

## Ossuaries, Tombs, and Archaeological Evidence for the New Testament | with Joel Kramer

(November 7, 2023)

### FRANK:

Where do you go for crystal clear explanations of major archaeological discoveries that deal with the Bible? You go to Expedition Bible on YouTube, where Joel Kramer is the archaeologist who puts together these great videos. There's about 40 or so of them right there on the YouTube channel. He's also written a book called 'Where God Came Down: The Archaeological Evidence.' And for those of you that have listened to this program for a while, he's colleagues with Dr. Titus Kennedy, who is an archaeologist as well. Now Joel is over there in the Middle East. He's been living for decades in the Middle East, 10 years in Jerusalem.

Also, he's been in Amman, Jordan for quite a while where he is now. And we just had him on the main podcast on the American Family Radio network. And we talked a lot about Old Testament discoveries. In this podcast, we're going to talk about New Testament. But before we get to the new Joel, I want to just close our discussion on child sacrifice. We were talking about that with regard to Gezer. And you point out in your video on Gezer, that Kathleen Kenyon who was the archaeologist in Jericho, actually admitted that child sacrifice was going on in Jericho as well. What relationship did Gezer and Jericho have? Were they the same kind of people in both those places?

### JOEL:

Yeah, they were both Amorite sites, Amorites being the most powerful of the Canaanite tribes. She was digging Jericho in the 1950's, and this was still during the time that this evidence of child sacrifice was still being interpreted as child sacrifice. It wasn't until after her dig was done and into the 1960's, that it then became politically incorrect to interpret this kind of evidence using the Bible, because the Bible is where we have the most information describing from an ancient source, this practice. And so, in the 1960's, it became politically incorrect. But she was digging Jericho before that. So, when she found sacrificed babies, that, as she describes, she knew were sacrificed because they had their heads severed off of their bodies. Then she reported that as child sacrifice.

And this was going on in the excavations all over the ancient land of Canaan, in this interpretation. And now you're taught the opposite. You're taught that there is no archaeological evidence at all for child sacrifice. You just really have to be careful with the interpretations that you get because the field is so secular. You know, the field of biblical archaeology, it sounds so positive. It sounds like it would be so positive towards the biblical record. But actually, it would be much better understood and put into context if it was called these days, anti-biblical archaeology, because that's what most of it is. At best they ignore the Bible. But oftentimes, they're very critical of the Bible.



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And so, that wasn't the case in the early days. You know, Kenyon was very critical of the Bible, but she knew that Jericho was Jericho. And how did she know that it was Jericho? Well, the Bible is what tells us that site is Jericho. And then she still understood these practices that are described in the Bible.

**FRANK:**

Now, as Americans and Westerners, we recoil at this suggestion that child sacrifice really took place. Well, it's not just a suggestion. We have the evidence, yet we're doing it here. We've been killing babies in the womb for decades, and we just call it a choice. They actually sacrificed their children for some sort of payoff from the gods. Why do they do it Joel?

**JOEL:**

Yeah. It's for their blessing. It's kind of like a tithe. You tithe the first of your income and expect a blessing in return. And they tied their children to this type of sacrifice, believing that the God that they were feeding (because they were feeding their children to the god in their belief system), was then going to bless them. And yeah, absolutely. The humbling thing about understanding the Canaanites and that practice is that we cannot as you said, as Americans, stand on a Canaanite site where this evidence was found and condemn the Canaanites for this practice, when we are as a nation guilty of it in modern times. But you know, it's not necessarily popular to talk about that kind of thing. But a lot of evidence has to do with human nature.

**FRANK:**

And well, yeah, there's one thing you mentioned in your Gezer video. And friends, you need to go to Expedition Bible to see this. You point out that it's a worldview issue. That when Macalister did his report back in about 1900 or so on this site, Gezer...which, by the way, where is Gezer in Israel?

**JOEL:**

So, when you're coming down Highway One from Jerusalem out to the coast, out to Jaffa and Tel Aviv, it's just off to the left-hand side when you're starting to get out to the coastal plain.

**FRANK:**

So, it's between, say, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv?

**JOEL:**

Yeah.

**FRANK:**

Okay. You point out when Macalister had put this out, he had a section in his report called the iniquity of the Amorite, which is pretty much a quote from Genesis 15:4 I believe. God says the iniquity of the Amorites is not complete. I'm not going to wipe them out yet. I'm going to wait 400 years and then wipe them out. What is the difference in worldview that seemed to have switched from, say, the 1950's to the 1960's?

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**JOEL:**

Well, I wouldn't say it's from the 1950's to the 1960's in regard to that's when the biblical interpretation came to an end. But yeah, it's a much broader scope of time, when you look back in the early days of biblical archaeologists where you have explorers coming into the land of the Bible and have them digging in all these different places. What was driving them? The Bible was driving them. That's how they knew these places existed in the first place. If you have sites all over the place that aren't excavated, why aren't they excavated? Because they're not in the Bible. And so, why go through the blood, sweat, and tears of digging a site if it's not in the Bible. And so, biblical archaeology in the early days was absolutely Bible driven, and Bible inspired. And things were dug up and interpreted using the Bible. And then what happened is, the field over time became more and more secular.

And so, this secular worldview is now the one that dominates the field. A Biblical worldview is very, very rare in the field today. It's the extreme minority. Take Jericho, we were talking about Jericho earlier. If you're looking at Jericho from a secular worldview, then of course you don't believe in God, you don't believe in the supernatural, and you don't believe in miracles. So, when you have a collapsed city while there, of course you're not going to interpret the city wall as coming tumbling down because of the timing of God as a miracle. Whereas if you're coming from the biblical worldview, well, of course God knocked the wall down in Jericho. We're not wondering if He did that or not. We're just wondering if in the excavations whether you can find evidence from that.

So, when we find a collapsed city wall, we say, oh, look. Here's the wall that got knocked down. And when they see a collapsed city wall, they say, well, this has nothing to do with the biblical account because that's mythology, because we don't believe in the supernatural or miracles. And so, it really is a clash of worldviews. And the worldview that dominates the field now is a godless one. So much of the Bible is God in His relationship with man, and miracles, and the supernatural that there's not much left.

**FRANK:**

And the worldview as you point out as well in the Gezer video at the time was, well, man is inherently evil. Now we think man is inherently good and he would never sacrifice his children, even though we're doing so right now, ladies and gentlemen, and we're calling it a right. You know, it's just madness. These people can't see the evil in their own hearts and in all of our hearts. That's why we need a savior, by the way.

**JOEL:**

Yeah, when you're digging into a mound into archaeology, what are you digging into? You're digging into the evidence of the problem of sin and death. It's just like when you go to a graveyard and you see all these graves of people, well, that's what a tel is. That's what these ancient mounds are. They are the graves of cities. Not just one city, but cities stacked one on top of each other. And so, I can't think of much else to study and to get into than archaeology as

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far as being, if you're from a secular worldview. That would be really depressing. I always tell the people that I dig with, you know, hey, we're just the next layer going into the tel, right? I mean, that's just what's happening. And so, if you don't have hope because hope is absolutely connected to having a future beyond the grave, then it's just a hopeless field and pretty depressing.

**FRANK:**

Let's talk about hope. We've talked a lot about the Old Testament. Let's talk about the hope that we get from Jesus. What evidence do we have, Joel, archaeologically related to Jesus? We can go in several different directions here. Where do you want to start? Do you want to start with the Caiaphas ossuary, the James ossuary, or something different? What do you want to talk about?

**JOEL:**

Yeah, I think that the best place to start is with the big picture. You know, we hear all the time the argument that there's no archaeological evidence for Jesus, or that there's so little archaeological evidence for Jesus. And you hear this over, and over again, and it affects your thinking, to where you maybe start thinking there isn't very much archeological evidence for Jesus. In reality, though, it really is the opposite of that. There's actually a ton of archaeological evidence for Jesus. And so, pretty much the major events that we read about in the New Testament are marked by early Christians.

And so, we have churches marking all these places. Just thinking about that, why is that the case? And the answer is this. It's Christians who cared, and who valued these places where these, at least in their belief system, the most important events in human history took place. And so, the concept of these churches being built, they go back much earlier than that, the commemoration of these sites. It's just that they weren't allowed to build commemorative buildings over these sites until after the Roman persecution against Christians had come to an end, when Constantine came to power. So, these sites were known. They were being visited.

We have records of them being visited, but churches weren't built over them until after Constantine came to power. And so, these places are marked. Now, you know, with a church there, that's a good starting point, but you can further test them. Does this site that is marked by a church that we have historical sources commemorate this particular event? Do we have the archaeology? Well, let me give you an example. I did a video on this. Let's use Jacob's Well as an example.

**FRANK:**

In Shechem.

**JOEL:**

In Shechem. So, it's right next to the Tel of Shechem. In the Old Testament, we have a description of land that was purchased in Shechem by Jacob, that he set up his camp there, that he built an altar there. And so, then we have that described. Then we go all the way to the

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New Testament. And we have in John 4 where the Samaritan woman is sitting at the well with Jesus, and they're having this conversation. And the Samaritan woman says to Him, are you greater than our father, Jacob, who gave us this well, and drink from it himself as did his sons? So, there you have 18-19 centuries have passed from the time that Jacob bought this land and camped there, to the time that the Samaritan woman is talking to Jesus. Now, how did the Samaritan woman know that this well was Jacob's Well? Well, her people knew that. The locals knew that. It was local knowledge that had been passed down from generation to generation.

Then you have when Constantine comes to power, you have a church that's built over the top of Jacob's Well, commemorating this as the place that the Samaritan woman had this conversation with Jesus. And then that church is destroyed and rebuilt over, and over again, until you have a modern church that's sitting over this well now. Then when you look at this archaeologically and historically, how do we know that this is an authentic site? Well, we can go back through the archaeology, from the modern church to the Crusader church, to the Byzantine church, to an earlier Byzantine church, back to the well itself, which dates all the way back to the time of Jacob or back to Old Testament times because of the design of the well. It also matches the biblical description, for example.

It says that it was in the area of Shechem and it's right next to Shechem. It says that the well was deep, and it was measured. It's 151 feet deep. And so, it matches with the biblical description, and matches to the description in the New Testament of how far Jesus had traveled from Jerusalem. It matches in the Old Testament, as far as the land. It makes sense that Jacob would have (if he was camping somewhere with his huge flocks) that he would need a well. And that's what somebody living in a tent could leave behind that would last for thousands of years. And then we see that the knowledge of this being Jacob's well, is preserved in the New Testament and matches the descriptions that we have in the Old Testament. So, there's no reason to go looking for another well somewhere else when you have all this commemoration and all these historical sources describing the one that has been believed to be Jacob's Well for literally thousands of years.

And so, that's just one example of how we have preserved through the local knowledge. It's not that you get to the Byzantine church, and then that's the end of the story. You can go back beyond the Byzantine church, both in the archaeology and the historical sources. And so, you have this same kind of phenomenon over, and over, and over again. You don't have the different places that the events of Jesus took place. You don't have a whole bunch of different things going on at these different places. You have the same phenomenon happening again, and again, and again. And so, like in Jerusalem, for example, where Jesus was crucified, buried, and rose from the dead.

The key is, you have Christians living in Jerusalem from the time of those events until today, virtually unbroken except for one tiny, short period of time exception where the Christians left Jerusalem at the time of the AD 70 Roman destruction. But then after that destruction, they came back to the ruins of Jerusalem and lived there again. And so, they're not going to forget

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where Jesus rose from the dead, where Jesus paid for the sins of mankind on the cross. And when they get the chance, they're going to commemorate that. And the ones who are the enemies of Christianity are going to desecrate those spots. And so, you have this stack of archaeology, and you have historical sources pointing to these. And they're very, very credible. And they're very solid. Either we've got to say the whole thing is not reliable or the whole thing, there's reasons to believe that it is reliable.

**FRANK:**

We're talking to Joel Kramer. You can see much of what he's been saying here on his YouTube channel, Expedition Bible. He has got about 40 or so videos. Joel, you're putting about one out a month or so, I noticed. Is that about right?

**JOEL:**

Yeah.

**FRANK:**

It takes a lot of effort to pull all this stuff together, all the footage, all the research, all the editing you need to do. Let's talk for just a second about the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Because when you go to Jerusalem, everybody wants it to be the Garden Tomb because it's much more peaceful and there's not all sorts of buildings built over it. You think, oh, this is a peaceful place. This is where Jesus rose from the dead. But the archaeology actually supports Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Can you give us some of that archaeology? Why do we think it's there?

**JOEL:**

Yeah, the same thing that we were just talking about. We have a stack of archaeological remains, one thing on top of another, that marks the place that has been attributed to the place of resurrection for the past 2000 years. So, if you go through the archaeology starting at the top, and you have the church that's standing there today. You have the Crusader church that was before that. You have several phases of Byzantine churches that were built, and destroyed, and rebuilt. And then you get down below that, we have the archaeological remains from the temple that Hadrian built on that site. And think about that. This is AD 130. So, we're talking about less than 100 years after the resurrection, crucifixion and resurrection.

And when Hadrian comes in 130 A.D., then Jerusalem is laying in ruins. And so, he decides to build this pagan Roman city over the ruins of Jerusalem. And so, he's going to pick his number one temple spot, because the rest of the Roman city is going to be laid out around that spot. He chooses of all the places of Jerusalem; he builds it right over the top of a first century tomb. Why does he do that? Because that's where the Christians are coming to worship at that time. And so, he's trying to supplant that worship with the worship that he sets up with Jupiter and Venus. So, you have the archaeological remains from that temple that was built over that.

And then you go all the way back to the tomb itself, which you have archaeological remains of another tomb right next to it. That shows that this is a first century cemetery outside of the walls,

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therefore, of the city at the time of Jesus. And then you have the tomb that was first uncovered around AD 324, after Constantine had come to power. One of the first things he did was he gave a command. Go rip down that temple. Which by the way, that Hadrian Temple was still the main functioning Temple of Jerusalem at that time called Aelia Capitolina.

**FRANK:**

Two-hundred years after he built it.

**JOEL:**

Yeah, exactly. So, go rip that down and dig a hole. It took them two years to do that. And what did they find at the bottom of the hole? They found a tomb dating to the first century, meaning that we know a first century tomb is very specific to a time period between 37 B.C. when Herod the Great starts his reign and up to the 70 A.D. destruction because they made tombs very specifically in that time, because of the practice of burying people in ossuaries, these stone bone boxes. And so, this is that type of tomb that was right under this temple that they dug this hole. Now, how did they know where to dig a hole in order to find the tomb of Jesus? And the answer, again, is everybody knew.

Everybody knew where the Tomb of Jesus was because it had been desecrated by the building of Hadrian's Temple. And so, there was a statue, as we have eyewitness accounts of the statue of Jupiter that stood over the buried tomb. And so, people don't forget. They're not going to forget an event like this. You know, I mean, one example we could talk about for America is, are New Yorkers going to forget what happened with the Twin Towers? You know, it's been over 20 years now since that tragedy happened. Are they going to forget? Have they forgotten in 20 years? Are they going to forget in 30 more years? Are they going to forget in 100 more years?

Here's the thing, as long as there are Americans in America and New Yorkers in New York, they are not going to forget what happened there and where it happened. Now, if you go to the site and look at it, it doesn't look like Twin Towers anymore. It's been dramatically altered from what it looked like before. And that's exactly the case at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It's not, as you pointed out, what we picture in our minds. But it's a crazy place. It's a place of chaos often, and people are turned off by that. But my goodness, I mean, the history and the historical sources that point out these layers, and then the archaeological layers themselves are fabulous. And the other way to think of it is this. When we have ancient texts, and you have different texts that give contradictory information, and you want to know which one of those texts should we consider to be the more reliable? Then the general rule of thumb is that the one that is earlier is to be considered the more reliable, and the later one is thrown out.

And that's the way that it goes with these New Testament sites as well. If you have the Garden Tomb, which is saying this is the Tomb of Jesus, and you have the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, as it's called the Day Tomb, then you look at both of them, and you say, which one is older? Which one goes back further archaeologically, and which one goes back further as far as the historical documents that specifically say this is the Tomb of Jesus? And there's no

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competition. The Garden Tomb is late 1800's. And these sources go way, way back for the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. And in fact, the archaeology goes all the way back to the time of the event, because you can go all the way back to the tomb itself.

**FRANK:**

You also have a video on where you think the trial of Jesus took place. Where do you think that is and what kind of archaeology do you have for it? Briefly. I know you can't get into all the details.

**JOEL:**

Yeah. Well, the place where Jesus was tried, we're told in the New Testament that it was associated with Herod the Great's palace, that Herod the Great had built his palace in Jerusalem. And then that's the place that Pontius Pilate, we have other sources outside of the New Testament that say that that's where Pontius Pilate was connected to that palace. That's where he's going to stay when he's in Jerusalem. He's going to stay at the big palace that Herod the Great built. And then we also have Simon of Cyrene coming in from the open country, who takes Jesus' cross. And we have all these indicators that the trial of Jesus, where he was turned over to be crucified, happened at the Praetorium, which is the palace. If they were talking about another palace in Jerusalem, then it's identified, you know, whether it's the Bible, or whether it's Josephus. It's identified as this other palace. But if it's The Palace, it's talking about the main palace of Herod the Great.

And then they were coming out of the palace grounds in order to bring Jesus out and bring Him back in. And this trial is very descriptive in the book of John about bringing him in and out. A stone pavement is described. A judgment seat that Pilate sits on to give his judgment is described. And then what happens is, in the AD 70 destruction, the wall is destroyed, and there's a massive destruction in this area where that covers up this site then. So, this site is buried under the AD 70 destruction until it's excavated in the 1970's. My professor, Shimon Gibson, was a part of that excavation. He was on staff for that excavation, even though he was a teenager and looked like a member of Led Zeppelin. But anyways, he was on that, and they were using...

**FRANK:**

Trying to build a stairway to heaven, right there. [Laughter]

**JOEL:**

That's right. And he describes how they were looking for this stone platform. They were using the Gospel of John's description for what they were looking for. They excavated that entire western side of the old city wall and they found one gate that led outside of Herod the Great's palace. And you would want, if you're Herod the Great, you know, he wasn't the most popular guy with his Jewish subjects. You would want an escape route out of your palace that led out to the open country. This is that gate. There was only one. We know that from archaeology because they excavated the whole side there and only found one gate. And then it matches the

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description in John wonderfully because you have a stone pavement there. You have a judgment seat, the remains of a judgment seat that were found there. And you have the barracks that are inside. Some evidence for that has come up recently, and then the palace itself has been excavated in the past. The destruction there was massive in the AD 70 destruction, but you have evidence from all of these places. Of the Israeli archaeologists that dug it, this was their interpretation. This was Shimon Gibson's interpretation of this site.

**FRANK:**

Now, where is it, Joel? Do you come out of the Jaffa Gate and turn left?

**JOEL:**

Yeah. You turn left and you go along that Western old city wall and follow it back there. You know where you cut that corner to go up the stairs and over the Zion gate. It's before you arrive there, and it's just off to your left there. There's a sign there. There's a drawing on it that is done by Shimon Gibson of the stone pavement. And for years, that's what I did with Shimon. I worked on the pottery and the other finds that came from that dig from the 1970's. It was never published. One of the problems in archaeology and with this particular site is that it's never been published.

So, I used to go for years. I would go into the abandoned building there; the Armenian Museum is what it used to be. And I'd go in with fellow students, and we'd go in, and we'd get these huge bags that are from that excavation back in the 70's, and pour them out, and then separate out the pottery and the other finds from the excavation of that site, and that excavation on the wall. So, I'm very familiar with the material. And, again, it's not my interpretation. It's the interpretation of the archaeologists that excavated it. But I certainly agree with it.

**FRANK:**

So, is it the case that the walls that we see now in the Old City of Jerusalem were built in about 1500 AD? Am I right about that, Joel?

**JOEL:**

Yeah, but they were built over, and over, and over again. So, where you see this stone pavement, you have a patch there of wall that dates back to the Herodian time period.

**FRANK:**

Okay, so one of the reasons other than it hasn't been published that this is not a popular site where people don't go, oh, this is the pavement where Jesus was tried is, it seems like it's like part of the wall almost of the city, right?

**JOEL:**

Yeah.

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**FRANK:**

Some of it's outside the wall of the Old City. And in the first century, the wall wasn't exactly there was it?

**JOEL:**

There was a wall there and you have that patch preserved, but the gate went through that wall. So, you have steps that are also preserved there that go into the Old City wall of today. Which of course, as you pointed out, is much later. So, it looks like the steps lead into a wall, which they do today. But of course, there was an opening there in the much earlier wall, of which a patch is preserved. And so, there was a gate there that led through the wall at that time. And then there was a raised up area, a bema off to the side, the judgment seat, and then the stone pavements.

Now, when you go there and you look for the stone pavements, there's only a few of the stone pavements that are still in situ, still in their original place because archaeology is also destructive. And so, when they expose that stone pavement floor, then the first thing that you do in archaeology is you rip up a floor to look underneath it because it's the coins and various things that you find underneath the floor that date the construction of that floor. And so, that was done in this area. And so, that's the hard thing about archaeology. Things don't tend to look like they did, they don't look like they did in ancient times. But they also don't even look, oftentimes, like they did back when they were excavated.

**FRANK:**

So, this has never been published. Has anyone written about it unofficially even though the excavation report has never been done? Have you written about it? Has anyone written about it?

**JOEL:**

Shimon Gibson has written a book that it's in, yes. His book is called 'The Final Days of Jesus.' I think the subtitle is 'The Archaeological Evidence' or something like that. But 'The Final Days of Jesus' by Dr. Shimon Gibson, he covers the excavations and the interpretation of the finds in there.

**FRANK:**

But he's not a Christian, is he?

**JOEL:**

No.

**FRANK:**

And yet, so he's the one claiming this is the location where Jesus was tried and he's not a Christian, and hardly anybody knows about this.

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**JOEL:**

It wasn't a Christian excavation. It was an Israeli excavation that exposed it. Yes.

**FRANK:**

And so, we mentioned in the previous podcast, and friends, if you're listening to this now and you haven't listened to the podcast we did last week, you need to go back and listen to it. But we talked about the fact that maybe 1% of the Holy Land has been excavated. But the areas that have been excavated, not all of them have been written up. And here is one example of it. Is that something that you can do, Joel? Can you write this up?

**JOEL:**

Yeah, I'm working on a second book. I've had trouble getting to my second book writing because of starting the YouTube channel and it's been taking so much of my time. But yeah, that site is in the second book that I'm writing, yes.

**FRANK:**

What about inscriptions regarding Jesus? You have a video on the YouTube channel. Again, it's called Expedition Bible, ladies and gentlemen. You talk about an inscription in Jerusalem, out in a field somewhere that's related to Jesus. Can you mention that?

**JOEL:**

It's at a site called Beit Loya and it's about 20-22 miles southwest of Jerusalem in the Foothill region. There are several caves there where you have the evidence that these caves were being used as churches. They were underground churches, so they're dated before the time of Constantine, when churches and Christian worship could then come above ground. And so, in one of these caves, you have an inscription in Greek that's translated "Jesus is present." And then it's got a very crude cross next to it. It's also got another more sophisticated cross underneath it.

This inscription has been dated. They don't know exactly when it dates, but it's considered one of two of the earliest inscriptions mentioning Jesus, the other one being the one that was found at the Megiddo prison inscription, which was dedicated to the God, Christ. And anyways, they're putting it at the end of the third, maybe even into the second century AD.

**FRANK:**

So, you're talking late 100's, early 200's, this inscription? And you're saying there's an inscription of Jesus in Megiddo?

**JOEL:**

Yeah, at the Megiddo prison. You know that big cross, where the roads cross each other there at the intersection, and then there's a prison there. So, if you're coming from the direction of Jerusalem towards Nazareth, then at that crossroad, then the prison is off on your right, and

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then you would turn left to go over to Megiddo to the tel. And so, they had decided to expand the prison. And in so doing, they came across the mosaic floor with an inscription of Jesus on that floor. And it also is dated before the time of Constantine, to the God, Jesus. So, it also is evidence from these arguments that you sometimes hear these that are baseless, but they claim that Christians didn't believe that Jesus claimed to be God or didn't believe that He was God until later in history. This is evidence that refutes that because it's dedicated to the God, Jesus.

**FRANK:**

What kind of Inscriptions have been found in Peter's house in Capernaum?

**JOEL:**

Yeah, same thing, like graffiti. Those have been found in several places. It's when you have a commemorative site, then you often have evidence in this graffiti that shows that it's Christians who are worshipping in this place. So, you'll have crosses, and you'll have all kinds of things like that. And so, same thing you know? Capernaum is another example of this one thing on top of another. Think about it. I mean, I know you've been there many, many times. So, you look at Capernaum.

All Capernaum is, is a fishing village on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. It's made out of basalt rock. And so, if you look down on that city that's been excavated, then you see all those houses, right? All those houses. And then you ask yourself the question, well, which one do we think Jesus might have lived in? Well, that would be the one with the giant flying saucer church built over the top of it right?

**FRANK:**

The Millennium Falcon. They built over it with the glass floor. Yeah.

**JOEL:**

And so, that's the one. That's the house out of all those other houses that all look the same, one house has this stack of archaeology. It was turned into this type of a church, and then octagonal church after that. It was a house church and an octagonal church, and all these different churches up until the modern church that stands over it today. And so, you know which house Jesus lived in because of the stack of archaeology that says, it's this one. And then you have pilgrims who are visiting that, that are writing about visiting it. And so again, you have the same phenomenon.

How do you know which tomb Jesus rose from the dead in? It's the one with the stack of archaeology. How do you know which cave Jesus was born in? It's the one with the stack of archaeology over the top of it. And it's just over, and over, and over again. And so, people don't forget, and they commemorate these places. And sometimes an enemy comes in and wants to supplant that worship with their own worship. So, they take over the site and put their own worship place up. And then oftentimes, the previous worshipers take back over the site at some

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point and start building their worship places. And so, you have these places that are incredibly marked. So, for me, if I'm looking at a site and asking the question if it's authentic, I'm looking for that stack of archaeology. If it doesn't have a stack of archaeology, then that's far more suspicious than if it does. But there might be a reason that it doesn't as well.

**FRANK:**

Last thing before we wrap up, Joel. I've been told, and I know a few of these, but not all of them, that several of the figures in the trial of Jesus have been discovered archaeologically. Pilate, Jesus Himself, of course, Caiaphas. Can you relate any of those figures to us and what has been discovered regarding them?

**JOEL:**

Yeah. It's kind of, you know, in the Israel Museum when you're going down that Jesus Hall of Fame portion there, you have the Caiaphas ossuary, which was found in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

**FRANK:**

Describe an ossuary to our listeners.

**JOEL:**

An ossuary is a limestone bone box. So, a body was placed in a tomb, and then allowed to deteriorate for about a year. And then the family members would come in after about a year, and collect the bones of the deceased, and put them in an ossuary in the limestone bone box. Of course, this is how wealthy people were buried, not how peasants always get buried in every culture the same way, right? But anyways, so there's a very ornamented ossuary that has the bones of a 60 year old man in it and that has Caiaphas written on the side of the bone box. And then we're told by Josephus that the high priest's name was Joseph and that his nickname was Caiaphas. Every Israeli archaeologist that I know, believes that that's the Caiaphas that's talked about in the New Testament.

And then you have the Tomb of Annas down lower in the Hinnom Valley as well. You have Pontius Pilate that was found, the inscription that was found in Caesarea. You have the bones of the crucified man, not only the ankle bone, which the one on display in the Israel Museum is a replica. The real one is down in Tel Aviv, in the University of Tel Aviv. I've seen it myself. And not only is there that crucified man, but there's the remains of another crucified man that was put on a cross through being nailed through his hand, through his wrist. And so, you have all this archaeological evidence.

But then also at the end of that row, I don't know if you've noticed this or not, but that whole row in the Israel Museum ends in the ossuaries that are on display from what's called the Talpiot Tomb. And this is where you know, they claim that they found the bones of Jesus in this tomb in Jerusalem. And it is not a coincidence. It's not just by chance that they put those ossuaries at

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the end of the Jesus Row Hall of Fame evidence row. They're trying to discredit Christianity by putting those there. And so, I've been involved in this fiasco for 17 years or more.

**FRANK:**

And why did they say the bones of Jesus? What do you mean that they found an ossuary with Jesus on this? I know there's the James ossuary which says James, brother of Jesus.

**JOEL:**

These are different. I did a rebuttal of this. It's on my YouTube channel. In 1981, they found and excavated a tomb in the Jerusalem neighborhood called Talpiot. My professor, Shimon Gibson, was the first one into that tomb. And he's the one that recorded the ossuaries in that tomb, and whatnot. And I know the other archaeologist that was involved in that. And they found one of the ossuaries had an inscription on it that may say Jesus, son of Joseph. So what? They have three other ossuaries from other tombs that say that too because there was such a small pool of names in that first century.

If you were in a room full of first century Jews in Jerusalem, and you said, Hey, Joseph! Then a bunch of them would turn around. If you said, Hey, Jesus! Which is from the Greek of Joshua, then a bunch of them would turn around. So, it's not unusual to have. Even if it does, it's not clear that that's what it says. But even if it does, it's not a big deal. They didn't make a big deal out of it. They didn't say anything about it because it was just normal names and everything like that. But it was later that a filmmaker came along.

**FRANK:**

Yeah, James Cameron, the guy that did 'Titanic' and 'Avatar.' He came along and tried to popularize it in a Discovery Channel, I think so-called documentary, in about 2006. It's coming back to me now.

**JOEL:**

That's correct. Yeah, and Simka Jacobovici. And so, then they made that into now an academic issue. So now it's in academia. Of course it is. Because if you claim that you've got the bones of Jesus, then then you're not going to not take advantage of that. So, the whole thing is bogus, and I did a whole rebuttal on it and whatnot. But like these criticisms and arguments so often are, it's completely baseless, and ridiculous, and all those kinds of things. But who I interviewed in my film were the Israeli archaeologists themselves, that excavated it, and who think the whole thing is ridiculous, as Israeli archaeologists, not as Christian archaeologists.

I think this is a good thing to end on, why it's important to, you know...it's not critical. You're not going to spend eternity apart from God because you don't know where this particular site is, or you got it wrong, or something like that. But it's important because if you make up another site that isn't the real site, then what you do is you dislodge from the evidence where that site is. And I think a good reason why it's so critical for the tomb of Jesus, is that there's three proposed tombs of Jesus. There's the one that is today, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

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There is the Garden Tomb, where many of the Protestants go. And now there's this Talpiot tomb where they're claiming the bones of Jesus were found. So, in order to refute the false claims at this false tomb, you really want to use the evidence that comes from the real, true tomb of Jesus. And you don't want to try to battle it with a dislodged tomb that makes us feel good when we're there singing and the birds are singing, and it's nice and peaceful.

But you want to refute that very serious criticism, which goes all the way back to the New Testament. The claim is right there in the New Testament that they're arguing that the body of Jesus was stolen away, rather than the resurrection happening. That was the lie back then. That lie continues to this day. And what they're saying is here's the archaeological evidence that that happened over at this tomb. And so, you really want to know where the tomb of Jesus really is, and what the evidence is, and that kind of thing.

**FRANK:**

There is an early Jewish source, ladies and gentlemen, that corroborates what Matthew says, that the Jews were saying that the disciples came and stole the body. Well, why would you come up with a theory that the disciples stole the body? Why would the Jews come up with that if Jesus's tomb was known, and He was still in it?

**JOEL:**

Why would you put him in an ossuary and then put His name on the side of the ossuary?

**FRANK:**

That's right. That doesn't make any sense at all. Joel, it's been such a pleasure. Just a final question to our viewers and listeners here. What encourages you the most about the work that you do and archaeology in general? What does this do for you personally?

**JOEL:**

Well, I definitely fit the description of a kid in a candy store. I often just think, I'm so grateful that God has provided me to be able to do this, and I just love it. If I could choose anything else to do, I would do exactly what I'm doing. Honestly, I came over here 17 years ago, and I thought it was going to be a big challenge. I thought I was going to be studying under secular scholars. I thought it was going to be a big challenge to my faith. I came ready for that challenge, and it hasn't been that at all, to be honest with you. The arguments against the Bible and its reliability are really on the level of ridiculous and are not intimidating in any way, shape, or form.

And so, just the more that I explore, the more that I look, the more in awe I am of God, and of the land of the Bible. And it's just like the Bible itself. You know? You can never master it. You can study it your whole life, and learn, and benefit from its profoundness. But the land of the Bible is like that as well. You can never master it. Every time you turn over a rock and get one answer, then it just leads to 100 more that you don't know. And so, it never gets old, ever. And it's just so powerful to live in the place that is just full of the evidence that shows the uniqueness

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of our Christian faith, how it is based on the historical record and that it talks about real people, real places, and real events. And that's powerful.

**FRANK:**

And the people, the places, and events are well-illustrated in Joel's work on his YouTube channel, Expedition Bible, and also his book, 'Where God Came Down: The Archaeological Evidence.' Joel P Kramer, if you haven't availed yourself of the YouTube channel or the book, you need to do so, friends. Joel, it's been a pleasure. I love the work you're doing. Keep it going.

**JOEL:**

Hey, thank you. It's been my pleasure as well.

**FRANK:**

Joel Kramer, ladies and gentlemen. Check out his YouTube channel, Expedition Bible, a new video every month. It's great stuff. Share those with your friends. Joel does a wonderful job of pointing out the discoveries. And also get the book, 'Where God Came Down.' And Lord willing, we'll be back here with you next week. God bless.

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