

I don't have enough **FAITH**
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with Dr. Frank Turek **PODCAST**

7 Archaeology Discoveries Associated with the Life (And Death) of Jesus with Dr. Titus Kennedy

(April 2, 2024)

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm right in the middle of recording a 22, 1-hour lesson program on 'Digging up the Bible' for our TV program. It will eventually be an online course. And where I'm getting much of my information from, since I'm not an archaeologist, is my friend Dr. Titus Kennedy. And many of you know Titus. He's been on this program several times before and he's been a busy bee over the past few years. He's written three great books on archaeology. The first one's called 'Unearthing the Bible.'

The second is called 'Excavating the Evidence for Jesus.' We've had Titus on for both of those. Now, his brand-new book is called 'The Essential Archaeological Guide to Bible Lands: Uncovering Biblical Sites of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean world. Now, Dr. Kennedy has his PhD from the University of South Africa in Biblical Archaeology. He also has a degree from the University of Toronto. He's been involved in archaeological projects at 18 sites spanning six countries.

He's also been a consultant writer and guide for history and archaeological documentaries and curricula, including 'Drive Thru History.' I don't know if you've ever seen any of that. Some of that's up on Amazon, ladies and gentlemen, 'Drive Thru History.' It's great stuff. And 'The Bible Unearthed.' And he's really put together this great new book on the essential archaeological guide to Bible lands. So, it's always great having the great Titus Kennedy on. Here he is, ladies and gentlemen, all the way from Seattle. He just got back from Egypt. Titus, how are you doing?

TITUS:

Well, Frank, thanks for having me on again.

FRANK:

Always, man. You got great stuff. Now, let's start with this new book. Why did you decide you wanted to write a book that just didn't cover the Holy Land, but you're talking about basically

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the entire ancient world that had anything to do with the Bible? Why did you want to write that?

TITUS:

So, I had written a previous book that focused on objects or archaeological artifacts. And so, I wanted to write another book that focused on locations, places of the Bible, cities, and other significant locations. And as I was doing research for this and reading through the books that were available on the subject, I noticed a couple of things. One is that a lot of the books on cities of the Bible and locations of the Bible, had been published quite a while ago, most of them 30 years ago, sometimes more than that.

The second thing I noticed is that especially for the more up to date ones, that they were primarily focused on the Holy Land. And yet when we look at the Bible, we look at the Bible lands, it obviously encompasses a lot more than this. So, I wanted to try to fill a niche there that was somewhat missing and address some of the primary locations in places outside of the Holy Land, like Mesopotamia, like Egypt, like Anatolia, Greece, Rome, and the Mediterranean. So, I did that. And I also tried to give the most updated information, whether it be new discoveries, new excavations, or new analyses on these various sites.

FRANK:

Well, you've done great work here. In fact, there's a lot of pictures and charts in here that can help, maps, that can help you see where the Bible has been unearthed to a certain extent, in many of these different lands, not just Israel, ladies and gentlemen. But as Titus just said, you can go to Egypt, you can go to Rome. You can go to Corinth; you can go to Derbe and Lystra. These are all places Paul went, particularly Derbe, Lystra, Rome, Corinth, all those places.

And Titus has sections in this new book that cover many of the archaeological finds related to that. And Titus, why don't we just start talking about the resurrection? Obviously, we just passed the high holy day in Christianity, the resurrection of Jesus. And in this new book, you talk about five figures, historical people, that had something to do with the crucifixion of Jesus, and they've all been discovered archaeologically. Let's start right there.

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TITUS:

Sure. Yeah. We can talk about the trial and crucifixion of Jesus narrative, which takes up a substantial portion of each of the four gospels. And if we look at that narrative, we actually have seven characters, I would say five major ones, but a couple of minor ones, who are talked about in those narratives, named in those narratives. But we also have archaeological evidence of those seven people.

So, that would be Caiaphas, the acting high priest. It would be Annas, the former high priest, who still wields a lot of power and influence. Then we would have Peter, the Apostle, or at that time, the disciple. We'd have Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea at the time, Herod Antipas, who was the local ruler of Galilee where Jesus was from.

Then we have this fairly obscure character, Simon of Cyrene, who helped Jesus carry the cross, and then finally Jesus himself. So, all these people attested archaeologically, as well as the locations that take place in the trial of Jesus. All of those we have archaeological evidence for as well.

FRANK:

Let's start with Caiaphas, the high priest. We have an ossuary of his. Explain what an ossuary is and where this was found. And what did it say?

TITUS:

So, an ossuary is essentially a bone box. These were made out of stone, and they were used primarily from the first century B.C. until about 70 A.D in the Jerusalem area up in Galilee. They went into about 135 A.D. But what would happen is when someone died, they would bury them initially, not in one of these ossuaries, in a tomb. And then about a year later, they would go back, and they would collect the bones, and then they would place the bones in this ossuary.

And the thinking was that they needed to have some type of physical remnant left for the future resurrection. So, they would then store the bones in these ossuaries. Some of the ossuaries were decorated. Most of them were not, but some were. And some also had inscriptions on them. And these inscriptions would name the deceased and some other identifier about them. It might be their father's name, fairly common. Sometimes it was their

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profession, also fairly common. Occasionally, where they were from. That's usually what you're getting on these.

So, the Caiaphas ossuary is very elaborately decorated. Actually, we could say it's the most elaborately decorated ossuary of the period and region, which is fitting of a high priest and a high priestly family. But it was found inside the Caiaphas family tomb. So, that was their family name. And inscribed on it was Joseph, son of Caiaphas. So, that was his full name. We know that from the writings of Josephus. So, we have there the ossuary of this high priest. Now, subsequent to that discovery, his granddaughter's ossuary was later found.

And on it, it also names him because he's an important part of her lineage and because of his prominence, it names that he is a priest from the line of Ma'aziah, from Bait Imri. And we can go back and see, that's actually mentioned in Chronicles. So, we know that Caiaphas was a legitimate priest. He was from the actual priestly line. And that really solidifies this Caiaphas as the high priest in the time of Jesus.

FRANK:

And this was found, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, near Jerusalem in about 1990. Is that right, Caiaphas?

TITUS:

Yeah.

FRANK:

I'm calling you Caiaphas now. Yeah, it's the high priest. [Laughter] Titus is Caiaphas. Yeah. Gee, it's been. It's been a long week. Anyway, so we have not only the burial box of the guy that wanted Jesus dead, the high priest, we have his bones inside the box, the bones of a 60 year old man and his family. That's pretty amazing when you think about it. And then, as you say, later you have the granddaughter of Caiaphas. Her ossuary is found. What have we found with regard to Annas? Did you say Annas was also discovered archaeologically, Titus?

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TITUS:

Yeah. So, we know about Annas outside of the New Testament or outside of early Christian sources because he is discussed in Josephus as well. In fact, Josephus talks about him being deposed and then Caiaphas later being appointed as the high priest. But also, Annas' tomb has been discovered just south of ancient Jerusalem. And it is the most elaborate tomb of that period that's ever been discovered. So, again, very fitting of someone who held the position of high priest and still holds a lot of influence even after he is no longer in that position.

FRANK:

Is there an inscription that identifies that tombstone?

TITUS:

There's not an inscription, but the connection is very strong because Josephus tells us where that tomb was located. And this extremely elaborate tomb is located right in that same place. So, it's a very powerful identification.

FRANK:

Friends, for those of you that don't know, Josephus was a Jewish rebel that rebelled against the Romans. He was born in 37 A.D. And instead of committing suicide like the rest of his colleagues did when they were surrounded by the Romans in about 66 or 67 A.D., Josephus gave himself up and wound up becoming a historian for the Romans.

And he lived to about 100 A.D. And much of what we know about the first century outside the New Testament text comes from Josephus. And so, Josephus identifies this tomb, as Dr. Kennedy just mentioned. And then we go find this tomb, and Josephus identified it as Annas, the high priest. Now, Caiaphas was somehow related to Annas. Was he not?

TITUS:

Yeah, he was the son-in-law.

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FRANK:

He was the son-in-law. And so, Annas was still sticking his nose into the business of Caiaphas when Jesus is about to be crucified. And, friends, when you see this stuff in the dirt, you go, they're not making this up. These people really existed.

And we have their names either in texts by Josephus and or in ossuaries and tombs that we've discovered. And they're all in the book, by the way, by Dr. Titus Kennedy, called 'The Essential Archaeological Guide to Bible Lands.' Okay, that's two of the seven. How about Peter? What do we have for Peter, Titus?

TITUS:

Well, for Peter, we've got basically two locations and a couple inscriptions. If you go to Capernaum, where Jesus' ministry was based in Galilee, and where Peter lived for a time, the house of Peter is talked about in the gospels. Well, the house of Peter is still there. You can see it. And this is because when Peter left, presumably for Rome, at least that's where he ended up. He seems to have let the local Christians take over his house and use it as a house church.

And so, they continue to do that in the following decades and centuries. And they modified this house into more of a community gathering building, and they plastered the walls, and they started to write inscriptions on the wall, and some of the inscriptions mentioned Peter himself. So, we have probably going back to perhaps the second century, inscriptions mentioning Peter in there.

But then when we look at Rome, Peter's tomb was excavated in Rome underneath the Basilica of St. Peter, which was originally erected there because it was the crucifixion site and burial site of Peter in Rome. And what they found in this tomb was an inscription mentioning Peter. Peter in the tomb and the bones of a man over 60 years old. And they had pieces of all of his skeleton, except for from the ankles down, which would be consistent with being crucified upside down. And then they cut the body off of the cross.

And we know that's how Peter met his fate due to early historical sources. So, we've got a couple inscriptions mentioning him, and we've got his house, and we've got his tomb. Which the tomb was a reburial of the original tomb in the second century. So, pretty interesting stuff

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for Peter, who, you know, at the time of the trial, was a very minor character, just one of the disciples of Jesus. Of course, he became much more influential later on. But not one of the people that you might expect to have that kind of attestation for archaeologically.

FRANK:

So, you're saying that the tomb in which they found this skeleton with the ankles cut off comes from the second century A.D.?

TITUS:

Yes, it was a reburial. They reburied Peter in the second century.

FRANK:

Is that written anywhere? How do we know that, that they've actually reburied him? How do they know that's not just a second century person? Is there an inscription?

TITUS:

There's an inscription that Peter inside? That's the inscription. And it's right in the location where Peter's tomb was said to be in the early sources. Again, they built the church over that because his tomb was located there.

FRANK:

Amazing. How about Pontius Pilate? What do we have for him?

TITUS:

We've got a lot for Pontius Pilate, more for him than any of these people. So, Pontius Pilate, we have coins that he issued during his time as governor of Judea. We have him mentioned in Josephus, and Philo, and Tacitus. We have in a Latin inscription from Caesarea, which was the Roman capital at that time, which names Pontius Pilate, prefect of Judea. And then we have a ring with a Greek inscription, Pilato Pilate, on it as well. So, as far as textual and inscriptional evidence for Pilate, there's a huge amount, even from his time in the first century, right there around Judea.

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FRANK:

So, so far, we've been through Caiaphas, Annas, Peter, Pilate. How about Jesus himself? What do we have for him?

TITUS:

For Jesus, we've got two inscriptions, it would seem, as well as many different ancient historical texts from the first and second centuries. So, of course, we could talk about Josephus. He's the most well-known attesting to Jesus and the trial of Jesus. But there are several others as well. But as far as archaeological inscriptions, the James' Ossuary names Jesus as the brother of James. And this is very irregular.

In fact, all the other ossuary inscriptions that are known, there's only one other one that names the brother. So, this was not normal protocol. It tells us that they had a very specific reason for mentioning the brother. But in the James Ossuary, it names James. It names that he's son of Joseph, and then it names his brother Jesus. So, it gives two identifiers for James in this other ossuary inscription. It just mentions the brother, not the father.

So, maybe the father was unknown. So, I think this is very powerful evidence for it being Jesus the Christ, who is well-known, because they're going through all this effort to add that name into the inscription as someone very well-known. This comes from Jerusalem. It comes from pre 70 A.D., and people were well aware of the connection between James and Jesus.

Josephus again says that James was the brother of Jesus. So, this is a familial connection that people are aware of. And it makes sense that that would appear on his ossuary, too, as he's the leader of the Jerusalem church.

FRANK:

Now, when this was made known, it wasn't found at a particular site. It was on the antiquities market, apparently, and there was a lot of controversy surrounding this, Titus. It went through a trial, apparently. And what was the result of that trial? What did they discover? Because they thought somebody was trying to create a forgery, which, of course, is against the law in Israel to do. So, what came of it? What kind of testing did they do, and did they verify this is from the first century and the inscription is from the first century?

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TITUS:

So, the result of the trial was that they had no evidence of forgery for this and many other artifacts. But more importantly, the trial put this artifact under an incredible amount of scrutiny by scholars from all over the world in various disciplines. And so, it underwent more analysis than just about any other artifact.

And what happened is that geologists said, this is the right kind of stone. It's genuine for Jerusalem in the first century. Many epigraphers said this is correct, fitting first century Aramaic script. There's no evidence that there was a part of the inscription that was there originally and then added on. Because when they looked at the patina, which is the residue, ancient residue that builds up and cracks, essentially, over time.

When the ossuary was in a tomb, they found the patina inside the letters in all the different parts of the inscription. So, they were able to confirm that the brother of Jesus part was there originally along with the rest of the inscription. And that had become later kind of the main question. Once people saw the ossuary was genuine, the inscription looked genuine. Then they tried to attack the brother of Jesus part.

But then it was shown that that was a part of the original inscription as well. And a statistical study was also undertaken for Jerusalem in the first century. We know the percentage use of different names. And so, looking at the population totals and then looking at the percentage of names, this statistical study was able to say that there would have been less than two people that we could identify with this Jesus just based on the population and the name usage.

FRANK:

Well, that's five out of seven. Let's talk about an obscure character, Simon of Cyrene. Well, according to the Scriptures, this is the man that carried Jesus' cross. And we actually have evidence, archaeological evidence for this man. What do we have, Titus?

TITUS:

What we seem to have for Simon of Cyrene is his son's ossuary. So, he is mentioned as having two sons. One of those sons is named as Alexander in Mark. And there was an ossuary

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discovered in Jerusalem. Again, it's a pre 71st century A.D. ossuary. And on this inscription, or on this ossuary, we've got two separate inscriptions, because one is in Greek, and one is in Aramaic. Well, in the Greek inscription, we have Alexander, son of Simon.

Okay, there's other Alexanders, son of Simon there. That doesn't tell us anything for sure. But in the Aramaic inscription, it says that he is Cyrenean. He's from Cyrene. So, we have Alexander, son of Simon from Cyrene. This narrows it down to a very, very likely possibility that it is the Simon of Cyrene who was the father of Alexander that's mentioned in Mark.

FRANK:

And Cyrene, was that considered northern Africa somewhere?

TITUS:

Yes.

FRANK:

Okay. So, man, we're getting down into the nitty gritty here, ladies and gentlemen. We're talking to the great Dr. Titus Kennedy. His brand-new book is 'The Essential Archaeological Guide to Bible Lands: Uncovering Biblical Sites of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean World.' And right now, we're just talking about characters that had something to do with the death of Jesus. We've been through six of them. We're about to hit seven.

Before we do, I want to mention that tomorrow night, if you're listening to this, on the 2nd of April, on the 3rd of April, we'll be at the University of Buffalo doing I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. It will be live streamed, Lord willing, on our YouTube channel, and website, and Facebook page. So, if you want to see that, you can. If you're anywhere near Buffalo, New York would love to see you. Then this weekend I'll be at a couple of churches near Idaho, near Boise, Idaho. All the details are on our website.

Then on Monday night, I will be at Boise State University, 7:00 p.m. Mountain time, 9:00 p.m. on the east coast, doing I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist. And then we've got some other events coming up in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Also, we have an event coming up just prior to that, right out where Titus is, out near Seattle. We're going to be at the Worldview. Let

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me pull that up so I have it right here. We're going to be at the Worldview Apologetics conference on the 19th and 20th in Bellevue, Washington. That's Crossroads Bible Church.

And then on Sunday, I'll be speaking at Sunday morning at Antioch Bible Church in Kirkland, Washington. So, keep an eye out for all that. Don't forget also that the next Unshaken conference with Natasha Crain, Alisa Childers, and myself is going to be out near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on the 18th of May. Go to UnshakenConference.com if you want to be a part of that. I hope you do.

And by the way, Titus is out there speaking as well. You can go to see him on YouTube. And if you want to learn more about Titus, go to the Discovery Institute, Discovery.org. You will see him there. He also teaches sometimes at Biola University. He's out on dig quite a bit. He's going to be in Israel again this summer and he just returned from leading a tour to Egypt.

So, he's not just an academic. He's actually doing the hard spade work out there that archaeologists, that good archaeologists are known for. Titus let's talk about the 7th character associated with Jesus that we found in the dirt, and that's Herod Antipas. First of all, who is Antipas and how does he relate to Herod the Great?

TITUS:

Well, he's one of the sons of Herod the Great and he's specifically one of the sons that had an inheritance of Herod the Great's kingdom after Herod the Great died. So, he took over the area of Galilee and Perea, and he started his reign about 4 BC after his father's death, all the way until 39 A.D. So, even beyond the time of Jesus.

FRANK:

Now, is this the guy that chopped the head off of John the Baptist? And is this the same guy that Jesus called a fox?

TITUS:

Yep, that is him.

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FRANK:

What do we have for him?

TITUS:

Well, we've got coins that he issued with his name and title on them, Herod the Tetrarch, which is exactly how Luke talks about him. Like in Luke 3:1, for example. And then we also have him mentioning Josephus. He names him as Antipas the Tetrarch. And we see that he's one of the sons of Herod the great there. So, family name Herod. And then in Philo, he's not given his name, Antipas. But he's talked about as one of the tetrarch sons of King Herod the Great.

So, we've got coin inscriptions, we've got ancient texts, then we have a lot of archaeology. Because as the ruler of Galilee, he did quite a bit of building. In fact, he built a new capital for himself at the city of Tiberias. So, if you go look at some of the excavations there at Tiberius, you can see the results of the building of Herod Antipas.

FRANK:

Amazing. So, there are seven, ladies and gentlemen, of archaeological confirmation of people involved with the crucifixion of Jesus. In fact, why don't you just go through the seven again just to refresh our memory, Titus? Just name them.

TITUS:

Annas, the former high priest, Caiaphas, the acting high priest, Peter, the disciple, Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea, Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, Simon of Cyrene, and Jesus Christ himself.

FRANK:

Amazing. Now, what about locations? Let's talk locations. And the book gets into this in great detail, ladies and gentlemen. Again, the book is called 'The Essential Archaeological Guide to Bible Lands.' For those of you that are watching in the community, here's what it looks like. It's a hardcover because it's an important book, 480 pages right here. Where was Jesus crucified? Well, let's start with where was Jesus sentenced by Pilate? Because that is a question that I think has been answered recently. Where is that, Titus?

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TITUS:

Well, the gospels tell us that it was at the Praetorium, which is the residence of the Roman governor. And they had a praetorium in Jerusalem as well as in Caesarea. Obviously, this was the one in Jerusalem. Pilate was there because it was the time of Passover. So, they need to have a Roman presence in there for the big festivals like that.

And we know that the Praetorium at the time of Jesus was located in the former palace of Herod the Great. And this is on the western side of the city, and part of it has been excavated. And so, people can actually go and look at some of the ruins of that praetorium where part of the trial of Jesus took place.

FRANK:

Friends, if you ever go to Israel, we hope to get back there again. Obviously, we can't right now. And in the next week or so, we're about to announce a trip to Egypt and Saudi Arabia in December, December 2 to about the 15th. So, we don't have all the details yet. But keep in mind, that's hopefully going to happen at the end of this year when Israel opens up again.

We'll go there. But when you actually go in the Jaffa Gate, for those of you that have been there, if you're entering the Jaffa Gate, instead of going through the gate, if you turn to the right and walk down, I don't know. How far would you say is it from the Jaffa Gate to the right, Titus? This area, which we think Jesus...

TITUS:

Quarter of a mile, maybe.

FRANK:

Quarter of a mile. Unless you know what you're looking for, you won't recognize it. But if you get Titus's book and also go to Joel Kramer's YouTube channel, we've had Joel on the program before. Joel has a video on this. Look for Expedition Bible on YouTube. It's quite impressive that they have discovered, it seems, the place where Jesus was sentenced by Pilate. And in previous, you know, a couple decades ago, Titus, this was like on the other side of the city they thought, the old city. Wasn't it?

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TITUS:

Yeah, some people thought that it may have been in the Antonia fortress, close to the Temple Mount, adjacent to the Temple Mount. And that was... There was a crusader tradition also associated with that. But now we know that that pavement, that some people connected with it is actually from about 135 AD, second century, when Hadrian rebuilt part of Jerusalem. So, that was a completely different location. The Praetorium wasn't located there. That was where the barracks were.

FRANK:

Now, you mentioned Hadrian, who was a Roman emperor, about 135 A.D. Hadrian did some things, trying to stop Christianity and the worship of Jesus. But he actually wound up marking sites. Can you name some of those sites that emperor Hadrian actually helped us discover?

TITUS:

The tomb of Jesus is the big one. And then we also have the Pool of Bethesda. We have the Church of Nativity, the birthplace of Jesus in Bethlehem, and then probably also the Pool of Siloam.

FRANK:

Let's talk about those. Let's start with Bethlehem. That's, of course, where he was born. What did Hadrian do that actually helped us discover where Jesus was born?

TITUS:

Well, Hadrian inquired as to where Jesus was born. And when he found out, he had a grove to the God Adonis constructed over that site, so as to disassociate it from Jesus and to make it be connected with one of the gods worshiped by the Romans instead.

FRANK:

And so, when a century or so later or two centuries or so later, when Christians came back to the Holy Land, they knew exactly where the site of Jesus birth was, because Hadrian had tried to cover it up. But by covering up, he marked it. And he did the same with the Temple Mount, and he also did the same with the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Why do you think the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is the true burial site of Jesus, Titus?

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TITUS:

Well, in short, it fits every requirement that we have, and it's the only place with an ancient tradition or an ancient historical reference as the tomb of Jesus. It's the same type of tomb. It's in the right location. It's what the ancient Christians believed it was. It's what the ancient Roman pagans believed it was the location. And when people look at the analysis of the tomb today, they can see that it fits the qualifications of how the Gospel describes it.

A single chamber tomb with a stone bench, and it was sealed by a rolling stone. It was in a garden area. So, all those things are talked about in the gospels. And the fact that it's a single chamber tomb is very, very important because it's the only single chamber tomb of that type in the Jerusalem area from the Roman period.

And that's because they didn't make them as single chamber tombs. Typically, they were family tombs. So, they had multiple chambers where a lot of different people would be buried. But Jesus' was a new tomb. Joseph Arimathea had just had that thing carved out. And so, then they put Jesus in there and then no one ever reused it. Hadrian built over it, but no one ever reused it again.

FRANK:

What did Hadrian build on it to try and hide it?

TITUS:

He built a double temple to Jupiter and Venus. And why did he do that? Well, he associated himself and his family with the goddess Venus and then Jupiter as this great king of the gods in the Roman pantheon. He built other double temples as well. For example, in Rome, right next to where the colosseum is, he built a double temple to Venus in Roma. So, this was a thing that he did. It seems odd, but that's something that Hadrian did and is known from elsewhere.

FRANK:

I thought I read, and it may be in your book, but I've read it recently. Again, the book, ladies and gentlemen, is called 'The Essential Archaeological Guide to Bible Lands.' Didn't they do some

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testing on a tomb near or under the church of the Holy Sepulcher and verified it came from the first century, Titus?

TITUS:

There are other first century tombs in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. For example, one that a lot of people have probably seen, some may have even gone into, because you can crawl in there, is popularly called the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. But it's a first century tomb, and it's located just a bit behind the tomb of Jesus in another room of the church. So, yes, it's known as a first century graveyard there.

FRANK:

Now, friends, for those that have been there, you go into the Church of Holy Sepulcher, and it looks like the last place that this would be for Jesus' tomb because it's inside the city walls. And church after church has been built on there. The church of the Holy Sepulcher has been burned down and rebuilt. And it's really hard to visualize what it was like in the first century. But, Titus, that was outside the city walls at the time of Jesus crucifixion, and everything points to that being the true site, correct?

TITUS:

Yeah, absolutely. There's not even another ancient tradition with any other site.

FRANK:

What about the Garden Tomb? Because you go to the Garden Tomb, and you want that to be the right site because it's much more peaceful and rustic and everything. Why is that not the correct site?

TITUS:

Well, the Garden Tomb is a useful example for people to go and look at. Kind of a nice visual area to visit. But the Garden Tomb was originally built in the 8th or 7th century B.C. So, around 700 B.C., the time of Hezekiah. It's actually a two chamber tomb, not a single chamber tomb. And then it was also reused by the Byzantine Christians around the 6th century A.D. So obviously, the early Christians didn't think it had anything to do with Jesus. They wouldn't have reused it as a tomb. And it's not a new tomb, so it can't be the tomb of Jesus.

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FRANK:

There have been other archaeological discoveries related, or at least it seems related to the crucifixion and resurrection. One of them has to do with stealing bodies, dead bodies. What's that one about, Titus?

TITUS:

Well, that would be the Nazareth Inscription. So, this was an edict of the emperor, would have been sent as a letter to a local official, and then from that letter, transcribed into a stone tablet and erected somewhere in public so that everybody could see. This particular one was inscribed in Greek. It was found in Nazareth. We don't know if that's where it was originally excavated because it wasn't found in an official archaeological expedition.

But it turned up in Nazareth in about 1878, and it had this Greek inscription, which everybody could read in that area. And on it, it gave this new penalty, the death penalty, actually, for anyone who broke into a specific type of tomb, one of these stone-carved tombs sealed with a big stone. And then if they stole the body out of that type of tomb with some ulterior motive, like with wicked intent, the inscription says.

So normally, people wouldn't just go around stealing bodies. They might break into tombs to try to steal materials in their grave goods. But if they did that, it was a fine. It was a curse, and there was a fine that you would pay. It wasn't a death penalty. So, this was something that was done to the extreme in order to try to prevent anything like this from happening again or to suppress this rumor.

Now, if we go to Matthew 28, we see that the Roman soldiers are paid to spread the story that the disciples of Jesus got into the tomb, and stole his body, and then made up the resurrection story. And so, we see that that section of Matthew really is confirmed by this Roman inscription. And that was the story that the Romans were spreading. And probably most of them believed that the disciples somehow stole the body of Jesus and then created this resurrection story for it.

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FRANK:

Which, of course, ladies and gentlemen, presupposes the empty tomb. There's no need to explain Jesus' tomb if his body was in there. They could have squashed Christianity by taking his body out. They couldn't take his body out because it wasn't there. Hence, they came up with this story that the disciples stole the body. For what motive? There is no motive. Why would they do such a thing? To get themselves beaten, tortured, and killed? It makes no sense.

And as Titus just mentioned, this is in Matthew's biography. And I think he says this is the story that the Jews have been passing to this day. It would be very difficult for Matthew to have any credibility with the Jews to whom his gospel is written if he says this story is the story that Jews are using to this day, if, in fact, that wasn't the case.

And so, I mean, Matthew would be basically discrediting his effort to convince the Jews Jesus is the Messiah if he's lying about their story, about the empty tomb. He wouldn't be lying. That's really what happened. Isn't there, I think Titus, if I'm remembering correctly, isn't there a relatively ancient Jewish source that puts forth this theory that the disciples came and stole the body other than the Bible itself?

TITUS:

Nothing going back as far as the first century, but late antiquity. It might be in the Mishnah or the Talmud.

FRANK:

Yeah, I think there is something, if I'm not mistaken. So, this is quite obvious that his tomb was empty. Otherwise, Matthew wouldn't have said it. He would have discredited himself completely if he's saying this is the story to this day. What about the Pool of Bethesda? Because it appears that there is some evidence that that pool was considered some sort of place you could get healed. What has been discovered with regard to that, Titus?

TITUS:

Well, here we have another case of Hadrian building some type of Roman temple over a spot associated with the historical Jesus. So, in this case, we go to the Gospel of John, and we see that the Pool of Bethesda is one of the locations where Jesus performs a very visible healing

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miracle. And it talks about in John that this pool had steps down into it and that it had five stoas or five porticos. Which, if you read that, it sounds a little confusing. Like, what is this, a five-sided structure or what?

But when it was excavated, they found that it was four-sided, but the fifth stoa was dividing through the middle into upper and lower pools. And they found, of course, the stairs that people would walk down to get into the pool. Well, when Hadrian comes along and he learns about this and this miracle, he builds a temple to the Roman and Greek God of healing, Asclepius.

And so, rather than people associating this healing miracle with Jesus, they're going to associate healing with the Roman God of healing, Asclepius. And it was used as such until after Christianity became legalized. And they dismantled this temple, and they eventually built a church over that location instead.

FRANK:

It's interesting too that today we still use the snake of Asclepius in some of the imagery for medical associations, as if there's a snake. I don't know all the history behind it, but it is quite odd, Titus.

TITUS:

Or we use the snake, or we use the Moses, the Moses in the wilderness snake, which may have been where the Asclepius symbology derived from, ultimately. They may have just hijacked that.

FRANK:

Yeah, I hadn't heard that. All this is in the book, 'The Essential Archaeological Guide to Bible Lands: Uncovering Biblical Sites of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean World' by Dr. Titus Kennedy, my guest today. And as you can see, Titus knows his stuff. And these three books, this is the third of three.

Any of these books you get, you're going to enjoy, because he explains things very well, and he has a lot of pictures and imagery in these books that will help you see that much of what you

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read about in the Bible, certainly not all, but many of the main stories, you can get some sort of archaeological reference for.

Now, this doesn't prove everything in the Bible is true, but it does corroborate that many of the events, and places, and people that you find in both the New and the Old Testaments, we find in the dirt. And Titus, despite the fact that we found so much, not very much of the Holy Land has been excavated, has it? How much has been excavated?

TITUS:

Ballpark figure, maybe 10%. It's very, very low. So, it's actually probably the most excavated region of the world. But even so, many of the sites have never been dug. A lot of them have been surveyed. But then when you go to the sites that have been dug, it's a small percentage of those sites that have been excavated. You know? Maybe 5% of a typical site has actually been excavated. So, there's so much more out there to find.

FRANK:

And how much of those places that have been excavated have actually been written up? Many of them haven't been written up.

TITUS:

Yeah, many of them have not been thoroughly published. Some have barely been published at all, besides some seasonal reports or some specific articles addressing a particular issue. So, yes. There's information out there that hasn't been disseminated as well.

FRANK:

Now, in just a minute, I'm going to ask Titus of some about some major discoveries outside of the Holy Land, like Mesopotamia, Persia, like Egypt, like the areas that Paul went for his missionary journeys in just a minute. Before I do, I do want to mention that a first time ever course at online Christian courses is with Stephen Meyer.

Stephen C. Meyer, a colleague of Dr. Titus Kennedy. He is actually going to do a live Zoom course on 'Reasons for the Faith. This has never been taught before. And Steve, as you probably know, is an expert, particularly on the biological side of investigation. But his real love has to do

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with Bible prophecy and archaeology. He and Titus have teamed up on several projects before. In fact, Titus is going to be a part of this new course. It starts in late April, and there's, I think, nine or ten live Zoom sessions. And if you can't make them all, they're going to be recorded. You can watch them later. But if you want to be a part of the first time ever course, 'Reasons for Faith,' live with Dr. Steven C. Meyer, then you need to go to Online Christian Courses. Or just go to CrossExamined.org. Click on online courses. You'll see it there.

And then next week we start 'Jesus vs. the Culture.' There are so many topics we're going to cover in that course. I'll be your instructor there. And since this is a political year, you want to be a part of that because we're going to cover CRT. We're going to cover socialism and capitalism, cancel culture, finding your true identity, transgenderism, Jesus in politics, so much more. You're going to want to be a part of that.

So, go to Online Christian Courses or Crossexamined.org. Click on online courses. You'll see 'Jesus vs. the Culture' there. We'll do two semesters on that. The first semester starts, as I say, next week. And if you're listening to this later than that, you can still join the class. And then we're going to take a summer break, come back and finish it during the election season.

So, check all that out. Those two courses are coming up. Now, Titus, I know it's hard to pick one discovery from these areas because you got 480 pages of discoveries. But pick something that you want to talk about archaeologically related to the Bible from the area of Mesopotamia and Persia.

TITUS:

Okay, why not Babylon? People are always interested in Babylon and familiar with that.

FRANK:

Go ahead, pick something from there.

TITUS:

So, Babylon, of course we read about, is one of the earliest cities. So, we've got Babylon listed in Genesis 10 there. Now we know that it was archaeologically an extremely early city. However, we do have a bit of a problem. And that is that the earliest levels of the city of

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Babylon have never been able to be excavated because of the water table. So, the water table has essentially put those earliest levels underwater. So, we don't know too much about the site physically from, say, prior to 2000 BC.

We know that it existed. We have some textual material, some references and other tablets to it. But if people are asking, for example, about, you know, have we found the Tower of Babel? Well, we really can't comment too much on that because if it's supposed to be in the ruins of it in that early, early phase of the city of Babylon, well, no one's been able to dig down into there. We do have discussion of things like the Tower of Babel story.

I would say the most interesting to me is found in the Sumerian text, 'Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta,' which talks about the building of a huge ziggurat. Never mentions it being finished, and it talks about the changing of the speech of mankind, except it's a reversal here. It's going back to speaking all in one tongue rather than split up into all these different languages. We do also have, of course, a later Tower of Babel, so to speak, a big ziggurat in Babylon. And we know about this one from the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

There are ruins of it, as well as it being depicted on a stele that also shows Nebuchadnezzar himself, which is a fairly recent discovery, by the way. So, this was a ziggurat in the middle of Babylon that was kind of the focal point or one of the focal points of the city. So, it's possible that if we were to look for ruins of the original Tower of Babel, that it would be deep underneath where this later ziggurat was located. But we're kind of giving an educated guess on that.

FRANK:

There's much more in the book, 'The Essential Archaeological Guide to Bible Lands.' Also, a colleague of Titus, Joel Kramer, has some videos of this on his YouTube channel. As I say, we've had Joel on the program before. Go to Expedition Bible. And Joel put up a drone and shows you how the prophecies about Babylon have actually come true in the fact that it's a desolate place and jackals and hyenas live there, and human beings really don't.

And so, that's quite interesting that you'll see from Joel. Let's talk about Egypt and Sinai. Now, Titus, this is very near and dear to your heart, because a number of years ago, you actually

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went to discover or rediscover the oldest known inscription of Yahweh. At the time it was Egypt, now it's Sudan. Tell us about that discovery, if you would.

TITUS:

Yeah. So, this is at a site that, as you said, is in present day Sudan. In ancient times, this was southern Egypt, around the area of the third cataract. So, it's the farthest south ancient Egyptian temple. And this was a temple that was erected by order of Pharaoh Amenhotep III. So, we're looking at around 1400 BC. And on this temple, he has all these different inscriptions on columns of the temple and then as well on a wall inside the temple. And these inscriptions are essentially claiming that the pharaoh has power over these places and people or has even subjugated them.

Now, we know that this pharaoh, Amenhotep III, did not do any major military campaigns, so he didn't go and himself subjugate any of these people. He's just making these claims that they're under his power now or giving some kind of propaganda. But the information he gives is very, very interesting because on one of the pillars of the temple and as well on the wall of the temple, he lists these different nomad groups, what the Egyptians, ancient Egyptians called Shasu. And one of the nomad groups he mentions is the nomads of Yahweh.

So, they are these wanderers who are connected to Yahweh. Now, there's no location anywhere that's ever been found in any kind of document or inscription that's called Yahweh. It's not a place. And in fact, on that same pillar, there are other nomad groups that are associated with deities, which indicates that this is also a God's name, Yahweh, not a place. Others, like Baal and Anat, are mentioned. So, it's the name of a God, Yahweh.

Well, if we go back to ancient times and we look at all the sources, we look at tablets, inscriptions and so forth, we can see that there was no other group of people besides the ancient Israelites who ever worshiped Yahweh. The Canaanites never did. The Canaanites never had a God named Yahweh. Contrary to the completely speculative claims of some scholars, there's zero evidence for that. The Edomites did not worship Yahweh. Yahweh did not come out of an Edomite context. There's no Edomite inscriptions mentioning Yahweh. Their main God was Cos.

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So, this has to be connected to the one group of people that worshiped Yahweh. That's the Israelites. So, not only is this the earliest inscription mentioning Yahweh, it also connects the wandering Israelites in the area east of Egypt at the time of the wandering, the end of the time of the wandering. And so, it corroborates a great many things biblically, that the Egyptians were familiar with the Israelites, that they knew the name Yahweh, because Moses had revealed that to the pharaoh, that the Israelites were wandering in this wilderness area east of Egypt, and that they were connected with Yahweh.

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, I don't know if you get the significance of what Titus just said. You've got to marinate on that for a minute. He just said that there's archaeological evidence that the Jews, the people who worship Yahweh, were wandering in Egypt in 1400 BC. Do you get that? I mean, that's amazing. Because you always hear, well, there's no evidence for the Exodus.

Well, Titus, you actually, you and Dr. Steven Meyer did a program on our YouTube channel three or four years ago on the top ten archaeological discoveries, or they're not all archaeological, some of their texts, but the top ten discoveries from Egypt that suggests that the Exodus is true, that the Hebrews were in Egypt around this time. If you take the biblical dating, the dating of the Exodus was 1446 BC, which means they got to Jericho about 1406 BC.

And much more can be explained and is explained in 'The Essential Archaeological Guide to Bible Lands.' That's Titus' new book. But you can also check out that YouTube. Go to the CrossExamined YouTube channel and look for Titus Kennedy and Exodus, and you'll find that discussion we had. You actually took pictures of this, Titus. Because I don't think there were modern pictures taken of it. Has this been written up recently? How do scholars react to this?

TITUS:

Yeah, so when I went down there, I documented it with high res photography and examined the whole site and looked around for any other inscriptions that might be related to that. And then I published a new article on it and corrected one of the readings from the earlier excavation report and another article that was part of that expedition in the 60's, 50's and 60's.

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And so now, yes, now there are high res photos of it available and a corrected reading. One of the hieroglyphs was read wrong. For whatever reason, the original excavation report didn't publish photos of all the inscriptions. So, this was one that did not appear in the excavation report. They had a drawing that was done with other drawings, but it was not done correctly and there was, there was no other information. Nobody had gone out and done this since that time. So, I published three articles on it since then.

FRANK:

Has there been any academic reaction to it?

TITUS:

There has, yes. So, there's been more recognition of this inscription and that it is mentioning Yahweh, and that it could have some kind of connection to wandering people who worship Yahweh. Now, the opinion on who those people are is going to vary amongst scholars. You know, some are going to say, again, some kind of Edomite group.

Others are going to say proto Israelites. Some people don't like it because they don't want to acknowledge that it actually is the name Yahweh of a deity. It's going to interfere with their historical framework. But it seems like there is more of a lean towards this mentioning the name of the God Yahweh.

FRANK:

What is the current state of biblical archaeology in the education system? Would a discovery like this generally be resisted or accepted?

TITUS:

Well, two different questions there. The state of biblical archaeology in the educational system is, I would say, quite poor in that there is not much taught at any universities. There are very, very few programs in biblical archaeology available today, whether that be bachelor's or graduate programs, just a handful of schools doing something. And some of those programs are very small in scope, maybe just a one year master's program.

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Others, a few are trying to do something beyond that. It's really fallen from previous generations when there were more programs available. However, I do think that there's a lot of interest in general in biblical archaeology today. So, people just have to make the effort to start putting together some of those programs and see if the students come. Now, as to your second question, their reaction towards an artifact like this is going to vary based on their historical framework.

So, for many secular scholars who view the exodus and conquest as myth, they may throw it out entirely and just say, ah, that can't be Yahweh. Or they're going to say, again, it's somehow connected to Edomites, who were the first Yahweh worshippers, even though they have no evidence for that. If people believe in a historical exodus, but they go with a 13th or 12th century BC Exodus, well, they can't have this be the name Yahweh of a God because that doesn't fit their framework.

You know, it's too early. And so, they'll have to say that it's some other name, or it's some place name. But for people who believe that there was some kind of historical exodus, or the name of the God Yahweh is out there early enough, then they're not going to have a problem with this.

FRANK:

And if you would just give us a quick overview of the difference between a minimalist and a maximalist.

TITUS:

Well, when we're speaking about biblical history, a minimalist would see the text of the Bible and particularly be talking about Old Testament here, usually. They would see the Bible as of minimal historical worth, minimal historical facts that have been corroborated. So, they would generally view the Old Testament as propaganda, myth, legend, whereas a maximalist would see the Old Testament as having a lot of historical value. Now, maximalists may think that there are historical errors. They may think there are sections of myth. So, there can be a wide range of this. But they're going to overall see the Old Testament as useful as a historical document.

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FRANK:

Now, in your experience, as far as you know, Titus, has there ever been an archaeological discovery that clearly, unequivocally contradicts a biblical reference?

TITUS:

Certainly not once people have had time to really analyze it. There have been things that have been discovered where at first glance, it looked like to some people, there's a contradiction here. But nothing once people have had time to research, and discuss, and do some critical thinking on. Nothing that clearly contradicts the historical record.

FRANK:

All right, let me ask you one more section here. Well, two. Let's start with Paul's missionary journeys into what we would call modern day Turkey now and maybe Greece. What archaeological discovery in that area do you find very intriguing? There's so many. Pick one.

TITUS:

Yeah, actually, one of my favorites comes from Cyprus, but there are also connected discoveries in Turkey and in Rome as well. And this all has to do with a figure in Acts chapter 13, who is the governor of the province of Cyprus, named Sergius Paulus, that the Apostle Paul encounters on his first missionary journey in Paphos, the capital of Cyprus at the time. And just north of Paphos, there was discovered an official Greek inscription during the reign of Emperor Claudius.

So, this is when Paul was on his missionary journeys. And it names the proconsul Paulus there. So, this is the same guy. The proconsul is the governor, same guy who was the governor of Cyprus in that period. Well, over in Turkey, at the area of Pisidian Antioch, which is where actually where Paul went next, there was a Latin inscription found that mentions Sergius Paulus. And that's because the family, his family was from that area.

So, that's where he originated from. They had an estate out there. Now, we go over to Rome and there's an inscription found in Rome from about 47 AD. So, this is just after the time when Paul was on Cyprus. So, it seems like Sergius Paulus went to Rome. He took a position as a curator of the Tiber River.

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So, he was still in the Roman government, had a different position after being a governor of Cyprus. So, we've got three different inscriptions, at least, possibly another one connecting Sergius Paulus or testing him, and kind of telling us a little bit more about the backstory of him, and the connection to Paul in the Book of Acts.

FRANK:

It's amazing. There's so much out there and there's so much more in the book, 'The Essential Archaeological Guide to Biblical Lands.' Friends, you need to get it by Titus Kennedy. Let me ask you one more thing about Rome. Of course, we could talk about 100 discoveries in Rome. Pick one that you find very intriguing, Titus.

TITUS:

Well, we talked about one earlier with the tomb of Peter there. But one of my favorite stories, actually, that it takes place in Rome, but it affects things going on in the trial of Jesus. And since we were talking about that and we were just celebrating the resurrection, might as well discuss this. So, in Rome, during the time of Jesus, late in his life, during his ministry, there was a praetorian guard commander named Sejanus.

And he, in about 26 AD, had started to compile more power than his position normally would have given him. And this was because Tiberius, the emperor at the time, wasn't really interested in being involved in the day to day affairs. He went off to the island of Capri, kind of in self-exile. Well, Pilate, Pontius Pilate, is appointed the governor of Judea in 26 as well. So, over the years, Sejanus, he collects more and more power.

Well, finally, in 31 AD, the emperor Tiberius, he finds out about this alleged plot that Sejanus wants to take over and become the emperor. And so, he creates this ruse. And the senate calls Sejanus in. And Sejanus thinks that they're going to declare him emperor. But instead, they say, you're guilty of treason, and they execute him there. And then they proceed to execute many of his political allies and family members.

And so, this is in 31. There's kind of a reverberation throughout the empire. So, we go probably less than two years after this. It's the trial of Jesus, and Pilate's there. And the Jews, they say to

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Pilate, if you release this man, Jesus, you are no friend of Caesar. Well, that was a political term for someone who had the favor of the emperor, the political favor of the emperor.

So, they're threatening to report him. And because all this craziness has just happened with Sejanus, and Pilate has already had probably four run ins with complaints from the Jews about things he did that they didn't like. He is in a very precarious position. And so, he is not going to stick his neck out for Jesus here and ultimately just gives in. And that is a smart move from a political standpoint for him at the time.

So, I think that context of Sejanus, who is well established in Roman records, he even had coins issued with his name and face on them. Which, by the way, almost all these were obliterated. His name scratched out or even reminted. But there have been a few examples where his name in Latin is still on there. So, they tried to erase him from history because of what he did.

FRANK:

And I remember you saying this, Titus, that this is probably one piece of evidence that favors the 33 AD trial of Jesus rather than the 30 AD. Because of the context, Pilate would be afraid if he annoys the Jews at all. He doesn't want to meet the same fate as his friend Sejanus met. And he's trying to distance himself from Sejanus. So, it makes more sense in 33 than 30. Because some scholars will say, well, we think Jesus was crucified in 30 AD.

By the way, friends, also, the prophecy in Daniel, chapter nine, if you do the math, works exactly for 33 AD rather than 30 AD. So, Titus, you're just adding some context to this that I think tips the scales toward 33 AD as Jesus crucifixion year, and then, of course, his resurrection as well. Let me ask you one last thing personally.

You've been doing a lot of work over the past few years, essentially, and even before that. But these three books have come out. The newest, again is 'The Essential Archaeological Guide to Bible Lands.' How does this affect you personally when you find all these discoveries?

TITUS:

Well, at this point, I am just continually amazed by all the things that continue to be discovered, just stacking up the information, and the illumination, and the evidence for the Bible in ancient

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times. Over the course of my studies and my professional career, it just becomes more apparent year by year of how much evidence there is out there and still yet to be found as well for the truth of the Bible. And so, it's encouraging. It's interesting. It's amazing. I just appreciate all the things that are out there, others doing the work, and that I'm able to participate in this as well.

FRANK:

Ladies and gentlemen, we've covered less than 1% of what's in the book, 'The Essential Archaeological Guide to Bible Lands' by Dr. Titus Kennedy. If you really want to be informed on this issue of archaeology across the ancient world, not just in Israel, you need to get this book. Titus, you've done another great work here. Thanks for being on the show and thanks for being faithful to digging up the Bible.

TITUS:

I appreciate it. Frank. Thanks for having me back on.

FRANK:

That's Titus Kennedy, ladies and gentlemen. Check him out at Discovery.org. That's discovery.org. And pick up a copy. You can get it, of course, in Kindle if you want. But I'm telling you, the hardcover is very pretty, and it's got a lot of great pictures, and maps, and that kind of thing in it. It will help you understand what has been discovered out there.

And the more and more we discover, the more and more we realize that the Scriptures are confirmed, the more and more we look. So, great being with you friends. Lord willing, we will see you here next week. Don't forget, University of Buffalo tomorrow night out in Boise, Idaho this weekend and Boise state on April 8. Look forward to seeing you guys out there on the road. God bless.

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