

WHY WE BELIEVE: The Bible Text: Matthew 2:1-8; 23:1-12

Evidences from Bible Archeology pt. 3

Introduction:

1. Over 2,700 times the Bible writers declare their writing it is by inspiration of God
2. But the Bible doesn't not just claim it—it proves it over and over...

I. EVIDENCES FROM BIBLE ARCHEOLOGY

(1) KING HEROD

1. **The Bible records that Herod was king in Judea at the time of Jesus birth in Bethlehem and tried to have Jesus killed. (Matthew 2:1–8)**
 - a) Was Herod a Mythological figure of Legend just made up by Bible writers? NO!
 - b) Ancient historical writers and Archeology confirms the terror and reign of King Herod
2. **A pottery fragment from a wine jug found was at Masada, Herod's palace fortress overlooking the Dead Sea is inscribed with his name.**
 - a) Archeologist Ehud Netzer said the Latin Inscription reads: "Herod, King of Judea"
3. **Many Coins with Herod's name have been found [IMAGE]**
 - a) Coins are helpful not only in naming rulers but in dating the time of their rule.
 - b) Herod was appointed ruler by the Roman Senate in 40 b.c. and given an army to defeat the Parthians and the Hasmoneans.
 - c) By 37 b.c. he was in total control of the region with his capital in Jerusalem.
4. **History also records HEROD'S MURDEROUS PARANOIA...**
 - a) As he got older he became more and more paranoid over losing his power.
 - b) He had his wife assassinated over fears she was conspiring against him.
 - c) Then he had his two sons murdered who might avenger her death.
 - d) When the wise men arrived searching for the newborn king,
 - e) Herod would not rest until the child was put to death... but God warned the Magi and Joseph and Mary in a Dream (Matthew 2:12–16)

(2) HEROD'S PALACE MACHAERUS

1. **Machaerus (name means "black fortress") one of his billionaire bunkers**
 - a) Hitler had: The Wolf's Lair, the Eagles Nest and Berlin Bunker
 - b) Herod had: Masada, the Herodium and Machaerus
 - c) It was one of several strongholds built for Herod the Great—father of Herod Antipas.
 - d) Positioned high above the edge of the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea.
 - e) Protected on 3 sides by deep ravines, as a safe fortress in times of political unrest.
 - f) Fire signals linked Machaerus to Herod's other fortresses and to Jerusalem.
2. **When Herod the Great died, Machaerus passed to his son Herod Antipas, who ruled Galilee and Perea until AD 39.**
 - a) Excavations at the site have uncovered remains of Herod's palace,
 - b) Rooms designed around a central courtyard, Elaborate bath and floor mosaics

- c) Even a **dungeon** underneath where prisoners were held by chains fastened to walls.
- 3. Jewish historian Josephus said this Palace ('the black fortress') is where John the Baptist was imprisoned and beheaded by Herod Antipas.**
 - a) Josephus talks about Herod Antipas and his scandalous marriage to his brother Phillip's wife and the murder of John the Baptist...
 - b) "John, that was called the baptist... was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, bothers to righteousness toward one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism... Herod, who feared the great influence John had over the people... sent [John] a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Marcherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death."
(Flavius Josephus, Antiquities 18:116-118)
 - c) The Historian Josephus Verifies the details of the Biblical account
 - d) Archeologists have found the dungeon where John was Murdered
 - e) Even the dance floor where Salome would've danced before Herod. (Mark 6:17-29)

(3) SYNAGOGUE IN CAPERNAUM

- 1. Capernaum is on the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee...**
 - a) The Bible tells us that Jesus lived here after leaving Nazareth...
 - b) Teaching in the Synagogue and performing miracles. (Mark 1:21-28)
- 2. The ruins Capernaum were uninhabited for almost a thousand years but were rediscovered in 1838 by American scholar Edward Robinson.**
 - a) Since then Archeologists have found the ruins of the Synagogue spoken of in Bible.
 - b) The remains of the Synagogue that still stands date back to the 4th century, but they were built upon the original basalt stones of the 1st century you still see today!
 - c) The 1st century pottery fragments found alongside the basalt stones leave no doubt that this is the same Synagogue from the 1st century that Jesus taught in!
- 3. You can visit the very locations where Jesus walked and taught!**

(4) MAGDALA STONE MOSES SEAT

- 1. One the western shore of the Sea of Galilee is a town called Magdala**
 - a) Magdala was a commercial fishing village from the time of Jesus
 - b) It has one of the most well known Synagogues in the first century.
- 2. Within the Synagogue was a stone seat traditionally called 'Moses Seat'.**
 - a) Several of these found have been found in different 1st century Synagogues
 - b) For example, another one was found in Chorazin
 - c) No one knows for sure—but it seems they were used for reading the scrolls of scripture in the Synagogue
- 3. But we know that Jesus uses this term to describe how the scribes and pharisees were trying to equate their authority with that of Moses**
 - a) (Matthew 23:1-12) Even today there are those who teach doctrines of men as if it were commandments of God.

(5) CAIAPHAS

- 1. Caiaphas was the acting High Priest in Jerusalem during Jesus ministry**

- a) Josephus records that Caiaphas was appointed by Roman authorities and that he was high priest through the time of Pontius Pilate.

2. A recently discovered ossuary of Miriam, the daughter of Caiaphas...

- a) was found with an inscription that showed the Caiaphas family were of the priestly lineage of the tribe of Levi (an ossuary is a burial box for bones)

3. Archeologists have found the actual ossuary of Caiaphas in a cemetery outside of Jerusalem with his name inscribed on it.

- a) It is ornately carved in limestone in a way that would only be done for a rich or prominent person
- b) It is dated before ad 70 when the Romans completely destroyed city and Jewish ossuaries were no longer buried there for centuries.
- c) But it is also dated from a.d.43 or later because a coin of Herod Agrippa I from a.d. 43 was actually found in the box.

4. Caiaphas was High Priest when Jesus was arrested and he was on the Sanhedrin Counsel when Jesus was condemned (Matt 26:57–68)

(6) PONTIUS PILATE

1. Jewish rulers did not have the authority to carry out capital punishment

- a) So they had to bring Jesus to Pilate to be put to death (Matthew 27:1–2)
- b) They claimed Jesus committed blasphemy...
but Pilate was shrewd and he didn't care about Jewish religious arguments.
- c) But the Jewish rulers were just as shrewd as Pilate—and changed the charges to Treason and said anyone who lets them man go is no friend of Caesar

2. Critics of the Bible believed Pilate was a fictitious villain made up by Bible writers to deceive the world about Jesus.

- a) But that changed when Archeologists found the Pilate Stone...
in the ruins of the Roman city of Caesarea Maritima.
- b) The dedication inscription in Latin reads:
“Tiberium, Pontius Pilatus, Prefect of Judea... dedicated.”
- c) It is dated to a.d. 26-36 and identifies Pontius Pilate as Prefect of Judea under the reign of Emperor Tiberius.
- d) A Ring was also found with his name in Latin: “Pontius Pilatus”
- e) Before these artifacts were found, the only references to Pontus Pilate were found in the Bible and the writings of Tacitus, Philo, and Josephus.

3. It's IRONIC that it had been repurposed as a stepping stone placed UPSIDE DOWN in the stairway of the Roman Theater at Caesarea.

- a) Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent—but he condemned the Son of God in order to save his status and power in the Roman Hierarchy. (John 19:1–18)
- b) **Pilate sold his soul to save his power and status—**
- c) the Roman Emperor later banished Pilate and it is said he committed suicide.

(Mark 8:34–38) What would it profit a man to gain the whole world but lose his own soul?

(7) CRUCIFIXION WITH NAILS

- 1. It was the Assyrians who invented crucifixion, but it was the Romans who perfected it into the cruelest form of execution.**
 - a) The most humiliating and excruciating form of execution ever devised by evil men.
 - b) First the victim is whipped with what was called the 'cat of 9 tails'.
 - c) A whip with multiple leather strands with pieces of glass and bone tied to the ends.
 - d) This was to extract a confession, so the strikes would not get lighter, only harder.
- 2. Then the condemned criminal was forced to carry his cross to the execution site—Golgotha: the place of the skull.**
 - a) Where he would be laid on the wooden cross lying on the ground while his hands and feet are nailed to the wooden cross.
 - b) The physical and medical trauma would induce a state of shock.
 - c) But the horrible nature of crucifixion is they would never allow the victims to pass out because then they would not feel the pain.
 - d) They kept them right on the edge so they would experience the full horror of being killed while they are still alive
- 3. The Bible tells us that Jesus hands and feet were nailed to the Cross.**
 - a) But Bible critics and skeptics claimed that Roman execution did not use nails in Israel in the 1st century.
 - b) That they only used ropes, not nails, to hold the condemned criminal to a cross because nails could not uphold the weight of the human body.
- 4. But in 1968 when builders for the Israeli Ministry of Housing, working in Jerusalem, accidentally discovered a Jewish cemetery...**
 - a) and they found the skeletal remains of men who were crucified during the Jewish revolt against Rome in a.d.70.
 - b) One of them was found with his name inscribed on the burial box. But what was astonishing was they found a Roman spike still protruding through his heel bone.
 - c) The Romans typically removed the nails before burial, because iron was expensive.
 - d) But this particular nail had a bent tip which made it's removal difficult, so it was left.
- 5. So the Romans did execute criminals by crucifixion with nails in the 1st century just as the Bible clearly says!**
 - a) After Jesus rose from the Grave He showed them His wounds (**Luke 24:36–40**)

CONCLUSION:¹

- 1. (**Luke 24:36–40**) Jesus could've reprimanded Thomas to just believe**
 - But Jesus Went to Thomas to Show Him the Physical Forensic Evidence He was alive
- 2. The Jesus gave a blessing to us, who were not there to see (**Luke 24:48**)**
 - These men, including Thomas, died for telling the Truth — that Jesus died for our sins, and was raised from the Dead so we could have eternal life.
- 3. We share in Jesus death, burial & resurrection when we are baptized in Christ**
 - Born again in Baptism—raised to new of life (**Romans 6:3-4**)

—Bill Turner 8/2026

¹ For more Bible Archeology see: 'Unearthing the Bible' by Titus Kennedy, Harvest House Publishers 2020