

# BIBLE TRUTH

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'...Ye shall not have gone over the cities  
of Israel, till the Son of man be come.'

Matthew ch.10 v.23

# **HIGH PRIEST'S HOME HAD ALL MOD CONS!**

## ***Archaeologists find prestigious residence on Mount Zion***

*By Rosemary Northway*



Excavations outside the south-east city wall of Jerusalem below the Al Aqsa Mosque

Archaeological excavations being carried out on Jerusalem's Mount Zion, just outside the walls of the Old City, have uncovered the remains of a high-class mansion dating from the first century AD.

The team who conducted the work, under licence from the Israeli authorities, came from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, USA. Co-directors, Shimon Gibson and James Tabor, believe the building's size and situation, together with the luxurious facilities that their work has revealed, indicate a wealthy and powerful occupant.

‘According to Byzantine tradition, the high priest's dwelling was situated somewhere in this locality’, Gibson told the news media. ‘It is close to the walls of the Second Temple, built by King Herod the Great, and may well have housed Caiaphas, or his father-in-law Annas, who worked closely together, and are notorious for their roles in the trial of Jesus.’

Caiaphas, who figures three times in the New Testament, was an ardent Sadducee, arrogant and domineering. He was extremely wealthy and controlled the business of the Temple, as well as being a supporter — and manipulator — of the Roman imperial government.

Among the amenities enjoyed by the mansion's owners were a three-pit oven, a private walk-in ritual pool (mikvah), and a separate bathroom, complete with bathtub.

The bathtub, which is situated on the left hand side of the bathroom, looks remarkably modern, and is of especial interest, since only three others like it from the Second Temple period in Israel are known. Two of these were in Herod's palaces, one at Jericho and the other at Masada. The third one was found in a priestly residence unearthed during excavations in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem. The bathtub discovered by Gibson and Tabor is almost identical to the others, suggesting that the same hand made all four.



2nd Temple mikvah

One curious discovery made by the archaeologists during their work was a huge number of Murex sea snail shells. It was possible to extract a blue dye from some species of these snails, and according to Jewish texts, was specified as the colouring matter for religious garments. This may account for their presence in the ruins.

In AD 66 a Jewish uprising against Roman rule led ultimately to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the future Roman emperor Titus in AD 70. During the siege many of the citizens took refuge in the underground cisterns that were part of the water system. In the mansion was a 30 foot deep (9 metres) cistern that contained debris indicating that it had been used in just such a manner, for the archaeologists found animal bones and cooking pots and other vessels right at the bottom.

The fact that the remains of this building have been so well preserved, is probably due to its location and the timing of its destruction. As Gibson explained, after the Romans had sacked and razed Jerusalem to the ground, the area remained desolate until the Emperor Hadrian rebuilt the city in AD135. However, the Mount Zion portion was still left as it was until the Byzantine period, at the beginning of the 4th century. Then the incomers simply dumped loads of topsoil from other construction sites on top of the Roman ruins without disturbing them, and built dwellings on top of this. That is why we found the mansion's remains in such an unusually good state of preservation.