



ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

LESSON 1: INTRO & PERGAMUM

Sargon of Akkad – 24th century B.C.

1. What is archaeology?

Archaeology is quite simply digging through the garbage of people who lived a long time ago. In the layers of debris people carefully dig to find out who lived there and from what time period. They can interpret that by the types of materials used for eating, cooking and water supplies and the materials and styles of weapons found.

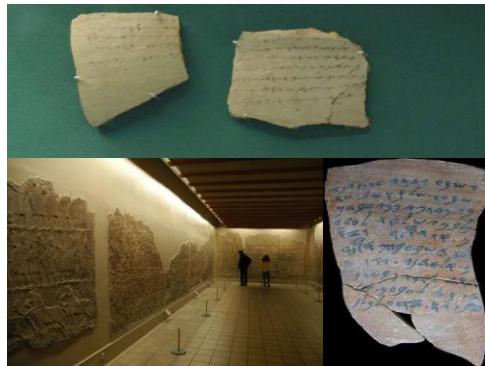
2. What does archaeology NOT do?

Archaeology does not prove the existence of God. It is a piece of the evidence we add to our collection which makes the science extremely valuable to our faith.

3. What does archaeology do?



- a. *Read Jeremiah 7:12-14; 12:7; 26:6. The picture above is the city that now dwells where ancient Shiloh was destroyed. Shiloh was the place where God set up the tabernacle with the Ark of the Covenant to dwell with His people. Because of their unfaithfulness God withdrew His protection and Shiloh was eventually destroyed.*



- b. Archaeology confirms Bible texts.

Jeremiah began ministry in 627 B.C. and ministered until after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. He warned God's people but then didn't listen. When they were captured Jeremiah told them to go peacefully and be good citizens. The scene above is a library discovered at Lachish. There was a small room containing letters. Letter 3 was written by an official at an outpost to his superior, Yoash in the city. It mentions Koniah, the son of Elnathan making a trip to Egypt for help and to a letter by Tobiah, a royal official with a warning from a prophet. The other writings mention King Zedekiah of Jerusalem, who is mentioned in 2 Kings 24. The prophet mentioned in the Lachish letter therefore would have most likely been Jeremiah, God's prophet.

- c. It sheds light on understanding Bible texts.

Have you ever wondered why God would tell Israel to destroy an entire nation when they entered the land? The people had become so far from their Creator that they worshiped false gods and would offer human sacrifices in the name of worship.

Worship often included prostitution in the name of worship. The nations were saturated with evil and had no understanding of the true God who created them.

- d. It identifies old cities cited in the Bible. (Gezer, Debir, Hazor, Capernaum, Gibeon, Lachish, Babylon, Nineveh)
- e. It shows the reality of Bible Characters (Abram, Pilate, Herod, Solomon)



Pontius Pilate - The Roman Procurator, Latin dedicatory inscription, Roman Theater at Caesarea, 26-36 CE, Stone, H. 80cm, L. 68cm, W. 20cm, Israel Antiquities Authority
© The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

f. *It gives us historical background for the Biblical Record. (Like Masada where the last stand of Zealots in AD 70 took place and Qumran, home of a scribal community and the Dead Sea Scrolls.)*

4. What are some of the discoveries that have refuted the skeptics and proven the Bible is the most historically accurate book ever written? (14 specific archaeological confirmations of the Bible)

- a. *Over 40 Old Testament Kings known from both Bible and contemporary monuments are not placed historically in their correct dates and reigns.*
- b. *Babylon's destruction*
- c. *Nineveh's destruction*
- d. *Gezer's destruction and rebuilding*
- e. *King Jehoiachin given rations by King of Babylon*
- f. *Belshazzar, King of Babylon in the days of Daniel*
- g. *Masoretic Text from 70 A.D. – 150 A.D.*
- h. *The Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in 1947. An almost complete scroll of Isaiah dating 1,000 years before the oldest scroll of the letter previously found.*
- i. *Burning of Gibeon, King Saul's home town.*
- j. *Solomon's casting of bronze for the temple*
- k. *King Mesha's revolt against Israel*
- l. *Hezekiah's tunnel*
- m. *Hezekiah's wall*
- n. *Patriarchal customs*
- o. *Pool of Gibeon built by Hezekiah when 4,000-6,000 people needed water.*
- p. *Other Biblical names and places*
- q. *We learn that the Bible is an accurate historical record and not a fabricated book of fantasy and myth.*

5. Where was Pergamum?
40 miles north of Smyrna along the Aegean Sea, you come to the Caicus River. From there you traveled northeast 10 miles inland and came to Pergamum. It was south and east of the archaeological site of the city of ancient Troy.

6. Where is Pergamum today?
Today Pergamum lies in western Turkey.



It is located in the modern city of Bergama. In the Roman period, Pergamum played a very important role in Christianity. It was 1 of the 7 churches of Asia Minor addressed in the book of Revelation. It was the center of worship for four of the most pagan cults of the day – Zeus, Athene, Dionysos and Asklepios who was designated, SOTER, savior. It was the official center in Asia for the imperial cult. It was the first city in Asia to receive permission that a temple be built in Pergamum to “the divine Augustus and the goddess “Roma” (Tacitus, Ann iii.37). Being a god, Augustus could execute people anytime he felt like it. He thought he held the sword of justice.

7. The Pergamum library

It was the second biggest library of the ancient period, after the library of Alexandria in Egypt. It contained 200,000 volumes. Pergamum invented the parchment, a thin material for writing made from calfskin, sheepskin, or goatskin to use instead of the papyrus made by the Egyptians.



8. Asclepieum

The Asclepieum was a sanctuary and a healing center built for Asclepieum, the god of healing. It was the first hospital in the world built in the 4th century B.C. in Pergamum.



9. The Pergamum ancient theater

The theater was across from the Temple of Athena in the Acropolis on the steepest hill and held over 15,000 spectators with 80 rows of seating.



10. Serapeum

(Temple of Serapis-Turkish name Kizil Avlu), was built in the 2nd century AD during the rule of King Hadrian and was dedicated to the gods of Egypt.



11. The Zeus Altar - Read Revelation 2:12-17

The finest altar (shrine) ever built is accepted as the in Pergamum in 180 BC. Its foundation still stands in Bergamum, the site of ancient Pergamum. Most parts of the Zeus Altar is now in the Berlin Pergamum Museum. The altar was on the acropolis with is 985' above the city. It depicts the gods of Greece in victorious combat against the giants of the earth



The following pictures were taken by Harley Ihm while in Berlin at the Pergamon Museum:





Jesus begins the letter to the church at Pergamum by reminding them who it is that really holds the sword. It is not the emperor nor the great pagan religions nor Rome itself. Jesus Christ alone holds the sword of justice.

When you see the pagan altar to the false gods in the city that worshiped them along with the emperor as god, we can vividly see and understand why Jesus says that Pergamum is where Satan has his throne. As Rome was the center of Satan's activity in the West, Pergamum was his throne, the center of his power in the East. The great problem we can see for the church is the powerful influence this evil city was on all people.

Jesus specifically mentions the sin of Balaam creeping into the church. A sin taught by a group called the Nicolatians. Balaam advised the Midianite women to lure the Israelites into relationships that were forbidden by the Lord. They women were able to get the Hebrew men to worship their gods and take part in their sacred meals. Obviously, this included sexual immorality. Balaam became an example of how people can be lured into compromising their faith while claiming to be holy. Archaeology helps us understand what was taking place, even creeping into the church at Pergamum. We can see from the evidence the depth of evil that saturated the city and affected the people.