TIMELANDERS COMIC EDITION

INTERVIEW WITH GARY AND GAYLE BYERS (PAGE 1 OF 2)

GARY AND GAYLE BYERS ARE ARCHAEOLOGISTS FROM TRINITY SOUTHWEST UNIVERSITY IN ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO, USA. HERE ARE A FEW PHOTOS OF ONE OF THEIR DIGS IN JORDAN.





1. What's one of the most exciting discoveries you've made or seen?
I have found 3 or 4 2000-year-old bronze coins, one small 'miniature' ceramic juglet that probably held some oil or ointment. We found 15-foot-wide and 5-foot-tall city wall that no one knew existed for 3,700 years and discovered a city gate that might have been mentioned in the Bible (the gate at Ai in Joshua 8), and a few dead bodies. Our team has found silver, gold, a few hundred whole vessels (all about 3,500 years old); over 1,500 coins (mostly 2,000-years-old, 6 silver and 2 gold), and 6 pieces of gold jewelry.

2. What kinds of tools or gear do you typically bring to a dig site?
We always have hats and water when we dig in the hot sun. We use trowels (sometimes one in each hand) and archaeologists like Marshalltown trowels best. I have a very small hand-pick, hard and soft brushes, dental tools (from our dentists after they are finished with them in our mouths) and, of course, big picks, all kinds of shovels, and sledgehammers.

3. How do you know where to dig? Are there clues or research you follow?
We do research (we use the Bible a lot) and check out locations in books and photographs. Then we go visit and pick up pottery on the ground at a site that interests us. If it looks like something we want to know more about, we create a number of 6-meter long and wide squares in which to dig. We choose to create squares because we often find stones in a line (probably a wall) or lots of pottery on the surface (meaning people were there for some time).

4. Can you share a moment that felt like solving a mystery from the past?
We dug down 10-feet and found 2 walls to a house with a doorway in one of the walls. They brought lunch down to us in our 6x6 meter square and we realized we were eating in someone's house—the first meal there in over 4,000 years!

5. Have you ever worked in extreme or exotic places, like deserts or jungles?
I dig at sites of ancient cities in dry dirt and sand desert areas mostly where there are very few trees and very little water. There are plenty of scorpions and vipers but no jungles on my digs.

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6. What's the oldest or strangest artifact you've ever handled?
We've found pottery from one of the earliest cities mentioned in the Bible, and I once held the severed skull of a man from the time of Jesus.

7. If you could meet someone from the ancient world, who would it be and why?
I have a great interest in Bible characters. I have had digs in two places where Joshua was and the last place Moses lived before he died. I know some things about where they were and about what it was like to live in those times, but I would really enjoy checking with them to see if I am right!

8. What do you love most about being an archaeologist?
I love to be in places the Bible talks about and discover with my own hands and see with my own eyes the things the Bible mentions. It is just the coolest thing ever!

9. Is there a fun fact or common misconception about archaeology you think we would be surprised by?
Sadly, most archaeologists who dig at Bible sites don't actually believe the Bible is true. It's exciting to find things to help them begin to understand.

10. Any advice for kids who dream of becoming archaeologists one day?
Psalms 37:4—delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. I really wanted to be able to do archaeology, and I think God probably put that in me. So, I focused on delighting in the LORD and he gave me the desires of my heart (although it did take a few years!)

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