

Documents in the Dust

Brad Harrub

Skeptics have attacked the Bible for centuries. Using a myriad assortment of tactics, they have called into question just about every facet of the inspired Book. It would be expected that if there really were errors they would be widely known and would have long ago discounted the inspiration of God's Word. Yet, the critics rage on, desperately trying to plant seeds of doubt and place a wedge in man's relationship with God.

One such skeptic, William Mitchell Ramsay, was professor of classical archaeology at Oxford University. He received his formal training in archaeology – but he also became a well-known New Testament scholar. Ramsay employed his scientific skills in an effort to debunk the accuracy of the Bible – specifically the New Testament book of Acts. His choice of Acts was brilliant. In the book of Acts, Luke mentions thirty-two countries, nine Mediterranean islands, and fifty-four cities. Surely, if there were errors to be found, it would be in this book so packed with geographical details. And so, Ramsay set out to disprove the validity of God's Word.

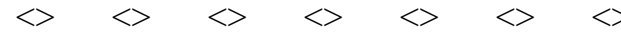
Ramsay took many research journeys to areas such as Greece and modern-day Turkey and became renowned for his knowledge of the geography and topography of this area. Throughout his research, he became an expert in Paul's missionary journeys. What Ramsay found were not discrepancies or contradictions – but rather the truth that Luke had described the geographical details beautifully. Luke was so accurate that Ramsay found himself becoming a believer of the truths contained in the Bible. In his book *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, Ramsay declared:

The present writer takes the view that Luke's history is unsurpassed in respect of trustworthiness . . . You may press the words of Luke in a degree beyond any other historian's and they will stand the keenest scrutiny and the hardest treatment . . . (1979, p. 81, 89).

In every circumstance in which Ramsay was able to check, Luke, the author of Acts, recorded the details perfectly. Ramsay then went on to proclaim:

Acts may be quoted as a trustworthy historical authority . . . Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy; he is possessed of the true historic sense; he fixes his mind on the idea and plan that rules in the evolution of history; and proportions the scale of his treatment to the importance of each incident. He seizes the importance of critical events and shows their true nature at great length, while he touches lightly or omits entirely much that was valueless for his purposes. In short, this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians (p. 222).

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Hide Not Your Talents!

Hide not your talents;
For use they were made.
What good's a sun dial
In the shade?

--Benjamin Franklin

Judging Ourselves

For some reason peculiar to our nature, whether it is in our competitiveness to be the best, or to make others as good as we seem to be, it is always easier to define the faults of others around us than it is to note our own. That's why there is a message in a supposedly true story applicable to all who would follow Jesus.

An Army private wrote a letter to his parents describing his daily schedule and an unintended comedy he witnessed while stationed at the Redstone Arsenal in Alabama. It was during a barracks inspection conducted by a newly promoted colonel, a "full bird" as the enlisted men called him.

Swept up in his new found position, the colonel stopped at the next soldier in line, looked the man up, down, and sideways, then snapped at the man as if he was in a dress, and yelled, "Button that pocket, soldier!" The soldier, completely rattled and afraid of the consequences, stammered, "Right now? Sir!"

"Yes, when did you imagine it to be? Of course, right now" was the officer's blunt reply. The soldier, with shaking hands, reached out very carefully and buttoned the flap on the colonel's shirt pocket. The colonel's all-seeing-eye inspection had seen what he thought to be an outstanding error in dress, not realizing he had failed to carefully prepare for the supposed-to-be example he was to set.

How many of us are able to see the "unbuttoned pockets" on others, but do not look closely enough at ourselves to note our own shortcomings? Aren't those the splinters in others eyes that appear more obvious than the planks in ours? Maybe the next time I am ready to judge someone, I should ask, "Is it I, Lord?" and then respond honestly about it.

--Gordon V. Herrmann (Santa Maria, CA)