



The Caller

A Weekly Newsletter of the Elizabethtown church of Christ
Vol. XXXVI May 2, 2010 No. 17

Confidence Corner

John F. Board

How can one have confidence that they have found the true Church of the New Testament? This is a question of serious importance. Jesus had told his disciples "Upon this rock I will build my Church." In Acts 20:28 Paul said that the elders were to "feed the church of the Lord, which He

purchased with His own blood" (ASV 1901). Both of these references imply a single Church—not many denominations who refer to themselves as one of many churches.

So how can one identify the one true Church of the NT? For the next few weeks we will examine this question together.

One may know that he has found the one true church by observing the place where the church had its beginning. The OT prophet of God, Micah, recorded that, "But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it. ²And many nations shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem;" (4:1-2). Isaiah, in chapter 2 states a very similar prophecy. Both of these prophets state that God's house or church would begin in Jerusalem.

In the NT, Timothy writes that "house of God" is the "church of the living God." There seems to be little doubt that Micah and Isaiah's "Jehovah's house" is the "house of God" that Timothy refers to through inspiration as the "church of the living God." Both the NT and OT writers seem to refer to the church in the ways noted above.

Consider as well that Jesus stated that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached...beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). The apostles remained in Jerusalem until they received power from on high. They began preaching the message of God in Jerusalem and the church was the result of the message preached in Jerusalem recorded in Acts 2.

One necessary characteristic of the one true Church is that it claims to have its beginning on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. (This study will be continued).

jfb

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

John F. Board

Steven Feldman, in his article for *BAR* refers to Lachish (modern day Tell ed-Duweir) as follows: "the impressive mound of Lachish, a major military outpost of the Judahite kingdom that fell to a massive Assyrian onslaught in 701 B.C." I might write and correctly say of Lachish, "thirty miles SW of Jerusalem lays the ancient site of Lachish. Lachish, along with Azekah (located nearby), was the last few cities of significance in Judah to be overthrown and subjugated by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar (around 587 B. C.)." How could both statements be true?

Perhaps the answer can be found from the following quote:

One of the central cities in the Plain, whose king was one of the five who fought Joshua at Gibeon and were subdued by the Israelites (Josh 10:23). Later it became one of the fortified cities in Judah (2 Chr. 11:5, 9). Amaziah, King of Judah, was killed at Lachish, having fled there from the conspirators in Jerusalem (2 Kgs. 14:19; 2 Chr. 25:27). The town played an important defensive role when Sennacherib made war on Judah, but was taken by him (2 Chr. 32; Isa. 36). A century later it was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 34:7). Lachish also appears in other historical sources: it is mentioned several times in the El Amarna letters of the 14th century BC; in a contemporary tablet from Tell el-Hesi; and Assyrian documents refer to the siege of Sennacherib and his conquest of the city, which are also depicted in the reliefs in his palace at Nineveh.

As one should be able to ascertain from the above quote, Lachish is of significance in biblical studies at various periods of Hebrew history.

jfb

Sunday's Sermons:

A.M. — *Concern in the Church*
Galatians 6:1-10

P.M. — *Three Kinds of Faith*
James 2:14-26

LACHISH LETTERS AND THE BIBLICAL JEREMIAH

Lachish may be the “best known” Ancient Near Eastern sight due to at least twenty-five biblical references as well as the Assyrian and Egyptian writings/records and reliefs. Three major excavations of Lachish also lend to the “best known” claim of Lachish (1932-1938 Starkey; 1960’s Aharoni; 1973-1987 Ussishkin).

It is the period under Starkey (specifically 1935-38) that this article will further examine. It was during this time that twenty-one pottery fragments (ostraca) were discovered at the site of ancient Lachish. The ostraca became known as the Lachish Letters.

The Lachish Letters reflect the Hebrew writing style of Jeremiah’s day (dated by some 589 B.C.). They were located in the Level II in an ash residue thought to be tied to the torching of the city by Nebuchadnezzar (586 B.C.). The “letters” appear to be written by an outpost soldier to his superior at Lachish.

Many of the letters have information pertinent to the subject of this article; this writer will give attention to Letter II as well as mention letters III, IV, and VI. The aforementioned letters provide some interesting information to this writer possibly linking the ostraca and the biblical Jeremiah.

Letter II seems to provide a record of the city of Lachish’s last days. The information recorded on the ostraca lines up well with Jeremiah’s account (34:6-7). Consider the following from the *Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*,

In one of the letters Hoshayahu informs Yaush that he has fulfilled all the commander’s orders and reports on events in his region. The last lines of this letter presumably throw light on the period described in Jeremiah (34:7): ‘When the king of Babylon’s army fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish, and against Azekah: for these defenced cities remained of the cities of Judah.’ Hoshayahu’s report that they cannot see Azekah seems to refer to a later stage in the state of affairs described in the book of Jeremiah. Now that Azekah has fallen as well Hoshayahu is watching for the signals of Lachish only. 1

Letter III contains a reference to a specific “prophet” who warned the people through his message of “beware.” Though the case is not closed by any stretch of the imagination, some scholars see this as a reference to the biblical prophet Jeremiah (perhaps Jeremiah 29:1-ff as suggested above). Letter III as well mentions some names that are contemporary and consistent with the book of Jeremiah.

Though Letter III is not convincing on its own, Letter VI provides some more interesting information regarding the biblical character Jeremiah. In Letter VI is recorded a complaint about those who had “weakened our hand” by their defeatist actions. Such language is very similar to that recorded in Jeremiah 38:4 regarding the Jews’ complaints against Jeremiah.

Another letter is Letter IV. In it is recorded the words, “we are watching for the signals of Lachish...” In Jeremiah the same uncommon word “signal” is employed by Jeremiah. Again though not conclusive, this does provide credibility for Jeremiah being an “authentic piece of writing” from this same time frame as the Lachish Letters (around 586 B. C.).

The Lachish Letters considered in this article help to illuminate study on the topic of the biblical character Jeremiah. With this archaeological find, the historical credibility of Jeremiah is strengthened. Though beneficial, this writer would not say that the Lachish Letters alone confirm the historical credibility of Jeremiah.

1 A. Negev, *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land* (3rd ed.) (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1996)

*John F. Board
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Bible Question

This Week's Bible Question: Who saw the heavens opened when he was dying?

Last Week's Bible Question: What man had "rivers of waters" run from his eyes because people would not keep the law of God? The correct answer is David, Psalm 119:136. Those who correctly answered the question are: Mary Walker, Edna Ashlock, Rick Eiler, Joyce Pack, Bloria Taylor, Wilma Stull, Jerry Carter, Reagan & Samuel White, and Lorene Harris.

Please write down your answer and put it in the box outside the church office before next Wednesday or email your answer to chofchrist@windstream.net by Tuesday afternoon. Please include the Scripture reference and your name.

Schedule of Services

Sunday:

Bible Classes	9:30 A.M.
Morning Worship	10:30 A.M.
Evening Worship	6:00 P.M.

Tuesday

Ladies Bible Class	10:30 A.M.
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Wednesday

Evening Bible Class	7:00 P.M.
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Are You Part of the PARTICIPATION

May 1 — Youth Work Day
May 2 — Anderson Baby Shower
May 4 — Tuesday Lunch
May 10 — Church Workers Workshop
May 16-19 — Gospel Meeting w/Tom Holland
May 22-23 — Super Saints Trip to Fort Gay
May 23 — Youth Banquet & Congregational Potluck
June 5 — Vacation Bible School
June 5 — Mandatory Camp Staff Meeting
Daily Bible Reading Schedule
May 3 — 1 Chronicles 7-8
May 4 — 1 Chronicles 9-11
May 5 — 1 Chronicles 12-14
May 6 — 1 Chronicles 15-17
May 7 — 1 Chronicles 18-21
May 8 — 1 Chronicles 22-24
May 9 — 1 Chronicles 25-27