

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:06,340

These are pieces of the original True Cross.

2

00:00:06,340 --> 00:00:07,340

Yes, of course.

3

00:00:07,340 --> 00:00:13,340

Look at the size of this place.

4

00:00:13,340 --> 00:00:14,840

Maybe the tunnel to the True Cross.

5

00:00:14,840 --> 00:00:17,840

Nobody's been back there for a thousand years, probably.

6

00:00:17,840 --> 00:00:24,340

This is one of the most important artifacts ever found in the world.

7

00:00:24,340 --> 00:00:27,340

Ah, interesting.

8

00:00:27,340 --> 00:00:28,340

What is it?

9

00:00:28,680 --> 00:00:31,680

It feels like there's a cavity under it.

10

00:00:31,680 --> 00:00:33,680

Oh, look at that.

11

00:00:41,680 --> 00:00:43,680

The Cross of Jesus Christ.

12

00:00:43,680 --> 00:00:48,680

It is the most recognized religious icon on earth.

13

00:00:48,680 --> 00:00:54,680

A relic with mystical healing powers and the symbol of Christianity for over a billion believers worldwide.

14

00:00:58,680 --> 00:01:02,680

The True Cross is an archaeological treasure without equal.

15

00:01:02,680 --> 00:01:09,680

But its journey through history has been so clouded with intrigue and legend that today its fate is unknown.

16

00:01:09,680 --> 00:01:14,680

So does the Cross, or pieces of it, still exist?

17

00:01:14,680 --> 00:01:17,680

And if so, can they be found?

18

00:01:17,680 --> 00:01:21,680

There are many who claim to possess fragments from this holiest of relics,

19

00:01:21,680 --> 00:01:24,680

but it's unclear if any are authentic.

20

00:01:25,520 --> 00:01:34,520

But now, startling evidence is emerging from the Holy Land that could bring the Cross from the realm of faith to the world of science.

21

00:01:34,520 --> 00:01:38,520

And recently, a Turkish archaeologist announced a stunning find,

22

00:01:38,520 --> 00:01:43,520

potentially pinpointing the location of a lost piece of the crucifix.

23

00:01:43,520 --> 00:01:50,520

For 2,000 years, scholars, theologians, and armies have sought the True Cross of Jesus.

24

00:01:50,520 --> 00:01:53,520

It is a quest of biblical proportions.

25

00:01:53,520 --> 00:01:58,520

And now, for the first time, we may have a prayer of succeeding.

26

00:02:02,520 --> 00:02:05,520

My name is Josh Gates.

27

00:02:05,520 --> 00:02:10,520

With a degree in archaeology and a passion for exploration,

28

00:02:10,520 --> 00:02:14,520

I have a tendency to end up in some very strange situations.

29

00:02:14,520 --> 00:02:17,520

God, Lord!

30

00:02:17,520 --> 00:02:23,520

My travels have taken me to the ends of the earth as I investigate the greatest legends in history.

31

00:02:23,520 --> 00:02:25,520

We're good to fly, let's go!

32

00:02:25,520 --> 00:02:28,520

This is Expedition Unknown.

33

00:02:41,520 --> 00:02:46,520

Welcome to Israel, a.k.a. the Promised Land.

34

00:02:46,520 --> 00:02:51,520

Temperatures today, 195,000 degrees, roughly.

35

00:02:51,520 --> 00:02:57,520

Searching for the True Cross of Jesus may seem on the surface like a really daunting challenge,

36

00:02:57,520 --> 00:03:00,520

but it is also a missing object.

37

00:03:00,520 --> 00:03:04,520

And like any missing object, the best place to look for it is the last place it was seen.

38

00:03:05,520 --> 00:03:11,520

My quest is taking me into the ancient city of Jerusalem, the site of the crucifixion of Jesus.

39

00:03:19,520 --> 00:03:22,520

Hanabah, Hanabah, Haroon!

40

00:03:22,520 --> 00:03:24,520

What he said!

41

00:03:24,520 --> 00:03:27,520

The city walls stand 40 feet tall.

42

00:03:27,520 --> 00:03:29,520

They guard a precious parcel of land,

43

00:03:29,520 --> 00:03:34,520

steeped in religion and coveted by empires for thousands of years.

44

00:03:34,520 --> 00:03:38,520

The old city of Jerusalem, there is nowhere in the world like it.

45

00:03:38,520 --> 00:03:42,520

It's one of those exotic destinations that looks exactly the way you think it should.

46

00:03:42,520 --> 00:03:45,520

It is a crush of humanity, it is a cacophony of sound,

47

00:03:45,520 --> 00:03:48,520

and the nexus for the world's great religions.

48

00:03:48,520 --> 00:03:53,520

So there's nothing unusual about seeing an Orthodox Jew passing a devout Muslim,

49

00:03:53,520 --> 00:03:56,520

or shops selling crucifixes mixed with Yomikans.

50

00:03:56,520 --> 00:04:00,520

With so many religious tokens everywhere, if you can't find what you're looking for,

51

00:04:00,520 --> 00:04:02,520

you're not looking hard enough.

52

00:04:02,520 --> 00:04:03,520

This is great.

53

00:04:03,520 --> 00:04:06,520

If you're looking for a gift, especially for the kids while you're here in the Holy Land,

54

00:04:06,520 --> 00:04:08,520

you can't eat the crown of thorns.

55

00:04:08,520 --> 00:04:10,520

Sir, how much for the crown of thorns?

56

00:04:10,520 --> 00:04:11,520

20 bucks.

57

00:04:11,520 --> 00:04:12,520

20 bucks?

58

00:04:12,520 --> 00:04:13,520

And what do I do with this?

59

00:04:13,520 --> 00:04:14,520

Am I supposed to wear this?

60

00:04:14,520 --> 00:04:16,520

Yes, because Jesus wear it.

61

00:04:16,520 --> 00:04:18,520

Well, not voluntarily.

62

00:04:19,520 --> 00:04:21,520

Question of a religious gift aside,

63

00:04:21,520 --> 00:04:25,520

Jerusalem is the place where the Christian church is located.

64

00:04:25,520 --> 00:04:29,520

On the other side, Jerusalem packs a historic punch in very close quarters.

65

00:04:29,520 --> 00:04:33,520

Three of the holiest sites of the three major Western religions

66

00:04:33,520 --> 00:04:36,520

are all sitting in a space smaller than Central Park,

67

00:04:36,520 --> 00:04:38,520

and it isn't an easy coexistence.

68

00:04:42,520 --> 00:04:45,520

To followers of Judaism, no shrine carries more weight

69

00:04:45,520 --> 00:04:49,520

than the 2,000-year-old Western or Wailing Wall.

70

00:04:50,520 --> 00:04:54,520

It is the only remaining foundation of a temple platform

71

00:04:54,520 --> 00:04:57,520

that was once home to the Ark of the Covenant.

72

00:04:59,520 --> 00:05:02,520

Looming just overhead is the Dome of the Rock,

73

00:05:02,520 --> 00:05:05,520

one of the most revered locations in the Islamic world.

74

00:05:05,520 --> 00:05:09,520

That's where doctrine says Muhammad made his ascent to heaven.

75

00:05:09,520 --> 00:05:13,520

And just a few steps away is my destination.

76

00:05:20,520 --> 00:05:24,520

This is the church of the Holy Sepulchre,

77

00:05:24,520 --> 00:05:28,520

though it feels less like a church and more like a small city in here.

78

00:05:28,520 --> 00:05:30,520

It is absolutely massive.

79

00:05:30,520 --> 00:05:32,520

It has a long and mysterious history,

80

00:05:32,520 --> 00:05:36,520

and it is also the single holiest site in the world for Christians.

81

00:05:38,520 --> 00:05:41,520

The church is home to the former tomb of Jesus.

82

00:05:41,520 --> 00:05:44,520

As well as the slab his body was laid on after he died.

83

00:05:44,520 --> 00:05:46,520

But there's something else here too.

84

00:05:47,520 --> 00:05:49,520

According to the New Testament,

85

00:05:49,520 --> 00:05:53,520

the Romans crucified Jesus and two thieves on a hill named Golgotha.

86

00:05:53,520 --> 00:05:56,520

History then loses sight of the cross.

87

00:05:56,520 --> 00:05:58,520

But then in the fourth century,

88

00:05:58,520 --> 00:06:01,520

the Roman Emperor Constantine, who had converted to Christianity,

89

00:06:01,520 --> 00:06:04,520

sends his mother Helena to the Holy Land.

90

00:06:05,520 --> 00:06:09,520

Permission is to find artifacts related to Jesus.

91

00:06:10,520 --> 00:06:13,520

Armed with nearly unlimited funds and power,

92

00:06:13,520 --> 00:06:17,520

she leads an excavation under the rubble of the hill of Golgotha.

93

00:06:17,520 --> 00:06:20,520

Legend has it that she finds a buried cross

94

00:06:20,520 --> 00:06:24,520

and tests it by asking a sick woman to touch the wooden relic.

95

00:06:24,520 --> 00:06:26,520

When it miraculously cures her,

96

00:06:26,520 --> 00:06:29,520

Helena declares the true cross found.

97

00:06:30,520 --> 00:06:34,520

But today, you won't find the hill of Golgotha on any map.

98

00:06:34,520 --> 00:06:36,520

That's because you're not alone.

99

00:06:36,520 --> 00:06:38,520

The hill of Golgotha on any map.

100

00:06:38,520 --> 00:06:42,520

That's because the church of the Holy Sepulcher was built right on top of it.

101

00:06:42,520 --> 00:06:46,520

When we think of the crucifixion, we think of a hill.

102

00:06:46,520 --> 00:06:48,520

And believe it or not, though it doesn't look like it,

103

00:06:48,520 --> 00:06:50,520

I'm actually standing on that hill.

104

00:06:50,520 --> 00:06:52,520

And this is the place where, reportedly,

105

00:06:52,520 --> 00:06:55,520

Jesus and two thieves were crucified.

106

00:06:55,520 --> 00:06:57,520

And 300 years after that crucifixion,

107

00:06:57,520 --> 00:07:02,520

Helena shows up and begins constructing a church on top of the hill.

108

00:07:02,520 --> 00:07:05,520

The church completely encases the site of the crucifixion.

109

00:07:05,520 --> 00:07:09,520

And the place where Helena unearthed the true cross.

110

00:07:09,520 --> 00:07:11,520

To find out more about the fate of the cross

111

00:07:11,520 --> 00:07:14,520

and whether Helena's story is a myth,

112

00:07:14,520 --> 00:07:17,520

I've been granted an audience with an archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Church

113

00:07:17,520 --> 00:07:19,520

who maintains the site.

114

00:07:22,520 --> 00:07:24,520

It's very nice to meet you.

115

00:07:24,520 --> 00:07:25,520

Welcome to the Holy Sepulcher.

116

00:07:25,520 --> 00:07:29,520

This is one of the most spectacular rooms I think I've ever been in.

117

00:07:29,520 --> 00:07:32,520

I think when many people who've never been here

118

00:07:32,520 --> 00:07:35,520

think about the crucifixion or the tomb of Jesus,

119

00:07:35,520 --> 00:07:37,520

they picture an outdoor space.

120

00:07:37,520 --> 00:07:40,520

They picture a hill, they picture a cave.

121

00:07:40,520 --> 00:07:42,520

For a first-time person seeing it, it's very surprising.

122

00:07:42,520 --> 00:07:43,520

Yes, it's surprising.

123

00:07:43,520 --> 00:07:46,520

Do we know how long it took Helena to find the cross?

124

00:07:46,520 --> 00:07:47,520

A year, I think.

125

00:07:47,520 --> 00:07:48,520

A year of searching?

126

00:07:48,520 --> 00:07:49,520

Yes.

127

00:07:49,520 --> 00:07:52,520

And once she finds the Holy Cross, what does she do with it?

128

00:07:52,520 --> 00:07:55,520

She cut the crosses into three pieces.

129

00:07:58,520 --> 00:08:01,520

One piece is he left here in Jerusalem.

130

00:08:01,520 --> 00:08:05,520

And one part she gave to the monastery of Cyprus.

131

00:08:06,520 --> 00:08:09,520

And one part of the cross, he took it back to the Custandino.

132

00:08:10,520 --> 00:08:14,520

But did Helena really find the hill where Jesus was buried?

133

00:08:14,520 --> 00:08:17,520

I ask if there are any off-limit sections of the church.

134

00:08:17,520 --> 00:08:20,520

We have a lot of parts around the Holy Sepulcher,

135

00:08:20,520 --> 00:08:22,520

not for the public to do.

136

00:08:22,520 --> 00:08:24,520

Is it possible to see those places?

137

00:08:24,520 --> 00:08:25,520

Yes.

138

00:08:25,520 --> 00:08:28,520

To help me understand the history behind the Helena story,

139

00:08:28,520 --> 00:08:33,520

the Archbishop leads me to where she claimed to find the cross in 326 AD.

140

00:08:38,520 --> 00:08:40,520

Underneath the Holy Sepulcher,

141

00:08:40,520 --> 00:08:43,520

we wind through seldom seen ancient passages

142

00:08:43,520 --> 00:08:46,520

and secret tunnels dug into the hillside of Golgotha.

143

00:08:46,520 --> 00:08:48,520

It just goes on and on.

144

00:08:48,520 --> 00:08:51,520

Making our way to the execution site of Jesus.

145

00:08:59,520 --> 00:09:02,520

Are we underneath the crucifixion site here?

146

00:09:02,520 --> 00:09:03,520

Yes.

147

00:09:03,520 --> 00:09:07,520

You know, when you're up inside the church and you see the crucifixion site,

148

00:09:07,520 --> 00:09:10,520

it's very hard to see it as a hill.

149

00:09:10,520 --> 00:09:13,520

You don't realize the church has just been planted on top of it.

150

00:09:13,520 --> 00:09:15,520

Where did she find the cross?

151

00:09:15,520 --> 00:09:17,520

It was a little down.

152

00:09:17,520 --> 00:09:19,520

So a little bit further down the hill.

153

00:09:19,520 --> 00:09:22,520

The geology here corroborates the Helena legend.

154

00:09:22,520 --> 00:09:24,520

But what about the small piece of the cross

155

00:09:24,520 --> 00:09:27,520

that she supposedly left behind in Jerusalem?

156

00:09:29,520 --> 00:09:32,520

Well, the Archbishop has an answer for that too.

157

00:09:32,520 --> 00:09:35,520

It's right here in the church.

158

00:09:44,520 --> 00:09:47,520

In Jerusalem on the search for the true cross of Jesus Christ,

159

00:09:47,520 --> 00:09:51,520

I've been granted special access to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

160

00:09:51,520 --> 00:09:55,520

The Archbishop here is about to show me a few staggering relics.

161

00:09:59,520 --> 00:10:06,520

These crosses are made out of brass and wood,

162

00:10:06,520 --> 00:10:10,520

but the real treasure is behind a layer of embedded glass.

163

00:10:10,520 --> 00:10:13,520

Inside are small shards of what the church claims

164

00:10:13,520 --> 00:10:17,520

to be the crucifixion cross of Jesus Christ.

165

00:10:19,520 --> 00:10:21,520

These are extraordinary.

166

00:10:21,520 --> 00:10:23,520

These are pieces of the original true cross.

167

00:10:23,520 --> 00:10:24,520

Yes, of course.

168

00:10:24,520 --> 00:10:25,520

Wow.

169

00:10:25,520 --> 00:10:29,520

Have you ever tested the wood inside the cross

170

00:10:29,520 --> 00:10:32,520

to find out age or carbon dating of any kind?

171

00:10:32,520 --> 00:10:34,520

Or has it always been inside the cross?

172

00:10:34,520 --> 00:10:35,520

Always been inside.

173

00:10:35,520 --> 00:10:37,520

And would you ever have it tested?

174

00:10:37,520 --> 00:10:38,520

No.

175

00:10:38,520 --> 00:10:40,520

We believe that this is the Holy Cross.

176

00:10:40,520 --> 00:10:44,520

Like the other relics here, this is an article of faith.

177

00:10:44,520 --> 00:10:48,520

So for the church to even test it would be to undermine its power.

178

00:10:48,520 --> 00:10:51,520

Are there any samples that are not behind glass?

179

00:10:51,520 --> 00:10:53,520

Yes, we have a small part of it.

180

00:10:53,520 --> 00:10:54,520

We do.

181

00:10:54,520 --> 00:10:56,520

And is it possible to see that?

182

00:10:56,520 --> 00:10:57,520

Okay, yes.

183

00:10:57,520 --> 00:10:58,520

Thanks.

184

00:10:58,520 --> 00:10:59,520

Yeah?

185

00:11:02,520 --> 00:11:05,520

Just to be able to see these two crosses is incredible,

186

00:11:05,520 --> 00:11:07,520

but to know that there's a loose piece as well

187

00:11:07,520 --> 00:11:10,520

is really astounding.

188

00:11:15,520 --> 00:11:18,520

The archbishop produces a small container

189

00:11:18,520 --> 00:11:21,520

and reveals a fragment of holy wood.

190

00:11:21,520 --> 00:11:24,520

I'm stunned when he offers to bless me with it.

191

00:11:29,520 --> 00:11:30,520

Bishop, thank you very much.

192

00:11:30,520 --> 00:11:31,520

You're welcome.

193

00:11:31,520 --> 00:11:32,520

Good to see you.

194

00:11:32,520 --> 00:11:33,520

I do feel blessed.

195

00:11:33,520 --> 00:11:34,520

Thank you very much.

196

00:11:34,520 --> 00:11:36,520

The experience of seeing and being touched

197

00:11:36,520 --> 00:11:39,520

by a small sliver of what could be the true cross

198

00:11:39,520 --> 00:11:42,520

is an overwhelming experience.

199

00:11:42,520 --> 00:11:45,520

But these tiny pieces will never leave the church

200

00:11:45,520 --> 00:11:47,520

and can therefore never be tested.

201

00:11:47,520 --> 00:11:50,520

Writings from Helena's time describe how she discovered

202

00:11:50,520 --> 00:11:53,520

the cross and broke it up into pieces.

203

00:11:53,520 --> 00:11:56,520

In the ensuing centuries, bits of the supposed true cross

204

00:11:56,520 --> 00:12:01,520

started turning up in churches from Europe to Africa to Asia,

205

00:12:01,520 --> 00:12:05,520

including the pieces inside the church of the Holy Sepulchre.

206

00:12:05,520 --> 00:12:09,520

If they were all put together, there'd be enough wood to fill a ship,

207

00:12:09,520 --> 00:12:13,520

which means that many of these pieces can't be authentic.

208

00:12:13,520 --> 00:12:16,520

Instead, I need to look for some part of the cross

209

00:12:16,520 --> 00:12:18,520

that can be tested and dated.

210

00:12:18,520 --> 00:12:21,520

To do that, I leave Jerusalem and drive to Tel Aviv.

211

00:12:24,520 --> 00:12:27,520

If Jerusalem is serious, religious, and political,

212

00:12:27,520 --> 00:12:31,520

Tel Aviv feels playful, cosmopolitan, and carefree.

213

00:12:31,520 --> 00:12:34,520

Citizens here are less about temples and rituals

214

00:12:34,520 --> 00:12:36,520

and more about sun and sand.

215

00:12:36,520 --> 00:12:38,520

Welcome to Israel's other city.

216

00:12:38,520 --> 00:12:41,520

Tel Aviv is home to about 3.5 million people.

217

00:12:41,520 --> 00:12:46,520

In fact, nearly 40% of all Israelis call Tel Aviv home.

218

00:12:46,520 --> 00:12:48,520

Hey, hey, hello!

219

00:12:48,520 --> 00:12:50,520

Come on. No respect.

220

00:12:50,520 --> 00:12:52,520

Maybe I should have worn my speedo.

221

00:12:55,520 --> 00:12:59,520

One of the really strange things about the cross of Jesus

222

00:12:59,520 --> 00:13:01,520

when you think about it is that this is probably

223

00:13:01,520 --> 00:13:05,520

the most recognizable symbol in the world, you know?

224

00:13:05,520 --> 00:13:09,520

Each of us probably see some representation of this cross

225

00:13:09,520 --> 00:13:12,520

every single day on TV, on a sign, on a church,

226

00:13:12,520 --> 00:13:15,520

and yet what do we really know about this cross?

227

00:13:15,520 --> 00:13:18,520

Do we know how big it was? Do we know when it was made of?

228

00:13:18,520 --> 00:13:20,520

Do we know where it went?

229

00:13:20,520 --> 00:13:23,520

I'm headed now to meet with an expert who might know more than anyone

230

00:13:23,520 --> 00:13:25,520

about the true cross of Jesus.

231

00:13:27,520 --> 00:13:29,520

I'm in town to meet with Israel Herskovitz,

232

00:13:29,520 --> 00:13:31,520

a professor of anatomy and anthropology.

233

00:13:31,520 --> 00:13:33,520

He's an expert on crucifixions

234

00:13:33,520 --> 00:13:36,520

and believes the reality behind the true cross

235

00:13:36,520 --> 00:13:39,520

is very different than the story we've been told.

236

00:13:39,520 --> 00:13:41,520

In thinking about the crucifixion,

237

00:13:41,520 --> 00:13:44,520

the thing that just in researching it that really surprised me

238

00:13:44,520 --> 00:13:48,520

is how little evidence there is for Roman crucifixions in general.

239

00:13:48,520 --> 00:13:52,520

There is actually no clear description of crucifixion

240

00:13:52,520 --> 00:13:53,520

in any historical record.

241

00:13:53,520 --> 00:13:56,520

The Romans were crucifying a lot of people.

242

00:13:56,520 --> 00:13:57,520

Millions.

243

00:13:57,520 --> 00:13:59,520

Much of what we know about crucifixions

244

00:13:59,520 --> 00:14:02,520

comes from artists' interpretations,

245

00:14:02,520 --> 00:14:05,520

many of which were painted centuries after the death of Jesus.

246

00:14:05,520 --> 00:14:07,520

When it comes to the foot,

247

00:14:07,520 --> 00:14:11,520

usually what you see is one foot on top of the other.

248

00:14:11,520 --> 00:14:13,520

The nail is coming from here between those two,

249

00:14:13,520 --> 00:14:15,520

a metatarsal bone.

250

00:14:15,520 --> 00:14:17,520

I mean almost every painting of Jesus shows that.

251

00:14:17,520 --> 00:14:18,520

Every painting.

252

00:14:18,520 --> 00:14:19,520

Every painting.

253

00:14:19,520 --> 00:14:20,520

There's just one problem.

254

00:14:20,520 --> 00:14:21,520

It doesn't work.

255

00:14:21,520 --> 00:14:23,520

Nails and wrists, hands or feet

256

00:14:23,520 --> 00:14:25,520

can barely support a body

257

00:14:25,520 --> 00:14:27,520

and victims quickly pass out.

258

00:14:27,520 --> 00:14:30,520

This would have been the type of crucifixion that it shaped.

259

00:14:30,520 --> 00:14:33,520

Then people would lose consciousness in 25, 30 minutes

260

00:14:33,520 --> 00:14:36,520

against the philosophy of crucifixion.

261

00:14:36,520 --> 00:14:38,520

The whole point is that it's supposed to last a long time.

262

00:14:38,520 --> 00:14:41,520

The whole point was to last it as long as possible.

263

00:14:41,520 --> 00:14:43,520

Also, huge vertical crosses

264

00:14:43,520 --> 00:14:45,520

would have been difficult to hoist up,

265

00:14:45,520 --> 00:14:47,520

especially when you consider that Romans

266

00:14:47,520 --> 00:14:50,520

were crucifying as many as 500 people a day.

267

00:14:50,520 --> 00:14:54,520

What it tells us is that the cross was not a T-shaped cross.

268

00:14:54,520 --> 00:14:56,520

The cross was an X-shaped cross.

269

00:14:58,520 --> 00:15:00,520

This is a dramatic revelation.

270

00:15:00,520 --> 00:15:02,520

If the Romans nailed or tied people

271

00:15:02,520 --> 00:15:04,520

to simpler X-shaped crosses,

272

00:15:04,520 --> 00:15:06,520

as many historians now contend,

273

00:15:06,520 --> 00:15:08,520

that means the traditional T-shape

274

00:15:08,520 --> 00:15:11,520

displayed in every Christian church could be wrong.

275

00:15:11,520 --> 00:15:14,520

It also means that I may be looking for remnants of an artifact

276

00:15:14,520 --> 00:15:17,520

with a totally different shape than I anticipated.

277

00:15:17,520 --> 00:15:19,520

Is there any evidence of a crucifixion?

278

00:15:19,520 --> 00:15:22,520

We have only one good evidence for crucifixion.

279

00:15:22,520 --> 00:15:24,520

Not just from Israel, but globally.

280

00:15:24,520 --> 00:15:25,520

One.

281

00:15:25,520 --> 00:15:26,520

Or only one.

282

00:15:26,520 --> 00:15:27,520

Okay, what is that?

283

00:15:27,520 --> 00:15:31,520

I think this is one of the most important artifacts

284

00:15:31,520 --> 00:15:32,520

ever found in the world.

285

00:15:37,520 --> 00:15:40,520

A nail going through the heel bone.

286

00:15:41,520 --> 00:15:44,520

This is the only firm evidence of form and crucifixion.

287

00:15:44,520 --> 00:15:46,520

That is amazing.

288

00:15:46,520 --> 00:15:50,520

This specimen is from the time of Jesus.

289

00:15:50,520 --> 00:15:52,520

This heel bone is a big deal.

290

00:15:52,520 --> 00:15:56,520

It is the only physical remnant of a Roman crucifixion.

291

00:15:56,520 --> 00:15:59,520

And the nail's location in the heel suggests the foot

292

00:15:59,520 --> 00:16:01,520

was perched in an open position

293

00:16:01,520 --> 00:16:03,520

and likely on an X-shaped cross.

294

00:16:04,520 --> 00:16:07,520

We have a piece of foot between the nail and the heel bone.

295

00:16:07,520 --> 00:16:08,520

That's wood.

296

00:16:08,520 --> 00:16:10,520

What type of wood?

297

00:16:10,520 --> 00:16:11,520

It's olive wood.

298

00:16:11,520 --> 00:16:12,520

It's olive wood.

299

00:16:12,520 --> 00:16:15,520

And you know that olive wood, according to Christian tradition,

300

00:16:15,520 --> 00:16:18,520

olive wood was used for making the cross for Jesus.

301

00:16:19,520 --> 00:16:23,520

I've just come face to face with a legit 2,000-year-old piece

302

00:16:23,520 --> 00:16:25,520

of crucifixion wood.

303

00:16:25,520 --> 00:16:28,520

That gives me hope that historical fragments of the true cross

304

00:16:28,520 --> 00:16:31,520

of Jesus could also have survived to the present day.

305

00:16:31,520 --> 00:16:33,520

Well, thank you so much for showing it to me.

306

00:16:33,520 --> 00:16:34,520

I really appreciate it.

307

00:16:34,520 --> 00:16:35,520

Pleasure.

308

00:16:37,520 --> 00:16:40,520

Armed with new knowledge, I set out to find a piece of the wood

309

00:16:40,520 --> 00:16:44,520

that both fits the Helena legend and can be scientifically tested.

310

00:16:44,520 --> 00:16:46,520

And I just caught wind of a promising discovery

311

00:16:46,520 --> 00:16:49,520

made by a restoration team at a church in Bethlehem.

312

00:16:49,520 --> 00:16:52,520

If that name sounds familiar, that's because it's also

313

00:16:52,520 --> 00:16:54,520

the birthplace of Jesus.

314

00:16:54,520 --> 00:16:58,520

To check it out, I'm headed for Israel's West Bank territory.

315

00:16:58,520 --> 00:16:59,520

North.

316

00:17:00,520 --> 00:17:02,520

After a few military checkpoints,

317

00:17:02,520 --> 00:17:05,520

keep driving, just keep driving.

318

00:17:06,520 --> 00:17:09,520

I arrive in the ancient city of Bethlehem.

319

00:17:14,520 --> 00:17:17,520

Oh, this old town of Bethlehem.

320

00:17:25,520 --> 00:17:27,520

Why can't I think of any of the other words to that song?

321

00:17:27,520 --> 00:17:32,520

Not a lot of ox or sheep or wise men or heavenly angels floating around,

322

00:17:32,520 --> 00:17:35,520

but it does have a manger.

323

00:17:35,520 --> 00:17:38,520

In the middle of town is the Church of the Nativity.

324

00:17:44,520 --> 00:17:47,520

Like the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, Helena commissioned this church

325

00:17:47,520 --> 00:17:49,520

during her trip to the Holy Land.

326

00:17:49,520 --> 00:17:52,520

Duck through a low arch and you'll find yourself in the manger

327

00:17:52,520 --> 00:17:55,520

that most of us know from Christmas carols.

328

00:17:55,520 --> 00:17:58,520

And a recent discovery in this building has me wondering

329

00:17:58,520 --> 00:18:01,520

if there's a hidden link to the true cross here as well.

330

00:18:02,520 --> 00:18:03,520

I'm Josh.

331

00:18:03,520 --> 00:18:04,520

I'm Paul.

332

00:18:04,520 --> 00:18:06,520

Nice to meet you as well. Thanks for seeing me. I really appreciate it.

333

00:18:06,520 --> 00:18:10,520

Paolo Guazzini is part of a team restoring the Nativity's roof

334

00:18:10,520 --> 00:18:12,520

and interior frescoes.

335

00:18:12,520 --> 00:18:13,520

Is this for me?

336

00:18:13,520 --> 00:18:14,520

Please.

337

00:18:14,520 --> 00:18:15,520

It's dangerous in here.

338

00:18:15,520 --> 00:18:16,520

A little bit.

339

00:18:16,520 --> 00:18:17,520

Alright, I like a little bit dangerous.

340

00:18:17,520 --> 00:18:18,520

Okay.

341

00:18:18,520 --> 00:18:19,520

Let's go.

342

00:18:20,520 --> 00:18:23,520

Parts of this building are nearly 2,000 years old.

343

00:18:23,520 --> 00:18:25,520

It's a layer cake of history.

344

00:18:25,520 --> 00:18:28,520

And Paolo's team discovered something incredible

345

00:18:28,520 --> 00:18:30,520

beneath years of dirt and dust.

346

00:18:32,520 --> 00:18:33,520

This was covered.

347

00:18:33,520 --> 00:18:35,520

It was covered by plaster.

348

00:18:35,520 --> 00:18:36,520

Really?

349

00:18:36,520 --> 00:18:38,520

The entire surface.

350

00:18:38,520 --> 00:18:40,520

And so what is the angel doing in the mosaic?

351

00:18:40,520 --> 00:18:43,520

The angel are moving toward the cross.

352

00:18:43,520 --> 00:18:45,520

The true cross.

353

00:18:45,520 --> 00:18:46,520

That's right.

354

00:18:46,520 --> 00:18:47,520

Alright, here we go.

355

00:18:48,520 --> 00:18:51,520

It's hard not to take the symbolism personally.

356

00:18:51,520 --> 00:18:53,520

I want to be moving toward the cross too.

357

00:18:53,520 --> 00:18:55,520

But Paolo found one more thing

358

00:18:55,520 --> 00:18:58,520

that makes me think we're not too far off.

359

00:18:58,520 --> 00:19:00,520

This is very, very interesting.

360

00:19:00,520 --> 00:19:03,520

This is what we found below the plaster.

361

00:19:03,520 --> 00:19:05,520

Three crosses.

362

00:19:06,520 --> 00:19:07,520

Incredible.

363

00:19:17,520 --> 00:19:20,520

I'm inside the church of the Nativity in Bethlehem,

364

00:19:20,520 --> 00:19:22,520

staring at a mysterious cross symbol

365

00:19:22,520 --> 00:19:24,520

a restoration team has just discovered.

366

00:19:25,520 --> 00:19:27,520

This is very, very interesting.

367

00:19:27,520 --> 00:19:30,520

This is what we found below the plaster.

368

00:19:31,520 --> 00:19:32,520

Three crosses.

369

00:19:33,520 --> 00:19:35,520

How old do we think these bricks are?

370

00:19:35,520 --> 00:19:37,520

These are cruises at the area.

371

00:19:39,520 --> 00:19:40,520

I'm not sure.

372

00:19:40,520 --> 00:19:41,520

I don't know.

373

00:19:41,520 --> 00:19:42,520

I don't know.

374

00:19:42,520 --> 00:19:43,520

I don't know.

375

00:19:43,520 --> 00:19:44,520

I don't know.

376

00:19:44,520 --> 00:19:45,520

I'm not sure.

377

00:19:45,520 --> 00:19:47,520

I don't know.

378

00:19:50,520 --> 00:19:52,520

I'm not sure.

379

00:19:56,520 --> 00:19:57,520

Oh, they're really cool.

380

00:19:57,520 --> 00:19:59,520

These symbols were underneath the plaster layer.

381

00:19:59,520 --> 00:20:00,520

That's right.

382

00:20:00,520 --> 00:20:02,520

So whoever took the time to carve these,

383

00:20:02,520 --> 00:20:04,520

they knew they were going to be hidden.

384

00:20:04,520 --> 00:20:05,520

Right, right.

385

00:20:05,520 --> 00:20:07,520

Could it be that

386

00:20:07,520 --> 00:20:09,520

the three crosses represent Jesus

387

00:20:09,520 --> 00:20:11,520

and the two thieves who were crucified with him?

388

00:20:11,520 --> 00:20:13,520

We are waiting for an answer

389

00:20:13,520 --> 00:20:17,520

I mean, it is possible that this was meant to be a marker for something.

390

00:20:17,520 --> 00:20:18,520

Yes.

391

00:20:18,520 --> 00:20:21,520

Do you think it's possible there could be something behind this wall?

392

00:20:21,520 --> 00:20:22,520

Could be.

393

00:20:22,520 --> 00:20:27,520

In a church as venerated as this, one can't just smash through a crusader-era wall.

394

00:20:27,520 --> 00:20:33,520

But in time, archeologists may scan the wall to see what, if anything, is hidden behind it.

395

00:20:33,520 --> 00:20:35,520

So watch this space.

396

00:20:35,520 --> 00:20:36,520

Keep me posted.

397

00:20:36,520 --> 00:20:37,520

Let me know if you find anything.

398

00:20:37,520 --> 00:20:38,520

Of course.

399

00:20:38,520 --> 00:20:39,520

I will tell you.

400

00:20:39,520 --> 00:20:40,520

I'll tell you.

401

00:20:40,520 --> 00:20:41,520

Especially anything cross-shaped.

402

00:20:41,520 --> 00:20:42,520

Yeah.

403

00:20:42,520 --> 00:20:47,520

The Church of the Nativity remains one of Helena's lasting legacies.

404

00:20:47,520 --> 00:20:51,520

But her story and the journey of the True Cross doesn't end here.

405

00:20:51,520 --> 00:20:58,520

After her tour of the Holy Land, Helena sends a large piece of the True Cross to the city named for her son,

406

00:20:58,520 --> 00:21:01,520

the Christian Emperor of Rome, Constantine.

407

00:21:01,520 --> 00:21:08,520

So I'm flying 750 miles north to Constantinople, or as we know it today, Istanbul.

408

00:21:12,520 --> 00:21:18,520

Home to 14 million, it is the largest city in Turkey, an urban jewel.

409

00:21:18,520 --> 00:21:22,520

The ancient and modern here don't blend so much as collide.

410

00:21:22,520 --> 00:21:27,520

Traffic spills down antiquated streets, shoppers clog historic bazaars,

411

00:21:27,520 --> 00:21:31,520

and regal mosques loom quietly above the hustle and bustle.

412

00:21:32,520 --> 00:21:37,520

This is the Bosphorus, this channel of water that cleaves Istanbul into two pieces.

413

00:21:37,520 --> 00:21:40,520

On one side Europe, on the other side Asia.

414

00:21:40,520 --> 00:21:49,520

And it is this division, this piece of real estate that has made Istanbul one of the most valuable and strategic pieces of real estate in history.

415

00:21:54,520 --> 00:22:01,520

And in my experience, the mixture of unique geography, rich cultures, and tumultuous history can only mean one thing.

416

00:22:01,520 --> 00:22:03,520

Seriously good food.

417

00:22:03,520 --> 00:22:08,520

I start things off with a regional specialty described perfectly by its name.

418

00:22:08,520 --> 00:22:09,520

Church Delight.

419

00:22:13,520 --> 00:22:15,520

This is effectively sugar covered in sugar.

420

00:22:17,520 --> 00:22:18,520

Oh.

421

00:22:20,520 --> 00:22:21,520

If you stand here, they just feed you.

422

00:22:21,520 --> 00:22:22,520

Yeah, it is this.

423

00:22:23,520 --> 00:22:27,520

I may have eaten my dessert first, but that doesn't mean I'm full.

424

00:22:27,520 --> 00:22:28,520

Mussels.

425

00:22:28,520 --> 00:22:31,520

This is pickles in pickle juice.

426

00:22:32,520 --> 00:22:33,520

Oh, that's good.

427

00:22:34,520 --> 00:22:35,520

Boiling hot mini-donut?

428

00:22:35,520 --> 00:22:36,520

Yep, that's happening.

429

00:22:37,520 --> 00:22:39,520

Of course, I'll need some coffee to top off those donuts.

430

00:22:39,520 --> 00:22:43,520

And for my money, no one does that better than the Turks.

431

00:22:44,520 --> 00:22:47,520

Turkish coffee, one of the last grade inefficient beverages of the world.

432

00:22:47,520 --> 00:22:50,520

Miniature copper pots, burning hot cinders.

433

00:22:50,520 --> 00:22:57,520

At an age when you can get a cup of coffee made by a machine, it's completely illogical and unbelievably delicious.

434

00:23:02,520 --> 00:23:03,520

So good.

435

00:23:03,520 --> 00:23:04,520

Hot.

436

00:23:04,520 --> 00:23:05,520

Thick.

437

00:23:05,520 --> 00:23:06,520

Strong.

438

00:23:06,520 --> 00:23:13,520

With caffeine and sugar pulsing through my veins, I've got more than enough energy to get back to chasing the true cross's path through Istanbul.

439

00:23:15,520 --> 00:23:22,520

At first blush, it may not make much sense to be looking for the most deeply revered Christian relic in a thoroughly Muslim country.

440

00:23:22,520 --> 00:23:25,520

But this city wasn't always brimming with mosques.

441

00:23:25,520 --> 00:23:28,520

It was once a second capital for a Christian Rome.

442

00:23:32,520 --> 00:23:39,520

And around the year 330 AD, the Roman emperor Constantine makes a historic decision to establish a new capital in the east.

443

00:23:39,520 --> 00:23:41,520

And he chooses this city.

444

00:23:41,520 --> 00:23:45,520

People just started calling the city after the emperor, and Constantinople was born.

445

00:23:48,520 --> 00:23:50,520

A lot of old Constantinople is still here.

446

00:23:50,520 --> 00:23:52,520

It's just hiding underground.

447

00:23:57,520 --> 00:23:59,520

This is the Basilica cistern.

448

00:23:59,520 --> 00:24:03,520

A magnificent forest of stone columns in perpetual darkness.

449

00:24:03,520 --> 00:24:07,520

A place where Medusa heads were used as decorations.

450

00:24:07,520 --> 00:24:12,520

1500 years ago, these caverns supplied Constantinople with drinking water.

451

00:24:12,520 --> 00:24:18,520

And throughout the city, there are stairways and passages that lead down to other ruins of this Christian capital.

452

00:24:20,520 --> 00:24:23,520

But the biggest relic from Constantinople is sitting in plain sight.

453

00:24:26,520 --> 00:24:28,520

The Hagia Sophia.

454

00:24:29,520 --> 00:24:35,520

Built in the 6th century, it stood for a thousand years as the largest cathedral in the world.

455

00:24:35,520 --> 00:24:41,520

In 1204, a historian wrote that he saw two pieces of the true cross here as thick as a man's leg.

456

00:24:41,520 --> 00:24:47,520

Then, in 1453, the Ottomans took over and brought Islamic rule.

457

00:24:47,520 --> 00:24:54,520

Rather than level the place, they covered up the Christian imagery with stunning Arabic shields and converted it into a mosque.

458

00:24:54,520 --> 00:25:00,520

Some believe priests may have hidden the most important Christian relic of the Hagia Sophia somewhere nearby.

459

00:25:00,520 --> 00:25:03,520

And one historian thinks he knows where.

460

00:25:07,520 --> 00:25:09,520

Hello, how are you?

461

00:25:09,520 --> 00:25:11,520

Good, nice to meet you.

462

00:25:11,520 --> 00:25:15,520

Goksal Gulunsoy has been exploring Istanbul's underworld for years.

463

00:25:15,520 --> 00:25:19,520

In terms of things like the true cross, in terms of holy relics,

464

00:25:19,520 --> 00:25:24,520

do you think it's possible that the cross or pieces of it survived today here in the city still?

465

00:25:24,520 --> 00:25:27,520

I will share a secret with you.

466

00:25:27,520 --> 00:25:31,520

There could be biblical relics hidden in passageways right beneath us.

467

00:25:31,520 --> 00:25:32,520

Underneath us?

468

00:25:32,520 --> 00:25:33,520

Yes, underneath us.

469

00:25:33,520 --> 00:25:38,520

Goksal explains that we are walking on a crossroad between the three most important structures in old Constantinople.

470

00:25:40,520 --> 00:25:44,520

Behind us is the Hagia Sophia, the center of religious power.

471

00:25:44,520 --> 00:25:47,520

Right next door stood the Byzantine Emperor's Palace.

472

00:25:47,520 --> 00:25:49,520

Sadly, there's nothing left of it today.

473

00:25:49,520 --> 00:25:57,520

And just beneath us lie the remains of the Hippodrome, a horse racing stadium big enough to hold 100,000 spectators.

474

00:25:59,520 --> 00:26:04,520

When the emperor visited the horse races or the cathedral, no one ever spotted him arriving.

475

00:26:05,520 --> 00:26:12,520

Goksal believes the emperor must have traveled between these three important buildings by way of secret underground passages.

476

00:26:13,520 --> 00:26:14,520

So there must be tunnels.

477

00:26:14,520 --> 00:26:15,520

Yes.

478

00:26:15,520 --> 00:26:16,520

Do you think that it can be reached?

479

00:26:16,520 --> 00:26:18,520

Yeah, I'm going to extend, Mr.

480

00:26:18,520 --> 00:26:19,520

Do I want to see it?

481

00:26:19,520 --> 00:26:20,520

Yeah, go ahead and extend.

482

00:26:20,520 --> 00:26:21,520

Yeah, I want to see it.

483

00:26:21,520 --> 00:26:22,520

Okay, I'll go ahead and give it to him.

484

00:26:22,520 --> 00:26:23,520

Please?

485

00:26:23,520 --> 00:26:24,520

Yeah.

486

00:26:25,520 --> 00:26:32,520

Goksal believes that remnants of the Holy Cross are hidden here, and he introduces us to his team conducting the investigation.

487

00:26:33,520 --> 00:26:34,520

How are you? Nice to meet you guys.

488

00:26:34,520 --> 00:26:35,520

So this is it?

489

00:26:35,520 --> 00:26:36,520

Yes.

490

00:26:36,520 --> 00:26:38,520

So what is this door?

491

00:26:38,520 --> 00:26:41,520

The door is made for the front.

492

00:26:41,520 --> 00:26:48,520

This part of the building was used for keeping the horses as stables, you know?

493

00:26:48,520 --> 00:26:49,520

Right. Is it safe?

494

00:26:54,520 --> 00:26:56,520

The silence is telling.

495

00:26:57,520 --> 00:27:00,520

Everybody got very quiet there when I asked if it was safe. What are the conditions like?

496

00:27:05,520 --> 00:27:06,520

I got it. Not safe.

497

00:27:07,520 --> 00:27:08,520

Not safe is what that's called.

498

00:27:08,520 --> 00:27:13,520

We waste no time and suit up in caving gear.

499

00:27:13,520 --> 00:27:22,520

We also have paramedics on standby, and they give us emergency oxygen, since the air beneath the hippodrome is potentially toxic.

500

00:27:27,520 --> 00:27:28,520

Whoa.

501

00:27:28,520 --> 00:27:29,520

Okay.

502

00:27:29,520 --> 00:27:30,520

Okay, here we go.

503

00:27:39,520 --> 00:27:47,520

I've joined explorers in the city of Istanbul, searching for evidence of the true cross of Jesus.

504

00:27:47,520 --> 00:27:48,520

Here we go.

505

00:27:48,520 --> 00:27:57,520

We're about to descend beneath the ancient chariot racing arena known as the hippodrome, where researcher Goksal Gulensoy believes precious relics are hidden.

506

00:27:57,520 --> 00:27:58,520

Whoa.

507

00:28:00,520 --> 00:28:01,520

Okay, under the hippodrome.

508

00:28:01,520 --> 00:28:02,520

Yes.

509

00:28:02,520 --> 00:28:04,520

Look at the size of this place.

510

00:28:05,520 --> 00:28:06,520

Yeah.

511

00:28:07,520 --> 00:28:08,520

A little wet.

512

00:28:10,520 --> 00:28:12,520

The question is how deep is that water?

513

00:28:13,520 --> 00:28:14,520

Maybe knee-deep.

514

00:28:14,520 --> 00:28:15,520

Okay.

515

00:28:15,520 --> 00:28:16,520

Let's give it a whirl.

516

00:28:26,520 --> 00:28:30,520

Goksal and his team have already mapped part of the underside of the hippodrome.

517

00:28:30,520 --> 00:28:35,520

We're heading along the curved outer wall toward the stables and tunnels they've never explored.

518

00:28:36,520 --> 00:28:49,520

This water is maybe the dirtiest water I've ever been in.

519

00:28:49,520 --> 00:28:55,520

It's literally parts of dead birds, all sorts of nastiness everywhere you step.

520

00:28:55,520 --> 00:29:08,520

So we have these little rooms that offshoot here, and they would have been stables, I guess, originally, for horses underneath the hippodrome.

521

00:29:09,520 --> 00:29:12,520

As we check out each stable, it appears they're all dead ends.

522

00:29:12,520 --> 00:29:16,520

So we have to look to see if any of these connect out to any passages.

523

00:29:25,520 --> 00:29:30,520

Just as I'm getting the hang of walking in liquid bird flu, we hit a wall, literally.

524

00:29:32,520 --> 00:29:35,520

Thankfully, Goksal and his team are undeterred.

525

00:29:36,520 --> 00:29:38,520

So I think I got this.

526

00:29:38,520 --> 00:29:39,520

Oop.

527

00:29:39,520 --> 00:29:40,520

Okay.

528

00:29:40,520 --> 00:29:46,520

They rig up a makeshift ladder, attach it to something unsafe looking, and I head up and over.

529

00:29:50,520 --> 00:29:52,520

Right, I'm done.

530

00:29:52,520 --> 00:29:53,520

Okay, coming down.

531

00:29:53,520 --> 00:29:55,520

The world's sketchy ladder.

532

00:29:55,520 --> 00:29:56,520

Check.

533

00:30:01,520 --> 00:30:02,520

Okay.

534

00:30:02,520 --> 00:30:04,520

Okay, I'm down.

535

00:30:04,520 --> 00:30:09,520

As I step back into the muck on the other side, something isn't quite right.

536

00:30:09,520 --> 00:30:11,520

The other part of the tunnel is the second part.

537

00:30:11,520 --> 00:30:12,520

Yeah.

538

00:30:12,520 --> 00:30:15,520

The first part of the tunnel is the worst part.

539

00:30:15,520 --> 00:30:16,520

Bad, yeah.

540

00:30:16,520 --> 00:30:17,520

You can taste it almost.

541

00:30:17,520 --> 00:30:22,520

It's like, I don't know if it's gas or a chemical or something, but it's bad.

542

00:30:23,520 --> 00:30:24,520

We should use masks.

543

00:30:24,520 --> 00:30:25,520

Masks, yes.

544

00:30:25,520 --> 00:30:26,520

Okay.

545

00:30:29,520 --> 00:30:31,520

Okay, here we go.

546

00:30:32,520 --> 00:30:41,520

This seems like the least fitting place in the world for the true cross, but these passages were once frequented by Christians and perhaps even emperors hiding from the Ottomans.

547

00:30:44,520 --> 00:30:46,520

Whoa, it's a little deeper here.

548

00:30:46,520 --> 00:30:47,520

Yes.

549

00:30:48,520 --> 00:30:54,520

Eventually, we reach the end of the curved wall, but haven't found any new passages.

550

00:30:54,520 --> 00:30:57,520

So we head back to explore the other direction.

551

00:30:57,520 --> 00:31:03,520

This area is promising because it's closer to the Isis of Fia and the emperors' palace.

552

00:31:04,520 --> 00:31:06,520

This old piping here.

553

00:31:06,520 --> 00:31:07,520

Yep.

554

00:31:07,520 --> 00:31:08,520

Whoa.

555

00:31:09,520 --> 00:31:10,520

Jesus.

556

00:31:12,520 --> 00:31:14,520

Passageway of some kind.

557

00:31:14,520 --> 00:31:16,520

What was this originally, do you think?

558

00:31:17,520 --> 00:31:19,520

The emperors and the priests, the important people.

559

00:31:19,520 --> 00:31:25,520

It might be an escaped tunnel for the important person, like the emperor or his family.

560

00:31:25,520 --> 00:31:31,520

If we're looking for holy artifacts, tunnels like this that would have been obscured from the general population are a great place to look.

561

00:31:32,520 --> 00:31:34,520

Do you want to go first or second?

562

00:31:35,520 --> 00:31:52,520

With every step, I'm feeling a little wary that we're getting farther from the only known exit and deeper into a very narrow, very dark, thousand-year-old passage.

563

00:31:54,520 --> 00:31:56,520

It never ends, it just goes and goes and goes.

564

00:31:57,520 --> 00:31:58,520

Follow me.

565

00:31:58,520 --> 00:31:59,520

Okay.

566

00:31:59,520 --> 00:32:00,520

After you.

567

00:32:04,520 --> 00:32:10,520

We're looking for some kind of opening in the ceiling, in the walls or in the floor, and then we get a break.

568

00:32:10,520 --> 00:32:13,520

What's he got?

569

00:32:13,520 --> 00:32:16,520

Do you see something?

570

00:32:16,520 --> 00:32:17,520

Yeah.

571

00:32:24,520 --> 00:32:31,520

I'm in Istanbul, several stories below street level, following a team of researchers inside the ancient hippodrome.

572

00:32:31,520 --> 00:32:36,520

We're searching for a lost passageway that might lead us to the true cross of Jesus.

573

00:32:37,520 --> 00:32:39,520

There's a small road on the left.

574

00:32:39,520 --> 00:32:40,520

There it is.

575

00:32:40,520 --> 00:32:41,520

What's he got?

576

00:32:42,520 --> 00:32:43,520

You see something?

577

00:32:43,520 --> 00:32:46,520

There's another room.

578

00:32:47,520 --> 00:32:48,520

Can you get down into it?

579

00:32:48,520 --> 00:32:49,520

Yeah.

580

00:32:50,520 --> 00:32:52,520

Let's see what's there.

581

00:32:56,520 --> 00:32:58,520

Before I can squeeze down to reach Goksel,

582

00:32:58,520 --> 00:32:59,520

Oh man, that's tight.

583

00:32:59,520 --> 00:33:03,520

it appears that he's made another find, a tiny opening in a side wall.

584

00:33:03,520 --> 00:33:05,520

It's a clean breeze coming through the hole.

585

00:33:05,520 --> 00:33:07,520

The air's colder here, yeah?

586

00:33:07,520 --> 00:33:08,520

Yeah.

587

00:33:08,520 --> 00:33:09,520

Yeah, it's colder.

588

00:33:09,520 --> 00:33:11,520

Like a room.

589

00:33:11,520 --> 00:33:13,520

Room, yes.

590

00:33:13,520 --> 00:33:14,520

Can we see into it?

591

00:33:16,520 --> 00:33:22,520

Unfortunately, the hole is too small to see through, and widening it could trigger a collapse.

592

00:33:22,520 --> 00:33:25,520

So we decide to rig a makeshift probe.

593

00:33:25,520 --> 00:33:28,520

This tiny camera might just give us a peek inside.

594

00:33:30,520 --> 00:33:31,520

Whoa!

595

00:33:31,520 --> 00:33:33,520

This connects through to a bigger space.

596

00:33:35,520 --> 00:33:37,520

There's definitely a chamber back there.

597

00:33:37,520 --> 00:33:39,520

It's flooded and see the waterline.

598

00:33:39,520 --> 00:33:41,520

It's hard to tell, it might go on underneath there.

599

00:33:42,520 --> 00:33:44,520

It's silted up, but I think it continues.

600

00:33:46,520 --> 00:33:48,520

You've got an unexplored room back there.

601

00:33:48,520 --> 00:33:50,520

Unexplored tunnel.

602

00:33:50,520 --> 00:33:51,520

Next time?

603

00:33:51,520 --> 00:33:54,520

Yeah, you bring the demolition equipment.

604

00:33:54,520 --> 00:33:55,520

Okay.

605

00:33:55,520 --> 00:33:56,520

Okay, hey.

606

00:33:56,520 --> 00:33:57,520

I'm waiting.

607

00:33:57,520 --> 00:33:59,520

That's absolutely incredible.

608

00:33:59,520 --> 00:34:00,520

Okay.

609

00:34:00,520 --> 00:34:03,520

Nobody's been back there for a thousand years probably.

610

00:34:03,520 --> 00:34:09,520

We've officially discovered a never-before-documented chamber inside Istanbul's hippodrome.

611

00:34:09,520 --> 00:34:13,520

But it will take months, or perhaps even years, to excavate our find.

612

00:34:13,520 --> 00:34:14,520

Hey, great job.

613

00:34:14,520 --> 00:34:15,520

Okay.

614

00:34:15,520 --> 00:34:16,520

Oh man.

615

00:34:16,520 --> 00:34:18,520

We're alive!

616

00:34:22,520 --> 00:34:28,520

Only time will tell if the tunnels beneath the hippodrome contain holy relics like the True Cross.

617

00:34:28,520 --> 00:34:34,520

And historic sources reveal that smaller fragments of the cross were splintered off in Istanbul

618

00:34:34,520 --> 00:34:38,520

to help establish new churches and spread Christianity.

619

00:34:38,520 --> 00:34:43,520

In 2013, an archaeologist leading a dig at a church in a small Turkish town

620

00:34:43,520 --> 00:34:47,520

made a monumental discovery connected to the True Cross.

621

00:34:48,520 --> 00:34:56,520

To find out more, I'm headed to Sinop, a town located on the Turkish coast, 300 miles northeast of Istanbul.

622

00:35:03,520 --> 00:35:05,520

Welcome to the town of Sinop.

623

00:35:05,520 --> 00:35:09,520

This is northern Turkey, as far north as you can get along the edge of the Black Sea.

624

00:35:09,520 --> 00:35:13,520

2,500 years ago, this was a Greek colony.

625

00:35:13,520 --> 00:35:17,520

After that, it was conquered by the Romans, then became part of the Byzantine Empire,

626

00:35:17,520 --> 00:35:20,520

and then the Ottomans, the Turks, and so on and so on.

627

00:35:20,520 --> 00:35:25,520

On paper, it might seem like kind of a weird place to look for the True Cross of Jesus,

628

00:35:25,520 --> 00:35:30,520

and it would be, except that just recently archaeologists here made an awesome discovery.

629

00:35:37,520 --> 00:35:41,520

On the outskirts of town, I meet with archaeologist Gulgun Karaglo.

630

00:35:41,520 --> 00:35:46,520

Her and her team have uncovered the remains of the 1400-year-old Balatlar Church.

631

00:35:50,520 --> 00:35:56,520

There's not one, but three cemeteries here, spanning more than a thousand years of history.

632

00:35:57,520 --> 00:36:01,520

Wow, really impressive site. It's huge.

633

00:36:01,520 --> 00:36:04,520

So you've been working here since when?

634

00:36:05,520 --> 00:36:08,520

They start the excavations in 2010.

635

00:36:10,520 --> 00:36:13,520

After several years of digging, Gulgun unearthed this.

636

00:36:15,520 --> 00:36:22,520

The corner of a stone box bearing a crucifix symbol that may have been used to hold a significant Biblical relic.

637

00:36:22,520 --> 00:36:29,520

The find made news around the world, since many believed a piece of the True Cross could be close at hand.

638

00:36:29,520 --> 00:36:33,520

So let's talk about this box that you discovered here. Can you show me where you found it?

639

00:36:33,520 --> 00:36:35,520

I'll take you back here.

640

00:36:42,520 --> 00:36:46,520

As we make our way to the back of the site, we're walking further back in time.

641

00:36:46,520 --> 00:36:49,520

Finally, we arrive at the oldest structure here.

642

00:36:53,520 --> 00:36:56,520

So this is where this box was found.

643

00:36:56,520 --> 00:37:00,520

So other than the fragment of the relic box that you find anything else in the pit.

644

00:37:01,520 --> 00:37:05,520

Nothing, but we have recently found something pretty incredible nearby.

645

00:37:17,520 --> 00:37:22,520

This is incredible. This is a burial obviously from what year do we think, roughly?

646

00:37:22,520 --> 00:37:24,520

It's the 7th century.

647

00:37:24,520 --> 00:37:26,520

7th century. God, look at that. That is something else.

648

00:37:27,520 --> 00:37:34,520

This is a big lead, a prominent grave located near the spot where the mysterious stone fragment was found.

649

00:37:34,520 --> 00:37:37,520

And best of all, we're going to excavate it right now.

650

00:37:46,520 --> 00:37:49,520

It can be a kafata suvar bro. There's a second skull.

651

00:37:50,520 --> 00:37:51,520

Look at that.

652

00:37:54,520 --> 00:37:56,520

And this is not from the same skull as this?

653

00:37:56,520 --> 00:37:57,520

No.

654

00:37:57,520 --> 00:37:58,520

Look at that.

655

00:37:59,520 --> 00:38:01,520

How many people do you think are buried here?

656

00:38:01,520 --> 00:38:02,520

Four people.

657

00:38:02,520 --> 00:38:04,520

Four? That is incredible.

658

00:38:05,520 --> 00:38:07,520

We continue excavating a family of four.

659

00:38:07,520 --> 00:38:10,520

But just as things are getting really interesting.

660

00:38:11,520 --> 00:38:13,520

Guys, we have to stop.

661

00:38:13,520 --> 00:38:14,520

We have to stop why?

662

00:38:14,520 --> 00:38:15,520

Tea.

663

00:38:15,520 --> 00:38:16,520

Tea time.

664

00:38:16,520 --> 00:38:17,520

Tea time.

665

00:38:17,520 --> 00:38:19,520

Tea time. Sure. Okay.

666

00:38:20,520 --> 00:38:22,520

This isn't just a quick run to Starbucks either.

667

00:38:22,520 --> 00:38:25,520

Here in Turkey, tea is serious business.

668

00:38:25,520 --> 00:38:28,520

This is the greatest archaeological excavation of all time.

669

00:38:28,520 --> 00:38:30,520

It has bundt cake.

670

00:38:30,520 --> 00:38:32,520

I've never been in a dig with bundt cake before.

671

00:38:35,520 --> 00:38:38,520

You never saw this scene in Indiana Jones where he stopped for cake.

672

00:38:38,520 --> 00:38:40,520

They cut right past that.

673

00:38:41,520 --> 00:38:45,520

After our mandatory Turkish snack break, we get back to work.

674

00:38:45,520 --> 00:38:48,520

Excavating a tomb near the location of a Biblical box.

675

00:38:49,520 --> 00:38:51,520

And you think there could be more skeletons in here as well?

676

00:38:51,520 --> 00:38:53,520

There's more people.

677

00:38:53,520 --> 00:38:55,520

We're right here.

678

00:38:55,520 --> 00:38:56,520

Did you find something?

679

00:38:56,520 --> 00:38:57,520

Interesting.

680

00:38:59,520 --> 00:39:00,520

What is it?

681

00:39:01,520 --> 00:39:02,520

It's hollow.

682

00:39:03,520 --> 00:39:05,520

It feels like there's a cavity under it.

683

00:39:06,520 --> 00:39:08,520

I've never seen anything like this.

684

00:39:08,520 --> 00:39:10,520

I feel like there's a cavity under it.

685

00:39:15,520 --> 00:39:17,520

Want even more expedition unknown?

686

00:39:17,520 --> 00:39:22,520

You can check out my personal photos, deleted scenes, and more at TravelChannel.com.

687

00:39:27,520 --> 00:39:31,520

I'm pitching in at an archaeological dig in the Turkish town of Sinal.

688

00:39:31,520 --> 00:39:35,520

And what looked like a simple headstone might be much more than we realized.

689

00:39:36,520 --> 00:39:37,520

You're right here.

690

00:39:38,520 --> 00:39:39,520

Did you find something?

691

00:39:39,520 --> 00:39:40,520

Interesting.

692

00:39:40,520 --> 00:39:41,520

What is it?

693

00:39:43,520 --> 00:39:44,520

It's hollow.

694

00:39:44,520 --> 00:39:47,520

It feels like there's a cavity under it.

695

00:39:47,520 --> 00:39:48,520

It's hollow, yeah?

696

00:39:48,520 --> 00:39:49,520

Yeah, yeah.

697

00:39:50,520 --> 00:39:51,520

You want to flip it?

698

00:39:51,520 --> 00:39:52,520

Yeah, sure.

699

00:39:52,520 --> 00:39:53,520

Okay, hold on.

700

00:39:53,520 --> 00:39:54,520

Ready?

701

00:39:59,520 --> 00:40:00,520

Look at that!

702

00:40:03,520 --> 00:40:04,520

It's hollowed out.

703

00:40:04,520 --> 00:40:06,520

It's not a stone, it's a container.

704

00:40:07,520 --> 00:40:08,520

What do you think this is?

705

00:40:11,520 --> 00:40:13,520

It could be a container for a holy roller.

706

00:40:14,520 --> 00:40:16,520

This is like the fragment you found earlier.

707

00:40:16,520 --> 00:40:17,520

Same idea.

708

00:40:17,520 --> 00:40:21,520

This would have been used for something, something holy.

709

00:40:22,520 --> 00:40:24,520

And do you think it could be for something like a holy cross?

710

00:40:27,520 --> 00:40:29,520

I think the site still holds great secrets.

711

00:40:30,520 --> 00:40:32,520

This is a huge find.

712

00:40:32,520 --> 00:40:36,520

A largely intact box that may have been used for a sacred burial

713

00:40:36,520 --> 00:40:39,520

or to hold an important Christian relic.

714

00:40:39,520 --> 00:40:41,520

So now the question is, what was inside of this?

715

00:40:42,520 --> 00:40:43,520

So, more work to do.

716

00:40:44,520 --> 00:40:45,520

Yes, more soil to turn.

717

00:40:45,520 --> 00:40:47,520

Who knows what's down there, yeah?

718

00:40:53,520 --> 00:40:55,520

My mission to follow the trail of the true cross

719

00:40:55,520 --> 00:40:58,520

has taken me from the heart of the Holy Land

720

00:40:58,520 --> 00:41:00,520

to a former Christian capital

721

00:41:00,520 --> 00:41:02,520

and to the very edge of an empire.

722

00:41:03,520 --> 00:41:05,520

Along the way, I've been lucky enough to see

723

00:41:05,520 --> 00:41:07,520

closely guarded holy relics

724

00:41:08,520 --> 00:41:10,520

and stunning historic artifacts.

725

00:41:10,520 --> 00:41:13,520

I've been on hand to participate in the discovery

726

00:41:13,520 --> 00:41:17,520

of unknown chambers and major archeological finds.

727

00:41:17,520 --> 00:41:19,520

It's all given me a new perspective

728

00:41:19,520 --> 00:41:21,520

on the importance of this story.

729

00:41:22,520 --> 00:41:25,520

The cross is more than just an artifact.

730

00:41:25,520 --> 00:41:26,520

It's more than a symbol.

731

00:41:26,520 --> 00:41:30,520

To billions, it is a living promise of salvation.

732

00:41:31,520 --> 00:41:33,520

And whether you believe in its power,

733

00:41:33,520 --> 00:41:35,520

it's hard not to be impressed by the explorers

734

00:41:35,520 --> 00:41:38,520

who have taken on the most unknown expedition of all.

735

00:41:39,520 --> 00:41:42,520

The quest to reconcile faith with history.

736

00:41:42,520 --> 00:41:45,520

Could biblical relics like the true cross still be out there?

737

00:41:47,520 --> 00:41:51,520

With so many exciting finds, I feel confident there's more to discover.

738

00:41:51,520 --> 00:41:55,520

And I for one feel blessed to have been invited along

739

00:41:55,520 --> 00:41:57,520

on the journey.