

Special Study

N.T. Archaeology and The Book of Revelation

(Compare Sir W. M. Ramsay's, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia* listed in the bibliography below with W. Barclay's *Letters to the Seven Churches*, London, 1957).

The only area where extensive archaeological excavation has been carried on with regards to *The Revelation* is the seven cities of Asia Minor.

1. *Ephesus*. The city was the center for the worship of the great diana (Acts 19:23ff). Emperor worship and all kinds of magical arts were also involved in the religious activity of the citizens of this city.

2. *Smyrna*. This city was a Greek colony over a thousand years before the birth of our Lord. The modern city of Smyrna lies almost directly over the ancient site. This made extensive excavation impossible. We are dependent on ancient written materials for our archaeological information.

3. *Pergamum*. Here, several religious cults made their home. The god of healing, *Asklepios* was chief among the many gods worshipped by the people. Probably, the most important single discovery made here was the giant altar to the god Zeus. This altar has been reconstructed and is presently in a Russian Museum.

4. *Thyatira*. Here Apollo and the female diviner, Sibyl were worshipped. The very serious error of Montanism had a great following in this city at least as early as 150 A.D. (Keep in mind that archaeology provides wirtten materials as well as cities, temples, and other artifacts, etc.

5. *Sardis*. The most important single archaeological find here was the bilingual text in Lydian and Aramaic. It dates from the 10th year of the Persian king Artazerxes.

6. *Philadelphia*. It was strategically located for the defense of the entire Phrygian territory. There is almost nothing from this city but coins and inscriptions.

7. *Laodicea*. There is no *new* information about this city available. Ramsay's work is the best to which we have access.

There has been extensive excavation in only three of the seven cities—Ephesus, Sardis, and Pergamum.

Bibliography for Further Study

For excellent, non-technical reports on contemporary excavation see:

The Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, Drawer 93A, Yale Station, New Haven, Connecticut. See also *The Biblical Archaeologist* - same address as above.

Near Eastern Archaeology, *Bulletin of Near East Archaeological Society* - edited by Joseph P. Free, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois (student membership, \$5.00).

Books

W. M. Ramsay, *The Letters to The Seven Churches*, N.Y., 1905. This is still an excellent work. Before more recent excavations in the geographical area covered by *The Revelation*, this work was indispensable. The bulletins listed above will give information of contemporary work which has been and is still being done - which is vital for the archaeology of *The Revelation*.

J. A. Thompson, *Archaeology, O.T. Pre-Christian Centuries, N. T.*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids - second edition, 1959. This text is a popularly written well informed statement by an alert Evangelical O.T. scholar. It is an excellent guide for Bible Study groups, and should be in the Church Library.

Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and The New Testament*, Zondervan Pub. House, Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1962. Chp. 15, pp. 274. This is a very alert work by an Evangelical (a Dispensationalist) of Dallas Theological Seminary. This is the best intermediate text for the study of N.T. archaeology that is presently available.

Wright, G. Ernest, *Biblical Archaeology*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1957. Get the newer edition, if possible.

Note: W. G. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfillment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus*, SCM Press, London, 1961, English edition.

Dr. Kümmel now occupies the chair formerly held by the leading European theologian, R. Bultmann (with the sole exception of Karl Barth). Because of its highly specialized character, we shall only raise the problem involved in Dr. Kümmel's work, and then direct you to the great work by the Dutch Calvinist, Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, Presb. and Reformed Pub. Co., Box 185 Nutley, New Jersey. Dr. Ridderbos' work is a much greater one than is Dr. Kümmel's and we have the extra advantage of his absolute committment to the Word of God as special revelation.

Dr. Kümmel's thesis is that Jesus asserted that He would return within the span of the apostolic period. This coming again was not realized; therefore, Jesus was mistaken about His eschatological message. Dr. Kümmel claims that the biblical use of the terms *eggus* and *eggizein* necessitate that we hold to the doctrine of an immediate coming of Christ. Since there has been an almost 2000 year gap and still Jesus' words have not been fulfilled, He must have been mistaken. If He was mistaken, then He certainly could never be our Lord and Savior. Conscientiously study the two works listed in this note and you will see that our Lord was not mistaken, and we still anxiously await His appearance!

Earlier in this commentary we referred to the problem of Time and Eternity in Biblical Theology. Instead of writing a brief separate study we chose to include that problem in our *Special Study of a Theology of History*. See that *Special Study* and the appropriate section on time and eternity.

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Some Major Doctrines in The Revelation

We aspire to give, in brief scope, of the major doctrines in the works of John, but our specific point of departure will always be

The Doctrine of God

The doctrine of God which we encounter in *The Revelation* stands firmly on the O.T. foundation by claiming that God is one. The monotheistic emphasis is clearly revealed in John's cry that God is the "Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End." He is the creator, as John asserts—"for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created" (4:11). The whole earth is admonished to "worship him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters" (14:7). He alone is holy, and the four living creatures sing the praises of God - night and day saying "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God"----(4:8). He alone is true. The martyrs cry—"How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (6:10). He will also call the dead into account. "And I saw the dead, the great and