

Christ in Prophecy

Archaeology 8: “Biblical Antiquity Center, Part 4”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: What were the crucifixion and burial techniques of the First Century when Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected from the dead? You might be surprised to find out they were quite different from popular conceptions as portrayed in movies. Stay tuned as we pay a visit to a Bible archaeology center located in LaGrange, Georgia where we are going to talk with Jim Fleming, one of Christendom’s foremost experts on biblical archaeology.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus our Blessed Hope and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. Once again this week we are in LaGrange, Georgia which is the site of a great educational center called Explorations in Antiquity. This is a center that was created by Jim Fleming a renowned teacher of Biblical Archaeology. And the purpose of this center is to show people the culture of the First Century; how people lived in the First Century so they can better understand what the Bible has to say. Jim welcome back to Christ in Prophecy.

Dr. Fleming: Thank you David.

Dr. Reagan: Now what we are going to do in this segment is have you do a teaching for us about the crucifixion. What can you tell us about the crucifixion say techniques of the First Century that is going to help us to better understand what the Bible says?

Dr. Fleming: David may I say something as introduction first.

Dr. Reagan: Ok, yes.

Dr. Fleming: And that is when something is really gruesome and horrific sometimes all you can do is speak matter-of-factly, just describe it. That is what the Gospels do, “and they crucified Him,” and move on. So certainly I realize we are talking about our Lord here. But let’s do some background and we just have to be descriptive about it.

Dr. Reagan: Alright.

Dr. Fleming: Had Jesus been tried in the Jewish court system and found guilty His death would have been by stoning. Jews were not allowed an instrument of torture or slow pain. But in that He was referred to the Roman court system and brought to Pontius Pilate His death was by crucifixion. Pilate liked crucifying Jews. He liked making it humiliating. Normally their Governors

before him allowed the criminals to still be robbed. He had them crucified in the nude as a more form of humiliation. Of course religious art for modesty purposes has a loin cloth. The day of Jesus' crucifixion two others were up for crucifixion. Did you know that the historian Josephus born about 30 AD said that in 6 AD there were 2,000 crucifixions in one day in Jerusalem?

Dr. Reagan: Wow.

Dr. Fleming: Now the point I want to make related to that is he says all the trees lining all the roads to and from Jerusalem became crucifixion places. So here in our museum we have a step roadway here and along it several trees that have been turned into crucifixion places. Do you see this would be a way of intimidating the people as they approach a town?

Dr. Reagan: Well you already explained very interesting to me because I did not know where they got the wood for all these crucifixions, I knew there were a lot of crucifixions but there's not that much wood in Israel.

Dr. Fleming: Right.

Dr. Reagan: So they just used trees.

Dr. Fleming: They used trees. They tended to have the criminal bring the crossbar; the word cross means crossbar. So you will see at our models it is a transportable crossbar. But the upright is a rooted tree.

Dr. Reagan: So you are already destroying my images of Jesus walking through the Via Dolorosa dragging this huge cross.

Dr. Fleming: With a full cross yes.

Dr. Reagan: He had the crossbar.

Dr. Fleming: Yes. But He had been scourged by Pilate and quite frankly scourging is a form of torture and therefore there is no word in the Hebrew for scourge.

Dr. Reagan: And some didn't even live through that.

Dr. Fleming: Yes. I was interested to see a number of years ago when the New Testament was being translated into Hebrew what word would be used for scourge because there is no such word. And they simply said, "Pilate tortured Jesus." It's a cat of nine tails, multi-whip with one handle. That way you could strike 40 spare one, 39, but the guy could still have 200 marks on his back. And in any case Pilate scourged Jesus. But having been scourged I am sorry for the detail but He doesn't have use of His back muscles.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Fleming: And even though it is quote, "only the crossbar," He is stumbling because He can't really carry it. When they got to the upright that was going to be used He would be fastened to that. But don't necessarily picture this high cross with ladders leading up. Jerusalem

is a city, the trees around it are not forest trees, there trees that are being pruned, you know olive trees, fig trees, things like that. And so probably you can lift it without a ladder to the cross.

Dr. Reagan: Yes. Plus they wanted them down close so the people could see them for the ultimate impact.

Dr. Fleming: Sure, right.

Dr. Reagan: Well let's see what you have.

Dr. Fleming: Well ok, generally you would, we could stand up a minute and go look at it. Why don't we come back on this side? Part of the torture of crucifixion was the criminal would last a long time. So there is a saddle and the buttocks would rest on the saddle.

Dr. Reagan: Is that right?

Dr. Fleming: And that's so I mean your feet have nail or nails in them, you could push down on your feet if you slid off, get a few more breaths as you rested on the saddle until you slid off again. But it was not merciful for you to last longer. Now they have found a case of a man who was crucified and we'll have close ups of that ankle bone with the spike in it. It was a tomb found in '68 building an apartment compound. But what is unusual about it is the ankle bone had a spike that hit a knot in the upright and it bent.

Dr. Reagan: Is that what you have right now?

Dr. Fleming: And so we have here, you can see there is a spike there, and a piece of wood.

Dr. Reagan: So even though he might be sort of sitting here, he would have his legs pulled back.

Dr. Fleming: In that particular case maybe the tree wasn't tall enough to have them down.

Dr. Reagan: OK.

Dr. Fleming: In his case the knees came out and then back and on either side the ankle bone had the spike come in the side. But because it hit a knot the loved ones couldn't pull it out. So that's how we knew that.

Dr. Reagan: This is the first I've ever heard of this particular part.

Dr. Fleming: The saddle yes.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah the saddle because my impression was that they wanted them to hang and that would cause them to suffocate.

Dr. Fleming: Well you would eventually slide off, you know. And that would make it hard to breathe.

Dr. Reagan: And where were the spikes put, was it in the hand?

Dr. Fleming: Well it is interesting in this particular case and we only had one so far where we know the person died by crucifixion in Jerusalem. The spike is where you would have a wristwatch. And you know not where you would think in the hand. But what is interesting the Hebrew word for hand is from the shoulder down.

Dr. Reagan: Is that right?

Dr. Fleming: So wounds in His hands doesn't need to mean an English hand it could be here.

Dr. Reagan: So it might be?

Dr. Fleming: So again I'm sorry the details but probably it would enter the mind of a soldier, let the wrist bones pull together the ulna and radius, and put the spike there.

Dr. Reagan: How long did it normally take to die?

Dr. Fleming: You could last for days. You could last for days. Depending on whether you had been scourged or not, right? Now so we have two spikes there because a piece of acacia wood was found under the head of the nail in the crucified person we have you see this case the soldier hammered the spike into a piece of wood and so it would be less likely the body could pull out over it, right? Now the criminal normally carried a sign through the streets.

Dr. Reagan: A sign?

Dr. Fleming: With his crime around his neck.

Dr. Reagan: I'm a robber, or a thief or whatever.

Dr. Fleming: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. It was nailed above His head. That was probably the sign.

Dr. Reagan: Mocking wasn't it, mocking.

Dr. Fleming: Yes, this is what's going to happen to anyone you want to be your king, right?

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Fleming: Right. And we have the three languages here. But Romans signs had these little fly wings on the edge of them so it probably looked like that. Now what is interesting also is that Matthew, Mark, and Luke say someone put a sponge with sour wine on it on a stick. John uses the word hyssop stick that is a reed that grows. You remember in the book of Exodus the ancient Hebrews are told dip hyssop in the blood of a paschal lamb and swab it on your doorpost and lintel. Do you see what John is doing? There is a Passover connection with the crucifixion. There's a bloody doorpost hyssop and redemption from death in Egypt is a bloody crucifixion post; hyssop and redemption from death at the cross. So John is drawing a paschal connection with the death. Now it doesn't need to necessarily mean a long pole. Someone doesn't want to touch a dying person, but Jesus doesn't have the strength. Remember the first time He didn't want something to drink and later in the day He said, "I thirst." He doesn't have the strength to lift His head back. But you see you can suck from a sponge that you held up to

someone. Now the sour wine is strong wine that turned to vinegar. It doesn't hasten the death but it is considered merciful because it makes you a little bit less aware of your surroundings and they put sour wine. Those who loved Jesus would have been grateful that some sour wine had been offered to Him. John's Gospel mentions there were four soldiers. It's curious because Roman sources talk about four soldiers as well. And a Jewish male has five items of clothing. So we put here if there are four soldiers you see what happens they are going to gamble for the fifth item. One soldier gets the turban; usually it's tied around the head. One soldier gets the sandals. One soldier gets the outer robe, normally open on the front. Another soldier gets the sash to tie the outer robe. What remains is the long tunic, the long tee-shirt. Well one of the, if I speak as a Roman a minute, one of the perks of crucifixion you can sell the guys clothes on the market. Who is going to buy a quarter of a tunic if you tear it into four pieces?

Dr. Reagan: Right.

Dr. Fleming: So they throw the dice. We put here into the cabin it's a Roman dice, believe it or not ankle bones from cattle. And they land on four sides rather than six. Well if there are four soldiers you could cast lots to see who would be the lucky soldier to get the fifth item, also the tunic. So it was definitely brutal. Jesus is on the cross from 9 'til 3. In Judaism you are supposed to be buried the day you died, and that afternoon they broke the bones to hasten the deaths. And the first person jumped when they stabbed Him, they broke his legs. The middle person did not He was already dead, they didn't break His legs. The third one again it ends with a Passover connection, an unblemished sacrifice with unbroken legs.

Dr. Reagan: Also it fulfilled prophecy that His legs, His bones would not be broken.

Dr. Fleming: Exactly, exactly.

Dr. Reagan: Incredible, well let's take a look at a First Century tomb now as where they would take the body to inter it and tell us about the customs of that ok?

Dr. Fleming: Ok, good.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: Let's go over here and look and take a look at this New Testament tomb. Wow this is a classic rolling stone type tomb.

Dr. Fleming: Yeah, and look how big it is David. You have Joseph of Arimathea was one of the elders which means the member of the Sanhedrin. And we have some tombs in Jerusalem with this large of stone, so we have a wealthy tomb. And do you see it rolls up hill to open. It would be easier to close.

Dr. Reagan: That's going to take a lot of pushing.

Dr. Fleming: It would. That's why the women are wondering who will help them turn back the stone.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Fleming: Usually they were decorated with floral or geometric designs for Jews. And outside you have a mourner's bench. And for one week you would visit the tomb daily and you would cry.

Dr. Reagan: Sit here and cry, sit here and weep.

Dr. Fleming: Yup, you cry here. And they even had tear vases or tear cups that they would collect their tears. And then they would inter their grief when they put the tear cup in, we find them in tombs.

Dr. Reagan: Oh they put them in. Oh, they put them in?

Dr. Fleming: Yeah.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, I didn't know that.

Dr. Fleming: It's called you know burying your grief with your loved one. And there are mentions of these tear bottles in the Bible.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, yes. It's amazing.

Dr. Fleming: So you see you are coming up a flight of stairs here.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Fleming: And notice we have an anterior of a tomb which we've in order to be able to have people to be able to view we have made it so there are three fully preserved niches there. Two of these niches are preserved but the roof broke here, and later collapsed. But one can see that there were 3 more niches running away. This is a typical Herodian Period tomb. Notice in front of the niches is a "U" shaped bench on three sides that's where you would dress the body, and then afterwards slide it to a niche so we have one sort of an example to see there. These kinds of tombs are only found in Jerusalem from 37 BC to 70 AD a very restricted period, so Herodian Period tombs. Well can you imagine then that Friday the body would have been brought up but not yet slid in a niche that gives an example later? But simply laid on the bench because they have to be adding grave cloths and spices. Usually you would be bringing grave clothes. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea had a mixture of myrrh and olives and some grave cloths. They would have wrapped the body with the spices, but Sabbath was coming and remember it says as they exited the tomb Sabbath was being manifest, that means people were lighting their oil lamps just before the sunset. Would not be the tradition of the women to come back on Saturday. So first light Sunday morning the women wanted to add more grave cloths because they didn't have enough time before sunset Friday night. And so they've come back to the tomb wondering who would help them roll back the massive stone that we saw. And of course it was rolled back and we have the mystery of the resurrection narrative. Let me just mention a bit more about burial practices.

Dr. Reagan: OK.

Dr. Fleming: You would wrap a body from foot to head, but notice you have to tie off the shoulders and come in again and start with the head.

Dr. Reagan: So it's a separate wrapping for the head.

Dr. Fleming: For the head and that is mentioned in the Gospel narrative. If someone had just stolen the body and unwrapped the grave cloths you'd expect to see a jumbled pile of grave cloths. But remember when they saw the head wrapping separate from the body wrapping there is a little space between them because you are tying off the shoulders and starting again with the head. That's significant when the women tell the disciples and Peter and John run to the tomb remember John got there first, I guess he could jog faster. And he stooped and looked in; you saw how it was only five hands high for the door, seven hands high for the door. But Peter when he got there walked right in, he is the first one to witness. And that strange thing when he saw the head wrappings still separate from the body wrappings he believed. If someone had stolen the body and left the grave cloths there would be just a pile of grave cloths. And people back then would understand you tie off the body and then start again coming in from the shoulders for the head. And they are seeing the head cloths separate from the body cloths made them realize he could not explain the arrangement of the grave cloths. The body was missing but the grave cloths were undisturbed. Normally what would happen is that you would add more spices the rest of that week gets smellier right, remember in the Lazarus story in John's gospel Martha says, "By now Lazarus stinks." You would add more spices. You would have that week of coming back for the funeral wake. You would add time for crying out on the bench out in front. But the interior has this arrangement of a "U" shaped work area. The angel story is there was for the resurrection narrative there was an angel sitting at the head and at the feet. It means the body had not yet been slid into the niche. Now a niche again is made to have it so the body would slide in headfirst and then in Jerusalem climate it would take about two years for a body to decompose. And the plan would be at the end of those two years to come back and collect the bones and put them in a bone box.

Dr. Reagan: An ossuary.

Dr. Fleming: Good man. The proof of the resurrection of Jesus however is not just the arrangement of the grave cloths which could not be explained. But rather Jesus' followers turned that First Century upside down. They should have returned to their nets had the resurrection not occurred. But instead they turned the First Century upside down. And it was their belief in the resurrection that kept them serving God. And kept them even in spite of danger and persecution willing to give their lives in obedience to God's will sharing the Gospel throughout the Roman world.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: I hope you are enjoying this teaching about the crucifixion and burial of Jesus. Our teacher is Jim Fleming one of Christendom's foremost experts on Biblical Archaeology and he has been speaking from his Antiquities Center that is located in LaGrange, Georgia about 60

miles southwest of Atlanta. You can find detailed information about the center on their website at digging4it.net. I want to emphasize that they have educational programs for both adults and children and they can tailor their programs to your time schedule. This is the fourth in a series of programs that we video taped at the center. If you have missed the previous programs you can find them at our website at lamblion.com. As we bring this series to a close I would like to show you some footage we have not shared on our other programs. It will illustrate to you what a wonderful learning center Jim Fleming has created. And I hope it will motivate you to plan a trip to the center with your family or with a church group. Here now is an illustration of what I am talking about. OK, Jim now it looks like we are in a threshing floor area.

Dr. Fleming: Yes, sir.

Dr. Reagan: Is that what this is?

Dr. Fleming: Four months of the year a farmer growing barley and wheat the life is related to this agriculture installation. In March, April it is the barley harvest. And you would bring in the handful of the sheaves of grain, put it in. It is always a place where bedrock is exposed. Then you have a threshing sled with sharp rocks in it that is turned with the rocks facing down. And a trained mule or donkey or you standing on it guiding them makes circles. And the sharp rocks scrapping the bottom cuts the pieces of the stalks into smaller and smaller pieces.

Dr. Reagan: So that's why you have bedrock instead of a soft ground.

Dr. Fleming: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: So the animal pulls this around and it grinds the...

Dr. Fleming: And it cuts it.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah what are these used for?

Dr. Fleming: These are winnowing forks you see.

Dr. Reagan: How do you do that?

Dr. Fleming: And then you would, now we don't have these cut very small but you wait until a windy afternoon and you throw it up in the air and the lighter elements are blown aside and the grain falls. But usually there's still some pieces in it.

Dr. Reagan: So what is this here?

Dr. Fleming: So then you have to sieve it a little bit more and usually you use pieces of cloth or whatever to sieve it, and then you bag it.

Dr. Reagan: Oh.

Dr. Fleming: And this is your harvest. The reason this is important is here where you know what your economy is going to be like. Did you get four bags for every bag you sold or 40 bags? And so it is interesting in the Canaanite Bible which was found at a place called Ras Shamra

you always build an altar to Ba'al at a threshing floor. Remember Ba'al is the rain god, the god of the economy, GNP god because that is where you are thanking Ba'al for the harvest. When David conquers Jerusalem he purchases the threshing floor of Araunah and builds an altar to the Lord, a different god is going to be thanked at Jerusalem's threshing floor. So it is not only an agricultural installation it's a religious installation.

Dr. Reagan: I wonder why David went up and bought a threshing floor.

Dr. Fleming: It's not because it's a vacant lot. Probably because Ba'al was being worshipped there and he is changing the religious status of Jerusalem's threshing floor.

Dr. Reagan: And that was on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem.

Dr. Fleming: Where eventually where Solomon built the Temple.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah.

Dr. Fleming: Or the Temple that Jesus saw Herod's Temple was.

Dr. Reagan: OK, well let's visit another site.

Dr. Fleming: OK.

Dr. Reagan: Now Jim what is this? It looks like a market area or something here.

Dr. Fleming: Yes, market street. This is a vending area. You see of course we have a place here where you could weigh out buying some nuts here.

Dr. Reagan: OK.

Dr. Fleming: Let's just say you wanted 3 ounces.

Dr. Reagan: Alright.

Dr. Fleming: I put my 3 ounce weight there. I've been adding over here you know until they are level. And this would be just right.

Dr. Reagan: That's just yes.

Dr. Fleming: There is a phrase "Kitsat hessed, be-vakasha" a little grace please. And if the vendor.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, so give me one more.

Dr. Fleming: And if the vendor wants you to come back they put another hand on your side. Now listen that is the same word after the golden calf, I am a god full of hessed, full of grace.

Dr. Reagan: Full of grace.

Dr. Fleming: The Bible speaks about a God who is so gracious He puts a little bit on our side of the weight. It is a wonderful thing for kids to be able to act out.

Dr. Reagan: But these vendors never did what some did in the United States in the early years of putting their thumb on this.

Dr. Fleming: Oh, never. In fact because you are worried about unscrupulous vendors you have a bureau of weights and standards. May I show it to you it is right there?

Dr. Reagan: Sure, ok. Ok, so now you say this is the bureau of weights and standards.

Dr. Fleming: Yes, yes you know there is somebody who might be having two sets of weights, remember Deuteronomy talks about it.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Fleming: This is for dry volume weights.

Dr. Reagan: OK.

Dr. Fleming: But this is for liquid volumes. And you see have all these containers of different volumes.

Dr. Reagan: Every one of them different volumes.

Dr. Fleming: And if you said that was a quart of milk and you were suspicious it was, you could come to the guy in charge of the weights and measures pour it in, there is a little quart there.

Dr. Reagan: So I could go from the vendor over here.

Dr. Fleming: And pour it in here and it would drain out and see if it did fill up a quart. And then the man in charge of the weights and measures would fine the vendor. This person is mentioned in the Gospels. At Capernaum there is it is usually translated royal steward, royal official. The word is agironomous or basilikos, the agora, the basilica.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Fleming: Is the man in charge of weights and measures? He's the guy who had a sick son who went to Cana in John 4 but he is the guy in charge. So Capernaum had a Bureau of Standards as well.

Closing

Dr. Reagan: A couple of years ago we had Jim Fleming right here in our studio as a very special guest and we shot four very fascinating programs with him. And we have made those programs available on this video album here entitled, "Biblical Archaeology." In these interviews

Dr. Fleming explains the importance of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and he discusses a wide range of archaeological issues like the location of the Jewish Temple and the disposition of the Ark of the Covenant. He also provides a detailed description of his remarkable discovery in 1969 of the ancient Eastern Gate that existed at the time of Jesus. I'd also like to recommend another video album to you it's called the "Mountains of Jerusalem." It contains four programs that were shot entirely in Jerusalem. The programs are about the biblical significance of the Mount of Olives, the Temple Mount, Mt. Zion, and the Mt. Herzl. It is one of the most popular video albums we have ever produced. In a moment our announcer will tell you how you can get copies of these albums.

Well that's our program for this week. I hope it's been a blessing to you until next week the Lord willing this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion Ministries saying, "Look up, be watchful for our redemption is drawing near."

End of Program