

Archaeologists Discover Ancient Statue That May Have Symbolized Jesus

Archaeologists in Israel say a ram statue discovered in the ancient port city of Caesarea may have meant to depict either Jesus or the Good Shepherd's flock.

"In ancient Christianity Jesus was not portrayed as a person. Instead, symbols were used, one of which was the ram," excavation directors Dr. Peter Gendelman and Mohammad Hater said in a joint statement Sunday.

The marble ram statue was discovered on Christmas Eve.

In Christian art, the ram is often depicted being carried on the shoulders of the "Good Shepherd" Jesus. The ram and the lamb often represent the faithful, or Jesus himself, whose anguish and death atone for original sin, according to Christian belief.

The Bible refers also to Jesus as a lamb. "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,'" John 1:29 states.

"It may or may not be a coincidence, but the statue was uncovered on Christmas Eve," Gendelman and Hater said.

Israel Antiquities Authority and the Caesarea Development Corporation are conducting the excavation.