



The Tower of Siloam

Reprinted with permission from

The Expository Times

[http://www.continuumjournals.com/journals/index.asp?
jref=24](http://www.continuumjournals.com/journals/index.asp?jref=24)

Vol. 115 No. 2 (November 2003): 37-45

By George Wesley Buchanan

Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.

Read the accompanying [**Newsletter for December 2003**](#)

As soon as I arrived in Israel (July–August, 2000) I went at once to Jerusalem, where I had previously lived for two years, and the first day I was there I walked to the City of David, which I had seen many times. I was there after Kathleen Kenyon said the City of David was not on the Dome of the Rock, but down near the spring of Siloam. Most people did not believe her, and I had serious doubts. How could David's holy city be this little town of about 10–12 acres, about ¾ of a mile long and 1/3 mile wide?

Now, however, archaeologists have discovered a wall that is more than 5,000 years old that circumscribed that little ridge, and alongside the eastern wall, on the Kidron Valley side, remains the footing of the Tower of Siloam. These are only the remnants of a much more complete recovery in 1920 by the archaeologist, Raymond Weill.¹ Weill, however, identified these ruins as constituting only "**a circular structure.**" It was not until the old wall was discovered in relationship to this structure that it was identified as the Tower of Siloam.

The whole picture now becomes clear. That 10–12 acre city was a strategic location. The spring was central to the city, and the ridge made it a secure fortress. It was easy to fortify a triangular, rocky ridge that was very steep on two sides, as it had been before the Hasmonean, Simon, removed the citadel and used the residue to fill in the entire Tyropoeon Valley. All the ancients had to do was to build a wall of small rocks, like a huge retaining wall, with the solid cliff to back it up. At that time the ridge displayed two hills on top. The tall hill was at the south end, and it became David's citadel. That was Mount Zion. At the north end there was a lower, broader hill, called Mount Ophel, which lay west, and north, of the Spring of Siloam. In between were David's palace and either David's altar and tent or one of the temples, right over and behind the spring. After the time of Solomon, along the eastern wall, at the north end, was the temple, which was also a fortress. At the south end was David's citadel, another fortress. In between was the Tower of Siloam, closer to the Spring of Siloam than to the Valley of Hinnom. On the western side of the ridge was once also a steep cliff that was fortified by a western wall. That is now an unfortified Tyropoeon Valley.

During the Maccabean period, the Syrians took control of the citadel and from it controlled the entire city. Jews hated that intrusion, and as soon as Simon gained freedom from Syria, he spent three years, removing the entire hill, down to bed rock, dumping the dirt into the Tyropoeon Valley (*Ant* 13.214–217), and filling in the valley between Zion and the ridge to the west. That which had been the tallest part of the ridge and city became the lower city (*Ant* 13.214–217). The temple became the highest point.

When Romans took control, they built a huge fortress, which is now mistakenly called the temple mount, north of the city of David, which enclosed 35 acres — about three times as much as the entire City of David. This was the Tower of Antonia. This fortress follows the

same pattern as Roman fortresses and camps in other places in the world.² Herod's fortress was built to replace the old Syrian citadel, and it was notoriously superior. It was much bigger and taller. From it soldiers could look over the top of the temple from the north, as David's citadel did earlier, from the south. As many as 6,000 Roman soldiers were kept in the Tower of Antonia at one time. Roman deities were worshipped there. Orthodox Jews would not enter Herod's temple, let alone the Roman city, because of its defilement. Six hundred feet south of Herod's fortress, Herod built a new temple, which Romans could overlook from the Tower of Antonia (*War* 6.144). There were two bridges that connected the two.

When I first saw the City of David in July 2000, I knew at once that Solomon's temple had to have been there, rather than up in the enclosure of the Dome of the Rock. I also thought David's altar and tent had to have been here, and also Zerubbabel's temple. At first, however, I thought that Herod's temple was inside Herod's city, but then I read Dr Ernest Martin's excellent book, *The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot* (Portland: ASK Publications, 2000). Martin collected literary evidence, both contemporary and later Jewish, Christian and Muslim literature, that proved that Herod's temple was also down, behind the Spring of Siloam. Scriptural testimony also places the temple on the ridge above the spring of Siloam.³

The Temple and the Springs

Nehemiah described the stairs that went down to the spring of Siloam from the City of David (Neh. 3:15–16) and the fountain gate at the base of the stairs (Neh. 12:37). This may have been where the high priest descended (*yah-ráhd יְהָד*) to immerse himself five times on the Day of Atonement and where the priests of the temple went for purification after nocturnal emissions (mYoma 3–34). All of that water from the spring was necessary for the performance of sacrifices in the temple. The numerous sacrifices made could not have been satisfied by water from the cisterns inside Herod's fortress. Describing the temple of Zion before its fall (70 IA)⁴ Tacitus said,

'The temple was built like a fortress . . . There is an ever-flowing spring tunnelled under the hills into collecting pools and cisterns.'

•

Hist 11.12

Aristeas (c.285 BIA) explained how the landscape of the temple area was designed with paved stones and gutters to carry away the blood washed down from the sacrifices. There was an inexhaustible supply of water gushing into the temple for sacrifices (Aristeas 87–89). This suggests that part of the temple was built over the spring or else the temple was so close to the spring that water from the spring could be directed from it into the temple itself. The temple scroll gives directions for establishing a place where priests could change their garments, bathe, and change into priestly garments before participating in the temple services. This bathing place required flowing water with a canal around it so the bath water, like the blood, could flow away into a drain that escaped into the ground (1QT 32.11–15). This mixture should not be touched before it vanished into the ground, because it would be defiled with blood (1QT 32.14–15). Rabbis said it would flow into the brook Kidron (mMid 3.2).

Yadin noticed that there was a great deal of agreement among the sources regarding the necessity of flowing water for sacrifices, but he seemed not to wonder what the source of all this water was if the temple was up north on top of the Dome of the Rock, where there is no water flowing.⁵ Other archaeologists, historians and religious people have also assumed for many years that the temple once stood in the very place where the Dome of the Rock now stands. Four of the most recent archaeologists to publish their choice locations for the temple inside the huge walls built by the Romans during Herod's time were Kaufman, Sporty, Ritmeyer and Jacobson. They all presumed that the temple had once existed in the area where the Dome of the Rock now stands. None of them agreed on its exact location.⁶

Pre-Martin Scholarly Opinions

The Roman fortress constructed under Herod's administration is large. There is easily room for a temple and an altar within that space in several locations, and fourteen scholars have indicated fourteen slightly different places, each one of which is intended to establish the very point where he thought the temple formerly stood.⁷ Each one assumed that the temple had been inside of the walls that surround the Dome of the Rock. The four most recent suggestions are as follows.

Kaufman said the temple had not been located on the spot where the Dome of the Rock now stands.⁸ He thought it would have to be directly in front of the Golden Gate entrance, and studied the ground to argue his case. Kaufman chose the NW corner of the grounds for the true location.

Ritmeyer, however, took a different approach. He claimed that the rock at the centre of the Dome of the Rock was the place where the ark was placed in the holy of holies. Ritmeyer's theory had been widely accepted, and many accepted him as the one who had '**identified the original Temple Mount**'.⁹ At first, other scholars asked only technical questions of detail about Ritmeyer's interpretation of rabbinic literature or neglect of a few relevant texts,¹⁰ and Ritmeyer answered them to the satisfaction of many. For example, Pretzky was one of Ritmeyer's early critics. To answer one of Pretzky's criticisms,¹¹ Ritmeyer said Pretzky's point was not valid because it was based on the Talmud. He said,

'The Talmud was written approximately a thousand years after the last sighting of the Ark, during the reign of Josiah. It is doubtful whether memory can stretch so far.' ¹²

Hershel Shanks invited Jacobson to evaluate the work of Kaufman and Ritmeyer, to learn which was correct. Jacobson thought they were both wrong.¹³ He thought that the temple should have been where the Dome of the Rock now is but the altar should be east of the temple. None of these scholars even considered the possibility that the temple could have been anywhere else except inside the walls that surrounded the Dome of the Rock. This means that Martin's book, *The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot*, came as a shock. Only Ritmeyer responded. He had been comfortable with his position of academic status, until Martin's book appeared showing that the primary assumption upon which Kaufman, Sporty, Jacobson and Ritmeyer based their technical observations was false.

The temple never existed within the walls that surrounded the Dome of the Rock. Instead of the Talmud, Ritmeyer based most of his rabbinic arguments on the Mishnah, that was finally edited in the third century IA — centuries after the eyewitnesses either of the ark or the temple in which it was housed. Following his own logic, however, Ritmeyer should have been still more favourably impressed by the accounts written by the contemporary witnesses of Enoch, Hecataeus, Aristeas, Tacitus, Josephus and the Temple Scroll, but he was not. Yadin had recognized the necessity for lots of water in the temple for all the sacrifices and cleansings; he just overlooked the fact that the area near the Dome of the Rock had only cisterns for water supply. Kaufman, Ritmeyer and Jacobson, however, never even tried to find a huge spring near that area that would meet the needs of sacrifices and be available all the year around. Except for Josephus none of them consulted the earlier testimony written from eyewitnesses to the location of the temple.

Martin showed clearly that the temple had been located near the Spring of Siloam, rather than any place inside of Herod's walled city and fortress. Kathleen and Leen Ritmeyer worked intensively to learn details about the temple. Part of their insights might be adapted to a different location, 600 feet south of Herod's fortress (*War* 6.144), if Leen Ritmeyer had analysed the new data Martin introduced appreciatively. Their analyses of Herod's walls are just as valid if they were recognized as parts of Herod's fortress as if they had been parts of the 'temple mount'.

Ritmeyer followed others in concluding that the Herodian walls had been built on top of earlier walls, and that there was a moat somewhere in the vicinity.¹⁴ The ridge that David found at Zion needed some kind of northern fortification. There were steep cliffs to protect the city on the east and west sides. Mount Zion was a natural hill that could easily have

been fortified at the south end of the ridge. This became David's citadel, placed at the end of the ridge as fortresses ordinarily are, such as Megiddo, Dan and Gezer. At the north end of this ridge, however, other fortification was needed, and the Hasmoneans had started to strengthen that before the time of Herod. If there had not been a fortress and strong walls there when David began his attack on the city, he could have conquered the city from the north without any resistance.

Instead of adapting appreciatively to Martin's discoveries Leen Ritmeyer took Martin's insights as a threat, and responded defensively. He ignored most of Martin's data, arguments and contexts. Instead he selected a few of Martin's statements, took them out of context, and said they were 'flawed', 'strange', and 'outrageous'. [15](#) Before his death, Martin answered Ritmeyer, point by point. Martin is no longer alive to defend his thesis, but there are still scholars who agree with Martin's insights, [16](#) so these important Interpretations are not likely to vanish. Ritmeyer can still take them into account if he chooses. The secular witnesses given above are not the only sources that assumed the close relationship between the Spring of Siloam and the temple. There is also scripture.

Biblical Testimony

Ezekiel's vision of the new age involved the stream flowing out from under the threshold of the temple, running down under the south edge of the temple toward the altar (Ezek. 47:1), down the Kidron Valley, toward the Dead Sea. It sweetened the water of the Dead Sea so that fish could survive there (Ezek. 47:10), because it flowed out from the sanctuary (Ezek. 47:12.). [17](#) All of this water had its origin in the temple from which it flowed south and then went [through Hezekiah's tunnel] under the threshold of the temple and on into the Kidron Valley (Ezek. 47:1-2, 12; 2 Chron. 32:3, 30; 2 Kings 20:20), and down Wady Qumran to the Dead Sea.

The topography and geography of Ezekiel's vision fit perfectly, once it is recognized that the temple was adjacent to the spring of Gihon (Siloam) that provided all of that water. After all, Ezekiel had lived in Jerusalem before he was taken to Babylon. He knew the geography and topography of that area. He would not have pictured a temple high on the dry hill north of the spring where this could not happen. Enoch also claimed to have seen the holy mountain with a stream that flowed underneath that mountain toward the south (1 Enoch 26:2-3). There is no such stream flowing underneath the Dome of the Rock. Hezekiah's tunnel does not flow north. The holy mountain was obviously the temple mount, located just above Ain Gihon. This is the location of which Ezekiel spoke, where the stream that flowed underneath the mountain also flowed underneath the temple near Siloam. That was a reference to Hezekiah's tunnel. [18](#)

An early author, who had obviously read Ezekiel 47, visualized having been taken to Paradise, where there were blooming and fruit-bearing trees, whose roots were from an immortal land that were watered from a river of gladness, and the region around them, otherwise known as Zion, was the land of life of the age [to come]. These fruits were probably watered by the river in the Kidron Valley, and the area around was the land of life of the age [to come] (Odes of Sol [G] 11.15-16)

The psalmist spoke of the temple, where '**Yehowah [19](#) sits over the flood**' where he is '**enthroned as king for the age**' (Ps. 29:10). '**The voice of Yehowah is over the water; the God of glory roars; Yehowah over much water.**' The flood was the huge fountain of water, pouring through Hezekiah's tunnel, under the temple. Another psalmist said, '**There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy dwelling place of the Most High**' (Ps. 46:5). '**The dwelling place of the Most High**' was the temple positioned near the streams that '**make glad the city of God**'. The Scroll of Blessings asked that the '**Lord bless**' the recipient from his holy dwelling, '**the fountain of the age**' (1 QSB 1.3). The holy dwelling at '**the fountain of the age**' was clearly the temple just above Ain Gihon.

One of the factors Zechariah anticipated in the future restoration, when Yehowah would become king over all the land, was having '**the water of life flowing out from**

Jerusalem' (Zech. 14:8–9). The Jerusalem he pictured was Zion, near the spring of Gihon (Siloam) — not the hill to the north that later became Herod's city.

When the NT seer looked forward to a new Jerusalem, he anticipated a heavenly city that had come to earth from God in heaven, prepared as a bride for a new wedding contract. In this new city one of the basic descriptions was '**the river of the water of life going out from the throne of God'** (Rev. 22:1, *thráw-noo too theh-oó* [θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ] = *keé-say áyl*, *לֹא אָסַךְ* *áyl* 1) שְׁرָקֵם *Shrekem* [QpHab 12:8–9]).

Those who had come up out of great tribulation would be before the '**throne of God'** where '**the Lamb would lead them to the springs of the water of life'** (Rev. 7:15, 17). These 'springs of water' were Ain Gihon and Ain Rogel at the base of the temple mount in Zion, where the Spring of Gihon streamed from the altar of the temple down the Kidron Valley to the south. The seer related the temple to the area near the spring of Gihon.

Hezekiah and the Rabshekah

Once I saw all of this and realized how much history took place in this little town, the scripture became clearer Suppose you were Hezekiah, for example, and you knew there were thousands of Assyrian soldiers stationed on Mount Scopus and the Mount of Olives, just across the Kidron Valley from Jerusalem. The Assyrian spokesman (the Rab-shekah) was standing on top of your wall and shouting so that nearly all of the people of that little town could hear, without any type of magnification, announcing that the Assyrians would come the next day and destroy every person in that little city if they did not surrender immediately. What would you do?

Hezekiah first consulted the chief of military intelligence, the Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah told Hezekiah not to worry. Isaiah and his team had the situation well in control. These soldiers would all be gone by the very next day. How did Isaiah know? He knew that all of these soldiers depended on the spring for water He also knew that the wall was built right over the top of the spring, so that water could be obtained on both sides of the wall. Inside the wall there was a pool where people could come and dip water. There was probably a pool on the outside as well where water was not in motion. All the Jews had to do was to poison the water the Assyrians used, and thousands of Assyrians would lie dead upon the mountains the next day. Hezekiah prayed, but the Lord probably had a little help from the Jewish intelligence. This might have been one of the earliest uses of chemical and biological warfare.

This is not the usual explanation of this story, but it is more reasonable than others. Some scholars suppose that '**The angel of the Lord'** (Isa. 37:36) that killed the Assyrian army was really a disease. [20](#) That is, of course, possible, but how did Isaiah know when diseases were going to break out? Most scholars are non-committal about the validity of this story. They think it might be exaggerated fact or it could be fabricated legend. [21](#) Sarosdy, for example, thought this was some sort of fairytale. He thought the numbers given were ridiculous. He argued that if some Assyrians died, they would have died of thirst when Hezekiah may have closed up the spring, but this could not have happened overnight. [22](#)

Sarosdy did not explain how Hezekiah could have closed that huge spring under the watchful eye of the Assyrians. The spring probably did not run through a water tap that could be turned off and on at will. Closing it would not have been an easy undertaking. Shea had made a strong case for two invasions against Hezekiah. By comparing the biblical texts with Sennacherib's annals and the Egyptian inscriptions, he held that there was one invasion in 701 BC and another in 688 or 687 BC. [23](#) Shea thought that Hezekiah had spent the intervening years strengthening his defences and working to develop the tunnel. It is not clear how much of this work was finished before the Assyrians returned, but Shea thought it was the second attack that left the Assyrians dead in the Kidron Valley.

Assyria was the real threat to Judah in the time of Isaiah. When Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, was worried about the imminent danger of Israel and Syria, he started to check out the city's water supply at the upper pool (Isa. 7:14). The archaeologists, Reich and Shukron, recently discovered the upper pool, near the Spring of Siloam. [24](#) It was a normal place for

a king to be who was in danger of a military attack. Isaiah reminded Ahaz that the nation's real danger was not either of these two small countries. It was Assyria (Isa. 7:17-20). The water supply was important both for the security of Judah and the success of any attacking enemy. Hezekiah had the tunnel built to provide secure water sources for Judah and to close off the water supply to attackers (2 Chron. 32:4). He may even have arranged a small pool on the outside of the wall, precisely for the purpose of trapping the Assyrians.

Sarosdy correctly held that the spring was there as a necessity for the Assyrians and played an important role in the event. If, however, the Assyrians had been poisoned, none of the problems Sarosdy suggested would have occurred. Death could have come rather suddenly, just as Isaiah expected. Since Hezekiah submitted to the Assyrians and gave them all of the gold of the national treasury (2 Kings 18:16-37), some think there could not have been any other event, such as this. That does not follow. Had this slaughter of Assyrians happened first, Hezekiah's submission might still have happened later. On the other hand, Hezekiah is reported to have had many possessions. Some of them might have been hidden in places outside of the treasury that he showed Sennacherib (2 Chron. 32:29), allowing him to continue his building projects. New archaeological evidence shows the small size of Zion at the time and the military importance of the spring.

It would not have taken thousands of Assyrian soldiers to take that small town. The Assyrian campaign was really organized to expand Assyrian borders westward. That is why so many troops were present. Controlling Palestine was just part of the programme. Palestine was the land bridge between Egypt and the great nations of the north and east. Even if this had been the massive, miraculous slaughter that was reported, it would not have destroyed all of the Assyrian army. Assyria still could have sent other troops to confront Hezekiah again and obtained his submission.

The submission of Hezekiah does not invalidate the report that there was also destruction on Mount Scopus, the Mount of Olives, and the Kidron Valley even if the actual number was smaller than the one quoted. The destruction of all of these soldiers did not destroy Assyria or prevent it from returning and forcing Hezekiah to submission. Hezekiah depended on Egypt for protection against Assyria.

The fact that Joel expected a similar event to happen later in the Kidron Valley when all of the armies of the enemy would be overcome (Joel 4:11-20; RSV 3:11-20) might indicate that Joel knew of a similar earlier event that happened in that valley in the time of Hezekiah. Joel thought that since God did this once to save Israel, he might do it again. That was not a ridiculous dream or prophecy. Almost any country that wanted to capture Jerusalem would have to camp on the mountains east of the city and use the water from the spring. When that happened the attackers could be cut down like grain or grapes, by just poisoning the water

The details of the event may be exaggerated and explained to suit the faith of the interpreter, just as the exodus from Egypt was, but the Israelites really got out of Egypt, and it is likely that numerous Assyrians really died in the Kidron Valley. The needs of water for the Assyrian army and the fact that Isaiah was certain that it would happen in advance suggests that the deaths were not accidental. The reports in Isaiah, 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles may be more valid than scholars have recognized.

Davidic Family Quarrels

Think of the Davidic family quarrels that took place in this little town! Absalom claimed possession of the kingdom, so he climbed up on the roof of David's palace and had intercourse with four of David's concubines, '**In the sight of all Israel'** (2 Sam. 16:22) where everyone in the city could look down from Mount Zion or Mount Ophel and observe the theatrical performance. That could not have happened if the palace had been up on the Dome of the Rock.

When Adonijah was celebrating his succession to the throne at Ain Rogel — just 300 metres south of Ain Gihon — Solomon, Nathan and the priest Zadok were gathered at Ain Gihon. While there, '**Zadok, the priest, took the horn of oil from the tent**' — that is the tent of the Lord (1 Kings 2:2 8) that David established for the chest containing the contract, which

he brought up to Jerusalem. There he placed it adjacent to the altar near Ain Gihon. The text continues:

'Then he [Zadok] anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the shofar and shouted, "Long live King Solomon!"'

.

1 Kings 1:39

Adonijah and his friends heard the shout, just a few city blocks away. Adonijah had to run at once to David's altar and take hold of the horns for security, but he did not have to run up to the Dome of the Rock. He had only a few city blocks to run. By the time he got there, Solomon had already ridden his father's mule to the palace, just a short distance from the spring where he had been anointed, and he was sitting on the throne when people told him Adonijah was asking for security. Solomon promised that so long as Adonijah remained virtuous he would be secure, but if he did anything evil he would die. He soon displeased Solomon, and Solomon had him killed. All of these events took place within easy walking distance of one another (1 Kings 1:5-2:25).

The Lukian Tower of Siloam

The tower of Siloam was small, compared to the huge towers in the Old City of Jerusalem. The remaining walls or footings have been recovered. The inside of the tower was about 19 feet (6 metres) in diameter, and the outside was about 22 feet (7 metres) in diameter. [25](#) It was situated along the old wall on the inside, between the spring of Siloam and the Hinnom Valley. [26](#)

It existed in NT times and is reported in a chreia in Luke. It is one of the most reliable and early textual passages in the gospels. The reference was written down in the form of two chreias (*kbray-ah, xp̄ia*), earlier than any of Paul's writings or anything in the Gospel of Mark.

A chreia is a literary form, possibly designed by Diogenes, about 2,500 years ago. He required his students to memorize important passages from the works of great people, including his own. He taught them short cuts in memory which probably meant taking sharp lines from these works and putting them in chreia form, so that a much larger report could be remembered. Other chreias were made from hearing things said and writing them down at once in chreia form. In either case it is likely that Diogenes actually checked the work. Most of these are only one sentence long. A responsive chreia summarizes an entire event that

- (1) identifies the speaker or actor,
- (2) gives the situation that prompted the person to act or speak, and
- (3) tells what the person did or said.

In Greek, the identity of the speaker or actor and the situation that prompted him or her to speak or act are usually contained in a genitive absolute. The rest of the sentence tells what the person did or said. The entire unit is very brief.

These literary units that were used more than 2,000 years ago were not invented by the so-called form critics of the twentieth century — Dibelius, Bultmann, and Taylor. Twentieth-century form critics who knew of chreias misunderstood them. Chreias are defined extensively in Greek books of Rhetoric, [27](#) written nearly 2,000 years ago. They selected choice parts of the actions, sayings, or writings of important people to preserve them for the future.

I have translated 194 chreias from the Greek that are preserved containing sayings of Diogenes. They are impressively coherent. There are hundreds of chreias attributed to church fathers, preserved to retain the memory of things church fathers did and said — used just as Diogenes planned these forms to be used. They could later be expanded into sermons, and many were — for example, the chreia in Matthew 15:1-3 is expanded in

Mark 7:1–9 — but they were first written down before that happened, at a time when they were understood just as they were. They were not later composed on the basis of any oral tradition or so called ‘silences of Jesus’.

There are twenty-eight chreias in the gospels preserving sayings of Jesus — all of which are coherent among themselves and coherent with the thirty-eight parables of Jesus. Wherever history or geography is mentioned in one of these chreias, it is in Palestine at the time of Jesus and Pilate. Two of these are found in Luke 13:1–5:

'Certain people, going along, at that time announced to him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate mixed with their sacrifices. He answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse criminals than all the Galileans because they suffered these things? No, but if you do not repent all of you will likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the Tower of Siloam fell and killed them. Do you think that these were worse debtors than all the inhabitants of Jerusalem? No, but I tell you if you do not repent all of you will likewise perish.'" [28](#)

The Galileans whose blood Pilate mixed with their sacrifices are nowhere else mentioned in scripture or surrounding literature. The eighteen who were killed when the Tower of Siloam fell are mentioned nowhere else. Both events occurred around Jerusalem, just a few metres apart, during Jesus’ ministry, when Pilate was governor (26–36 IA). These reports were written down when people knew all about the events and did not have to be told ‘which Galileans’ or ‘which eighteen’. How far away from Jerusalem could that have been? Or how much later than the events could that have been written down without any explanation? Think about it — 2,000 years ago, when there were no cell-telephones, no TVs, no radios, no newspapers, no telegraphs, e-mail, web, or other modern means of communication. The ruins of this tower have now been discovered inside the City of David, near the old wall and near the spring of Siloam, several metres south of Herod’s fortress, [29](#) confirming the validity of Luke 13:1–5.

Now the ruins of the Tower of Siloam have been found, and the location of the temple is known. These two structures were constructed very close to one another. At most they were only a few blocks apart. The blood Pilate shed in the temple is readily understood as a military confrontation. The eighteen who were killed when the Tower of Siloam fell might have been killed in a construction accident, but the fact that both chreias are mentioned together, and that the areas involved are geographically very close to each other, suggests that both events probably occurred at the same time and for the same reason, but this is only a deduction. The original readers of these chreias knew precisely what happened. The chreias only reminded them of something they already knew. That is why they were called ‘shortcuts in memory’.

The event in which Pilate killed the Galileans while they were offering sacrifices is nowhere else recorded, but if some redactor had invented these sayings fifty years later in Rome, Egypt, or Asia Minor and wanted to attribute them to Jesus for the local needs of the local church, he or she would have had to describe the Galileans and the eighteen more completely. Anyone who would believe that these were the inventions of the later church would have to be able to believe eight or ten incredible things before breakfast. The most logical conclusion of an objective historian is that these were actual reports of the sayings of Jesus. They happened in history at the very time Jesus and Pilate both lived and within the walls of the very city of David in which the temple stood.

The only reason NT scholars have not noticed this before is *not* that they did not have the ruins of the Tower of Siloam to look at. It is because they have been imprisoned by the hypothesis that Mark was the earliest gospel and that most of Matthew and Luke are additions of the later church. This hypothesis was invented by Ewald in the early nineteenth century — not as an analytical, historically based conclusion, but for defensive purposes, *only*. It has been used rhetorically ever since for the same reason. Archaeological discoveries and the Dead Sea Scrolls, however, continue to intrude upon the security of antiquated hypotheses.

At the meeting of the Society of New Testament Studies meeting in Durham, England, August 2002, Professor James Dunn astutely suggested, in his presidential address, that NT scholars were inhibited by their doctrinal 'default settings' that excluded important data. Archaeological data, such as this, may sooner or later force NT scholars to change their academic 'default settings' and open their minds to historical data. When this happens scholars will learn that the church can stand the tests of truth.

Conclusions

These data suggest the following:

1. David's tent and altar and all of the temples were constructed upon the ridge just above and behind the spring of Siloam (old Ain Gihon). They could never have belonged on the dry hill, surrounded by Herod's walls and the Tower of Antonia.
2. Jesus does not come to us as one unknown. There is an impressive amount of valid data for Jesus research available for the objective historian who will look for them on the soil of Palestine and in the scripture and surrounding literature rather than the ivy halls of Europe or America and rhetorical books on trial techniques.

George Wesley Buchanan, November, 2003

* This article is presented as given in *The Expository Times* with British spelling and punctuation. Minor formatting changes were made. DWS

1 T. Ariel (ed.), *Excavations of the City of David 1978–1985. Directed by Yigal Shiloh V* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, c.2000), pp. 18–21 R. Weill, *La Cité de David* (Paris: Geunther, 1920–47), p. 2.

2 J. D. Tabor, 'Locating the Herodian Temple: Old and New Theories in Light of Ancient Literary Evidence' (Video-tape made by Biblical Archaeology Society). Martin, *Temples*, pp. 58–59.

3 Tabor read Martin's book and reported that he was first shocked by the boldness of Martin's conclusions, but was later 80 per cent persuaded. M. R Germano, Editor, *BA* [www.bibarch.com], DWS], said, '**Not only a work of significant scholarly impact it may well serve as the awaited stimulus for the building of Jerusalem's Third Temple.**'

4 IA and BIA (international age and before the international age) are politically correct abbreviations used in preference to the apartheid abbreviations, AD, BC and CE, BCE.

5 Y. Yadin (ed.), *The Temple Scroll* (Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society, 1983) I, p. 222.

6 H. Shanks, 'Everything You Ever Knew about Jerusalem is Wrong' *BAR* 25.6 (1999): 20–29, and 'I Climbed Warren's Shaft', *BAR* 25.6 (1999): 30–35; J. Sudilovsky, 'Virtual Temple Mount', *BAR* 27.4 (2001): 16. R. Reich and E. Shukron, 'Light at the End of the Tunnel', *BAR* 25.1 (1999) 22–33, 72. A. S. Kaufman, 'Where the Ancient Temple of Jerusalem Stood', *BAR* 9.2 (1983): 40–59, D. Jacobson, 'Sacred Geometry', *BAR* 25.4 (1999): 42–53, 62–63; 25.5:54–64, L. Ritmeyer, 'Locating the Original Temple Mount', *BAR* 18.2 (1992): 44.

7 Ritmeyer, 'Locating', p. 44.

8 Kaufman, 'Ancient Temple', pp. 40–59; Jacobson, 'Sacred Geometry', *BAR* 25.4 (1999): 54–64.

9 L. Ritmeyer, 'The Ark of the Covenant', *BAR* 22 (1996): 49. It had been accepted by E. Stern (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), II, p. 718.

10 G. Avni, 'Jerusalem as a Textbook', *BAR* 22.3 (1996): 65–68.

11 Z. Pretzky, 'The Long and the Short of it', *BAR* 22.3 (1996): 66–67.

12 L. Ritmeyer, *BAR* 22.3 (1996): 67.

13 D. Jacobson, 'Sacred Geometry', 42–53, 62–63; 25.5 (1999): 54–63, 74.

14 L. Ritmeyer, 'Locating', pp. 22–45, 64–65.

15 <http://www.templemountonline.com>. [Note: As of December 2003, <http://templemountonline.com> does successfully link. *DWS*]

16 At his own website, <http://www.askelm.com/temple/t010513.htm>, Martin answered Ritmeyer competently and extensively. Those who read both web sites will recognize Ritmeyer's motivation in trying to dismiss Martin's book.

17 See further Buchanan. *The Gospel of Matthew* 2 (Lewiston: Mellen Biblical Press, c.1996), pp. 816–18.

18 So Martin, *Temples*, pp. 277–280.

19 This is the correct pronunciation of the tetragramaton, as is clear from the pronunciation of proper names in the First Testament (FT), poetry, fifth-century Aramaic documents, Greek translations of the name in the Dead Sea Scrolls and church fathers. See further Buchanan, 'Some Unfinished Business with the Dead Sea Scrolls', *RevQum* 49–52, 13 (*Mémorial Jean Carmignac* (ed.), F. Garcia Martinez et E. Peuch (Paris, 1988), pp. 411–20).

20 R. B.Y. Scott, *The Book of Isaiah* (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1956), p. 371. G. A. Smith, *The Book of Isaiah* (London: Nodder & Stoughton, n.d.), p. 359.

21 J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, c.1986), Pp. 669–70; J. Maachline, *Isaiah 1–39* (New York: Macmillan, c.1962), p. 233; E Delitzsch, *Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 198. W. W. Hallo, 'Jerusalem under Hezekiah: an Assyriological Perspective', L. I. Levine, *Jerusalem: its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: Continuum, 1999), p. 38, noted that there were very few defendants of the two-campaign theory. He also observed, however, that '**The account in II Kgs. 19:35 and Isa 37:36 attributes Sennacherib's retreat to the angel of the Lord who struck down 185,000 men — a figure uncannily close to the 200,150 exiles of Sennacherib's annals.**'

22 C. Sarosdy, 'What Really Happened at Lachish', *BAR*, 18.5 (2002): 14, 70.

23 W. H. Shea, 'Jerusalem under Siege', *BAR* 25.6 (1999): 36–44, 64.

24 R. Reich and E. Shukron, 'Light at the End of the Tunnel,' *BAR* 25.1 (1999): 22–33, 72.

25 Y. Shiloh, *Excavations at the City of David* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1984), pp. 46–47.

26 Shiloh, *Excavations*, p. 40.

27 Such as L. Spengel, *Rhetores Graeci* (Lipsiae: B. G. Geubneri, 1854), 2, pp. 96–106, Greek.

28 The first part of this chreia was omitted because of its association with the previous chreia which belonged to the same situation.

29 Buchanan, *Jesus: The King and his Kingdom* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), pp. 227–230, 238.