

52 Garden Tomb

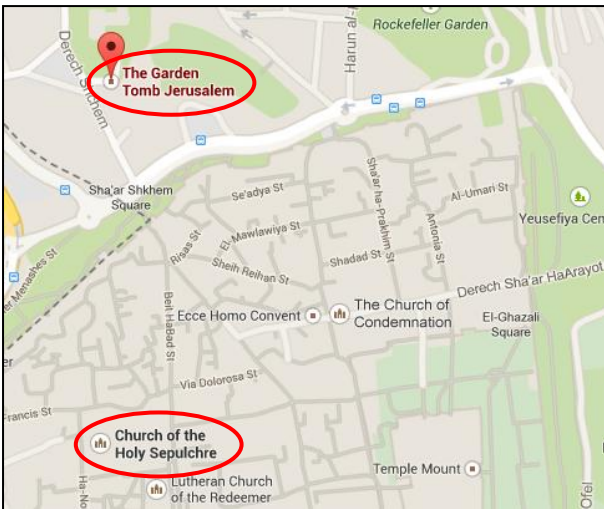
Names (also known as)

Sepulchre; Tomb; The place where the Lord lay.

Etymology

Sepulchre/tomb – Strong’s G5028 *taphos* – 7 times NT - burial chamber or tomb. Also Strong’s G3419 *mnemeion* – 42 times NT - burial chamber or tomb; from G3420 *mneme* – memory. Translated once as ‘remembrance’ – 2 Pet. 1:15.

Location/Description



The Biblical description of the tomb in which Christ was laid is as follows:

1. It was near the place of crucifixion - John 19:41.
2. It was in a garden - John 19:41; further it appears that it was well tended, probably on account of Joseph - John 20:15.
3. It was a tomb that was previously unused – Matt. 27:60; John 19:41.
4. It was hewn out a rock – Matt. 27:60.
5. There was a stone door that was rolled - Matt. 27:60.
6. It was owned by a rich private individual, Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of the Lord – Matt. 27:57.

At least two places have competed in history for the right of being called the place where the Lord was laid and from which he rose to life again and was then immortalised. These are:

- The church of the Holy Sepulchre (within the walls of Old Jerusalem today; and
- The Garden Tomb (north of the Damascus Gate).

Scriptural references

New Testament

Matt. 27:60,61,64,66; 28:1,8; Mark 15:46; 16:2,3,5,8; Luke 23:53,55; 24:1,2,9,12,22,24; John 19:41,42; 20:1,2,3,4,6,8,11; Acts 13:29

Famous characters

Joseph of Arimathea
Christ
The resurrection angels

Archaeological examples

Herod’s tomb, adjacent to the king David Hotel in David Hamelekh Street, Jerusalem is perhaps the finest example of a tomb with a rolling stone.



The garden tomb (north of the Damascus Gate – pictured above) is considered by some to be the place where the Lord was laid on account of the location of the adjacent “place of the skull” as indicated by Gordon in the 1880’s.

The photo below taken in 1901 is of “the place of the skull”.



Brief history

The earliest burial-places on record were caves. So Sarah was buried in a cave at Machpelah (Gen. 23), and then Abraham (Gen. 25:9) and the other patriarchs (Gen. 49:29; 50:13).

Samuel is said to have been buried "in his house at Ramah" (1 Sam. 25:1). Of King Asa it is said - "they buried him in his own sepulchre which he had digged for himself in the city of David" (2 Chron. 16:14). Elisha was buried in a cave (2 Kings 13:21) and so was Lazarus (John 11:38).

Similarly, the sepulchre in which Christ was laid was a new cave which Joseph of Arimathea had "hewn out in the rock" for himself (Matt. 27:60).



Above: The 'skull' escarpment thought to be Golgotha (the sign in front has a photograph from 1880 of the same place)

Ancient burials

Ancient burial methods differed markedly from modern practice. On death the body was interred within a stone sarcophagus, or laid wrapped in a stone trench in the centre of the tomb. Following decomposition, the bones were collected and placed within a smaller box, often ornate in case of dignitaries, called an ossuary. The length of the box was dictated by the longest bone in the body, the femur, the upper leg bone. The box then was placed in a niche to the side of the tomb, called a Loculi. Because the smaller volume of the contents, there was space provided then for collection of generations of the same family, a practice captured in the Bible expression "gathered to his people".

Gen. 25:8 - Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre

In the early 2nd century AD, the site of the present Church had been a temple of Aphrodite; several ancient writers alternatively describe it as a temple to Venus, the Roman equivalent to Aphrodite. Eusebius claims, in his Life of Constantine, that the site of the Church had originally been a Christian place of veneration, but that Hadrian had deliberately covered these Christian sites with earth, and built his own temple on top, due to his hatred for Christianity. Although Eusebius does not say as much, the temple of Aphrodite was probably built as part of Hadrian's reconstruction of Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina in 135 AD, following the destruction of the Jewish Revolt of 70 AD and the Bar Kokhba revolt of 132–135 AD.

Today it also serves as the headquarters of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, while control of the building is shared between several Christian churches and secular entities in complicated arrangements essentially unchanged for centuries. Today, the church is home to branches of Eastern Orthodoxy and Oriental Orthodoxy as well as to Roman Catholicism. Anglicans and Protestants have no permanent presence in the Church and some have regarded the Garden Tomb, elsewhere in Jerusalem, as the true place of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.

Sources:

L Ritmeyer; Jerusalem in the year 30 AD pg. 60
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History>

(Compilers – Peter Boon/Jim Cowie)