

## ***Christ in Prophecy***

### **Archaeology 4: “Archaeological Issues”**

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#### **Opening**

**Dr. Reagan:** There are many hotly debated archaeological issues that relate to the Bible. For example; where did the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus occur? Was it at the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, inside the current Old City of Jerusalem? Or was it at the site of the Garden Tomb located north of the Old City? Another issue is the location of Mount Sinai. Is the traditional site in the Sinai Peninsula the correct one? Or is Mount Sinai really located in the Arabian Peninsula? And what about the site of the Transfiguration, did it occur at the traditional site of Mount Tabor or was it at Mount Hermon? Or could it have been at another site like Mount Meron? For a fascinating discussion of these and other archaeological issues with one of Christendom’s finest teachers of Bible Archaeology, stay tuned.

#### **Part 1**

**Dr. Reagan:** Well Greetings in the name of Jesus our blessed hope and welcome once again to Christ in Prophecy. My colleague Nathan and I are just delighted to have for the fourth time, Dr. James Fleming who is considered one of the foremost teachers of Biblical Archaeology in all of Christendom today. Jim we just thank you so much for being back with us for the fourth time. We appreciate you traveling all the way from Georgia to Texas to God’s country...

**Dr. Fleming:** I am exhausted.

**Dr. Reagan:** ... to be on this program. Okay. Nathan I want to thank you also for helping us with these interviews. You’ve really been very helpful, and I would like for you to tell our viewers how they could see the programs they may have missed in this series.

**Nathan Jones:** Certainly, just go to [www.lamblion.com](http://www.lamblion.com), our website, every page at the bottom there’s a big button that says TV Shows, click it and it will take you right into the current show. If it is past then just go to Multimedia and then Television Programs it is right there in the list, and it is under the heading of archaeology or look for Jim Fleming, it is all right there.

**Dr. Reagan:** Thank you, Nathan. Jim, in this particular series of this program we want to focus on hotly debated archaeological issues. And I realize that there may not be some answers to some of these, but on the other hand there maybe. So the first one I want to start off with has to do with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

**Dr. Fleming:** Yes.

**Dr. Reagan:** There are 2 sites in Jerusalem, particularly 2, and that is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which is located inside the current walls of the Old City. And the other one is the Garden Tomb which is located just slightly north of the Damascus Gate of the Old City. Some also argue that it could have occurred on the Mount of Olives, that's not a strong point but some argue that. Now I know when taking groups to Israel that they go into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and they are just really turned off by all of the idolatry that they see, and the darkness and all the things that they see. Whereas you take them to the Garden Tomb and it is just like, oh man this is it, this is it, there is an emotional thing that happens. You know what I am talking about...

**Dr. Fleming:** Yes.

**Dr. Reagan:** ... because you take groups over there. So getting over the emotional and all, and talking strictly from a scientific archaeological viewpoint where was Jesus crucified, buried, and resurrected?

**Dr. Fleming:** May I quote one of my favorite sayings as a teacher which the student don't like, "Let me enrich you with a new uncertainty."

**Dr. Reagan:** Okay, okay.

**Dr. Fleming:** You know I am honored to be an archaeological advisor for the Garden Tomb, and it is one of my favorite places in Jerusalem, to reflect, to pray.

**Dr. Reagan:** Mine too.

**Dr. Fleming:** It deserves the sanctity, it is a beautiful garden, it has a site that looks like a tomb, and looks like a garden. The Holy Sepulchre you described is really six different denominations, sometimes having services at the same time, in terrible competition with one with another. And it is hard to feel the Spirit of Christ there. I once visiting the Garden Tomb saw an Armenian Orthodox priest who I recognized as working in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and there he was praying. So after he finished his prayer I went up to him I said, "What's a nice Armenian like you doing at a place like this?" Listen to his answer I think it reflects the view of many Christians. He said, "We might have the right place at the Holy Sepulchre but for me this is a nicer place to remember it." Most evidences for any sites authenticity will fall into 3 categories: geographical evidence, historical evidence, archaeological evidence. The

Garden Tomb has excellent geographical evidence; it is outside the walls of Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. It is along a major road that went both from Jerusalem north to Damascus and from Jerusalem east to the Mount of Olives in Jericho, and the Romans liked crucifying on major roads. It has a huge water cistern within it which is too large for a house it was probably an irrigation that would go with garden. It has near it an Old Testament stone quarry that left a cliff and most ancient quarries that left cliffs were reused as cemeteries because it is nicer to have a wall entrance to a tomb than a floor entrance to the tomb. A tomb is located there.

**Dr. Reagan:** And on the face of the quarry it looks like a skull.

**Dr. Fleming:** Looks like a skull, and the 3 things there are, it is called Golgotha or Skull because it either looks like a skull, it is smooth on top like the top of a cranium, or skull skeletons were found nearby. Garden Tomb at a certain angle the facade looks like a skull; it is smooth on top like the top of a skull and nearby are tombs.

**Dr. Reagan:** Okay, now I can feel it coming.

**Dr. Fleming:** The weaknesses.

**Dr. Reagan:** All this stuff but.

**Dr. Fleming:** Yeah, sure. The weaknesses are the second two, history, and archaeology. By the way, the Garden Tomb staff is always very conscious...

**Dr. Reagan:** Oh, yes.

**Dr. Fleming:** ...to end every one of their little talks, we can not be sure this is the tomb of Jesus, but it is an empty tomb and it reminds us of the importance of the Resurrection.

**Dr. Reagan:** And they always say, "And wherever the tomb is, it is empty."

**Dr. Fleming:** Yes.

**Dr. Reagan:** So, you believe it is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the site.

**Dr. Fleming:** Yes, and as the other 2 areas with the Garden tomb is weak. No one suggested the Garden Tomb until the 1880's AD. And many denominations were kicked out of the Holy Sepulchre if there was any memory of an alternate site, which you think one of those would have chosen that. They have a place by themselves; no one you know suggested it.

**Dr. Reagan:** Is it true that many of the holy sites, like the site of the birth of Jesus, and the site of the death, burial and resurrection were all selected by the mother of Constantine some 300 years after the events?

**Dr. Fleming:** Yes, yes. The 3 main sites were the Church of the Nativity, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Church of the Ascension. Those fall under the three categories that churches can fall into, one is close; that is the Church of the Nativity, one is mistaken; that is the Church of the Ascension it is over a Jewish tomb from the time of Jesus. And one is probably accurate and let me just quick summarize why most archaeologist, in fact all Herodian Period archaeologists I know feel that the Holy Sepulchre is good archaeological evidence.

**Dr. Reagan:** Okay.

**Dr. Fleming:** It is over a Herodian period tomb, which means it is outside the wall in the Herodian period. We don't know for sure where the wall was.

**Dr. Reagan:** Right.

**Dr. Fleming:** For the Holy Sepulchre Church, we do know the Garden Tomb is outside. But if there is a Herodian Period cemetery which means 37 BC to 70 AD, and that is the exact kind of tomb. Unfortunately and it is hard for me to say it because I love the Garden Tomb so much, but it is an Old Testament style tomb. In a line of Old Testament style tombs. Did you know 3 feet inside the wall of the Garden Tomb is an Old Testament tomb with bones and pottery still in it from the Old Testament period? And remember Joseph of Arimathea's tomb was a newly cut tomb in which no one had yet been laid. Now it is technically true that Mrs. Arimathea could have said, "Listen Joe, I don't care if everybody else is making these fancy, schmancy Herodian period tombs, if you want me to be buried with you, you'll make them like they were in the Old Testament period." But you see the point is it is near Old Testament tombs that still have Old Testament pottery in it.

**Dr. Reagan:** Now the mother of Constantine was not an archaeologist.

**Dr. Fleming:** No.

**Dr. Reagan:** She was probably not even an historian. She probably knew little of the Bible.

**Dr. Fleming:** Correct.

**Dr. Reagan:** So she selects these sites. How does she select them?

**Dr. Fleming:** This particular one....

**Dr. Reagan:** On the tradition or something?

**Dr. Fleming:** ...she writes a letter which we have to her son the Emperor, Dear Consti.

**Dr. Reagan:** Dear.

**Dr. Fleming:** You'll be glad to know...

**Dr. Reagan:** She didn't say dear sonny or something.

**Dr. Fleming:** ...that the local believers say that they have received from the ancestors an exact tradition for where the burial of Jesus was. It is under the Venus Aphrodite Pagan Temple that the Romans built. Did you know that we have the names of all the bishops of the Jerusalem church from James the relative of Jesus in the book of Acts, until Helena? Until 135 AD it is a Jewish name, Jewish believers of Jesus. But then the Jews had to leave Jerusalem, then it's a Gentile name. If there is any site parents are going to pass onto their kids it is going to be the tomb of the Resurrection.

**Dr. Reagan:** Okay.

**Dr. Fleming:** Theologically, and sure enough when they tore down the Venus Aphrodite site they found, what we now would know is a Herodian period tomb. It is complicated but it has all the characteristics of tombs in that very restricted period from 37 BC to 70 AD.

**Dr. Reagan:** Okay, but the Garden Tomb is still a great object lesson.

**Dr. Fleming:** So it is correct it is the nicer place to remember. And isn't it great too we are reminded there that a missing body, an empty tomb points to the deeper theological truth...

**Dr. Reagan:** That's true.

**Dr. Fleming:** ...the Spirit of the raised Christ alive and well in our hearts today.

**Dr. Reagan:** Thank you.

**Dr. Fleming:** Yeah.

## **Part 2**

**Dr. Reagan:** Welcome back to our interview of Dr. James Fleming renowned teacher of Biblical Archaeology. Jim we've been talking about the site of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and you have just made it clear to us that you think that it is at the

site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. That raises a question and that is; that recently there was a whole lot of hullabaloo over the discovery of the tomb of the family of Jesus in Nazareth and we had James Cameron the...

**Dr. Fleming:** Jacobovici was the producer,

**Dr. Reagan:** Yes.

**Dr. Fleming:** Cameron gave the money to make it.

**Dr. Reagan:** And Cameron and they held this big thing, and this tomb had been discovered in Jerusalem and they said, "See this is really, this is the tomb, this is where He was buried, there was no resurrection and so forth." What about it?

**Dr. Fleming:** There was a very serious problem. When you have names that you find, like on bone boxes and there were 10 bone boxes in that tomb. To say, just because there is a Mary or there happened to be a Jesus son of Joseph on one of them. There was a Matthew, a Martha, that if these specific ones from the Gospels, these are such common names, 75% of the people in the time of Jesus have either names of Biblical names or the Hasmonians the Jewish family that drove out the Greeks in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC. And there are very few first names. So you have between 10% and 40% of the names are disciples names of the common names from the period.

**Dr. Reagan:** Sure. And certainly Joshua or Yeshua would have been a very famous name.

**Dr. Fleming:** Sure 7% of people were name Joshua, more than that named Joseph, Simon is 20%. So in any case it is just someone getting their exercise by jumping to conclusions. In order to make a sensationalist documentary, but serious scholars would say hey, there is no evidence that would be those families. As you mentioned Jesus' family tomb would be in Nazareth not in Jerusalem.

**Dr. Reagan:** And this was no new discovery Israeli's discovered this, and the discovered it several years before.

**Dr. Fleming:** In the 1980's.

**Dr. Reagan:** Several years before.

**Dr. Fleming:** Yeah, in 1980's.

**Dr. Reagan:** And they didn't make anything out of it, because they realized it.

**Dr. Fleming:** And of course what is most tragic is that one of the tombs was a woman named Mary, who he tried to show was Mary Magdalene who is married to Jesus and

one of the bone boxes was Judas son of Jesus, and it showed they had this child. All of this...

**Nathan Jones:** Da Vinci Code stuff.

**Dr. Fleming:** Yeah. And the same guy believes in the Da Vinci Code still.

**Dr. Reagan:** Well, let's get back to something more substantial.

**Dr. Fleming:** This is not serious.

**Dr. Reagan:** Nathan.

**Nathan Jones:** Glad to hear that wasn't a smoking gun after all. Now obviously the Sinai Peninsula you think Sinai Peninsula you think Mount Sinai, but I watched a documentary recently that says that they think now it is in the Arabian Peninsula. Where do you think Mount Sinai is? Where we got the 10 Commandments?

**Dr. Fleming:** Yes, here is your problem. In remote areas you don't have people living at the same oasis where they can pass on a tradition from parent to son or daughter without break. Most of these areas are places of sojourn, you are going through. Of the more than 30 places in the Exodus mentioned with names where they stopped, only 4 of them sound like any modern Arabic names in the desert. And those are the largest oasis where people lived. So we have lot of questions, how large was the Sinai Desert at the time? The same thing goes for the Wilderness of Zin, the Wilderness of Paran, etcetera. It is true we don't have good archaeological evidence for the traditional Mount Sinai, Jabal Musa, the Mountain of Moses. So as it has been suggested that a site in Saudi Arabia which had a volcanic eruption somewhere around 3,000 to 4,000 years ago, could that be the fire and smoke of the Biblical period? The problem is the Saudi's have not permitted any sound archaeological survey there. So to put all your eggs in a basket, in one basket for a site that hasn't had proper excavation is very iffy.

**Dr. Reagan:** I've been to the site in the Sinai Peninsula once and it immediately struck me that that site I don't know where in the world you would put 2 million people. There is no flat land around where they could have camped or whatever, that I could find. I don't know.

**Dr. Fleming:** The earliest known tradition we have for that mountain is 250 AD.

**Nathan Jones:** Wow.

**Dr. Fleming:** Again we are talking about something between 1400 and 1200 BC.

**Dr. Reagan:** Yeah.

**Dr. Fleming:** So again there is a mountain that we have found x son of y was here, doesn't say why he was there from the Nabataeans 200 BC but we just don't have enough to go on, because it is a place of sojourn.

**Dr. Reagan:** Well that leads me to another question and that is: many of the archaeologists that I read these days talk about the whole exodus as simply nothing but a fantasy that it never occurred. And they argue that the true evidence of that is that there is absolutely no archaeological evidence of an exodus.

**Dr. Fleming:** I wish you would give me some complicated or controversial questions, but listen.

**Dr. Reagan:** I told you these are going to be hotly debated.

**Dr. Fleming:** In Judaism when you ask a difficult question in for which your program is timed...

**Dr. Reagan:** Yeah, they ask you a question or something.

**Dr. Fleming:** No the Rabbis would always preface it by saying, "Please tell me while standing on one foot." So let me give you a 1 foot answer here David. You know, you should not expect the Egyptian Daily News to have an article about Pharaoh or his army being defeated.

**Dr. Reagan:** Well of course not.

**Dr. Fleming:** It is only victories. So it is not surprising that you don't have defeats. You know everything the king says is good and powerful and stuff like this. But there are many evidences of that the Hebrews came from a time in Egypt that the land itself shows a gradual change of pottery from east to west, meaning from Jordan, Jordan Valley, Mount Judah coastal plain, just as presented in Joshua and Judges. So to show that people did enter from the east of the land as the Bible says. But more specifically there are some things that you need to be open to; could there be more than one exodus? The Bible has more than one route for the exodus. In one tradition they are not allowed through Egypt, through Moab and Edom, in another text they king of Moab and Edom let them through. Some sites in the land they worship the Lord at Gilgal, at Shechem other sites they battle. Could there have been a number of times the Lord brought people out of Egypt, the largest was the Moses, Joshua led exodus and that is what ended up in the Bible. But the total number is the number that the Lord brought out of Egypt on a number of exodi. We just, you have to be careful to say the Bible says for sure there is only one when there is more than one route in the Bible, and things like that. So it may have, it is still the miracle of par excellence in the Old Testament. God brought the forced labor class from out of Egypt and He started their own nation.



### Part 3

**Nathan Jones:** Our special guest is Dr. James Fleming who is a renowned teacher of Biblical Archaeology and we are just so delighted that he took the time to come and be with us. Jim I want to ask about the never ending search for Noah's ark. What do you think about that?

**Dr. Fleming:** Haven't found it yet. There is a high mountain with the name Mount Ararat on the boarder between Eastern Turkey and Armenia. Unfortunately it is a boarder area with people who haven't had good relations.

**Dr. Reagan:** So highly sensitive.

**Dr. Fleming:** And you can't just easily go and excavate and explore. The other problem we have is that there was a partial ice age in the late 1500's and the early 1600's AD giving us most of the glaciers we have here in the United States as well. There is a Turkish inn that we know of from 1500 that used to be on a mountain pass there. And with global warming and the melting of some of the glaciers some wood protrudes from something which is a 3 story Turkish inn known from sources. But you can imagine the religious imagination wanting to prove the ark, so that is it. The other thing is there is natural erosion of gully's that make patterns that look sort of pointed on either end in the ground and one of those a producer named Ron Wyatt suggested was Noah's ark. He wanted it so much to be Noah's ark that he with a metal detector walked every foot back and forth, while let's say it is pointed like this, in straight lines and had a white rope with him and added all these parallel lines and every time there was a beep he put a rock, and he photographed that and those are nails from the floor boards of it. Now stop and think about it, if he had walked curlicues with a rope and every time it beeped put a thing, that is how it would look, it was the way he walked right? It is just crazy.

**Dr. Reagan:** Okay.

**Dr. Fleming:** So I am sorry to say.

**Dr. Reagan:** Are they looking in the right place?

**Dr. Fleming:** It says the mountains of Ararat not Mount Ararat. And so generally that is up hill from Mesopotamia right, the Tigris and Euphrates. It seems to be the correct area but does it have to be preserved? So we need to be cautious.

**Dr. Reagan:** That's right.

**Nathan Jones:** Plus a boat that old you would think would rot.

**Dr. Fleming:** Yup.

**Nathan Jones:** What about David and Solomon a lot of archeologist you read they talk about them like they were mythological creatures, like King Arthur in Camelot.

**Dr. Fleming:** Yes.

**Nathan Jones:** Is there any historical evidence to prove that they were real people?

**Dr. Fleming:** Unfortunately there is a kind of pottery that is called a two color ware bichrome ware in the hill countries of Judah which there is a debate as to how long it was used. Don't want to get into all the details of that some say that is in the 1000 BC, some say it's not until the 900 BC. If it's in the 1000 BC that it is still being begins being used then we have lots of evidence for structures that date to the united monarchy Saul, David, Solomon. If someone puts that date down to the 900's it means it is the divided monarchy, the general tradition now as more and more archaeologist are saying there is evidence in the hill country of Judea which is what we are talking about, it started as early as 1000 BC which means we have lots of pottery showing sites.

**Dr. Reagan:** What about the item found at Tel Dan that had the house of David written on it?

**Dr. Fleming:** Yes, now that is from 700 BC, and yes House of David. What is interesting every word had a little dot between it but the word house and the word David did not have a dot on that inscription. Which means Davidic Dynasty, right, not house of David? And an Assyrian King boasting that he killed the King of Israel and the house of David in Judea. But certainly this convinced most archaeologists, as you would expect this wouldn't you? A dynasty that lasted 400 years in the Bible without lacking male prodigy which is very unusual, house of David is going to be mentioned by some neighbor at some point. So it is great that we have that. So generally more and more scholars and this is as you would expect as there is more excavations are feeling that there is a lot of evidence for a ruler there.

**Dr. Reagan:** Has anything come out of the excavations of the City of David, the Ancient City of David that might indicate the historicity of both Solomon and David?

**Dr. Fleming:** Yes, you have there David conquers a Jebusite city and renames it City of David. It has to do with the dating of that particular kind of pottery, but a major archaeologist working there feels she's even found what maybe the administrative palace of David.

**Nathan Jones:** Really?

**Dr. Fleming:** So, at least it is a large structure with 4 foot thick walls that seems to be that period. The stronghold of Zion is a synonym for David's City. A 45 foot high huge

rampart tallest structure from the Old Testament period found has been found, that certainly seems to fit with the phrase, “Stronghold of Zion.”

**Dr. Reagan:** Let’s shift gears here for a moment. What about the transfiguration, where did it take place?

**Dr. Fleming:** Okay, unnamed mountain, it is a week after Caesarea Philippi they have withdrawn from Galilee, is what scholars call the withdraw section to the district of Caesarea Philippi. Caesarea Philippi is not in Galilee, Galilee is ruled by Herod Antipas, Herod Antipas wants to see Jesus. Do you remember he’s just finished seeing John? Killing John, he wants to kill Jesus. Jesus leaves Galilee, and he withdraws to Herod Philip territory, it is further north and then a week later he is at an unnamed mountain in the withdraw section. It is unnamed so I don’t think it is Mount Hermon itself, it’s a famous mountain it would be named but one of the high foothills or cinder cones around Mount Hermon, an unnamed mountain. The other sites that you mentioned at the intro Mount Meron, Mount Tabor are in Galilee and if you take the Biblical text seriously they’ve withdrawn from Galilee.

**Dr. Reagan:** Good point.

**Dr. Fleming:** Unfortunately on top of Mount Tabor which is a beautiful church to remember the transfiguration, there is a city in the time of Jesus, and you don’t get the feeling that Jesus is in a city with Peter, James and John for the transfiguration.

## Closing

**Dr. Reagan:** Dr. Fleming I want to thank you once again for being our special guest, you have intellectually stimulated and enlightened us but most of all you have spiritually blessed us, and I thank you for that. And I also want to give you one last opportunity to tell our viewers how they can get in touch with you and your great ministry. Find out about you Antiquities Center and the many materials that you have produced to help people better understand the culture of the Bible.

**Dr. Fleming:** Thank you, David. It is very easy digging4it is our website .net, and there you can find how you can come visit our museum we would be glad to see you again.

**Dr. Reagan:** I love that address, digging4it.net, so folks I hope that you will sign-in on that and find out some information. Nathan I want to thank you too for helping us with these interviews. And folks I want to thank you for tuning it. I hope you will pray for us, I hope you will consider making a donation to our ministry to keep these programs going. And I hope you will be back with us again next week. Until then this is Dave Reagan

speaking for Lamb and Lion Ministries' saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our redemption is drawing near."

**End of Program**