

Insights Archaeology Handbook, edited by Charles R. Swindoll, Plano, TX: Insights for Living Publishing House, 2008. 118 pp.

This is a quaint, easy to read book that assesses the impact ten archaeological discoveries/artifacts have had on our biblical understanding. In determining the ten discoveries, the authors were confronted with several hurdles which they have overcome. First, selection of the ten archaeological discoveries to adequately cover the span of time covered by scripture (five Old Testament and five New Testament) must have been difficult. However, their selection aligned fairly well with those presented by Keith Schoville (2001:13-26) in his article "Top Ten Major Archaeological Discoveries of the Twentieth Century Relating to the Biblical World" as well as other list that have been published. As each chapter was introduced and the archaeological discovery described it was easy to understand why the discovery was considered to be significant. Each artifact has had tremendous impact on our understanding of the scripture. Another hurdle that the editors and article authors had to overcome is the perception that biblical archaeology is dry, dusty, and not much fun. This book tries to dispel that notion and for the most part succeeds in that mission. The primary tool used to dispel this notion was comparing biblical archaeology to a fun puzzle. Each article presented the artifacts as pieces of a puzzle. While the description of the artifact focused on the individual puzzle piece, other aspects of the artifact were also discussed. To assist in this endeavor, the artifacts are illustrated with full color pictures assisting the reader in gaining an understanding the article. In a sense, the pictures act as the cover top of the puzzle box, thus allowing the artifact to be placed properly within the overall archaeological puzzle. This process assists the reader with understanding how the artifact described by the authors has illuminated our understanding of scripture. A final hurdle the authors overcame was keeping the technical aspects of biblical archaeology at a minimum without watering down the information. The fact that each article is self contained and could easily be used in any bible study, Sunday school, or undergraduate course is a good indication that they succeeded. Each article relates information about the find itself, such as, who discovered the item, any interesting facts surrounding that discovery, and how the artifact relates to the biblical times. These tidbits of information are skillfully interwoven into the articles; yet do not detract from the overall ability of the article to excite the general reader. As part of this effort, an interesting addition in many of the chapters is the "Dig This!" section which takes the reader just a bit farther into the archaeological adventure to artifacts that have also had an impact on biblical archaeology that are in some way related to the main article. These "Dig This!" sub-articles are snippets of information that could easily stand alone as well in any classroom.

As an aside to the articles on the artifacts, the editors also strategically chose to integrate the fascination with the "Indiana Jones" movies. They included two articles linking biblical archaeology to biblical archaeologist "Indiana Jones." The first article contrasts the theatrical "Indiana Jones" view of archaeology with a explanation of what occurs providing an overview of the archaeological endeavor. While this is not a comprehensive detailed description of archaeological work, it does assist in dispelling any notion that archaeology is like that depicted in the movies. The second is an interview with Dr. Bryant Wood and Professor Todd Bolen who were selected as representative "Indiana Jones" for biblical archaeology. Their article basically discussed what these "Indiana Jones" of biblical archaeology have

done with the archaeological artifacts and discoveries that they have been involved with in their career and how these discoveries have assisted in illuminating the Bible.

As mentioned above, the book is an easy read and could be used as a supplementary text in an introduction to Old and New Testament studies. The book could also be use as a standalone book to introduce a small group or bible study members to the utility of biblical archaeology in enhancing one's understanding of scripture. As should be evident, the book is not a text book on biblical archaeology, nor was it intended to be a text book. *Insights Archaeology Handbook* is a handbook on some interesting biblical artifacts, and, as such it could be a tool used to introduce young men and women to biblical archaeology. As such it could be utilized by organizations that are interested in the future of biblical archaeology. Buy a few extra copies and use them to introduce biblical archaeology to some future biblical archaeologists.

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