

POOL OF SILOAM FOUND!

New Finds Bolster The Historicity Of John's Gospel.

by Gordon Govier | posted 10/26/2005 09:00 a.m.

Note from pastor Kevin Lea: Throughout the centuries, many Bible critics have tried to label Old and New Testament historical accounts as mere myths and legends, stating they are without any basis in fact. However, nearly every year there are archeological finds that add further understanding and credibility to the accounts in the Bible, proving that they are indeed accurate records of history.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the evolutionists are still trying to find just one undisputed "transitional fossil" and the Mormon apologists look in vain for evidence to support the concocted history of the false prophet Joseph Smith, as found in the Book of Mormon.

The Christian should take great comfort when they put their trust in God the Father, and Jesus the Savior, the only true God, as revealed to us in the miraculously truthful Book, the Holy Bible.

The Pool of Siloam, considered a metaphor in John's Gospel by some New Testament scholars, was in fact a huge basin at the lowest point in the city of Jerusalem. Recent excavations have uncovered two corners and one side of the pool that stretched for half the length of a football field.

"It's very exciting," James Charlesworth, a professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary, told CT. "It's very important for the study of the New Testament."

Some Johannine experts have suggested the story in John 9 of the blind man whom Jesus healed and told to wash in the Pool of Siloam wasn't much more than a metaphor. "To dismiss John as not historically important is absurd," Charlesworth said. "Now it becomes clear that the Gospel of John does have reliable historical information. We have found there is such a pool, precisely as John describes it."

Tradition has always located the Pool of Siloam near the end of Hezekiah's water tunnel, which dates to the eighth century B.C. The pool under excavation is just a few yards from a much smaller Byzantine-era pool that visitors to the area had been calling the Pool of Siloam.

Several digs have been going on in the City of David area, the oldest part of Jerusalem. The narrow 10-acre ridge of land stretches from the Temple Mount down to the junction of the Kidron and Hinnom valleys.

Elsewhere in Jerusalem, Israeli archaeologist Eilat Mazar has discovered

large foundation stones of a monumental building in an excavation that began earlier this year. Pottery shards found in one room date to the Iron Age II period, the 10th-9th century B.C., the time of David and Solomon. Underneath the building she found Iron Age I pottery, dating to just before the time of David.

Mazar believes she has uncovered David's palace in what The Jerusalem Post calls "the archaeological find of the century," if true. One archaeologist calls Mazar's tentative conclusion about her discovery "wishful thinking." But others have called it "an extremely impressive find," "something of a miracle," and "a very significant discovery," even though there's no consensus yet that this could be the palace that was used by David and Solomon and possibly their Judahite monarchy descendants all the way to King Zedekiah.

Among the pottery shards and other finds, Mazar's team uncovered a bulla, or seal impression, with the name Jehudi, a palace officer. Jeremiah 36 reports that Jehudi read the scroll of Jeremiah's warnings to King Jehoiakim. The king, to show his contempt for the prophet, cut off the columns of the scroll with a knife as Jehudi read them and tossed them into the fire.

The excavation is currently off limits to visitors, even though it's located at what had been the visitor's center of the Ir David Foundation. Ir David is a conservative group that has been buying up land in the mostly Arab East Jerusalem neighborhood known as Silwan.

Last summer the Jerusalem City Council announced plans to raze 88 Arab homes in Silwan (from Siloam), in order to pursue plans for an archaeological park in the area. Officials claimed the homes were built illegally.

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Biblical Pool of Siloam uncovered in Jerusalem

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By Thomas H. Maugh II, Los Angeles Times

Workers repairing a sewage pipe in the old city of Jerusalem have discovered the biblical Pool of Siloam, a freshwater reservoir that was a major gathering place for ancient Jews making religious pilgrimages to the city and the reputed site where Jesus cured a man blind from birth, according to the Gospel of John.

The pool was fed by the now-famous Hezekiah's Tunnel and is "a much grander affair" than archaeologists previously believed, with three tiers of

stone stairs allowing easy access to the water, according to Hershel Shanks, editor of Biblical Archeology Review, which reported the find yesterday.

"Scholars have said that there wasn't a Pool of Siloam and that John was using a religious conceit" to illustrate a point, said New Testament scholar James H. Charlesworth of the Princeton Theological Seminary. "Now, we have found the Pool of Siloam ... exactly where John said it was." A Gospel that was thought to be "pure theology is now shown to be grounded in history," he said.

The discovery puts a new spotlight on what is called the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, a trip that religious law required ancient Jews to make at least once a year, said archaeologist Ronny Reich of the University of Haifa, who excavated the pool.

"Jesus was just another pilgrim coming to Jerusalem," he said. "It would be natural to find him there."

The newly discovered pool is less than 200 yards from another Pool of Siloam, this one a reconstruction built between A.D. 400 and 460 by the empress Eudocia of Byzantium, who oversaw the rebuilding of several biblical sites.

The site of yet another Pool of Siloam, which pre-dated the version visited by Jesus, is still unknown.

That first pool was constructed in the eighth century B.C. by the Judean King Hezekiah, who foresaw the likelihood that the Assyrians would lay siege to Jerusalem and knew that a safe water supply would be required to survive it.

He ordered workers to build a 1,750-foot-long tunnel under the ridge where the City of David was located. The tunnel connected Gihon Spring in the adjacent Kidron Valley to the side of Jerusalem less vulnerable to an attack.

The first Pool of Siloam was the reservoir holding the water brought into the city. It presumably was destroyed in 586 B.C., when Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar razed the city.

The pool of Jesus' time was built early in the first century B.C. and was destroyed by the future Roman emperor Titus about A.D. 70. The pool was discovered last fall by a repair team, supervised by Eli Shukron of the Israel Antiques Authority, that was excavating a damaged sewer line.

As soon as Shukron saw two steps uncovered, he stopped the work and called in Reich, who was excavating at the Gihon spring. When they saw the

steps, Shukron said, "We were 100 percent sure it was the Siloam Pool."

With winter approaching rapidly, the two men had to hurry their excavation, so the sewer could be repaired before the rainy season.

As they began digging, they uncovered three groups of five stairs each, separated by narrow landings. The pool was about 225 feet long, and they unearthed steps on three sides.

They do not yet know how wide and how deep the pool was because they have not finished the excavation. The fourth side lies under a lush garden -- filled with figs, pomegranates, cabbages and other fruits -- behind a Greek Orthodox Church, and the team has not yet received permission to cut a trench through the garden.

"We need to know how big it is," Charlesworth said. "This may be the most significant and largest 'mikvah' [ritual bath] ever found."

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