

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 3/18/2024

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, March 19 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray that the HOLY SPIRIT will inspire you to grow in your participation in the Kingdom of GOD. Ask that you might be led each day into situations where you might share your faith through words and actions. Trust that GOD will equip you for each situation because it comes from GOD.*

Biblical archaeology can take two forms. Most commonly, it is thought of as examining physical locations that may connect to narratives in the Bible. These sites shed light on the historicity and culture of that site. But biblical archaeology can also refer to information we can discern from material recorded in the Bible.

One such example of this, as we journey through the Gospel of Mark this year and prepare to enter into Holy Week, is a small element that often goes unread and unnoticed in the account of JESUS' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Mark 14:51-52 tells us that "A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following JESUS. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind." A small and unusual item from the Passion story. Who was this young man and what can we learn from this detail?

If you think about this oddity in the story, who would have been aware of this small part of the larger narrative? With all the confusion of JESUS' arrest, the fleeing of the disciples, and attempts to capture them, who would have noted this young man, also trying to run away and having his loin cloth pulled from him? The answer must be the one who wrote the story, this gospel.

JESUS' Last Supper was likely eaten in the Jerusalem home of one of the several Marys in the gospels, the mother of John, also called Mark. When the disciples ate this Passover meal, they needed a location that was private and could accommodate the thirteen men of JESUS' party. Luke 22 says that when JESUS instructed HIS disciples to prepare the Passover meal, upon asking where the meal could be eaten, they would be shown "a large upper room." We know from Acts 12 that, after the resurrection, the early church would meet for meals, worship, and prayer in this same setting. We know the location of this home today and the Upper Room, called the Cenacle, is a spacious room, about 40' by 60' in size, that later served as a dormitory for the apostles during their time in Jerusalem.

At the Last Supper, there would have been a servant who waited on the disciples during the Passover meal. When they left this dinner to go to the Garden of Gethsemane, it would not be surprising that this waiter would follow them, especially if he had the freedom from his responsibilities in the home where the meal was shared. He would have witnessed the events in the Garden first-hand. And, because he was there when the soldiers arrived, he would have been recognized as part of JESUS' entourage, making him a target for arrest. So, as he, like the disciples fled, the soldiers would have grabbed at him, coming away with only the cloth from around his waist.

Because of JESUS' importance to those early followers, the need for security as rumors about a plan to arrest JESUS circulated, and a familiarity with the group, a waiter for the meal would have been someone known and trusted. Who better than the son of the hosting family? Thus, we can conclude that this waiter, who followed the disciples to the Garden and was almost arrested himself, who told this in his gospel, is John, called Mark. This is how we come to believe that this is Mark's gospel. Further, because he was not always with the disciples, especially in the early days, he must have spent a lot of time with them later, hearing the stories told about JESUS, primarily told by the leader of the apostles, Peter. Thus, we might call this second gospel, "The Gospel of Peter as recorded by John, called Mark. And there you have a bit of biblical archaeology.

In CHRIST's love,
Pastor Jeffrey