**Paul Wright on Biblical Archeology**

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**Dr. Paul Wright**

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1. Introduction.
2. The Ottoman Turkish Empire. Europe saw this part of the world as a potential colony. Diplomats and military people came (e.g., Napoleon 1799). It was the first time that this world was looked at culturally. In 1850, Florence Nightingale; Mark Twain came, as did Agatha Christie. Camel caravans and other romantic images.
3. Scientific Study of the Ancient Middle East. The Bedouin today do not reflect Abraham, but Abraham did live in a tent under a tree. Tribalism and ethnicity, sacred space, these concepts emerged an developed. We can see the modern Middle East in the Bible, and in the Bible we can see the modern Middle East.
4. The Study of the Land Itself. We can bring together the reality of our experiences here in Israel, terra sancta, holy land. Ps. 78: holy order.
5. Geography. Theology may be the “queen of the sciences,” but the people who wrote the Bible lived in this area, were embedded in the biblical time and place.
6. Example of Psalm 18. “God is my rock” – that’s a geographical (geological) term.
7. Examples from St. John. “Out of me will flow living water.” Living water is an image of river. These are the realities, the concrete realities, upon which theology is based.
8. Numbers 13: Before Moses sent the spies, he said, “Go spy out the land of Canaan.” Go up to the Negeb. Go up to the hill country. See if the land is good or bad, the cities. Are there cities? Fortifications? Get some of the fruit and bring it back”.
9. First Epistle of John. “What we have heard and seen with our own eyes, what we have touched with our hands.” Get to know the place.
10. Ecclesiasticus: “A threefold cord is not easily broken”: (1) one God, (2) one chosen people, and (3) one place. We can see the link between God, people, and land in every religion, but it is special in Israel.
11. Genesis 12. “I will take you to a place that I will show you.” The United Kingdom, Judah, Judea-Samaria, Syro-Palestine. The Temple, the Holy of Holies, Mount Calvary.
12. Romans 1: Even those who don’t know the revealed God can know God as revealed in the world.
13. The dust has been blown in from Syria. We are tired. But we are in Israel, the best classroom of the world. We came to Israel, not to simply stay in a classroom. So imagine that we are in a Palestinian field, sitting on limestone seats.
14. Maps. From an airplane, we cannot see the details, we cannot see signs. Maps are good, but then we have to accept the authority of the map maker. To draw a line is a political act.
15. Paul Wright’s point: if we want to walk where Jesus walked, we have to know where he walked.
16. Jesus in the eyes of an Israeli travel guide. They “know” Jesus and the NT, but they are “outside the camp” of Christianity. They don’t want to have the tour guide say, “This is where he walked,” not “Scholars are not certain about where Jesus walked.”
17. Church Memories. We want to know about the places we have read about. The shepherd’s cave. The place of the nativity. But in the majority of biblical studies, we cannot say exactly where they took place. Most Christian pilgrims, here for a week, can only know at a superficial level. We, who are here for three months, can know more deeply.
18. Epistemology of Biblical Geography.
19. Introduction. In Nazareth, there is a place of the Annunciation, on the remains of a Byzantine structure from the sixth century. That’s 400-600 years after the Annunciation.
20. Historical Geography.
21. Definition. It has to do with human interactions with the land. It is a big subject. It connects us with the biblical texts. What underlies the events in the stories, and the person who wrote the biblical text.
22. Systematic. Historical geography has to do with the collective memory of the church.
23. Four Tools.
* Philology.
* Toponymy.
* Archaeology.
* Geography.
1. Philology.
2. Definition: “Lover of Words.” Philology studies language and texts. We look first at the history recorded in the texts. Let’s suppose we had a time machine. If we could go back in history. We have the thing that happened, and the words that recorded it.
3. Example: “God is my rock.” How are we to interpret it?
4. Hebrew Substructure.
5. *Sela*. This is a word that means, not a pebble, but an enormous rock out of which, for example, living water may flow.
6. The word “rock” can mean something very different, let’s say, if you’re born in Central Illinois.
7. Psalm 125:2. “As the mountains surround Jerusalem,” writes the Psalmist. What does it mean to speak of the mountains around Jerusalem.
8. Other languages. The example is Egyptian Hieroglyphics.
9. Image of hieroglyphics. Face in profile, plus a body (or cartouche), i.e., a bounded set of hieroglyphs.
10. When the Egyptians drew “Asians,” they looked a specific way. People with their arms tied. Cities in Canaan that had been conquered by Thutmose III.
11. Sound and Place. The hieroglyphs show us how the Egyptians pronounced names. They also indicate that the places listed were in order.
12. Joshua’s City Lists and Boundaries.
13. Historicity. When the biblical writer and other writers (e.g., Egyptian, Syrian) spoke of geography, they described what they saw.
14. Examples.
15. Megiddo is at the end of a path on a plain.
16. Lachish
17. Corroboration. Geographical data is believable. Apologists find in geography a good tool. It helps establish the credibility of the book. We read for geographical data and place names.
18. Toponymy.
19. Definition. The study of place names and their preservation over time.
20. Example of Beth-Shean.
21. Textual examples. From the time of 3000 BC – 300 BC, we have a place known as Beth-shean (south of the Sea of Galilee). It shows up in the Bible, in Egyptian texts, and in Mesopotamia.
22. Texts. The same place, from the time of Alexander the Great to the break up of the Byzantine Empire, was known as Scythopolis. At that time, the people of the place were Greek speakers.
23. Toponymy in Modern Times.
24. The Story of Edward Robinson. Robinson had studied with Gesenius. He inherited land. In 1838, Dr. Edward Robinson was offered to be the Bible Department at Union Theological Seminary in New York. At that time it was tiny and poor and conservative. He got a sabbatical before his start, asking, “How can I teach Bible if I have never been to Israel?”
25. Stability in the Middle East. In the 19th century, Mohammed Ali (a British military man) helped push the Turks out of Palestine. The British established a military presence. Robinson wanted to find the biblical landscape. He knew the texts in Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Strabo, Josephus, etc.
26. Scientific Approach. Robinson and one of his students, a linguist (Eli Smith), hired a local guide. They traveled by donkey. When they came to a place that looked old, Robinson said, “What is this place? How do you call it?” He discovered the indigenous place names. At Beth-Shean he asked, “What do you call this place?” He discovered columns. The people called their town “Beisan.” This is the same as Beth Shean. “Eureka!” (who discovered the displacement of water?)
27. Toponymic Connection. Robinson made 1,712 toponymic connections. He connected Beth-Shean and Scythopolis. The Greeks had imposed a new name, but the local people continued to call it Beisan or Beth-Shean. One God, one people, one land – the people never ceased to call it its ancient name. The Israeli map makers name it “Beth-Shean,” but the Arab locals continue to call it “Beisan.”
28. The Example of Nablus = Shechem = Neapolis.
29. The change of names indicates a tension. An “invader” has imposed a new name.
30. Michmash > Mukhmas.
31. Geba > Jaba.
32. Gibeon > el Jib.
33. Emmaus > Imwas and Motza.
34. Jericho > er-Rahia.
35. Ophrah (“demon”) . . . Taiybe (“favored”).
36. Dan > Tel el Qadi (“mound of the judge”).
37. Problem. Most place names were not preserved, but the principle remains sound. Place names give us a clue to history.

Break until 10:29.

1. Archaeology.
2. Definition. The origins of man-made things.
3. Example: Tel (or “mound”).
4. A “Tel” is an artificial mound made up of the remains of earlier civilizations, plus the dust and dirt of later eras.
5. Joshua 11 speaks of the Battles of Jericho, Ai, and Hazor. The second half of the book has City Lists and boundary descriptions. Scholars debate about the periods that Joshua reflects.
6. Analogy: the stories of World War II. We know the strategic spots. The Bible tells us about the strategic spots of the ancient Near East. When General Edmund Allenby, the Scottish general who King George ordered to conquer Jerusalem, he took Smith’s historical geography with him in his saddle bag. If the attack routes worked in biblical times, they’d work against the Turks. The Israelis did the same.
7. The Example of Joshua 11:10: “Joshua at that time turned back, and took Hazor, and smote the king thereof with sword: for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms” or towns (Tels?). Then verse 13: “But as for the cities that stood still in their strength, Israel burned none of them, save Hazor only: that did Joshua burn.” So archeologists look for a burn layer in a *tel* that reflects the text of Joshua.
8. Archaeologists looked for a mud-brick house that no-longer is, but which was ancestral land. It was identified as your place. Beth-Shean was the house of Shean. After 3000 years, there is a mound.
9. Mounds or Tels. If Joshua reflects 1400-1200 BC, then the ruins of Hazor must be a mound. Edward Robinson found the ruin of Hazor, a word that appeared in Egyptian and Babylonian texts. It’s north of the sea of Galilee. A mound that is ten times larger than the old city of Jerusalem.
10. Joshua burned Hazor only, according to 11:13. But he also burned Ai (Joshua 7). The one (Hazor) is a tel; the other (Ai) is a scattered ruin
11. Question. Some archaeologists refuse to use the Bible (said Chris). But Paul Wright replied that one should use the Bible, but carefully, understanding it rightly. The “city” of Ai was burned (Jo. 8:19).
12. An archaeologist has recently argued that she has found David’s palace.
13. Jerusalem is mentioned in Egyptian documents. They considered Jerusalem to be an important Egyptian royal city (in the Amara texts).
14. In the last ten years, there is a seal impression or signet ring with the name of Amen Hotep III. That connects Egypt and Jerusalem.
15. There are cuneiform tablets (Akkadian) that have been found in Jerusalem. So there were trained scribes in Jerusalem.
16. Therefore: by the time David entered Jerusalem, Jerusalem was already an important capital. Believers could say: Jerusalem is a Hebrew center.
17. Tel Dan inscriptions.
18. There is a cliff in Nazareth (“jumping mountain” or “Mt. Precipice”) off which Jesus jumped to escape.
19. Stratigraphy.
20. Example of Megiddo. There are 25 levels of time excavated.
21. In photograph 1, we can see a burn or ash layer. This enables us to understand a text that speaks of burning.
22. In photograph 2, we can see rooms divided by foundation stones.
23. Photography of Archaeological Digs.
24. In photograph 3, there is a tel near Tantur. There are stones that were shaped and lined up. The size of the building blocks reveal that this site was a palace or temple. If the location is strategic, we find a plaster floor, and dig a square meter down to bedrock. “Archaeology is the only science where the goal is to destroy the evidence.” So we destroy a part, and leave parts untouched to preserve the context. In this case, we can find destruction of one level, after which a second level marks a different phase of building. We can do “sequential” or relative dating.
25. Dame Agatha Christie married an archaeologist. Some of her books (“Murder on the Orient Express”) reflect an interest in archaeologist. “An archaelogist makes the best husband. The older I get, the more interested he is in me.”
26. The Dominant Object. Archaeologists judge by looking at the whole. Most of us drive cars newer than ten years. That is the norm, even though some people drive very old cars.
27. Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie. He established modern archaeological methods. He started in Egypt in tombs near the pyramids.
28. He was home-schooled, and eclectic.
29. He gave sense to Egyptology as a discipline.
30. He learned that tombs are a way of interpreting the past. Objects in a tomb indicate how the dead person lived.
31. He came to Israel and was looking for Lachish. He found at Tel el Hesi a large site. A wadi cut off a side of the mound. Petrie saw that the pottery had changed. He saw a pot that reminded him of a pot that he had seen in Egypt, which enabled him to date the pot at Tel el Hesi.
32. Pottery dating is now 125 years old, complicated and accurate. The burn layers, which can be dated by pottery at Hazor, can be related to the 12th century BC in Joshua. Geography and archaeology support a narrative. Petrie is buried on Mount Zion in the Protestant Cemetery. He willed his head to scientists in London, believing that his skull was expanding.
33. Pottery Dating. “We’re looking for a whole vessels in a sealed context.” In that case an amphora (for example), even though broken, can be reconstructed. Archaeologists need to know objects from the past well enough to interpret them. Today, for example, we drink water out of plastic bottles. We would not have drunk out of plastic bottles thirty years ago. In the ancient world, people drank out of clay vessels. Consider oil lamps:
34. Pre-Herodian (first century BC).
35. Late Iron Age 2 (Isaiah to Jeremiah).
36. Late Bronze (Moses to Joshua).
37. Four spouts, Middle Bronze 1 (2000 BC).
38. The study of archaeology “sacralizes” the land, showing that geographical data substantiates the biblical text. Israel has exposed granite (Mount Sinai), sandstone, and limestone. Mount Hermon is Jurassic. The limestone is 60-70 million years old.
39. Next Meeting: Geography. See September 17, 2015.