

2,000-year-old nails 'may be tied to crucifixion'

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Simcha Jacobovici, the producer of Secrets Of Christianity series, shows the Roman nails which he believes may have been used in the crucifixion of Jesus, during a press conference in Jerusalem, on April 12.

Two Roman nails dating back 2000 years, found in the burial cave of the Jewish high priest who handed Jesus over to the Romans, may be linked to the crucifixion, an Israeli filmmaker has claimed.

The gnarled bits of iron, which measure around three inches (eight centimetres) each, were shown to reporters in Jerusalem on Tuesday at the premier of a television documentary series examining the question of whether they could have been the [nails](#) used to crucify Jesus.

The series is to air from Wednesday in the United States, Canada and South America, and in Israel from May 15.

The two nails were first found in Jerusalem 20 years ago when [archaeologists](#) uncovered a family tomb believed to be that of Caiaphas, the high priest who handed Jesus over to the [Romans](#) to be crucified.

One nail was found inside one of 12 limestone coffins found inside the cave, while the second was lying on the floor of the tomb.

"Two iron nails were found inside that tomb," said Israeli documentary maker Simcha Jacobovici, who presented the popular series called "The Naked Archaeologist" which was broadcast on The History Channel.

"Somebody went to his grave with that nail among his bones and nobody reported it," he told reporters.

The length of the nails and the fact they were bent at one end were both consistent with the crucifixion of hands, he said.

Since Caiaphas is only associated with one crucifixion -- that of Jesus -- the assumption is that these were the nails used, Jacobovici said.

"If these were found in any other tomb, we would not be here today."

The discovery of the nails was noted in the original archaeological report, but shortly afterwards they went missing before being photographed or sketched.



A man shows two Roman nails next to a Roman period ossuary which Simcha Jacobovici, the producer of Secrets Of Christianity series, believes may have been used in the crucifixion of Jesus, during a press conference in Jerusalem, on April 12.

During his search for the missing nails, Jacobovici visited Tel Aviv University and stumbled across two iron nails dating back to the same era, which were discovered in Jerusalem 20 years ago -- which he believes were the ones found in Caiaphas's tomb.

The theory that these were the nails used in the crucifixion, is based on two assumptions, Jacobovici admits: "That these are probably the nails from Caiaphas's tomb, and that Caiaphas was associated with only one crucifixion -- that of Jesus," he said.

"If you accept that these nails came from that tomb, given that Caiaphas is only associated with the crucifixion of Jesus, they very well could be those nails."

Asked why the man who, according to the Gospels, sent Jesus to his death would want to be buried with the nails that ended his enemy's life, Jacobovici suggested that Caiaphas may have been racked with guilt over his decision.

An alternative theory explored in the documentary is that he may have been a secret follower of Jesus who did not realise that handing him over to the Romans would result in his death.

Historical record points to tens of thousands of people being crucified by the Romans but until now, there has only been one piece of archaeological evidence to support it -- a fossilised heel bone punctured by an iron nail which was found in Jerusalem in 1968.

Gabi Barkai, a professor of archaeology at Tel Aviv's Bar Ilan University who has 40 years of experience excavating tombs in Jerusalem, confirmed the nails dated back to the first century, but said it was impossible get a more accurate date.

"Nails are a rare things in tombs from Second Temple period Jerusalem," he told reporters, noting that there was no [bone](#) residue attached to them.

There were several theories as to why they might have been put inside a grave, one of which was that crucifixion nails were believed to be powerful amulets for the afterlife.

But there was "no proof whatsoever that these nails came from the cave of Caiaphas," he said.

Asked if he believed they were used in the crucifixion, Barkai was cautious.

"It's a possibility," he said.

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