

John 20 – When We Refuse to Believe

Hook (1005-1008) – Study: Despite biblical records, camels didn't exist in Israel until centuries later

By REENAT SINAY - 02/11/2014 14:16 - TAU archaeologists' study on first domesticated camels in ancient Israel presents a new challenge to the Bible's veracity as a historical document.

Although camels are mentioned over 20 times in the Bible, the patriarchs apparently didn't have much to do with them, according to a new archaeological study that calls the historicity of the Bible into question.

"Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels," (Genesis 31:17) is just one of several instances where domesticated camels are used in the stories of Abraham, Joseph and Jacob. However, archeologists Dr. Erez Ben-Yosef and Dr. Lidar Sapir-Hen of Tel Aviv University have found that camels weren't domesticated in the Land of Israel until centuries after the patriarchs lived, **providing direct proof that the Bible was compiled well after the events it describes.**

Drs. Ben-Yosef and Sapir-Hen used radiocarbon dating to identify the earliest date that domesticated camels were used in the eastern Mediterranean.

Their findings, published recently in the journal *Tel Aviv*, argued that camels became commonplace at the end of the 10th century BCE - several centuries after the patriarchs lived (2000-1500 BCE) and decades after the Kingdom of David, according to the Bible. Their article also defined the appearance of camels as a turning point in ancient Israel's international trade relations.

The oldest known domesticated camel bones were found in the Arava Valley, the ancient site of copper production, in a series of digs led by Drs. Sapir-Hen and Ben-Yosef. While camel bones were found in deeper sediments, archaeologists think they probably belonged to wild camels, who were present in the southern Levant since the Neolithic period. Researchers believe that the mass domestication of camels coincided with major changes in the copper industry, and opened Israel up to international trade and socioeconomic change.

Camels were most likely originally domesticated for use as pack animals in the Arabian Peninsula, which borders on the Arava Valley, towards the end of the 2nd millennium BCE.

There is a National Geographic article on the same topic which is more balanced. Though I have not found the paper) the science, while fascinating, is not definitive. More study, and more open minded study, is required. Reenat Sinay has made foolish statements because she refuses to believe.

What We Become When We Refuse to Believe

Blind
Divided

Afraid
Wounded

Book (1007-1010) – John 20:1-31

Look (1010-1040)

Blind

V1 – The followers of Jesus refused to believe that He would die and rise again (Matthew 16:21-22, Luke 9:22, 44-45). Their unbelief, like ours, was a matter not of ignorance, but of the will.

Mary Magdalene was a leader of the group of women that ministered to Jesus. She was accompanied by Mary the mother of James, Salome and Joanna as they walked in the early morning darkness toward Jesus' tomb. When they approached they saw that the stone had been rolled away.

V2 – Mary Magdalene was sent from the group to tell the disciples what had happened, and as the early morning light grew, the rest of the women grew bolder and entered the tomb. There they saw the angels (Matthew 28:1-8). Meanwhile Mary reached the gathered disciples and told them what she had seen.

VV 3-4 – Peter and John hurried away to the tomb, with the younger man, John, running ahead.

V5 – John stooped to look in the tomb but did not enter. He took a quick glance at the grave clothes (βλέπω *blepō*).

VV 6-7 – Peter arrived second but rushed into the tomb and examined (θεωρέω *theōreō*) Jesus' grave clothes. From this Greek word is derived the English word for theory, and it implies that Peter carefully studied the clothes and pondered what he saw there. The linen wrappings were not discarded but carefully rolled up and placed apart from the face cloth, something that grave robbers were unlikely to have taken the time to do.

V8 – John entered the tomb, surveyed the situation, and immediately believed that Jesus had risen from the dead. The Greek word (εἶδω *eidō*) means to see with understanding.

V9 – Until this time, none of the disciples understood that Jesus had to die and be raised from the dead. John was the first to get it.

V10 – Peter and John returned, reported what they had seen to the other disciples, and they all went home to ponder what was happening.

VV 11-13 – Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb after reporting to the disciples. She did not believe that he had risen from the dead but was distraught that she no longer had even the body of her beloved Lord. She had not yet looked into the tomb but finally did so and saw two angels sitting at the head and foot of the bed of the tomb. They asked her why she wept and she explained the situation as best she understood.

V14 – Mary then turned around, looking outside the tomb, and saw another man. She did not realize that He was the Resurrected Christ.

V15 – Jesus asked why she wept and who she sought. Through her tears and bewilderment, Mary explained her situation yet again.

V16 – Each question forced Mary to think about what was going on and eventually repeating her story had the desired effect. She only needed one more prompt to recognize Him, which she received when He identified her as “Mary”. Notice that she had been referred to as “woman” before.

V17 - Mary clung to Jesus in amazed wonder. He did not say “don't touch Me” but said “do not continue to cling to Me”, emphasizing that she could touch Him but eventually needed to let Him go. Jesus sent her to tell the brethren what she had seen.

Discussion/Application

Give examples of when your refusal to believe has made you blind to what God is doing in the world.

Give examples of when your refusal to believe has made you blind to your role in His mission.

What are you refusing to believe right now?

Afraid

V18 - At this point, the women and Peter had seen the empty tomb but did not know what it meant. John saw it also and believed that Jesus had risen from the dead but had not seen Him. Mary was the first one to see the resurrected Lord.

V19 – That night the disciples gathered to eat a meal, hide from the Jews, and probably discuss the strange occurrences that were going on. As the testimony of women was not regarded in ancient Israel and was not even admissible in court, they could not be sure that Mary Magdalene, who had been demon possessed once before, had not fallen into insanity with the death of her Master.

Despite the doors being locked and the brethren in a hiding place to keep the Jewish authorities from finding them, Jesus appeared in their midst. In His familiar voice He gave a familiar message, one perfectly suited to meet their greatest need... "peace".

Discussion/Application

The chief priests remembered that Jesus said that He would rise again, and they posted a guard to prevent grave robbers from stealing the body and supporting that claim. Can you imagine what would have happened if the disciples had believed even as much as the Sanhedrin did? They would have gone all over Jerusalem saying "Jesus said that He would rise again." Imagine the impact of that message when, two days later, Jesus, and many Old Testament saints, actually rose again!

If Jesus and the OT saints rose again into glorified bodies, why are Christians ever afraid? Why are we afraid?

Divided

V20 – Jesus confirmed that He had been bodily resurrected by showing them His wounded hands and side, now bearing the scars of His crucifixion. The disciples present finally believed.

VV 21-22 – Jesus again pronounced "peace" on the disciples, but this time He demonstrated by His breath that His Holy Spirit, the Comforter, would come to them and give them peace.

V23 – Only God can forgive sins because He is the aggrieved party in all sin. Only the one sinned against can forgive (Psalms 51:3-4). However, Christians can proclaim with confidence the forgiveness of God to those who accept Jesus.

V24 – Thomas was not with the group on the first night when Jesus appeared to them.

V25 – Thomas was a practical man with a slightly pessimistic bent and a determination not to be taken in again. He was a bit of a skeptic, demanded hard evidence, not just testimony, of the resurrection.

Discussion/Application

Ten of the eleven remaining disciples were thrilled with Jesus' resurrection, but Thomas' refusal to believe put an irreparable division between him and his former friends. How often does our refusal to believe in God's word divide us from those we love?

How many Christian marriages are damaged or even destroyed because one partner refuses to believe?

How many Christian children are estranged because someone refuses to believe?

Wounded

V26 – Eight days later Jesus appeared again to the disciples, including Thomas. He repeated His blessing of peace upon those gathered.

V27 – Jesus then addressed Thomas personally. He invited his skeptical disciple to look and touch the wounds in His hands and side.

V28 – Confronted with irrefutable evidence, Thomas replied in faith.

V29 – Jesus did not rebuke Thomas for his desire for evidence, but simply acknowledged it. It is easy for us to rebuke his unbelief but Thomas provided an opportunity for the evangelists to record a key bit of evidence for the resurrected Christ.

VV 30-31 – John provided a very clear mission statement for his gospel in these verses. While he did not even try to include all of the things that Jesus said and did, he did include enough so that his readers could believe in Jesus the Messiah of Israel and Son of God. Those who did believe would have life.

Illustration

Jesus lived with His scars, and so can we (FBCA – Dr. Mark Croston)

1. Been through something hard
2. Been through it victoriously
3. God heals wounds and turns them into scars
4. Signs of wounds that are not healed – anger, bitterness, unforgiveness
5. Jesus didn't hide or ignore His scars
6. The elderly sing out of long and hard experience. They don't just sing the words on the page.

When we believe in the promises and truths of God, our wounds heal and become scars, as Jesus' were. When we refuse to believe Him, our wounds do not heal, they bleed and fester. Like *What a Friend We Have in Jesus* says "Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear."

Discussion/Application

Thomas was deeply disappointed by Jesus' death. He had expected the Lord to rise up in rebellion and crush Rome, and suffered terribly when his Master was Himself crushed. Thomas was wounded, and until he believed, they did not heal.

What wounds do we have because we refuse to believe?

Took (1040-1045)

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Verdict – What do you want them to DO as a result of the truths they have just received?

Additional Reading – MDHarrisMD.com