

## ***Christ in Prophecy***

### **Archaeology 7: “Biblical Antiquity Center, Part 3”**

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#### **Opening**

**Dr. Reagan:** What was life like in the time of Jesus? Two weeks ago 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 onsite interview with Jim Fleming in which he will focus on the Last Supper that Jesus had with His disciples.

#### **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 a town located about 60 miles southwest of Atlanta down near the Alabama border. And this is the location of a phenomenal educational center that is called The Explorations in Antiquity. And it was founded and established by my good friend Jim Fleming here who is a renowned teacher of Biblical Archaeology. Jim I want to talk with you about the Last Supper. And as you well know whenever American’s think of the Last Supper they always think of one thing, that is that magnificent painting by Leonardo da Vinci, but there’s some problems with it, right?

**Dr. Fleming:** There certainly are.

**Dr. Reagan:** Alright tell us about some of the problems.

**Dr. Fleming:** Well as you know it is unique for his perspective, for the facial expressions, the hand movements, etcetera. It’s too bad that it is daylight coming in, it was a Passover evening.

**Dr. Reagan:** It would be in the eve after sun goes down.

**Dr. Fleming:** It’s too bad its table and chairs. The Last Supper was a reclining meal. And that they are all on one side of the table makes it easy to observe the facial expressions. But that’s

not how you would have been seated at the time of Jesus. So one of the things we've tried to do here is without demeaning that picture.

**Dr. Reagan:** Sure.

**Dr. Fleming:** Help people better understand what the real setting may have been like.

**Dr. Reagan:** OK.

**Dr. Fleming:** There are four words to go on in Luke 22:11&12. Do you remember that Jesus told Peter and John to make the preparations?

**Dr. Reagan:** Yes.

**Dr. Fleming:** They were to follow a man with a water pot. When they got to the doorman they were supposed to inquire of him. Jesus said and he will show you a large upstairs, furnished guest chamber. How would First Century people understand those four words? That is what we have tried to do here.

**Dr. Reagan:** OK.

**Dr. Fleming:** Large- mega, if it is a small room you have a one sided reclining table. We have such like that where food gets a little bench on one wall and a mat in front of it in our little village in the museum. If it was a medium sized room it would be an "L" shaped reclining table, where you recline on two sides. But if it's a mega, a large it is a three-sided reclining table. They use the word triclinium even though it is based on a Latin word; today in modern Israel a couch in the living room is called a triclinium. And so we have here a three-sided reclining table.

**Dr. Reagan:** OK.

**Dr. Fleming:** But it's a reclining table, large, upstairs. Most downstairs rooms have to have supports to support a heavy upstairs and a roof, so larger rooms tend to be upstairs. They also in Jerusalem which is a hill and valley city, upstairs often has a balcony that looks out over a

lower roof and are lovely. Upstairs furnished, that's actually table with mattresses, translated furnished. It can be translated table with cushions.

**Dr. Reagan:** OK.

**Dr. Fleming:** But in all the Gospels they are reclining at table. Modern translations might say "sat at table," to make it modern. But the word is actually reclined and it is a table with mattresses.

**Dr. Reagan:** OK, now my question is this: Where would the key figures have been at this "U" shaped table; Jesus, Peter, Judas, John?

**Dr. Fleming:** OK. I just want to do my fourth word.

**Dr. Reagan:** Alright I'm sorry; I didn't mean to get ahead of you.

**Dr. Fleming:** No, that is fine. Guest chamber kataluma, guest chamber; it's a room where a guest eats and sleep. Meaning there is a table, this happens to be with one step down and mattresses. If they hadn't gone to the Garden of Gethsemane they would have slept in the room of the Last Supper. See in your house you have some rooms where you eat, some where you sleep. But every house that is able to afford a guest chamber, guest room has a place where you guests eat and sleep. And the Last Supper is clearly in a guest room where guest would eat and sleep.

**Dr. Reagan:** So you are saying this would be both a place where you would eat, and a place where you would sleep.

**Dr. Fleming:** If you were a guest. I have a hunch Dave that Judas brought the guards back to the room of the Last Supper. Remember he left during the meal? Because he probably thought they were going to sleep there. But when they weren't there he knew Jesus was enough of a person of habit that there was a favorite garden where He liked to pray. So he said, "Don't worry I can take you another place where you probably can get Him when He is away from the crowd." But you're supposed to eat and sleep in a guest room.

**Dr. Reagan:** I see.

**Dr. Fleming:** We've actually found over 1,000 First Century reclining tables.

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

**Dr. Fleming:** So there is a lot we can go on, yeah. To get back to you, you gave a good question an interesting one.

**Dr. Reagan:** I want to know where they were.

**Dr. Fleming:** Yes, there is an order of importance. Now your viewers don't know it in advance and you might do the same thing Jesus disciples did as they walked in the room an argument arose as to who was the greatest. They knew there was an order of importance. This actually is big wigs.

**Dr. Reagan:** Over here the big wigs.

**Dr. Fleming:** Don't think of the middle like Leonardo Da Vinci did.

**Dr. Reagan:** OK.

**Dr. Fleming:** Then here this is sort of sometimes wigs, sometimes no wigs, medium level. And over here I am sorry.

**Dr. Reagan:** These are the bald headed guys.

(Laughing)

**Dr. Fleming:** I was going to say scum of the earth, but now but now it makes me sound like.

**Dr. Reagan:** OK.

**Dr. Fleming:** So they go from most to least important.

**Dr. Reagan:** So Jesus would not be sitting in the middle if He's the most important person.

**Dr. Fleming:** Right, now do you remember when Jesus earlier in Luke's Gospel said, "When you're invited to a feast don't take an important place; someone more important than you may come and the host will move you down. Why don't you take a low place, what an honor for you when the host will move you?" Which means everyone in Jesus day knows about this kind of thing. You know we have even found games where the board is a triclinium? And you move up and down the game board for more levels of importance.

**Dr. Reagan:** So now would Jesus then sit on the end?

**Dr. Fleming:** Do you mind if you sit right here.

**Dr. Reagan:** OK.

**Dr. Fleming:** I'm going to walk around you because you're not sitting you're lying down remember. So I have moved in behind you and this is the second place in, this would be the host. You always recline on your left elbow, you eat with your right hand even if you are left handed; you have to learn to eat with your right hand, and recline on your left elbow. For a thief to have his right hand cut off as punishment would be a social stigma, you can't have a banquet. Now the healing of the man with the withered right hand at the Capernaum Synagogue would be a special joy, he can now attend a banquet.

**Dr. Reagan:** Well if that is where the host sits, or lies down, this must be a very special place here.

**Dr. Fleming:** On either side of the host are the main guest seats. This side of the host would be the right hand assistant. Any host has a right hand assistant. This comes from a military motif where a General in a battle field, 9 out of 10 of them would have their sword in their right hand, and shield on their left and they can't defend their right side. So they'll have a right hand man with a shield. So it is a most trusted position. That the ascension narrative has Jesus ascending to the right hand of God the Father means it is the most trusted position.

**Dr. Reagan:** So who would have been here?

**Dr. Fleming:** The one leaning on Jesus' chest?

**Dr. Reagan:** John.

**Dr. Fleming:** John. You remember if I want to speak to the person behind me, I need to lean back.

**Dr. Reagan:** That must have galled Peter.

**Dr. Fleming:** You're not kidding.

**Dr. Reagan:** I mean he was numero uno you know.

**Dr. Fleming:** In church art Peter is near Jesus and Michelangelo has him near Jesus. But remember he is not near Jesus and has to motion to John to ask Jesus who the betrayer is.

**Dr. Reagan:** Oh, that's right.

**Dr. Fleming:** Now the next important place I will skip over the host is the guest of honor who would be on the left of the host. So any host has a right hand assistant, a guest of honor. Now this is going to surprise some of our viewers. Usually Judas is the end of the line without a halo. The way the host shows the guest of honor is to dip bread into his bowl.

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

**Dr. Fleming:** And put it in the mouth of the guest of honor, offering the sop.

**Dr. Reagan:** Yes.

**Dr. Fleming:** And remember clearly in the Gospels Jesus offered the sop, if you asked anyone in Jesus day, "How does one show who the guest of honor is?" He shares the bowl of the host. Now here's kind of a sad thought; if Jesus has John leaning on his chest Judas who is already

arranged to exchange information for money, has Jesus heavy on his heart in every sense of the word. I don't imagine he ate much.

**Dr. Reagan:** No.

**Dr. Fleming:** Remember the text does say, "Jesus offered the dip to Judas before he left." I hope Judas knew the Lord loved him to the end. He offered him that reconciliation bread till the end. So these places we can guess.

**Dr. Reagan:** Ok, so we've got John her, the Lord there, and Judas there. Where is poor Peter?

**Dr. Fleming:** Ok, I am going to need to get up and walk around, alright.

**Dr. Reagan:** OK.

## Part 2

**Dr. Fleming:** There are three evidences that the first hearers would have imagined Peter at the lowest place. It doesn't sound like Peter does it?

**Dr. Reagan:** No.

**Dr. Fleming:** Particularly Peter's as we find him in Mark's Gospel first out of the boat, first to sink, first to confess, first to deny, first to guess when he doesn't know the right answer. Remember the Lord said, "I want you to forgive one another." I always pictured Peter going, "How many times Lord, seven?" "No, seventy times seven." Three evidences people would have pictured Peter at the lowest place. Number one is the weakest evidence we will just call it Peter's personality. If Peter and John schlepped everything upstairs and got the room ready it's probably alright with Peter for Jesus to give the right hand seat to John, I mean John helped. But for Jesus to give the guest of honor seat to the treasurer, remember Judas kept the purse, nobody likes the treasurer. By the way Judas might be the only Judean; Judas Iscariot- Judas man of Kerioth. Kerioth is a village south of Hebron in Judea.

**Dr. Reagan:** Oh.

**Dr. Fleming:** And remember after Judas tragic suicide the ascension story addressing the eleven, men of Galilee why do you stand gazing up in the clouds? So the eleven may have been Galilean's probably Judas was a Judean. For Jesus to give the guest of honor seat to Judas probably seemed like bad judgment to Peter. "Well I didn't get an important seat." Stomp, stomp, stomp, stomp, plop, I'll make you feel bad. Now that's very human Peter, but as we find in earlier particularly in Mark's Gospel he seems to only open his mouth to change feet, right? He's always saying and doing the wrong thing at the wrong time. But there are two stronger evidences.

**Dr. Reagan:** OK.

**Dr. Fleming:** When it is time to wash the feet everybody knows that the lowest place is supposed to wash the feet. In fact we find a basin on many archaeological digs near the lowest place. If he already schlepped everything upstairs and did all this work, he is not about to do it. Nobody moves. These guys aren't feeling so bad; they're not in the place that has to do it. Oh Peter's there it will do him good. Normally a good teacher tries three things when you're students aren't catching on. Number one you might just wait a while, has anyone learned about being a servant? Nobody moves. Two you might give a hint, remember the Last Supper we have Jesus saying, "I don't want you to lord it over one another like the pagan Gentiles do." No one moves. And third of course you set the example yourself. But he is probably in the place that is supposed to be doing it. Earlier do you remember when Jesus said, "One of you will betray me?" Everyone says modestly, "Is it I?" In fact that's what's great in Da Vinci's painting he has just said, "One of you will be betray me." Most art until that time showed the moment of the consecration of the bread and the fruit of the vine. And everyone's face is, is it I, could I do that? And in John's Gospel Peter says, "It's not me is it?" Not his first, Peters sure it's not him. But remember he was dying of curiosity to know which of these other jerks it was who was going to speak against Jesus. It says he motioned to the beloved disciple to ask Jesus who it was. Now do you see John is looking away from everyone on his left elbow?

**Dr. Reagan:** Yes.

**Dr. Fleming:** It would be hard for any of these people to catch John's attention.



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

**Dr. Fleming:** But you see from opposite I think he took a little almond and tossed it over. Notice my fluent Herodian Hebrew. Pst, good accent?

**Dr. Reagan:** Yeah.

**Dr. Fleming:** Psst. No I'm making this little bit, I will get serious in a moment. He had to be in a place he could catch the beloved disciple's eye. But when it is time to wash the feet, here's the most important point. You are always supposed to wash them this way. Jesus took the towel and basin and started washing the feet. Part way through He says, "Guys, who is greater the one who washes the feet, or the one who's feet are being washed?" And they say, "Oh, the one whose feet are being washed." And He said, "Yet here am I, washing your feet." And when he got to Simon Peter you can imagine how bad he would have felt by then. Strongest evidence Peter is the only one who refused to let Jesus wash his feet, which would make First Century hearers of the text knowing there is a place assigned to washing them would imagine Peter was probably the only one in the place assigned to wash their feet. Remember actually it says, "He cries out, 'Lord I refuse to let you wash my feet.' 'But Simon your feet are dirty.'" Great conversation. "I feel so bad, give me a bath.' 'What has been bathed only needs their feet washed.'" And so this would have contributed to people picturing Peter was probably at the lowest end of the table. And it's nice isn't it that we can picture how a First Century in light of the culture we have four descriptions in First Century sources about the seating around such a table. So it's something that we feel confident about.

**Dr. Reagan:** OK.

### Part 3

**Dr. Fleming:** There is evidence that the Last Supper was indeed a Passover meal; one evidence is the reclining meal. The Rabbis at the time of Jesus taught that every Jew whether bond or free had to have at least one meal a year reclining like a free person. Slaves had to eat standing and that meal reclining should be Passover because that's the feast to remember you used to be a slave but now thanks to God you are free. So you must eat Passover reclining. The Last Supper is a reclining meal. Special attentions to cups aren't there? And when the meal had

ended Jesus took a cup again. Passover you are supposed to have four cups of the fruit of the vine. It's a meal where they sing, they sang a hymn and left and went to Gethsemane. It really seems like it is a Passover meal. When the meal had ended Jesus has a number of sayings particularly in John's Gospel. Did you know, I am sure you do Dave, but it's amazing almost half of John is Jesus' last night with the disciples?

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

**Dr. Fleming:** John 12-18 in Gethsemane. We have sayings about, "I'm the vine you are the branches." About not to be sorrowful He's going away from them but is sending a comforter. "I am the way, the truth and the life." It is very important that He wash their feet. I've washed them so you will remember that I have done it. It doesn't say, "Do this in remembrance." So it's not quite as strong as the bread and the fruit of the vine, but that you'll remember that I have done it. I'm not sure if you agree but I wonder if that's Jesus' organizational chart for the Church. If I was leaving my staff I would make an organizational chart. Jesus washed their feet. The organizational chart of the church is we serve one another.

**Dr. Reagan:** Yes.

**Dr. Fleming:** And that He would want them to remember that He has washed their feet. I try to remind myself whenever I am tempted to point out someone else's dirt. What's wrong with this picture? Hasn't the Lord washed my feet? Why am I pointing out someone else's dirt? Can't I give them a break? The Lord has given me a break. We also of course have that saying of doing in remembrance of me. That word in Greek is "don't have amnesia."

**Dr. Reagan:** Really?

**Dr. Fleming:** "Anamnesia" this is important, don't forget. This evening, these words of comforts, that I've given you the vine and the branch, the cups, follow me to find the way the truth and the life. Remember I've washed your feet; this will help you through life. At the end of the meal you would sing four songs, Psalm 115, 116, 117, and 118 they are called the Hallel. They sang a hymn and left. Did you know the Rabbis taught if you celebrate the Passover inside the city limits of Jerusalem you are supposed to stay inside the city limits all night?

**Dr. Reagan:** Oh.

**Dr. Fleming:** They didn't go to Bethany did they like they had the other nights that week. They went to Gethsemane; Gethsemane is within the city limits. And His teachings continued as they walked to Gethsemane: the shepherd is about to be taken, the sheep will be scattered; he quotes Zechariah 13:7. He was the brave shepherd, do you remember when He was arrested they thought he would run off, they told Judas kiss the guy so we can quick jump on him before he leaves, and we will now who we are supposed to arrest. Jesus stepped forward bravely protecting the flock. And remember once he was assured that only he would be taken he went willingly. And Peter and John followed. But it is a night of many failures in Peter's life. I wonder if part of what was behind Jesus' saying in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, "I've been looking forward to eating this Passover with you." It's the only one of the seven feasts the Jews have that sat at table. And eating a meal is the way you forgive someone. Maybe he thought it would help them later in life to remember his last meal with them was at a feast at a table, a place a setting of forgiveness that might help them through the dark days ahead. So there are wonderful things to associate of course with that meal. Isn't it great to be alive? We have found so many examples of reclining tables and sitting practice, things like that.

**Dr. Reagan:** You know one of the things that excites me is that He's made a promise and that promise is one day He will return and drink the cup with us.

**Dr. Fleming:** With us, the Marriage Feast of the Lamb.

**Dr. Reagan:** So the Lord's Supper today which is based upon the Passover Supper is not only a remembrance of the past but a remembrance of the promise of the future that He is coming again.

**Dr. Fleming:** At a table.

**Dr. Reagan:** Amen.

#### **Part 4**

**Dr. Reagan:** Well folks what you have just experienced is just one of many, many teachings that Jim Fleming can present here at the various sites of his tremendous Explorations in

Antiquity Educational Center. You can bring Church groups here; they can have a Biblical meal and spend two or three days here being taught about First Century culture right?

**Dr. Fleming:** Yup.

**Dr. Reagan:** Why don't you tell people how to get in touch with you, or with your center?

**Dr. Fleming:** Oh, thanks.

**Dr. Reagan:** We are going to write it down here.

**Dr. Fleming:** We have a very complicated webpage digging4it, it can be 4 the number or four.com. And we also you will find on there our phone number and things like that too. But I think the webpage will be the easiest way.

**Dr. Reagan:** Yes, I think so.

**Dr. Fleming:** It maps how to get here. We have had many people from Texas to Canada to the Northeast. Sometimes a church group in a bus, things like that.

**Dr. Reagan:** Well it's a wonderful experience. I remember taking a group in Israel to your first site there and having a biblical meal. And some of them did have trouble getting up afterwards, not because they ate so much, but because they were down low.

**Dr. Fleming:** Dining lying down.

**Dr. Reagan:** But anyway it's a great experience. And Jim I just thank you again for having us, and I pray that the Lord will continue to bless your ministry, that He will provide you with the funds you need to finish...

**Dr. Fleming:** The Archaeological Artifact House.

**Dr. Reagan:** Oh, yes whatever you are doing now.

**Dr. Fleming:** Well thanks for mentioning that Dave. And we appreciate knowing...

**Dr. Reagan:** And you are a tax-exempt organization so people can make donations.

**Dr. Fleming:** Yes.

**Dr. Reagan:** And every donation made to his ministry will be matched by a foundation.

**Dr. Fleming:** Yes.

**Dr. Reagan:** Praise the Lord.

**Dr. Fleming:** Praise the Lord.

## **Closing**

**Dr. Reagan:** I hope this visit to Jim Fleming's Antiquity Center has been a blessing to you. I'll tell you one thing it was certainly a joy and blessing for me and my video crew to go to his center in LaGrange, Georgia to see it firsthand. Once again you can get detailed information about this center at [digging4it.net](http://digging4it.net). You can also find information on that site about how to help him financially. He is currently trying to raise sufficient funds to construct a museum that will house archaeological artifacts that will be supplied by the Israeli government. And as he pointed out every dollar he receives will be matched by a foundation.

If you have missed seeing our previous programs in this series you can find them posted on our website at [lamblion.com](http://lamblion.com). The first one demonstrated how First Century 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. The second program in the series focused on the gates of First Century cities and talked about their importance and the governance of the city, and in the defense of the cities when they were under siege.

Incidentally while you are at our website please sign up to start receiving our bi-monthly magazine called the "Lamplighter," its 20 pages long and always contains a variety of articles about Bible prophecy. It also features articles written to defend the Christian faith. You can

receive it free of charge by e-mail or you can arrange to receive it by mail. Either way you can sign up for it on our website at [lamblion.com](http://lamblion.com).

Next week the Lord willing we have one more program to show you that we video taped at Jim's Antiquity Center. It will focus on crucifixion and burial techniques of the First Century. I think you will find it fascinating. I hope you will be back with us then the Lord willing. 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**