In the year 26 BC, King Herod the Great, master builder and politician, began work on his most daring building project yet, the city of Caesarea Maritima. For centuries beforehand, nothing had existed on this barren coast land except for a small Phoenician outpost called Strato’s Tower. This was due in large part to the fact there there was no sufficient harbor at this location, and neither was there any freshwater source to sustain permanent living. But Herod and his builders would not be deterred. First, they made plans for the building of the world’s largest, artificial harbor at that time. This was accomplished through the use of water-soluble cement, wooden forms, and barges. In total, Herod’s engineers successfully built over 700 meters of breakwater right into the Mediterranean Sea. Although most of this lies underwater today, there are still some remains that are visible and other spots just below the surface. Fishermen stand on top of this breakwater, and look as if they are literally standing in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea!

In order to solve the problem of fresh water, Herod had his engineers build a nine-mile aqueduct from the springs located near Mount Carmel in the north. This aqueduct was so well built that some of it remains today. Having solved these two major problems, the city was finished and dedicated in honor of Caesar Augustus in 10 BC. Herod’s motives for building this city were both political and personal. Because he intended to impress and flatter the Romans, Herod designed the city to be a miniature Rome, and thus Caesarea had every form of Roman entertainment available. There was a theater, amphitheatre, hippodrome (for chariot races), and
a temple dedicated to Caesar. Personally, the opening of a new harbor that could accommodate up to 300 ships brought great wealth into Palestine. Herod also built his largest and finest palace here, of which Josephus called the “most beautiful.” It even had a freshwater swimming pool built right into the sea. It was his “getaway” from all of the strict, Jewish regulations that were so carefully maintained in Jerusalem. Indeed, Caesarea was by far a Gentile city, and one which the Romans made the capital of their province when Herod’s son Archeleus was exiled from Palestine in A.D. 6.

Regarding its Biblical importance, it is important to note that Cornelius, a Roman centurion and the first Gentile convert to Christianity, lived here, and that Peter was sent to him from Joppa. Peter later relates his testimony in this matter regarding the salvation of Gentile people in Acts 15. It was here also in A.D. 44 that Herod Agrippa, grandson of Herod the Great, made a speech in the theater for which he was praised as a god. God struck him with a deadly disease from which he died (Acts 12). Paul was imprisoned for two years in this city, during which he testified before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa II (Acts 23-25), and Philip the evangelist moved here and made this city the center of his ministry.

Due to the very dry and arid climate, much of this city has been well preserved including the theater which, after a little resurfacing, still holds concerts till this day. Also, an important archeological find was found here that contained an inscription with the name of Pilate. Other than the Bible, this has been the only

**Scripture**

**Bible References in Context**
- Cornelius, the first Gentile Convert, lived here (Acts 10:1-5)
- Philip the evangelist made his home here (Acts 8:40)
- Herod Agrippa I was smitten by an angel of the Lord here (Acts 12:21-23)
- The apostle Paul visited Caesarea on many occasions (Acts 9:30;23:23-35)

**Acts 8:40**
But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to CAESAREA.

**Acts 9:30**
Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to CAESAREA, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

**Acts 10:1-5**
There was a certain man in CAESAREA called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter:
Acts 10:21-40

Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God. Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;

Acts 11:11

And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me.

Acts 12:18-19

Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode.
Acts 18:22
And when he had landed at CAESAREA, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

Acts 21:8
And the next day we that were of Paul’s company departed, and came unto CAESAREA: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

Acts 21:16
There went with us also certain of the disciples of CAESAREA, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

Acts 23:22-23
So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me. And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to CAESAREA, and horsemen three-score and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;

Acts 23:33
Who, when they came to CAESAREA, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.

Acts 25:1
Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

Acts 25:4
But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at CAESAREA, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.

Acts 25:6
And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto CAESAREA; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought.

Acts 25:13
And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto CAESAREA to salute Festus.

Acts 21:16 (NIV)
Some of the disciples from Caesarea accompanied us and brought us to the home of Mnason, where we were to stay. He was a man from Cyprus and ONE OF THE EARLY DISCIPLES.

Acts 23:23 (NIV)
Then he called two of his centurions and ordered them, “Get ready a detachment of two hundred soldiers, SEVENTY HORSEMEN and two hundred spearmen[a] to go to Caesarea at NINE TONIGHT.”
### Theatre
This is the most ancient of all theaters found in Israel. It was built in Herod’s time and continued to be used for hundreds of years after. There were two seating areas that could accommodate 4,000 spectators. The orchestra area was decorated with marble-like plaster. Behind the stage stood a three story high wall, built with pillars, which provided a stage backdrop.

### Hippodrome
A huge amphitheater, built by Herod, was also discovered that was probably used for horse racing, sporting events, and entertainment. The amphitheater is more than 820 feet long and 164 feet wide. There were 12 rows of seats and had a capacity for 10,000

### Aqueduct
The lack of fresh water at Herod’s new city required a lengthy aqueduct to bring water from springs at the base of Mount Carmel nearly ten miles away. In order that the water would flow by the pull of gravity, the aqueduct was built on arches and the gradient was carefully measured. Later Hadrian and the Crusaders would attach additional channels to Herod’s aqueduct.

### Promontory Palace
Josephus called this a “most magnificent palace” that Herod the Great built on a promontory jutting out into the waters of Caesarea. The pool in the center was nearly Olympic in size, and was filled with fresh water.
The Statues Square

This square was part of a Byzantine road (the cardo) which had two statues, one made of marble and the other porphyry, and probably was dedicated to Roman Caesars. According to the mosaic inscription, the square was renovated in the 6th century.

Herod’s Harbor

This site was insignificant until Herod the Great began to develop it into a magnificent harbor befitting his kingdom. The harbor was built using materials that would allow the concrete to harden underwater. The forty-acre harbor would accommodate 300 ships, much larger than the modern harbor existing today.

The Pilate Stone

The Pilate Stone is the name given to a damaged block of carved limestone with a partially intact inscription attributed to, and mentioning, Pontius Pilate; a Prefect of the Roman-controlled province of Judaea from 26–36 AD. It was discovered in the archaeological site of Caesarea Maritima, in 1961. The artifact is particularly significant because it is the only widely accepted archaeological find, to date, of an authentic 1st-century Roman inscription mentioning the name «Pontius Pilatus». It is contemporary to Pilate’s lifetime, and accords with what is known of his reported career.