SYLLABUS
BI412--BIBLICAL BACKGROUNDS: NEW TESTAMENT ARCHAEOLOGY
B.M.A. Theological Seminary  Fall Semester  2012
Professor--Dr. Greg W. Parsons

I. Course Objectives

1) To introduce the student to the field of biblical archaeology including its scope and purpose for New Testament studies.

2) To survey major aspects of Intertestamental and New Testament history with emphasis on significant archaeological discoveries which illuminate the background and text of the New Testament.

3) To present an overview of selected archaeological sites, certain men who excavated them, and some resulting discoveries which are important for New Testament studies.

II. Requirements

A. Reading


Reports on required reading assignments must be recorded and turned in weekly on standardized reading slips obtainable from the seminary office. Students may be responsible for a quiz at any time over the required reading for the day.

B. Term paper and report

Each student is responsible for an 8-to-13 page (double-spaced) typewritten paper. Normally this paper should be written on a significant archaeological site (see list below)--describing its history and excavation and summarizing the main discoveries and their impact upon the background or text of the New Testament. Mention should be made of any ambiguity or disagreement concerning the archaeological data. Primary sources (see p. 7) should be consulted where possible.

This syllabus is tentative 7-31-2012 and may be adjusted during the semester if necessary.

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It must briefly describe the history of the identification of the proper site and its excavation and summarize the main discoveries and their impact upon the New Testament. Note any ambiguity or disagreement concerning the archaeological data.

In sum the following components should be researched:

1) Suggested biblical city: identification(s) (in the case of site known by Tel name)
   -or Tell identification(s) (in the case of site known by city name)
2) Biblical data referenced and summarized
3) Historical data (non-biblical records)
4) Geographical and/or topographical data
5) Archaeological data—summarizing main excavations (including date and excavator), discoveries and possible contribution to understanding or illumination of the biblical text
6) Proper research parameters: Use Turabian format and utilize at least 6 or 7 sources besides Scripture and textbook(s).—namely books, journal article(s), and Internet research (where applicable, but not exclusively).³
7) Minimum qualifications for an “A” paper: a) utilize at least one journal article; b) judicious use of Internet (see footnote 3); c) try include a primary source if possible.

The main bases for grading will be the quality of the paper and the usage of adequate sources. The paper should resemble the format in the 5th or 6th or 7th edition of Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. An oral report of about 30 to 45 minutes must be presented (normally on the same day that topic is scheduled for class discussion). [Be sure to turn in a finished copy of the term paper to the professor before the oral report is given.]⁵

A list of sites for possible term paper topics are as follows;

With special permission the student may write on other topics including the archaeological background of a section of Scripture or of a significant event. Examples of the former are: 7) Archaeology & the seven churches of Asia Minor (in Rev. 2-3) ____________ 8) Paul's travels (and/or shipwreck) in the Book of Acts ____________. An example of the latter is 9): the contribution of archaeology to understanding the Fall of Jerusalem and of Masada to the Romans ____________. Another option is 10) Compilation and review of websites with journal articles on New Testament backgrounds including museums and virtual locations for ancient Greece, Rome and/or Palestine (in the 3rd cent. B.C. to end of A.D. 1st century) ____________. 11) Perhaps one of peoples or subgroups (see Simmons book, etc.)

C. Possible field trip (with 2 to 4?? [single-spaced] page report): museum in Ft. Worth (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary): Lecturer Dr. Tom Davis: Archaeology, Cypus and the Apostle Paul: New Evidence on Transformation of Christianity. Possible museum visit during day on Oct 30 or on Oct. 31 with lecture at 8:00 pm on Tuesday Oct 30. Report due ~ Nov. 29?

D. Exam

Two exams are planned for this course (see class schedule below). The nature of these tests will be explained later.

³ Internet Resources—The student may employ some online resources, but limit the Internet to ¼ or less of the total sources. (This restriction does not apply to legitimate journal articles found online through EBSCO (ATLA).) One should include author, article title, and website (URL) in footnotes and bibliography. Do not be naïve about online resources. If the information seems fantastic or unbelievable, it probably is not true. When in doubt, carefully seek to verify it.


⁵ The student's grade will be penalized for failure to turn in a finished report on time or for going beyond the time framework without prior permission.
E. Grading guidelines for B.A.R.

The probable weight of each requirement is as follows:
Exams 22.5% each; term paper—22.5% (plus 1% for the oral report); 14% for weekly reading documented on reading slips [including any quizzes]; daily grade 5% (divided equally between class participation and class attendance). Possible field trip and report ~ 12.5%

III. Class Schedule (for 2012)

Aug. 30  Brief review of syllabus.
I. Introduction to Biblical Archaeology
   A. Definition of biblical archaeology.
   B. Role of archaeology in New Testament studies
   C. Basic methods of archaeology.
   D. Basic chronology

   Assignment: Read McRay, pp. 11-13, 17-30; Currid, pp. 15-22 & look at color photos of archaeological sites (near p. 48); read Thompson, pp. 3-9. For extra credit: read Currid on Bethsaida (111-119) and on methods (44-65).

Sept. 6   I.E.  Brief history of archaeology [Currid chap.2]
II. Archaeology and the Hellenistic era (ca. 331 to 37B.C.)

   Assignment: Read Currid, 23-35, 67-76; McRay, 37-55. 212-13 and Holman Bible Atlas, 174-187. For extra credit: study Oxford Bible Atlas, ?pp. 82-83; 115-16; Archaeological Study Bible, xxii(b)-xxii(a);700, 1399, 1406, 1408, 1796, 1799, 1805, 1814, 1816 and Thompson, 249-267

Sept. 13  III. Ancient Documents and the Text and Meaning of the New Testament
   A. Greek papyri and other manuscripts impacting the N.T.
   B. Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls


20  IV. Roman occupation of Palestine

   Assignment: Read; McRay, pp. 55-63; 65-88; review 38-40, 43-48; Holman Bible Atlas, 190-199, 207-13; photo of Qumran (213); and Arnold, ZIBBC 2:142-43 on Pax Romana. and Ara Pacis +photo of aqueduct 310. Extra credit: Archaeological Study Bible , 1748, 1829, 1845, 1855; Thompson, pp. 319-344.

Sept. 27  *Student report due on Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus[

V. Herodian Construction in Palestine (ca. 37 to 4B.C.)
   A. In Jerusalem (including Temple Mount) [The Jerusalem that Jesus knew]

Oct.  4  
*Student report due on Caesarea Maratima*

B. Herodian construction outside Jerusalem
   1. Jericho
   2. Caesarea Maratima
   3. Samaria
   4. Hebron
   5. Herodium
   6. Masada (only briefly)


11  Mid-term Exam

18  VI. Jesus' Birth and Ministry
   A. Jesus' Birth and Youth
   B. Jesus' Galilean Ministry

Assignment: Read McRay, pp. 155-183; Holman Bible Atlas, 216-222; Arnold, 2:20-27, 34-52, 63-72. Also read Archaeology and the Bible, vol 2, pp. 188-225 and read or review Currid, pp. 111-119 (on Bethsaida); Archaeological Study Bible, 1584, 1587, 1589, 1591, 1623, 1635, 1637, 1638, 1643, 1651, 1667, 1668, 1723, 1727, 1732, 1751, 1757, 1783. Extra credit: ??Thompson, pp. 364-372 (+map 374-375); 386-389.

Oct. 25  C. Jesus' Ministry and Last Days in Judea
   1. Ministry in Judea & Tyre-Sidon
   2. Passion week
   3. Evidence for crucifixion
   4. Burial place of Christ (2 views)
   5. Shroud of Turin


?Oct. 30  ?Possible field trip to Ft. Worth (Southwestern Seminary): Lecturer Dr. Tom Davis: Archaeology, Cyprus and the Apostle Paul: New Evidence on Transformation of Christianity.

Nov. 1  *Student report(s) due on Athens*

VII. Archaeology and the Book of Acts/ Pauline epistles?
   A. Cities of Eastern/central Asia Minor (including Paul's 1st missionary journey)
   B. Cities of Macedonia
   C. Athens

Assignment: Read McRay, (reread p. 20); and read 225-241; 277-310; and Holman Bible Atlas, 236-245; 251-252; Arnold, 290-93; 298-99; 315-25; 331-54; 367-93; 419 + photos (253, 297, 365 & 420). Extra credit: Also read Archaeology and Bible, vol 2, 271-279; 288-293 & Archaeological Study Bible, 1788, 1793, 1795, 1802, 1804, 1898, 1904, 1927, 1944, 1946 and ?Thompson, 385, 390-399.
Nov. 8  *Student report(s) due on Corinth, Ephesus or Rome

D. Corinth

E. Ephesus

F. Rome

G. (If time) Possible evidence of Paul's Shipwreck & Journey to Rome


15  *Student report due: 7 churches of Asia Minor (in Rev. 2-3)

VIII. Archaeology and the Book of Revelation

Assignment: Read Thompson, pp. 418-423; McRay, pp. 243-275; Holman Bible Atlas, pp. 263-267; Archaeological Study Bible, 1940, 2046, 2051, 2053.

Nov. 22  NO CLASS. HAPPY THANKSGIVING.

Nov. 29  Due date for Field trip report?  Student report due.  Review for exam. Fill out evaluation forms (if applicable).

IX. Fall of Jerusalem and of Masada to the Romans

A. Capture and fall of Jerusalem

B. Last stand at Masada (Jewish "Alamo")


Dec. 6  FINAL EXAM
IV. Selected Bibliographic Data

Archaeological Bibliographies

[Remember to consult endnotes in McRay correlating to each chapter for bibliography; cf. also Thompson's footnotes.]


New Testament Abstracts

Look primarily under NT World [subheadings including "Archaeology, Jewish World, Greco-Roman World, & Dead Sea Scrolls"] for helpful summaries of journal articles and books.

Selected Bibliography


Good pictures and diagrams as well as helpful bibliography.

Edersheim, Alfred. *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services as They were as the time of Jesus Christ*. Kregel reprint: 1997.
Reprint edition has beautiful color photos & illustrations.


Excellent summary analysis of important cities with bibliographies.


Contains excellent bibliographies with each article.


Moorey, P. R. S. *Excavation in Palestine.* Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans.

Helpful on methodology and on specific sites.


Selected Primary Sources or Guides to Primary Sources


