

A Tribute to the Scholarship of Bryant Wood

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The issue was a Festschrift for Dr. Wood.

I first met Bryant Wood at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in 2005. This was my first attendance at the ETS annual meeting and I only knew two of the more than 2,000 attendees. Perhaps because he was interested in my talk on the inerrancy of Scripture, Bryant went out of his way to engage in friendly conversation with me and my wife, who was also attending. In the several years since then I have benefitted from his friendliness, his scholarship, and his faithfulness to God's Word.

Bryant has patiently, over the years, brought forth archaeological evidences that demonstrated the truth of God's Word. That evidence fits into a category called, in the popular vernacular, "stubborn facts." As readers of *Bible and Spade* will know, his name is most closely associated with the sites of Jericho and Khirbet-el-Maqatir, the second of which, due to the efforts of Bryant and the others who have spent many seasons there, is increasingly being recognized as Joshua's "Ai."

One of the stubborn facts that Bryant has emphasized was the presence of Egyptian scarabs of Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, Amenhotep II, and Amenhotep III in the necropolis of Jericho. None of the scarabs are later than Amenhotep III, thus dating the fall of Jericho City IV to about 1400 BC. Other data in the "stubborn facts" grab-bag are the circumstances related to the destruction of Jericho City IV: 1) The city was captured at some time in the early spring, as evidenced by full storage jars of grain (compare Josh. 4:19). 2) The full storage jars show that the city, though strongly fortified, did not endure a long siege (Josh. 6:15-20). 3) The conquerors did not plunder the food supplies of the city, contrary to universal practice in ancient warfare (Josh. 6:18-20). 4) The city was burnt apparently immediately after an earthquake, a strange coincidence that even Kenyon noticed (Josh. 6:20, 24). Egyptologist David Rohl recognized that these facts so strongly verify the biblical account that he accepted ca. 1400 BC for the fall of Jericho, even though the city's Late Bronze (LB I) pottery is in conflict with his revisionist Egyptian chronology. It is regrettable that those who accept a 13th-century Exodus conquest, or who say that the biblical account is entirely fictional, do not have the insight that Rohl does regarding this agreement of archaeological and biblical evidence, even though it might contradict their other presuppositions.

Bryant's present project is to document and publish the pottery finds from Khirbet-el-Maqatir, showing that the destruction of this city, just as the destruction of Jericho City IV, occurred in LB I. This is painstaking but necessary work, and it requires a fair amount of expense. The LB I dating has received much opposition from skeptical archaeologists, who insist on dating the pottery at Jericho City IV to Middle Bronze, about 120 years earlier, and who also appeal to radiocarbon dating that is consistent with that estimate. Bryant's present work is therefore significant in refuting that viewpoint. Support for Bryant's LB I date comes from the finds at Avaris in Egypt's Delta, where LB I pottery from the 15th century BC is similar to that found at Jericho City IV. Further, radiocarbon dating for this same area and time of Egypt is about 120 to 170 years too high, the same amount of offset for radiocarbon results from Jericho. These too-early radiocarbon dates for Egypt and other areas of the Mediterranean in the period 1400 BC and earlier have led to a conflict between "science" and what had been accepted as firmly established archaeological dates. Critics of the radiocarbon dates have argued that they are too early, not because of wrong measurements of the $^{14}\text{C}/^{12}\text{C}$ ratios, but because of the very

dubious, and poorly documented, matching of tree-ring data that provides the adjustments that are used to derive absolute (BC) dates from carbon ratios. In this ongoing debate, those who proclaim that “science” has disproved the Bible account of Jericho have never themselves investigated all the steps that go into establishing the “scientific” dates, but instead direct skepticism only at the Bible.

“If only the Bible isn’t true! Then we can do as we please.” So reason the children of Adam in order to justify their lifestyle, their rejection of any reason of why Christ would have to die for them, and, frequently, their abandonment to any kind of perversion. The assault on the historical parts of the Bible therefore has a spiritual dimension, and the defense of the Bible in those matters is essentially spiritual warfare. Let us pray that Bryant, as an important participant in this warfare, will continue the careful and judicious scholarship that has always marked his work: “Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men” (Proverbs 22:29).