

1

00:00:00,007 --> 00:00:17,573

This series presents information based in part on theory and conjecture.

2

00:00:17,573 --> 00:00:22,094

The producer's purpose is to suggest some possible explanations, but not necessarily

3

00:00:22,094 --> 00:00:29,616

the only ones to the mysteries we will examine.

4

00:00:29,616 --> 00:00:33,338

The most elusive holy relic of all time.

5

00:00:33,338 --> 00:00:44,061

Was it the chalice Jesus used to celebrate the Last Supper?

6

00:00:44,061 --> 00:00:49,102

Was it a magic vessel found again in Arthurian times?

7

00:00:49,102 --> 00:00:58,385

From the holy land to pagan Britain to the New World, in search of has tracked this mystery.

8

00:00:58,385 --> 00:01:11,590

It was the Holy Grail.

9

00:01:11,590 --> 00:01:17,031

Modern films and novels still celebrate King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

10

00:01:17,031 --> 00:01:22,593

Jousting, questing, bringing chivalry to medieval England.

11

00:01:23,593 --> 00:01:27,595

And the heart of the Arthur stories was a mystery.

12

00:01:27,595 --> 00:01:38,598

A strange otherworldly quest with a long lost holy grail.

13

00:01:38,598 --> 00:01:43,600

There are 47 surviving romances of King Arthur and the quest for the holy grail.

14

00:01:43,600 --> 00:01:45,600

Arthur was a real person.

15

00:01:45,600 --> 00:01:50,602

In the 5th century, he led the Britons to a decisive victory over the Saxons.

16

00:01:50,602 --> 00:01:57,604

The grail legends, however, are not history, but a very strange intertwining of Christian and pagan stories.

17

00:01:57,604 --> 00:02:01,605

For the first time on its search, we're going to examine the same mystery twice.

18

00:02:01,605 --> 00:02:08,608

First as a Christian legend, and second as a very ancient pagan myth.

19

00:02:08,608 --> 00:02:12,609

The image of the Last Supper derives from medieval art.

20

00:02:12,609 --> 00:02:15,610

The events are chronicled in the Gospels.

21

00:02:15,610 --> 00:02:18,611

Jerusalem, 33 A.D.

22

00:02:18,611 --> 00:02:26,613

Thirteen humble Jews gathered to celebrate Passover, a ritual unchanged since the time of Moses.

23

00:02:33,615 --> 00:02:39,617

The rabbi, Jesus, astounded the group with his blessing of the ritual wine.

24

00:02:39,617 --> 00:02:45,619

Drink. This is my blood, spilled for the redemption of sin.

25

00:02:45,619 --> 00:02:51,621

We will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until we all meet in heaven.

26

00:02:53,622 --> 00:02:57,623

A day later, Jesus was dying on the cross.

27

00:02:57,623 --> 00:03:02,625

According to legend, Joseph of Arimathea attended the crucifixion.

28

00:03:02,625 --> 00:03:09,627

He anointed with Christ's blood the same silver chalice, which thus became the Holy Grail.

29

00:03:11,627 --> 00:03:16,629

Joseph of Arimathea fled Roman persecution to England.

30

00:03:16,629 --> 00:03:24,632

Landing at St. Michael's Mount, he took the Holy Grail as a talisman to found the first Christian church in the British Isles.

31

00:03:25,632 --> 00:03:34,635

The story then took a curious turn. The Holy Grail was somehow lost.

32

00:03:36,635 --> 00:03:41,637

Five hundred years later, the legend continued with the birth of King Arthur.

33

00:03:41,637 --> 00:03:49,639

On the windswept rocky Cornish coast, beneath the ruins of the great castle of Tintagel, lies Merlin's Cave.

34

00:03:50,640 --> 00:03:56,642

Around 500 A.D., the old magician, deep in thought, left his grotto.

35

00:03:56,642 --> 00:04:03,644

Old King Uther Pendragon was dying without an heir, and the future of England seemed in grave doubt.

36

00:04:03,644 --> 00:04:10,646

He found an abandoned baby, and recognized that this was an auspicious moment.

37

00:04:10,646 --> 00:04:16,648

England needed a strong ruler and a common goal.

38

00:04:17,648 --> 00:04:24,651

Merlin proclaimed to the skies, England was the only country in the world that had a strong ruler.

39

00:04:24,651 --> 00:04:27,651

So the story was told.

40

00:04:27,651 --> 00:04:32,653

The baby did grow up to unite all the warring feudal barons.

41

00:04:32,653 --> 00:04:38,655

Arthur's order of the round table was the first stirring of democracy in medieval Europe.

42

00:04:40,656 --> 00:04:46,657

Late one year later, the king of England, the king of England, was killed.

43

00:04:46,657 --> 00:04:52,659

Arthur's order of the round table was the first stirring of democracy in medieval Europe.

44

00:04:53,660 --> 00:05:00,662

Late one night, near the end of Arthur's reign, a strange omen appeared deep in castle Camelot.

45

00:05:09,665 --> 00:05:13,666

King David's sword, embedded in a rock.

46

00:05:17,667 --> 00:05:24,669

It was foretold that whosoever could pull the sword from the stone would find the lost Holy Grail.

47

00:05:25,670 --> 00:05:29,671

All the knights of the round table tried in vain.

48

00:05:29,671 --> 00:05:36,673

Even Lancelot, the strongest man in the world, had to admit that force alone was useless.

49

00:05:49,677 --> 00:05:53,679

Suddenly, a stranger appeared from the shadows.

50

00:05:53,679 --> 00:05:57,680

Gala had the one pure knight.

51

00:06:24,688 --> 00:06:30,690

All the knights wanted to follow Gala had in search of the Holy Grail.

52

00:06:30,690 --> 00:06:35,692

They felt it would be the greatest adventure of their lives.

53

00:06:39,693 --> 00:06:44,695

Twelve knights and an army of attendants left Camelot.

54

00:06:54,698 --> 00:07:05,701

Most of them soon wearied of the search for the Grail and took to raiding sacks and castles, slaying infinals and rescuing maidens in distress.

55

00:07:05,701 --> 00:07:23,707

Too worldly to pursue the Grail, they were soon decimated by unlucky battles and spiritual impurity.

56

00:07:24,707 --> 00:07:32,710

The few who kept to the true quest found themselves in an appalling wasteland.

57

00:07:39,712 --> 00:07:46,714

Lost in a dark forest, they came upon ruins older than any of them could imagine.

58

00:07:47,715 --> 00:07:55,717

Their quest became a dark dream, like being lost in a maze.

59

00:08:02,719 --> 00:08:11,722

Finally, half dead from wounds and starvation, they came to the enchanted castle of Corbenac, where it was told the Grail itself was hidden.

60

00:08:12,723 --> 00:08:15,723

Only three knights were left.

61

00:08:16,724 --> 00:08:19,725

Sir Percival, who had never known a woman.

62

00:08:20,725 --> 00:08:24,726

Sir Bors, who had only once and repented.

63

00:08:24,726 --> 00:08:31,729

And Virgin Gala had, whose strength was as the strength of ten because his heart was pure.

64

00:08:31,729 --> 00:08:41,732

They found the castle guarded by the three deadly sins.

65

00:09:01,738 --> 00:09:21,744

The fallen armor lay empty.

66

00:09:32,748 --> 00:09:36,749

Inside the castle, they had to climb seven levels.

67

00:09:37,749 --> 00:09:45,752

Like Robert Bruce and the spider, six times they lost their way until the seventh attempt to penetrate the ultimate mystery.

68

00:09:55,755 --> 00:09:58,756

They found more than they expected.

69

00:10:02,757 --> 00:10:19,763

The Grail had been guarded for 500 years by the wounded Fisher King, preserved in a terrible state of agony until the proper magic question would be asked.

70

00:10:20,763 --> 00:10:31,766

Galahad alone conquered his terror and asked, whom does this Grail serve?

71

00:10:31,766 --> 00:10:57,775

The Grail came forth with a light no man could tell and changed shape in a fashion no man could fathom and the wasteland was restored to fertility.

72

00:11:02,776 --> 00:11:22,783

The Grail had been taken back to the Holy Land, to the mythic country of Saras.

73

00:11:23,783 --> 00:11:30,785

What was this Saras? It was not told.

74

00:11:30,785 --> 00:11:41,789

In Antioch, Syria in 1910, an ancient silver chalice was unearthed beneath a thousand years of rubble.

75

00:11:43,789 --> 00:11:48,791

Scholars traced the progress of the chalice through secret deals to Paris.

76

00:11:49,791 --> 00:11:55,793

It was then sold to the Cloister Museum in New York, where it is now kept under top security.

77

00:11:57,794 --> 00:12:03,795

It was recently discovered that the outer cup of gold encloses a fragile inner cup of pure silver.

78

00:12:04,796 --> 00:12:14,799

This new evidence led several top historians to pose the question, is the inner chalice, the Holy Grail, found at last?

79

00:12:15,799 --> 00:12:23,802

The Antioch Chalice kept in the Cloister Museum in New York was for a time thought to be the Holy Grail.

80

00:12:23,802 --> 00:12:32,805

Religious historians speculated that the outer gold cage was a reliquary, fabricated to hold and protect the inner silver cup.

81

00:12:32,805 --> 00:12:38,807

The chalice is obviously very old and in a fragile state of preservation.

82

00:12:39,807 --> 00:12:44,808

The silver is as thin and as delicate as tissue paper.

83

00:12:44,808 --> 00:12:52,811

The authenticity of the chalice has been researched by the curator of the Metropolitan Museum, Margaret Frazier.

84

00:12:52,811 --> 00:13:00,813

The great impression that this cup made inspired and the dating of it in the first century,

85

00:13:00,813 --> 00:13:11,817

within shortly after the death of Christ, conjured up the idea that this was the cup from which Christ drank at the Last Sovereign.

86

00:13:11,817 --> 00:13:20,820

More recently, we have looked at the cup with the eye to the style of the figures, to the way the grapevine is ordered on the cup,

87

00:13:20,820 --> 00:13:23,821

and found that there's no way that you can put it in the first century.

88

00:13:23,821 --> 00:13:27,822

It simply doesn't have the same style as first-century work.

89

00:13:27,822 --> 00:13:34,824

Much more, it responds to works from the fourth, even as late as the sixth century.

90

00:13:34,824 --> 00:13:40,826

And is it likely that Christ used the silver cup? It seems highly unlikely.

91

00:13:40,826 --> 00:13:46,828

He and his apostles espoused the simple life, the giving to the poor as opposed to the rich.

92

00:13:46,828 --> 00:13:54,831

And silver was a very valuable commodity to make it into tableware was only the privilege of the rich.

93

00:13:55,831 --> 00:14:07,835

It's inconceivable to me that Christ had a silver cup, rather cups of normal materials that we use, glass, pottery, or wood.

94

00:14:07,835 --> 00:14:13,837

Most scholars now agree, not the Holy Grail.

95

00:14:13,837 --> 00:14:19,838

The church has never officially recognized the Holy Grail as a relic.

96

00:14:19,838 --> 00:14:27,841

Many parts of the legends indicate the Grail was not a cup at all, but something much more mysterious.

97

00:14:28,841 --> 00:14:32,843

As a Christian legend, the Grail quest is very strangely convoluted.

98

00:14:32,843 --> 00:14:38,844

There is, however, a pre-Christian version of the story, which takes us back 2,000 years before Christ,

99

00:14:38,844 --> 00:14:46,847

a version long lost in amidst of time, until a recent, amazing breakthrough.

100

00:14:46,847 --> 00:14:51,849

Glastonbury, England has many links to the old stories.

101

00:14:51,849 --> 00:15:01,852

Joseph of Arimathea is said to have hidden the Grail at the bottom of Chalice Well, a natural

spring of red-tinged waters.

102

00:15:01,852 --> 00:15:08,854

The awesome ruins of Glastonbury Abbey mark the spot where Joseph built the first Christian church in England.

103

00:15:08,854 --> 00:15:12,855

King Arthur was supposedly buried here.

104

00:15:12,855 --> 00:15:17,857

Many Christian cathedrals are constructed over the sites of ancient pagan temples.

105

00:15:17,857 --> 00:15:23,859

Similarly, many Christian legends are retellings of earlier pagan myths.

106

00:15:23,859 --> 00:15:33,862

Just as we can excavate under church foundations, is it possible to discover hidden in the Christian stories traces of an earlier religion?

107

00:15:33,862 --> 00:15:37,863

Jeffrey Ash is the world's foremost Arthurian scholar.

108

00:15:37,863 --> 00:15:42,865

He's published 16 books on the quest of the Holy Grail.

109

00:15:42,865 --> 00:15:49,867

It's usually thought of as the cup or chalice used by Christ at the Last Supper.

110

00:15:49,867 --> 00:15:59,870

But if we go back to earlier versions, we find that it seems to be a sort of magical pagan cauldron of plenty, not a Christian thing at all.

111

00:15:59,870 --> 00:16:11,874

It doesn't appear alone. It appears with other things, with a lance that drips blood, with a sword, with a dish that sometimes has a severed head on it.

112

00:16:11,874 --> 00:16:15,875

These are called the Grail Hallows and they all add to the mystery.

113

00:16:15,875 --> 00:16:20,877

Is it possible to rediscover the lost pagan story of the Grail?

114

00:16:20,877 --> 00:16:28,879

Near Glastonbury Abbey is a very strange mound, 500 feet high and 2,000 feet long.

115

00:16:28,879 --> 00:16:44,884

Glastonbury Tor. The most uncanny aspects of this famous landmark are the obviously man-made terraces cut deep into the sides, still visible after 4,000 years of erosion.

116

00:16:44,884 --> 00:16:54,887

Some years ago, an Irishman, Jeffrey Russell, put forward a rather interesting theory that these are the remains of a prehistoric maze,

117

00:16:54,887 --> 00:17:09,892

which was cut in the hill for some ritual purpose thousands of years ago, and that people used to spiral up it by a long, long, complicated circuit going round 7 times, up and down, around and back.

118

00:17:09,892 --> 00:17:26,897

And he suggested that this was the origin of the whole idea of the quest of the Grail, that people came here to thread a maze to some sort of initiation ritual mystical experience when they finally got to the cinder.

119

00:17:26,897 --> 00:17:41,902

I lived by the Tor, but I had never really gone into it until a year or so ago, so I spent a very

hard afternoon walking round and round the Tor, seeing whether Russell's maze worked, and I thought it did.

120

00:17:41,902 --> 00:17:48,904

And I went on trying all through that summer until I was pretty well satisfied that I had the whole pattern.

121

00:17:48,904 --> 00:17:53,906

Great satisfaction in finding that it did seem to work.

122

00:17:53,906 --> 00:18:08,911

There is one really heartbreaking bit where you very nearly get to the top, but you aren't allowed to go there. You have to go down and make another circuit, and down and make another circuit, and then you are finally allowed to go to the top.

123

00:18:08,911 --> 00:18:16,913

I think perhaps this is part of the secret of the whole thing, perhaps there was a kind of lesson in it.

124

00:18:17,914 --> 00:18:27,917

Is there any other evidence which could corroborate such a radical theory that the quest for the Holy Grail was an ancient pagan ceremony inside a giant maze?

125

00:18:27,917 --> 00:18:32,918

The answer? A surprising confirmation.

126

00:18:33,919 --> 00:18:41,921

At Tin Tadgel, where legendary Arthur was born, ruins of a Saxon fortress still stand guard over the Cornish coast.

127

00:18:41,921 --> 00:18:53,925

Pre-Roman ruins have been found beneath the foundations of the fortress, ruins which date to the time of the ancient megalith builders in Britain, the time of Stonehenge.

128

00:18:53,925 --> 00:19:01,927

In a hidden valley beneath Tin Tadgel, Geoffrey Ash noticed the rock carving from the same era.

129

00:19:02,928 --> 00:19:15,932

As a double maze, this is the Mother Earth symbol of a long forgotten religion.

130

00:19:15,932 --> 00:19:25,935

The same seven-fold spiral has been found in ancient Crete, Pompeii, and as far away as the Hopi Indian lands in America.

131

00:19:25,935 --> 00:19:38,939

No one had noticed any similarity between a small circular rock carving and a 2,000-foot-long hill until Ash obtained aerial photographs of the Glastonbury tour.

132

00:19:38,939 --> 00:19:49,943

At first, he couldn't believe his eyes. He checked and rechecked his diagrams, counting terraces, noting all the turns and convolutions.

133

00:19:49,943 --> 00:19:58,945

The Tin Tadgel rock maze leads in, out, in, out, and in to the center.

134

00:19:58,945 --> 00:20:09,949

The Glastonbury tour maze, although stretched to fit the original hill, leads up, down, up, down, and up to the center.

135

00:20:09,949 --> 00:20:14,951

The patterns are exactly the same.

136

00:20:15,951 --> 00:20:24,954

When Ash published his findings, a band of modern-day druids organized the first threading of the maze in 4,000 years.

137

00:20:24,954 --> 00:20:32,956

Strangely, they have been instinctively drawn to repeat again and again this ritual on the tour.

138

00:20:32,956 --> 00:20:38,958

For the first time, we have an insight into an ancient pagan rite.

139

00:20:45,960 --> 00:20:57,964

An archeological dig could corroborate this theory that the maze on Glastonbury tour was the original quest for the Holy Grail.

140

00:20:57,964 --> 00:21:09,968

If so, the nature of the Grail itself, the prize at the center of the maze, is still open to speculation.

141

00:21:10,968 --> 00:21:21,972

From ancient times through the Christian era, modern scholars still regard the Holy Grail as one of the great unsolved mysteries.

142

00:21:23,972 --> 00:21:26,973

What was the Holy Grail?

143

00:21:26,973 --> 00:21:32,975

In the earliest known accounts, it was described as a saucer-shaped vessel which fell from heaven.

144

00:21:32,975 --> 00:21:36,976

The roots of the word grail mean crater.

145

00:21:36,976 --> 00:21:46,980

Were the Christian legends built upon pagan myths, dim memories of something ancient and alien, still buried under Glastonbury tour?

146

00:21:46,980 --> 00:21:49,981

Perhaps.

147

00:21:51,981 --> 00:21:58,983

Coming up next, in search of journeys to find the exact spot where Moses is supposed to have received the Ten Commandments,

148

00:21:58,983 --> 00:22:04,985

then agents go hunting for a kidnapper on FBI, the untold stories.

149

00:22:04,985 --> 00:22:09,987

At all this week, Peter Fonda takes you on a breathtaking trip through the history of the Rockies,

150

00:22:09,987 --> 00:22:15,989

from the exploration of Lewis and Clark through the frontier heyday, and into the era of vacation resorts.

151

00:22:15,989 --> 00:22:21,991

It all begins tonight at 9, here on the History Channel, where the past comes alive.