

119 Ministries and the Copper Scroll Project (Part 2)

A Response to Jim Barfield

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As I stated in the first installment of this blog series, Rob Vanhoff and I addressed some of the issues we have with the Copper Scroll Project (CSP) on our podcast, The Rob & Caleb Show. The director of the CSP is Jim Barfield. Barfield admits that he is not a scholar but rather a retired investigator. After our show aired Barfield took some time and put a Q&A page up on the CSP website (published Feb. 20th 2015). I can only assume that this is a direct response to our show, as it attempts to address the exact objections we raised.

I have decided to focus on the two main points within Barfield's response. The dating of the Scroll and Barfield's translation. Much of Barfield's argument is wrapped up in method used for dating various info. We will first need to look at the texts Barfield uses to support his theory that the Copper Scroll is speaking about treasure hidden by Jeremiah. We will then move to Barfield's historical chronology, and finally his translation of the scroll.

Barfield's "witnesses"

There are numerous issues that Barfield has raised, and perhaps without even knowing it. Barfield begins his case by stating:

If you choose to accept "dating" about Biblical events from sources other than the Bible, be my guest. I unashamedly choose the Biblical dating.

Since the Biblical texts have nothing to say about the temple treasures being hidden, or anyone actually taking them out of the temple to be saved, Barfield immediately leaves the Biblical text after his assertion that he will unashamedly use the Bible as his dating tool, and turns to three non-Biblical texts.

These three texts are Barfield's foundation in his assertion that the Copper Scroll is referring to the first temple treasures, and that these treasures were hidden by the prophet Jeremiah. The three texts Barfield calls "witnesses" are, 1) *2Maccabees 2*, a letter claiming to be from Judah Maccabee to Aristobulus. This text is widely debated as having any authenticity. The text dates itself to the time around 164BCE, but this is also strongly debated by scholars. This letter from Judah to Aristobulus can be found in 2Macc. 1:10b-2:18. 2) *Emek Ha Melek*, a 17th century CE kabbalistic document written by a German rabbi named Naphtali Herz Ben Jacob Elhanan. This book is an introduction to the kabbala, and a commentary on parts of the Zohar (if this doesn't send huge red flags up in your mind, something is wrong). Barfield's third "witness" is 3) *The Apocalypse of Baruch*, also known as *2Baruch*, a Syriac text dated to 100CE.

Barfield claims all three of these texts are "witnesses," but none of them actually are. *2Maccabees 2* is clearly the earliest of these three texts, and at the earliest scholars date it to 164BCE. Barfield dates the destruction of the first temple at 412 BCE (I will discuss Barfield's historical timeline below). Even if we accept Barfield's date for the destruction of the first temple (which I adamantly oppose), the first of his "witnesses" does not come onto the scene until at least 284 years later. Saying this is a witness would be like me saying I was a witness at the signing of the declaration of independence. Barfield's latest "witness" (*Emek*

Ha Melek) doesn't come onto the scene until 2,100 years after Barfield claims the events happened.

The other significant problem with Barfield's "witnesses" is that they all disagree. *2Macc.* states that Jeremiah the prophet hid the temple treasures on "the mountain from the top of which Moses had seen God's promised land." (2Maccabees 2:4) According to Deut. 3:27 the mountain sighted here is Mt. Pisgah. Barfield accepts 2Macc. when it says Jeremiah hid these artifacts, but rejects this text when it gives a location of where these treasures are. To get to Mt. Pisgah from Qumran you would have to go around the dead sea, across the Jordan river, and outside the boundries of Israel. Something Barfield doesn't address.

In *2Baruch* no one hides the temple artifacts. Instead an angel (not Jeremiah) speaks to the earth, and it obeys: "the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them [the temple artifacts] up." (2Baruch 6:9)

In *Emek Ha Melek* the author informs us that five righteous men (who lived over 100 years after Jeremiah) hid the treasure. Among these men were Zechariah and Haggai. This document says nothing about Jeremiah hiding the treasure, nor does it say anything about Baruch hiding the treasure, nor does it say anything about anyone praying and the earth swallowing it up. What it does say is that these treasures will be hidden until the Messiah comes. So if Barfield really wants to take this document as truth, then why is he looking for the treasure at all? According to one of his "witnesses" none of these treasures will be found until the Messiah is here. With that aside, Barfield's witnesses all have conflicting stories, that not only contradict each other, but give significantly different dates and individuals involved. Barfield's witnesses disprove each other.

Barfield's Timeline

Perhaps one of the most offensive things Barfield has done within his response is (perhaps unknowingly) discarded one of the *Tanach's* most exact prophecies of our Messiah Yeshua. Since Barfield wants the Mishnaic Hebrew of the Copper Scroll to be written by Zechariah and Haggai, he needs to push them late in history. He also needs the destruction of the first temple, and the prophet Jeremiah to be on the scene way later than they actually were. To accomplish this Barfield once again turns to kabbalists. Barfield decides that he will use *The Jewish Timeline Encyclopedia: A Year-by-Year History from Creation to the Present* by Mattis Kantor. Kantor, an Australian kabbalist, had a specific agenda when writing this work. Kantor believes that the rabbinical writing, including the Zohar, are God breathed. Thus Kantor's timeline is an attempt to aline Jewish historical events with Rabbinic literature. To do so Kantor places events such as the destruction of the first temple much later than they actually were. Barfield has decided that this timeline is a good one... kind of.

Barfield tries to say that his timeline research is entirely based on the Bible. Barfield's claims of chronological accuracy due to his Excel spread sheet where he has factored jubilee years, sabbatical years, astronomical dates, etc. sounds like a segment off Michael Rood's "Shabbat Night Live." Nonetheless, Barfield likes the kabbalistic work of Kantor, but doesn't accept it fully. Barfield places his own dates for some historical events within twenty years of Kantor, but rejects Kantor's exact dates.

The generally accepted date for the destruction of the first temple is 587-586 BCE. Barfield places this event 175 years later in 412 BCE. Barfield's dating brings significant issues when it comes to the prophecy of Daniel. The specific date of the destruction of the first temple is important, but not nearly as vital as Artaxerxes decree to rebuild (my father has done work on this prophecy which can be found in his study in the book of Daniel.) Before I look at the

Biblical texts I would like to first establish how I am dating the the Medo-Persian King Artaxerxes.

“The years of Babylonia’s rulers from 747 B.C. down to the second Christian cent. were accurately recorded in The Canon of Ptolemy, a geographer and astronomer of Egypt, A.D. 70–161. Ptolemy also recorded and dated by reign over eighty verifiable astronomical phenomena, such as the eclipses of the moon on 17 March 721 B.C. and 16 July 523 B.C. Similarly, the neighboring Assyrians maintained “eponym” lists, in which each year was assigned the name of an important official. Since the lists include also an eclipse of the sun, on 15 June 763 B.C., the whole can be dated, from 892 to 648 B.C. Furthermore, since Sargon II of Assyria at one point assumed the throne of Babylon, and since this comes out to the year 709 B.C. in both The Canon of Ptolemy and in the eponym lists, the accuracy of both sources is established. Prior to 892 B.C., Assyrian king lists revert to about 2000 B.C. They become fairly reliable from the dynasty of Adasi (1700 B.C.) onward, with a margin of error of less than ten years after 1400 B.C. Similar lists from Egypt, which can be cross-checked with the Assyrian and with other astronomical observations, produce dates of 2133–1990 B.C. for Dynasty XI, of 1990–1786 B.C. for XII (Middle Kingdom) “with only a negligible margin of error” (CAH rev., pp. 4, 12, 13), and of 1570–1085 B.C. for XVIII-XX (New Empire).”¹

Based on the evidence sighted above, scholars place the decree of Artaxerxes that is spoken of in Ezra 7:12-26 at 457 BCE.

“Artaxerxes, king of kings, to Ezra the priest (V.12)... I make a decree (V.13)... Whatever is decreed by the God of heaven, let it be done in full for the house of the God of heaven, lest his wrath be against the realm of the king and his sons.” (V.23)

Daniel prophesied about this decree before it happened, and at the same time prophesied about our Messiah Yeshua. Daniel reads:

So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. (Dan. 9:25-27)

In this passage we are told that the Messiah will be cut off, and that the temple will once again be destroyed. Most scholars agree that in this passage Daniel is speaking in groups of seven. Scholars do debate why Daniel breaks the grouping up into two parts, i.e. 7 and then 62 (there are different theories on what might have happened after the first seven). If we take the full number (7+62 = 69) of 69, and apply it to groups of seven as most scholars believe it should be (69X7) we get a number of 483. This numbering, of course, is problematic for non-believers because if we accept the number 483 as years, the Daniel passage tells us that after 27CE the Messiah would be cut off, and the temple would be destroyed. This of course only works if we accept the decree of the rebuilding of the temple in 457 (i.e. 457 – 483 = 27CE)

1. Tenney, Merrill C. and Steven Barabas, eds. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Zondervan, 1976, 1.830

Different scholars and groups might reckon this slightly differently, but all of them get the same basic conclusion, give or take a couple of years. If you happen to own an ESV study Bible, they have given a nice chart on Dan. 9:25-27 that shows the different reckonings of this timeline.

It's not only believers who have seen this. There is no doubt that the rabbis were all too happy to take this prophecy away from Yeshua. Thus Kantor's chronology works great for him because it takes away Daniel's prophecy and exact dating of the Messiah. For Barfield what it does is make him now have to explain how the temple was destroyed in 412 BCE, then there was 70 years of captivity, and a decree went out to rebuild the temple in let's say 364 BCE (at the earliest), then Yeshua would have had to die after 119 CE, and the destruction of the temple would have to be after that time. Is Barfield suggesting that the second temple wasn't destroyed until after 120 CE?

Barfield's Excel sheet must be wrong, because looking at all of the extant evidence, he's almost two hundred years off. Not to mention he would need to tell the prophet Daniel he missed the mark by over a hundred years.

In the first installment of this blog series I put forth evidence that the Hebrew within the Copper Scroll was what scholars call "Proto-Mishnaic Hebrew." The evidence clearly points to a date of the first century CE, and also tells us that this scroll could not be a copy of an older work. On his answer page Barfield poses the question like this:

Is the Copper Scroll Mishnaic, proto-Mishnaic, Ancient or Paleo-Hebrew?

His answer?

It makes no difference... The scroll is "Hebrew" with a smattering of Greek letters. Attempting "to date" the scroll has nothing to do with finding the location. This path will only take the researcher into a quagmire of academic arguments and...they too will join those, since 1952, that have failed to see "the forest for the trees." The point is, if the key fits the lock... unlock it. Qumran is the key.

It makes no difference? Actually Mr. Barfield, it does! The presence of Mishnaic Hebrew within the scroll, along with Greek letters disproves your theory all together. It shows that the treasure spoken of in the Copper Scroll is not from the time of Jeremiah, Haggai or Zechariah. It shows that this is a late work. And since you have brought up location, I would like to once again point out that 2Macc., a text you place a significant amount of weight upon for your theory, gives a specific location for the treasure Jeremiah supposedly hid, and it wasn't Qumran.

Barfield neglects to speak to any of the evidence that has been presented. Let's put it into the court room scene Barfield continues to try and bring our minds to. The prosecution has brought forth a good amount of evidence, and the defendant stands up and says, "it makes no difference." Need I say more?

Translation

In our interactions with 119 Ministries, Rob Vanhoff asked three times "who did your translation of the Copper Scroll?" Jon from 119 Ministries refused to answer the question. After reading Barfield's response we understand why. Barfield seems to be using a translation of the Copper Scroll from Florentino Garcia Martinez, a great scholar and one that has rendered a good English version of this text. However, when Martinez's translation doesn't quite work for Barfield he downright changes the text.

Those words are rendered “Beth-Hakuk” or house of Hakuk by Florentino Garcia Martinez. With respect to Mr. Martinez the Strong’s had no word spelled in Hebrew (Image 5) but it did have the Hebrew word (Image 6)(H3581) pronounced kuk.

Barfield has taken a translation of the Copper Scroll, and when it doesn’t line up with his theory, he goes to Strong’s Numbers. The first major problem with this is that Strong’s deals with Biblical Hebrew, not Mishnaic or Qumran Hebrew. Second, Strong’s is not a lexicon (Biblical dictionary). What Strong’s Numbers does is tell a reader what Hebrew word an English word within the King James Bible translated. So when you look at a Strong’s number, it is not giving you a definition of a word, it is actually giving you the way in which the translators of the KJV decided to translate that word. This is problematic for anyone trying to study the word, as it is not giving definition. Rob Vanhoff likes to say that Strong’s Numbers is the KJV looking at itself in the mirror.

Not only is Strong’s not a lexicon, Barfield doesn’t realize that Strong’s is dealing with Biblical Hebrew, not Mishnaic Hebrew (or he doesn’t think it matters). When Strong’s doesn’t have a word Mr. Barfield likes, he just decides to change the word (He literally changes letters in words, thus changing words and the meaning of the text). It should first be noted that the text that Barfield is speaking about in the quote above is disputed. Since the scroll was written on a copper sheet, and it was rolled up, it is now difficult to make out the exact letters in this passage. No matter what letters you accept in this passage, Barfield’s “translation” is an assault on the Hebrew language. Barfield spells Hebrew words backwards, he removes consonants that function as vowel markers which Qumran Hebrew almost always includes, and straight up changes words. For instance, in the quote above Barfield tells us that he couldn’t find a word in his Strong’s Numbers so he decides to try and find a word that is close. Barfield changes the word כוך to the word כוה. I don’t think I need to explain this, but it would be like me saying, “I couldn’t find the word ‘drop’ so I decided to find a word that is close, so I chose ‘crop,’” This doesn’t work in English, and I’m not really sure why Barfield would assume it works in another language.

But it gets worst. When trying to explain how the Hebrew word לוח should mean sheet instead of tablet (which it doesn’t) in the 17th century work *Emek Ha Melek*, Barfield tells us he once again goes to Strong’s. Since Strong’s does not give Barfield the translation he desires, Barfield decides that Google Translate should suffice (I am not making this up, Barfield actually sights Google Translate). Perhaps Barfield thinks that since this document is so recent in history, Google Translate will get it right. At one point Barfield tells us that what the Hebrew language in the scroll says doesn’t matter:

Does the hill have a red hue? Yes. Is that the name the writer intended? It does not matter...it is a heap, a hill, or a mound that matches the Copper Scroll description perfectly. Again, those that get wrapped up in the minutia will never see the obvious.

Once again, Barfield’s “translation” shows a lack of respect for the language, or the scroll itself, as Barfield is not doing justice to the Hebrew or the text. But according to him, “it doesn’t matter.”

Because of Barfield’s unwillingness to deal with the language of the scroll, he has made the text say what he wants instead of what it actually says. Within the Copper Scroll there is no place that talks about a “Heap of Color” or a “Hill of Red.” Barfield has literally made this up. Nor is there any reference to the “wealth of the house” as Barfield suggests. Barfield has supplied this for anyone who will listen, but it is nowhere in the Hebrew text. Barfield also

wants to tell us we can find the words “Youth,” “Sisters” and “Wives,” all of which show up nowhere in the scroll.

It is quite obvious from Barfield’s response that he does not take scholarship, historical data, or any form of evidence seriously. But what is even more shocking is that the folks at 119 Ministries have jumped on board with him. I am amazed that 119 has decided that Strong’s Numbers and Google Translate are now superior to Hebrew and Greek scholars who have spent years studying the languages.

119 Ministries and Jim Barfield have been presented with evidence, and have snubbed their nose at it. Their dealing with scholarship and study in general is egregious, and we should not stand for it. Barfield’s post on its own should be enough for people to reject anything that CSP does, and reject 119 for backing it! Barfield’s response should make everyone realize that this is nothing more than a sensational claim that holds no validity. Barfield and 119 Ministries are leading people down a path of falsehood, and are doing it willingly and without regard for God’s elect.