

the same difficulty here. Most of the written material has disappeared, because the convenient writing material that was easily available was not durable. Very little material actually written in New Testament times has been preserved. Aside from the Dead Sea Scrolls, which will be discussed later, practically all our written material that has been found from the time of the events described in the New Testament consists of brief inscriptions on ossuaries. An ossuary is a limestone casket in which the bones of a deceased person were collected after the flesh had decomposed. Hundreds of these have been found in the Jerusalem area in tombs of people buried during the last century before the city was destroyed in A.D.70. These ossuaries have on them short inscriptions in Greek or Aramaic, which, though very brief, have considerable historical value for students of the New Testament.

There are certain differences between the archeology of Palestine as relates to the New Testament and as relates to the Old. The New Testament is not directly concerned with great political events. Christianity began inconspicuously. The Son of Man had not where to lay his head. To the external eye he appeared to be merely a Galilean peasant. He went about with comparatively simple people. There was nothing here that would lead a contemporary ruler to put up a stone monument, or to make a bas-relief on the wall of his palace. Moreover, the New Testament period is comparatively so short that we cannot expect a great deal of light from archeology. Many periods of Old Testament history have very little archeological evidence to throw light upon them. Other periods have contacts with great political events that left imposing archeological monuments. While Old Testament history extends over a thousand years, the entire history described in the New Testament occupies little more than half a century. Another difficulty with New Testament archeology is that the most