

I have mentioned a couple of times that at the end of this thread I will be discussing the two arguments that Craig Evans marshals that strike me as interesting and to be taken seriously. These are (1) the general claims in a couple of passages of Josephus and (2) the discovery of the skeletal remains of a crucified victim. Even though these are, in my opinion, good arguments, I will explain why I do not find them persuasive. Up till now I have been dealing with the arguments that Craig advances that I do not find at all convincing — for example, that Roman governors on rare occasions showed clemency for lower level crimes and that Pilate was not the kind of person to offend Jewish sensitivities. I have one more argument of this sort to deal with. It is one that may sound highly convincing to someone who has only Craig’s summary at hand but who does not know the facts of case.

This argument does not involve historical literary sources (Philo or Josephus, e.g.) but archaeology. Craig points out that we have evidence of crucified victims from the Roman period in Judea, and this evidence shows that victims were given decent burials. The evidence is that archaeologists have discovered, in Craig’s words,

dozens, perhaps more than one hundred, nails that have been recovered from tombs and ossuaries, some of which bear traces of human calcium. These nails, especially those with traces of calcium, were used in crucifixion and, strangely, were viewed as talismans” (p. 86)

Well, this certainly sounds intriguing, important, and virtually definitive - right? If dozens of victims were buried with the nails that had been used to crucify them, this would show beyond any reasonable doubt that crucified victims in Judea were granted decent burials.

But I’m afraid Craig begins to unravel his own case himself, somewhat unwittingly. As it turns out,

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