

Ancient Israeli Artifacts Offer Clues About Jesus' Life and Death

In a cavernous warehouse where Israel stores its archaeological treasures, an ancient burial box is inscribed with the name of Jesus.

Not THAT Jesus. Archaeologists in Israel say Jesus was a common name in the Holy Land 2,000 years ago, and that they have found about 30 ancient burial boxes inscribed with it.

Ahead of Easter, Israel's antiquities authority opened up its vast storeroom to reporters on Sunday for a peek at unearthed artifacts from the time of Jesus. Experts say they have yet to find direct archaeological evidence of Jesus Christ, but in recent years have found a wealth of material that helps fill out historians' understanding of how Jesus may have lived and died.

"There's good news," said Gideon Avni, head of the archaeological division of the Israel Antiquities Authority. "Today we can reconstruct very accurately many, many aspects of the daily life of the time of Christ."

Israel is one of the most excavated places on the planet. Some 300 digs take place each year, including about 50 foreign expeditions from as far away as the United States and Japan, the Antiquities Authority said.

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