

Christ in Prophecy
Archaeology 6: “Biblical Antiquity Center, Part 2”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: What was life like in the time of Jesus? Last week we began exploring that question with a visit to a remarkable Antiquity Center in LaGrange, Georgia that was established by Jim Fleming one of Christendom’s foremost experts on Biblical Archaeology. This week we are going to continue with that visit. Stay tuned for an on-site interview with Jim Fleming.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Well greetings in the name of Jesus our blessed Hope and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. Once again we are here in LaGrange, Georgia at the tremendous Exploration in Antiquities Center with my good friend Jim Fleming who established this remarkable place to give people a feel of what it was like to live in the First Century. Now Jim we have just come out in front of a city gate.

Dr. Fleming: That’s right.

Dr. Reagan: This is a very important place isn’t it?

Dr. Fleming: It’s amazing. A city gate is normally located at the place where this hill where your town is, has a nice access to the plain or valley outside.

Dr. Reagan: OK.

Dr. Fleming: And because there is usually a lower approach where your Gate is you have to make it extra strong. And so the easiest place to attack a city would be the lowest access.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Fleming: So you build up extra towers usually the highest part is your gate tower you see here. You see the little loop holes there?

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Fleming: You could fire out balls and arrows through there, and throw down things that aren’t very nice on your enemy.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, like hot oil.

Dr. Fleming: Yes that messes your whole day up with the oil. But the road comes in; under the road is often a drainage because your lowest place is your town. So there would be drainage going out of the town. But most important that's where your judges sit.

Dr. Reagan: I always read about that in the Bible.

Dr. Fleming: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: The judges are at the gate.

Dr. Fleming: You have two gate chambers here each inside a tower. It's interesting 3,000 years ago and today they were called judge's chambers, and judge's benches. And there will be a judge's chamber on either side. And then usually a U shaped bench inside where the judges sit. So this would passport control. Let's just say we were.....

Dr. Reagan: So I couldn't just wander in to this city.

Dr. Fleming: Well the problem is there is a security problem here, are we friend or foe? Might we steal things? Do we want to stay the night? Usually there is an open area inside the gate where you would have guards and the people would stay. And also there is usually a roof or two where maybe you don't fully trust them to be in town but you can have them sleep up on the roof, or if it is someone you have known over the years you will have them stay at your inns and in people's homes. But it is not only passport control, birth records are kept at the gate. So the Romans knew that Jews would try to avoid paying their high taxes to Rome for the body count so they said you had to go to the place of your birth records. So even though in the Gospels Joseph was living in Nazareth, his birth records were in Bethlehem. And that's why he has to go on that journey. So birth records are at the gates. But your town judges you need even in a small town you need three judges so there won't be a split decision. Sometimes a judge can't make up his mind so there will be a good Governor will visit the towns at least once a year to process those cases. But understand Herod Philip was such a Governor of Caesarea Philippi in his territory. Herod Antipas, no, he was not as conscientious. But the gate is also where you might have some public meetings where crowds could be addressed at the city gate. And when the Governor or even more the King is visiting you have a throne. So you have here a little footstool area. But this would be for the address of important proclamations of the governor or ruler or even the king coming thru. And it is usually covered in the shade. We found some of these at the city gates. You see there are benches here and here for assistance for important meetings, etc.

Dr. Reagan: I would like to sit there for just a moment to see what it feels like.

Dr. Fleming: Yes, first time in your life you are going to be appreciated right?

Dr. Reagan: Here we go. Hey this is very, very nice. It's very soft and comfortable and has a nice covering. And so the important people sat here?

Dr. Fleming: Now folks who are the hoi polloi you know like cameramen and things like that come up and kiss your feet. No, no I guess not.

Dr. Reagan: Well I won't require that, ok.

Dr. Fleming: Ok, good, good I didn't think you would. I didn't think you would. But it's interesting the way you say judge righteously if you're a prophet is, "lift up your heads o ye gates." Now gates don't look like heads do they? But gates have judges.

Dr. Reagan: That's Psalm 24.

Dr. Fleming: Exactly.

Dr. Reagan: "Lift up your heads O gates that the King of Glory may come in."

Dr. Fleming: And if you make bad judgments your heads are bowed down in shame. How can you say judge righteously; walk with your heads tall? Deal justly in the land. And so the gate is a very important symbol. And remember a gate can leave people out, or save people and protect them within. Are you going to let poor people in when the enemy is coming? This becomes a big issue.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, yes.

Dr. Fleming: You have walled mother cities and unwalled daughter villages. It's interesting the word *kiryat* in the Hebrew- municipality is a feminine word. So just like in English of Dallas you would say she. So a mother walled city has unwalled daughter villages.

Dr. Reagan: OK.

Dr. Fleming: Joshua destroyed these cities and their daughters that's men and women old and young in unwalled villages, connected to a walled mother city. On the way to the cross when the daughters of Jerusalem are weeping that doesn't mean women, it means has gone outside the city wall. And the people outside the wall are called daughters. So think the wall is the skirt of the mother city. And the outskirts and it really comes from that are the people who can't afford the taxes and things to live inside, the poor. There's 200 references in the Bible where the word daughters is not next to a person's name. Daughter's of Jacob mean female offspring. Daughters of Israel, daughters of Judah, daughters of my people, daughters of Jerusalem; means the landless, the poor, the forgotten outside the protection of the walled mother city.

Dr. Reagan: OK.

Dr. Fleming: So the Word of the Lord, many places in the Bible comes to the daughters of my people. Don't forget prophets don't forget the people easy to forget. And the prophet is reminding the king not to forget those who are easy to forget. And so the phrase daughters of my people is the way you say that. On Palm Sunday John uses that when he says everyone yelling Hosanna, John quotes Isaiah, "Say to the daughters of Jerusalem your Redeemer is coming." That's the people outside the wall like on the Mount of Olives on Palm Sunday. And Jesus had a special conversation with the daughters of Jerusalem who were weeping because they loved Jesus and hung on His every word when they saw He was about to be crucified outside the wall where they were.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, in fact Mary his family of Mary, and Lazarus and Martha were from Bethany a town of the poor.

Dr. Fleming: It's a daughter village.

Dr. Reagan: So that would be a daughter village.

Dr. Fleming: Yes, yes.

Dr. Reagan: And they would be daughters of Jerusalem.

Dr. Fleming: Yes, if Jesus meant the women who had come from Galilee with Him to Jerusalem He would have said daughters of Galilee. But He is talking to the people outside the wall of Jerusalem.

Dr. Reagan: Sure. What else do you want to tell us about the municipality situation?

Dr. Fleming: A city gate has several important things.

Dr. Reagan: OK.

Dr. Fleming: You would have a water reservoir.

Dr. Reagan: Ok, that's always at a city gate.

Dr. Fleming: Well it's the lowest part of the town remember.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Fleming: Your water is draining, so you try to have things channel into a cistern. Now a cistern unlike a well is where you would store rainwater that flows into it. For example do you see here's a grating this is the entrance.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, so rain water goes down in through that.

Dr. Fleming: Right, it's not reaching ground water. In fact all gates are designed so no water leaves the city if you can help it. So water falling on the top tower falls to this roof; on this roof water drains from here, into here to the cistern. When this water cistern is full it goes to a cistern on the other side of the road. And you hopefully will never have a rainfall with any water that leaves the city. You try to store it.

Dr. Reagan: Well catching ever drop of water has always been an important thing in Israel because of the fact that they have such a long dry season. Explain that.

Dr. Fleming: Yes, our last rains are beginning of May, and then we don't get them again until mid-September.

Dr. Reagan: That's a long stretch.

Dr. Fleming: Five, six months.

Dr. Reagan: So when it's raining you've got to collect it.

Dr. Fleming: And so you have to collect the rain during the winter rains and store it. And of course you need to store it underground because- algae.

Dr. Reagan: Algae, ok.

Dr. Fleming: So darkness is the only purifier the ancients would have had.

Dr. Reagan: So the algae can't grow without sunlight?

Dr. Fleming: Right, so you have a cover for your cistern. And of course this is available for you if there is an enemy siege. Now if you sit back a minute.

Dr. Reagan: Well, wait a minute. Let's talk about an enemy siege.

Dr. Fleming: Ok, well for example if you come over here we can look back to some structures that are here. There is a gate chamber here which we will look at inside later. But can you see in there, there is a light covered wall.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Fleming: This and always found just inside the gate will be a place for a caravan to unload its supplies. You are going to see a row of water mangers and food mangers where you would then unload your animals. So it is called a stable storehouse. It serves two purposes, one is it's a stable for the caravan to stay. But when you unload the animals you are storing goods.

Dr. Reagan: OK.

Dr. Fleming: The Bible calls a city like this a store city. It's where you're trying to store enough supplies so if you are under enemy siege you have enough supplies to live off.

Dr. Reagan: And not only supplies its water that's very important.

Dr. Fleming: Water, supplies, now these supplies will be nonperishable; grain, olive oil, dried fruit, nuts, things that will last. You must have those at the gate. Then you would have of course on the other side of the gate your gatehouse. But on the top would be a military installation because this will become the highest part of your city where you could shoot down, throw down things you know on your enemy. But we not only store in a stable storehouse, we have two other ways of storing I would like to show you over here.

Dr. Reagan: OK, let's go over there.

Dr. Fleming: This is another place where you would store things; it is a silo, a grain silo. Notice that it is cut down into the ground. It is domed over of course you don't want rain to come in. But you store your things in sacks not in free grain because you need to be able to easily take sacks out. You have a problem if water starts seeping in to be able to move sacks, dry sacks; you are bringing new ones from your threshing floor in. But I would like to mention a few things about this. Would you come down with me?

Dr. Reagan: Sure, lead the way.

Dr. Fleming: Coming down David let me show you an underground grain silo. You see there are places for oil lamps on the sides.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Fleming: And you're going to be storing as much grain as you can. But as you see you keep it in sacks. As you are looking down towards us you can tell that you have an inner wall that is plastered here, then your stairway there is actually another stairway here going out so if you are bringing in sacks.

Dr. Reagan: So this is one way traffic, one down, and one up.

Dr. Fleming: Right and then you go and bring more down, etcetera. Sometimes with kid groups coming to the museum we have them haul all of this grain to the threshing floor; and the next group take it back.

Dr. Reagan: Do you ever tell them that was women's work back then?

Dr. Fleming: Oh no, no we don't. But you'll be able to see we have it filled with peat moss and not with real grain. But what is most important here that you need to understand if you can't outlast an enemy siege when the enemy is coming it's done for you.

Dr. Reagan: That's right.

Dr. Fleming: The Israelites did not have an offensive army, they have a defensive army. The Assyrians, the Babylonians have siege equipment, battering rams. All you have as an ancient Hebrew is an ability to store supplies, have a wall and hope and pray you could outlast the patience of your enemy who has besieged your town. And your storehouse stable, your silo are part of your insurance.

Dr. Reagan: OK.

Dr. Fleming: Let's go look at another food storage place.

Dr. Reagan: OK.

Dr. Fleming: David come with me. We are not outside the city, the terraces of the field. If you're a farmer you don't know if the city slickers are going to let you in when the enemy comes.

Dr. Reagan: I never thought about that.

Dr. Fleming: You probably were told pay your taxes to us, don't worry we will let you in.

Dr. Reagan: We will take good care of you.

Dr. Fleming: And some of your hard produced barley wheat, olive oil is stored in the city when the enemy comes.

Dr. Reagan: Sure.

Dr. Fleming: But then can you imagine when push comes to shove every daughter family you let in the city is one day less of stored food for your family if you live in the city. How many are going to vote to keep them out?

Dr. Reagan: To keep those folks out.

Dr. Fleming: Yeah, keep them out. Also they are less educated. Think what will happen to your unemployment during this siege. You've got kids graduating from Megito University looking for a job, think if you are flooded with all of those folks from outside. And the prophets tell the kings, "don't forget the daughters of my people." But I bet you they were often forgotten. So if you are living outside the city wall you bury some supplies because you're not sure you are going to be allowed inside. And so you will camouflage them but you'll have huge jars, huge jars filled with grain buried in the field.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah.

Dr. Fleming: Buried in the field. Now Jeremiah 41:8 the Babylonians have destroyed most of the towns and they started torturing a farmer from out in the field. And he says, "Don't kill my family I can show you where we have buried in the fields grain, oil, and honey." So these huge underground pits you see we have another one here are places that you could shall we say incase the city doesn't let you in. And sometimes by chance an archaeologist working on an excavation in a city has not found all of the underground storage pits. These pithoids these huge, you know this 5, 6 feet deep sometimes. But by accident a road project in Israel somewhere in the countryside you come across a lone few big pots out in a field full of carbonized grain. But what I want to stick with you; look how desperate daily life was back then. You don't ask if the enemy is going to come, you only ask when.

Dr. Reagan: It's just when.

Dr. Fleming: And so the prophets are struggling to give them a message of trust in God, be wise prepare for the enemy. But I would like to maybe another place we could sit down more at the city gate where some of these discussions are going on more intensely and discuss what really happens during a siege.

Dr. Reagan: Alright let's go to the city gate and sit, and sit where the elders.

Dr. Fleming: Oh, ok big time.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: I hope you are enjoying our tour of the Explorations in Antiquity Center in LaGrange, Georgia. The Center is designed to show how people lived in the First Century during the time of Jesus. It's open to the public and has a variety of educational programs for both adults, and children. You can get detailed information about this center at its website which can be found at digging4it.net. If you missed our introductory program last week, you can find it on our website at lambliion.com. In that program we saw how people lived in tents, how they cared for sheep and goats, how they quarried stone, how they grew grapes, and how they processed grapes and olives. Let's return now to our study of the importance of city gates. OK, Jim we're up here on top of a gate now and what are going to tell me about a siege?

Dr. Fleming: OK, can you imagine they've let in all the unwallled folks they're going to. The gate has been slammed closed and now we are preparing for the Assyrians to come. We've heard there distant sure far drum and rams horns blowing and we know there about to be here. The prophets are going to moralize the people trust God, be brave. The King and the army are going to mount the highest point the gate tower behind you here. And then they start throwing sling stones, but worse they bring huge battering rams.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, boy.

Dr. Fleming: Up the slope to our city, bang it into the wall. They even have they prying pointed things to start wiggling some of the rocks in the city defenses. They are going to be also shooting firebrand arrows that are flaming into the city. And at the same time sappers are going to be digging tunnels trying to get under our wall. And some of these sieges lasted 2 to 3 years long. The Bible tells us the Assyrian siege of Samaria the capital of the northern ten tribes was 3 years. Can you imagine the starvation?

Dr. Reagan: Well yes. And Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem lasted a long time.

Dr. Fleming: Yes the 9th to the 11th year of King Zedekiah.

Dr. Reagan: And Jeremiah even describes how he saw evidence of cannibalism of women eating their children.

Dr. Fleming: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: This sounds strange but we've actually found a toilet from the last couple of years of Jerusalem; a toilet seat. And this will make sense in a minute David don't look at me so strangely.

Dr. Fleming: Ok, ok.

Dr. Reagan: And fortunately the seat was still in situ; in its original place but because of that we could determine the diet and the diseases of everyone who used that toilet. And the last two years of Jerusalem meaning from the 9th to the 11th year of King Zedekiah 589 to 587 BC the diet went from field grains and fruit to grasses growing between the rocks inside the city. And the diseases were tenfold. So you can just imagine how desperate people were. Now there

were false prophets going around telling the people “Don’t worry God’s going to give you a final victory.” “Don’t worry God is on your side,” “God loves your nation more than other nations.” “You won’t have enemies, you won’t have drought.” Then the prophets of the Lord came you know you can be a child of God and still have drought, and still have enemies. The difference is God will be with you during them. And even if what the worst thing you can think of captivity from your land to a foreign land, even in captivity the Lord will weep with you by the waters of Babylon where you weep and bring you back. One of the best verses about that theology is Isaiah 40 the last verse, “I shall run and not be weary. I shall walk and not faint. I shall mount up with wings like an eagle.” The Lord helps you through life’s darkest moments and brings you back. And that hope held them through. And you know the two easiest archaeological levels for us to separate on our dig before the Babylonian captivity idols in all the houses, most the houses, after not one idol. There was national repentance and renewal. They came back from that national calamity without idols. And God was able to do amazing things with the people in the days of Nehemiah, Ezra, and Esther. They’re rebuilding what we call the Second Temple Period.

Dr. Reagan: So it cleansed them of idolatry.

Dr. Fleming: Sometimes it takes a hard time before you have introspection and see how much you’ve turned away from the Lord.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Dr. Fleming: So this is a wonderful reversal of fortune. God specializes in taking difficulties, not giving up bringing you through and making good out of it.

Dr. Reagan: Well the Lord can do that. Well folks we are sitting on top of the city gate here at Jim Fleming’s Antiquity Center in LaGrange, Georgia. And I wanted you to see something very special that’s on the ground behind us. It’s one of my favorite places here and so we are going to look over Jim’s shoulder and have him tell us all about it.

Dr. Fleming: One of the most important aspects of our work at the Explorations in Antiquity Center is for children. We have here what we call kids dig. They’re actually real replicas of archaeological digs and every night our staff comes out and buries real archaeological finds not replicas which means we can’t let the kids keep them. But we want them to touch something 2,000-3,000 years old. The far side is for preschool young children its dinosaur bones. The next one is a one period site, it’s a house found in an excavation in Capernaum where their courtyard was an industry for dying things purple. Then our next the third one up is an Old Testament period site. It has an Egyptian temple from the time of the exodus for the worship of the cow god that was destroyed by the Midianites and then rebuilt as a Midianite worship area for an invisible god. They actually found brazen serpent in the Midianite shrine. Then the last one over here is more difficult it is three different periods, one on top of the other. The bottom is a First Century house in Capernaum and there’s fishing equipment in it; sinkers, even part of an old net, weights. That house became a house church; the word was domus ecclesia a domus side house church. All the domestic pottery disappeared and it becomes only oil lamps so you can tell it goes from a living house, to people gathering to pray and sing hymns only oil lamps. And

eventually in the 50's AD an octagonal church was built on top and we have there Mosaics and carved stones from a 5th Century Church. Getting kids excited about the past. You know truth is not only in the future. For those of us from the Judea and Christian heritage we look to what God has done before. Before it is a great word, it happened before. But if we have open eyes we can see it before us. And we're trying to make a place where it is easier to see and understand what God has done before.

Closing

Dr. Reagan: Well folks, that's our program for this week. I hope it has been a blessing to you. And I hope you will be back with us again next week when we will continue our tour of the Antiquity Center. Until then 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