

Unlikely Apologist: Agnostic Archaeologist Finds Evidence for the Virgin Birth

Of the four Gospels, Luke is the one that gives the most detailed account of the nativity and mentions Mary 12 times, more than any other biblical writer. In addition to the birth of Jesus, he also gives special, detailed attention to the birth of John the Baptist, and many see his gynecological interests to be a result of his training as a physician.

Agnostic Oxford professor and archaeologist Sir William Ramsay thought he would scientifically prove Luke to be a bogus, unreliable writer by retracing Luke's account of Paul's travels in Acts. But after years of retracing the Lucan account of Paul's journey and doing archaeological excavations along the way, Ramsay completely reversed his view of Scripture and first-century history.

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He Sets Out to Disprove Luke

Ramsay, considered one of the greatest archaeologists of all time, was a product of the skeptical, German higher criticism of the 19th century. According to these critics, the New Testament was written in the second century by individuals far removed from the events described and is therefore full of inaccuracies, myths and legends.

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Ramsay set out to prove these theories, which he taught and had become accepted as facts throughout much of academia. However, after his years of archaeological research, he became convinced that Acts was written in the first century by Luke, the traditional author, and also acquired a very high regard for Luke as a historian. He wrote: "Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, he is possessed of the true historic sense; in short, this author should be placed along with the greatest of historians" (Hyatt, "Christmas is for Real," 10-11).

In 1896, Ramsay first published his discoveries in a book titled "St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen." The book caused a furor of dismay among the skeptics of the world, for its affirmation of the biblical record was totally unexpected. In fact, the evidence was so overwhelming that many atheists gave up their atheism and embraced Christianity.

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