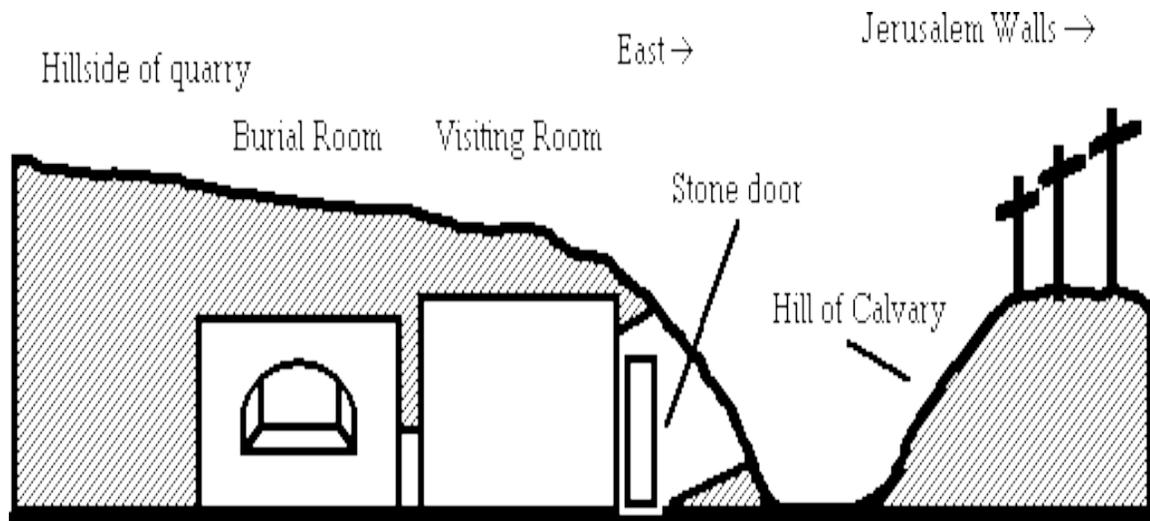


Mid – Week Meditation

For the last several weeks, we have been talking about the prophecies of the passion. These meditations pointed out that the prophecies give authority to the glory of Jesus' sacrifice at calvary because God predicted the coming Messiah hundreds of years before Jesus walked the earth. We are in the midst of the season of the church year called Eastertide. And so, we are celebrating the empty tomb of Jesus; The glorification of our Savior Jesus Christ so that we might all be citizens of the Kingdom of heaven. An that is true because of the willing sacrifice that he made. Today we are going to see how history also gives authority to the same sacrifice that the gospels tell about and the prophecy foretold. And we are going to do that by visiting the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

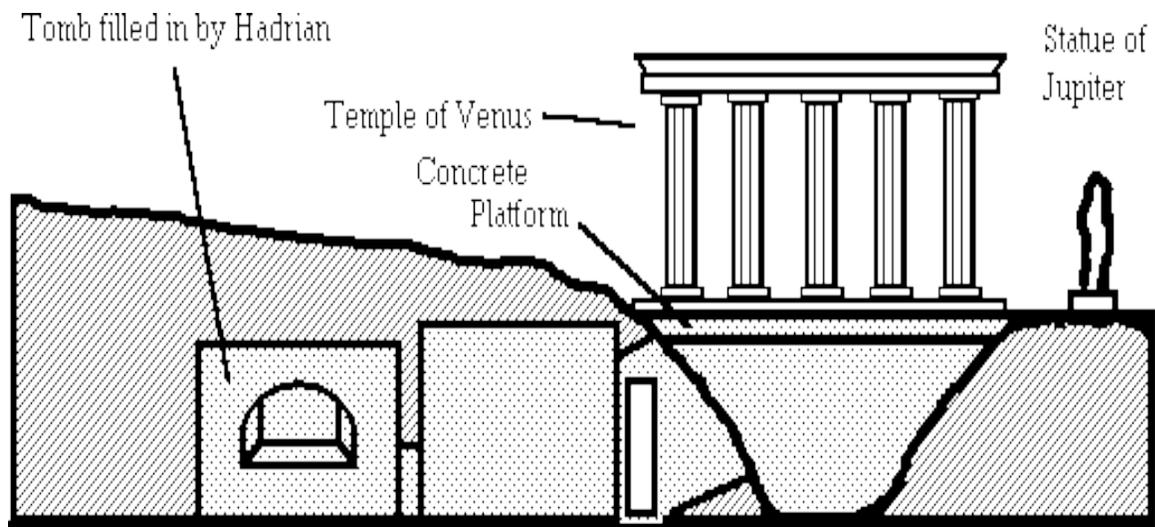


The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is located in Jerusalem, and it houses the place where Jesus tomb is, and the site of Jesus's crucifixion. This church does not really witness to those events completely unless we stop and consider the history of this church from Jesus time until now. In Jesus time, the hill of Golgotha was outside the city walls. It was located at the edge of an ancient quarry. The quarry was likely one of the sources of the stones that were used by King Herod for the Temple mount and the buildings associated with the Temple



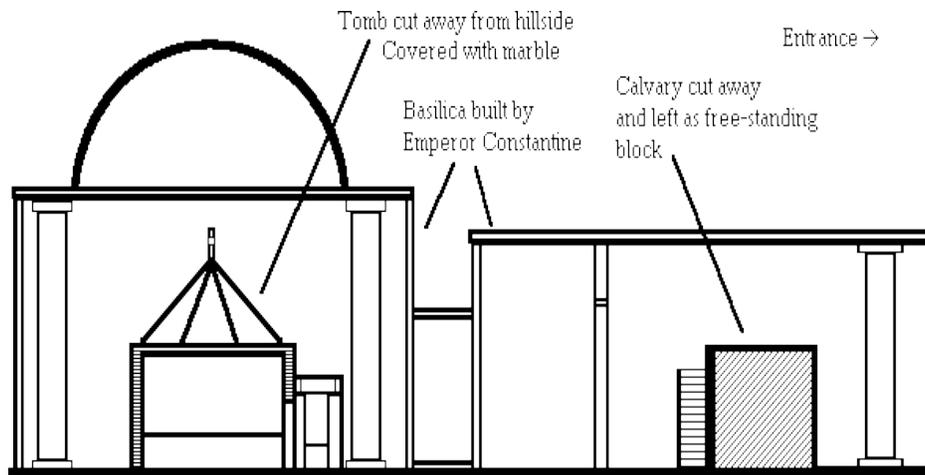
Tomb of Christ - 1st Century A.D. ©

As you can see from this drawing, the cross where Jesus died was up on a hill, and it was a couple of hundred yards from the temple. So, the temple would have been to the right of the picture on this drawing. The Romans wanted everyone to see the penalty of defying Rome. So, it is likely that Jesus and the thieves faced east toward the temple and the road toward the cross the rose gradually up the hill from the area around the temple to the place of the crucifixion. So, it was likely that those who were mulling around in Jerusalem for the Passover could see Jesus Death. And that is just the way the Romans wanted it. After Jesus had died, He was placed in a tomb that was carved into the rock of this abandoned quarry. As you know, it was the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. It would have looked like what is pictured above in Jesus time. The distance between the place where Jesus died, and the place where he was buried was probably about 100 to 125 feet. Since it was the tomb of a rich man, Joseph, it had a visiting room as shown in the picture and a burial chamber. So, this is what it was like in Jesus time. And you can see the stone in front of the entrance. Now fast forward about a hundred years or so. We move into a time that is very unfriendly to Christianity. In fact, the powers that be were very interested in erasing every trace of the history of this "Savior," Jesus, who had made such an impact on the people in the first century



Tomb of Christ - 2nd Century A.D.

So, the Roman emperor, whose name was Hadrian, decided to fill in the tomb of Jesus and put a cement slab over the whole area between the tomb and Golgotha and a temple was built to the honor the God of Venus, and he built a statue of a pagan God, Jupiter, over the place of Golgotha. This was done as a way to discourage Christians and to erase the existence of this Christian holy place. But that sort of back fired. Jupiter is built right over the place of Jesus' crucifixion and the temple of Venus over the opening to Jesus tomb. So those Holy places were not erased, but preserved for future generations. Venus and Jupiter survived a couple of hundred years until the reign of Constantine. Emperor Constantine was a supporter of Christianity. In about 330 A.D. it was still pretty common knowledge that Hadrian had buried the tomb of Jesus and built statue on the top of Golgotha. After all, it was only 3 or 4 generations since those monuments were built.

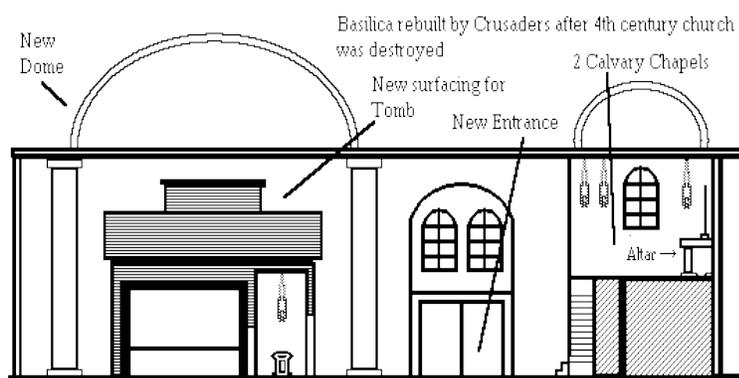


Tomb of Christ - 4th Century

So, Constantine tore down the temple of Venus and the statue of Jupiter, and built a basilica, memorializing the place where Jesus was buried and where he was crucified. The tomb was dug out, and the rock around Jesus tomb was cut away in order to make room for the walls of the Basilica and the tomb was covered with marble, and a dome was built over it to mark the place of Jesus burial.

Now Golgotha, in Jesus' time, had a more Gentle slope down toward the temple. But the edges of Golgotha were cut away by Constantine leaving a rectangular rock probably about 30 to 40 feet high, about 40 feet long and 30 feet wide. These measurements are just my guess.

A building was then built over Golgotha as a memorial to Jesus sacrifice at Calvary as is shown in this picture. It was roughly this way until the 12th century when it was destroyed by an earthquake.



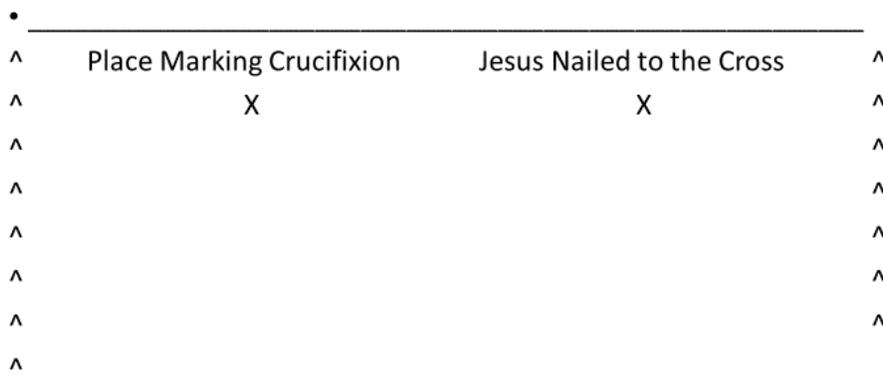
Tomb of Christ - 12th - 20th Centuries A.D.

Then a building with the rough character and dimensions of the current church, the church of the Holy Sepulchre, was built. That included an aedicula around the Tomb and an enclosure around the block shaped Golgotha.

So today, pilgrims visit the area inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre much like they have visited it for the last 900 years.



Now we are on the Golgotha side of the Church. Here you can see the sides of that block.

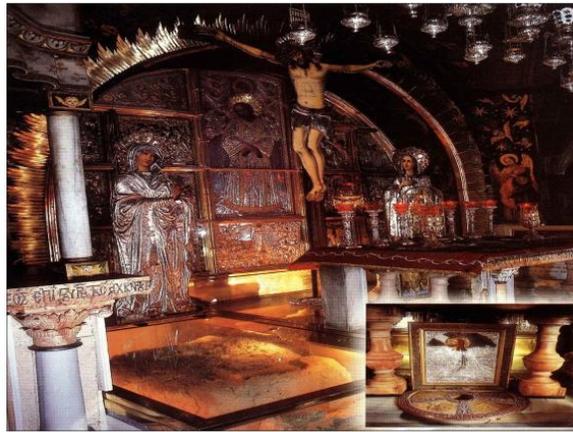


Over head view of what is left of Golgotha. About 40' L x 30' W & 35'H

The diagram above shows the roughly flat top, of Calvary which is covered by the structure of the church. In the next several slides, we are on top of Golgotha at the place where Jesus was nailed to the cross and the place where Jesus was Crucified Right on the Xs.

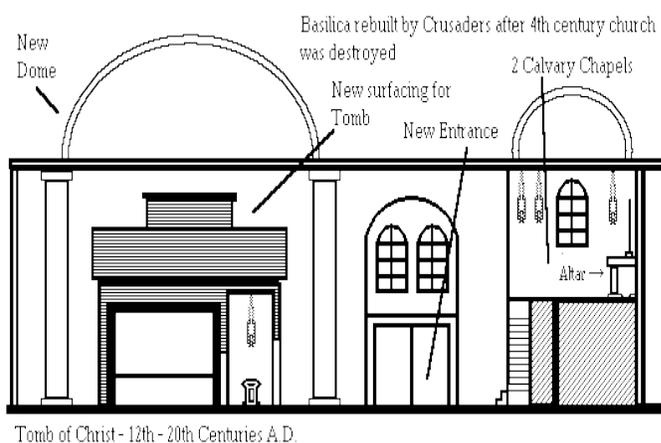


Jesus Nailed to the Cross



Jesus Crucified

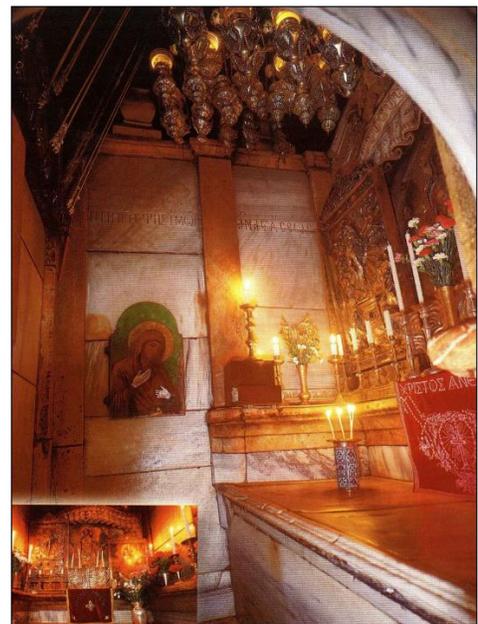
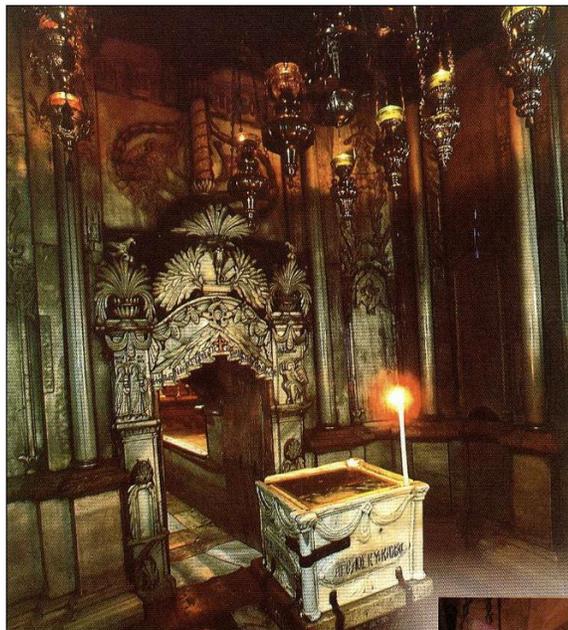
From the diagram below, you can see where the Golgotha alters fit in. You can also see where the tomb of Jesus fits in the scheme.



Below is a picture of the exterior of the Holy Sepulcher



Below is a picture of the visiting room, and the tomb of Jesus.



You can see the marble slab over the tomb where Jesus Body was laid

In the last several years, the Holy Sepulchre has been completely restored, and in the process, discoveries have been made completely affirming the time and date of Jesus burial, and structure of the historical line of events and the authenticity of the crucifixion and resurrection narrative in the gospels. When our tour group was in Israel, our guide said that the authentic sights that we would see would change our reading of the Gospel narratives from black and white to living color. The Golgotha that we visited was the same Golgotha where Mary, Jesus mother,

and John and Mary Magdalene watched Jesus die. The tomb is the same tomb where Peter and John looked in and saw the linen clothes on the rock inside tomb, and where Mary encountered Jesus outside the tomb alive. Christ is Risen. And He lives and he reigns in our lives and our world for ever and ever. The prophesy foretold it. The gospel tells the story. And History affirms completely it. And now our faith lives in its light.

Let us Pray