guided in their research and writing by God’s hand.⁶⁷

In his book on inspiration, Edward J. Young states that when the verses in the Bible are studied which has to do with inspiration, it teaches that the whole not just some parts are

⁶⁶ I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 32-41.

⁶⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 139.

inspired. John 5:46-47 states our Lord believed the Scriptures were trustworthy and authoritative. The challenge to the church is seen when he concludes, “only one doctrine of inspiration is taught in the Bible, namely, that of a plenary and verbal inspiration to which the modern reader is so hostile.”⁶⁸

This understanding of the gospel story is necessary to make and develop a disciple of Christ. The gospel is the story of God’s relationship with His people in a story of redemption. God chose Israel to bring salvation to the whole world. In Genesis 12, God promised Abraham that he would have a people, a land and through “His seed” all the nations of the earth would be blessed. The story or narrative tells of God’s dealing with His people Israel and leading them to bring the world Jesus. The covenants, the kings, the laws, and history all tell us the gospel how God was and is at work in humanity's salvation. The Israelites were led from oppression to freedom by the mighty hand of God. “These past experiences are powerful theological portals of Yahweh as their merciful and disciplining God. They also are designed to shape the community’s response to their God as they cling to His grace, seek Him by faith and turn to Him in penitential response.”⁶⁹ One cannot understand the gospel unless one looks at the Old Testament's narrative story and the New.

⁶⁷Edward J. Young, *Thy Word is Truth: Some Thoughts on the Biblical Doctrine of Inspiration*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

⁶⁸Mark J. Boda., *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 23.

⁶⁹Mark J. Boda., *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 49.

The character of God is also necessary to understanding the gospel. This is shown in the story and expressed in such passages as Exodus 34:6, Psalms 86:15, Joel 2:13 and Nehemiah 9:17. Here we find how God is “slow to anger”, “abundant in steadfast love and truth,” “compassionate and gracious.” This tell us that, “God is strong enough to save Israel in its moment of need, God is merciful enough to notice Israel in its moment of need. God is also jealous for His holiness and jealous in His relationship with His people; but, God’s mercy and faithfulness ensure that His people will experience grace when they fail.”⁷⁰ Without these concepts and beliefs we would not fully understand or be able to preach the good news to the world. In Leviticus 26:12 we find another facet of the gospel. “And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.” There is a relationship between God and His people. There were obligations between both parties and a realization of their mutual connectedness. The covenants between Abraham, at Sinai, between the kings and the coming new covenant of Jeremiah 31 all have these elements. As Boda expressed it, here we have reciprocity, identity and responsibility. This close and ongoing relationship with the Creator is an important part of understanding what the gospel is.⁷¹

In our continuing quest to define the gospel we now go to the New Testament. Bates explains that what the gospel meant for the early Christians is found in Paul's passages. These are the earliest writings of the New Testament and show how the first Christians viewed what the gospel is all about. Bates mentions Romans 1:1-5, Romans 1:16-17, and 1 Corinthians 15:1-5. He summarizes these passages by saying, “the gospel is the power-releasing story of Jesus’s life, death for sins, resurrection, and installation as King, but the story only makes sense in the wider

⁷⁰Mark J. Boda., *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 49.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 63.

framework of the stories of Israel and creation.”⁷² In Romans 1:1-5, Paul teaches that the Son was promised by the prophets in the “holy Scriptures” as well as a descendent of King David. He was declared to be the Son by the resurrection. Then in Romans 1:16-17, the gospel is the power of God to Jews and Gentiles. The new Covenant was now in effect which Jeremiah talked about in chapter 31. God’s righteousness is revealed and then Paul quotes an Old Testament call for faith in righteousness from Habakkuk 2:4. In I Corinthians 5:1-5, Paul reminds the Corinthians that the gospel that was preached unto them, which they received and were standing in which they were receiving as salvation was Jesus died, was buried and rose again. All of these facts are based on faith, a biblical faith based on evidence.

In defining the gospel, the facts are presented to cause us to have faith. Paul in I Corinthians 15 presents the eyewitness of Jesus’ resurrection including himself. He even reminds his readers over 500 have seen Jesus alive, many who are still alive. If one wanted proof, they could go to see the first eyewitness and find out the truth of the matter. “This is God’s pattern through history. He doesn’t ask his followers to believe without any evidence or despite the evidence. Instead, God gives people evidence and then asks them to trust Him in light of it. Faith is to be based on evidence; it is not something that is to develop without evidence.”⁷³

In helping us define the gospel as taught by the early church in Acts 3:15-26, Peter shows how all of God’s narrative story is presented in prophecy. “Notice the flow of the redemptive action of God through the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time (vs 21), beginning with Moses(vv. 22-23), then on to Samuel, his successors (v24), and to the present audience, who ‘are the sons of the prophets’ (v. 25) for whom God raised up ‘His servant’ Jesus to prompt

⁷² Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 30.

⁷³ Donald J. Johnson *How to Talk to a Skeptic*, (Bloomington, Minnesota: Bethany House Publications, 2013), 35.

repentance (vs 26).”⁷⁴ Thus if one does not teach the Old Testament they are not presenting the gospel. The story of God’s plan of redemption is throughout the whole of scripture. In Luke 24:27, Jesus summarized the importance of understanding the Old Testament when he told those two seekers these words. “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

When Jesus was speaking concerning Himself, He was announcing to the world that all of God’s promises and plans were coming to fruition in Himself. “He brought the good news that God’s promised rule of deliverance had arrived. To experience the kingdom, Jesus preached, is to experience God’s presence.”⁷⁵ This promised rule of Jesus as King over his kingdom is the good news we are to be teaching and proclaiming to a lost people today. It is an allegiance to our King, Jesus in our lives as we live in his kingdom. “We discover that saving allegiance includes three basic dimensions: mental affirmation that the gospel is true professed fealty to Jesus alone as the cosmic Lord, and enacted loyalty through obedience to Jesus as the king.”⁷⁶ In understanding what the gospel is, we are living a committed life to our Ruler and Lord, who died to save us. “All other major faiths have founders who are teachers that show the way to salvation. Only Jesus claimed actually to be the way of salvation himself.’”⁷⁷

McIntosh sees this as an important spiritual factor. “The birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, intercession, and ultimate return of Jesus Christ are all tied to the desire

⁷⁴ Boda, *The Heartbeat*, 108.

⁷⁵ Darrell L. Bock, *Recovering the Real Lost Gospel: Reclaiming the Gospel as Good News*, Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 1.

⁷⁶ Bates, *Salvation By Allegiance*, 92.

⁷⁷ Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, (New York: Penguin, 2008) 180.

of the Father to find the lost and bring them into reconciliation with himself.”⁷⁸ As we are challenged to rekindle the early church’s zeal and enthusiasm in emulating their motives and practicing their spiritual factors that shaped them in our local churches here in the twenty-first century we need to look at the teaching and example of the Word of God. Jones in his volume on church growth called for such a look back. “In the same way that contemporary painters look back to the old masters for inspiration, we need to cast our eyes back on the missiological principles of the early church. In one generation, the apostles turned the world upside down and had become a threat to the Roman empire. Within three hundred years they’d spread so rapidly, they made up ten percent of the population of the empire.”⁷⁹

⁷⁸ McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 69.

⁷⁹ Peyton Jones, *Reaching the Unreached: Becoming Raiders of the Lost Art*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 29.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The ministry problem is the lack of confidence the church members have in the Scriptures historical accuracy. An intervention is proposed to evaluate and answer this lack of confidence in the target group. A strong component of the project thesis will be to enable the participants to be asked questions, making them aware of the challenges presented.

Intervention Design

At a local church in Belton, Kentucky, the thesis project will be implemented. The participants in the study will be a cross-section of the educational, age, and occupations of the congregation. The participants will include a local school principal and teachers. There will be college students at the local university. Other participants include a business owner and a local law enforcement officer. The final participants will be a college instructor, an optometrist, a school secretary and a physician assistant, three pastors and retired teachers.

The purpose and objectives of the project's intervention align with the problem statement and the project thesis. There is a lack of confidence that some members have in the historicity of the Bible. This is a problem that the facts and training in Biblical Archaeology methodologies and apologetic studies can address.

Intervention Details

The Minister will begin with a series of questions on how one feels about certain issues pertaining to the Bible's stories. These questions will ask if there are times because of modern influences concerning the Bible and whether these stories are true. Then there will be questions that ask whether these stories are authentic and will influence one's faith, a member's relationship with the Lord. Then it will be asked what has influenced them to believe this way? The participants will be asked if they have ever faced others who do not believe the Bible is true concerning the stories. The question will then be presented if they feel confident to answer those who do not believe in the Biblical narrative? Another will inquire if anything they think will help them become more confident in answering these questions. The intervention would make a change in the problem. It will provide a teaching opportunity to help those who need help in answering the lack of confidence in the Word of God. Those who are included in the project will participate. We will need their approval as well as the approval of leaders of the church.

Personal preparation done through the literature review shows the lack of confidence even Christians have in the stories of the Bible. The intervention will include two sections of the thesis that will address the historicity of the United Monarchy and the proofs of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. After the thesis, the future task will be to create a series of lessons created to provide further confidence to these members of the church in the historicity of the scriptures. Having studied history and archaeology and participating in numerous excavations we will feel ready to teach these interventions.

The project will begin after IRB approval. The group members will be asked to participate, and I will explain the purpose and rationale of the project. The participants will be given a series

of 25 questions which will ascertain their beliefs and knowledge concerning the subject. The questions will be asked to be returned in two weeks and then the research will be used to create an intervention.

The relationship that the researcher has with the group participants is he is their Minister. As their Minister, we have worked at the congregation for five years and the researcher has known each of these participants as faithful active members of the congregation.

Questions for Permission to Do the Survey

Consent For Study

You are invited to be a part of the study that I am doing for my D. Min. in Theology and Apologetics.

You will receive a document with a series of questions concerning your views of the historicity of the Bible. Please answer the questions and send them back by E-Mail. This will enable me as a researcher to understand the beliefs of church members on Bible inspiration and the use of archaeology.

1. Please indicate if you will participate by circling your response. I “will/will not” participate.
2. After evaluating your answers, the survey’s will be destroyed.
3. Again, thank you for your participation

Garry L. Hill, Minister

Questions For Survey

1. Do you believe Genesis 1-11 is true, is it history or myth?
2. How do you define myth?
3. How does that influence your view of the inspiration of the Bible?
4. Do you believe in the historical accuracy of the Abrahamic story?
5. Do you believe in the historical accuracy of the Exodus event?
6. Do you believe the historical accuracy of the Conquest?

7. Do you believe in the historical accuracy of the existence of David and Solomon?
8. Do you believe in the historical accuracy of the story of Hezekiah and the Assyrian campaign?
9. Do you believe the historical events of Jesus life as narrated in the Gospels?
10. Do you believe in the historicity of the events as narrated in the book of Acts and the epistles of Paul?
11. What is your definition of Biblical inspiration?
12. Does your view of inspiration affect how your opinion the historicity of the Biblical events?
13. Can one believe the Biblical stories are incorrect and still believe in Biblical inspiration?
14. When you see or hear a biblical archaeologist viewing a certain set of ruins and sees the evidence contradicting the Bible, how would you respond?
15. What if a biblical archaeologist sees a certain set of ruins and one sees it agreeing with the Bible, does this influence your view of inspiration?
16. Why do you believe two different archaeologists would view the same finds completely different?
17. How would you feel this would affect your view of inspiration?
18. Does the lack of evidence for a certain biblical event prove that the event did not happen?
19. Does the fact that the Scriptures were written in a pre-scientific age mean we cannot expect accurate facts?
20. Do you feel that modern science and the Bible contradict?
21. Can't we view the Bible as an ancient book filled with historical inaccuracies and still have faith in God?

22. How do we deal with the passages that seem to have Jesus agreeing with the content of the Old Testament if we believe many of the events were inaccurate?
23. How do we deal with Paul and Peter speaking of such events as Adam and Eve and the Flood, if these things were inaccurate and pre-scientific?
24. How would one deal with the books, articles and TV documentaries that say “all or most” scholars feel that these events in the Bible were written late, many years after the events, and done so to give Israel a post-exilic history?
25. Do you feel that every biblical event must have evidence found by the archaeologist or historian for it to be true?
- Would you like further training in these issues?

Use of the Study Question

The announcement was made concerning volunteers in the local congregation to participate in the study. The ones who participated were of various ages, educational levels and occupations. A 62-year-old with a B.A. was one of the participants. A 22-year-old who is working in ministry responded. One college freshman responded, as well as a recent college graduate in the sciences. An M.A. Educator in the church responded along with his wife, also an educator. A 70-year-old college graduate turned in the survey along with a 35-year-old trade school graduate.

The survey was completed by a 60-year-old with a bachelor’s degree and an 81-year-old college graduate. The study was completed by a 66-year-old with a B.S. and a 72-year-old with high school education. A 66-year-old with an M.A. completed the study along with a 67-year-old

who finished the 12 grades. The implementation was done by a 32-year-old, a Ph. D. student and 46-year-old educator with a master's plus 30 post-graduate hours. A retired educator who is 72 years old with an M.S. participated in completed the survey and two 67 years olds, one with a master's and the other with a B.S degree.

The intervention's final participants include a 71-year-old retired nurse with a BSN and a 61-year-old with a master's degree. The survey's completion includes an 88-year-old with two years of college and a 47-year-old with a doctor's degree.

The intervention participants are all active members in the church. They are elders and deacons of the congregation. Some teach Sunday school, head up the benevolent program and are involved in local and foreign missions. They are also involved in the community as teachers and health care professionals. Some are successful businessmen, and most have sent their children to college or trade school. This is the current cross-section of the church in our rural area in Kentucky. Surveying their beliefs and confidence in the inspiration of the Bible is important as the church looks to the future. The results of their confidence and competence in knowing and teaching the future generation will be important to evaluate. This will help the researcher know what should be studied and researched in presenting a continuing program of equipping the church to stay on track in its biblical teaching.

The Researcher will then be able to explore one's confidence in the Scriptures and the Bible's inspiration. Making disciples of Christ is one of the essential ministries of the church. All Christians are called to be disciples. A disciple is a follower of Christ. Jesus, in giving the "Great Commission," tells those who are already disciples to; "go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching

them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19) So how does one know what a disciple of Jesus is? How does one become one? How can one be sure they are growing in discipleship in the Lord? Here are the biblical characteristics of a disciple of Jesus. Here is the evidence of being a dedicated, committed disciple of Jesus Christ.

(1) Know who the Savior is.

- a. To be a disciple of someone one must know who and why they are following him. In Jesus’ case He is the Word, (John 1:1-4) His Creator and Lord of all (Colossians 1:15-19) He is the head of His church (Matthew 16:18)
- b. To know Jesus, we must know he is mankind’s Savior and Redeemer. (Romans 3:23-26,)” In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.” (Ephesians 1:7)
- c. Our knowing who we are a disciple of motivates us to love, cherish and desire to walk with our Lord in a fervent and earnest daily walk with Him. “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death.” (Philippians 3:10)

(2) To Be Daily Growing in Knowledge and Action like Jesus

- a. The first call to Peter and Andrew in being a disciple of Jesus is found in Matthew 4:19. “And He said to them, follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.”
- b. The call and subsequent obedience, they left their nets and followed Him, is evidence of a disciple in action.
- c. In John 8:31-32 Jesus said, if you hold to My teachings, you are really My disciples.”

- d. A disciple is always learning more about Jesus and then willing to please Him in their actions.
- e. “So, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him” (2 Corinthians 5:9)
- f. “I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)
- g. These passages remind us that being a disciple is an “all the time” totally committed follower of Jesus.
- h. He truly becomes the reason for our existence, our purpose, our very being.
- i. (Ephesians 5:1-2) We are willing to do this for He loved us and gave Himself for us.
- j. We are so thankful to Jesus for dying on the cross to save us that He is everything.

(3) Being a Disciple means passing it on to others

- a. 2 Timothy 2:2 “and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”
- b. Why would not a committed, faithful, ever-growing in knowledge and likeness of and about Jesus’ disciple not be willing to “shout the good news” from the rooftops?
- c. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...” (Romans 1:16)
- d. “And they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.’ (Acts 2:42)

- e. Thus, to be a disciple is to be fellowshiping with the saints, learning and meditating on the Word and living and sharing the “good news” about our Lord and Master to the world.

Being a Disciple of Jesus is one of the world's greatest needs, in the church today.

Paul reminds us of its importance when he challenges us through the Scripture found in 2 Corinthians 13:5. “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourself. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you unless indeed you fail to meet the test. As challenged by Dallas Willard we need to be reminded of the importance of discipleship. “So the greatest issue facing the world today, with all its heartbreaking needs, is whether those who, by profession or culture, are identified as ‘Christians’ will become disciples-students, apprentices, practitioners-of Jesus Christ, steadily learning from him how to live the life of the Kingdom of the Heavens into every corner of human existence.”⁸⁰

⁸⁰Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teaching on Discipleship* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), xv.

Chapter 4

Results Results of the Survey

The first question of the survey was a question on the truth of Genesis 1:1-11? The results were all similar as to be expected in an evangelical church. One stated it was real history and myths were a fable. A more challenging answer was that it is history as Moses saw it through the eyes of his cultural paradigm. One answered that it was right, and a myth was something with no evidence of truth. They further went on to say there is enough evidence to prove Genesis to make one believe the rest of the Bible. One survey stated defined Genesis as history, and a myth is something that is make-believe. Another said myth is based on truth but includes some fantastical elements to embellish the story. One person noted that myth was simply a story passed down from generation to generation. One participant said a myth is probably a lie that doesn't sound real. The next viewpoint expressed said that Genesis 1-11 is history and a myth is not entirely accurate. Another participant said that a myth is a falsehood, an opinion, a story with or without a factual basis. The participant that said a myth is an untruth that someone has decided is true and then noted as all the others did that Genesis 1-11 is true history. A participant said Genesis 1-11 is true and a myth is an opinion not based upon fact. Another said myth is a story handed down that is probably not true. Another said it was an untrue story presented as truth. One more reasoned definition of the question said they believed Genesis 1-11 is a literal telling of historical fact. A myth is the story of a person or place that has no basis in reality and a lack of supporting evidence. A more interesting definition of a myth was the participant who defined it as a fiction story with gods and mythical creatures explaining supernatural events. One other participant said that a myth is a story that contains exaggerations or falsehoods. The participant that defined myth as a made-up story to help explain supernatural events. One recent college

graduate described a myth as a story or event that is widely known, but altogether untrue. They say there are pieces of the myth that don't withstand the scrutiny of modern scientific evidence and that they look forward that science will explain certain events and so far, has always.

Another participant defines myth as an untrue story of an event, person, being or thing. The thing that makes a myth is the lack of proof to defend such a story. A participant said that a myth is a fictional story used to explain or give meaning to the unknown. They further stated that they do not think Genesis 1-11 is a myth.

The various answers and viewpoints are the first point of a needed intervention in the church. It is encouraging to see that all, some even emphatically, said that Genesis 1-11 is history. Some said if this part of the Bible was a myth, it was not based on evidence or experimentation. The contrast between myth and history is a point to consider having lessons to clarify the difference between both further. As Kaiser points out, "we ought to expect that archaeology can help us by illuminating the author's meaning and by building confidence in that word as being a reliable and dependable word."⁸¹

The answers to the next set of questions are as would expect a Bible-believing church would respond. The historical accuracy of the Abraham story had all participants answer yes. They also answered the exodus event with a yes, along with the historicity of the conquest. Then they answered the question on the historical accuracy of David and Solomon with a yes.

Archaeological Intervention: Existence of David and Solomon

The question concerning the truth of the David and Solomon story was encouraging for this is a battleground in archaeological studies today. One of the researches and survey purposes was to see whether or not the church members are influenced by modern historical beliefs

⁸¹ Kaiser, *Old Testament Documents*, 108.

concerning the Biblical narrative. One of the most interesting aspects of the study of Bible archaeology is the changing worldview scene concerning the Biblical text's historical accuracy. A few years ago, believing Christians were richly rewarded with find after find that proclaimed that the Bible was right, and critics were wrong. But that has changed in the last few years with a group of scholars called the minimalist. The word means that they believe that there is very little in the Bible that is accurate concerning history. "One group of historians known as the "Biblical Minimalist" (also called the "European School," the "Copenhagen School" or even "Deconstructionists") hold that the Old Testament was written during the Persian period (fourth century BC) or even the Hellenistic period (third and second centuries BC) These scholars include Niels Peter Lemche, Thomas Thompson, John Van Seters and Philip R. Davies.⁸² As Christian apologist, what is our response to this group of skeptics? That is the focus of this intervention, especially concerning the skeptics view of the United Monarchy during King David's time.

William Dever, professor emeritus of Near Eastern Archaeology and anthropology at the University of Arizona summarizes the revisionist's beliefs well. "There is no history in the Hebrew Bible. It is all written too late to be reliable. It is all a myth. There was no real ancient or biblical Israel. There was no Exodus, no Sinai, no faith, no conquest of Canaan, no Israelite ethnicity."⁸³ Wallace in a recent article in the *Smithsonian* magazine defines these unbelievers as ones "who argue that the Old Testament is literary rather than historical-the work of ideologues

⁸² Gary A. Byers, "The United Monarchy under David and Solomon." *Associates for Biblical Research* (November 2004 Newsletter, <abr.christian.answers.net>) 1

⁸³ Michael McCormack, "Archaeologist Rebuffs Revisionist." *Artifax*. (Spring 2005)

who wrote it between the fifth and second centuries B.C. .-and that Moses, Joshua, David and Solomon never existed.”⁸⁴

The thrust of this intervention is the historical accuracy of King David. Are the minimalists right in saying that the Bible is incorrect in this story also? The history of this modern journey is fascinating indeed. There are some 75 chapters in the Bible that discuss Israel’s greatest king. Prior to 1970 most scholars were impressed in which the clear and frank style of David was presented. But then individual scholars started saying the writing was propaganda and attributed the narratives as imaginative storytelling.⁸⁵

Provan puts the skeptic’s position this way. “Did David exist? Was he historical? Not so long ago, increasing numbers of scholars, though far from a majority, were voicing the opinion that David did not and was not.”⁸⁶ This is explained as a growing belief when recently, Gary A. Byers has written. “Yet, in the mid-1990s, a significant academic debate developed over the historical accuracy of the Bible’s description of the United Monarchy under David and Solomon. They covered most of the tenth century BC (roughly from 1000 to 925 BC; known to archaeologists as Iron Age IIA, the topic was frequently discussed in scholarly journals and the popular press.”⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Wallace, Jennifer. “Shifting Ground in the Holy Land.” *Smithsonian Magazine* (<http://www.smithsonianmagazine.com/issues/2006/may/archaeology.htm>).

⁸⁵ Kaiser, *A History of Israel*, 227.

⁸⁶ Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, Tremper Longman III. *A Biblical History of Israel*. (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2003), 216.

⁸⁷Byers, Gary A. “The United Monarchy under David and Solomon.” *Associates for Biblical Research* (November 2004 Newsletter, <abr. christian answers.net>), 1.

Wilson, in expressing the current viewpoint from a historical perspective, tells us, “But in recent decades the most accepted view has been that the Bible is more myth than history, particularly its books recounting events that happened centuries earlier, like those relating to David.”⁸⁸

Both Lemche and Thompson, as two of the leading minimalists, state their position when they say, “A growing minority of Old Testament scholars today are of the opinion that the narratives about David in the Old Testament have little to do with history.”⁸⁹ Later they give their historical summary of the discussion. “Until very recently, however, biblical scholars have insisted that these stories were historical. Their very clarity and brilliance were claimed to be a hallmark of what scholars likened to think of as this very golden age’s genius for history writing. They say that has changed because of recent literary and critical biblical studies and to revisionist histories of Palestine. Their conclusion is “none of these studies leave much room for a historical David.”⁹⁰

Kaiser summarizes John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller to give some reasons they rejected King David's historical record. One of those reasons was the “Emphasis on the presence of God who knows all, judges all, and rewards all.” As Kaiser points out he has “critiqued the view that excludes any divine intervention as a proper subject for historical writing.”⁹¹ What he is emphasizing is that these minimalists because of their preconceived notion that there can be no

⁸⁸Wilson, Scott. “A Dig into Jerusalem’s Past Fuels Present-Day Debates.” *The Washington Post*, www.washingtonpost.com/, 2.

⁸⁹Lemche, Niels Peter and Thomas L. Thompson. “Did Biran Kill David? The Bible in the Light of Archaeology” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*. 64:1(Dec. 1994), 16.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 17.

⁹¹ Walter C. Kaiser Jr, *A History of Israel*, 227.

supernatural in a historical record, reject it wholly. This was the case in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The theory of evolution and higher Bible criticism by German rationalists came on the scene, arguing that the Bible was unhistorical and had no reliable basis in fact. Their belief was that most of the Old Testament books were not contemporary records but written centuries after the events took place. Thus, many scholars came to deny the existence of Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, David and Solomon.⁹²

Israeli archaeologist Israel Finkelstein “believes the Old Testament's core historical books were written in the late seventh century BC (the days of King Josiah) as political propaganda to support his reforms.” Thus, for Finkelstein, a Biblical writer was not actually describing the period about which he was writing; instead, he was inventing history about that period.”⁹³

Finkelstein, speaking further about the United Monarchy period, says “it’s a myth concocted in the seventh century B.C. by the authors of Kings and Samuel to validate Judah’s expansion into the northern territory of Israel. Finally, Finkelstein says David never united the country; rather, Judah and Israel remained neighboring states.”⁹⁴

The archaeologist Amihai Mazar, one of the most respected Israeli archaeologist summarizes the debate on the United Monarch in this way the extreme revisionist “rejects the existence of reliable Iron Age historical data in the biblical text and thus deny its validity for a historical reconstruction of most of the pre-exilic era.”⁹⁵

⁹² Leap, Dennis. “Archaeology Proves Bible History Accurate.” *The Trumpet.Com*,1.

⁹³ Gary A. Byers, A. “The United Monarchy under David and Solomon,” *Associates for Biblical Research* (November 2004 Newsletter, <abr.christian answers.net>), 1.

⁹⁴ Wallace, *Shifting Ground in the Holy Land*, 5.

⁹⁵ Mazar, Amihai. *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*. (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 5

The champions of the Minimalist cause, Lemche and Thompson, go even further when they conclude, “In the history of Palestine that we have presented, there is no room for a historical United Monarchy, or for such kings as those presented in the biblical stories of Saul, David or Solomon. The early period in which the traditions have set their narratives is an imaginary world of long ago that never existed as such.”⁹⁶

For the Christian Apologist, this presents a problem of enormous proportions. It is a challenge for the Christian historian and archaeologist to understand how we can answer the United Monarchy's skeptics. Some feel that belief can operate in such a world and not even be answered but this is not the case. As Geisler and Howe point out this is not what Bible inspiration is. “Inspiration includes not only all that the Bible explicitly *teaches*, but also everything the Bible *touches*. This is true whether the Bible is touching upon history, science, or mathematics. Whatever the Bible declares, is true—whether it is a major point or a minor point. The Bible is God’s Word, and God does not deviate from the truth in any point. All the parts are as true as the whole that they comprise.”⁹⁷

Thus, we need to answer the minimalist contention that King David was unhistorical. Biblical inspiration demands such. First let us look at what some scholars are saying about specific archaeological digs. For many years now, Dr. Amihai Mazar has been one of the leading archaeologists in Israel. He has written a popular textbook and numerous articles on archaeology and its relationship to the Bible. For the last few years, Dr. Mazar has dug at Tel Rehov a city near Beth-Shean in the Galilee. His research has shown that the critics have been incorrect about

⁹⁶ Niels Peter and Thomas L. Thompson, “Did Biran Kill David?” 10.

⁹⁷ Geisler, Norman and Thomas Howe. *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Biblical Difficulties*. (USA: Victor Books, ND.), 13.

the absence of evidence for King David and Solomon. “The scholars argue that these findings conclusively prove that they found at Tel Rehov signs of urban society from the 10th century BCE that can be compared with finds from other Israeli sites such as Megiddo, Hatzor and Gezer, which were attributed in the past to the United Monarchy.”⁹⁸

Speaking of the debate on the evidence of David and Solomon, Mazar concludes: “these results provide a new foundation for the traditional view concerning the attribution of occupation strata and buildings at Tel Rehov to the time of the United Monarchy of Solomon and David, and negates the view that all these finds should be dated to the ninth century. The revisionist says that there is no evidence for the urbanization in the 10th century which the Bible describes as attributed to the rise of the United Monarchy.

Dever responds to the debate by saying the evidence of the minimalist are wrong. “Now the revisionist have said Israel was too small to be a state, and they argue there were only a few thousand people in all of Israel and Judah...In fact, archaeologists have documented a population of more than a hundred thousand. Statehood, ladies and gentlemen, is not about size. It’s about centralization and complexity.”⁹⁹ Thus finds like Tel Rehov show this centralization and complexity. It is physical proof from archaeology of the correctness of the biblical story.

Kitchen comments that “if the available data is consulted, both outside the Hebrew Bible and within its pages, we can see that politically, the twelfth to tenth centuries BC were not blank; the political absence of the former great powers-Hatti, Egypt, and Assyrian-left an arena in

⁹⁸ Judy Siegel-Itzkovich, “Tel Rehov Excavations Support Biblical Account.” *Artifax* (Spring, 2003) 1-3, 3

⁹⁹ Michael McCormack, “Archaeologist Rebuffs Revisionist,” *Artifax*. (Spring 2005) 1-5, 4.

which several others (Tabal, Carchemish, Aram-Zobah, and Israel) could try their hand, and did so.”¹⁰⁰

One of these examples from archaeology of a rise of more advanced fortifications and complexity during the monarchy was Beth-Shemesh. Thus, the minimalist contention that there was no archaeological evidence for the rise of the Monarchy just does not carry weight. As Kitchen puts it, “the stubborn refusal to seek out a factual basis for accessing biblical texts, and to be willing to ditch personal prejudices and agendas when the facts point in other directions- this can only lead to stagnation and sterility.”¹⁰¹

Beth-Shemesh was a flourishing Late Bronze Age II town in the thirteenth century and then destroyed around 1200 BC. But in the tenth century, David and Solomon's time, we have a remodeled town with no more Philistine pottery and a total absence of pig bones. There is a construction of several features like a large cistern and a stable complex. All of this complexity in this small site shows a central organization and sophistication which is exactly what one would expect when finding evidence of a new central government.

Dr. Dale W. Manor, field director of the Beth-Shemesh excavations, notes in Iron Age II 985-586 that the remains at Beth-Shemesh provide clear evidence of a central governing authority to oversee and administer the region. One example of this is a massive fortification system built during the latter half of the tenth century. The construction of a massive water reservoir points to a strong centralized influence in the region. A large administrative building was then found at the northern gate into the city during this period. Manor concludes by noting,

¹⁰⁰ K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003),125.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

“the combination of these features points to the presence of a central governing body to oversee, fund, and construct the features at the town. While there is nothing explicit at Beth-Shemesh to indicate who that central authority might have been, the weight of evidence points to Jerusalem.”¹⁰²

One of the most conclusive archaeological evidence for King David as the person spoken of in the Scriptures is the Tell Dan inscription. “Just for the record, the existence of David as a person, king, and head of a dynasty was mentioned in an inscription from Tel Dan, written around 100 years after his death.”¹⁰³ (Byers, 2) This inscription found in Dan in 1993 was the oldest non biblical mention of King David. The phrase on the tablet is *Byt-Dwd* translated the House of David speaking of a dynasty. Kitchen says, “in this way a kingdom could be named after a prominent founder of a dynasty. Contrary to what some OT scholars claim, such mentions are strictly personal in almost all cases: they imply that a real man David and a real man Omri founded dynasties in the kingdoms concerned (Judah, Israel).”¹⁰⁴

The finding of the House of David inscription has shown that there is archaeological evidence concerning the Monarch. “This confirmation of David is especially significant in view of recent attempts by several scholars to raise doubts about the existence of the United Monarchy under Saul, David and Solomon.”¹⁰⁵ In conclusion, Kitchen reviews this find by noting, “So, we

¹⁰² Dale W. Manor, “Beth-Shemesh”, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of The Bible and Archaeology* Volume 1 Daniel E. Master Editor. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 124-135.

¹⁰³ Byers, Gary A. “The United Monarchy under David and Solomon,” 2.

¹⁰⁴ Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* , 92.

¹⁰⁵ Wood, Bryant. “House of David Again! Another Extra Biblical Reference to the Dynasty of the Great King of Israel.” *Bible and Spade* 8:3 (Summer 1995) 91-92, 92.

thus gain a clear mention of David as dynastic founder of the kingdom of Judah about 150 years after his death.”¹⁰⁶

Another historical find that points to the truth of the United Monarchy Biblical story concerning King David is the Mesha Stela also called the Moabite Stone and is a black basalt slab inscription found near Dibon, Jordan. It dates to 850-840 B.C. and talks of Moabite relations with Israel in the ninth century B.C. In 2 Kings 3:4-5 it speaks of the event depicted on the stone. It mentions the ‘house of David’, another reference to David and the monarchy.¹⁰⁷

Another site that shows the evidence of the United Monarchy is Khirbet Keiyafa. One of the excavators is Yosef Garfinkel. In his joint article in *Biblical Archaeology Review* he states the significance of the excavation. “Khirbet Qeiyafa (the Qeiyafa Ruin) is located on the northern border of the Elah Valley, about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem... The site contains the remains of a fortified Iron Age city, radiometrically dated by 27 olive pits to about 1020–980 B.C.E., the period generally attributed to King David. During seven excavation seasons, from 2007 to 2013, the Qeiyafa expedition uncovered a massive city wall, two city gates, two gate piazzas, ten Iron Age buildings, a large storage building and a central palace.”¹⁰⁸

One crucial site for evidence of David is the city of David, Jerusalem. “Last August, Israeli archaeologist Eilat Mazar reported that she had found new evidence of a palace, also supposedly built by David, near the site of the stepped stone structure. Using potsherds and the

¹⁰⁶ Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 92.

¹⁰⁷ David E. Graves, *Biblical Archaeology* vol 2, 88-89.

¹⁰⁸ Madeliene Mumcuoglu and Yosef Garfinkel, “The Puzzling Doorways of Solomon’s Temple,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 41, no. 4 (2015), 34.

traditional chronology, Mazar dated huge stones she believes made up part of the palace to the tenth century B.C.”¹⁰⁹ Speaking of the consequence of Mazar’s find Wilson concludes “Some archaeologists believe Jerusalem was no more than a tiny hilltop village when it served as David’s capital. The discovery of a palace or other large public building from David’s time would strengthen the opposing view that he and his son, Solomon, presided over civilization grander than the collection of rural clans some historians say made up the Jewish kingdom.”¹¹⁰

Provan sees the importance of the finds when he says. “At the heart of the debate over the historical plausibility of a Davidic kingdom as described by the Bible is the archaeology of Jerusalem. If the biblical accounts of the tenth century kingdoms of David (and Solomon) are accurate, so the argument goes, should one not expect to find considerable material remains from the tenth century in Jerusalem?”¹¹¹

The site of the ancient city of David is south of the Temple Mount. Now outside the city wall it contains a few stone built houses and some olive trees. The hill on which the Jebusite city stood is bounded on the east by the Kidron Valley, to the south by the valley of Hinnom, and to the west by the Tyropoeon Valley

Until now, the revisionist has cried that since there have not been many remains “the biblical accounts must be legendary at best.”¹¹² Provan then reminds us that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Kathleen Kenyon conducted the two most significant modern

¹⁰⁹ Jennifer Wallace, “Shifting Ground in the Holy Land,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, 6.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹¹¹ Iain, V. Provan, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 228.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 228.

excavations of Jerusalem in the 1960's and Yigal Shilo in the 70's and 80's. The final reports of these two excavations disagree in considerable detail. Margret Steiner writing for Kenyon, insists that "there was no city here for King David to conquer and that the United Monarchy is not a historical fact."¹¹³

Jane Cahill who was one of the chief archaeologists in Shiloh's project, finds Steiner's conclusions wrong and insists that both Kenyon and Shiloh found evidence for a city during David's time. "According to Jane Cahill, the archaeologist finishing the 1980's City of David dig report, tenth century Jerusalem was fortified, served by two complex water-supply systems and was populated by a socially stratified society that constructed at least two new residential quarters-one inside and one outside the city walls."¹¹⁴

Archaeologically, Jerusalem is the most challenging site to understand. There are several reasons for this. First, Jerusalem is still occupied, and the city has been destroyed and looted several times in its history. The Babylonians destroyed the town in 586 B.C. and the Romans in A.D. 70. Finally, one of the areas of most interest to the archeologists is the "temple mount," which limits the archaeologist.

One of the areas that have been excavated by Yigal Shiloh is the famous "Stepped-stone structure." Shiloh dated it to the tenth century, the time of King David."¹¹⁵ Shiloh in the 1980 excavation season gave instructions to penetrate the floor of the Iron Age house located at the foot of the two towers. Many feel that this was the *millō* mentioned in 2 Samuel 5:9. This word

¹¹³ Ibid., 228.

¹¹⁴ Byers, Gary A. "The United Monarchy under David and Solomon." *Associates for Biblical Research*, 2.

¹¹⁵ John C.H. Laughlin, *Archaeology and the Bible*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 126.

means a fill and would have been used as a support structure to build upon, like the city David would have built upon after his capture of Jerusalem from the Jebusites.

Amihai Mazar writing about this find, which supports the evidence for David's activities in Jerusalem, notes, "Excavations on the steep eastern slope of this hill, above the spring of Gihon, have revealed an imposing edifice, known as the 'stepped structure', which may be tentatively attributed to the tenth century B.C.E.; it is a huge retaining wall, preserved to a height of 16.5m, which apparently supported a monumental building of which no remains were found. The identification of this construction with David's 'Fortress of Zion'...(1 Chr 11:5) is tempting."¹¹⁶

Now that Eilat Mazar has continued excavation in the area around the millo and the stepped structure, she has found what many believe is King David's actual palace. "Mazar has dubbed the large public building; she is excavating the Large-Stoned Structure. She suggests it may well have been built by King David as his palace. The name recalls the Stepped-Stone Structure, a massive retaining wall slightly south and east of the Large-Stone Structure, which is believed to have supported Jerusalem's ancient fortress and which Mazar now suggest was part of the palace complex."¹¹⁷

The work of earlier archaeologists in Israel such as Kathleen Kenyon now has been reevaluated. "The northeastern side of the Large-Stone Structure was built directly on a 20-foot-high manmade rock cliff uncovered by Kenyon. At the foot of the cliff, Kenyon discovered the debris of ashlar stones and the proto-Aeolic capital. They had fallen from the Large-Stone

¹¹⁶ Amiha Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 374.

¹¹⁷ Eilat Mazar, "Did I Find King David's Palace?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*. (Jan/Feb. 2005: 17-27), 23.

Structure.¹¹⁸ She explains that the proto Aeolic capital was part of the decoration that outlined David's palace. Pottery from Iron Age I was found this season around the structure dating it to 1000 BC, the time of David. "This was not just a house, but a fantastic house, Eliat Mazar said of the remains, which would have stood just outside the city walls at the time. Believing it to be the palace of King David it would have been just the thing we would expect a new king to do."¹¹⁹

"Archaeologically, it appears that it was built either at the very end of Iron Age I or at the beginning of Iron Age IIa- either slightly before or slightly after 1000 B.C. E., about when the Bible tells us King David conquered Jerusalem from the Jebusites/Canaanites."¹²⁰

Seymour Gitin, director of the W.F. Albright Institute, said there needs to be more research done. He says that Eilat Mazar needs to keep digging. "But if this can be proven to be 10th century, it demolishes the view of the minimalists, referring to those who dismiss the unified monarchy as a petty kingdom or even as mythical."¹²¹

Kitchen, in stating his belief that the minimalists have gotten their conclusions wrong, says, "Thus the strange idea that tenth-century Palestine was almost uninhabited and unable to sustain a modest empire is frankly, a nonstarter. So also, is the equally bizarre notion that a compact, fortified site like early Jerusalem could not be the capital for a small nation-state or mini-empire."¹²²

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 24.

¹¹⁹ Scott Wilson, "A Dig into Jerusalem's Past Fuels Present-Day Debates," *The Washington Post*, 4.

¹²⁰ Eilat Mazar, "Did I Find," 27.

¹²¹ Scott Wilson, A Dig into Jerusalem's Past, 4.

¹²² K.A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability*, 154.

So, is there evidence from archaeology that the United Monarchy existed as the Bible says? Yes, David's inscription has been found, cities like Tel Rehov and Beth-Shemesh and Khirbet Qeiyafa became organized and fortified against the Philistines during this time. And Jerusalem itself has now produced evidence of King David. Evidence will continue to come from future excavations, but we can have confidence in the Bible as accurate and trustworthy.

Results of the Survey2

The next questions asked how a lack of evidence for the Biblical story in some historians and archaeologists' work affected the Christians "beliefs" in the doctrine of Biblical inspiration. One participant said their view of inspiration did not change their view of the biblical events' historicity. They went on to say they could believe the Bible stories were incorrect and still believe in inspiration. This as another reason for the thesis study. That view denies the Biblical doctrine of inspiration.

Looking at how other participants answered these questions, the researcher found one said no they could not believe the biblical stories were incorrect and still believe in inspiration. They said that if a biblical archaeologist viewed a particular set of ruins and it contradicted the Bible, it would be because the science is not exact. In the group, a teacher and scientist noted in addressing these questions that one could not believe the biblical stories were incorrect and still believe in Bible inspiration. If some scientist or archaeologist sees a different viewpoint, they noted the interpretation of the evidence and context of the find would be brought into question. They explain that skeptics of the biblical stories do not affect his view of inspiration and a lack of evidence for a certain Biblical event does not prove that it did not happen.

The questions about Biblical inspiration and belief in the stories were answered by one participant who said they believed the Bible was 100% accurate. They explained that their culture and environment need to be understood to fully understand the Scriptures. They said if you believe in inspiration inerrancy, then you must believe the Biblical stories are true. It was further emphasized when the participant said if the archaeologists' conclusions agree with the biblical story and others disagree, we see scientific data interpreted differently. They said though that the Bible has stood the test of time. The finds should be rigorously tested and interpreted. The believer should not be afraid of the science or the data. A final point they made is that if the Bible is true, and they strongly believe that then archaeological evidence will point that out. A discussion followed where they talked about how different viewpoints come about because no two archaeologists will have the same cultural bias, educational and religious background. The necessity of scientific finds being peer reviewed was stressed in the answer.

The question of whether the historical events must have happened for the Bible to be inspired got some strong and confident answers. One stated yes, if you believe in the inspired inerrant Word of God, if it is not accurate, that calls all scripture into question. Another participant said that one's belief could be undermined if one puts all their faith in what modern secular science say about history, mankind, the world and even the universe. This participant said their view of Bible inspiration and the historicity of the Bible stories was God directs the words, ideas and meaning of each story and event depicted in the Bible.

When the participants were asked, do you feel every biblical event has to have evidence found by archaeologists and historians to have happened to be believed one stated wisely, "No, enough has been proved to suggest that it all happened. Another participant in discussing why

two different archaeologists would see finds differently, noted there could be discrepancies in what was found beforehand. Both groups are dealing with many unknowns and interpretations of what the ground gives up. Even though there are different interpretations and the participant understood this they still said it would not influence their view of inspiration. They stated that the historical events had to have happened for the Bible to be God's inspired word. They further felt that even though the Scriptures were written in a prescientific age we can expect the facts to be accurate. They state the laws of science stay the same and science can show many truths within the Bible. They do not feel modern science and the Bible contradict.

This is another point the researcher found in the survey that requires intervention. The question is, since the Bible was written in a prescientific age, do science and the Bible contradict? There were various answers given. One said no, they do not contradict, another, yes, some aspects of science most definitely contradict the Bible. A participant asked these questions about science said sometimes they do contradict. A more fleshed out answer was the way scientists interpret data conflicts with the Bible and one states ultimately no, they said they believe science can be utilized to help understand the world and universe in which we live. However, many theories and hypotheses can contradict the scriptures; but, when expounded upon and fully examined, they will either be proven false or end up actually pointing back to God. Another well-reasoned answer to the question was that modern science and the Bible do not contradict, not at all. They continued to say I do not know how you could continue to be a scientist and not believe in a Creator. There are too many patterns, too many 'laws of nature' and too much beauty for the world to be random.

The participants were asked questions concerning if they were comfortable discussing these issues of faith with those who disagree. Some said they were comfortable enough and, on some things, wish more study and classes on the subject. Another participant said they hoped those who disbelieve would change their view, and they wanted more training. One participant said they feel attacked if one doubts and always wants more training. One said they were uncomfortable and would read more for understanding. Another participant says they were now more comfortable than they used to be, and another said they were not comfortable, but are satisfied with the accuracy of the scripture and wanted no other training. One participant said they stand firm in their beliefs and they read God's word and prayed for understanding of His truths to lead to believing in His Holy Bible. Another participant said it is the disbelievers right to disbelieve and they wanted no further training. In an honest assessment, they were somewhat unprepared and wished additional training to deal with the issues. One stated they were comfortable discussing these things and it would benefit them to know how to answer those who question the historical scientific questions of the Bible by members of our community. One participant sounded eager to learn more when they stated they never have enough information.

Can We Learn From History?

If one believes the late modern view of history, there is certainly an incompleteness and lack of full data on the Bible's events. So, one may ask, can we be sure of what happened in the past? As the Christian historian and scholar notes in speaking of the late modern influenced devotee of history; "they forget however, that there is a hard core of facts about events which can be verified by the critical scrutiny of historians, so that a consensus can be reached about most historical information."¹²³ Mohler challenges the Christian scholar by expressing the challenge

¹²³ Cairns, *God and Man in Time: A Christian Approach to Historiography*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) 21.

that is before us. “Externally, the Gospel must be defended against secular atheism, postmodern relativism, naturalistic scientism, materialism, and current syncretism’s. The gospel must be proclaimed in the face of rival systems of belief and alternative worldviews new and old.”¹²⁴

The careful work and scrutiny of the competent historian is a challenge for the believer to investigate the claims of the Christian faith. Just because many who are involved in naturalism do not believe that truth can be established in history is not valid.

Historical Intervention The Resurrection

One of the fundamental Christian beliefs is that the Bible, both Old and New Testament, are the inspired word of God (I Timothy 3:16-17). Thus, when studying any Biblical doctrine, that presupposition is the worldview focus of the Christian scholar. Obviously, many do not hold to that belief, and the Christian writer must understand the unbeliever's worldview and understand his own. This intervention focuses on Biblical inspiration confidence that leads to a belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We will look at different apologetic reasons to believe that the resurrection happened and how Biblical inspiration is a part of that confidence and belief.

In their investigation of the historicity of the resurrection of our Lord, Habermas and Licona have used true historical techniques in their investigation. They believe it is proof that these events, such as the death and resurrection, really happened. “These principles are important because historical data, such as archaeological finds, documents, and eyewitnesses, are all we have to tell us of events that occurred and people who lived in antiquity.”¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Albert Mohler, “You are Bringing Strange Things”, 21.

¹²⁵ Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona. *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2004), 36.

The Christian historian will want to use the best available data and research techniques to investigate his faith's claims. In the same way any historian would wish to investigate the life of Alexander the Great or one of the Windsor Kings of England. Usually one does not have a problem with other historical investigations but oftentimes one is viewed as biased or suspect when they are investigating the historical claims of the Bible. One way to account for that is the philosophy of naturalism that is manifested itself in the late modern era.

The writing of history and other fields of study have a series of expectations that a dedicated researcher will follow. “Though historians take various approaches to uncovering the past, they tend to follow general methodological rules and principles that can be delineated, and the academic community at large generally holds historians accountable to these rules and principles.”¹²⁶ Certainly a competent Christian scholar will be aware and faithful to following these tenants of good scholarship. The apologist Geisler agrees with this and then he emphasizes, “historical objectivity is most certainly possible within a given framework such as a theistic world view.”¹²⁷ A fair and reasonable belief can be presented to the world by the Christian historian and calls for reasonable men to accept as factual truth. Garnett Reed explains this process of competent scholarship as it applies to the Scriptures. “In contrast to the minimalist reading of the Scriptures is the traditional orthodox view that takes the language and linguistic data in the text at face value. Characters and events of the past purported by the Bible to be true, that is, conforming to reality, are historical.”¹²⁸

¹²⁶Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell. *Evidence that Demands a Verdict: Life Changing Truth For a Skeptical World*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 689.

¹²⁷ Norman L Geisler. *Christian Apologetics*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 293.

¹²⁸ Garnett H. Reid “Minimalism and Bible History.” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 155:620 (1998), 401.

The believer does not have to accept the naturalistic premise that says truth is only available if one subjectively accepts it. They do not have to believe we lived in a closed universe where no God has intervened in sending his Son to be the Savior of the world. There is truth and it can be known in which any fair-minded individual can be led to accept its promise. The apologist Groothuis speaks confidently after his investigation on the truth claims of Christianity. “The resurrection of Jesus is part of a theistic worldview. It is the supremely significant event in providential history. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is explained based on a supernatural event brought about by God.”¹²⁹

In studying and researching events of the past, historians have to test the evidence such as eyewitness accounts, the time between the event and the written records concerning it, and the effect it has on the contemporary scene. The resurrection is only one example of the historical accuracy of the Scriptures.

Gary Habermas reminds us that “the conviction that Scripture, both the Old and New Testament comprises God’s word to us. It is our chief source of doctrine.¹³⁰ The New Testament makes clear that Jesus believed Scripture was from God and as believers we must take that seriously. In speaking of the resurrection, Jesus used the Old Testament as a source to predict His coming death and resurrection. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus used an Old Testament event to predict what was going to happen at the end of His life. He used the Old Testament scriptures as reliable historical accounts of God’s great acts of the past. “Jonah’s experience in the belly of the

¹²⁹ Groothuis, Douglas. *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2011), 530.

¹³⁰ Gary Habermas. *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope*. (Lanham, Maryland Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 213.

fish as an historical prefiguring of his own experience for three days and nights in the tomb, and so endorsed the historical reliability of the prophecy of Jonah”.¹³¹

Here, as in other cases, Jesus considered the characters of the Old Testament as real, historical people. He further viewed the writings of the Old Testament as coming from God. In Matthew 5:17-18 Jesus said, “He had not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but that He came to fulfill them. That not one iota or one dot would pass from the Law till all was accomplished.” Here Jesus is putting his work and teachings on par with the Law and Prophets. This was a common designation for the Old Testament canon. He was both showing His confidence in the Old Law as well as the coming new. They both were authoritative because they both were from God.

Jesus convincingly attested to the New Testament, which records the resurrection events and its theological meaning for all Christians today. Jesus trained the disciples, and he promised that after He left, the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth (John 16:12-13). The writers of the New Testament, the apostles of Jesus and the inspired penmen, were convinced that they were writing God's words. In the Ephesian epistle, the apostle Paul told those Christians that they were “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” (Ephesians 2:20-21).¹³² Thus, the New Testament writings have evidence that they were works that were historical and theological. Their intent is that we can have confidence in the

¹³¹ Edward C. Wharton. *Christianity: A Clear Case of History!* (West Monroe, Louisiana: Howard Book House, 1977), 46.

¹³² Habermas, *The Risen Jesus*. 215.

story they were producing concerning the salvation that is found in the life and work of Jesus Christ.

One prime example in the quest for our confidence of the accuracy and trustworthiness of the New Testament, as they especially pertain to the resurrection of Jesus, is the Gentile writer, Luke. He begins his gospel in Luke 1:1-4 by stating that he would follow these guidelines in his writing. He was aware that there were other written stories of the events of our Lord's life. His modus operandi was going to interview eyewitnesses who were present during the life of our Lord and he was going to incorporate that into his gospel. Luke then shares with his readers that he will make his arrangement to persuade Theophilus of the certainty of the Christian faith. So, we see Luke intended to write historically, apologetically, and theologically. When compared with other writers of the classical world, he stands as a first rate writer. "These are precisely the kinds of details that we find, at times even in very similar language, in the lengthier prologues to volumes of that era which are generally viewed as among the most reliable works of history produced back then."¹³³

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all were writing to tell the story of the life, work, death and resurrection of Jesus. Later, Paul and Peter would do the same. The historian Paul Barnett reminds us of their task. "First please notice that our subject is not the theological but the historical reliability of the New Testament. These two aspects of reliability dovetail into one total concept of reliability. They are really inseparable since the theology of the New Testament

¹³³ Douglas, Groothuis. *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Academic, 2011). 446.

depends on the events concerning Jesus having actually taken place and the events concerning Jesus are themselves profoundly theological.”¹³⁴

So, the New Testament writers wrote as men who were interested in sharing Christ's life in a straightforward competent manner. Their task was to produce faith, as John states in John 20:30. “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” As these men wrote about Jesus as God’s Son and His life and work, they were striving to lead to belief in Jesus as the One whom God had chosen as the Savior of the world. As we have seen, John was not just reporting the facts, not doing only what modern historical writing would do, but he also wanted to lead his hearers to faith in the Risen Lord. As Kaiser and Silva pointed out in their book on Hermeneutics, “in the case of the Gospels, every indication we have is that the writers expected their statements to be taken as historical.”¹³⁵

When one investigates the historicity of the story of Jesus, any fair-minded individual will be impressed with the amazing plethora of evidence for historical accuracy. As historians look at the ancient evidence for the writing of the New Testament books, they see where the gospels were written in the 60s and the earliest writing of Paul in the 50s. Then there are the allusions to Jesus’ teachings, like the Sermon on the Mount that date as early as the 40s in

¹³⁴ Paul Barnett. *Is the New Testament Reliable: A Look at the Historical Evidence* (Downers Grove Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 10.

¹³⁵Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moises Silva. *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing,2007), 158.

James' writing. All of this shows the New Testament was written very soon after the events in Jesus' life happened.¹³⁶

This makes the new Testament the most attested to book, closest to the actual events in antiquity. This encourages F. F. Bruce when he reports, "The situation is encouraging from the historians point of view, for the first three Gospels were written at a time when many were alive who could remember the things that Jesus said and did and some at least would still be alive when the fourth gospel was written."¹³⁷

In full confidence of this event having really happened, Keller notes this. "However, the resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact much more fully attested to than most other events of ancient history we take for granted."¹³⁸ So, one searches for why many with a naturalistic worldview would not believe in the research of competent historians concerning the historicity of the Scriptures. An example of this is the research of Simon A. Joseph. Looking at the evidence of the resurrection, he outright dismisses the existence of God. He states that because of this there can be no miracles.¹³⁹ Therefore, he concludes that there was no resurrection. This naturalistic worldview therefore excludes all evidence that possibly would interfere with that belief.

In addressing this skepticism "most modern historians make the philosophical assumption that miracles simply cannot happen, that made the claim of the resurrection highly problematic.

¹³⁶ Groothuis, *Apologetics*, 439, 441.

¹³⁷ F. F. Bruce. *The New Testament Documents Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1960) 13.

¹³⁸ Timothy Keller. *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 219.

¹³⁹ Simon J. Joseph "Redescribing the Resurrection: Beyond the Methodological Impasse?" *Biblical Bulletin: Journal of Bible and Culture*, 45:3 (2015) 156-7.

However, if you disbelieved the resurrection, you then had the difficulty of explaining how the Christian got started at all.”¹⁴⁰ In looking at the study of the resurrection and Bible authority we have seen that the historical evidences, which are as detailed and more numerous than any other historical event in the ancient world, is tied to the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible. “The evidence for our New Testament writings is ever so much greater than the evidence for many writings of the classical authors, the authenticity of which no-one-dreams of questioning.”¹⁴¹

We have seen where Jesus believed the Old Testament was the word of God. He used it to show where He was mentioned in prophecy and God’s plan of redeeming man. He claimed to be the fulfillment of its teachings. As Habermas concludes, “viewed from various angles, this is indeed a high view of inspiration. We conclude that Jesus was definitely the inspiration of the Old Testament. It is difficult to draw other conclusions.”¹⁴²

Jesus then promised the apostles that they would be led by the Holy Spirit would be led to in writing the story of man’s salvation based upon Jesus’ death and resurrection. The apostle Paul in writing to the Thessalonian church praised them for understanding this fact. “And we also thank God constantly for this that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as what it really is the word of God which is at work in you believers.” (I Thessalonians 1:13) This concept is expressed by the scholar Wharton who says, “in essence the resurrection implies that Jesus is the Son of God and the Bible is the Word of God. It is conclusive that the genuineness of Christianity and the Bible’s

¹⁴⁰ Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 209.

¹⁴¹ Bruce, *New Testament Documents*, 15.

¹⁴² Habermas, *The Risen Christ*, 215.

claim to inspiration stands or falls on the historical reality of the resurrected Jesus Christ.”¹⁴³ The resurrection of Jesus Christ is God’s sign that Jesus is the Savior of the World. The New Testament documents are from God as his inspired record of the saving work of Jesus. For that we are to preach and proclaim to a world that needs Jesus. When one strives to believe in Jesus but does not have confidence in the New Testament as being inspired, a major dichotomy exists. Can one believe in the One who promised that the apostles would be led to all truth and they penned the truth for us in the Word of God, but not believe it is accurate and true? The many and various false naturalistic explanations for the resurrection have not held up under rigorous scrutiny. And the finest historians of the ancient world vindicate the historical record, which the Christian believes comes from God. Thus, the Resurrection is true, and the New Testament is the Spirit breathed inspired record of the story of God’s grace to the world.

The rules of evidence are not adequately explored or used correctly within the worldview of the naturalist that automatically dismisses every miracle, every story of God’s involvement in the world. These rules include such common-sense reasoning as the fact that eyewitness testimony is stronger than any secondhand account. Also, the closer between the time of the event and the writing about it, the more reliable the witness. The greater number of independent resources the greater the possibility of the event actually happening. And if one has received a testimony that does not sympathize with the event that is a strong indication of its historical validity.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Wharton, *Christianity a Clear Case*, 46.

¹⁴⁴ Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona. *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, (Grand Rapids:Kregel Publications, 2004), 37-39.

All of these evidential evidences are present when one explores the resurrection. It is also present when one explores the rest of the Scriptures and its story.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The study was highly successful in pointing out the necessity of the church to have confidence and understand the doctrine of Bible inspiration. The science of archaeology and the historical worldview presented in the Scriptures are a necessary component of the disciple of Christ to have the correct tools to grow spiritually as God desires.

Specific things the researcher became aware of are the amazing historical confirmations for the truth of the Biblical stories. No other book or people in the ancient world have as many confirmations of the events depicted in the Bible. If one is to believe any major character or epic in ancient history such as the Pharaohs and Egyptians history , the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian Greek or Roman characters and events, there is just as much intertwining and independent confirmation of the events depicted in the Bible also.

Another conclusion found is the influence of the modern view of history that permeates our society's worldview. If one is influenced by this there is very little one can learn from the past. This is not the Biblical worldview of history and the researcher was made aware of how important it is to realize this facet of post-modern society. The surveys completed and the intervention and literature review and the various viewpoints concerning the issue of Bible historicity and inspiration made the researcher more aware of the necessity of the need to forewarn and equipping the disciples to be aware of these things .

Some things stood out immediately that need further teaching on. One is the misunderstanding of myth and truth in historical study pertaining to the Bible. The disciples need to be aware of the truthfulness for the Bible story and how it cannot be inspired if it is not true.

Further teaching on the Biblical teaching on inspiration is needed for different views of inspiration showed a lack of completeness of the doctrine of inspiration. Another issue that needs to be addressed is the attitude that those who do not believe in the Bible's historicity feel there is no need, or they are unequipped to discuss this with others. Some have the attitude that they believe, so what does it matter if others do not.

A final challenge that was presented is almost half believed science and the Bible contradict. None of those who believed that had no problem with believing in inspiration also. Again, a lack of training and confidence showed in their attitude. As the researcher the survey participants and members of the congregation made me aware of some issues that do need to be addressed but also made one proud of their strong confidence in the historicity of the Bible story.

Hopefully, further study will create a greater ability of the congregants to reach out to others who need the truth of the gospel presented also. Thus, the thesis and study involved made one aware of the necessity of the ministry of the church as her preacher, minister and leader.

As a preacher of the gospel, one must have a biblical-based philosophy for his work to be pleasing to the Lord. The philosophy of preaching begins with the purpose of ones' work. It begins with Jesus call to "Go", "Make Disciples", and "Teach" as contained in Matthew 28:19, the Great Commission. A preacher is one who is a disciple of Christ and then feels called by God to spend his work proclaiming the Scriptures. As Paul told Timothy, "Preach the Word." (2 Timothy 2:2) Paul in Ephesians 4:11f speaks of how God, "gave some to be evangelist, shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry." A preacher is one who is committed to the work of making and teaching disciples, being in the ministry, accepting the call of God to build up the church worldwide.

Another component in the preacher's philosophy is his awareness of the question Paul asked the Romans when speaking of how the gospel was first preached. He says, "How shall they call on Him when they have not believed, and how are they to believe in Him in whom they have not heard? And how are they to believe without someone preaching to them." (Romans 10:14-15) This passage personally was one of the main components of accepting the challenge of being a full time gospel preacher. Truly a preacher has the philosophy of making disciples for Jesus and proclaiming the gospel to those who have never heard the good news. Thus, if the gospel is not proclaimed and the people never hear, how can they ever come to the saving knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Preaching is done when one proclaims the good news of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. In Acts 5:42 we see how the early church stressed the importance of the study and preaching and teaching of the Word in their gatherings. "And every day in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus. (Acts 5:42) Preaching consists of the story of Jesus as Lord and Christ. Paul told the Corinthian brethren that in proclaiming the testimony of God he decided to know nothing among them except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:1) Later on in the epistle he gives his most detailed explanation of what the gospel consists of in I Corinthians 15. He said the gospel that he had preached to them, was how they were saved. It consisted of Jesus death on the cross for their sins His burial and His resurrection. Jesus was raised on the third day and numerous eyewitnesses can attest to that fact. These events happened and it is the basis of our faith and salvation. Paul tells the Ephesians that "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace." (Ephesians 1:7)

In the epistles of Paul to the two preachers of Timothy and Titus he explains the components of preaching to his two disciples as well as the target of preaching. He left Timothy at Ephesus so that “certain men will not teach any different doctrine”. (I Timothy 1:3) He later told him to “command and teach these things.” (1:3) Then the apostle told the young evangelist to “Teach and urge these things.” (6:26) This target of his preaching was for disciples who had already been saved and come to the truth. They needed more instruction in the faith and one of Timothy calls was to provide that teaching.

When Titus was preaching on the island of Crete, he was challenged to teach and mature the church in the faith also. “But as for you teach what accords with sound doctrine.” (Titus 2:1) Afterward Paul told him to “declare these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority.” (2:15) Then Paul challenges the preacher, Titus, to “insist on these things so that those who have believed in God, may be careful to devote themselves to good works.” (Titus 3:8)

From these snapshots in Timothy’s and Titus’ work as gospel preachers, it appears a large part of their teaching was in building up the faith and maturing the church with their preaching. Paul in both Ephesus and Crete and these preachers had preached the gospel were sent to ensure the church stayed faithful to the teachings of the gospel and grow in the faith.

One clear example of why preaching should be focused on evangelizing, as well as maturing the audience, is because that is what the Great Commission tells the church to do. The disciple of Christ is to make disciples, go, teach and remind the words of Jesus to all. One clear cut example of this is the passages in Acts after the day of Pentecost where we have the gathered church meeting and learning, being taught and built up by the Word. A clear example of this is during Paul’s missionary journey as described in Acts 14:21. “And when they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to

Antioch strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith.” The gospel was first preached, and congregations were established. Then the apostle returned to the cities where the disciples were and continued to teach and preach, strengthening them. As the preaching and teaching of the gospel was for the process of making disciples and teaching disciples, we see in the New Testament that the church grew. “And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.” (Acts 14:27)

The expected result of good preaching is men and women becoming disciples giving their allegiance to King Jesus. The gospel was first preached, and men and women believed. This led to repentance, confession and then baptism. They were a part of the local church and then they were to continue to grow. In 1 Thessalonians 1:8 we see where the results of the gospel were carried out worldwide. “For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere.” When the gospel is preached the result is growth. Acts 16:5 “So the churches were strengthened in the faith and they increased in numbers daily.” May God also give us the ability to show and equip our members in the defense of the faith in our world that is increasingly hostile to it. This is what this thesis is designed to do, Lord willing.

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LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 26, 2020

Garry Hill

Dennis McDonald

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY19-20-146 Inspiration and Bible Archaeology

Dear Garry Hill, Dennis McDonald:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

101(b):

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any

modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office