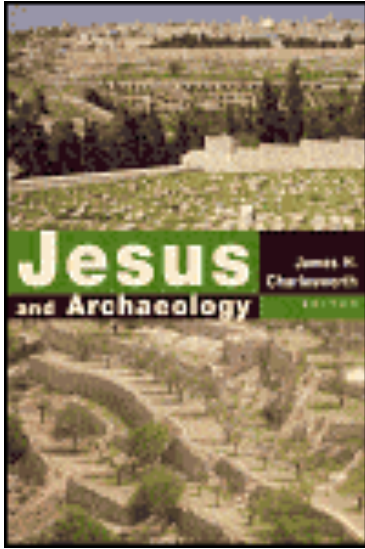


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**Charlesworth, James H., ed.**

***Jesus and Archaeology***

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This thick book combines the work of thirty authors under the title *Jesus and Archaeology*. Although published in 2006, the papers were originally presented in the summer of 2000 at the millennium conference in Jerusalem organized by James H. Charlesworth, who edited this volume and added a preface (xxii–xxv), conclusion (692–95), and his own contribution, “Jesus Research and Archaeology: A New Perspective” (11–63). Some of the essays are short and appear to represent the original oral presentations (e.g., Avraham Biran, “What is Biblical Archaeology?,” 1–8), but most have been reworked for publication and are between twenty to thirty pages, often with extensive footnotes and updates by the author or editor that mention subsequent discoveries like the Pool of Siloam and even the very recent *Gospel of Judas*.

The bulk of papers relate archaeology to historical Jesus research, but they do so in various ways and with seemingly competing agendas. Thus, while Charlesworth’s programmatic essay at the beginning is subtitled “A New Perspective,” the collection itself is so diverse that the book might appropriately have been subtitled “Various Perspectives.” Charlesworth himself rightly stresses that “the fundamental importance of archaeology” lies in “re-creating the social and spiritual world of Jesus of Nazareth” (11), and he notes that too much previous research, including my own, has been preoccupied with Galilean archaeology at the expense of Jerusalem archaeology. Stressing Jesus’ Jewish context

throughout, Charlesworth tends to accentuate those discoveries that confirm Gospel accounts, and he is especially enthusiastic where archaeology corroborates details in John's Gospel. By stressing direct links between artifact and text, Charlesworth—and some other authors in the collection—seem to flirt with the old-style biblical archaeology. But for the most part a broader approach is taken: “archaeology can sometimes confirm literary data, sometimes supplement it, and at other times raise new questions and perspectives” and indeed, “sometimes archaeology reveals that a section of a text cannot be historical” (27).

The book is divided into two sections, with a lengthy set of papers appearing under the heading “Studies in Archaeology” (11–520), and a shorter set under “Archaeology and Theology” (521–691). For the sake of this review, the papers will be categorized according to how they relate the two disciplines, namely, archaeology and Jesus studies. Some authors begin with archaeology by examining a particular location, region, discovery, or set of artifacts, while others begin with exegetical or literary concerns and then turn to archaeology for clarification.

Among those studies that focus on a location is Rami Arav's “Bethsaida,” (145–66) who discusses the finds from his excavation and demonstrates, convincingly I think, that et-Tell is in fact Bethsaida. His essay is unlike Frédéric Manns' “Mount Tabor” (167–77), which treats that location as a theological concept in literary texts, almost without reference to archaeology. Dan Bahat discusses the location of the various Gospel stories in “Jesus and the Herodian Temple Mount” (300–308), and Bargil Pixner summarizes his well-known but not always accepted theory of an upper room in the Essene Quarter where Jesus and his disciples celebrated the Last Supper in “Mount Zion, Jesus, and Archaeology” (309–22). Daniel R. Schwartz adds a note stressing that in literary sources the *Birah* (even if not the *Baris*) was identified with the Antonia (“Stone House, *Birah*, and Antonia during the Time of Jesus,” 341–48), and Michele Piccirillo argues on exegetical grounds that “Bethany beyond the Jordan” (and not Batanaea) has no symbolic value in John but is instead a historical memory (“The Sanctuaries of the Baptism on the East Bank,” 433–43).

Unlike the above-mentioned studies, two essays characterize entire regions and offer far-reaching implications for first-century society and culture. One is by the late Yizhar Hirschfeld, who extrapolates from two estate sites he excavated that the disparity between rich and poor was accelerating at the time of Jesus all across Palestine (“Ramat Hanadiv and Ein Gedi: Property versus Poverty in Judea before 70,” 384–92). In a similar way, Jürgen Zangenberg authoritatively summarizes the archaeological surveys and excavations in Samaria to characterize the Samaritans-Samaritans (“Between Jerusalem and the Galilee: Samaria in the Time of Jesus,” 393–432).

Other essays focus on a specific artifact that can—or cannot—be tied directly to Jesus. Thus, on the one hand, Richard A. Batey argues for an early date for Sepphoris' theater and its possible influence on Jesus, even though the ceramic evidence, upon which its dating ultimately rests, is only discussed and not here presented in a way that can be evaluated by archaeologists (“Did Antipas Build the Sepphoris Theater?” 111–19). Achim Lichtenberger, on the other hand, argues that Herod the Great's theater in Jerusalem was made of wood and therefore temporary, so that it was long disassembled by the time of Jesus (“Jesus and the Theater in Jerusalem,” 283–99). Craig A. Evans, in a contribution titled “Excavating Caiaphas, Pilate, and Simon of Cyrene: Assessing the Literary and Archaeological Evidence” (323–40), provides a balanced perspective on these finds and warns against uncritically identifying the *Yehosef bar Qafa* ossuary with Caiaphas the High Priest. He suggests it is the ossuary of Caiaphas, but prudently underscores the uncertainty. Joseph Zias offers an examination of the cemeteries at Qumran, and shows, I think convincingly, that the few females buried there were from later Bedouins while the cemetery as a whole can be characterized as Essene (“The Cemeteries of Qumran and Celibacy: Confusion Laid to Rest?,” 444–71). He concludes with an important point appropriate to the limits of interdisciplinary research: “the ultimate interpretation of the cemetery at Qumran lies with physical anthropologists, whereas its final historical interpretation lies with the Qumran scholars of today” (471). Although Zias never directly relates his findings to Jesus research, whether or not Qumran was Essene and the site where the Dead Sea Scrolls were written is of profound importance for assessing the religious context of Jesus' first-century world.

Other chapters begin with either a problem in historical Jesus research, an exegetical conundrum, or an entire Gospel, and then move to the archaeological record. Bruce Chilton ponders the evidence for and implications of Jesus' illegitimacy, and to that end notes the (as yet still unpublished) excavations at Bethlehem of Galilee (“Recovering Jesus” *Mamzerut*,” 84–110). James Dunn consults the most up-to-date synagogue archaeology to advocate “in all probability Jesus did attend the synagogue.” Although I am more skeptical of synagogue remains at Magdala/Migdal, one can now add the recently discovered first-century structure at Kiryat Sepher outside Tel Aviv to the discussion, which only strengthens Dunn's case (“Did Jesus Attend the Synagogue?,” 206–22). Brian J. Capper picks up on Birgil Pixner's thesis of an Essene quarter Upper Room but tries to show from literary sources that the Essenes had a series of so-called community or poor houses to host like-minded sectarians (“Essene Community Houses and Jesus' Early Community,” 472–502). William Klassen connects the puzzling phrase in Matt 26:50 to the same phrase inscribed on several glass cups found across the eastern Mediterranean, which is best translated “Friend, rejoice! That's what you are here for.”

Although I am disinclined to think such Greek-inscribed vessels circulated in first-century Galilee, given at least one other Sidonian glass found in Jerusalem's Upper City, these vessels do lend a measure of support to Klassen's positive re-characterization of Judas ("Judas and Jesus: A Message on a Drinking Vessel of the Second Temple Period," 503–22). Urban C. von Wahlde provides a lengthy catalogue of archaeological evidence that relates to the Gospel of John's topographical references. Listed in the order they appear in John, from "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" (1:28) to "A Tomb in the Garden" (19:41–42), von Wahlde provides information on the Johannine context, literary citations, and archaeological evidence; he argues against earlier scholarship that these references are both earlier and more historical rather than later and more theological ("Archaeology and John's Gospel," 523–86). Paul N. Anderson follows up this article with a more thorough discussion of the implications, arguing that "the Gospel of John is far closer to the historical Jesus than most scholars have claimed or thought for almost a century" (614). Whether this is due to a later redactor and important for understanding his social context, or due to the original author (an eyewitness?) and important for his theological claims, is difficult to tell ("Aspects of Historicity in the Gospel of John: Implications for Investigations of Jesus and Archaeology," 587–618).

The collection's title, along with Charlesworth's preface, essay, and conclusion focus the book on archaeology, but it appears that the original conference was broader in scope and included several papers that look at Jesus through Jewish texts. Three of these focus on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Esther Eshel's "Jesus the Exorcist in Light of Epigraphic Sources" (178–85), Henry W. M. Rietz's "Reflections on Jesus' Eschatology in Light of Qumran" (186–205), and Emile Puech's "Jesus and Resurrection Faith in Light of Jewish Texts" (639–59). Other authors likewise do not discuss the material culture, such as John W. Welch, who describes Roman perceptions of and laws concerning magic, and convincingly argues that Roman fear of Jesus' alleged supernatural powers has consistently been ignored by historical Jesus scholars ("Miracles, *Maleficium*, and *Maiestas* in the Trial of Jesus," 349–83). John Painter successfully rehabilitates Bultmann, a favorite whipping boy of late for many New Testament scholars interested in archaeology, history, and Jesus' social context; he was never, as often claimed, a- or anti-historical. He simply cautioned against certainty with regard to determining much about Jesus' life and personality due to "the difficulty of distinguishing Jesus from the process of transmission" (623). Painter also provides a moving description of the friendship between Bultmann and his Jewish student Hans Jonas in Marburg, before, during, and after the horrors of the Nazi regime ("Bultmann, Archaeology, and the Historical Jesus," 619–38). Finally, there are also essays that deal with archaeology but not really Jesus: Benedict Thomas Viviano's "Synagogues and Spirituality: The Case of Beth Alfa" (223–35), John Reumann's "Archaeology and Early Christology" (660–82), and J. K. Elliott, "The Christian Apocrypha and

Archaeology” (683–91). This is not to imply any criticism of these essays, only to note that the scope of the book is broader than the title *Jesus and Archaeology* implies.

Three essays stand out for their importance and merit more space in this review. First, Sean Freyne, one of the recognized deans of Galilean studies, provides an assessment of the state of the dialogue between the disciplines in “Archaeology and the Historical Jesus,” (64–83). Completed in 2002, this essay has since published in his highly recommended *Jesus, a Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus-Story* (T&T Clark, 2004). Summarizing well over a decade of Jesus scholars’ critical engagement in archaeology, Freyne notes that we are “only at the very early stages of a dialogue that hopefully will develop fruitful collaboration . . .” (74). Considering the recent events in “New Testament archaeology” like the alleged James Ossuary or so-called Jesus tomb at Talpiot, it appears that there is still a long way to go. Freyne’s comments on Galilean culture (which had Judean roots), class (which was increasingly stratified as part of rapid social and economic changes), and gender (which is just now being seriously considered), are worth a careful reading.

Second, the essay by Peter Richardson, a New Testament scholar trained also in architecture and who has participated in numerous Galilean excavations, is a model for combining archaeology and Jesus research (“Khirbet Qana [and Other Villages] as a Context for Jesus,” 120–44). His focus is mainly on Qana and Yodefat, but includes also places like Capernaum, Gamla, and Chorazin, while keeping an eye on the larger towns of Sepphoris and Tiberias. His conclusions—even if in question form—are provocative: Do the quasi-Hippodamian plans of some villages indicate more centralized economies and control? Have we exaggerated the differences between villages and cities? Were there differences in the extent of Hellenization in urban centers and rural villages? (“In a word, yes”; 142). What actual evidence, other than inference, is there for either economic exploitation or development and social stratification? And finally, what archaeological evidence is there for a “common Judaism” in both Galilean villages and cities? Ample, Richardson answers.

Third and finally, John S. Kloppenborg offers a detailed and powerful retort to the suggestion that the Theodotos synagogue inscription is from a later century and hence cannot be used as evidence for a Second Temple synagogue *building* (“The Theodotos Synagogue Inscription and the Problem of First-Century Synagogue Buildings,” 236–82). Kloppenborg makes a well-organized and absolutely convincing case, which touches on methodological issues involved in epigraphic dating of inscriptions—the least decisive of which he acknowledges as the style and shape of the letters. After reviewing the inscriptions’ complex history of scholarship, which has its own convoluted stratigraphy

after being found by Raimund Weill in his 1913–14 Jerusalem excavations, Kloppenborg examines the provenance of the inscription, the character of the document, its prosopographic data, any datable formulae, and finally its paleography within its regional context, noting ample parallels. Although it is often said that the Theodotos inscription was found in an unstratified context, Kloppenborg’s strongest argument for an early date is in fact its provenance, near the areas labeled B, D, and E in the City of David which was not occupied after the Second Temple. “The nature of the archaeological evidence makes it extremely difficult to imagine the presence of a building on the south end of the eastern ridge of the Ophel at any time after 70 CE” (263). Indeed all the evidence converges on a date in the Herodian or Early Roman period, which “not only helps to solve a lexicographic issue—the point at which the term synagogue came to be used in Palestine of buildings—but also provides important controls on the descriptions of synagogues encountered in the Gospels” (279).

Those three essays alone are worth the price of the book, as they demonstrate not only the value of archaeology for historical Jesus research but also how to bring the two disciplines together. A helpful glossary is included (compiled by Jacob Cherian, 702–6), but unfortunately there is only a select bibliography (compiled by Jonathan E. Soyas, 707–29), and only textual and geographical indices. One minor criticism must be raised: scattered throughout the book are numerous illustrations, mostly from Charlesworth’s collection, which, although at times helpful, at other times seem misplaced or could be replaced with something more appropriate. So we see, for example, a bichrome Canaanite decanter in Klassen’s article on Sidonian Greek-inscribed glass, or the excavations at Cana in Kloppenborg’s article, but none at all of the Theodotos inscription whose letters are analyzed in a way that is hard to visualize without a picture. Of course by using his own photos, Charlesworth was able to keep the cost down, so that at \$50.00 for over seven hundred pages, we should be thankful. This is a book suitable for upper division undergraduate courses, graduate courses, and is recommended reading for New Testament scholars interested in the ways in which archaeology is brought to bear on Jesus research.