

***Christ in Prophecy***  
**Easter 3: “The Tombs of Jerusalem & the Resurrection”**

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**Opening**

**Dr. Reagan:** No one knows for sure where the tomb of Jesus is located. But one thing I know for sure. Wherever it may be, it is empty! Stay tuned.

**Program**

**Dr. Reagan:** Greetings in the name of Jesus our blessed hope. I'm Dave Reagan, founder and director of Lamb and Lion Ministries. Welcome to *Christ in Prophecy*. During the past two weeks our programs have been focusing on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in celebration of Easter. Or what I like to call Resurrection day. Two weeks ago we began this series by taking a look at the crucifixion in Bible prophecy. In doing so we focused on one of the most remarkable prophecies in the Bible, it is contained in Psalm 22, written by King David of Israel more than one thousand years before the birth of Jesus. In that Psalm, David prophesied that the Messiah would be executed by having His hands and feet pierced. That prophecy was made 700 years before the Romans perfected crucifixion as a method of execution. Even at the time of Jesus, the Jewish method of execution was stoning, but the Jews had lost the power to implement the death penalty. They had, therefore, to turn Jesus over to the Romans to be executed and the Roman method, as prophesied by David one thousand years before, was crucifixion.

Last week we considered the validity of the resurrection of Jesus. We looked at all the ways people have tried to explain away the resurrection, many of them just downright silly in nature. We saw that no one has ever been able to provide an adequate explanation for the empty tomb except of course to conclude that the resurrection really occurred. We emphasized that the empty tomb and the post resurrection appearances of Jesus are powerful evidence of the truth of the resurrection. But we concluded the

greatest evidence of the resurrection in Scripture is to be seen in the transformed lives of Jesus' disciples. For within 50 days of His crucifixion, His disciples had been miraculously transformed from a defeated, frustrated, hopeless group of individuals into a confident band of Christian soldiers determined to win the world for their Lord.

In this program we want to show you the historical setting of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. To do that we're going to take you to the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem where we're going to visit a variety of tombs including a first century tomb that could very well have been the tomb of Jesus. Let's go now to the Kidron Valley on the east side of the old city of Jerusalem.

**Dennis Pollock:** The Kidron Valley is a deep ravine that runs north and south between the Old City of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. Above us, to the west is the Temple Mount with its golden gate. In front of that gate is a Muslim cemetery. On the east side of the Kidron Valley is the Mount of Olives where you can see thousands of Jewish graves.

**Dr. Reagan:** Every time I stand in this valley and look up at all those graves, I am reminded of an experience that God gave to the prophet Ezekiel. He took him to a valley like this one, full of dead men's bones and He told him, "Preach to those bones." Incidentally folks, I think I know how Ezekiel felt because I've been to a few churches where I felt like I was preaching to "the frozen chosen"! Anyway, Ezekiel started preaching, and the bones started moving. Before his astonished eyes, the bones came together and flesh formed on them. That's when the Lord told him that what he was seeing was a prophetic vision prophesying that one day God would regather the Jewish people from the four corners of the earth and bring them back to their homeland of Israel.

**Dennis Pollock:** And that's exactly what God did during the 20th Century. In the year 1900 there were only 40,000 Jews in all this land. Today, there are over 5 million of them!

**Dr. Reagan:** Jerusalem has come alive in these end times, but it is still a city surrounded by tombs. Some are very elaborate, others are simple. Some are very

ancient, others are new. Some are the tombs of very great people. Most are the tombs of common folks.

**Dennis Pollock:** We are going to show you a cross-section of the tombs of Jerusalem, leading up to the most important tomb in the whole world, a rich man's tomb that was loaned to a lowly and poor carpenter from Nazareth by the name of Jesus.

**Dr. Reagan:** Let's get started right here in the Kidron Valley. As you can see, this valley contains some of the most elaborate tombs in all the land. This monument is the most famous. It is usually referred to as the Tomb of Absalom, referring, of course, to the son of David who revolted against his father.

**Dennis Pollock:** The tradition that this tomb belonged to Absalom is based on a statement from 2 Samuel which reads, "Now Absalom in his life-time set up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's valley and it is called Absalom's monument to this day."

**Dr. Reagan:** The only problem is that this tomb dates from the Second Temple period, long after the time of Absalom. So it is most likely the tomb of a very prominent but now unknown citizen of Jerusalem.

**Dennis Pollock:** Now, one interesting thing about this remarkable tomb is the fact that since it was attributed to Absalom, who rebelled against his father, it became a tradition for passers-by to actually throw stones at it! Also, parents would often bring their kids here to impress on them the consequences of rebelling against their parents.

**Dr. Reagan:** When I look at this spectacular tomb though, I am reminded of the words of Jesus when He rebuked the Scribes and the Pharisees. He said, "Woe to you, you hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside are full of dead men's bones."

**Dennis Pollock:** Now, the only one of these tombs that bears an inscription is this one. Although the tomb is popularly referred to as the tomb of St. James, the inscription attributes it to the priestly family of Hezir, a family mentioned in the book of Nehemiah.

The traditional name of the tomb comes from a Christian tradition that James, the brother of Jesus, was killed in this area and buried here.

**Dr. Reagan:** The third tomb in this row of monuments is called the tomb of Zechariah. The oldest tradition holds that the tomb is that of the oral prophet named Zechariah who was murdered in the Temple about 800 BC. But a later tradition attributes the tomb to the father of John the Baptist. The tomb is not old enough to be that of the prophets, and it is too old to be related to anyone in the family of John the Baptist. You know folks someone ought to write a book someday on how all these legends get started!

**Dennis Pollock:** The only thing we can be sure of is that this remarkable row of tombs attests to the high standards of architectural and masonry skills that existed in Jerusalem during the period of the Second Temple. They also are a witness of the wealth of the city's population.

**Dr. Reagan:** But of course, that wealth was concentrated in the hands of very few families. The average person during the time of Jesus could not afford an elaborate tomb like these. To get an idea of the tombs of the average people, let's go over to the Mount of Olives.

**Dennis Pollock:** The tombs that you see here on the Mt. of Olives are the more common type of tomb that you will find in this area. Now the body is actually buried in the ground, not in these stone boxes that you see here above the ground.

**Dr. Reagan:** The reason there are so many graves on the Mt. of Olives is because it says in Zechariah 14 that when the Messiah comes to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He will arrive here on this mountain, and the great resurrection of the dead will occur. Thus, it is believed that those buried here will be the first to be resurrected.

**Dennis Pollock:** Notice the stones that are scattered on the top of each tomb. These are stones of remembrance. Whenever a friend or a relative visits the grave of a loved one, they leave a stone on top as a sign of their remembrance.

**Dr. Reagan:** That reminds me there are a couple of graves here on the Mount of Olives that I would like to honor with a stone of remembrance. And the first one is located at Dominus Fleuit Chapel, the place where Jesus wept over the city. Let's go there.

**Dr. Reagan:** The first grave I have in mind is a very unusual one. It's located over here at the base of this tree. Several years ago a very dear friend of mine, Clem Stewart, and his wife, Nancy, were scheduled to come to Israel with me for a holy land pilgrimage. Clem was extremely excited about this trip. But two months before we were to leave, Clem drowned in a very tragic boating accident. His wife and his daughter decided to come anyway, and we had a special ceremony right here at this tree and his ashes were scattered at the base of it. Well folks, that means that when the Lord Jesus Christ returns, there is going to be at least one Gentile who will be resurrected from this Jewish cemetery! I love you, Clem, and I look forward to being with you again one day. The second special tomb I'd like to show you is located at the base of this mount. Let's go down and see it. Well, here it is. This is the tomb of one of Israel's greatest Prime Ministers. He was the only Prime Minister Israel has ever had who was an Orthodox, observant Jew. That's why he is buried here on the Mount of Olives rather than in Israel's national cemetery.

**Dennis Pollock:** Orthodox Jews must be buried before sunset on the day they die. They are not embalmed, nor are they placed in a casket. They are buried in a simple shroud.

**Dr. Reagan:** On the day that Menachem Begin died, the news spread very rapidly, and by the time his body reached here there were over 150,000 people present to honor him.

**Dennis Pollock:** And we're going to honor his memory now, by placing stones of remembrance on his tomb.

**Dr. Reagan:** And now for a dramatic contrast in tombs, let's go to the national cemetery of Israel. It is located in New Jerusalem, on Mt. Herzl. This is the Mt. Herzl Cemetery in New Jerusalem. It is the national cemetery of Israel, equivalent to Arlington National Cemetery in the United States. Most of the graves are of military personnel killed in action. It is also the final resting place of some of Israel's most illustrious leaders.

**Dennis Pollock:** David Ben Gurion, Israel's first and most famous Prime Minister is buried on the grounds of a kibbutz in the Negev Desert. But behind me here is the tomb of the only woman ever to serve as Prime Minister. An American by the name of Golda Meir, she was the nation's Prime Minister during the Yom Kippur War in 1973.

**Dr. Reagan:** This is the tomb of Yitzhak Rabin, the only Prime Minister ever to be assassinated. He was shot at a peace rally in Tel Aviv on November 4, 1995. His assassin was a Jew who opposed the Oslo Peace Process of trading land for peace. Rabin was the Chief of Staff of the Israeli armed forces during the Six Day War in 1967.

**Dennis Pollock:** But the most important tomb in this cemetery belongs to the man the cemetery is named after, Theodore Herzl. Let's go there now. Theodore Herzl is the George Washington of Israel. He was a visionary who founded the Zionist Movement in the latter part of the 19th Century by reviving the concept that the Jews of Europe should return to their ancient homeland.

**Dr. Reagan:** At the First Zionist Congress, held in Basel Switzerland in 1897, Herzl predicted that the state of Israel would come back into existence within 50 years. And sure enough, 50 years later in 1947, the United Nations voted to establish the state.

**Dennis Pollock:** But Herzl didn't live to see his dream come true. He died in 1904 at the young age of 44. His body was moved to this site in 1949.

**Dr. Reagan:** Next we are going to visit three tombs in the Jerusalem area that are identified with biblical characters. The first is the tomb of the prophet Samuel.

**Dennis Pollock:** This is the traditional site of the tomb of Samuel. It is located on a mountain northwest of Jerusalem. The structure is a Crusader church that dates from the Middle Ages. In the 15th Century it was transferred to Jewish hands and became a synagogue. About a hundred years later it changed hands again and became a Muslim mosque. Today it is shared by the Muslims and the Jews. The mountaintop on which this tomb stands was called the Mountain of Joy by the Crusaders because it was from here

that they got their first glimpse of Jerusalem in the year 1099. Today you can see how the new suburbs of Jerusalem are spreading this way.

**Dr. Reagan:** Let's pause for a moment to honor Samuel. He was both a judge and a prophet. He was also God's anointer. He was the one who anointed Saul to be the first king of Israel, and he was the one who later anointed David to succeed Saul. He knew what it meant to have a personal relationship with God, and that knowledge prompted him to make a statement that is quoted in the Gospels. He said, "Obedience is better than sacrifice." In other words, God is more pleased with our obedience to His Word than He is in empty religious ritual.

**Dennis Pollock:** Our next stop is the tomb of Rachel, located on the south side of Jerusalem, near the town of Bethlehem. Here is an old photo taken of the tomb around 1900. As you can see, today the tomb is almost completely obscured from view by a large wall that has been built in recent years to protect the site from car bomb attacks. These gates, which used to be in the outdoor courtyard leading to the tomb, are now located indoors behind the protective wall.

**Dr. Reagan:** Well, here we are at the tomb of Rachel and you may be wondering what it is that's going on behind us here. What these men are doing is wrapping the tomb in red thread, and this is for the purpose of raising money for charity later on. When people make donations they will be given a little piece of this thread that actually touched the tomb of Rachel. Now, regarding Rachel, she was the beloved wife of Jacob. The Bible says that she died in childbirth while she was on her way to Bethlehem with her husband. The child she delivered while she was dying was named Benjamin.

**Dennis Pollock:** Rachel is described in the Scriptures as "beautiful of form and face." She was Jacob's favorite wife, and she gave him two sons, Joseph and Benjamin.

**Dr. Reagan:** When I think of Rachel, I am always reminded of the words in Proverbs that say, "An excellent wife is worth far more than jewels. Her children will bless her and her husband praises her name." May the name of Rachel be praised!

**Dennis Pollock:** The third biblical tomb we are going to visit is that of one of the most notable characters in all of God's Word, King David. Now nobody knows for sure where his tomb is located, but the traditional site is here on Mt. Zion. I'm standing right outside the Zion Gate, and just down a narrow lane about a block from here is a building that contains the tomb.

**Dr. Reagan:** No one knows for sure how the tradition developed that King David's tomb was located in this general area of Mt. Zion. Let me show you where we are on the map. Here is an outline of the current walls of the Old City of Jerusalem. The city in the time of David consisted only of this small area here outlined in red. It is outside today's walls. The Bible says that David was buried in the city of David, which would be here in this small red area. Right now, we are over here on Mt. Zion, a considerable distance from the site of the original city.

**Dennis Pollock:** The site that we are about to enter has been the generally accepted location of David's Tomb since the Middle Ages. Let's go inside. How do I look?

**Dr. Reagan:** You look great; let's go. My namesake, King David, was a passionate man of God who is described in the Scriptures as a man after God's own heart. I think he was the greatest poet who ever lived. Let's honor him for a moment by reading a poem that has blessed millions of people for 3,000 years, Psalm 23.

**Dennis Pollock:** "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

**Dr. Reagan:** "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely, goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

You know, folks, every time I come to this area of Mt. Zion, I am reminded once again of how anywhere you go in this city you will find the ancient and the biblical juxtaposed with

the modern and the secular. To give you an example, right down the hill from here, you will find the tomb of a man who has become very famous in recent years. I've never been there, but let's go see if we can find his tomb.

**Dennis Pollock:** Hey Dave! I think I've found it over here. Yeah, this is it.

**Dr. Reagan:** That's right, that's it. Folks, this is the tomb of Oscar Schindler, the man made famous by the movie, *Schindler's List*.

**Dennis Pollock:** Schindler was a very paradoxical man. He squandered the early years of his life in Czechoslovakia as a black marketeer, a gambler, an alcoholic and a womanizer. And when Germany invaded Czechoslovakia in 1939, he joined the Nazi Party to advance his business interests. But when it became clear to him that the Nazis intended to exterminate the Jews, he spent the rest of the war trying to protect as many Jews as he could from being arrested and sent to extermination camps. Using bribery and trickery of all types, he was able to save the lives of twelve hundred Jews.

**Dr. Reagan:** In the 1960's Schindler was declared by the Israeli Government to be a "righteous Gentile." You know, that's a title that's given to any Gentile who saved Jews during World War II. In fact, it's the same title that was given to Corrie ten Boom. Schindler is the only member of the Nazi Party to ever receive this honor. When Schindler died in 1974 in Germany, his remains were brought to this place for burial. Today there are more than 6,000 descendants of Schindler's Jews living in the United States, Europe, and Israel.

**Dennis Pollock:** When I think of what Schindler did for the Jews, I am reminded of the words of Proverbs 24, it reads, "Rescue those who are unjustly sentenced to death; don't stand back and let them die. Don't try to disclaim responsibility by saying you didn't know about it. For God, who knows all hearts, knows yours, and He knows you knew!" We are now ready to proceed to the most important tomb in the world, a First Century tomb that could very well have been the tomb of Jesus.

**Dr. Reagan:** But before we do we need to pause for a moment to talk about the design of First Century tombs and first century burial customs.

**Dennis Pollock:** First Century tombs of the wealthy were shaped like this. The entrance would take you into a "weeping chamber." This was often large enough to hold 20 people. Next to it was a burial chamber with three ledges for bodies. Now the entrance was sealed with a rolling stone. Here is a good example of a tomb with a rolling stone. This tomb is located about 19 miles southwest of Jerusalem. It was excavated in 1976. Unfortunately, it was totally destroyed by vandals in the late 1990's.

**Dr. Reagan:** Tombs like these were used only temporarily. By that I mean that a body would be placed in the tomb and left to decay. And after it had decomposed, and only the bones were left, they would be collected and placed into an ossuary or bone box that looked like these. This made it possible for the tomb to be used over and over again.

**Dennis Pollock:** The Bible tells us that Jesus was buried in a rich man's tomb that was hewn out of solid rock. It also says that that tomb was sealed by a large stone that was rolled in front of the entrance.

**Dr. Reagan:** With this background, let's go now to a place called The Garden Tomb.

**Dennis Pollock:** The Bible says that the tomb of Jesus was located in a garden near the site of the crucifixion.

**Dr. Reagan:** And this tomb meets those qualifications. It is located in a beautiful garden that contains a wine press and one of the largest cisterns in Jerusalem. It is also adjacent to Skull Hill, a site of execution in the First Century.

**Dennis Pollock:** The tomb itself is cut out of solid rock, and running along the front here is a trough to hold a rolling stone that would seal the entrance. The original rolling stone is no longer here, but a smaller one is on display to give you an idea of what it looked like.

**Dr. Reagan:** Let's go inside.

**Dennis Pollock:** This is the weeping chamber where the families would come to pray and grieve over the loss of their loved one. And this is the burial chamber where the body would be placed.

**Dr. Reagan:** The door to this tomb has an important sign on it. The sign says, "He is not here, for He is risen." The Gospel of John contains a great insight about the tomb of Jesus, but it's one that you cannot understand unless you know something about the prophetic typology of the Ark of the Covenant, that mysterious, sacred box that sat inside the Holy of Holies in the ancient Jewish Temple.

**Dennis Pollock:** The Ark was made of wood, indicating that the Messiah would be human. But it was overlaid with gold, pointing to the Messiah's divine nature. Inside the Ark were three objects. One was a pot of manna, signifying that the Messiah would be the Savior, the bread of life. The box also contained the tablets of Moses, indicating that the Messiah would fulfill the Law perfectly. And the third item was Aaron's rod that budded. It was a symbol that the Messiah would rise from the dead. On top of the box was a lid called the Mercy Seat. And on it were two golden angels, one at each end.

**Dr. Reagan:** Once a year the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat. This was a prophetic symbol that one day the Messiah would shed His blood, making it possible for the grace of God to cover the law of God.

**Dennis Pollock:** In John, chapter 20, we find these words, "But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." Now, folks, that sounds like nothing but a simple description of a woman looking into a tomb. But when you know something about prophetic symbolism, the passage takes on a whole new meaning.

**Dr. Reagan:** You see, folks, when Mary looked into the tomb, she saw the prophetic fulfillment of the meaning of the Ark of the Covenant. She saw where the body of Jesus had lain, where the blood had been spilled. And she saw two angels sitting at each end of that sacred spot, just like those two angels at each end of the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant.

**Dennis Pollock:** At the beginning of this program we pointed out that no one knows for sure today where the tomb of Jesus was located. It could have been the tomb here in this garden, but we are not making that claim, and neither do the caretakers of the Garden Tomb Society. But the point that I want to make is that no matter where the tomb is located, one thing we know for sure and that is that it is empty. And no one has ever been able to explain away the empty tomb, because the only explanation for that is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**Dr. Reagan:** The Jewish leaders at the time bribed the Roman guards to say that Jesus' disciples had come in the night and stolen the body. Now folks, just stop and think about that for a moment. A handful of scared fishermen stole a body from a band of Roman soldiers? And then devoted their lives to a lie? Come on, let's get serious.

**Dennis Pollock:** Others claimed that the disciples went to the wrong tomb. Well, why didn't they go on to the right tomb then and produce the body? The reason, of course, is that the tomb was empty.

**Dr. Reagan:** There have been many other explanations of the empty tomb such as hallucinations and hypnosis. Perhaps the silliest is the idea that Jesus really didn't die on the cross that He sort of lapsed into a coma. And then, later on He was placed in the tomb, He awoke, pushed away the stone, and ran around the countryside for 40 days. Such ridiculous attempts to explain away the empty tomb are really harder to believe than the fact that He was resurrected from the dead.

**Dennis Pollock:** I'll say Amen to that Dave. The empty tomb cannot be explained away. It is a continuing testimony to the fact that Jesus is alive. His resurrection totally transformed His small band of disciples, converting them from despair to triumph, and motivating them to go forth and preach the Gospel to all the world. And the resurrection of Jesus continues to transform the lives of millions today. How about you? Have you received Christ? I urge you to reach out to God in faith, receive Christ as your Lord and your Savior.

**Dr. Reagan:** Until we meet again, this is Dave Reagan and Dennis Pollock speaking from Jerusalem, saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our redemption is drawing near."

**End of Program**