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# The Rod of an Almond Tree in God's Master Plan (Online Edition)

by Peter and Christie Michas

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## Chapter 3

### The Mount of Olives - True Site of the Resurrection

Therefore on account of the Jewish day of preparation, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus [Yeshua] there (John 19:42).

And Joseph [of Arimathea] took the body [of Yeshua] and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away (Matthew 27:59-60).

But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she beheld two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus [Yeshua] had been lying (John 20:11-12).

In Chapter 2 "The Mount of Olives – True Site of the Crucifixion", we proved from the Word of God that the crucifixion took place at the summit of the Mount of Olives. The Word of God also tells us that Yeshua's body was placed in a tomb near the place of the crucifixion:

Therefore on account of the Jewish day of preparation, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus [Yeshua] there (John 19:42).

Therefore, the tomb was also located on the Mount of Olives. There is a unique tomb that has been discovered at the summit of the Mount of Olives near the crucifixion site: the tomb located under the Church of the Pater Noster.<sup>1</sup> This tomb is the only tomb in the area closest to the crucifixion site that fits the Biblical description for the tomb of the resurrection: a new tomb at the time of Yeshua; located in a garden/olive orchard; and a rolling stone tomb, a rare type of tomb in Jerusalem and Israel. Also, the tomb is located at a particular site associated with early believers in Messiah Yeshua.

### **PATER NOSTER TOMB FITS THE BIBLICAL DESCRIPTION OF YESHUA'S TOMB**

The tomb at the Church of the Pater Noster fits every detail of the Biblical description of Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, where Yeshua's body was placed:

1. Near the crucifixion site "outside the camp", "outside the [Eastern] gate", where the Red Heifer was sacrificed and burned, and where the carcasses (remains) of the Day of Atonement sacrifices were burned (John 19:42; Hebrews 13:11-13).
2. Near the crucifixion site Golgotha (Matthew 27:33; Mark 15:22; John 19:17).
3. First-century tomb.
4. Rolling stone tomb, rare type of tomb in Jerusalem and Israel (Matthew 27:60, 28:2; Mark 15:46; 16:3-4; Luke 24:2).
5. Most preferred Jewish burial site and affordable by Joseph of Arimathea.
6. Gate of Heaven above the summit of the Mount of Olives, the highest place opposite the Temple Mount and city of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 11:23).
7. In an olive-orchard garden (John 19:41).
8. Qualifies as a new tomb (Matthew 27:59-60; Luke 23:53; John 19:41).
9. Fits description of two angels inside the tomb (John 20:11-12).
10. Near Bethany, were Yeshua and His disciples resided during Passover (Matthew 21:17; Mark 11:11; Luke 19:29; John 12:1).

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<sup>1</sup> "Pater Noster" is Latin for "Our Father". The cave under Pater Noster Church is by later tradition identified as the place where Messiah Yeshua taught the "Our Father", the Lord's Prayer. The *kokim* tomb on the west side under the church was not part of the original cave (Joan E. Taylor, *Christians and The Holy Places: The myth of Jewish-Christian origins*, p. 144).

11. Near tombs of Jerusalem church members at Dominus Flevit.
12. Early Christians associated the site with Yeshua and His disciples.

### **Near the Crucifixion Site “Outside the Camp”, “Outside the Gate”**

The tomb at the Church of the Pater Noster is located near the place “outside the camp”, “outside the [East] gate”, where Yeshua was crucified:

Therefore on account of the Jewish day of preparation, because THE TOMB WAS NEARBY, they laid Jesus [Yeshua] there (John 19:42, emphasis added).

As detailed in Chapter 2 “The Mount of Olives – True Site of the Crucifixion”, the crucifixion took place on the summit of the Mount of Olives in a specific place called “outside the camp” and “outside the gate” – the designated place outside the Eastern Gate of the Temple where the Red Heifer was sacrificed and burned, and the carcasses (remains) of the Day of Atonement sacrifices were burned.

### **Near the Crucifixion Site “Golgotha”**

The tomb at the Church of the Pater Noster is located near Golgotha (Matthew 27:33; Mark 15:22; John 19:17), approximately 100 feet south and slightly east of the crucifixion site, as described in detail in Chapter 2 (section “Golgotha – The Summit of the Mount of Olives”).

### **First-Century Tomb**

The tomb at the Church of the Pater Noster is a first-century tomb, the time of Yeshua:

The unroofed church has steps leading down into the cave, which was partially collapsed when discovered in 1910. It is an interesting medley of ancient rock cuttings, concrete supports and marble furnishings. THE CAVE CUTS PARTLY INTO A 1ST-CENTURY TOMB (emphasis added).<sup>2</sup>

The tomb is of the *kokim* (*kokhim*) type:

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/israel/jerusalem-church-of-pater-noster>

The *kokhim* tomb on the west side [of the cave under the Church of the Pater Noster] was not part of the original cave, but was broken into at the time of the Constantinian expansion of the grotto, and then resealed”.<sup>3</sup>

The burial chambers inside the tomb are horizontal shafts called *kokim* (*kok* - singular):

Another development of the chamber tomb was that in which the burial places in the inner chamber or chambers consisted of horizontal shafts or niches driven straight back into the walls. Such a shaft was ordinarily quadrangular or perhaps vaulted, and of such dimensions as to accommodate a body put into it lengthwise and probably head first.<sup>4</sup>

At Jerusalem the great majority of ancient tombs are of this type, and date approximately from 150 B.C. to A.D. 150. It may fairly be said that this type of tomb virtually became the canonical form of the Jewish family grave.<sup>5</sup>

### **Rolling Stone Tomb – Rare Type of Tomb in Jerusalem and Israel**

The tomb at the Church of the Pater Noster is a rolling stone tomb, a very rare type of tomb in Jerusalem and Israel.

The New Testament accounts tell us that Yeshua’s body was placed in a rolling stone tomb (Matthew 27:60, 28:2; Mark 15:46; 16:3-4; Luke 24:2):

And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he **ROLLED A LARGE STONE AGAINST THE ENTRANCE OF THE TOMB** and went away (Matthew 27:59-60, emphasis added).

And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and **ROLLED AWAY THE STONE** and sat upon it (Matthew 28:2, emphasis added).

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<sup>3</sup> Joan E. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places*, p. 144.

<sup>4</sup> Jack Finegan, *The Archeology of the New Testament*, p. 296-297.

<sup>5</sup> Finegan, p. 297.

And Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and HE ROLLED A STONE AGAINST THE ENTRANCE OF THE TOMB (Mark 15:46, emphasis added).

And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” And looking up, they saw that THE STONE HAD BEEN ROLLED AWAY, although it was extremely large (Mark 16:3-4, emphasis added).

And they found THE STONE ROLLED AWAY from the tomb (Luke 24:2, emphasis added)

The Greek word *proskulio* (Strong’s #4351) means “to roll”<sup>6</sup> or “roll (up to)”<sup>7</sup>. The use of this Greek word shows that the stone was a round rolling stone, not a square or rectangular blocking stone. A rolling stone was a round stone placed in a channel that could be rolled to either close or open a tomb. Rolling stones were “a type of closure typical of the late Jewish period up to AD 70.”<sup>8</sup>

Rolling stone tombs are very rare throughout Israel, including Jerusalem. The six documented round rolling stone (*golel*) tombs in Jerusalem are: the Tomb of Helene (the Tomb of the Kings), Herod’s family tomb, the Nicophoria tomb (east of Herod’s family tomb), a tomb on Mount Scopus (the northern peak of the Mount of Olives), a tomb in the Kidron Valley, and the Hinnom Valley tomb.<sup>9</sup> On the east side of the Mount of Olives at Bethphage, there is a rolling stone tomb with the rolling stone still in place in front of the entrance.<sup>10</sup>

The Pater Noster tomb is a rolling stone tomb. On several trips to Israel from 1979 through the 1980s (1979, 1980, 1981, 1984, 1986, 1987), Peter Michas saw the rolling stone in place at the entrance of the tomb, in the channel and positioned to the left side of the entrance. In 1989, Peter saw that the rolling stone had been removed to a place unknown to him.

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<sup>6</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible, Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 61.

<sup>7</sup> William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Second Edition), p. 716.

<sup>8</sup> Finegan, p. 46.

<sup>9</sup> Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period*, p. 64.

<http://blog.bibleplaces.com/2011/09/rolling-stone-tombs-in-jerusalem.html>

<sup>10</sup> Finegan, p. 165.

In 1991, Christie Michas saw the rolling stone which had been removed from the entrance of the tomb, and at that time was placed against the outer wall of the enclosure building covering the cave and tomb area. During our following visit to Israel in 1994, Peter and Christie saw that the rolling stone had been moved from this location, apparently to another location unknown to us, and we have not seen it on subsequent trips to Israel (1996, 2000, 2005).

We have been unable to find any information regarding the rolling stone associated with the Church of the Pater Noster tomb in Finegan's *The Archeology of the New Testament* or in any other reliable source. But the fact that the Pater Noster tomb is a rolling stone tomb is a critical piece of information because rolling stone tombs are so rare in Jerusalem and throughout Israel. When Constantine built the Eleona Church on this site, the tomb was broken into and then resealed.<sup>11</sup> At that time, no special significance of a rolling stone tomb on the summit of the Mount of Olives would have been recognized since Constantine had already (incorrectly) selected the site for the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

Beginning in 1910, the Eleona Church ruins were identified and excavated by L. H. Vincent and the Dominicans.<sup>12</sup> As Vincent was a French archeologist, we assume his original work would have been in French. Unfortunately, we have been unable to find out if Vincent documented the rolling stone tomb under the Eleona Church. Because the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was a firmly established tradition of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches by the time of this excavation, no special significance would have been attributed to the discovery of a rolling stone tomb on the summit of the Mount of Olives.

### **Most Preferred Jewish Burial Site and Affordable by Wealthy Joseph of Arimathea**

The tomb at the Church of the Pater Noster is located on the Mount of Olives, the most preferred site for Jewish burial since ancient times:

Jews have sought since antiquity to be buried on the Mount of Olives, where according to the Bible (Zech 14:4) the resurrection will begin when the Messiah comes. Eventually, the cemetery grew to cover the entire western and much of

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<sup>11</sup> Taylor, p. 144.

<sup>12</sup> Finegan, p. 166.



the southern slopes.<sup>13</sup>

In Jewish tradition, the Messiah will descend [on] the Mount of Olives on Judgement Day and enter Jerusalem through the Golden Gate (the blocked-up double gate in the centre of the eastern wall of the Temple Mount, also known as the Gate of Mercy, or the Beautiful Gate).

For this reason, Jews have always sought to be buried on the slopes of the mount. The area serves as one of Jerusalem's main cemeteries, with an estimated 150,000 graves [from ancient to modern times].<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, the resurrection did begin on the Mount of Olives, with the resurrection of Messiah Yeshua:

But now Christ [Messiah] has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Yeshua was the first to resurrect. The resurrection of the dead, when those in Heaven and those still alive on earth, will receive their immortal resurrection bodies, will take place at the "Catching Up", referred to as the Rapture:

Behold, I [Paul] tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep [die], but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

When the Rapture takes place, the angels of the Lord will gather His people from all over the earth to be with Him in Heaven for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb:

"And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other" (Matthew 24:31).

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<sup>13</sup>[www.goisrael.com/Tourism\\_Eng/Tourist+information/Jewish+Themes/Jewish\\_Sites/Mount+of+Olives+Jewish+Cemetery+jew.htm](http://www.goisrael.com/Tourism_Eng/Tourist+information/Jewish+Themes/Jewish_Sites/Mount+of+Olives+Jewish+Cemetery+jew.htm) - Go Israel, "The Jewish Cemetery on the Mount of Olives".

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.seetheholyland.net/mount-of-olives/>

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7).

The Word of God shows that the Gate of Heaven is located above the Mount of Olives. After the Shekinah (Glory Cloud) – the manifestation of God’s presence – left the First (Solomon’s) Temple, it moved eastward and rested above the Mount of Olives for a time until it ascended into Heaven (Ezekiel 10; 11:22-23). This is why Messiah Yeshua also ascended from the summit of the Mount of Olives into Heaven (Acts 1:9-12). And this is why He will descend on to the Mount of Olives when He returns:

And in that day His [the Lord Messiah Yeshua’s] feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west be a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south (Zechariah 14:4).

Joseph of Arimathea, as a wealthy Jew, would have selected the most desirable place for a new tomb (Matthew 27:60; Luke 23:53; John 19:41): the summit of the Mount of Olives, directly facing the Temple. The tomb under the Church of the Pater Noster is located on the summit of the Mount of Olives, directly opposite the Temple Mount. And we will see that not only Yeshua was laid in a tomb on the Mount of Olives, but also several members of the Jerusalem Church.

### **Gate of Heaven Above the Mount of Olives**

The tomb at the Church of the Pater Noster is located on the summit of the Mount of Olives, above which is the Gate of Heaven.

From Heaven, the Shekinah (Glory Cloud), a manifestation of God’s presence, came to fill the First Temple built by King Solomon (1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chronicles 5:13-14; 7:2):

Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, to the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim (1 Kings 8:6).

And it came about when the priests came from the holy place, that THE CLOUD [SHEKINAH] FILLED THE HOUSE OF THE LORD, so that the priests could

not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD (1 Kings 8:10-11, emphasis added).

During the time of the First Temple, the Shekinah was the visible manifestation of God's presence in the Holy of Holies, where the Ark of the Covenant stood.

Prior to the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians, the prophet Ezekiel had a vision of the Shekinah departing from the Temple and moving eastward to a position above the Mount of Olives:

Then THE GLORY OF THE LORD WENT UP FROM THE CHERUB TO THE THRESHOLD of the temple, and the temple was filled with the cloud, and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the LORD (Ezekiel 10:4, emphasis added).

Then THE GLORY OF THE LORD DEPARTED FROM THE THRESHOLD of the temple and stood over the cherubim. When the cherubim departed, they lifted their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight with the wheels beside them; and they stood still at the entrance of the east gate of the LORD'S house. And the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them (Ezekiel 10:18-19, emphasis added).

Then the cherubim lifted up their wings with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them. And THE GLORY OF THE LORD WENT UP FROM THE MIDST OF THE CITY, AND STOOD OVER THE MOUNTAIN WHICH IS EAST OF THE CITY [THE MOUNT OF OLIVES] (Ezekiel 11:22-23, emphasis added).

The Shekinah stood above the Mount of Olives and subsequently ascended into Heaven through the Gate of Heaven located above the mountain summit.

In a vision of the future, Ezekiel saw the return of the Shekinah from the direction of the Mount of Olives:

Then he led me to the gate [of the Temple], the gate facing toward the east; and behold, THE GLORY [SHEKINAH] OF THE GOD OF ISRAEL WAS COMING FROM THE WAY OF THE EAST. And His voice was like the sound

of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. And it was like the appearance of the vision which I saw, like the vision which I saw when He came to destroy the city. And the visions were like the vision which I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face. AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD CAME INTO THE HOUSE [TEMPLE] BY THE WAY OF THE GATE FACING TOWARD THE EAST. And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, THE GLORY OF THE LORD FILLED THE HOUSE [TEMPLE] (Ezekiel 43:1-5, emphasis added).

The Shekinah will return from Heaven above the Mount of Olives and move from the east to the west, through the Eastern Gate of the Temple Mount, and into Ezekiel's Temple that will stand during the Millennial Kingdom/Messianic Age.

The pattern revealed in the movement of the Shekinah into Heaven from above the Mount of Olives and back from Heaven above the Mount of Olives clearly shows that the Gate of Heaven is located above the Mount of Olives. This is why Yeshua ascended into Heaven from the Mount of Olives:

And after He [Yeshua] had said these things, HE WAS LIFTED UP while they were looking on, and a CLOUD [SHEKINAH/GLORY CLOUD] received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? THIS JESUS [YESHUA], WHO HAS BEEN TAKEN UP FROM YOU INTO HEAVEN, WILL COME IN JUST THE SAME WAY AS YOU HAVE WATCHED HIM GO INTO HEAVEN." Then they returned to Jerusalem from THE MOUNT CALLED OLIVET [THE MOUNT OF OLIVES], which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away (Acts 1:9-12, emphasis added).

As the disciples watched Yeshua ascend into Heaven from the summit of the Mount of Olives, they were told by "two men in white" (angelic beings or human beings ascending with Yeshua) that Yeshua would return in the same way that they saw Him ascend. This means that when Yeshua returns, He will descend in the Shekinah (Glory Cloud) from Heaven to the summit of the Mount of Olives. This is exactly what the prophet Zechariah prophesied:

And in that day HIS FEET WILL STAND ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, WHICH IS IN FRONT OF JERUSALEM ON THE EAST; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south (Zechariah 14:4, emphasis added).

Yeshua also tells us that at His return, He will come from the east, referring to the Mount of Olives, which is located east of the Temple Mount and the city of Jerusalem:

“For just as the lightning comes FROM THE EAST, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:27, emphasis added).

Like lightning flashing from the east to the west, so shall the brilliant light of Yeshua’s coming be seen as He descends from Heaven above the Mount of Olives. From the Mount of Olives, He will move west to the Temple Mount. The first time He came humbly, riding a donkey colt, into Jerusalem. At His Second Coming, He will come in great glory as King Messiah to rule for a thousand years!

and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory (Matthew 24:30).

The Word of God clearly shows us that the Gate of Heaven is located above the Mount of Olives. Therefore, we can see that the Mount of Olives fits the Scriptural and prophetic pattern as the site of the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and Second Coming of Messiah Yeshua.

### **In an Olive Orchard Garden**

The Church of the Pater Noster tomb was located “in a garden” at the time of Yeshua:

Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and IN THE GARDEN A NEW TOMB, in which no one had yet been laid (John 19:41, emphasis added).

The garden refers to an olive tree orchard on the Mount of Olives. During the time of Yeshua, the Mount of Olives was covered with olive trees. That is why it is called *Har Hazeitim*, meaning “Mount of the Olives”, to this day.

In Acts 1:12 the reference to “the mount called Olivet” comes from the Greek:

where *ελαιων*, olive grove, is a proper noun and the phrase means literally, ‘from the mountain called Olive Grove,’ i.e., the Mount of Olives; cf. the Latin *mons oliveti*, ‘the mountain of the olive grove [*olivetum*],’ i.e., the Mount of Olives, whence English ‘Olivet’; so also in Lk 19:29; 21:37), which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away.<sup>15</sup>

Today, there is an olive tree grove next to the crucifixion site (as we have identified it) and another olive tree grove next to the Church of the Pater Noster. Even though the Romans cut down all the trees on the Mount of Olives during the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, today there are many olive trees again growing there because of the ideal conditions for olive trees. In fact, olive trees estimated up to 2,000 years old have regrown from the roots of ancient olive trees.

The name Eleona, meaning “olive garden”, was given to the Mount of Olives and also to the basilica (church) that Constantine built on the summit of the Mount of Olives, in the very same place that the Church of the Pater Noster now stands:

‘Eleona’ appears to have been the name of the Mount of Olives in the Jerusalem speech of the day [during the time of Egeria/Atheria’s pilgrimage in the 380s], which attached the Aramaic/Syriac emphatic ending *-a* to the Greek word *ελαιων* ‘olive garden’.<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, the garden referred to in the area of the crucifixion and resurrection was an olive tree grove/orchard. The tomb at the Church of the Pater Noster certainly fits the Biblical description.

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<sup>15</sup> Finegan, p. 165.

<sup>16</sup> Taylor, p. 144.

## **Qualifies as a New Tomb**

The tomb at the Church of the Pater Noster is from the time of Yeshua:

The unroofed church has steps leading down into the cave, which was partially collapsed when discovered in 1910. It is an interesting medley of ancient rock cuttings, concrete supports and marble furnishings. **THE CAVE CUTS PARTLY INTO A 1ST-CENTURY TOMB** (emphasis added).<sup>17</sup>

According to the Gospel accounts, Yeshua's body was placed in a new tomb where no other body had ever been placed:

And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own **NEW TOMB**, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away (Matthew 27:59-60, emphasis added).

And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, **WHERE NO ONE HAD EVER LAIN** (Luke 23:53, emphasis added).

Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a **NEW TOMB, IN WHICH NO ONE HAD YET BEEN LAID** (John 19:41, emphasis added).

## **Fits Description of Two Angels Inside the Tomb**

The tomb at the Church of the Pater Noster fits the Biblical description of Mary looking inside and seeing two angels sitting where Yeshua's body had been placed:

But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she beheld **TWO ANGELS IN WHITE SITTING, ONE AT THE HEAD, AND ONE AT THE FEET, WHERE THE BODY OF JESUS HAD BEEN LYING** (John 20:11-12, emphasis added).

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/israel/jerusalem-church-of-pater-noster>

As one enters the tomb, there is a central area approximately 12 feet by 9-10 feet,<sup>18</sup> where Yeshua's body would have been placed. Since preparation of the body had not been completed (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56; 24:1), it would not yet have been placed into one of the horizontal burial shafts (*kokim*). As one looks into the tomb, the area where the body would have been placed is easily visible, and the space adequate for the two angels to sit where Yeshua's head and feet had been.

### **Near Bethany Where Yeshua and His Disciples Resided During Passover**

The tomb of the Church of the Pater Noster is near Bethany, where Yeshua and His disciples resided during the Passover festival. The ancient village of Bethany<sup>19</sup> was located on the southeastern side of the Mount of Olives, about two miles from Jerusalem.

Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off (John 11:18).

Jesus [Yeshua], therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead (John 12:1).

Yeshua went back and forth between Bethany and Jerusalem during the Passover period leading up to His crucifixion:

And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and lodged there. Now in the morning, when He returned to the city, He became hungry. (Matthew 21:17-18).

Yeshua went from the area of Bethany to the Temple during His "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem, and returned to Bethany with His twelve disciples:

And it came about that when He approached Bethphage and Bethany, near the mount that is called Olivet [the Mount of Olives], He sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village opposite you, in which as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it, and bring it here (Luke 19:29-30).

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<sup>18</sup> Taylor, p. 145 (Figure 12).

<sup>19</sup> Today, the village of el-Azariyeh, whose Arabic name is derived from the ancient name Lazarium (Lazarus), is located in the same place (Finegan, pp. 156-157).



And He entered Jerusalem and came into the temple; and after looking all around, He departed for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late (Mark 11:11).

On the day of Yeshua's resurrection, His disciples, who were residing in Bethany, made multiple trips to and from the tomb (Matthew 28:1, 8; Mark 16:1, 10; Luke 24:1, 9-12; John 20:1-18). As the distance from Bethany to the tomb at the Church of the Pater Noster would be about a fifteen-to-twenty-minute walk, this would have been easier and quicker as compared to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher tomb and the Garden tomb, both of which would have more than doubled the distance.

### **Near Tombs of Jerusalem Church Members at Dominus Flevit**

The tomb at the Church of the Pater Noster is located near the tombs of Dominus Flevit, where several of Yeshua's disciples were buried. Dominus Flevit is located on the western slope of the Mount of Olives, approximately 820 feet (0.15 mile) west of the Church of the Pater Noster.<sup>20</sup>

About halfway down the direct descent on the west side from the summit of the Mount of Olives is the site known as *Dominus flevit*, the name embodying the tradition that this is the place where "the Lord wept" over Jerusalem (Lk 19:41).<sup>21</sup>

The site is the location of a Franciscan monastery and chapel, marking the traditional place where Yeshua wept over the city (Luke 19:41).<sup>22</sup> During excavations of the site in 1953, hundreds of ancient tombs were discovered, including those of prominent members of the Jerusalem church, including the apostle Peter:

The Franciscans began excavations in 1953 at Dominus flevit and found a very extensive ancient cemetery with many hundreds of graves. According to the accompanying materials that were discovered, including coins, pottery, and objects of glass and stone, the burials belonged to two distinct periods. The first period was 135 B.C.-A.D. 70 (or possibly 135), and the graves were of the kokim type. ... The second period was that of the third and fourth, especially the fourth, centuries, and the graves were characterized by arcosolia. ... In the graves were

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<sup>20</sup> See photo of Dominus Flevit at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/seetheholyland/4167586701>

<sup>21</sup> Finegan, p. 171.

<sup>22</sup> *Dominus flevit* is Latin for "The Lord wept".

seven sarcophagi and 122 ossuaries [bone boxes], or fragments thereof. All of these were from the first period, which is in accordance with the otherwise supported opinion that ossuaries were used at Jerusalem only until A.D. 70 or 135. ... In the judgment of some scholars, **SOME OF THE OSSUARY INSCRIPTIONS AND MARKS REPRESENT EARLY JEWISH CHRISTIANITY ...** (emphasis added).<sup>23</sup>

... **MOST OF THE OSSUARY INSCRIPTIONS AT DOMINUS FLEVIT PROBABLY BELONG TO THE FIRST PART OF THE FIRST CENTURY OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA ...** (emphasis added).<sup>24</sup>

Many names on the ossuaries are those of New Testament believers, including the names of both Martha and Miriam (Mary) on the same ossuary; Eleazar (Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary); and Salome (buried in the same burial place as Martha and Mary).<sup>25</sup>

The name of Simeon (Simon) bar Jonah was also discovered on one of the ossuaries at Dominus Flevit. Simon was also called Peter, one of the twelve disciples of Messiah Yeshua:

And walking by the Sea of Galilee, He [Yeshua] saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen (Matthew 4:18).

And Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the living God.” And Jesus [Yeshua] answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, **SIMON BARJONA [SIMON BAR JONAH]**, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 16:16-17, emphasis added).

“Simon” comes from the Hebrew name “Simeon” and “Bar” is Aramaic for “son”. Therefore, the name on the ossuary is “Simon, son of Jonah”, the same way Yeshua addressed Peter. While the name “Simeon” was popular at the time,<sup>26</sup> the name “Jonah” was not. This makes the inscription on the ossuary much more specific. In addition, Peter’s ossuary:

...was found within twelve feet from the place where the remains of Mary,

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<sup>23</sup> Finegan, p. 172.

<sup>24</sup> Finegan, p. 368.

<sup>25</sup> Finegan, p. 370.

<sup>26</sup> Finegan, p. 368.

Martha and Lazarus were found—the remains of St. Peter ... were found in an ossuary, on the outside of which was clearly and beautifully written in Aramaic, "Simon Bar Jona [Jonah]".<sup>27</sup>

According to F. Paul Peterson:

I talked to a Yale professor, who is an archaeologist, and was director of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem. He told me that it would be very improbable that a name with three words, and one so complete, could refer to any other than St. Peter.

But what makes the possibility of error more remote is that the remains were found in a Christian burial ground, and more yet, of the first century, the very time in which Peter lived. In fact, I have a letter from a noted scientist stating that he can tell by the writing that it was written just before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 A.D.<sup>28</sup>

All the evidence points to the ossuary being Peter's. This is consistent with the Word of God telling us that Peter was the apostle to the (circumcised) Jews (Galatians 2:7) while Paul was the apostle to the (uncircumcised) Gentiles (Galatians 2:7; Romans 11:13; 1 Timothy 2:7). There is no historical evidence that Peter ever went to Rome but the Bible clearly shows that Paul did.

Yeshua and His disciples spent a great deal of time on the Mount of Olives. It was on the Mount of Olives opposite the Temple that Yeshua told them about the coming destruction of the Temple as well as His Second Coming (Matthew 24:3; Mark 13:3). It was on the Mount of Olives that Yeshua was crucified, resurrected, and ascended into Heaven (Hebrews 13:11-13; Luke 24:50; Acts 1:9-12). What more preferable place could Yeshua's followers have been buried than on the Mount of Olives, near the tomb of Yeshua's resurrection?

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<sup>27</sup> See F. Paul Peterson's "Peter's Tomb Recently Discovered in Jerusalem", 1960, 1971 (4<sup>th</sup> edition, out-of-print) at <http://www.aloha.net/~mikesch/peters-jerusalem-tomb.htm> for details and documentation of the discovery. The Papacy has suppressed the evidence that Peter was buried in Jerusalem. In "The Search for St. Peter" episode of *The Naked Archaeologist* series, Simcha Jacobovici also shows that Peter's ossuary was discovered in Jerusalem at Dominus Flevit. The Roman Catholic authorities did not allow him to see the ossuary even though he had made an appointment to do so. Peter Michas had the same experience in 2000. The Catholic Church's claim that Peter was buried in Rome is based on later tradition, not historical, archeological, or Scriptural evidence.

<sup>28</sup> Peterson (<http://www.aloha.net/~mikesch/peters-jerusalem-tomb.htm>).

## Early Christians Associated Site with Messiah Yeshua and His Disciples

The tomb at the Church of the Pater Noster was near a cave that early Christians associated with Yeshua and His disciples:

the Acts of John is probably reflecting (in a Gnostic way) a tradition of Christian belief about the cave on the mount of Olives, which at the time it was written was already accepted by the Jerusalem church. The Gnostic author thus takes this cave as the scene for his particular version of a story of teaching and ascension, because it is already associated with teaching and ascension in the orthodox Christian tradition.<sup>29</sup>

Apparently, this particular cave on the summit of the Mount of Olives was associated with the teachings of Yeshua from a very early time, going back to the time of the first believers in the Jerusalem church. The *Acts of John*, a Gnostic writing dating to the start of the third century, seems to be based upon this very early tradition but incorrectly interprets the significance of the cave according to erroneous Gnostic beliefs.<sup>30</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church of the Pater Noster is located on the summit of the Mount of Olives, opposite the Temple Mount:

The site is 70 meters [230 feet] south and slightly west of the absolute summit of the ridge where the Ascension Mosque ... stands.<sup>31</sup>

The name Pater Noster (Latin meaning “Our Father”) comes from the later tradition that Yeshua taught His disciples the Lord’s Prayer at this location.<sup>32</sup>

The Church of the Pater Noster was built on the site of the Byzantine church (basilica) erected by the Roman Emperor Constantine in the 4<sup>th</sup> century to commemorate the Ascension of Messiah Yeshua.<sup>33</sup> By the 380s, the church was called Eleona (“Olive Garden”), the same name for the Mount of Olives at that time.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Taylor, p. 146, #6 footnote: *Pace* Wilkinson (1976), 84.

<sup>30</sup> Taylor, pp. 144, 146.

<sup>31</sup> Finegan, p. 166.

<sup>32</sup> For photos and history of the Church of the Pater Noster, see <http://www.biblewalks.com/Sites/PaterNoster.html>

<sup>33</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church\\_of\\_the\\_Pater\\_Noster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_the_Pater_Noster)

<sup>34</sup> Finegan, p. 166.

The Eleona Church (about 100 feet in length) was built over the cave-crypt, located under the west end of the church.<sup>35</sup> The church historian Eusebius (A.D. 260-340) recorded that the church was built over a cave linked with the Ascension.<sup>36</sup>

The partially rebuilt cave, which acquired its sizeable dimensions in the fourth century, is associated with the present Church of the Pater Noster and Carmelite Convent. The cave is no longer extant in its Byzantine form but has been used as the basis for the present cave chapel. **THE *KOKHIM* TOMB ON THE WEST SIDE WAS NOT PART OF THE ORIGINAL CAVE, BUT WAS BROKEN INTO AT THE TIME OF THE CONSTANTINIAN EXPANSION OF THE GROTTO, AND THEN RESEALED ... (emphasis added).**<sup>37</sup>

The tomb is located on the western end of the cave, as it exists today. This tomb was not part of the original cave, but very near to it. Later the cave was enlarged to include the entrance to the tomb, which opens into a smaller cave.

The cave chapel area as it is today is approximately 20 feet by 9 feet. The cave-tomb located on the west end of this cave has a central area approximately 12 feet by 10 ½ feet (south side) and 12 feet by 9 feet (north side).<sup>38</sup>

## **WHY THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHER TOMB CANNOT BE YESHUA'S TOMB**

The Roman Catholic/Eastern Orthodox traditional site of the crucifixion and resurrection is the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, located within the walled Old City of Jerusalem, west of the Temple Mount.<sup>39</sup> This site does not fit the Biblical, historical, or archeological evidence as either the site of the crucifixion or resurrection. There are several fundamental reasons why the tomb cannot be the tomb of Yeshua's resurrection:

1. Not located near the Red Heifer Site identified in Hebrews 13:11-13.
2. Site of no significance to early Christians.

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<sup>35</sup> Finegan, pp. 167-168.

<sup>36</sup> Life of Constantine, Book III, Chapter 41 (<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/25023.htm>).

<sup>37</sup> Taylor, p. 144.

<sup>38</sup> See Taylor, p. 145, Figure 12, for a detailed diagram of the tomb.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.biblewalks.com/Sites/Sepulcher.html>

3. Hadrian's selection of the Venus temple site fits the typical Roman city plan, not a deliberate attempt to cover up the crucifixion/resurrection site.
4. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher was built on a pre-existing pagan site, like the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.
5. Eusebius did not document alleged dreams, visions, and discovery of the alleged "True Cross" claimed to authenticate the site.
6. The site was too unstable at the time of Yeshua for a crucifixion to have been done there.
7. The tomb fits the design of Constantine's Basilica (Church), showing it was selected for that reason.
8. It is questionable whether the tomb is a rolling stone tomb.
9. It is questionable whether the tomb is a first-century tomb – if not, it cannot be a new tomb.
10. The claim of an empty tomb is invalid since all tombs were cleared in the area before it was incorporated into the city of Jerusalem in ancient times (A.D. 41-44).
11. Melito's statement "in the middle of Jerusalem" cannot be used as evidence for the site.

### **Not Located Near the Red Heifer Site Identified in Hebrews 13:11-13**

The Church of the Holy Sepulcher tomb cannot be Yeshua's tomb because it is located west of the Temple Mount, not east of the Temple Mount. The apostle John tells us that the tomb was located near the place of crucifixion (John 19:42). The author of the Book of Hebrews tells us the specific place where Yeshua was crucified was "outside the camp", "outside the [Eastern] gate", where the Red Heifer was sacrificed and burned, and where the carcasses (remains) of the Day of Atonement sacrifices were burned (Hebrews 13:11-13). The Red Heifer site was on the summit of the Mount of Olives, east of the Temple Mount. Therefore, the tomb at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher cannot be Yeshua's tomb. (See Chapter 2 "The Mount of Olives – True Site of the Crucifixion" for a detailed explanation of the Red Heifer site located on the summit of the Mount of Olives, opposite the Temple Mount.)

### **Site of No Significance To Early Christians**

There is absolutely no evidence of any kind that the Rock of Calvary [Golgotha of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher] was venerated by Christians prior to Byzantine developments.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Taylor, p. 134.

This means that the site was not identified as an important site to Christians prior to the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine and his selection of the site three hundred years after the event.

Furthermore:

It is striking that no pre-Constantinian source makes anything of, or even mentions, the offensive conjunction of a temple of Venus and Golgotha.<sup>41</sup>

This would not seem to have been the case if the site were authentic and the knowledge of the site passed down over time in the Christian community. Surely Christians would have considered the construction of a pagan temple over the crucifixion site and nearby tomb as deplorable

According to Eusebius, the official church historian and Emperor Constantine's biographer:

...as soon as the original surface of the ground, beneath the covering of earth, appeared, immediately, and CONTRARY TO ALL EXPECTATION, the venerable and hallowed monument of our Saviour's resurrection was discovered. ...this most holy cave ... (*Life of Constantine*, Book III, Chapter 28).<sup>42</sup>

Was Eusebius expressing doubts about the site by commenting that "contrary to all expectation" the Lord's tomb was discovered at this site? As Constantine's biographer and church historian, he was not in a position to openly criticize the emperor. And Constantine's order to build a splendid Christian basilica (dedicated in 335) on the site was obeyed without question by the Bishop of Jerusalem, who was commissioned to oversee the construction project.

### **Hadrian's Selection of Venus Temple Site Fits Typical Roman City Plan, Not Deliberate Attempt to Conceal the Crucifixion Site**

According to the Church of Rome's tradition, the Roman Emperor Hadrian deliberately built a temple to Venus over the site of Golgotha. However, if one looks at the plan of the Roman city Aelia Capitolina, the Roman city that replaced Jerusalem, one sees a typical pattern for Roman cities. That is, the temple(s), in this case, the temple to Venus, was/were built next to the Roman Forum (marketplace). This is typical of Roman city plans, including the city of Rome, with temples located near the Roman Forum.

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<sup>41</sup> Taylor, p.135.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/25023.htm>

To begin with, it is helpful to consider what we know about the area immediately around the temple of Venus in the late Roman period. The seventh-century *Chronicon Paschale* (i. 224 PG 92, 613) informs us that Aelia Capitolina had two civic centres, *demosia*. One of these has been found north of the Haram esh-Sharif [Temple Mount]. It is very probable indeed that the second civic centre, or forum, was located immediately south of the temple of Venus, in the region of the present Muristan. The Muristan was known by the medieval period as the traditional market-place of Jerusalem. Evidence of Hadrianic filling and levelling operations have been discovered here and under the Church of the Redeemer (see Map 4). These operations would have been undertaken to create a level space for the market region. CERTAINLY A FORUM NEXT TO A TEMPLE WOULD MAKE SENSE. As with the temple, it would have been connected to the main north-south street of the city, the *Cardo Maximus*, in both late Roman and Byzantine times, and also to the east-west *Decumanus I* (emphasis added).<sup>43</sup>

Dan Bahat's book, *The Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*, shows the plan of the pagan Roman city Aelia Capitolina that was constructed on the ruins of Jerusalem after its destruction in A.D. 70.<sup>44</sup> The temple of Venus (Aphrodite) was located on the northwest side of the Forum. The Camp of the Roman Tenth Legion was located south of the Forum. A main north-south street ran from the temple of Venus, along the western side of the Forum, and south all the way through the Camp of the Tenth Legion. Another north-south main street (that became the *Cardo Maximus* in Byzantine times) ran east of the temple and along the eastern side of the Forum.<sup>45</sup>

Wikipedia's article "Church of the Holy Sepulchre" confirms:

Hadrian's temple [to Aphrodite/Venus] had actually been located there because it was the junction of the main north-south road with one of the two main east-west roads and directly adjacent to the forum (which is now the location of the (smaller) Muristan); the forum itself had been placed, as is traditional in Roman towns, at the junction of the main north-south road with the (other) main east-

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<sup>43</sup> Taylor, p. 116.

<sup>44</sup> Dan Bahat, *The Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*, p. 59.

<sup>45</sup> Bahat, p. 59.



west road (which is now El-Bazar/David Street). The temple and forum together took up the entire space between the two main east-west roads ...<sup>46</sup>

### **Church of the Holy Sepulcher Built on Pre-Existing Pagan Site Like Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem**

We have previously shown that the site for the Venus temple was not chosen because it was the crucifixion site but because it fit the typical plan for a Roman city, temples being located next to the Forum (marketplace).

The general pattern that we see in Roman Christianity is the building of churches over pagan sites and converting pagan temples to churches. Just as Constantine built the Church of the Holy Sepulcher on a pagan site (where Venus was worshipped), he also built the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem on a pagan site (where Tammuz-Adonis was worshipped).

The Church of the Nativity was built over a cave claimed to be the place of Messiah Yeshua's birth. But the Word of God does not tell us that Yeshua was born in a cave. This false notion arose from the pagan concept of a god born from a rock (for example, Mithras).

Dedicated in 339, the Church of the Nativity was built over a cave where pagans worshipped the god Tammuz-Adonis, the same god whose worship by His own people so angered the Lord (Ezekiel 8:14):

This god inspired love and a feeling of trust that came close to salvation. Tammuz was also the shepherd who tends the flock, and in this aspect there was an emphasis on his death, with its corresponding mother's lament. ... It is no wonder that many aspects of the cult of Adonis would soon find their way into Christian rituals and festivals.<sup>47</sup>

**THERE IS NO EVIDENCE FOR THE EARLY CHRISTIAN VENERATION OF THE NATIVITY GROTTO IN BETHLEHEM.** The texts that are used to support a case for a Christian use of the cave prior to the fourth century fall into two categories. In the first place, there is the evidence of Justin Martyr, and the apocryphal stories, which place the birth of Christ somewhere outside Bethlehem in a cave. It has been argued that there are several possibilities that would explain

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<sup>46</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church\\_of\\_the\\_Holy\\_Sepulchre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_the_Holy_Sepulchre) (Section "Relationship to Temple of Aphrodite").

<sup>47</sup> Taylor, pp. 109-110.

why a cave should have been employed in this tradition, the most likely being that Justin assumed that the stable was a cave and perhaps made use of an apocryphal nativity story of a kind that utilized symbolic elements. The *Protoevangelium* popularized this view by developing the idea of the cave as a symbol, and CHRISTIANS VISITING PALESTINE, WHO WERE INFLUENCED BY APOCRYPHAL STORIES, CAME TO PRESUME THAT CHRIST'S BIRTH TOOK PLACE IN A CAVE. There are, in the second place, the writings of Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome, which together show that by the end of the third century, the famous cave where the mysteries of Tammuz-Adonis were celebrated was identified with the birthplace of Jesus; these do not continue the tradition of Justin, in which the cave is located outside the town, but rather demonstrate a BLENDING OF PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS. ... THERE IS NO SHRED OF EVIDENCE THAT MIGHT SUGGEST THAT JEWISH-CHRISTIANS VENERATED THIS CAVE (emphasis added).<sup>48</sup>

### **Eusebius Does Not Document Alleged Dreams, Visions, and Discovery of “True Cross” Claimed To Authenticate Site**

According to Roman Catholic tradition, Helena discovered three Roman crosses at the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.<sup>49</sup> Though church historian Eusebius, who lived at the time, describes in detail excavation of the site and construction of a church, he does not mention this finding. Even if wood/wood beams were discovered, there could be any number of possible explanations. For one, the area was a former quarry and wood beams were used to split rocks.

The story about the discovery of the so-called “True Cross” was not recorded until fifty-five years after the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was dedicated in 335:

...the story of the finding of the [alleged] True Cross was first written down in a (now lost) church history by Gelasius of Caesarea, c. 390.

Interestingly, in fifth-century accounts of the finding of the [alleged] True Cross, the site of Golgotha is completely unknown to the Jerusalem church. It is revealed to Constantine's mother Helena, who is guided to the right place—which just

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<sup>48</sup> Taylor, p. 112.

<sup>49</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/True\\_Cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/True_Cross)

happens to be the temple of Venus—BY DREAMS AND A HEAVENLY SIGN (cf. Rufinus, *Hist. Eccles.* x. 7; Socrates, *Hist. Eccles.* i. 17; Sozomen, *Hist. Eccles.* ii. 1-2). THE CHOICE OF SITE IS JUSTIFIED BY THE DISCOVERY OF THE CROSS, WHICH HAS [ALLEGED] MIRACULOUS POWERS OF HEALING (emphasis added).<sup>50</sup>

Dreams and visions that conflict with the Word of God cannot be trusted, even if accompanied by miraculous healings. One of the ways Satan works to deceive and mislead is through “signs and wonders”:

And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with THE ACTIVITY OF SATAN, WITH ALL POWER AND SIGNS AND FALSE WONDERS (2 Thessalonians 2:8-9, emphasis added).

What better way for Satan to obscure the true site of the crucifixion and resurrection than to work through deceptive visions and dreams and healing miracles? In the exact same place where an idol of the goddess Venus stood in the Roman temple now stands an idol of the goddess referred to as the “Virgin Mary” in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher – in violation of the Second Commandment (Exodus 20:4-5).<sup>51</sup>

### **Site Too Unstable for Crucifixion**

Due to the unstable nature of the rocky outcrop (incorrectly) identified as “Golgotha”, this site would not have been selected for the crucifixion:

The actual form of the rock was obscured, and no one realized just how unlikely a place it would have been for a crucifixion; it was naturally hollow and stood 12 metres [approximately 39 feet] above bedrock on the east, and 5 metres [approximately 16 feet] above bedrock on the west. In other words, any ROMAN SOLDIERS WHO WISHED TO CRUCIFY THREE PEOPLE ON TOP OF THIS

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<sup>50</sup> Taylor, p. 138.

<sup>51</sup> See photos of the crucifixion altar with silver icon of the “Virgin Mary” at <http://www.biblewalks.com/sites/Sepulcher.html>

UNSTABLE SPUR WOULD HAVE HAD TO OVERCOME ENORMOUS LOGISTICAL DIFFICULTIES, to say the least (emphasis added).<sup>52</sup>

### **Tomb Fits the Design of Constantine's Basilica (Church)**

The tomb seems to be conveniently located with regard to the architectural plan of the basilica (church), suggesting that the tomb was selected to fit the building design:

Moreover, it is curious that if the basilica was the paramount structure, and was not designed to focus on the tomb, the tomb is nevertheless in such a convenient place. It is close to being aligned with the basilica. If it was secondary, as the evidence suggests, then one might well be justified in wondering whether it was not so much that THIS TOMB was the first empty sepulchre to be recovered, but that it was THE ONE IN THE MOST APPROPRIATE PLACE FOR THE ARRANGMENT OF THE ARCHITECTURE.<sup>53</sup>

### **Questionable Whether Tomb Is Rolling Stone Tomb**

According to the article about the Church of the Holy Sepulcher at biblewalks.com, a fragment of the blocking stone is stored in the first chamber (Chapel of the Angel) adjoining the tomb.<sup>54</sup> Blocking stones are square or rectangular stone slabs used to block the entrance of a tomb. But the Gospel accounts clearly tell us that a stone was rolled into place to close the tomb, meaning that a round rolling stone, not a blocking stone, was used (Matthew 27:60, 28:2; Mark 15:46; 16:3-4; Luke 24:2).

If a rolling stone had been discovered at the time the tomb was uncovered during the time of Constantine, it seems that it would have been noted as significant and kept as evidence, based upon Gospel accounts regarding the presence of a rolling stone.

### **Questionable Whether Tomb Is First-Century "New" Tomb**

There is another problem with the Holy Sepulcher tomb that has to do with dating:

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<sup>52</sup> Taylor, pp. 131-132.

<sup>53</sup> Taylor, p. 140.

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.biblewalks.com/Sites/Sepulcher.html>

We cannot even establish that it was from the first century. It appears to have been rectangular, with an arcosolium bench on its northern side (cf. Adomnan, *De Loc. Sanct.* i. 2. I, 9-12), **BUT THIS TYPE OF TOMB WAS USED FOR MANY CENTURIES PRIOR TO THE TIME OF JESUS** (emphasis added).<sup>55</sup>

If the tomb was from before the time of Yeshua, it cannot be the newly hewn tomb as described in the Gospel accounts:

And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own **NEW TOMB**, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away (Matthew 27:59-60).

Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a **NEW TOMB**, in which no one had yet been laid (John 19:41).

### **Claim of Empty Tomb Invalid as All Tombs in the Area Cleared of Remains When Third Wall Built**

The claim of this tomb being found empty is not proof that it was Yeshua's tomb. According to Biblical/Jewish law, dead bodies were unclean (Numbers 19:11-16). Cemeteries had to be located outside the city. At the time of Yeshua, the area was outside the city wall but later incorporated into the city, at which time **ALL** remains from **EVERY** tomb in the area would have been removed and reburied outside the city.

The area under the temple of Venus and the forum—a former quarry—had been outside first-century Jerusalem. During the years 41-4, however, under the reign of Agrippa I, the region was included within the city by Agrippa's Third Wall.<sup>56</sup>

It is not completely astounding that the Constantinian workmen found an empty tomb in a place which was outside the city walls of Jesus' time, and then included inside. ... **THE AREA WOULD HAVE BEEN CLEARED OF CORPSES WHEN IT WAS INCLUDED IN AGRIPPA'S CITY** (emphasis added).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Taylor, p. 140.

<sup>56</sup> Taylor, p. 117.

<sup>57</sup> Taylor, p. 136.

## Melito's Statement "in the Middle of Jerusalem" Not Proof for the Site

In about A.D. 170, Melito, the Bishop of Sardis, journeyed to Palestine.<sup>58</sup> At that time, he visited the Roman city Aelia Capitolina that had been built on the ruins of Jerusalem.

In his homily *Peri Pascha (On the Passover)*, Melito states that the crucifixion took place "in the middle of Jerusalem" and "in the middle of the city", "in the middle of the street", and "in the middle of the day".<sup>59</sup> This is likely a manner of speaking rather than a matter of precisely identifying the time and place of the crucifixion. Crucifixion would not have been done "in the middle of the city". Nor was the precise time of the crucifixion "in the middle of the day" but rather 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Melito's statement, that the crucifixion was "in the middle of the city", has been interpreted by some as supporting the Church of the Holy Sepulcher site. However, we believe that Melito's reference to "the middle of the city" is a general reference to Jerusalem as the place of the crucifixion, rather than an identification of the precise site.

Alistair Stewart-Sykes notes that Melito's reference to the crucifixion in "the middle of Jerusalem":

is more probably a theological statement resulting from the identification of the death of Christ with that of the lambs in the Temple. That Mount Moriah. ... was subsequently identified in the Jewish tradition with the Temple mount, would tend to lend support to this interpretation.<sup>60</sup>

Melito makes no mention of the temple of Venus built by Hadrian as being located at the crucifixion site:

Melito does not place Golgotha under the *temenos* [sacred precinct] of the temple of Venus. It is striking that NO PRE-CONSTANTINIAN SOURCE MAKES ANYTHING OF, OR EVEN MENTIONS, THE OFFENSIVE CONJUNCTION OF A TEMPLE TO VENUS AND GOLGOTHA.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Tim Dowley, *A Lion Handbook: The History of Christianity*, p. 104.

<sup>59</sup> Melito of Sardis (Alistair Stewart-Sykes, Translator), *On Pascha: With the Fragments of Melito and Other Material Related to the Quartodecimans*, p. 63.

<sup>60</sup> pp. 56-57.

<sup>61</sup> Taylor, p. 135.

Melito uses the word *plateia* (*πλατεια*) in his Paschal Homily – *ετι μεσης πλατειας* – “in the middle of the street” – to refer to the place of crucifixion.<sup>62</sup> This is the same word that the apostle John uses in the Book of Revelation to refer to the place where Yeshua was crucified:

And their [the Two Witnesses’] dead bodies will lie in the STREET [*PLATEIA*] of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, WHERE also their Lord was crucified (Revelation 11:8).

The apostle John reveals that the Two Witnesses will be killed in SAME PLACE where Messiah Yeshua was crucified. The Greek word *plateia*, translated “street”, can also be translated as “plaza” or “square”, referring to an area where people can gather. This fits the place where Yeshua was crucified at the summit of the Mount of Olives. (See Chapter 2 “The Mount of Olives – True Site of the Crucifixion” for a detailed explanation of this subject.)

Melito was the Bishop of Sardis, one of the seven churches Messiah Yeshua addressed in the apostle John’s Book of Revelation. Surely Melito would have been familiar with John’s record of the visions he received directly from Messiah Yeshua, including the future deaths of the Two Witnesses. For Melito to use the same word John used (*plateia*) to describe the place of the crucifixion does not seem to be a coincidence.

However, this does not necessarily mean that Melito knew the precise place where the crucifixion took place was the summit of the Mount of Olives. Nevertheless, he understood that the crucifixion took place in a very prominent, clearly visible place to the people in Jerusalem. The summit of the Mount of Olives, the highest point directly opposite the Temple and covered with Jewish pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem for Passover, certainly fits this description.

## **WHY THE GARDEN TOMB CANNOT BE YESHUA’S TOMB**

The Protestant alternative to the traditional Roman Catholic/Eastern Orthodox crucifixion/tomb site is called the Garden Tomb, Gordon’s Tomb, or Gordon’s Calvary.

Suggested by [the German scholar] Otto Thenius in 1842, General Charles Gordon declared in 1885 that this was the site of the crucifixion and burial, found some 250 yards NE of the Damascus Gate. ... Those who contest this

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<sup>62</sup> Taylor, p. 117.

identification maintain that the hill was part of a ridge that is still visible on the N wall of Jerusalem adjacent to Herod's Gate. Thus it was not a separate hill in NT times. ... THE TOPOGRAPHICAL FEATURE OF THE HILL THAT MAKES IT LOOK LIKE A SKULL WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PRESENT IN NT TIMES (emphasis added).<sup>63</sup>

There are four primary reasons why the Garden Tomb cannot be the tomb of the resurrection:

1. Not located near the Red Heifer site identified in Hebrews 13:11-13.
2. "Skull-like" features of "Golgotha" not present in Yeshua's time.
3. Not the right age – not a new tomb.
4. Not a rolling stone tomb.

### **Not Located Near the Red Heifer Site Identified in Hebrews 13:11-13**

The Garden Tomb cannot be Yeshua's tomb because it is located north of the Temple Mount, not east of the Temple Mount. The apostle John tells us that the tomb was located near the place of crucifixion (John 19:42). The author of the Book of Hebrews tells us the specific place where Yeshua was crucified, "outside the camp", "outside the [Eastern] gate", where the Red Heifer was sacrificed and burned, and where the remains of the Day of Atonement sacrifices were burned (Hebrews 13:11-13). The Red Heifer site was on the summit of the Mount of Olives, east of the Temple Mount. Therefore, the Garden Tomb cannot be Yeshua's tomb. (See Chapter 2 "The Mount of Olives – True Site of the Crucifixion" for a detailed explanation of the Red Heifer site located on the summit of the Mount of Olives, opposite the Temple Mount.)

### **"Skull-Like" Features of "Golgotha" Not Present in Yeshua's Time**

The eye-socket features claimed to fit the description of Golgotha as a skull are recent and did not exist at the time of the crucifixion:

THE TOPOGRAPHICAL FEATURE OF THE HILL THAT MAKES IT LOOK LIKE A SKULL WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PRESENT IN NT [NEW TESTAMENT] TIMES. In fact, this hill, called by the Jews the "Grotto of

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<sup>63</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 2, p. 809.



Jeremiah”, is thought to be a mine site developed only in the past two or three centuries (emphasis added).<sup>64</sup>

### **Not the Right Age – Not a New Tomb**

According to Israeli archeologist Gabriel Barkay, the Garden Tomb is located in a network of burial chambers that were hewn during the First Temple period, some eight to nine hundred years before Yeshua’s time.<sup>65</sup>

Like a number of geographically related tombs within the grounds of the nearby Monastery of St. Stephen ... it is now believed that the Garden Tomb dates originally from the eighth and seventh centuries B.C., in the time of the First Temple. Between then and the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. (in the Byzantine period) usage is not indicated, and the tomb was probably recut in the Byzantine period to attain its present shape.<sup>66</sup>

...not a single tomb from Second Temple times has been found in this area.<sup>67</sup>

Therefore, the Garden Tomb could not have been the “new tomb” where Yeshua’s body was placed (Matthew 27:60; John 19:41).

In addition, the burial benches were cut down in the Byzantine period (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century AD) to create rock sarcophagi, radically disfiguring the tomb. This clearly indicates that early Christians did not believe this was the burial place of Christ.

In the Middle Ages, the Crusaders lowered the rock surfaces in front of the tomb, built vaults against it, and used the site as a stable.<sup>68</sup>

The fact that early Christians disfigured the tomb and later Crusaders used the area as a stable certainly shows that they did not believe this tomb was Yeshua’s.

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<sup>64</sup> *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 2, p. 809.

<sup>65</sup> Gabriel Barkay, “The Garden Tomb: Was Jesus Buried Here?”, *BAR* (12:2), pp. 40-57.

<sup>66</sup> Finegan, p. 283.

<sup>67</sup> Barkay, p. 51.

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/israel/jerusalem-garden-tomb>

## Not a Rolling Stone Tomb

The Garden Tomb is not a rolling stone tomb, as described in the Gospels (Matthew 27:60, 28:2; Mark 15:46; 16:3-4; Luke 24:2):

...the rock-cut trough which runs along the whole front of the tomb at ground level. ... does not appear adequate to provide for a rolling stone closure of the tomb such as may be seen in certain other Jerusalem tombs ... and probably its purpose was simply to carry away rainwater from the cliff above ...<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Finegan, p. 284.

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