

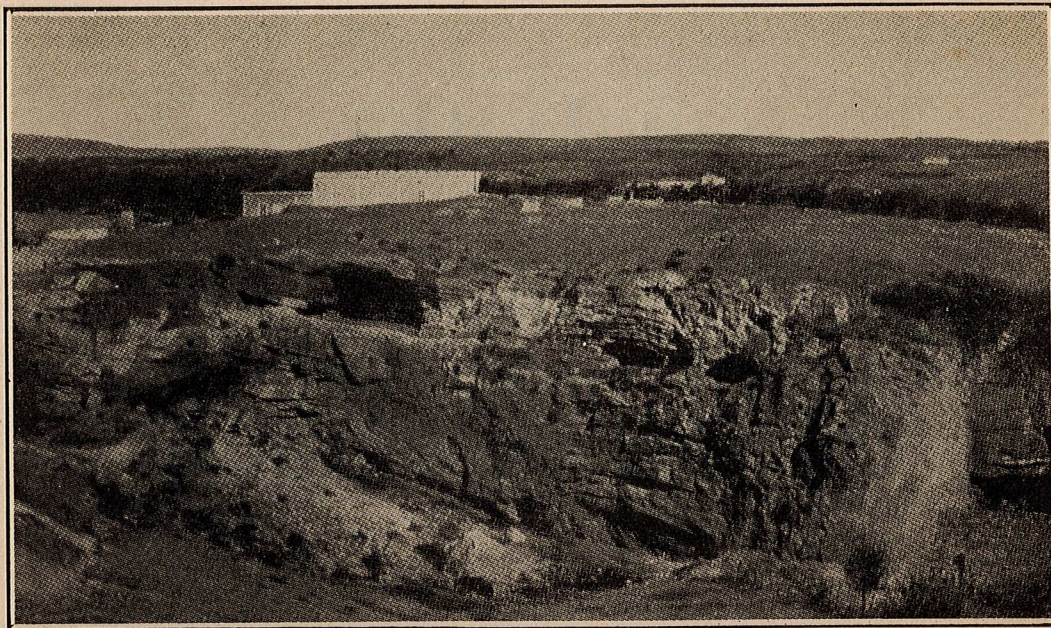
Golgotha  
and  
The Garden Tomb

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*By Robert Watsford*



“There They Crucified Him.”



THE SKULL HILL.

*The eye sockets are plainly seen. Above the Hill is Calvary.*

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# Golgotha and the Garden Tomb

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THE MAN CHRIST JESUS is an INDISPUTABLE FACT in history. The records of this FACT are not confined only to sacred writers. We have the independent testimony of the Roman historian, Tacitus (A.D. 97) to His existence and Crucifixion, for he states that "Christus was put to death by Pontius Pilate, in the reign of Tiberius."

Also we have the letters of Pliny the Younger, Governor of Bithynia, to the Roman Emperor Trajan (A.D. 107), referring to the number of His disciples, not a century after. The pagan philosopher, Celsus, also refers to the Crucifixion.

Concerning the Resurrection, in spite of all efforts to refute it, the evidence for its actuality is overwhelming, and so acknowledged by all who have gone carefully into it. St. Paul tells us in his First Letter to the Corinthian Church, which is regarded by all New Testament critics as a genuine Pauline work dating before A.D. 65, that there were above 500 persons at once (1 Cor. 15: 6) who had seen the risen Christ after His Resurrection.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was long supposed to be on the site of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of our Lord. The tradition which grew up round this Church was the result of Queen Helena's dream in the fourth century.

Recent discoveries (Geographical, Topographical and Archæological) challenge the authenticity of this claim. Before such discoveries were made, numerous scholars rejected the traditional site owing to its location being almost within the heart of the City; whereas the Scriptures indicate that Calvary was OUTSIDE the City.

It is impossible to explain how the site occupied by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre could ever have been outside the City walls. Excavations in 1938 diminish such a contention.

## *The Walls of Jerusalem.*

The walls of Jerusalem are described by Josephus, as the first, second and third walls. The first is of no concern. The second was first built by Nehemiah and his



co-workers, but was afterwards partly rebuilt by the Asmonean princes. This was the wall existing in our Lord's time, outside which He suffered and was buried.

The third wall, as Josephus relates, was built by Herod Agrippa to enclose the suburb outside the north wall then existing. In that case the old wall running parallel to, or under the present north wall, proves conclusively that the so-called "Church of the Holy Sepulchre" could not possibly have been the place of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, and also that Church is far inside the old walls. We are told that "Jesus suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13: 12) and also that "the place where He was crucified was nigh unto the City." That was in accordance with the Hebrew Law. The Jews did not bury their dead within the precincts of the City, neither put their criminals to death inside the walls. This fact destroys the value of the traditional site.

Dr. Thomson writes:—"No practical engineer would select a line for the second wall, which, starting from the Hippicus and ending at the North-West corner of the Temple Area, would leave the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre West, or North-West, of it. Of course, it would include the site, just as it is now, within the wall. To argue that the Church was at that time outside the gate and the City walls, is to make the City, when at the zenith of her glory under Herod the Great, smaller than it is to-day."

Sir Charles Marston, the eminent Archæologist, stated in 1942, that "it is a cardinal mistake to assert that the Damascus Gate belonged to the third wall, for that wall has now been completely identified and runs as Josephus said it ran."

### *The Place Called Calvary.*

Skull Hill is accepted by many scholars as Calvary, the actual site of the Crucifixion, for there are impressive reasons why this judgment appears conclusive. Nothing more satisfying to the conditions described in Scripture could be imagined, and this positive evidence in its favour alone is more convincing than the legends about Queen Helena and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

General C. H. Gordon, of Khartoum fame (1883) was convinced, after extensive research, that Skull Hill is Golgotha. Hence it is popularly known as "Gordon's Calvary."

To locate it one has to leave Jerusalem by the Damascus Gate and is soon confronted with a barren hill rounded at the top like a skull. It is the only skull-shaped hill in or about Jerusalem to-day. The summit has been preserved as a Moslem Cemetery, and this has protected it from human interference, and it is believed this is providential.

The face of the cliff resembles a human skull, even after 2000 years. Surely this is the place of which Saint



Matthew wrote: "And when they were come unto Golgotha, a place of a skull, they crucified Him" (Matt. 27: 33-35).

This hill is called by the Jews to-day, as from time immemorial, the "Hill of Execution." They claim it was the place of public execution for criminals, and that it is identical with the Beth-ha-Sekelah, or House of Stoning, mentioned in the Mishna ("Sanhed" 6, 1-14). It is held as an accursed spot by the Jews. According to "Hagadah of Shimeon Bar Kepha," a Jewish work of the eighth century, our Lord "was first stoned and then crucified."

The historical importance of this site seems to be attested both by Rabbinical and early Christian tradition and is undisputed.

The local Arabic name of the hill is El-Heidemiyeh, or "the Rent". The second derivation shows that the idea of a rent or fracture has long been associated with it and Dr. Schick has alluded to earthquake as one of the causes. The Abbot Daniel (A.D. 1106-7) described this hill as "flat rocky mountain which split up at the time of Christ's Crucifixion: the place is called 'Gehenna'." There is no other rocky mountain in this locality which presents any appearance "of having been split up." Referring to the Crucifixion, Saint Matthew wrote: "The earth did quake, and the rocks rent." (Matt. 27, 51-52.)

The existence of this "green hill" amidst all the destructive agencies in operation during many centuries, is impressive.

Again, the main road to Damascus, passed along side it, thus the reference: "And they that passed by railed on Him." (Mark 15, 29.) All roads led to the Damascus Gate.

Simon of Cyrene, "coming out of the country" (Mark 15-21), was probably about to pass through this gateway; the outside road is up-hill and it may have been here that our Saviour felt the weight of the Cross too much. The soldiers, fearing their Victim would succumb without crucifying Him, "compelled Simon" to bear His Cross.

During the Passover week, Jerusalem was overcrowded, and all surrounding spaces covered with encampments. The only empty place around Jerusalem was Skull Hill, which could afford space for the public execution of three criminals. The peculiar position of Skull Hill rendered it the most public view from adjacent roads and the City wall, which suggests that this is the "Green Hill, without a City wall, where the dear Lord was crucified, Who died to save us all."

The identification of Golgotha by learned men of many nationalities was an essential preliminary to the location of the Holy Sepulchre.



# Golgotha and the Garden Tomb

ST. STEPHEN'S MONASTERY.

GOLGOTHA.

SITE OF CRUCIFIXION.



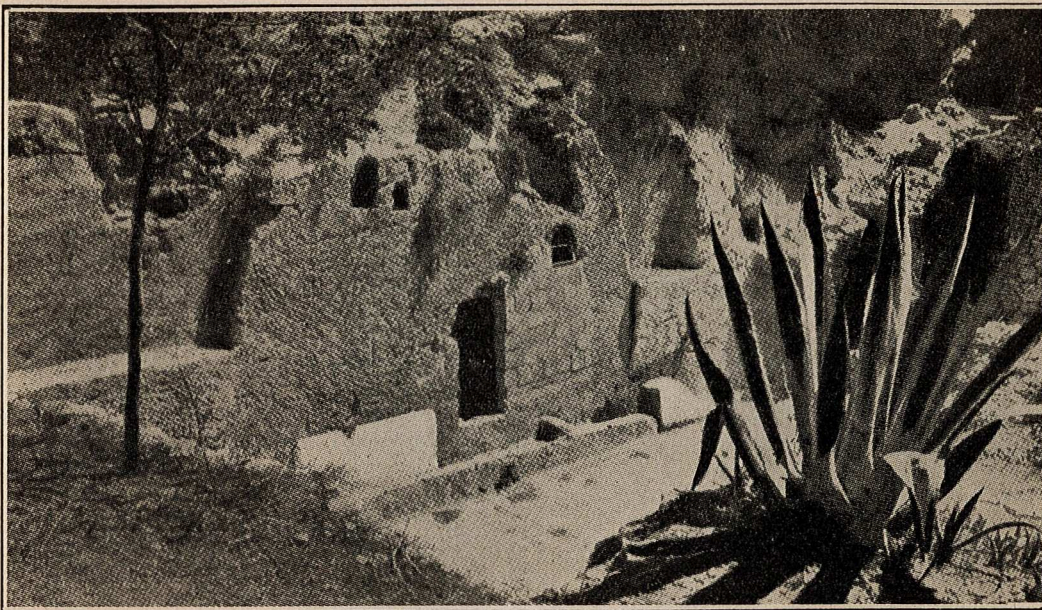
ENTRANCE TO THE GARDEN TOMB.

GARDEN OF THE RESURRECTION.

(Note the Garden Tomb on the left and its close proximity to the site of the Crucifixion.)



“He is not here, for He is risen.”



THE ENTRANCE TO THE GARDEN TOMB

*showing on the right of the door the little window through which Peter and John looked.*



## *The Garden Tomb.*

Saint John states:—"Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand." (John 19, 41-42.)

The place of burial was so close to the scene of death, that the Cross and the Tomb were not merely "nigh" each other, they were in the same garden. If our Saviour suffered on the "green hill", His Sacred Body must have been laid in some rock-cut Jewish sepulchre situated hereabouts. The Tomb in the Garden which lies at foot of Calvary (an ancient winepress excavated close by, proves that in Roman days it had been a garden), is the only Jewish sepulchre yet found near the supposed place of Crucifixion which in point of position, character and general fitness, remarkably satisfies all the conditions of the Gospel narrative.

Saint Matthew states that the Tomb where our Lord's Body was laid was "the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea." It was "his own, which he had hewn out in the rock" (Matt. 27, 57-60). The extraordinary fitness of the Garden Tomb for a private family vault in a garden to accommodate three bodies is impressive.

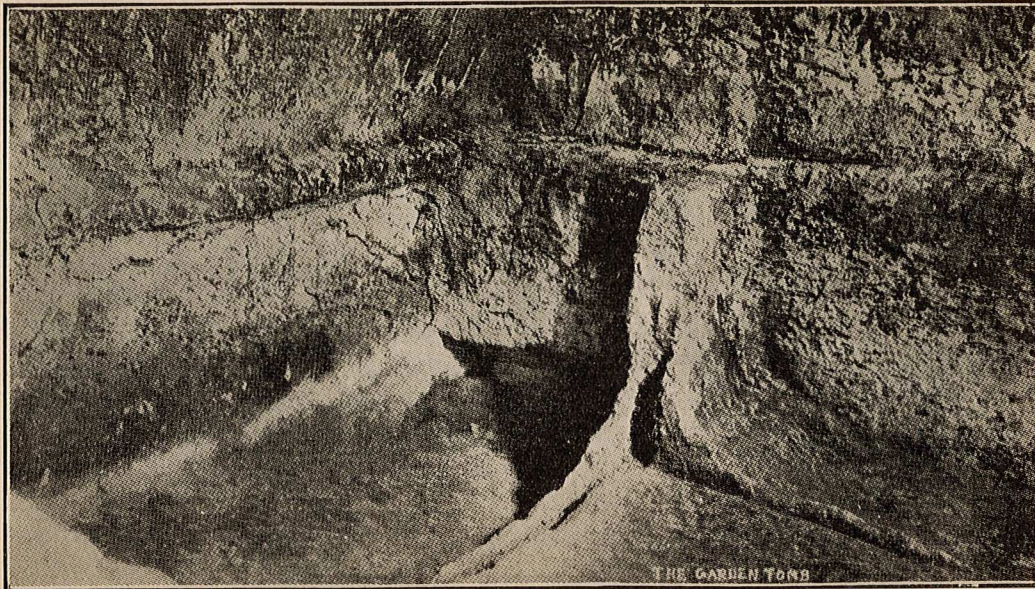
It was such as Joseph of Arimathea might well have made. "No one had yet lain there"; so wrote St. Luke and St. John. Experts inform us that no mortal corruption has been found there.

Only one tomb, that opposite the doorway, was actually finished and was the only one ever occupied. The head would be toward the West, and the rock is chiselled into a slope for the shoulders. This would explain why there was a separate napkin for the head apart from the winding sheet for the body. A man who stood at the door and looked in could see the whole length of the grave except the head, which was hidden behind a stone seat. This would account for John not seeing the napkin as well as the linen clothes, until he had followed Peter into the tomb. There is a ledge at each end of the only finished grave which would provide a seat. Hence the reference by John to Mary who "seeth two angels sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." (John 20: 12.)

In the inside of the Tomb one can follow each separate phrase of the writers accurately: (a) "They entered in (to the tomb)." (Luke 24: 3.) The Tomb itself would accommodate easily over a dozen people standing. (b) A tomb would also have to be a large one for three women to anoint a body with spices whilst in a tomb. (Mark 16: 1.) (c) John stooped down and looked into the tomb



• “Death is swallowed up in Victory.”



*Part of the interior of the Tomb, showing the Holy Grave.*



while Peter entered it (John 20: 5-8), afterwards John also entered in.

The striking fact of the Garden Tomb is that it is a light-tomb—the only one ever discovered anywhere in Palestine. The tombs of kings are shrouded in darkness. The interior was perfectly clear to the view of the Apostles because there is a light shaft cut out of the rock.

A large rolling stone would be necessary to close the entrance of the Garden Tomb, and this is exactly what the Scripture demands: (Matt. 27: 60) and (Mark 16: 4). St. Matthew tells us that “the angel rolled back the stone” (Matt. 28: 2), and this fact corresponds with the Garden Tomb, for outside there is a groove for a rolling stone.

Archæology shows that an early Christian Church was built over the very site. In front of the Tomb are the remains of an ancient Church floor. Evidently the place was highly revered by the early Christians. It is known that Herod Antipas erected a wall that encircled the site for a brief period between 43-70 A.D. This is conclusive that the Tomb must have been built before that time.

Sir Flinders Petrie, the famous Archæologist, recently examined the Tomb and pronounced it as one that dated from Herodian times.

In 1885 a tomb was discovered in the French Dominican enclosure immediately adjoining the Garden Tomb, bearing a Greek inscription, “Buried near his Lord.” This is still preserved.

THE GARDEN TOMB COMPLIES IN EVERY RESPECT with the details given by the four Evangelists in the New Testament.

If the reader will carefully check over these Scripture details with the illustrations supplied, they will reveal how very accurately the facts have been recorded by the early writers. It is these things that give us all a wonderful assurance that these things are written “that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in His Name.”

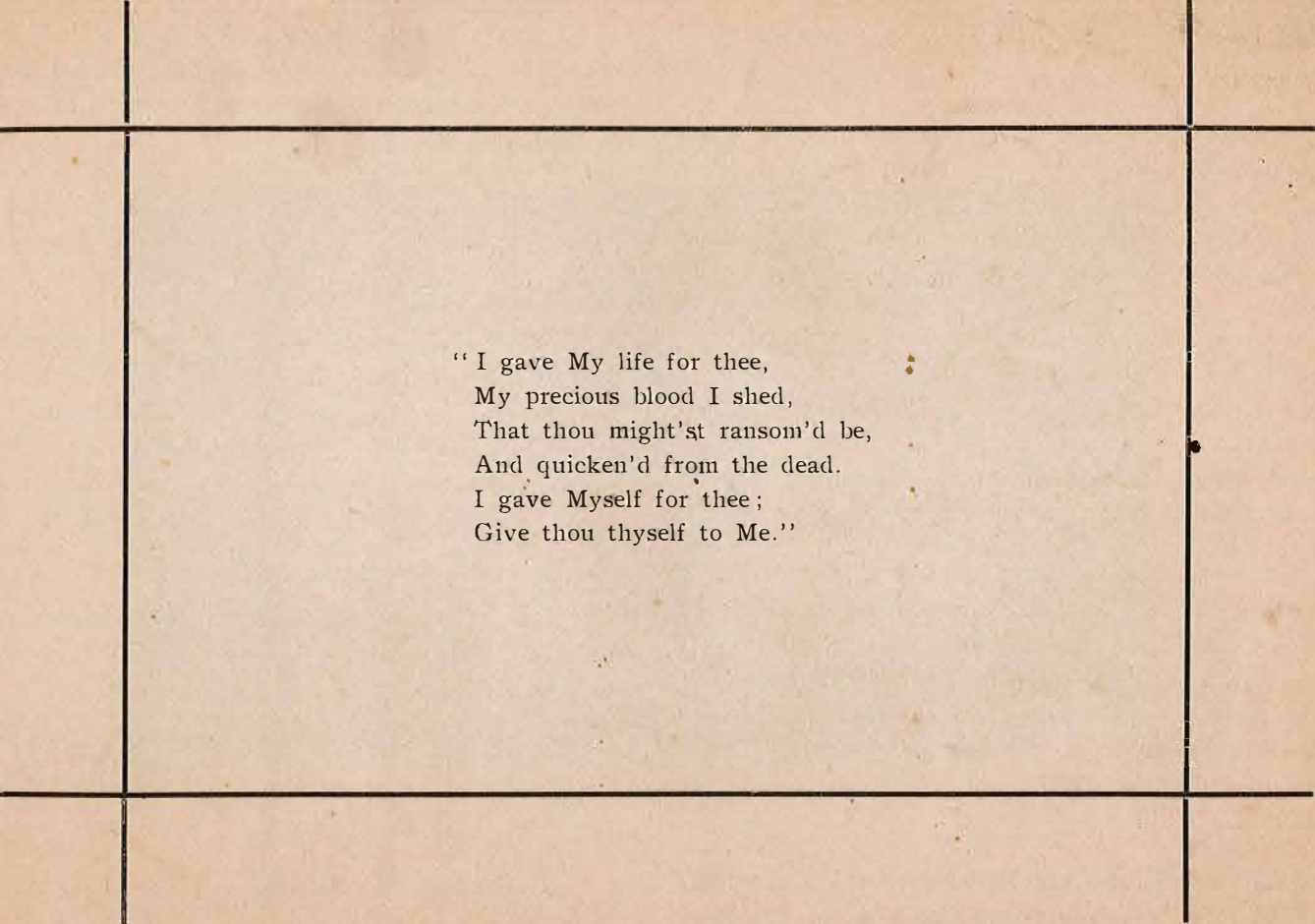
Thousands believe the Garden Tomb to be the actual tomb where our Lord's Body was laid, and from which He rose triumphant over death and the grave.

Yet after all it is not “the place of a skull” or the genuine Tomb that is significant, but rather what they represent.

GOLGOTHA, the Sacrifice once offered for all.

THE EMPTY TOMB, a Resurrected, Living Christ.





“ I gave My life for thee,  
My precious blood I shed,  
That thou might'st ransom'd be,  
And quicken'd from the dead.  
I gave Myself for thee;  
Give thou thyself to Me.”