



**SECRETS
OF
GOLGOTHA**

The
Forgotten
History
of
Christ's
Crucifixion

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Chapter 1

THE GEOGRAPHICAL KEY TO JESUS' CRUCIFIXION

There is no longer any doubt. Jesus was crucified near the summit of the Mount of Olives about half a mile east of the Temple Mount. This fact is confirmed in the New Testament in a variety of ways. One such confirmation comes from the Book of Hebrews. It states that the crucifixion occurred “without the gate” and “without the camp” of Israel that was associated with the city of Jerusalem in the early first century (Hebrews 13:11-13). These geographical factors in the Book of Hebrews are of utmost importance in locating the place of the crucifixion of Jesus. In fact, these two phrases in the Book of Hebrews of themselves are sufficient to pinpoint the region where the crucifixion of Jesus took place.

With the geographical references in the Book of Hebrews that Jesus was crucified “without the gate” and “without the camp,” these are adequate indications to allow any school child in the first century who lived in the vicinity of Jerusalem the ability to identify the area of the crucifixion. These geographical factors may mean little to us who live in the modern western world, but to early Jewish people in the Jerusalem area, they can mean only one thing:

They show that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives. This determination would have been as easy to make by early Jews as an American geography student today being able to identify the Statue of Liberty as being in New York harbor in the eastern part of the United States.

The Book of Hebrews Provides the Key

Let us look at these geographical indications in the Book of Hebrews. The phrases “without the gate” and “without the camp” referred to a specific place in the area of Jerusalem, and not simply to a general region surrounding the capital city. Indeed, to the author of the Book of Hebrews, it was a specific “gate” of Jerusalem that he emphasized. Only one area in the vicinity of Jerusalem was being referred to by the two geographical expressions mentioned above, and that was in the *eastern* region outside the city limits of Jerusalem. And though the sacred writers tell us that Jesus was crucified at a place called “Golgotha” (without feeling the need to identify its location), the geographical parameters mentioned in the Book of Hebrews are of themselves sufficient proof to show that Golgotha was located at the southern summit of the Mount of Olives. In actual fact, the author of Hebrews provides a ritualistic context which involves prescribed and well-known Temple ceremonies that demand specific geographical factors that locate the place referred to by the phrase “without the camp.” The geographical indications associated with the two phrases (“without the gate” and “without the camp”) are adequate to pinpoint the site of Golgotha to first century Jews. To do so, however, requires that a person understand the geographical features associated with the ritualistic factors celebrated at the Temple in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus.

Geographical Factors of the Temple Are Mostly Unknown Today

The problem in modern times is the fact that most people (even

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scholars and Christian ministers) do not apply, or they do not understand, the geographical features associated with the Temple and its ritualistic ceremonies. Because of this deficiency, which is widespread, I feel it is necessary at the start of this book to rehearse for modern readers a brief geographical overview of the Jerusalem area and the Temple that all people of the first century who lived in Jerusalem not only understood but took for granted. Just as anyone in New York City today or in the whole of the United States knows that the Statue of Liberty is located in New York harbor, so the use of the geographical factors associated with the Temple rituals in the time of Jesus can without doubt locate "Golgotha" as being near the southern summit of the Mount of Olives. It is very easy to do once the geography is understood. These matters were well recognized by people who once lived in Jerusalem or in Judaea, and this was especially in evidence while the Temple was still standing. The geography can identify the site of the crucifixion of Jesus.

The Temple and Geography

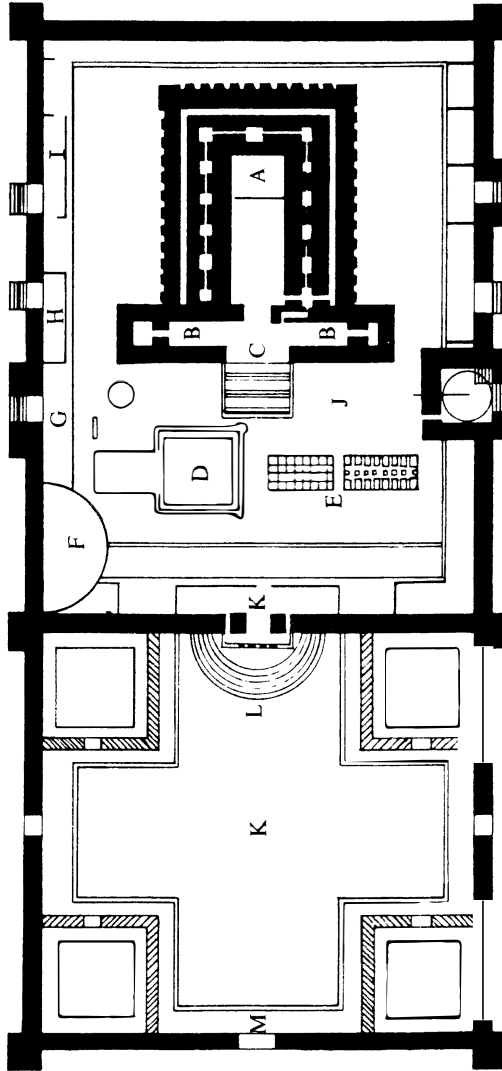
First of all, the Temple at Jerusalem was patterned after the Tabernacle that Moses constructed in the wilderness, which in turn was patterned after the geographical features of the Garden in Eden and the Land of Eden itself. That does not end the symbolic agreements. The Temple and its environs were further patterned after God's heavenly palace and its celestial surroundings (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23). These are important factors to recognize. As for the Tabernacle, it was simply a portable Temple. Though the Temple in the time of Jesus was built out of stone, wood and precious metals, for nostalgic and ritualistic purposes it was common for Jews in the first century to call the Temple by its former designation "the Tent." This was a way of perpetuating the connection of the Temple with the Tabernacle that existed in the time of Moses. The author of the Book of Hebrews consistently called the Temple which Herod refurbished by the name "the Tent," and he was followed by the Jewish authorities who wrote the Mishnah, the first part of the two

Talmuds a little over a century later.

The Temple (or “Tent”) was made up of three main sections and it had three altars. That’s right. It had *three* altars. Most people today are only aware of *two* altars associated with the Temple. But there were actually *three* altars, and the *Third Altar* is the most important for us to recognize if we hope to discover the place where Jesus was crucified.

Look first at the three compartments of the Temple. The innermost section was located in the western part of the structure and it was called the Holy of Holies. This is where God was typically resident and He faced *eastward* to view the other two sections of the Temple where the priests and the ordinary Israelites assembled for God’s commanded ceremonial services. The second section of the Temple was just to the *east* of the Holy of Holies and it was called the Holy Place — a place where only priests could enter or supervise. Within this compartment there was the first altar placed in front of the inner veil called the Altar of Golden Incense. Just *east* of this compartment called the Holy Place, but still in the priest’s section, was the second altar called the Altar of Burnt Offering. Further *east* from this Second Altar was the third section of the Temple called the Court of the Israelites which was divided into two parts, the western reserved for the men and the eastern for the women. Besides this, outside this third section of the Temple (and surrounding the Temple itself) there was a vast enclosure which Herod built that he called the Court of the Gentiles. This was not a part of the Holy Temple in a strict sense but it provided an area where Gentile folk could assemble if they felt inclined to worship the God of Israel.

The Court of the Gentiles located outside the three main sections of the Temple had an eastern wall *with one gate* that separated the Temple Mount from a deep ravine that was situated along the entire side of this eastern wall. This ravine was called the Kidron and is mentioned several times in the Bible (I Kings 15:13; II Chronicles



The Temple at the time of Christ. A) Holy of Holies, B) Outer Holy Place, C) Outer Curtain, D) Altar of Burnt Offering, E) Slaughter Areas, F) Chamber of Hewn Stone (Sanhedrin Hall), G) Counsellor's Chamber, H) House of Abtinias, I) Chamber of Wood, J) Court of Priests, K) Court of Israel, L) Steps to Nicanor Gate, M) Eastern Gate. Diagram by Norman Tenedora.

30:14; Jeremiah 31:40; John 18:1). In the time of Jesus, there was a double tiered arched bridge supporting a roadway which led from this eastern gate of the Temple to the top of the Mount of Olives. That double tiered arched bridge was built by the priests to span the Kidron Ravine. This bridge was constructed by the priests for sacerdotal purposes and it was known as the Bridge of the Red Heifer (*Shekalim* 4:2). It connected *the single gate* in the eastern wall of the Court of the Gentiles with a sanctified road that led up to a Third Altar of the Temple located near the summit of the Mount of Olives. It is this altar referred to by the Book of Hebrews that was associated with the crucifixion of Jesus.

The Third Altar of the Temple

Where was that Third Altar that the Book of Hebrews has reference to? If that altar can be found, then the general site of the crucifixion can also be ascertained. As the author of the Book of Hebrews points out, this is the important altar associated with the crucifixion of Jesus.

“We have AN ALTAR, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned *without the camp*. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, *suffered without the gate*. Let us go forth unto him *without the camp*, bearing his reproach” (Hebrews 13:10-13 capitals and italics mine).

The first thing that must be recognized is that a *literal* altar is being discussed by the author of Hebrews. It has been shown by Helmut Koester (“Outside the Camp,” *Harvard Theological Review*, 1962 (55), pp.299-315) that the “altar” cannot be a symbol for the Lord’s Supper nor is it a figure of speech for the “cross” of Jesus. After all, the statement in the Book of Hebrews about the “bodies of those beasts” was certainly referring to literal beasts, and the “blood brought into the sanctuary” was clearly a literal event, and the “high priest” performing the ceremony was certainly a lit-

eral person, and the sin offerings that were “burned outside the camp” were also literal animals, and the fact that the priests “had no right to eat” of those well-know sin offerings was also a literal fact because these particular sin offerings were prohibited from being eaten, so why shouldn't “the altar” itself be a literal altar? This is especially true because there was in fact a literal altar (the Third Altar) of the Temple associated with these sin offerings. There can really be no doubt in this matter. The altar being discussed in the Book of Hebrews was the Third Altar of the Temple that the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the time of Jesus were well acquainted with. This altar was not shaped like the other two altars in the Temple. We will see shortly that it was built for different purposes and those purposes required that it have no ramp like we normally think is associated with an altar. Still, the author of the Book of Hebrews called it an altar. It was the specific altar located outside the Camp of Israel that surrounded the city of Jerusalem where certain sin offerings were burnt to ashes.

This important Third Altar was located near the summit of the Mount of Olives where the Red Heifer was killed and burnt to ashes and where special sin offerings were burnt according to the Law of Moses (Leviticus 4:12). This outer altar the prophet Ezekiel called the *Miphkad* (Numbering Place), which the King James translators rendered as “the appointed place” (Ezekiel 43:21). In the words of Ezekiel, it was located “without the sanctuary” and was positioned outside the Temple. It was called an “Outward Sanctuary” (Ezekiel 44:1), and the Targum for Ezekiel 43:21 says the spot was “the Temple outside the Sanctuary.” This outer “Temple” was patterned after the altar on which the sin offering for Cain was to be placed outside the area of Eden as shown in the early account in Genesis.

The Importance of the Third Altar

Most readers of the Bible today (even Christian scholars and ministers of religion) are completely unaware of this important Third Altar positioned on the Mount of Olives that was associated

with essential ceremonies of the Temple. Most Christians today are completely oblivious to the existence to this altar. Indeed, I have read major books written by eminent professors over the past two hundred years about the ritualistic and ceremonial services conducted in the Temple at Jerusalem with the authors *not once* mentioning this important and significant Third Altar located near the summit of the Mount of Olives. This is the altar that Christians have forgot! But recognizing the existence and the importance of this Third Altar plays an essential role in identifying the place of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Why this particular altar? Because the sacrifices on this Third Altar of the Temple were the prime ones mentioned by the Book of Hebrews which dealt with the sins of Israel. They prefigured precisely what Jesus would be doing for mankind at his crucifixion.

“Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered *without the gate*. Let us go forth therefore unto him *without the camp*, bearing his reproach” (Hebrews 13:12,13).

Early Christians were well aware of this outside altar. The location for burning these sin offerings was to be “in a clean place” outside the Camp (Leviticus 4:12). Note that Moses commanded “a clean place” (singular), not “clean places” (plural). There was only one place outside the Camp of Israel in the wilderness, and only one place outside Jerusalem in the time of Jesus, where these offerings were burnt to ashes. The Jewish authorities have maintained records which show the location of this specific “clean place” within which the Third Altar was situated mentioned by the Book of Hebrews. It was *east* of the sanctuary.

In the time of Moses the holiest region within the encampment of Israel was in front of the entrance to the sanctuary (on its *east* side). This was the area of the Camp within which Moses, Aaron, and his sons pitched their tents (Numbers 3:38). The eastern region was also the side of the sanctuary governed by the tribe of Judah,

out of whom came King David who was to give rise to the Messiah of Israel (Numbers 2:3). As a matter of fact, the author of the Book of Hebrews consistently used the theme of the Tabernacle in the wilderness as his standard and model in showing how Jesus fulfilled the Mosaic rituals. This is significant in our present discussion because there was only one entrance for people to enter the Tabernacle and that was on its *east* side. Indeed, the entrances to all three compartments of the Tabernacle were on their *east* sides. There was no way of entering (or exiting) any area of the Tabernacle on the south, the west or on its north sides. Since the author of Hebrews exclusively used the Tabernacle in the wilderness as his standard for illustration, it follows that the bodies of the animals taken outside “the gate” (note the text says “THE gate,” a single gate) has to refer to the *eastern* gate of the Temple (or the *eastern* gate of the Camp) through which the priests took the sin offerings to be burnt. Dr. Hutchinson in the last century believed that this indication alone gave weight to Jesus’ crucifixion being *east* of the Temple (*Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly*, 1873, p.115). And though Dr. Hutchinson made this suggestion so long ago, no scholars took him up on his belief in an *eastern* crucifixion of Jesus and his idea got nowhere at the time. Had the scholars paid attention to Dr. Hutchinson, the place of the crucifixion would have been discovered a century ago. But back to the matter at hand.

The Holiest Area of Jerusalem Was East of the Temple

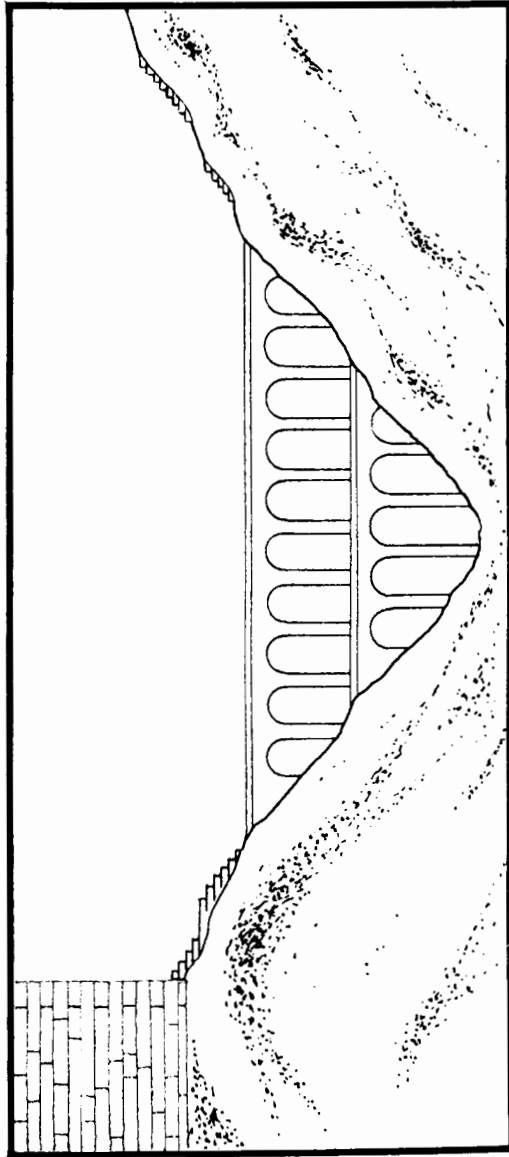
Indeed, it was the region *east* of the Temple and up the slopes of the Mount of Olives that was reckoned the holiest part of the Jerusalem area surrounding the Temple (*Berakoth* 9:5). One of the main reasons for this was because the sin offering known as the Red Heifer was killed and burnt to ashes in this area “outside the camp” (Numbers 19:1-22, see especially verse 9 where the Red Heifer is called a sin offering). I will show evidence in a moment that proves the place where the Red Heifer was sacrificed was exactly the same “clean place” where the bodies of the offerings

referred to by the author of Hebrews were also burned “outside the camp.”

The Red Heifer sacrifice was considered one of the holiest of Israel’s offerings. Its ashes were saved for long periods of time. Periodically, part of the ashes was mixed with pure water in a large container. The sprinkling of this water purified Israelites for a number of important ceremonial functions associated with the Temple and the Camp of Israel (Numbers 19). It was also the means for purifying the Levites so that they could perform their activities in the Temple (Numbers 8:7). In order to sacrifice the Red Heifer, the selected animal was taken from the Temple through the *eastern* gate (“without the gate”) and then led further *east* (“without the camp”) to the special “clean place” where it was killed and burnt to ashes. The early rabbis noted that the Red Heifer was taken through the *eastern* gate of the outer walls surrounding the Temple.

“There were five gates to the Temple mount: the two Huldah Gates on the south, that served for coming in and going out; the Kiponus Gate on the west, that served for coming in and going out; the Tadi Gate on the north that was not used at all; *the Eastern Gate* on which was portrayed the Palace of Shushan. *Through THIS [Gate]* the High Priest that burned the [Red] Heifer, and the heifer, and all that aided him went forth to the Mount of Olives” (*Middoth* 1:3 capitals and italics mine).

This reference shows that in the time of Jesus the place for burning the Red Heifer was located *east* of the Temple on the Mount of Olives. This is also attested in another part of the early Jewish records (*Parah* 3:6,7). This latter section of the Mishnah also gives us further details about the roadway that led from the Temple up to the summit of the Mount of Olives. It shows that from the *east* gate of the sanctuary the priests constructed a causeway for pedestrians that went *eastward* from the Temple mount to a bridge which crossed the Kidron Valley onto the western slopes of the Mount of Olives. This was an arched bridge. It had pillars on the bedrock of the valley floor which went upwards to form several arches for the



This drawing is a reasonable facsimile of the bridge across the Kidron Valley. It was two tiered with the upper pillars located over the lower crowns of the arches in order to prevent any physical contact with a bone, grave, or tomb in the valley below. The bridge connected the temple mount with the "Broadway" known as the Descent of the Mount of Olives.

first tier. On top of the crowns of those arches another tier of pillars went upwards to form a second group of arches. The causeway was then built on top. The bridge was constructed in this fashion because of ritual interpretation. According to the rabbis this type of bridge prevented anyone coming in contact with bones or other contamination that might have been in the valley below and it would allow people to enter the Temple in a purified way.

The two tiered arched bridge must have been an imposing sight for it allowed pedestrians to walk *eastwards* apparently from the level of the Temple mount straight across the Kidron Valley (which was quite precipitous in this area) to intersect with the western slopes of the Mount of Olives. The arched bridge made it unnecessary for worshippers to descend into the depths of the valley and then climb up a portion of the mountain on the east to reach the summit of Olivet. Conversely, people walking westward from the Mount of Olives into the Temple enclosure were afforded the same convenience. This roadway on the slopes of Olivet which led *westward* into the Temple had a special name and it is mentioned in the New Testament. It was called “The Descent of the Mount of Olives” (Luke 19:37).

This was the holiest roadway into the Temple. Indeed, the whole area of the Mount of Olives in front of the *eastern* part of the Temple was considered the most sacred region outside the walls of Jerusalem because it faced the Holy of Holies (*Berakoth* 9:5). The holiness was further enhanced because at the top of the Mount of Olives was the “clean place” where the Red Heifer was burnt to ashes and (as we will see later) where the bodies of the sin offerings mentioned by the author of the Book of Hebrews were burnt to ashes. From this summit area of the Mount of Olives one could look westward over the eastern wall of the Temple directly into the sanctuary itself. The eastern wall of the Temple enclosure was made lower than the other walls surrounding the Temple in order to allow a full view of the sanctuary interior including the curtain that

was hanging in front of the Holy Place.

“All the [Temple] walls were high, save only the *eastern wall*, because the [High] Priest that burns the [Red] Heifer and stands *on the top of the Mount of Olives* should be able to look directly into the entrance of the Sanctuary when the blood [of the Red Heifer] is sprinkled” (*Middoth 2:4*).

This area from the “clean place” on top of the Mount of Olives westward into the Temple itself was reckoned to be of special religious significance. And while the southern and western entrances to the Temple allowed worshippers access into the unrestricted regions of the Temple enclosure, the purifying waters from the ashes of the Red Heifer could only be obtained in Jerusalem at the *eastern* entrance to the Temple and at the “clean place” on top of the Mount of Olives (*Parah 3:11 cf. 3:3*). Since the Red Heifer was burnt to ashes at this location on Olivet, it follows that it represented the site of origin for the main purification rituals for the people of Israel. This was understood by all Jews of the time. This is why it was essential that Jesus was crucified (to purify not only the earth but even heaven itself) near the spot where the purifications for Israel were ordained to take place which was on top of the Mount of Olives.

With this in mind, it can be better understood why *this* region on Olivet has great symbolic significance in relation to Jesus' crucifixion. Not only was it the area of origin for the purification rituals of Israel and where the sin offerings were burnt “outside the camp,” but it was in this general region, according to Christians, where the greatest of all sin offerings (Jesus) was sacrificed to God. As a matter of contrast, the present *western* site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as the place of Jesus' crucifixion, built by Helena the mother of Constantine from A.D.326 to 337, and the Garden Tomb area *north* of the Damascus Gate, *have nothing to do with any* Old Covenant ritual. However, this *eastern* site of purification on the Mount of Olives is very much associated with the rituals and ceremonies of the Temple at Jerusalem. This is why the author of the

Book of Hebrews was so interested in associating the altar outside the Temple (the Third Altar) with the crucifixion of Jesus. Both the altar for burning the sin offerings and the location of Jesus' crucifixion were near each other on the Mount of Olives.

The Third Altar and the Sin Offerings

It is important to recognize that the site of the altar for burning the sin offerings situated "outside the camp" was at the same place at which the Red Heifer was burnt to ashes. That the two rituals were performed at the same place can be shown from a discussion that took place among the rabbis just after the destruction of the Temple in A.D.70. The inquiry was in relation to this very matter. In analyzing scriptural verses that discussed the subject, Rabbi Eliezer (who had seen the Temple before its destruction) was adamant that the place located "outside the camp" in Leviticus 4:12 (speaking about the burning of the sin offerings) was identical to the place "outside the camp" mentioned in Numbers 19:3 (speaking about the burning of the Red Heifer).

"It is said here [in Leviticus 4:12]: *Without the Camp*, and it is said there [in Numbers 19:3]: *Without the Camp*. Just as here [in Leviticus] it means outside the three Camps [of the priests, of the Levites, and of the Israelites], so does it mean there [in Numbers] outside the three Camps; *and just as there* [Numbers 19:3] *it means TO THE EAST OF JERUSALEM*, so does it here [Leviticus 4:12] *TO THE EAST OF JERUSALEM*" (Yoma 68a, see also Zebahim 105b, capitals, brackets and italics mine).

This is rabbinic proof (from an eyewitness to the Temple and its rituals) that the place "outside the camp" for burning the Red Heifer was identical with that for burning the sin offerings mentioned by the author of the Book of Hebrews. And what is highly significant is the fact that Rabbi Eliezer (just like the author of the Book of Hebrews) applied rituals pertaining to the Tabernacle of Moses with those which governed the Temple in Jesus' time.

This means that the Old Testament legislation concerning the

Tabernacle was applicable to the later Temple. It was thus necessary for the priest performing the sacrifice of the Red Heifer to be *east* of the Temple so that he could face *directly west* in order “to sprinkle the blood seven times towards the Holy of Holies” (*Parah* 3:9). The priest had to be able to see the full curtain that was hanging in front of the *east* entrance to the Holy Place. This is one of the main reasons that the *eastern* wall of the Temple was lower in height than the other walls. Recall again what *Middoth* 2:4 says about this matter.

“All the [Temple] walls were high, save only the *eastern wall*, because the priest that burns the [Red] Heifer and *stands on the top of the Mount of Olives* should be able to look directly into the entrance to the Sanctuary when the blood is sprinkled” (italics mine).

There is a further reference in the Mishnah about what the High Priest did on the Day of Atonement at this same place “outside the camp.” It shows that the altar for burning the sin offerings was far enough away from the Temple that the High Priest standing near the entrance to the Holy Place could not distinctly make out the features of the priests who were getting ready to set the torch to the sin offering at the summit of the Mount of Olives. What must be understood in this account is the fact that it was *distance* between the High Priest in the Temple and those on the Mount of Olives which made both parties obscure to one another. I will explain why this matter is important in a moment. Note the account.

“He that can see the High Priest when he reads [in the Temple] cannot see the bullock and the he-goat that are being burnt; and he that can see the bullock and the he-goat that are being burnt cannot see the High Priest when he reads: not that it was not permitted, but because the *distance apart* was great and both acts were performed at the same time” (*Yoma* 7:2).

This reference tells us very much. It shows that the High Priest could not be seen distinctly because of the *distance* between the simultaneous ceremonies. The summit of the Mount of Olives is a

little over half a mile from the place where the High Priest was standing. From the Mount of Olives I have tried to distinguish friends of mine among a crowd of people standing around the Dome of the Rock on the Temple mount, and though my friends could be seen, it was not possible to identify them individually. And so it was with the priests on top of the Mount of Olives. The High Priest was just a little too far away to distinguish him clearly.

The Importance of the Third Altar

There can actually be no doubt that the “clean place” for burning the sin offerings on the Day of Atonement as well as performing the Red Heifer sacrifice was located *directly east* of the Temple. It was a permanent site called the Beth ha-Deshen (the House of the Ashes) where also the “ashes are poured out” from the animals consumed on the Altar of Burnt Offering in the Temple (Leviticus 4:12). It was located on a slope of a hill (*Yoma* 68b). Being on a slope allowed the ashes not to pile high into a heap. There was a drainage system associated with the “clean place” that permitted the ashes to be washed with rain water down the side of the hill into the Kidron Valley where the ashes would fertilize areas maintained by the priests. Indeed, since the ashes were not allowed to gather into a heap at the Beth ha-Deshen, the altar area was designed in such a way that it resembled more of a pit to contain the ashes rather than an altar with a ramp like we normally understand an altar to be shaped. For this reason the “clean place” was called “the Ash Pit” (*Zebahim* 47b). Since Rabbi Eliezer said that in Temple times this area was *east* of the Temple and located on a sloped area, it was located on an upper western slope of the Mount of Olives overlooking the Temple to the west.

Now why is it important to recognize that the early Jewish records show the altar for burning the sin offerings on the Day of Atonement was *directly east* of the Temple? The reason is because of an opinion among some Jews in the fifth century of our era that a “clean place” for burning the sin offerings was located *north* of

JERUSALEM LOOKING WEST JUST AFTER THE TIME OF CHRIST



The Temple Mount is seen with its entrances on the east. The black stripe indicates the position of a double tiered arch bridge (described on page 34) which connected the main Temple (the "Inward Sanctuary") with the Miphkad Altar which was the Altar of Red Heifer (the "Outward Sanctuary") on the Mount of Olives.

the Temple (see *Yoma* 68b and *Tosefta Kippurim* 3:17). There were reasons in the fifth century why they said this (and I will explain it in a later chapter), but this opinion could in no way be correct for the first century since it contradicts the eyewitness account of Rabbi Eliezer that in Temple times the specific “clean place” was east of Jerusalem (*Yoma* 68a; *Zebahim* 105b).

In regard to this northern supposition, some modern Jewish scholars have pointed out that there was about fifty years ago an extensive ash heap located south and west of the old Mandelbaum Gate that had been there for generations. The existence of this ash heap has been traced back, apparently, to the twelfth century and some have wondered if this might also be a northern “clean place” to satisfy the phrase “where the ashes are poured out”? In no way, however, could this particular ash heap be considered such a “clean place.” Analysis of the remains from this heap show that there were, besides ashes, the remnants of bones, teeth and even flesh still left on bones (Milgrom, *The Anchor Bible*, Leviticus 1-16, p.240). These are not from the Temple. There were no flesh or parts of bones or teeth left from the offerings performed in the Temple. All animals to be burnt on the Altar of Burnt Offering were consumed totally to ashes. Though a portion of the ashes was placed beside the altar on its east side each day, the large remainder of them were piled in the center of the Altar to re-cycle in the burnings until all parts of the animals had become ashes, and this included teeth and bones. It was not thought for a moment that any flesh would still be on the bones for deposit at the official “clean place” designed as a receptacle for the ashes which was located “outside the camp.” After all, the “clean place” was for ashes, not bones, teeth or flesh. It was only when the animals had totally become ashes was it allowed for them to be taken to the “clean place” and poured out.

The “Clean Place” Was an Ash Pit, Not an Ash Heap

There are differences. The particular ash heap near the old

Mandelbaum Gate is northwest of the Temple and it was located on level ground while the official site of “where the ashes are poured out” had to be *east* of the Temple and situated on the slope of a hill. As a matter of fact, the official “clean place” was not even an ash heap. It was, as I have shown, an Ash Pit (*Zebahim* 47b). This Pit was located within the enclosure called the Beth ha-Deshen and it was only for ashes and contained no fragments of bones, teeth or pieces of flesh still left on the bones. This Ash Pit was attached to a conduit that allowed the ashes to descend into the valley below (rain water or other waters were used to cause the ashes to descend into the valley). A similar conduit existed on the Temple mount to allow the blood from the sacrifices to descend into the same area of the Kidron Valley.

None of these important factors was associated with the ash heap near the Mandelbaum Gate. Indeed, there is another reason why any ash heap located north of Jerusalem could not be considered as being the official place for the sacrifice of the sin offerings “outside the sanctuary” as Ezekiel described it. This is because the Mishnah also shows that the priests “outside the camp” who performed the Red Heifer sacrifice were able to look *directly west* and see the High Priest in the interior of the Temple (*Yoma* 7:2). This would have been impossible if the priests were situated north of the Temple (and certainly from the northwest where the ash heap was). The outer northern wall of the Temple was higher than the eastern wall and this would have prevented anyone north (or northwest) of the Temple from observing the activities even in the outer part of the Temple. This fact is fatal to any theory that the sin offerings were burnt north of the Temple. The truth is, the ash heap northwest of old Jerusalem was probably the remains of a tanning factory that once was in the area. It certainly has nothing to do with the official site for pouring out the ashes from the Temple sacrifices that the author of the Book of Hebrews had in mind. The reason some rabbis of the fifth century began to speak about a “clean place” in the north of Jerusalem (erroneously so) will be explained in chapter

nineteen. The true “Ash Pit” was located on Olivet.

What About the Garden Tomb Area North of Damascus Gate?

There is another northern region that has been suggested as possibly being the site of “Golgotha.” This is an area about 200 yards north (and a little east) of the Damascus Gate that has become known as the Garden Tomb. In the middle of the last century a small hewn tomb was found in a garden that had on its east side a hill on which was a Muslim cemetery that had two caves in its limestone escarpment that gave an appearance of the eye sockets of a skull. This cave area had been given the name “Jeremiah’s Grotto,” probably in the Crusader period, though scholars are aware that the name had nothing to do with the historical prophet by the name Jeremiah. Yet the limestone escarpment, now located just north of the present bus station, did have a remarkable resemblance to the eye sockets of a skull. Since most New Testament translations render the word “Golgotha” (which was the place where Jesus was crucified) as “Place of the Skull,” it was surmised by some scholars at the time that this may indeed be the site of the crucifixion. While it was recognized that there were no Temple rituals of any kind (the type that pre-figured Jesus and his substitutionary role as the sin-bearer for mankind) that were associated with this northern area, the skull-like appearance of those caves gave those who did not accept the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the western part of Jerusalem as being the proper site a great deal of optimism and even confidence that the real tomb of Jesus had now been found.

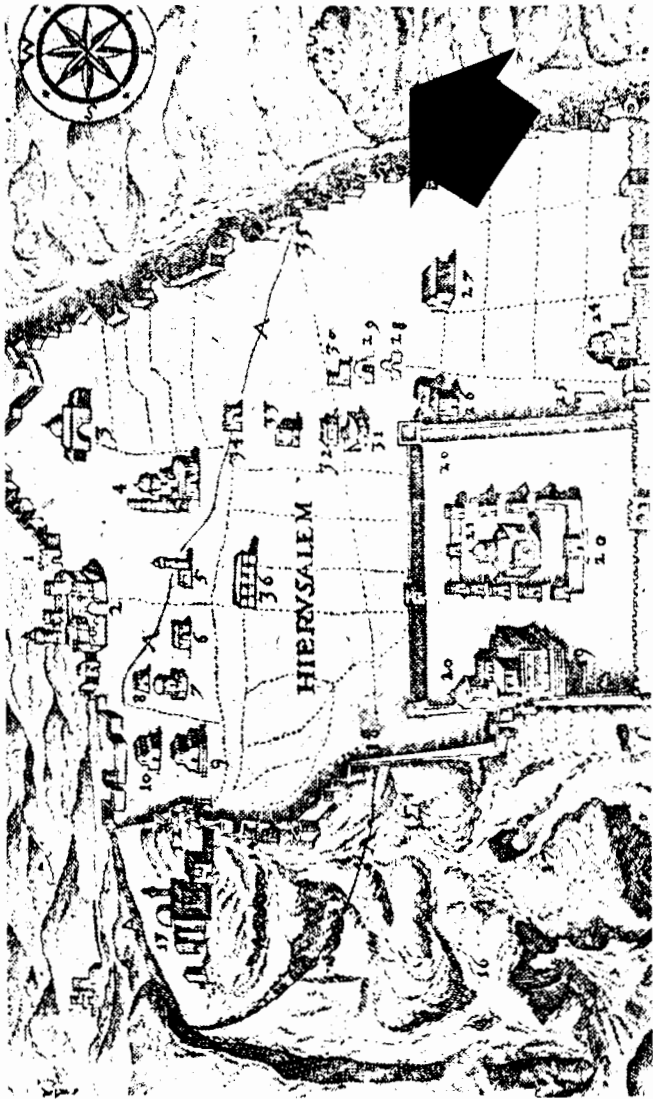
Could the Garden Tomb Area Be Golgotha?

When the skull-like rock formation was photographed and sent throughout Europe and the United States, an enthusiasm began to emerge in some Protestant circles that the Garden Tomb area had better credentials for being the real crucifixion site of Jesus than the region of the traditional Church of the Holy Sepulchre built in the

days of Constantine. But the enthusiasm did not impress the majority of scholars in the world. As for the Garden Tomb area itself, it had many demerits associated with it. If the skull-like appearance of the hill above the present bus station had the supposed eye socket features in ancient times, there is no mention of it in early literature.

The fact is, there is evidence that the “eye sockets” which were rather impressive a hundred years ago were not even there in the time of Jesus (or at any other period between Jesus’ time and A.D.1700). A European traveler by the name of Sandy went to Jerusalem in A.D.1610. He took time to draw a picture of some of the prominent geographical features located within and around the city. Though his drawing displays only the structures and hills which he thought significant (either *over* or *under* exaggerating their dimensions and showing a number of non-existent hills as a background fill-up), Sandy nevertheless emphasized (for some reason) the hill which presently represents the site of “Jeremiah’s Grotto.” Interestingly, he showed no caves as having then existed in the escarpment. Had this location contained the two “eye socket” caves that were a rather prominent feature in the hill a hundred years ago, it is strange that Sandy (whose drawings were noted for their exaggerations) showed nothing of them in A.D.1610. It seems evident that the erosive process that created the unique “eye sockets” only happened between 150 and 250 years ago. As a matter of fact, anyone who has visited Jerusalem over the past thirty years (as I have a score of times) is well aware that the so-called skull appearance of “Jeremiah’s Grotto” has so deteriorated in that short period that one can hardly recognize today any skull features at all. The truth is, “skull hill” is a modern creation that has nothing to do with the geography that existed in the time of Jesus.

These difficulties have prompted some scholars to attempt new research in their quest to pinpoint the region of Jesus’ crucifixion. Professor W. S. McBirnie went to Jerusalem and to various acade-



This is the A.D.1610 drawing of Jerusalem by Sandy. The arrow points to the large hill outside the north wall of Jerusalem and not far from the Damascus Gate (numbered 35 by Sandy). As one can observe there is no indication of any skull-like eye sockets (caves) associated with the hill. They were not there in A.D.1610.

mic centers in Europe with what he referred to as a "Task Force" of educated Christians to locate the tomb of Jesus. The result of their research was published in the 1975 book titled "The Search for the Authentic Tomb of Jesus." In the prologue to their book they mentioned that the team of researchers spent thousands of man hours pondering over the geological, topographical, demographical, archaeological and historical data that have been written about the subject since the beginning of the Christian era. After surveying this evidence, Professor McBirnie and his "Task Force" concluded that the site of the Garden Tomb had the best credentials for being the actual tomb of Jesus (though he wisely admitted that "the final proof of any location is still absent" p.14).

Though my own opinion concerning the crucifixion site has varied over the past 40 years, I came to feel (with the publication of Professor McBirnie's book) that he made a good case for NOT accepting the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as the true location, though his suggestion that the Garden Tomb was probably authentic remained a shaky conclusion. This is especially true at the present because archaeologists over the past 20 years have identified all the tombs around the Garden Tomb area (including the Garden Tomb itself) as being Iron Age creations. This means that these tombs were actually carved out of the rock about seven to eight hundred years before Jesus (Barkay and Kloner, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April 1986, pp.22-57). These new discoveries are fatal to the theory that the Garden Tomb could have been that of Jesus because the New Testament clearly indicates that Jesus was buried in a tomb just *recently* hewn from the rock.

Only a Site Connected With the Temple Rituals Is Proper

In summary, we find that any person who lived in Jerusalem in the early first century would have known the precise geographical parameters involved in the teaching of the author of the Book of Hebrews when he said that Jesus was crucified "without the gate" as well as "without the camp." These geographical indications

focus on well-known matters that deal with the Temple rituals and ceremonies. The only sacrifices which met the requirements that the author was speaking about concerning the death of Jesus were those associated with the Third Altar located *east* of the Temple near the summit of the Mount of Olives. From this information alone, any of the ordinary citizens of Jerusalem would have directed their attention to the *eastern* part of Jerusalem and to the top of the Mount of Olives for the fulfillment of any such analogy. And, indeed, we will see in a later chapter that no animals of any kind (no matter what they were) were ever offered outside the Temple in the *northern* parts of Jerusalem, neither in the *southern* parts of Jerusalem, nor in the *western* parts of Jerusalem. Only in the *eastern* part of the Temple were the animals sacrificed, except those which were sacrificed at the important Third Altar located even further *east* of the Temple near the southern summit of the Mount of Olives.

In the next chapter we will look at the dimensions of the Camp of Israel that surrounded the Temple and Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. This information will also show conclusively that Jesus was indeed crucified on the Mount of Olives very near the Third Altar where the ashes were poured out and where the main offerings for sin (including the Red Heifer) were sacrificed by Israel to God.



Chapter 2

THE CAMP OF ISRAEL

The Jewish authorities in the first century patterned the Temple and its ritualistic ceremonies to agree with the essential parameters associated with the Tabernacle in the wilderness, which in turn were patterned after God's heavenly residence and other celestial real estate associated with God's realm in heaven (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23). It was thought in the time of Jesus that such arrangements of the Temple were necessary in order to duplicate as much as possible the teachings of the Law of Moses concerning the Tabernacle in the wilderness. This is why the Jewish authorities in the first century established a "Camp area" surrounding the Temple and the city of Jerusalem in the circular fashion that Moses ordained. This area of the circular "Camp" extended eastward 2000 cubits (about 3000 feet)—almost to the summit of the Mount of Olives. The Jewish authorities chose the radius of 2000 cubits because of the reference to the 2000 cubits mentioned in Joshua 3:4 that separated the Israelites from the Ark of the Covenant. The accounts in the earliest part of the Talmuds known as the Mishnah show the use of these 2000 cubits in early Jewish interpretation (*Rosh ha-Shanah* 2:5, see also *Sanhedrin* 1:5 and *Shebu'oth* 2:2 for the authority of the

Supreme Court of the Jews to set these limits of the “Camp”). And, as in the case of the Ark in the time of Joshua, the distance was conducted “by measure” (Joshua 3:4). This was by walking the distance with a reed or a line [a measure] in the hand (with vertical inclines reckoned in the measurement as determined by the priests). It was not in a direct measurement as a bird would fly.

It was just outside this 2000 cubits’ boundary of the “Camp” where the authorities built the Third Altar of the Temple called the Miphkad Altar — the Altar where the Red Heifer was sacrificed. This Third Altar was placed near the southern summit of Olivet, and directly east of the Temple itself. This particular altar was commanded by Moses to be located just “without the Camp,” and so it was. And, recall, the author of the Book of Hebrews said Jesus was crucified “without the Camp” (Hebrews 13:11-13).

A Panoramic View of Jerusalem

Now, looking westward from this Miphkad Altar which was the Altar of the Red Heifer on the Mount of Olives, one could see a panoramic view of the whole Temple area and much of the eastern parts of the city of Jerusalem. One could observe the sanctified roadway leading downslope from the Mount of Olives to the double tiered arched bridge over the Kidron Ravine. Beyond this bridge could be seen the single eastern gate which led to and from the Temple area called the Court of the Gentiles, and further west one could see the east entrance to the Temple proper which permitted Israelites into the Court of the Women and beyond that into the section for the Men. And just west of the men’s section and without too much straining of the eyes, because it was about half a mile west, the Altar of Burnt Offering could be seen located just to the south and east of the curtain that was in front of the Holy Place. This outer curtain (not to be confused with the inner curtain(s) that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies), we are told by the Jewish historian Josephus who was an eyewitness, was about 82 feet high and 24 feet wide. This was as high as one of our modern

eight story buildings. It was this curtain that tore in two, from the top down, at the time of Jesus' death. This curtain was suspended from a stone lintel that must have weighed thirty or more tons. These large dimensions help to show the grandeur of the Temple area and they also reveal that there would be no difficulty in seeing these majestic features from as far away as the Mount of Olives.

This unbroken view of the surrounding area looking westward from near the Miphkad Altar on the summit of the Mount of Olives would have been most spectacular and it is no wonder that the disciples of Jesus who were standing with him near this Third Altar of the Temple about two days before his crucifixion exclaimed how majestic the sight was (Matthew 24:1-3).

The Importance of Geography

The foregoing geographical overview of Jerusalem with the Temple and its ritualistic precincts provides us with some necessary benchmarks with which to comprehend some simple statements made in various parts of the New Testament that have great significance in locating the exact area of the crucifixion of Jesus. So plain are these geographical indications, to those who understand the ritualistic ceremonies of the Temple, that they furnish the reader of the New Testament with the essential tools to discover the crucifixion site. The conclusion is just like saying that "Golgotha" was situated at the summit of the Mount of Olives.

To gain an understanding of this fact, let us first look at the verses written by the author of the Book of Hebrews which afford the reader with a great deal of geographical information relative to the crucifixion of Jesus. I will at the present give only an overview of these New Testament geographical indications, but in the body of this book these matters will be shown in detail. Look at Hebrews 13:11.

"The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned *without the camp*"

This verse is written within a context speaking about the crucifixion of Jesus. Note that the author speaks of events in his own time while the Temple was yet standing. He said the blood of those sacrifices “*is brought*” into the Sanctuary. He was referring to the then existing Temple and not to the rituals of the Tabernacle in Moses’ time. And further, the next verse equates those particular animals (sin offerings) as typically referring to Jesus. The author then states that those animals burned “without the camp” were analogous to the suffering of Jesus who was also crucified “without the camp.” The author is giving a geographical equation that the people of Jerusalem in the first century would have been well aware. Giving a direction of the compass was not necessary for this well-known spot east of the Temple. The author of the Book of Hebrews continues.

“Wherefore Jesus also [like those sin offerings], that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered *without the gate*” (Hebrews 13:12,13).

Note that the author states that Jesus suffered *outside* one of the gates of the Camp of Israel that existed around Jerusalem in the time of Herod’s Temple. He buttressed his teaching with two further statements that it also took place “without the camp” (Hebrews 13:11,13). Recall that the “Camp area” was a circle with a boundary that was 2000 cubits (the radius) from the inner Temple. There were “gates” in this boundary which allowed people to enter or to exit the “Camp,” just like there were “gates” in the early “Camp” of the Israelites that Moses designed in the wilderness. It is important to realize that the boundary of the “Camp in the wilderness” also had “gates” located at certain points within that boundary (Exodus 32:26,27). These “gates” were NOT openings in stone walls with doors pivoted on hinges that could open or shut. The fact is, Israel in the wilderness had no stone walls associated with their encampments. These particular “gates” into the “Camp” that are mentioned by Moses were designated by the name “gates,” but they were really marked entrances into the encampment areas of certain

Israelite tribes that Moses positioned around the Tabernacle. The author of the Book of Hebrews said there was a similar “gate” in the boundary of the “Camp” that existed around Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. The author associated Jesus with going through that one “gate” on his way “without the camp” to the place of his suffering.

The Gates Were NOT Hinged Gates Within Stone Walls

Recall that the “Camp” of Israel in the wilderness with its “gates” did not have any visible walls surrounding it. It was a designated boundary that was imagined to exist some 2000 cubits away from the central part of the Tabernacle, at least, this is the way it was recognized in the first century. Likewise, the boundary of the similar “Camp” at Jerusalem in the time of Jesus, based on the wilderness pattern, was not indicated by walls. The actual stone walls on the four sides of Jerusalem were not the boundary of the “Camp.” It is most important to remember that the “Camp” limits were an imaginary circle (zodiacal in design, as we will see) that surrounded the central part of the Temple which extended outward with a radius of 2000 cubits (*Rosh ha-Shanah* 2:5, see also *Sanhedrin* 1:5 and *Shebu'oth* 2:2 for the authority of the Supreme Court of the Jews to set these limits of the “Camp”). This is why the Miphkad Altar for the Red Heifer and other sin offerings was located near the summit of the Mount of Olives just to the *east* of the boundary of the “Camp.” This was almost half a mile *east* of the *east* wall of Jerusalem.

Without any doubt, the location for the Miphkad Altar shows that the *east* wall of Jerusalem was NOT the eastern limit of the “Camp.” I mention this point specifically because some people have imagined that the “Camp” limits were in fact the four-sided walls that encompassed the city of Jerusalem. In no way was this true. The “Camp” boundary extended much beyond the walls of Jerusalem. Being “without the camp” meant being at least 2000 cubits away from the central part of the Temple. As stated before,

this means that the present site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the western part of Jerusalem (located just outside the former second [western] wall that some guess was the place of Jesus' crucifixion), along with the site of the Garden Tomb in the northern part of Jerusalem which some Protestants accept as the place of the crucifixion, ARE BOTH LOCATED well INSIDE the "Camp" of Israel that existed in the time of Jesus. True, both these sites were then just outside the western and the northern walls of Jerusalem, but both were still within the officially established "Camp" area that then surrounded the city. Those two popular sites are thoroughly disqualified from consideration for this reason alone.

Every Ceremony of the Temple Conducted Eastward

There is another geographical point that must be realized in regard to the site of Jesus' death, especially since the author of the Book of Hebrews equates certain rituals of the Temple with the crucifixion of Jesus. It is interesting that there is not a ritualistic ceremony or animal sacrifice which the New Testament states as typifying the sacrifice of Jesus that had anything to do with the southern, western or northern parts of Jerusalem.

Since it was reckoned that God resided in the Holy of Holies in the Temple with his face oriented toward the *east* where he could see all the official activities of his people Israel, all the ceremonies and the sacrifices in the Temple and those on the Mount of Olives were of necessity conducted EAST of the Holy of Holies. Whether the sacrifice was a Burnt Offering, a Meal Offering, a Peace Offering, a Sin Offering or a Trespass Offering (and also including all the Heave Offerings), they were prepared and sacrificed in the EASTERN parts of the Temple precincts or on the Mount of Olives. Indeed, every official ceremony, no matter what it was, that had to do with the ritualistic services ordained by Moses for the Tabernacle and later adopted for the Temple in the time of Jesus, was conducted in the EASTERN part of the Temple, so that God could witness all the ceremonies from the Holy of Holies. The most

significant of the sin offerings were burnt to ashes even further *east* at the Miphkad Altar near the summit of the Mount of Olives. And, true to pattern, this altar was directly EAST of the Temple proper.

Any reference by first century Jews to animal sacrifices being typically associated with the sufferings of Jesus would have directed their attention to the EAST side of the Temple and not to the west side where the present Church of the Holy Sepulchre is located. This western area is totally devoid of any sacrificial ritual of the Temple. Indeed, there was not a single ceremony of the Temple performed with the western side of the Temple in aspect. And note this. Since the Garden Tomb region is situated north and west of the Temple platform, it is also bereft of having any association with any sacrificial ritual or ceremony of the Temple.

It must always be kept in mind that all animals that were sacrificed in accordance with Mosaic Law were offered on the EAST side of the Temple. Any Jew of the first century would geographically direct his attention EASTWARD when any animal sacrifice, ritual or ceremony was typically associated with the sufferings of Jesus. No other direction was suitable from any symbolic point of view regarding the geography of the Temple.

So, when the author of the Book of Hebrews connected the sufferings of Jesus with certain sin offerings of the Temple that were taken through a particular “gate” and were led finally “without the camp” to be burnt according to the precise rules of the Temple, any reader in the first century would immediately direct his or her attention to the EAST side of the Temple. Indeed, they would do more than that. They would also direct their attention to a place beyond the 2000 cubits’ radius for the “Camp” measured from the central point in the Temple of this circular arrangement. That is because those particular sin offerings mentioned by the author of the Book of Hebrews were always taken through the *eastern* gate to a place “without the camp,” to the summit of the Mount of Olives. Let us now look at those particular sin offerings that the author of

Hebrews referred to. They will give us much enlightenment on the actual place where Jesus was crucified and why it is important to recognize these geographical facts.

Sacrificial Animals Taken Eastward from the Temple

The Book of Hebrews mentions certain sacrificial animals which had their blood taken into the Holy Place of the Temple and then were delivered *without* the gate and *without* the Camp of Israel to be burnt to ashes. We read in the Old Testament that these particular types of sacrifices were reckoned as sin offerings to which special rituals applied. Geographical requirements of the Temple rituals come into the picture in the offering of these particular animals. Two of those sin offerings are described in Leviticus 4. One was a bullock that was sacrificed if a priest sinned under certain circumstances. After killing the bullock at the slaughtering place on the north side of the Altar of Burnt Offering, the priest then entered the Holy Place and sprinkled its blood seven times before the inner curtain in front of the Holy of Holies. The priest then smeared some of its blood on the Altar of Incense in the Holy Place (Leviticus 4:6,7). After a few other ceremonial steps, Moses gave a further command. "The whole bullock shall he carry forth *without the camp* unto a clean place [note that this was to a single clean place, not to several places], where the ashes are poured out, and burn him on the wood with fire: where the ashes are poured out shall he be burnt" (Leviticus 4:12). Besides this sacrifice, another sin offering was also sacrificed in a similar manner if the whole congregation of Israel through some ignorance committed a national sin (Leviticus 4:13-21). A precise geographical location was intended by Moses as the place to perform these sacrificial ceremonies.

There was one place where these sin offerings were to be taken. It was where the ashes were poured out. As a matter of fact, Moses did more than simply tell Israel of this one place. He reinforced the importance of the location in a double sense to make certain that no mistake would be made in performing the ceremony at the proper

site. Notice that Moses identified the place twice: "where the ashes are poured out ... where the ashes are poured out" (Leviticus 4:12). This special area "outside the camp" (and it was a single area) was further described as being the site where the ashes from ALL THE ANIMALS burnt on the Altar of Burnt Offering (with some of the ashes gathered daily in a receptacle at the eastern base of the Altar of Burnt Offering) were finally deposited in the ritualistic ceremonies at the Miphkad Altar at the summit of the Mount of Olives. Moses said, and the Jewish authorities in the time of Jesus followed Moses precisely: "The priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen breeches shall he put upon his flesh, and take up the ashes which the fire hath consumed with the burnt offering on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar [in a receptacle near its base]. And he shall put off his garments, and put on other garments, and CARRY FORTH THE ASHES WITHOUT THE CAMP unto a clean place [the same "clean place" that was mentioned earlier]" (Leviticus 6:10,11 emphasis mine).

This "clean place" *without* the Camp of Israel became known as the place "where the ashes are poured out" (Leviticus 4:12). There was only *one* such place in Jerusalem. The prophet Ezekiel called it "the appointed place" (or, in Hebrew, the *Miphkad*) and he said it was located "without the sanctuary" (Ezekiel 43:21), that is, it was outside the precincts of the main Temple. It was actually an *OUTWARD* extension of the main Sanctuary (with the main Sanctuary called comparatively the *INWARD* Sanctuary). Ezekiel even called the east gate of the Temple "the gate of the *OUTWARD* sanctuary" (Ezekiel 44:1 compared with 43:1; the KJV has the correct rendering of 44:1). That east gate led to this "*OUTWARD* [eastern] Sanctuary." At designated times, the priests took the sin offerings of Leviticus chapters 4,6 and 16 and Ezekiel 43:21 to this "Outward Sanctuary." The book of Hebrews refers to these rites.

"Neither by the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the

eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:12-14).

These bulls and goats, as well as the Red Heifer, that the author of the Book of Hebrews mentioned above, were taken to the altar “without the sanctuary” (Ezekiel 43:21) to be burnt to ashes. They were taken *east* to the top of the Mount of Olives. When people begin to realize that Jesus himself was killed and had his blood sprinkled on the Mount of Olives, then the symbolic value of these animal sacrifices mentioned by the author of Hebrews takes on an importance that many people have not realized before. Indeed, Jesus was crucified adjacent to (about a stone’s throw away) from where the principal sin offerings mentioned above were burnt to ashes.

The second clue for identifying the crucifixion site of Jesus is the fact that these rituals had to occur just over 2000 cubits from a central point in the Temple. The precise point in the Temple for the center of this circle will be explained in chapter four, but what it does show for the present is the fact that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Garden Tomb area are not qualified for being sites for the crucifixion of Jesus because both of them are located well within the 2000 cubits limit of the Camp of Israel.

As a matter of fact, we now need to look specially at one of the most sublime and significant animal sacrifices that first century Christians saw typically to represent Jesus, and this sacrifice was conducted just over 2000 cubits *east* of the Temple. That sacrifice was that of the Red Heifer. The author of Hebrews drew a precise attention to it (“the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean”). Besides the Book of Hebrews, we have the “Letter of Barnabas,” written in the last part of the first century. Christians saw in the sacrifice of the Red Heifer an exact analogy with the crucifixion of Jesus. The next chapter will explain.



Chapter 3

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RED HEIFER SACRIFICE

The area of the Mount of Olives was an important region in New Testament times. It was where the Miphkad Altar was located. This Third Altar of the Temple was where the special sin offerings which typified the sufferings of Jesus mentioned by the author of the Book of Hebrews were burnt to ashes, and it was the same altar at which the most important of all the sin offerings as far as the Jewish authorities were concerned was burnt to ashes. This sacrifice was that of the Red Heifer. This female cow which was young and never yoked or mounted by a bullock was selected within the precincts of the Temple and taken *eastward* across the double tiered arched bridge that spanned the Kidron Ravine between the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives. In fact, that very bridge was called the “Bridge of the Red Heifer” (*Shekalim* 4:2). The heifer was led alive by the high priest and other priests eastward through the Miphkad Gate (Nehemiah 3:31) and over the double tiered bridge up to the Miphkad Altar just outside the limits of the Camp of Israel. It was then killed and burnt to ashes. This Third Altar of the Temple had a pit associated with it for burning the heifer. Details of these matters can be found in the Jewish Mishnah by reading

Middoth 1:3; 2:4; *Yoma* 7:2; along with the Talmud in *Yoma* 68b and *Zebahim* 105b. Moses explained it: “Ye shall give her [the calf] unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face [that is, on the east side of the Sanctuary because God figuratively sat on his throne in the Holy of Holies and He faced eastward to view all the activities of his people assembled in or in front of the Sanctuary]” (Numbers 19:3). To be “before the face of God” meant to be *east* of Him in all the geographical associations involving the Sanctuaries.

The Red Heifer and Jesus

Look at this important sacrifice called the Red Heifer. The ashes of this sin offering were to purify the people of their ritualistic sins. This was essentially why this Third Altar of the Temple was located “without the camp” so that the ritualistically defiled among the Israelites could be purified by the sprinkling of its ashen waters and then re-enter the Camp and into the Temple itself. The early Christians deemed it typically essential that Jesus should purify the whole world of their sins in this same locale “without the camp.” The early Jewish records, which I will give in detail in a further chapter, clearly show that the sacrifice of the Red Heifer was certainly outside the Camp area of Israel in the time of Jesus and near the summit of the Mount of Olives, but slightly downslope in a westward direction so that the priests burning the Heifer could see the high priest who returned to the Temple and was finally standing near the Temple’s outer curtain. And recall, this spot on the Mount of Olives for killing the Red Heifer was identical with the place “where the ashes are poured out” of all the animal sacrifices that were offered in the main Temple and where the other sin offerings I have mentioned previously were burnt to ashes. One should remember as well that this Third Altar was also patterned after the altar of Cain referred to in Genesis chapter four.

All the rituals of the Red Heifer were performed east of the Temple and Jerusalem. Even when one considers the walls of

Jerusalem, the only “gate” through which all the sin offerings were taken which I have so far mentioned in this book, including the Red Heifer, was THE GATE in the EAST WALL, called in the Bible the “Miphkad Gate,” which led people in and out of the Court of the Gentiles on the Temple mount. We have Jewish records from the second century that the Temple region had five gates which led people in and out of the Temple. Note again the early Jewish record.

“There were five gates to the Temple mount: the two Huldah Gates on the south, that served for coming in and going out; the Kiponus Gate on the west, that served for coming in and going out; the Tadi Gate on the north that was not used at all; the Eastern Gate on which was portrayed the Palace of Shushan. Through THIS [Gate] the high priest that burned the [Red] Heifer, and the heifer, and all that aided him went forth to the Mount of Olives” (*Middoth* 1:3, capitals and italics mine).

The Red Heifer was led by the high priest to the Mount of Olives to be killed and burnt to ashes.

The Red Heifer and the Blood Of Jesus

The sacrifice of the Red Heifer was connected specifically with the Mount of Olives. No other area in the Jerusalem region was ever considered as proper in performing this most sacred of sacrifices. And significantly, the author of the Book of Hebrews compared the ashes of this Red Heifer, which were mixed with pure spring water, with the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus which occurred at his crucifixion. He considered the sacrifice of the Red Heifer to be a physical ritual and a type of Jesus, but the sacrifice of Jesus was an actual spiritual sanctification.

“If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ” (Hebrews 9:13,14).

The “sprinkling” of the ashen waters and the “dripping of Jesus’ blood” at his crucifixion were typically equated by the author of the

Book of Hebrews. In the case of the physical Israelites, it was the mixing of the ashes of the Red Heifer with water that allowed the people to be sprinkled for purification. This ashen water was actually a substitute for blood which was ordinarily used in other sacrificial rites to purify people and material items. The sprinkling was especially to purify people from any uncleanness they may have encountered that rendered them unfit to approach God in His “Camp” or His residence in the Temple. For certain purification purposes, this sprinkling had to be done “without the camp” and this was done in the Jerusalem area at the Miphkad Altar region on the Mount of Olives where the Red Heifer was burnt to ashes. Actually, there were different degrees of purification depending on the types of defilements to which the Israelites had been exposed and contaminated. For those who were defiled only in a limited sense but were still allowed into the “Camp” area, they were permitted to be sprinkled with the ashen waters at a purification site at the east entrance to the Temple. There were other such sites at the twenty-four priestly cities located around Judaea. But, in a symbolic sense, for Jesus to purify the world by his sacrifice, he was crucified in the main area of Jerusalem where the most defiled had to be purified. This site of purification was “without the camp.” And remarkably, the blood of Jesus was sprinkled at the main purification area on the Mount of Olives, like the sprinkling of the ashen waters of the Red Heifer where its “red” color was to show its association with “blood.”

There was great significance to this sprinkling of the ashen waters of the Red Heifer because even the priests in order to be consecrated and the Temple itself were purified by the sprinkling of those waters (e.g. Numbers 8:7; Ezekiel 43:26). It is no wonder that the author of Hebrews compared the same sprinkling of the blood of Jesus as being of much more significance than sprinkling the ashen waters of the Red Heifer because Jesus’ blood had the spiritual effect of purifying every person on earth from sins, even the most defiled, and no matter how serious the defilements of the sin-

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ners happened to be (Hebrews 2:9). It is this scope of purification by the blood of Jesus that the New Testament writers were trying to demonstrate.

What is pertinent in a geographical sense to our present discussion is the fact that this symbolic comparison of the Red Heifer with Jesus by the author of Hebrews helps to direct a person to the place where Jesus' blood was sprinkled for mankind's purification. His blood was shed at the main purification region on the Mount of Olives. And besides that, the Book of Hebrews is not the only Christian source that saw this symbolic comparison or equation of the Red Heifer with Jesus.

Christians Knew the Red Heifer Symbolized Jesus

In the "Letter of Barnabas," which was written by a knowledgeable Jew about A.D.90 and one who was well acquainted with the sacrificial system of the Temple, the author also stated that the Red Heifer in Christian circles was identified as being typical of Jesus at the time of his crucifixion. He stated most dogmatically: "*The calf IS Jesus: the sinful men offering it are those who led him to the slaughter*" (8:2). Just as the high priest and his attendants led the Red Heifer from the Temple eastward, through the Miphkad Gate and across the double tiered arched bridge over the Kidron Ravine and up to the Miphkad Altar on the Mount of Olives, the author of the "Letter of Barnabas" said the priests "led him [Jesus] to the slaughter." And true enough, in the ritual it was the priests who led the calf EASTWARD across the "Bridge of the Red Heifer." All people knew these facts who lived in first century Jerusalem. But counter to these well-known facts is the supposition so often met with today that Jesus was crucified in the western (or northern) part of Jerusalem. Such a belief in a *western* crucifixion of Jesus cannot equate the Red Heifer or any of its rituals with Jesus. It is clear that such a belief in a *western* crucifixion site is looking to an area that is diametrically opposite the proper direction and is looking to an area completely devoid of any ceremonies associated with the Red

Heifer. The western (or northern) regions of Jerusalem are disqualified.

This “Letter of Barnabas” and the “Book of Hebrews” in the New Testament are important first century testimonies showing that the early Christians in the area of Jerusalem were well aware that those sin offerings which they mentioned typified Jesus. These offerings were precisely equated by them with Jesus and his suffering. They all knew that these types of animal sacrifices were taken EAST of the Temple up to the Mount of Olives to be burnt to ashes. If Jesus was reckoned as the “calf” called the Red Heifer (as Barnabas stated) then any first century Jew would immediately associate that Red Heifer with the only place in the Jerusalem area where such a sacrifice could be legally performed. That place was at the summit of the Mount of Olives! And even more than that, what does the author of Hebrews state that Christians allegorically ought to do on account of these geographical facts associated with the Temple ceremonies? He states that Christians should leave behind the old city of Jerusalem and go forth unto the same area that Jesus went when he carried his cross-piece, called in Latin the *patibulum*, to the place of his crucifixion.

“Let us go forth therefore unto him [Jesus] *without* the camp [to where the sin offerings were burnt], bearing his reproach [a reference to the cross-piece to which the hands of Jesus were nailed]” (Hebrews 13:13).

As a matter of interest, the author had just stated in this context that Christians allegorically had an altar to which they ought to go (Hebrews 13:10). That particular Third Altar of the Temple was that altar near the summit of the Mount of Olives. Though his illustration was a figure of speech, the author had this singular altar (the Third Altar) in mind because it suited his allegorical illustration in an exact geographical way. He described it as an altar “whereof they [the priests who served the physical Temple] have no right to eat” (Hebrews 13:10). And remarkably, in regard to the sacrificial

animals which the author of Hebrews mentioned in his illustration, the priests ARE INDEED FORBIDDEN TO EAT THEM! This is what Moses commanded. “And no sin offering, whereof any of the blood is brought into the tabernacle of the congregation to reconcile withal in the holy place, SHALL BE EATEN: it shall be burnt in the fire” (Leviticus 6:30). This is why the author of Hebrews stated, concerning the sin offerings that typified Jesus, that the priests “have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle” (Hebrews 13:10). His identification regarding this command forbidding the eating of these animals could not be more exact. Any one familiar with the Temple ceremonies in the first century would have understood this point.

The Altar that is Meant for Christians

That particular altar (the Third Altar) referred to allegorically by the author of the Book of Hebrews on which those sin offerings that he mentioned were burnt to ashes was the Miphkad Altar located near the southern summit of the Mount of Olives directly EAST of the Temple. There can really be no doubt that any first century Jewish person identifying these sacrificial animals as typifying the sufferings of Jesus, and even though the illustrations are allegorical, would of necessity have placed the crucifixion of Jesus “*without the camp*” and on the Mount of Olives in order to retain any geographical compatibility within the allegorical illustrations.

Even the use of the allegorical method by the author of Hebrews in the above interpretations demands an EASTERN geographical context in relation to the Temple and Jerusalem in order to make sense out of his illustrations. Look at a modern example that can show this. In a similar way, would it not be silly for an American newspaper in San Francisco, which is in the western part of the United States, to display an allegorical headline during World War II describing a ship bringing back the wounded and dead from the Pacific Theatre of war as it entered San Francisco Bay with a banner saying “The Statue of Liberty Weeps for her Children” based on

the theme of Jeremiah when he said “Rachel wept for her children.” What? The “Statue of Liberty”? That monument is located in New York harbor, not in San Francisco Bay. More appropriately for San Francisco would be: “The Golden Gate Weeps For Her Children.”

On the other hand, if it were the New York Times displaying the headline, which of course publishes its newspaper in the EASTERN part of the United States and describing the same type of ship but this time coming from the European (eastern) Theatre of war, the allegorical headline would make perfectly good sense and it would be appropriate. Similarly, all of the allegorical illustrations in the Book of Hebrews and in the “Letter of Barnabas” that describe the sin offerings as being typical of the sufferings of Jesus, demand that the “Statue of Liberty” of their allegorical illustrations be located in “New York Harbor,” not out west in San Francisco Bay. This is the only way allegories can be sensible.

This modern example is quite relevant regarding the question of where Jesus was crucified because most people today are saying his crucifixion took place on the western side of Jerusalem and not the eastern side that all the typical narratives demand. To Jews of the first century, this is just like saying the “Statue of Liberty” is in the west. Using such erroneous geographical anomalies in allegorical illustrations simply won’t work with the rationale of any intelligent person. So, even the use of allegory by the early Christians concerning the crucifixion of Jesus insists that the EASTERN area of Jerusalem (and “*without* the camp”) is the only reasonable and acceptable geographical answer to the site of the crucifixion. But, if Jesus were indeed crucified in the WEST to satisfy the area of the present Church of the Holy Sepulchre, or crucified in the NORTH to equate with the Garden Tomb area (which sites had no sin offerings associated with them whatever), the allegorical illustrations of the Book of Hebrews and “Barnabas” would not only be inappropriate, any first century Jew would call such misuse of these allegorical factors as patently absurd! Whether one uses allegory to

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explain the teachings of the Book of Hebrews (or one uses literal methods), the geographical outcome is the same. Nothing makes sense unless one views the scene in an easterly direction from the main Temple at Jerusalem.

The appropriateness of this *eastern* region is shown by Ezekiel because he stated quite categorically that the sin offerings designated to be taken to the “appointed place” (the *Miphkad* Altar) were located “without the sanctuary” (Ezekiel 43:21), and these offerings are the ones mentioned by the author of the Book of Hebrews. These animals were taken through the *eastern* gate of the Temple. This *eastern* gate was given a proper name by Ezekiel. He called it “the Gate of [or, to] the Outward Sanctuary” (Ezekiel 44:1, the KJV has the proper translation). Though Ezekiel’s Temple was an ideal one, the rabbis still used much of its geographical terms as applying to the actual Temple. This single gate was the one that led to this “Outward Sanctuary” which was called the Beth ha-Deshen. It was a sanctified site that was designated a “clean place” where the Red Heifer and other sin offerings were burnt to ashes.

This is why the place was given a divine status by being called the “Outward Sanctuary.” The special holiness of this “Outward Sanctuary” was assured because this was where the Shekinah retreated and continued to reside in the time of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 11:23), apparently until after the Babylonian Captivity. We should recall that wherever the Shekinah resides, is technically where the Sanctuary is. So, the “Outward Sanctuary” became even more sanctified than the “Inward Sanctuary” which was the main Temple of Ezekiel, because the Shekinah left the western part of the Temple and went to its extreme eastern part (to the *Miphkad* Altar) at the top of the Mount of Olives. Indeed, this Altar at the “Outward Sanctuary” became more sanctified still, when Jesus was sacrificed in that same general area in A.D.30. It was to this *eastern* Altar that the Book of Hebrews tells Christians to bear His reproach.



Chapter 4

THE ASTRONOMICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE CAMP

The Third Altar of the Temple which was that associated with the sacrifice of the Red Heifer (that the prophet Ezekiel said was located “without the sanctuary”) was also situated “without the camp” of Israel as it was defined in the time of Jesus (Leviticus 4:12,21; 6:11). To discover the site of the crucifixion of Jesus, it is supremely important to realize what the geographical features of the “Camp of Israel” were like in the time of Jesus?

The Jewish authorities positioned the “Camp” around Jerusalem by using the model that Moses provided in the wilderness. The “Camp” was designed to be in a circular manner. It was constructed in the form of a circle surrounding the holy city with a radius extending exactly 2000 cubits from a strategic center point in the Temple. This circle was astronomical in design. Its celestial configuration had been established by Moses for specific reasons. The astronomical design provided a prophetic and calendar theme to instruct the Israelites. The circular design was intended to mimic the celestial environment that surrounded the palace and territories of God’s own realm located in the heavenlies. We should recall that

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the Tabernacle (and Temples) as well as “the Camp” were patterned by Moses to depict within our earthly sphere of influence the celestial aspect of God’s palace and “Camp” in his heavenly realm (Exodus 25:9; Hebrews 8:5; 9:23).

The center point of this astronomical circle surrounding the city of Jerusalem (which represented the whole of the “Camp of Israel”) was positioned precisely between the inner and outer curtains of the Temple in the Holy Place. This center point was located between the Table of Shewbread on the north with its twelve loaves, which the early Jewish historian Josephus said represented the twelve months of the Zodiac, and the Menorah (the seven lamps) on the south side which Josephus said represented the seven visible planets (Josephus, *War* V.5,5 ¶¶213-217). This circular alignment involving the twelve months (loaves) and the seven planets (seven lamps) was adopted to accord with a representation of the ecliptic of the sun (the circular path that the sun takes through the heavens each year). This had the effect of placing the center point of this zodiacal circle in front of the Holy of Holies and just a few yards east of the Altar of Golden Incense.

The Astronomical Design of the Camp

Though the Holy Scriptures in other areas utterly condemn the use of Astrology as conceived by the Gentiles and when the celestial motions are used for wrong purposes (Isaiah 47:11-13), the placement of the twelve tribes of Israel around the Tabernacle was intended by Moses to provide the authorities in Israel with a knowledge of God’s plan for the nation of Israel, both for its present existence and what will happen to Israel in the future. This was the type of astronomical teaching that we find in Psalm 19. This kind of astronomical teaching is biblical and proper. This is not like the Babylonian and Egyptian astrological concepts which use pagan principles and Gentile religious themes to explain their prophetic meanings. The Gentiles actually corrupted the prophetic teaching found in the design of the “Camp of Israel” and placed on it a

hodgepodge of heathen interpretations that completely obliterated the true prophetic meaning that God gave to Moses. Though such Gentile forms of Astrology were proscribed for Israel, the zodiacal significance of the “Camp of Israel” was well known by Moses and the prophets and it was wholeheartedly approved because it was given to Moses by God.

So, what about this astronomical design of the “Camp”? The outer boundary of this zodiacal design was an imaginary circle positioned by the Jewish authorities to be 2000 cubits (a radius of about 3000 feet) from that central point in the Holy Place of the Temple. It is important to realize that the outer boundary of this circle denoted the limits of the “Camp.” And since the Temple and its associated precincts in the time of Jesus were patterned after the Tabernacle and its astronomical divisions designed by Moses, this circle around the Temple contained twelve equal portions (twelve equal “slices”) equaling the zodiacal arrangement established for the twelve tribes that encircled the Tabernacle at each encampment of the Israelites. This was the pattern that God had Moses to design (Exodus 25:9). It is important to realize that the outer limits of this circular encampment area were 2000 cubits from the center point of the astronomical circle whose center was situated on the floor of the Holy Place. As we continue in this book, we will see how this information helps us to locate the place of Jesus’ crucifixion.

The Camp of Israel Was a Celestial Clock

The astronomical design of the Camp made the Camp of Israel to be circular in design. This circularity is not to be confused with the perimeter limits of the Sabbath Day Journey which were reckoned in the time of Jesus to be a square around Jerusalem and measured to be 2000 cubits from the outer walls of the city. This square-shape for the Sabbath limits, rather than a circle, was allowed by the Rabbis because it permitted the Israelites to have an advantage of the extra space afforded by the corners. This procedure autho-

rized more room to maneuver on the Sabbath than would a circle (*Erubin* 4:8; 5:1).

It is important that we not confuse the two measurements. Though there are similarities (especially in using 2000 cubits as a standard measurement), the Sabbath Day Journey parameters were delineated as a square, while the camps parameters were circular.

The “Camp,” however, was different in another way. The dimensions of the Camp were not determined by measurement from the walls. It was to be circular in shape, like a gigantic analog clock and it had astronomical significance. This large celestial clock surrounding Jerusalem was reckoned to be read by the Jewish authorities in a counterclockwise manner when they used it to determine astronomical matters that concerned prophetic or calendrical themes. It was patterned to be an earthly counterpart to the outer precincts encompassing God’s palace and its surrounding areas in heaven. This astronomical design in circular fashion reflected God’s heavenly courtyard and the outer celestial areas associated with his divine residence (*Hebrews* 8:5; 9:23).

Each Tribe Had Its Zodiacal Sign Within the Camp

Moses positioned each of the twelve tribes of Israel as representing a particular zodiacal sign in its regular astronomical order. The tribe of Judah was given the prime position in this zodiacal design by being located directly east of the entrances to the Tabernacle and the later Temples. Let me explain. Four principal tribes were selected to denote each of the four seasons of the year. Judah was first, Dan was second, Reuben was third and Ephraim was fourth. The positions of these four prime tribes were arranged 90 degrees from each other (within a 360 degrees circle) to accord with those four seasons of the year. Judah was selected to be the tribe directly east of the Tabernacle and it was given first place. This gave Judah prime importance. The prophetic significance of this zodiacal arrangement began with Judah and it also ended with

Judah since the “Camp” was a circle. The zodiacal story is a prophetic account that actually centers on the Messiah of Israel who was destined to come from the tribe of Judah. For this reason, Judah was reckoned as the chief tribe and it was located in Moses’ arrangement of the “Camp” directly east of the Temple.

The tribe of Judah had for its tribal symbol the Lion (called Leo today). Judah had a subsidiary tribe of Israel located on each of its sides. As the chief tribe, Judah (Leo) and its sign was positioned to dominate the summer season in prophetic and calendar matters. It was positioned on the east side of the Temple and Jerusalem. Judah was given the fifth month Ab (called the Father month) as the month commencing (or “fathering”) the prophetic teaching that the twelve zodiacal signs provided in the circular design of the “Camp.” The sign of Leo was the start and end of the zodiacal year according to Moses. The twelve tribes in their arrangement in the encampment also represented the twelve months of the year.

The next pivotal tribe proceeding counterclockwise around this zodiacal design of this “Camp of Israel” (90 degrees to the right from Judah) was Dan with a subsidiary tribe of Israel located on each of its sides. It was positioned on the north side of the Temple and Jerusalem as a venomous creature, sometimes displayed as an eagle with a snake in its talons (called Scorpio, the venomous scorpion today). It dominated the autumn season in the prophetic calendar of Israel.

Reuben (90 degrees to the right of Dan) with a subsidiary tribe of Israel located on each of its sides was placed on the west side of the Temple and Jerusalem in the original arrangement. Reuben was connected with water, as a Man bearing water (called Aquarius today), and it dominated the winter season in the original prophetic calendar. In another (and later) arrangement of the tribes within this zodiacal pattern, Reuben changes places with Ephraim. This arrangement is that of Reuben in disgrace. This arrangement was to place Reuben in last place in the astronomical pattern to account for

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his sin of going up to his father's bed (Genesis 49:3,4). So, in this later arrangement Reuben was taken out of the section of the Hebrew Zodiac which had the Holy of Holies within its "slice" and that "slice" was given to Ephraim. Still, in the final arrangement as shown in the Book of Revelation, Reuben is shown in its original (and sinless) position (Revelation 4:7 see the next section on the Cherubim for more information on this interesting subject).

And finally there is Ephraim (90 degrees to the right of Reuben in the original arrangement before the sin of Reuben) with a subsidiary tribe of Israel located on each of its sides. He was on the south side of the Temple and Jerusalem as a bullock (called Taurus today). It was positioned to dominate the spring season in a prophetic and calendar sense. And, of course, if one continued to the right another 90 degrees, one would then return to Judah (Leo) for the start of another calendar or prophetic year.

The Angelic Cherubim and Astronomy

Another form of this astronomical arrangement surrounding the Temple and Jerusalem (and patterned after God's abode in heaven) was the four sides of the cherubim mentioned by Ezekiel (1:4-14) and the Book of Revelation (4:6,7). The cherubim were reckoned by the biblical writers as encompassing the throne of God in heaven. These angelic cherubim also had the four zodiacal signs representing the seasons of the year associated with them (Lion, Eagle, Man, Bullock which are today called Leo, Scorpio, Aquarius, Taurus and they were analogous to the four principal tribes of Israel: Judah, Dan, Reuben and Ephraim). These particular cherubim had prophetic significance regarding the seasons of the year in the Hebrew calendar, and these astronomical indications were reflected in the arrangement of the "Camp of Israel" in the wilderness. But it didn't stop with the encampment in the wilderness. This celestial order of the twelve tribes of Israel was also introduced in the time of Jesus to encompass the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. Jewish records are clear on this fact. The "Camp" was

patterned to represent God's abode and his official precincts surrounding his residence in heaven (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23). So, even the external shape of the angelic cherubim as shown in the Old and New Testaments indicated the signs of the four seasons of the year and this was also duplicated in the symbolic astronomical (circular) design of the "Camp." Revelation 4:7 shows the Cherubim arranged with Reuben returned to its prestigious spot on the west side (the original arrangement before Reuben's sin) which had the Holy of Holies in the Temple within Reuben's zodiacal "slice."

The Zodiacal Design and the Messiah

While it should be remembered that the Bible condemns faulty interpretations by the so-called astrologers of this world (a profession which the prophets held in disdain), there are still clear astronomical signs given in the Bible for prophetic reasons in numerous places, and biblical interpreters should try to understand them.

In regard to the biblical indications involving celestial signs, let us note the prime astronomical illustration in the Holy Scriptures. That is the zodiacal design of the tribes of Israel within their encampment in the wilderness. Recall that the main entry gate for astronomical purposes that led into the camp of Israel while they were in the wilderness (and the same thing applied to Jerusalem in the time of Jesus) was the entrance from the *east*, through the tribe of Judah which had as its sign the Lion (or, as we say today, Leo). Indeed, the zodiacal interpretation for the twelve tribes began with the sign of Leo. This was also the case with the early Babylonian zodiac (*The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol.XII.51). This astronomical sign answered to the 5th Hebrew month Ab (the father month, or the beginning month for astronomical interpretation). The month of Ab was reckoned to be Judah's month, and all biblical astronomical significance in a prophetic sense started in the middle portion of Leo (in the time of Moses it began with Ab 15).

In fact, the design of the biblical Zodiac that the tribes of Israel

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displayed in their encampment prefigured the history of the Messiah of Israel as certainly interpreted by the early Christians. Its prophetic or chronological significance is all “*within* the camp,” not *outside* the camp. Note this important point. Jesus was born of Judah (Leo the Lion, the month of Ab) and the first sign in a counterclockwise direction that anyone *within* the camp would encounter would be Virgo, the Virgin (Elul, the 6th Hebrew month). And certainly, Jesus was accepted by Christians as being born of a virgin. Then, in the New Testament narrative, Jesus at the start of his ministry then met Satan for his temptation as shown by Dan (the sign of the venomous serpent or scorpion). He later came into deep waters (e.g. Psalm 124:4) through his apprehension, trial and crucifixion at Jerusalem (which is symbolized by Reuben, the sign of the Water Bearer a man carrying water). But then comes the Springtime (as indicated by the Joseph tribes, particularly Ephraim, Taurus the Bull) and this represented the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Finally, one returns in this circular (or celestial) journey *within* the camp to the first part of the tribe of Judah (Leo the Lion, back to the first fifteen degrees of the month of Ab) where the chief star called Regulus the King Star is located (which happens to be the closest star in the heavens to the ecliptic, the path of the Sun), and this represents the Christ being crowned King of Kings and sitting on the right hand of the Father, whom the Sun represents (Malachi 4:2).

The four cherubim which represent the four seasons (and the four principal tribes) are the primary actors in this zodiacal or celestial design of the fortunes of the Messiah *within* the Camp of Israel. It is reflected in the story found in Psalm 19 where the Sun comes forth as a bridegroom and begins to tell a prophetic history that Israel can understand. Indeed, the apostle Paul quoted Psalm 19 (Romans 10:18) and referred it to Jesus and his message as going forth like the messages in the sun, moon and stars into all the world. The early Christians saw the astronomical message found in the zodiacal arrangement of the tribes of Israel within their encamp-

ment as giving highlights of the career of Jesus in his role as the Christ of God. The celestial prophecy had nothing to do with directions of the compass around Jerusalem itself where these things would take place because the temptation by Satan was in the wilderness south and east of Jerusalem, not in the north where the tribe of Dan was positioned in the tribal pattern.

It is interesting, however, that Judah (the chief tribe) was located *east* of the Temple so that it would always be in front of God who viewed his people looking *eastward* from the Holy of Holies. People would *orient* themselves in matters of direction by using the *east* as their standard direction (and even today we use the word *orient* in the same way, though most of us now use north as the standard). All directions for geographical purposes in the Bible have their standard based on the *east* (the direction God looked toward from his Holy of Holies in the Temple). Indeed, even two Hebrew words were used for “south” (*yamin* and *teman*) and both signified “the right hand” (in this case it was “the right hand of God” sitting in the Holy of Holies). And one of the Hebrew words for *east* was *qedem* and this also had the meaning (in several contexts) of “being before” or standing “in front of” someone, notably being before God when He sat in His Sanctuary facing *east*. So, the tribe of Judah was situated directly *east* of God in the encampment of Israel. But, the astronomical standard begins with Judah and ends with Judah. It was expected that the Messiah himself would emerge from Judah. Thus, all the significant acts of Jesus in his role of Messiah in the capital city of Jerusalem (his crucifixion, his resurrection, his return to heaven, and his return from heaven, etc.) have their occurrences just “outside the camp” which was just opposite the *eastern* entrance to Judah.

The Three Heavens and the Temple

This astronomical arrangement of the Temple and “the Camp” is shown in another fashion that Jews took for granted in the time of Jesus. The Bible reveals that there are “three heavens.” There are

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numerous texts showing that the “first heaven” is the atmosphere where the birds fly and where all weather phenomena take place. The “second heaven” was beyond the earth’s atmosphere and embraced all the visible planets and stars, including the sun and the moon. The “third heaven,” that the apostle Paul referred to in II Corinthians 12:1-4 which he called Paradise, was that of God’s official residence in his heavenly region which was separate from the other two heavens.

These “three heavens” were symbolically pictured in the Temple at Jerusalem. In fact, the three main sections of the Temple were designed to show these three heavens. When an Israelite entered the main Temple from the east, he or she would first be within the Court of the Israelites. This first section of the Temple (which continued westward up to the eastern portion of the priests’ court in which was the Altar of Burnt Offering) was not covered with a roof. The first section was open to all weather phenomena and birds could fly within it. This area of the Temple answered in a typical manner with the “first heaven.” This “first heaven” is our atmosphere surrounding the earth. The “second heaven” in the Temple in a symbolic sense began at the eastern curtain in front of the Holy Place. This curtain, we are told by Josephus, had the principal stars of the heavens displayed on it in tapestry form (*War*, V.5,5 ¶213). It represented the entrance into the starry heavens (the “second heaven”) beyond our atmosphere. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century, tells us that west of this curtain, one could witness the center of the zodiacal circle with the seven planets displayed on the south side in the form of the Menorah (the seven lamps) with the twelve signs of the Zodiac denoting the twelve months displayed on the north side by the twelve loaves of the Table of Shewbread. This second court of the priests represented all the starry heavens above the earth’s atmosphere. But beyond this “second heaven,” there was yet a “third heaven.” This “third heaven” was the Heaven of Heavens, or in Temple terminology, the Holy of Holies which equaled God’s celestial abode where his palace and divine precincts

were located which the apostle Paul called Paradise.

The Temple and Jerusalem Were Astronomical In Design

With all of the astronomical features of the Temple, it is not difficult to understand why the shape of the “Camp of Israel” was reckoned to be circular, as astronomical designs are typically shown to be. In a word, the city of Jerusalem and the Camp area that surrounded it were symbolically accounted as being the physical and earthly counterpart (or pattern) of God’s heavenly headquarters from which he governed the entirety of the universe (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23). These astronomical features are what Moses was trying to reveal to the Israelites with the design of “the Camp” in the wilderness.

Now, I have taken considerable time to show the circular shape and the dimensions of “the Camp,” but this is a necessary geographical feature that is often overlooked by those who write about the Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. Indeed, this lack of understanding is one of the main reasons why the place of Jesus’ crucifixion has not been retained in peoples’ knowledge over the centuries. Had the true dimensions of “the Camp” been taken into consideration, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the west and the Garden Tomb in the north would never have been thought to be legitimate places for the crucifixion of Jesus, because both sites are positioned *well inside* the official “Camp” at Jerusalem. The shape of the “Camp” at Jerusalem in the time of Jesus utterly forbids the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Garden Tomb area as being candidates for the site of Jesus’ crucifixion.

Thus, the shape and dimensions of the “Camp” that surrounded the Temple and Jerusalem is a major key that helps the modern reader to know the area where Jesus was crucified. Most people today, even theologians and other scholars, know very little about these essential features connected with the Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. For that reason, I have felt it necessary to provide this geo-

graphical information so that a person can understand the geographical significance of the various sacrifices that the early Christians associated in a typical way with the role of Jesus in the teaching of the Christian message.

What this geographical information provides is a certain fact that the crucifixion of Jesus had to occur at least 2000 cubits (3000 feet) *east* of the Holy Place in the Temple. This is why the events associated with Jesus in his role as the Messiah of Israel took place *east* of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. It was recognized in the first century that the Messiah would indeed come from the *east* to Jerusalem and to the people of Israel (Matthew 24:27; Luke 17:24), and the Jewish authorities at the time reckoned that the Messiah would enter Jerusalem from the *east* because of the statement in Ezekiel that the Glory of God would come from the *east* (Ezekiel 43:1-4). This was the region of the “camp of Israel” that the tribe of Judah dominated and it was the direction toward which God looked out over Israel and the world from His divine position within the Temple. All Jews who lived in Jerusalem in the first century would have known that the indication mentioned in the Book of Hebrews about the sin offerings that were equated symbolically with Jesus and his crucifixion, were all performed *east* of the Temple. This is one of the main reasons why the crucifixion took place “without the camp” *east* of the Temple and on the Mount of Olives. There is even more to prove this.



Chapter 5

THE JEWISH PLACE OF EXECUTION IN JERUSALEM

Let us note an important ritualistic principle that dominated Jewish thought in the time when the Temple was in existence. It was that all “unclean things” associated with the Temple, with Jerusalem or with the people of Israel (whether of animals or human beings) had to be dealt with or disposed of *east* of any sacred area. Recall that the sin offerings killed in the Temple had to be taken *east* to the Miphkad Altar for burning to ashes (Leviticus 4:1-21). The bullock and the goat (both sin offerings) which were sacrificed on the Day of Atonement had to be taken *east* to the same altar and burnt into ashes (Leviticus 16:27). Even the live goat (the scapegoat) was led by a fit man into the wilderness *east* of Jerusalem (Leviticus 16:20-22). The sin offering called the Red Heifer was also burnt to ashes at the Miphkad Altar which, of course, was *east* of the Temple and Jerusalem. Even the ashes of all the sacrifices offered at the Altar of Burnt Offering in the Temple itself had to be taken *east* to the same “clean place” called “the *OUTWARD* Sanctuary” (Leviticus 4:12 with Ezekiel 44:1). Ashes were a symbol of repentance and these had to be deposited *east* of Jerusalem in the area where the main animals bearing the sins of

Israel were also burnt to ashes.

There was a definite reason why these things representing “sin” and “sorrow” had to be taken *east*. That is because all things reckoned to be “unclean” were placed *east* of the holy city. In the recently discovered “Temple Scroll” found in the Dead Sea area there was a general reference that “unclean” persons who lived near the ideal city of God as described in the Scroll had to live at designated places *east* of the city.

“And you shall make three places to the EAST of the city, separated one from another, into which shall come the lepers and the people who have discharge and the men who have had a nocturnal emission” (Yadin, *The Temple Scroll*, p.173).

These “unclean” persons had to live “without the camp” and on its *east* side (*ibid.*, p.174). Indeed, Josephus (who was a priest who lived while the Temple existed) said that “persons afflicted with gonorrhoea or leprosy were excluded from the entire city [of Jerusalem]” (*War* 5:227). And in *Antiquities* 3:261 he said that Moses “banished from the city alike those afflicted with leprosy and those with gonorrhoea.” And in the “Temple Scroll” it states that lepers must be kept out of the Temple city. It was necessary for them to reside *east* of the city” (Column 46:16,17).

The “Unclean” had to be East of Jerusalem

There was a special reason why such “unclean” persons had to be kept *east* of the Temple. Professor Yadin provides the answer. “There can be no doubt that the stress that lepers were to be isolated in a separate place *east* of the Temple city was prompted by the belief that this disease was contagious and was carried by the wind. Since the prevailing winds in Jerusalem are westerly, the areas *east* of the city, particularly the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives facing the Dead Sea, would have been considered least likely to endanger the people in the Temple and city of Jerusalem” (*The Temple Scroll*, p.177). Yadin gave proof of this from an early

Jewish commentary on the Scripture. In the Midrash, Leviticus Rabba 16 it says:

“Rabbi Yohanan said: One is not permitted to pass within four cubits to the east of a leper. Rabbi Simon ben Lakhish said: Within a hundred cubits. There is no contradiction. The one who said within four cubits meant when there is no wind blowing; and the one who said within a hundred cubits meant when there is a wind blowing.”

Yadin reports that in the *Baba Batra* 3:9;13 of the Palestinian Talmud more evidence of this principle is found: “Rabbi Mana would walk with people afflicted with boils. Rabbi Abbaya said to him: Do not walk *east* of him, but rather to the west of him.”

Yadin’s observations on this matter are very interesting because he also calls attention to the New Testament reference that Jesus two days before the Passover stopped off at the village of Bethany on the *eastern* side of Jerusalem at the home of a leper: “And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at table...” (Mark 14:3). Yadin makes the point that this account is important to the matter at hand because the village of Bethany was situated on the *eastern* side of Jerusalem and even on the *eastern* slope of the Mount of Olives. According to Yadin, this is clear proof that lepers lived *east* of Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. This New Testament indication fits the pattern of placing “unclean” things *east* of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem.

Sin Offerings also had to be East of Jerusalem

What does the sacrifice of sin offerings *east* of the Temple have to do with the crucifixion of Jesus? Very much indeed! We will see that all executions of human beings in the Jerusalem area were considered symbolically as sin offerings to the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. It means that the place of execution for murderers and blasphemers had to be “outside the camp” (like most sin offerings) but in an area that would not affect the sacredness and purity of the Holy City of Jerusalem. All “unclean” things (including the major

sin offerings ordained of God) were sent out *eastward* from the Holy City and the Temple itself. This is because in the theological thinking of the Jewish authorities in the first century, it was determined that each person who committed a capital crime and was executed for his criminal act was reckoned as being a “sin offering” to himself. It was believed that no animal could take the place of such a heinous person but that he (or she) had to be a “sin offering” himself (or herself) for the sins that had been committed. “May my death be an atonement for all my sins,” said the one being executed (Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud*, p.317). In simple terms this meant that no animal sacrifice for sin could act as a substitute for the person but that the individual had to be “his own” sin offering to atone for the terrible sins that had been done. The animals were burnt “outside the camp” because the sin offerings provided the example for a human who was also executed as his own sin offering “outside the camp” (See *Sanhedrin* 42b and especially 52a). The two “offerings” were considered analogous.

The reason this point is important to our present discussion is the fact that all animal sin offerings that were consumed “outside the camp” were offered to God *east* of the Temple near the summit of the Mount of Olives. And since all judicial executions were considered the judgment and wrath of God upon the wrongdoer, such executions were accomplished in the “presence” of God, that is, on the side of the Temple that God faced (its *east* side) when his people were brought before him to be judged.

It is important to realize that each time in the scripture that the phrase “before the Lord” is used in connection with the Tabernacle or the Temple it means that the people or the occasion were always located on the *east* side of the holy sanctuary. Since the sanctuary was considered the house (or palace) of God on earth and the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies was reckoned as the throne of God, he was always depicted as sitting on his throne facing *eastward* where all the entrances of the Tabernacle were situated.

The Judgments of God were Officially performed in His Presence

When Israelites approached God for worship and even for judgment, they were always coming before him on the *east* side of the Holy of Holies (never on the south, west or north of the Holy of Holies because there were no entrances to the inner sanctum on those sides). This is why the three main courts of the Tabernacle only had entrances on their *east* side. And in the time of Jesus the three main judicial courts of Israel to dispense the judgments of God to the people were located within the Temple on its *east* side (Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud*, pp.300-302; *Mishnah, Sanhedrin* 11:2 and *Middoth* 5:4). This allowed all judgments to be given “before the Lord” (that is, in the presence of “God’s face”). And indeed, even the sentences of those judgments were also expected to be carried out “in the presence of the Lord.” This principle is even found in judgments recorded in the New Testament: “he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone” in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb” (Revelation 14:10). It was common to expect judicial decisions by the courts to be given by God as people came “before him,” that is, on the *east* side of the Temple. Women who were accused of adultery were brought “before the Lord” (to the *east* entrance to the sanctuary) for judgment (Numbers 5:16-31). When the two sons of Aaron were judged for offering strange fire “before the Lord” they were judged and punished on the *east* side of the sanctuary (Leviticus 10:1-7). When Korah and his Levites were punished it was on the *east* side of the Tabernacle (Numbers 16:41-50).

Recall that the early Jewish people would *orient* themselves in matters of direction by using the *east* as their standard direction (and even today we use the word *orient* in the same way though most of us now use north as the standard). All directions for geographical purposes in the Bible have their standard based on the *east* (the direction God looked toward from his Holy of Holies in

the Temple). Recall that two Hebrew words were used for “south” (*yamin* and *teman*) and both signified “the right hand” (in this case the standard *orientation* was God on His throne and “the right hand” was that of God sitting in the Holy of Holies). Also, one of the Hebrew words for *east* was *qedem* and this also had the meaning (in several contexts) of “being before” or standing “in front of” someone, and notably, the standard theme for use was standing before God while He sat in His Sanctuary facing *east*.

All Judgments Conducted East of the Temple

Even when it comes time for God to judge the world from Jerusalem, those to be judged will come “before the Lord” which means on the “east side” of God’s throne (Psalm 96:13; 98:9). In a literal sense this means those being judged will have to position themselves on the slopes of the Mount of Olives facing the Temple in which God will then be sitting. In actual fact, the great judgment in the Valley of Jehoshaphat mentioned in Joel 3:2,12 was acclaimed by people in the first century as referring to the Kidron Valley which separated the Mount of Olives from the Temple mount. Since the word “Jehoshaphat” means “God judges” it became common to believe that the final judgment for people in the world will occur on the “eastern” side of the Temple and up the slopes of the Mount of Olives. It is for this reason that this region became known as the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

Indeed, Charles Warren in Hasting’s *Dictionary of the Bible* listed over fourteen Christian authorities (from the Bordeaux Pilgrim onward) who attested to the belief that the Kidron was the actual Valley of Jehoshaphat (vol.II, p.562). This is why it was important, from the Christian point of view, that Jesus died in this eastern region facing the “Valley of Jehoshaphat” which was reckoned the judgment place for all mankind. For Jesus to be judged as dying for the sins of all humanity, Christians thought he had to be judged and sentenced in the place where all mankind were designed to be judged for their sins.

Even Muslims (who inherited many traditional beliefs from the Jews and Christians) firmly believe that the summit and the western slope of the Mount of Olives is also the judgment area for mankind. The *Kitab Ahwal al-Qiyama* (“Book of the Phases of Resurrection”) has an interesting account of Muslim tradition. “All the dead will congregate on the Mount of Olives and the angel Gabriel will move paradise to the right of Allah’s Throne and hell to its left. All mankind will cross a long bridge suspended from the Mount of Olives to the Temple Mount, which will be narrower than a hair, sharper than sword, and darker than night. Along this bridge there will be seven arches and at each arch man will be asked to account for his actions” (for more information giving similar Jewish traditions, see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. IX, col. 1576). It will be noticed that the Muslim tradition still has reference to the two-tiered arched bridge that spanned the Kidron Valley from the Temple Mount to Olivet.

There is, however, a positive side to this judgment of God. Some of the righteous will be judged as worthy of being resurrected from the dead and to stand before God in glory. For this reason, many Jews and Muslims over the last few centuries have wanted to be buried in this region so that they might be the first of the righteous to be given their rewards when God comes to judge the world. The chief spot in all Jerusalem to be buried, in the eyes of certain Jewish people (and there are numerous tombs there), is on the western slopes of the Mount of Olives facing the Temple so they can be the first to meet God in the resurrection when the judgment takes place. This was considered the prime area for judgment and where the righteous will be rewarded with a resurrection from the dead while the wicked will be sent to the left hand side into Gehenna.

Jesus Was a Sin Offering for the World

What has this to do with the crucifixion of Jesus? It is highly significant to it. Since the New Testament makes it abundantly clear that Jesus bore all the judgments for sin and that he endured the

Chapter 5 -The Jewish Place of Execution in Jerusalem

wrath of God in place of the whole world (II Corinthians 5:14-21), it was necessary that Jesus bear his judicial punishment in the area where “all the world” is destined to be judged. And too, for Jesus to be executed “in the presence of God” for the sins of the world, he had to bear those sins in the region designed by God for that purpose. This is why the sin offerings that were sacrificed by the priests were carried “outside the camp” to the top of the Mount of Olives in order to be burnt into ashes. This is also why the holiest of sin offerings (called the Red Heifer) was killed and burnt to ashes “outside the camp” at the summit of Olivet directly “east” of the Temple. It was also in this same region (but somewhat to the south, as we will see) where criminals deserving the death penalty were taken “outside the camp” to become a sin offering for themselves.

Thus, in Jesus’ time, we find that the official Jewish place for execution was near the southern summit of Olivet but facing the eastern entrances to the Temple so that the evildoers would be executed “in the presence of God.” Only an area “east” of the Temple (and Jerusalem) will fit all the requirements regarding the judicial execution of criminals.



Chapter 6

THE PLACE OF ROMAN EXECUTION

There is a major point to help us identify the site of Jesus' crucifixion that has not been applied until recently (at least to my knowledge). It concerns the Roman legal requirements for crucifying criminals. It appears that Pilate may have been legally obliged to crucify Jesus at the place of his arrest or at the place where his crime was considered to have occurred. The evidence is quite interesting and it could well have a bearing on locating the spot where Jesus was crucified. The research on this matter appeared in a 1980 book "The Enigma of Jesus the Galilaeen" (pp.301-305) by Nicholas Kokkinos. Mr. Kokkinos and I were speakers at a conference on the nativity of Jesus which was conducted by Mississippi State University in December, 1983. The Cobb Archaeological Institute of MSU had asked Mr. Kokkinos to come from London, England (his present home) to be a panel speaker for the conference and this is where we became acquainted. Though we have similar interests in trying to determine the time of Jesus' nativity, I was especially fortunate to find that Mr. Kokkinos had done research on the site of the crucifixion. The following information from Roman and Greek sources is largely from the research provided in Mr.

Kokkinos' book and from personal letters from him. Again, the evidence shows that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives.

Crucifixions Were Performed at the Site of the Crime

What is important to the issue is the fact that Roman jurists held that convicts sentenced to crucifixion, particularly pirates or enemies of the state, must be crucified at the scene of their misdeed (*Digest* 48:9.19.28.15; cf. *Collectio Legum Nosaicarum et Romanarum*, I.6). This was the manner of crucifixion prescribed by tradition and law that had been followed through the years and it can be seen in various examples. Note some of them. "He crucified the soldiers in the spot where they had committed their crimes" (*Scriptores Historiae Augustae* 6, Vulcacius Gallicanus, *Avidius Cassius*, 4.1f). Also, the proconsul of Africa punished the priests of Saturn by crucifying them "on the very trees of their temple, in the shadow of which they had committed their crimes" (Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, 9:2). Additionally, there is Chariton, *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 3:4.18, which says: "A great proportion of the crowd followed Theron as he was led away, and in front of Callirhoe's tomb he was crucified upon the cross, and from the cross gazed out upon the sea *over which he had carried captive* the daughters of Heromcrates." This shows that Theron's crucifixion was at the site of his criminal abduction. These are examples to show that it was common to crucify people where their crimes had been committed (cf. Justinus, *Epitome* 22.7.8).

Crucifixions Were Performed at the Site of Capture

There was yet another method for selecting a spot for crucifixion. If it were not possible to return the criminal to the site of his crime, then the place where the person was arrested was viewed as proper. We find the following in the *Acts of Pilate* IX.5: "According to the law of the pious emperors hanged on the cross in the garden in which you were seized" (cf. Ps.Cypr., *De Montibus Sina et Zion* 3; Cyril, *Catechetical Lecture XIV*, 5; *Toldoth Jeshu* IV.20-25; also

cf. *Song of Solomon* 6:11). There were also other criteria.

Crucifixions Were at Main Crossroads

If, however, the crucifixion of a malefactor was not feasible at the scene of the crime or place of arrest, it was also common to select an area of *high ground* and/or *crossroads* for the execution. This was done to attract the attention of a large number of people to provide a visible deterrent to others not to commit such crimes. Since crucifixion represented the utmost form of humiliation for the criminal, his naked body had to be on public display at a prominent place. In Quintilian we read: "The crowded roads are chosen. Penalties relate not so much to retribution as to their exemplary effect" (*Declamationes* 274). See also *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* 18, Aelius Lamridius. In *Alexander Severus* 23:8 we read: "As a deterrent to others he had them crucified on the street that his slaves used most frequently."

What is interesting in the above examples is the fact that Jesus fulfilled all the factors for a normal Roman crucifixion. Notice first the place where Jesus was arrested. This was at the Garden of Gethsemane. Just where was this garden located? Prof. J.A. Thompson has this to say:

"The site of Gethsemane is not known with certainty, although it was across the Kidron valley on the side of the Mount of Olives. There are today several rival sites for the place. The confused visitor will be shown the scene by the Roman Catholics, the Greeks, the Armenians, and the Russians. The oldest tradition places the scene [of Jesus' praying] on the ground now occupied by the Tomb of the Virgin. But the fact is that we have no clear information, archaeological or historical, which will allow precise identification" (*The Bible and Archaeology*, 3rd ed. (1982), pp.359, 360).

The truth is, no one knows exactly where the Garden of Gethsemane was located yet it is clear that it was somewhere east of the Kidron Valley and on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. This

is made certain in the Gospels. We are told that Jesus had been in the city of Jerusalem for the Last Supper (Luke 22:10). After that event he and his disciples left the city and went “across the Kidron” (John 18:1) and “onto the Mount of Olives” (Mark 14:26). They then came to the place which had been Jesus’ habitual rendezvous area for teaching his disciples (Luke 22:39). Or, as the apostle John put it, where “Jesus had many times met there with his disciples” (John 18:2). This place was, of course, the Garden of Gethsemane and we should note that it was certainly on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39).

But where on the Mount of Olives was the Garden of Gethsemane? No scholar today has the slightest idea where it was! We only have traditional beliefs available which were determined in later centuries and no one can be certain if any of them is reliable. As a matter of fact, Peter the Deacon’s description of the holy places puts it near the summit of Olivet and not far from the burial site of Stephen (Wilkinson, *Egeria* p.185). This reference makes the arrest of Jesus to be higher up the mount than most think today.

Jesus Was Arrested on the Mount of Olives

Whatever the case, the New Testament shows that Jesus was taken into custody on the Mount of Olives and one of the customs of the Roman government was to crucify a criminal at the place of his arrest. Gethsemane was even the scene of a “crime.” Jesus always forbade the carrying of weapons by his disciples (Luke 22:36), but at the time of his arrest he specifically commanded that his disciples have at least two swords in their possession (Luke 22:38). The reason for this was to make Jesus appear as though he were indeed a “criminal” (Luke 22:37). Thus, the Garden of Gethsemane became “the scene of a crime” — a crime of sedition against the constituted authorities.

If Pilate followed one of the Roman rules for crucifixion, he would have executed him near the area of arrest. We are told by the

Gospel accounts that Jesus was killed near (or in) a “garden” (John 19:41). Was this the same “garden” as the Garden of Gethsemane because the identical Greek word was used for the place of his arrest as well as that of his crucifixion? This is one of the reasons that Dr. Hutchinson in the *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly* (1870, pp.379-381) thought the Garden of Gethsemane could be a candidate for the crucifixion site. Kokkinos in his book called attention to the third century work *The Acts of Pilate* (IX.5) that Jesus was crucified in the garden where he was seized because this was the law of the Romans. This evidence deserves serious consideration but to me the case remains doubtful. While there is the statement in the Talmud (*Shebu'oth* 16a) that there were two areas of “meadows” or types of “gardens” on the Mount of Olives (one near the bottom and close to the Kidron Valley which could be Gethsemane and the other near the summit which could be the garden in which Jesus was crucified), there is not enough geographical points given in the sources to be certain that these “gardens” can be identified or compared. The evangelists tell us that the crucifixion was at the “Place of the Head.” This gives the definite impression that the site was at the summit of a mountain, not near a valley which the descriptions of the Garden of Gethsemane seem to denote. Also, as we will see in the next chapter, the Temple curtain could be observed from the scene of the crucifixion and this means that Jesus had to be executed high enough up the Mount of Olives to view that Temple curtain. From this evidence alone, Gethsemane cannot be considered unless further historical or archaeological evidence is discovered to show that it was located much nearer the top of Olivet.

Jesus Claimed to be a King

There was, however, a much higher charge than sedition against Jesus for having two swords among his disciples. His more serious “crime” was allowing the people to proclaim him as a king — not just an ordinary king but the prophesied messianic king who was

destined to rule over all nations on earth (including Rome). It was against Roman law for anyone to be proclaimed a king without the express permission and approbation of the emperor of Rome. And while Jesus forbade the multitudes to make him a king early in his ministry (John 6:15), a few days before he was crucified, Jesus did allow many of the people at Jerusalem to call him the king of Israel, and he approved of it. Notice *when* and *where* this proclamation of Jesus' kingship took place.

At the time of his triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem on what is called today "Palm Sunday," the Gospel of Mark said that as he drew near "to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives," he let the people proclaim him as the king of Israel and the world (Mark 11:1). The actual place where the triumphal procession began was at Bethphage where he mounted the donkey, and this was precisely at the southern summit of the Mount of Olives (Wilkinson, *The Jerusalem Jesus Knew*, pp.113-116). From that spot Jesus rode the animal down the slopes of Olivet along the roadway called by Luke "The Descent of the Mount of Olives" (Luke 19:37). Nearby the village of Bethphage was the "Beth ha-Deshen (the House of the Ashes) which contained the "Miphkad Altar" (the altar where the sin offerings were burnt "outside" the regular Temple).

This means that Jesus committed the "crime of treason" against Rome and the emperor by having himself proclaimed a king (indeed, the intimation of the people was that he represented the king of kings) from near the crest of the Mount of Olives until he reached the city of Jerusalem. *This* was the actual "crime" that caused him to be crucified (Luke 23:2; John 18:37; 19:12,14,15).

Since we have shown in this chapter that the Romans customarily crucified criminals where their infringement took place (or at the place of arrest), and if possible on high ground and/or at cross-roads, all these factors were applicable for Jesus on the *east* side of Jerusalem. This is just another legal reason why Pilate must have

felt obliged by Roman law or custom to crucify Jesus on the Mount of Olives. There would have been no reason whatever for the Romans to select a spot on the south, west or north of the city to crucify Jesus. All of the activities of Jesus outside the city and the Temple mount (two prohibited areas for crucifixions) were on the Mount of Olives. Jesus actually *lived* on that mount while in the environs of Jerusalem. “By day he was teaching in the Temple, but by night he would go out and lodge on the Mount of Olives” (Luke 21:37). It was his “habitual” place for meeting with his disciples (Luke 22:39), or (as John stated) “where he many times met there with his disciples” (John 18:2). Even the village of Bethany where he sometimes resided was on the eastern slopes of Olivet (Mark 11:1).

What About the Two Thieves?

As a closing thought to this chapter, one might wonder if the Roman rules for execution also applied to the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus? No one, of course, can know for sure. It may be that they committed their crimes in different areas of the country and were brought to the capital for crucifixion. But one thing is certain. The thieves were in Jerusalem and apparently they were Jews (it was against imperial law to crucify Roman citizens). And in Jerusalem (as we have shown in the last chapter) there was only one general area in which Jewish criminals could be executed so as to be “in the presence” of God at the time of their judgment. That place was on the *east side* of the Temple and *outside* the camp. Only at some area near the summit of Olivet could these Jewish requirements fit in a perfect manner. And we will see in a further chapter that Jesus was actually executed according to Jewish law, not Roman! Though it is interesting that even Roman requirements for execution were also met in Jesus’ crucifixion, we will later see that it was the Law of Moses that caused him to be killed.

Still, all of this shows that the crucifixion of Jesus and the two robbers could justifiably have occurred near the summit of the

Chapter 6 - The Place of Roman Execution

Mount of Olives, whether by Jewish or Roman law. This is the only area in the Jerusalem region that was appropriate both from the ritualistic and the environmental point of view. We will see further evidence about these matters in future chapters, and it will become abundantly clear that the summit of the Mount of Olives was indeed the place where Jesus was crucified. The next chapter will specifically address this question in greater detail.



Chapter 7

***TEARING OF
THE TEMPLE
CURTAIN***

There is an event associated with Jesus' death which has *not* been thought by most people as having any bearing on the identification of the crucifixion site, but had this one event been properly appraised in its geographical and historical contexts, the actual location of Jesus' crucifixion would never have been lost. Strangely, this simple proof has been neglected by scholars and this includes my own research for the first 30 years of my professional career. But once this evidence is realized, a new perspective is made available towards solving the geographical mysteries concerning Jesus' crucifixion.

Look first at the scene of the crucifixion as described by Luke. Note carefully his account of the tearing of the Temple curtain. For clarity's sake, quotes in this chapter are made directly from the original languages into English. The King James renderings are a little archaic to us moderns, so I will give the scriptures with a modern translation.

“And darkness occurred over the whole earth until the ninth hour because the sunlight failed, but the curtain of the Holy Place was

Chapter 7 - Tearing of the Temple Curtain

rent down the middle. And with a loud voice Jesus said: Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit. When he had said this, he died” (Luke 23:44-46).

The Gospel of Matthew reverses the events involving the tearing of the Temple curtain and Jesus’ death.

“But again Jesus having cried out with a loud voice, he yielded up the spirit. And, behold, the curtain of the Holy Place was rent in two from top to bottom” (Matthew 27:50,51).

It is important to note that Jesus’ death and the severing of the curtain were regarded by the two Gospel writers as synchronous events. Once this is realized, a significant clue emerges to identify the place of the crucifixion. Pay close attention to what Luke said happened at the exact time of Jesus’ crucifixion. [I have emphasized certain words.]

“But the centurion *having seen THE THING* having occurred glorified God saying: Surely this man was righteous” (Luke 23:47).

In this account Luke lays emphasis on “the thing” that was seen by the centurion (note carefully that the evangelist is referring to “one thing” — a single event — that prompted the centurion to exclaim that Jesus was truly righteous). What was that single event? It could hardly have been the witnessing of his death because Jesus’ death was fully expected and represented nothing unusual to anyone. The earthquake that Matthew mentioned could not have been Luke’s “one thing” because Luke doesn’t even refer to that particular event anywhere in his context. The three hours darkness (probably caused by dark clouds and/or smoke, see my research study titled “The Location of the Lake of Fire” for proof) could hardly have been “the thing” causing the centurion to glorify God. Note that the darkness did not seem to disturb the other inhabitants of Jerusalem who apparently dismissed it as an event (naturally explainable) which normally occurred in the Jerusalem area at that time of the year. But something caused the centurion to recognize the supernatural origin of one event associated with the death

of Jesus. What was “the thing” that the centurion viewed as significant? A careful reading of the context shows it was the tearing in two of the Temple curtain at the precise time of Jesus’ death.

Geographical Knowledge Locates the Site of the Crucifixion

This event concerning the tearing of the curtain, provides us with some excellent geographical evidence from the New Testament that allows us to identify the general region of Jesus’ crucifixion. The truth is, there was only one place within the environs of Jerusalem where the centurion could have witnessed the tearing of the Temple curtain (and still be outside a gate of Jerusalem as the Book of Hebrews informs us). This would of necessity have been in an *easterly* direction from the Temple. The reason for this is simple to understand. This is because the Temple curtain, that could be seen from outside the Temple, was the one suspended from a large stone support (or lintel) that covered the eastern entrance to the Holy Place (Greek: the *naos*). This curtain was located directly in front of the eastern doors to the Holy Place and only from the eastern side of the Temple could this curtain be seen by spectators located outside the walls of Jerusalem. It would have been a physical impossibility for anyone to have seen the curtain from the south, from the north or from the west. This means that anyone near the present area of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or even around the Garden Tomb would only have been able to see the back walls of the Temple. In no way was it possible to view the Temple curtain hanging in front of the Holy Place from any area around Jerusalem other than from the east. Anyone familiar with the Temple and its entrances would recognize this factor instantly.

The Gospel of Matthew gives even more information on this matter that substantiates this conclusion.

“Again Jesus cried out with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And, *behold, the curtain of the Holy Place was rent in two from top to bottom, and the earth quaked and the masses of rocks were*

split” (Matthew 27:50,51, quoted directly from the Greek).

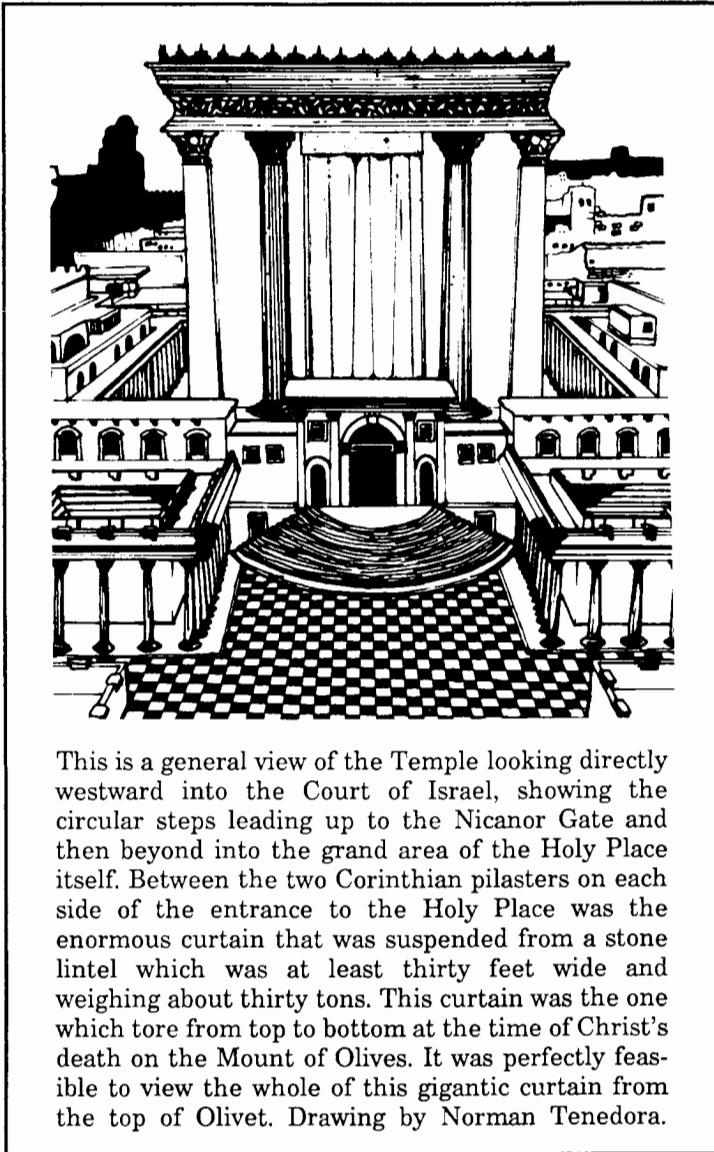
Matthew then provides some parenthetical details which occurred after Jesus’ resurrection. He said that the tombs were opened and many of the bodies of the saints were resurrected. These saints then entered Jerusalem and showed themselves to individuals who had previously known them. After presenting this added bit of information which happened three days after Jesus’ death, Matthew returns to his account of the crucifixion itself. He mentions that the Temple curtain tore in two at the time of a great earthquake.

“But the centurion and the others with him watching Jesus *having seen* the earthquake and *THE THINGS occurring*, became very much afraid, saying: Truly, this was God’s son” (Matthew 27:54).

It should carefully be noted that not only the centurion but also those standing beside him witnessed the effects of the earthquake as well as “the things” (in Matthew the usage is plural, see Greek). What were these particular “things” that Matthew said were happening simultaneously with Jesus’ death? They were the earthquake, the termination of the sun being obscured, and also the rending of the Temple curtain. In fact, Matthew makes an added emphasis concerning the severing of the curtain. He calls attention to its significance by stating: “And, behold [that is, look intently], the curtain of the Holy Place was rent in two” (Matthew 27:51). He wants his readers to pay particular heed to this event—to “look intently” at the tearing of the Temple curtain. This rending of the curtain at the exact time of Jesus’ death (along with the earthquake and the ending of the sun’s obscuration) were prime events of importance to Matthew. Indeed, they would have been to anyone standing amidst the scene of the crucifixion. No wonder that the centurion and the others exclaimed: “Truly, this was God’s son.”

The Events of the Crucifixion Taken Together

What is necessary to our present discussion is the realization that



This is a general view of the Temple looking directly westward into the Court of Israel, showing the circular steps leading up to the Nicanor Gate and then beyond into the grand area of the Holy Place itself. Between the two Corinthian pilasters on each side of the entrance to the Holy Place was the enormous curtain that was suspended from a stone lintel which was at least thirty feet wide and weighing about thirty tons. This curtain was the one which tore from top to bottom at the time of Christ's death on the Mount of Olives. It was perfectly feasible to view the whole of this gigantic curtain from the top of Olivet. Drawing by Norman Tenedora.

these concurrent events can help us to locate the region of Jesus' crucifixion. The fact that these occurrences could be seen from the site of the crucifixion is one of the things that the Gospel writers were trying to convey. Again this shows (since the Temple curtain could only be seen from the eastern side of Jerusalem) that the centurion and the others around the scene of Jesus' crucifixion had to be *east* of the Temple. It also means that they had to be at an elevated area higher than the *eastern* wall of the Temple in order to see the Temple curtain. Thus, they were situated somewhere up the slopes of the Mount of Olives and probably near its summit.

We are provided with more information about this matter in the Gospel of Mark.

“But Jesus having let out a loud voice died. And the curtain of the Holy Place was rent in two from top to bottom. But the centurion standing alongside and opposite of him HAVING SEEN that he expired THUSLY [that is, he died at the exact time the curtain tore in two], said: Truthfully, this man was a Son of God” (Mark 15:37-39).

The adverb “thusly” in the above quote shows that Mark reckoned Jesus' death as contemporaneous with the rending of the Temple curtain and that the centurion was able to see the two events happening at the same time. It must be understood that it was not simply the death of Jesus that caused the centurion to exult (because his death was quite naturally expected), but it was *witnessing* the tearing of the curtain at the time of his death.

The Plainness of New Testament Teaching

One thing we should recognize. Drawing attention to the details of the words found in Luke, Matthew and Mark concerning Jesus' crucifixion is not “straining at a gnat” or trying to make a mountain out of a molehill. These are important considerations that have long been overlooked by individuals trying to comprehend the geography of Jesus' crucifixion. It is now time to begin paying attention to these details. Once we do, we will then be in a proper position to

understand some of the important doctrinal and prophetic teachings of the New Testament that the real site of the crucifixion affords. The fact is, the New Testament makes it clear that the centurion and all the others around the crucifixion site *could see with their own eyes* the Temple curtain being torn in two. This curtain was hanging in front of the eastern portal of the inner Temple. This means that the crucifixion had to have taken place near the summit of the Mount of Olives located on the eastern side of Jerusalem.

It must be realized that there was no difficulty in witnessing the tearing of the Temple curtain from the Mount of Olives, which was a Sabbath Day's journey of about half a mile away from the Temple mount (Acts 1:12). This outer curtain was 55 cubits high and 16 cubits wide (over 80 feet tall and 24 feet in breadth) (Josephus, *War* V.210-214). This curtain was a magnificent creation of art. Josephus (who was an eyewitness) described it as a wonderfully made tapestry woven with the finest materials (*ibid.*). And how majestic it was! Imagine a curtain about 24 feet wide and as high as a modern eight story building. It is important to realize how enormous in size this curtain was because one might wonder how people standing about half a mile distant could witness it tear from the top down. When it is understood how large its dimensions were, all problems of distance vanish away.

The Doors of the Holy Place

It also ought to be mentioned that early Jewish records show that the doors of the Holy Place (in front of which this curtain was suspended) mysteriously opened of their own accord in A.D.30 (the year in which Jesus was crucified). "Forty years before the Temple was destroyed.... the gates of the Hekel [the Holy Place] opened by themselves, until R. Yohanan Ben Zakkai rebuked them [the gates] saying: Hekel, Hekel, why alarmist you us? We know that you are destined to be destroyed. For of you has prophesied Zechariah Ben Iddo (Zechariah 11:1): Open your doors, O Lebanon [the Temple], and the fire shall eat your cedars" (Yoma 39b).

Forty years before the destruction of the Temple in A.D.70 is obviously A.D.30. This is the year in which Jesus was crucified (see Addendum One of this book with new information which demonstrates this). Edersheim was of the opinion that the miraculous opening of these Temple doors was in some way associated with the tearing of the curtain since the doors were positioned directly behind the curtain itself (*Life and Times*, vol.II, pp.610,611). This would have to be the case if the tearing of the curtain was to show that the spiritual barriers to the Holy Place were now made redundant by Jesus' death. These two doors opened inwardly and the symbolic teaching would have been meaningless had the two doors remained closed. Indeed, for the intended symbol to have any relevance whatever, the two events would have had to occur at the same time.

The Consequence of Tearing the Temple Curtain

But how was it possible for the doors to the Holy Place to open? A Jewish Christian work of the early second century called "The Gospel of the Nazaraeans" said that the large stone lintel which supported the curtain (which no doubt had the inner doors attached to it for stability) split in two when the curtain was severed (*cf.* Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *The New Testament Apocrypha*, vol.I, pp.150,153). Remember that there was a major earthquake at the precise time of Jesus' death and this could have been the cause for fracturing the stone lintel. There is no reason to deny the possibility that the collapse of the overhead lintel (which was an enormous stone at least 30 feet long and weighing probably 30 tons) was the "natural cause" of the curtain tearing in two. The fact that the curtain was severed from top to bottom demonstrates that it was the force of the falling lintel that caused the curtain to rend. This collapse could also have been the means by which the inner doors next to the curtain were forced open. The crashing down of 30 tons of stone from the height of an eight story building could surely have opened the two doors that were directly next to the falling

stonework. No wonder Jewish people long remembered the event about the opening of the doors to the Holy Place in A.D.30.

The collapse of this lintel at the time of the earthquake (as attested by the “Gospel of the Nazaraeans”) is excellent evidence that the curtain did in fact tear in two. It helps to show that the New Testament is giving *literal* information and not *symbolic* teaching alone. But even if some people might believe the biblical accounts are only symbolic, the crucifixion would still have to be reckoned as occurring east of Jerusalem. This is because anyone living in the first century and aware of the geography of Jerusalem would realize that even such a *symbolic* illustration (if that is what it was) would still demand an *eastern* aspect for the observer if the figure was to have valid geographical parameters. But if the lintel did break in two as shown by the “Gospel of the Nazaraeans,” then we have remarkable evidence that the New Testament is giving literal teaching when the three Gospels said the curtain was severed from top to bottom.

This means the New Testament is giving eyewitness evidence that the centurion and the other spectators at the scene of Jesus’ crucifixion were able *to observe* the tearing in two of the Temple curtain. It then follows that the observers were situated in an elevated region that was high enough for them to view the tearing of the curtain over the eastern wall of the Temple. Without doubt, this New Testament evidence demonstrates that the crucifixion of Jesus occurred *east* of the Temple mount somewhere near the summit of the Mount of Olives. In the next chapter more evidence will be given to show this.



Chapter 8

A SIGNIFICANT GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION

There is another piece of evidence from the New Testament which shows that Jesus' crucifixion took place on the Mount of Olives. It is interesting that this information (to my knowledge) has never been used in determining the site, yet it has an important bearing in solving the geography of the crucifixion. It concerns a topographical location mentioned in the Gospel of John. He shows that Jesus was executed near an area of Jerusalem called "The Place of the City" (John 19:20). The wording of the Greek requires one to render the words as "The Place of the City" (or "The City's Place"), but many translators not realizing that a specific location in Jerusalem was intended by John, usually translate the passage: "For the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city." But this translation is not correct. The text should actually read: "Near was *The Place of the City* where Jesus was crucified" (John 19:20, translation, italics and capitalization mine). The expression in the original has appeared so odd to some scholars in its grammatical construction that many of them have been forced to modify what John wrote. But this "oddity" is the very key to its meaning.

The Place of the City

What was “The Place” that the apostle John intended? It can be found if one will transliterate the Greek that John used for the “Place.” Utilizing the actual Greek, John said that Jesus was crucified near “*The Topos* of the City.” It is that “Topos” that must be located. That particular Topos can be found if we pay attention to its use in other contexts of the New Testament. [All translations in this chapter are from the original Greek, not KJV.]

All Jewish people living in the first century knew what “The *Topos* of the City” represented. It happened to be a well-known description of the Temple at Jerusalem. The usage is found in several texts of the New Testament. Look at Acts 6:13,14 which records the activities of Stephen.

“And they brought forth false witnesses who said: This man does not stop speaking things against *The Topos*, even the Holy [*Topos*], and against the Law. For we have heard him say that Jesus the Nazarene will throw down this *Topos* and change the customs that Moses handed down to us.”

In this account “The Topos” clearly signified the Temple in the city of Jerusalem. But there is more. When the apostle Paul was being challenged by the Jews in Jerusalem, they presented some specific accusations against him.

“Men of Israel, help us. This is the man who teaches everywhere against the People, and the Law, and *The Topos*, and what is more, he has brought Greeks into the temple [enclosure] and defiled *The Holy Topos*” (Acts 21:28).

Again, in these New Testament references, it can be seen that the “Topos” signified the Temple. But let us now look at the Gospel of John itself (the Gospel which contains the statement that Jesus was crucified near *The Topos* of the City). Recall the conversation of the Samaritan women with Jesus. She called the Temple “*The Topos*.”

“Our forefathers worshipped in this mountain, but you people say that in Jerusalem is *The Topos* where it is necessary to be wor-

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shipping [*The Topos* was a common term]” (John 4:20).

Jews always considered *The Topos* as being in Jerusalem — and that the Temple could only be located in Jerusalem. Jesus himself acknowledged this to the Samaritan woman. But even more important to the issue is John 11:47,48. Here we have the authoritative and official pronouncements of the chief priests and Pharisees within the Sanhedrin (the Supreme Court of the Jews). In the clearest of terms they referred to the Temple simply by the name *The Topos*.

“The chief priests and Pharisees gathered together the Sanhedrin and began to say: What are we to do, because this man performs many signs? If we let him go his way, they will all put faith in him, and the Romans will come and take away from us both *The Topos* and *The Nation*” (emphases mine).

The Topos of the City Was the Temple

These scriptures show that the common designation for the Temple and its holy areas was “The Place” (i.e. *The Topos*). There was absolutely nothing strange to the Jews of the first century in using such a name for the Temple. There are a host of references from the Old Testament (both in Hebrew and Greek), and from other Jewish works as well as from Gentile accounts which show that the expression “*The Topos*” meant the Temple in Jerusalem. The phrase was also used to refer to Gentile sanctuaries throughout the world (see Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary*, vol.VIII, pp.187-208 for many such references). In the middle of the fourth century, Athanasius simply called the Temple at Jerusalem “The Place” (*The Topos*) without the slightest elaboration.

“Aliens had invaded the Temple at Jerusalem.... Aliens indeed had held *the Place*, but knew not the Lord of *the Place*.... What profit then is *the Place* to them? For behold they that hold *the Place* are charged by them that love God with making it [*the Place*] a den of thieves” (Letter XXIX fragment).

Thus, when the apostle John spoke about “The Place of the City” (John 19:19,20), this was a clear reference to the Temple

complex. The additional part of the phrase (“of the City”) was itself a common title in the first century that referred to Jerusalem. This term “the City” was the most used term of Josephus in his abundant references to the capital of the Jews, Jerusalem.

The fact that the phrase “The Place of the City” refers to the Temple is a powerful piece of evidence that (even standing alone) will show us where Jesus was crucified. Let us now return to John 19:19,20. When the real meaning of John is understood we will have a significant geographical indication showing the location where Jesus died. Note that Pilate made a title and placed it above the head of Jesus. John said a great number of people were able to read this title because the site of the crucifixion was near “*The Topos*” (“*The Place*”) — it happened *close* to the Temple!

“Pilate wrote a title: Jesus the Nazarene the king of Jews. Therefore many of the Jews read this title because it was near *The Topos* of the City where Jesus was crucified.”

John is telling us important information. Being near the Temple (but outside its walls) is a clue to the site of the crucifixion. Indeed, John would not have indicated it was near the Temple unless he saw some significance to this factor as it related to the Temple and its symbolism. He wanted people to know that Jesus was crucified within the environs of His Father’s House — the place where all the sacrifices for sin were offered to God.

John also wanted his readers to understand why there were so many people able to view the crucifixion of Jesus. This was because his execution was near an entrance to the Temple. Recall that it was the Passover season and that Jesus was being killed while throngs of people were carrying their Passover lambs into the Temple to have them killed.

Jesus Was Crucified Near the Temple

How *near* the Temple was Jesus? On what side of the Temple was he? One thing for certain, Jesus was not crucified inside the

Temple complex because the Jewish people considered the execution of criminals as in no way appropriate *inside* the sanctuary of God. As a matter of fact, the author of the Book of Hebrews gives us information that not only was Jesus crucified “outside the gate” of the city, but more than that, he was crucified even “outside the camp” (Hebrews 13:12,13). There is not the slightest doubt that Jesus’ execution took place outside the city of Jerusalem, yet it was near the environs of the holy Temple. These biblical indications tell us a lot about the location of the crucifixion if we will pay close attention to the texts.

Let us now use the argument of elimination in locating the proper site. If Jesus would have been put to death on the southern flank of the Temple (to satisfy being *near* the Temple as John says), it would violate the statement in the Book of Hebrews that he was crucified outside the city because the whole southern region of Jerusalem abutting to the Temple was *within* the city. This same restriction applies to the entirety of the western *area* near the Temple because it was also *within* the walls of the city. Even if one went further westward to include the present site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (which was so far *west* of the Temple mount that it was even located beyond the “Second Wall” of Jerusalem in the time of Jesus), this location could not be considered near the Temple. This one factor alone prohibits the region of the present Holy Sepulchre Church as being the area of Jesus’ crucifixion. This also applies to the spot where the present Garden Tomb is situated. Indeed, that site is even further away from the Temple and could in no way fulfill the description of the apostle John that Jesus was executed *near* the Temple. Actually, the whole northwestern area adjacent to the Temple was occupied by the fortress called the Antonia. It was not possible for Jesus to have been crucified inside this fortress, which (by the way) was technically *inside* the city as well.

Where Was “Near the Temple”?

It might have been possible (in a geographical sense) to be *near*

the holy Temple and *within* the northeast sector of Jerusalem which had no walls around it. This region had within it the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:2) and a little further to the north on a nearby hill was the extension of the city limits called Bezetha. It was quite a populous area. Jesus, however, was crucified in a garden (really, an orchard of trees) and in a region where rock-hewn tombs could be built. But both gardens and parks were prohibited in the city limits because of the odor produced by the cut weeds which came from gardens and from the dung used for fertilizer in such areas (*Baba Kamma* 82b). All parts of Jerusalem were thought to be “holy” and this included the areas adjacent to the Temple, including Bezetha. Making new tombs within the city was not allowed for such tombs were considered ritualistically impure. In the time of Jesus tombs were only being permitted outside the city (and even outside the “camp”) of Jerusalem. [This will be explained more fully in a succeeding chapter.]

The simple fact is, the region of Bezetha on the northeast side of the Temple was an active part of the city of Jerusalem. It was a populated area and it would have been a most unlikely region for any crucifixion. In any event, the Book of Hebrews precludes Jesus’ crucifixion *anywhere* within the built-up areas of Jerusalem (whether inside or outside the walls) because the crucifixion occurred even “outside the camp” (Hebrews 13:11). But the area of Bezetha was within the camp. And besides that, it would not have been possible to see the curtain of the Temple from the region of Bezetha (certainly not the whole of the curtain) because the northern exterior and interior walls of the Temple would have prevented it. But, as it has been shown in the last chapter, the centurion and the people at the crucifixion site were able to see the curtain from its top to bottom. Only on the upper slopes of the Mount of Olives was this possible.

But why did the apostle John want his readers to know that Jesus was crucified *near* “*The Topos* [The Place] of the City” which

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meant the Temple complex itself? Note that he did not simply say “near the City” (as almost all mistranslate John today). John was showing, for symbolic reasons, that Jesus' sacrifice took place *near* the Temple itself. John wanted to show his readers that the crucifixion was connected with the Temple ceremonies in numerous ways. This allowed Jesus to fulfill many typical features indicated in the Old Testament rituals of the Temple.

Now look at an important fact that I have pointed out in chapters two and three of this book. Though there was only one Temple apparatus at Jerusalem, there were actually TWO main divisions to that sacred complex. There was what the prophet Ezekiel called “the *OUTWARD* sanctuary” (Ezekiel 44:1, the KJV has the proper translation of the Hebrew) which was located outside the main Sanctuary and also outside the *eastern* gate. This “Outward Sanctuary” had one altar associated with it (the Third Altar of the Temple) called the *Miphkad* Altar at the Beth ha-Deshen (the House of the Ashes), which the Targum for Ezekiel 43:21 called “the Temple outside the Sanctuary.” The main Sanctuary, however, (which in contrast could be called “the Inward Sanctuary”) was located west of the Kidron Valley and it had two altars with it (the Altar of Burnt Offering and the Altar of Incense).

The single Sanctuary at Jerusalem was thus made up of both divisions of the Temple (the *INWARD* and the *OUTWARD*). It was by combining them together that one witnessed the complete Sanctuary that the apostle John called “the *Topos* of the City.” So, “the *Topos* of the City” was located both on the traditional Mount Moriah (which was the *INWARD* Sanctuary), along with its second division situated at the summit of Olivet called the Beth ha-Deshen in which was the *Miphkad* Altar (this place was the *OUTWARD* Sanctuary that the Targum called “the outer Temple”). Jesus was crucified a mere stone's throw away from this “Outward Sanctuary” which was part of “the *Topos* of the City.” That is why the John said Jesus was executed *near* the “*Topos* of the City.”



Chapter 9

WHERE AND WHAT WAS GOLGOTHA?

Golgotha has now been located as demonstrated by the biblical and historical data which are given in the first eight chapters of this book. With this information, we are presented with some geographical keys to locate the site. In this chapter, the place will be pinpointed with greater detail. To do this, we have to remember a few points.

Recall that the word “Miphkad” designated the east gate of the Temple as well as the altar on the Mount of Olives. Simply put, the road through the Miphkad Gate led to the Miphkad Altar, and this is why the gate was designated “the Miphkad.” It is important to remember that the word “Miphkad” actually means to “Number.” It signified a place where armies or the general population would assemble to have their *heads* counted. This numbering was in matters of censuses or counting people who were to pay the poll taxes. In a word, the Miphkad area was a “Numbering Place” for counting *heads*. I have emphasized the word “*heads*” because in the section of the Old Testament where Moses conducted censuses, the actual Hebrew word that was used for “*head*” is *golgolet* from

which comes the geographical word that is rendered “Golgotha.”

The Real Meaning of Golgotha

In ordinary usage, the Miphkad (Numbering) Altar on the Mount of Olives became known in New Testament times as “Golgotha” and it denoted a place where *heads* were counted in any numbering or census of Israel. All numberings involving the totality of the Israelite people would have required the place of the counting to be “without the camp” because certain individuals who were permanently or temporarily designated as ritualistically defiled could not come inside the Camp of Israel (Numbers 5:1-4). This is why it was always necessary to have the official censuses outside the camp area. That way all individuals could be counted whether they were ritualistically defiled or not.

One can read about the first census of Israel recorded in chapter one of Numbers. See Numbers 1:2,18,20,22 3:47 and I Chronicles 23:3,24. In the Old Testament, there are two primary words that denote a census and they are very similar in meaning though in spelling they are quite different. Both words occur in one verse in Numbers 1:2 which informs us about the first grand census of the men of Israel. Let us look at that verse and notice the two Hebrew words that denote a census.

“Take ye the *sum* [Hebrew: Lift up the *rosh*] of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names [individual names], every male by their *polls* [Hebrew: *golgolet*]” (Numbers 1:2).

This shows that the English words *sum* and *polls* in this verse in Numbers are similar in meaning (practically synonyms), and this equally applies to the Hebrew words *rosh* and *golgolet* from which the English words derive. Indeed, in Hebrew both the words *rosh* and *golgolet* mean “head” — like a person’s head, the top part of a person’s body. The King James Version translates the Hebrew word *golgolet* by the English word “poll,” which signified the counting

of people by their polls (by their *heads*). This practice is not even foreign to us moderns because we call the place where we cast our ballots to elect our officials to government offices as “polling places.” This is where government officials “count” each of us to get our votes in an election. And so it was in Israel. The officials simply counted *heads* (*rosh*) or they also counted *heads* (*golgolet*) in their polling. The double use of the term *head* seems like a redundancy to us who speak English (and so it is), but in Hebrew this was a common way of expressing things. The use of several words that are practically synonyms to each other are often used (even in succession in one verse) to accent the meaning of the author’s intent. And so we have it in Numbers 1:2. Both *rosh* and *golgolet* mean in the basic etymology of both words what we in English signify as the word “head.”

There is a secondary meaning to the word *golgolet*. It can mean *skull* in some usages where the context demands it, or almost demands it as in Judges 9:53. In some places in the Old Testament it is even doubtful, however, that *golgolet* has the meaning of *skull* as in II Kings 9:35 where the other two parts of Jezebel’s body that the dogs did not consume were *not* referring to her bones (and the main meaning of *skull* is certainly to the bony part of the head). In this case of II Kings 9:35, the word *golgolet* could legitimately be rendered as *head* and not *skull*. Indeed, in the Hebrew and Aramaic lexicons, the grammarians state that the word *golgolet* in the majority of its biblical and post-biblical contexts indicates the word *head*. It even came to be used in a special way to mean “capitation tax,” that is, a *head* or *poll* tax.

Golgotha and Censuses at Jerusalem

Censuses in Israel were not always to count people as each person passed by a census taker. Other ways were also used. An actual counting was taken annually by summing up the offering of money that each Israelite contributed (such as the half-shekel poll tax). This was the “capitation tax.” From the amount of money or

items collected, it was possible for the authorities to arrive at the actual number of people involved. Since it was a requirement that *EVERY Israelite male* of adult age pay the half-shekel poll (head) tax (whether the person was defiled or undefiled), the giving and counting of such moneys in the Jerusalem area was always conducted “without the camp.” The place for such countings (which was done in the presence of God who looked eastward from his Temple) was “without the camp” on the Mount of Olives at the designated Polling Place near the Miphkad (Numbering) Altar. Thus, the word “Golgotha” came to signify that Polling Place which was the area where polling for the poll (head) tax was conducted. This was called “the capitation tax” in Jewish society at the time.

This Hebrew and Aramaic usage for “golgolet” is important because if such a term were used for a geographical area in Palestine, it is the early Hebrew meaning that must predominate in determining its original significance and not some definition derived from a foreign Greek word of later origin. In the New Testament, which was written in Greek, the writers gave the later definition of “Golgotha” by the Greek word *kranion*. Our English translators of the New Testament almost always translate the Greek *kranion* by our English word “skull.” However, even the primary use of the Greek word *kranion*, in classical Greek writings, also means *head* and only if the context shows that the word is referring anatomically to the bony part of the head (without the flesh attached) is it proper to render *kranion* as “skull.” So, even the New Testament writers in their usage of the Greek *kranion* could easily have meant “head” rather than “skull.” In the Hebrew, it is always preferred to use the word “head” unless the context demands the use of “skull.” And in the verses in the Old Testament which speak of the censuses of all Israel, the people conducting the *rosh* (census) were always counting the *golgolet* (heads) of men who were alive, not the *skulls* of dead men.

The Words Golgotha and Kranion Mean “Head” in the New Testament

Let us be clear about this important matter. The primary and ordinary biblical meaning of the Hebrew word “Golgotha” is *head* or, in the old English, *poll* and the Greek *kranion* can also mean *head*. The New Testament writers were NOT actually stating that the place of Jesus’ crucifixion was the “Place of the Skull.” They were referring to its original Hebrew and Aramaic usage (not the later Greek term), which means the “Place of the Head or the Poll.” This was the polling area associated with the Miphkad Altar at the summit of the Mount of Olives. This is why the “outside” altar was properly designated the “Numbering Altar.”

Golgotha Was the Eastern Census Area

There is Old Testament evidence that makes this clear. Censuses conducted by Moses in which he polled the people were held at a spot *east* of the Tabernacle and just “without the camp” so that even the ritualistically defiled could be counted since they were not permitted to enter into the precincts of the Camp. Note how this is shown in Numbers 31. By reading Numbers 31:1-54, we see that after the final eastern war with the Midianites, the Israelite army returned to Moses and Eleazar the high priest and met them on the *east side* of the Camp. This meeting was just “without the camp.” See verse 13. But before these men of war could re-enter the Camp, since they had touched dead bodies and were accounted as being “defiled,” they were required to wash themselves with the ashen waters of the Red Heifer to be cleansed after a seven day period of purification (verse 24). And before they re-entered the Camp, Moses conducted a numbering (a census) of the men in the Israelite army. The text says: “Thy servants have taken the *sum* [*rosh*] of the men of war.” It was found from this census that Israel lost no men in the battle (verse 49). Moses also took a census of the men and beasts that the Israelites had captured. The text says: “Take the *sum* [*rosh*] of the prey, both of man and of beast” (verse 26). These two

“numberings” were by the counting of *heads*. Simply put, the men were polled. And from this polling, Moses levied a tribute (a tax) from each man of war (Numbers 31:28,37,41).

This polling of each man was like the first two censuses of the Israelites recorded in chapters one and twenty-six of Numbers, where both the defiled and the purified of the people were counted. “Take ye *the sum* [*rosh*] of ALL the congregation of the children of Israel...every male by their *polls* [*golgolet*]” (Numbers 1:2). This was also done “without the camp” because both the defiled and the purified of Israel were numbered. This was accomplished near the Miphkad (or Numbering) Altar at the *east* gate to the Camp. And recall, the word for “head” or “poll” in this section of the Book of Numbers is *golgolet* from which the New Testament writers obtained the word “Golgotha.” But note also the word “*sum*” in Numbers 1:2 is *rosh*. Interestingly, the Hebrew word “*rosh*” in many contexts also means “*head*.” But it also came to signify a “summit” or the “top of a mountain.” The Septuagint Version in Second Samuel 15:32 and 16:1 states that at the summit of the Mount of Olives was a place that was specifically named “the Rosh” (that is, the *Head*) where David stopped to worship God at the time he was fleeing from his son Absalom (I will have more to say on this important incident in chapter twelve). This was the summit area of Olivet, but it was also the place where *heads* were counted in censuses.

Golgotha Was a Mountain

That Golgotha was on a mountain was also recognized by the early Jews. Professor James Tabor of the University of North Carolina in his review of my first edition of “Secrets of Golgotha” (in the Society of Biblical Literature’s *Critical Review of Books in Religion*, 1991, pp.213-215) gives new information to sustain my thesis that the summit of the Mount of Olives was the location of Golgotha. Dr. Tabor writes: “An interesting support of Martin’s thesis, which he does not note, is that the Hebrew text of Matthew

known as *Even Bohan* refers to the place of crucifixion as Mount (*har*) of the Skull (see G. Howard, *The Gospel of Matthew according to a Primitive Hebrew Text* [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1988]).” This reference may well support a reasonable belief that the Jewish authorities were well aware that the crucifixion of Jesus occurred on a “mountain” (that word perfectly fits the description of the Mount of Olives) rather than on a small outcropping of rock that appears to have been at the original site where the later Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built. In no way could this latter area be called a “mountain.”

And speaking of the word “mountain,” there are some interesting usages of the word “rosh” (meaning “head or mountain top”) for the counting of heads or conducting censuses. A census was called by the phrase “Lift up the *head*.” In the Bible the phrase was used in both a positive and a negative way. One type of census that was conducted in a positive manner was “to lift up the head” in order to honor the person(s) and to grant favors. But the other type was in a negative manner—“to lift up [or, off] the head” in order to execute a person by beheading him (see the use of this double-entendre by Joseph in regard to the butler and baker in Genesis 40:13,19). In the latter (negative) sense, the “Rosh” area at the summit of Olivet indicated an area for execution, which, according to Moses, had to be similarly located “outside the camp” (Numbers 15:35). The “Rosh” or “Golgotha” (both synonyms in certain contexts) indicated the proper type of judgment area that was selected in the time of Moses as the polling place where both the defiled and the purified Israelites could be counted or could be judged, and in some cases (as with Jesus) where people were executed for heinous crimes.

Such numberings or censuses were reckoned as having to be counted in the presence of God (which meant *east* of the Sanctuary) around the Miphkad (Numbering) Altar. The numbering had to be done “outside the camp” in order to include the unclean or unpuri-

fied (and there were always multitudes of such people who were temporarily in the unpurified state). This is an important point because God always, in a symbolic sense, looked eastward from his residence in the Tabernacle and the later Temples. In the ritual of the Red Heifer which was to be sacrificed “without the camp, and ...before his face” (Numbers 19:3), the phrase “before his [God’s]” face was synonymous with the word *east*. God always faced eastward from His Temple. And, as shown in Numbers 31, this designated area for *numbering* in a census was located on the east side of the encampment and just “without the camp” (see example, Numbers 31:1-54). In the time of Jesus, this *eastern* area for polling (so that God could witness it from his throne in the Temple) was near the Miphkad (Numbering) Altar [the Altar named for those numberings] on the Mount of Olives where the areas called either “the Rosh” or “Golgotha” were located.

In simple terms, “Golgotha” was NOT “the Place of the Skull” as the Greek word *kranion* can mean, but it means “the Place of the Head” (which the Greek word *kranion* can also mean). Or, in contemporary terms of the first century, Golgotha among the Jewish people in Jerusalem meant “the Polling Place” and synonymously it was called “the Rosh” (the mountain summit of Olivet as the LXX translation has it).

On the Mount of Olives was the specific area of “Golgotha” where the *sum* [*rosh*] in the censuses of the people of Israel were determined. Golgotha was thus situated next to the Beth ha-Deshen (the House of the Ashes) which was a holy place called “the *OUTWARD* Sanctuary” (Ezekiel 44:1) where the Red Heifer was sacrificed. These historical indications in the Bible are important in locating the “Golgotha” of the New Testament.



Chapter 10

***HISTORICAL
RECORDS AND
THE MOUNT
OF OLIVES***

In this book I have been showing that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives far enough east of Jerusalem to be “outside the camp” yet high enough up the mountain to be able to view the Temple curtain from the site. This latter indication makes it certain that the crucifixion could not have been too far east (that is, over the ridge of the mountain itself) because this would have prevented the spectators from seeing the Temple curtain. The evidence makes it pretty clear that Golgotha, “The Polling Place,” must have been near the summit of Olivet and facing the Temple and Jerusalem which could be seen to the west.

Interesting enough, there is (or rather was) a small knoll or hillock located at the exact southern summit of the Mount of Olives and it is described by a Christian pilgrim who visited the site in A.D.333. He is known in history as the Bordeaux Pilgrim and he wrote an itinerary of his trip from Europe to the Holyland and to Jerusalem itself. He gives us valuable information about some of the important geographical areas in and around Jerusalem before major building programs were constructed by later Christians

which in some cases altered the previous features of the land quite drastically. His description of the southern summit of Olivet is most instructive and it will go a long way in helping to identify the exact spot of “Golgotha” — the site of Jesus’ crucifixion.

The Bordeaux Pilgrim tells us that on top of the Mount of Olives there was a *monticulus* which in Latin means “little hill” or “hillock.” In his words he called it “a little hill on top of the mountain.” And what is most important to the matter of the crucifixion site, is the fact that the Pilgrim also called the “Golgotha” discovered by Helena, the mother of Constantine, on the *west* side of the city (found only seven years before) as a *monticulus*. He used the same word to describe both sites! But note this. The Pilgrim was able to see that a great deal of building activity was progressing around and upon the *monticulus* discovered by Helena, but in contrast, the *monticulus* on top of the Mount of Olives was apparently in its natural state and free of buildings. Even modern archaeological investigations have been made on and around the “little hill” on the summit of Olivet and it was found that the site was uninhabited at the time of Jesus (Hoade, *Guide to the Holy Land*, p.260). This is important to realize because Jesus was crucified near a garden area (not in a built-up region) and this indicates that the spot was apparently free of buildings.

Golgotha in Tradition and History

Be this as it may, what does this *monticulus* have to do with the site of Jesus’ crucifixion? It could have very much to do with it because the Bordeaux Pilgrim had more to tell us about this location. The Pilgrim said, to the puzzlement of scholars over the centuries, that on this “little hill” the transfiguration of Jesus took place! This was a blatant geographical mistake because it is clear from the Gospels that the actual transfiguration occurred in the region of Galilee many miles north of Jerusalem. And even the Christian authorities in Jerusalem a short twenty years after the Pilgrim reported this information were assured that the transfigura-

tion happened in Galilee and not on the Mount of Olives (Cyril, *Catech.*xii.16). Admittedly, however, some of the common people were still making the mistake of thinking the transfiguration was on Olivet as late as the time of Jerome (*Comm.Matt.*5:1).

But why the confusion? The fact is, there were several different words used in Latin to denote the crucifixion of a person. One of them was *transfigere* which meant to transfix a person with nails or some other sharp instruments. And remarkably, this word which meant “transfixiation” was one which was very close phonetically to that which meant “transfiguration.” The word for “transfiguration” was *transfigurare*. For a comparison of both Latin words and how similar they are, see the Oxford Latin Dictionary, ed.1982, p.1964; also the unabridged Oxford English Dictionary, vol.XI, pp.258,259; and Merriam-Webster (3rd ed.), p.2427.

In spoken Latin (and with various Latin accents found among the pilgrims and residents of Jerusalem when the Pilgrim was there) the words *transfigere* and *transfigurare* could well have sounded similar to the Bordeaux Pilgrim. And since he probably composed his final work long after he left Palestine and without the means to apply any critical apparatus to the understanding of Palestinian geography, he could well have confused the site of the Jesus’ transfiguration (*transfigurare*) with that of Jesus’ transfixiation (*transfigere*). But even the Latin people in Jerusalem at the time of the Pilgrim were also making the mistake of thinking the transfiguration occurred on Olivet. The truth is, however, the “little hill” (*monticulus*) on top of the Mount of Olives was not the place of the transfiguration. It was the place of the transfixiation (the crucifixion) of Jesus.

Golgotha and King David

There is even another historical incident that could help to show this. The Old Testament tells us that when King David was fleeing Jerusalem at a crucial time in his life, he ascended the Mount of

Olives and went to a designated site on the mountain in order to worship God (II Samuel 15:30). This location was at the very top of Olivet and he went to the same *monticulus* that the Bordeaux Pilgrim had reference to. In the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, the translators called this spot "The Rosh (Head)." The word is used in the Greek Septuagint as though *Rosh* were the name of a place, and a place that was so well-known by the general population of Jerusalem that the translators simply referred to it as (*The Rosh*). It was there that King David worshipped God.

Calling this prominent spot by the word "*head*" has interesting ramifications. This is because the meaning of "*head*" is also found in the word "Golgotha." The use of the word "head" also signifies that this "little hill on top of the mountain" was the southern summit (the *head*) of the Mount of Olives. In Hebrew, this highest summit of Olivet was known as the "Bamah." It was the "high place" on the Mount of Olives and this is where King David went to worship God overlooking the city of Jerusalem to the west. It also answers to the same *monticulus* that the Bordeaux Pilgrim talked about. Indeed, this highest point on the southern summit of Olivet became known as the Imbomon (which comes from the Greek "en bommo" which means "high place" or "altar"). It is this name which has been attached to this *monticulus* on Olivet for the past 1600 years. At the present there is a small Muslim shrine built over the site.

This place was significant in the crucifixion of Jesus. It was at the very top of the Mount of Olives. Would not Pilate have wanted to crucify him at the highest point of eminence in order to heighten his degradation in the eyes of the people? Since Jesus claimed to be the King of kings, the messianic offspring of King David himself, then it would have seemed sensible to exacerbate his debasement by crucifying him at the exact spot where his father David once worshipped God when he was turned out of Jerusalem by his family and friends. It would mean that Jesus was crucified stark naked

“outside the camp” of Israel at the highest point of Olivet. There would have been no greater humiliation.

Golgotha Was a Small Hill on the Mount of Olives

When the Bordeaux Pilgrim went to the summit of the Mount of Olives to see this “little hill on top of the mountain,” he was able to observe it without any buildings covering the area. But about 50 years later, a noble woman by the name of Poemenia had a church constructed on this “little hill.” She did this because she thought this was probably the area of the ascension of Jesus back to heaven. Remarkably, on top of Poemenia’s church there was placed a great glistening cross which became the standard landmark for all people to see in the Jerusalem area (Jerome, *Comm.Soph.*,i.15). This gigantic cross was so magnificent to behold that it came to dominate all the area around Jerusalem for several decades afterwards. It could be seen for many miles by people approaching Jerusalem and it was a wonder to behold.

There is further significance to this “little hill” on the top of Olivet. It was from this region that fires were lit by the Jewish authorities in early times to signal Jews throughout the world (via a network of fire signals from mountain top to mountain top) to show when Jews should begin their yearly festivities to Yahweh. Because of this, the Mount of Olives became known as the Mountain of Light. When Brother Felix Fabri went to this very spot in the year A.D.1484 he said it was significant because King David worshipped here when he was turned out of Jerusalem. It was also the place where Jesus said to his apostles to “go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

The Importance of the Mount of Olives Long Recognized

Brother Felix gave seven reasons why Olivet was called “The Mountain of Light.” First, it was because its summit was the first to catch the rays of the sun each day, even before the Temple itself received the light. Secondly, it was the Mountain of Light because

the lamps of the Temple always lit up the whole of its western side. Thirdly, this was the mountain where the great fire was lit by the priests for burning the Red Heifer sacrifice. Fourthly, because the church at the summit was always lit with many lights. Fifthly, the olive trees of the mountain provided the oil for the lamps in the Temple. Sixthly, a man at the top of Olivet could with the light of his eyes see the world far and wide. And seventhly, it was the Mountain of Light because it was the most delightful area to behold in all Jerusalem and gladdened the eyes of mankind (*Palestine Pilgrim Texts*, vol.VII,pp.495-499). Brother Felix could also have added, had he known this was the place of Jesus' crucifixion, that this was the very spot where "the Light of the world" (John 1:9) was sacrificed to atone for the sins of all mankind.

It was on this "little hill" on top of the Mount of Olives that the Church of the Ascension was built by Poemenia with its bright and glistening cross atop. Burchard of Mount Sion (about A D. 1232) said that the site was made more appropriate for the ascension when a stone bearing the supposed footprints of our Lord as he left for heaven was transported to the spot (*Palestine Pilgrim Texts*, vol.XII,p.83). That stone can be seen today under the small Muslim shrine which now occupies the site. Of course, the area of this "little hill" was not the actual region from which Jesus ascended to heaven because that was much further to the east near the village of Bethany (Luke 24:50).

Yet this "little hill on top of the mountain" that the Bordeaux Pilgrim described was important, because it was on (or near) this very spot where the crucifixion of Jesus took place. And even though the Pilgrim used the same word *monticulus* to denote the newly "discovered" Golgotha on the west side of Jerusalem (which had only come to light some seven years before), the real *monticulus* of the Gospels was on the Mount of Olives.

Once it is realized that the actual "Golgotha" was located at the southern summit of Olivet, it makes it easier to discover the *actual*

tomb in which Jesus was placed because we are told in the Gospels that it was not far from Golgotha. In chapter fourteen, I will show some new and reliable information that will locate the very tomb in which Jesus was placed and from which he was resurrected from the dead. But before we look for the very tomb of Jesus, we need to be aware of some other important historical events (which just recently have been discovered) that occurred in the precincts of the Temple and at the summit of the Mount of Olives. These new discoveries help to show just how important in a spiritual and symbolic way the top of the Mount of Olives becomes in Christian teaching.



Chapter 11

WHERE WAS THE SANHEDRIN LOCATED?

The New Testament contains geographical information that provides us with a fascinating account of what *really* happened on the day of Jesus' crucifixion. This is especially true when we combine it with Jewish records concerning the Temple in the first century. They provide us with a *new* understanding of the history of that day that is truly eye-opening. The actual historical scenario has been obscured because most observers have followed the commonly accepted account of Jesus' crucifixion that has prevailed since the time of Constantine. What needs to be done is to re-think the historical and geographical evidences that are given to us in the early documents. We especially need to know *where* the House of Caiaphas was located in which Jesus underwent his preliminary examination and *where* the Sanhedrin (the Jewish Supreme Court) was situated in which he was condemned. Also we should know *where* Pilate finally pronounced his judgment to have him crucified. When these points are properly understood, the events as shown by the New Testament give a profound historical and doctrinal significance to the role of Jesus in fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah's Suffering Servant. It also shows even more poignantly how

he became the *literal* (as well as the *symbolic*) sin-bearer for Israel and the world as reckoned by the apostles and early Christians.

Let us look at the geographical evidences that can help us locate these significant sites. Our quest should start with the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and proceed until he was executed on the tree at Golgotha. The first thing we should realize is that Jesus was arrested about midnight by both Roman and Jewish soldiers (and both groups are distinguished in John 18:12). He was led first to Annas who is designated a chief priest and who no doubt was the deputy (or *sagan* in Hebrew) to the actual High Priest who was Caiaphas. Edersheim in his *Life and Times* (vol.II,p.547) notes that there is no further mention of Roman troops (or police) after Jesus was placed in the hands of Annas. Not until Jesus was handed over to Pilate for final judgment do we again meet with Romans. There is a significant reason why Roman Gentiles had nothing to do with any affairs involving Annas, Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. The fact is, the place where their homes and chamber hall were located did not permit Gentiles to be within its precincts (and the Roman authorities upheld the restriction). We will soon understand why Romans could not be in those areas.

Annas and Caiaphas lived at the time in different sections of the same house as most commentators have believed because a single courtyard served them both (compare John 18:15-18 which deals with Annas and Matthew 26:57,58 which mentions Caiaphas in association with the same courtyard). This gives credence to the belief that both priests were then in some kind of official capacity that required them to be near each other. Indeed, it was then the Passover season and both the High Priest and his deputy would have needed to be in residence close to one another. Jesus along with John were then led into the courtyard (Greek: *aule*) of the residence of Annas and Caiaphas. This is also called the *house* or *home* (Greek: *oikos*) of the High Priest (Luke 22:54). Peter, however, was only able to stand near the door (and later in the

vestibule) of the courtyard where he warmed himself with others because it was cold. After a preliminary examination, Annas handed Jesus over to Caiaphas (John 18:12-18).

The Official Sanhedrin (the Supreme Court) Judged Jesus

At this time in the activities of the court, a large number of members of the Sanhedrin (the Supreme Court of the nation) began to arrive at the residence of Caiaphas (Matthew 26:59; Mark 14:55) and there they began to question Jesus about what they considered to be his unlawful activities. But when it became daylight, Luke said that the whole group then went to the building in which the Sanhedrin normally held their official trials and judgments (Luke 22:66). Luke makes a special point of informing his readers that this removal of the High Priest, the chief priests, the scribes and elders from the house (*oikos*) and courtyard (*aule*) of the High Priest into the official Chamber of the Sanhedrin *was after daylight* because the law required that trials and judgments involving capital crimes had to take place within the Chamber of the Sanhedrin itself, and within the hours of daylight (*Sanhedrin* 4:1).

Interestingly (and most importantly), Caiaphas and the members of the Sanhedrin only had to walk fewer than 50 yards from the High Priest's house (*oikos* and/or *aule*), which would have taken no more than two or three minutes, in order for them to enter the official Chamber of the Sanhedrin. There is no doubt that this was the case, because (in the time of Jesus) the Chamber of the Sanhedrin was situated directly inside the Temple itself. It was located at what was known as the Chamber of Hewn Stones which was about 40 yards southeast of the entrance to the Holy Place where the curtain was hanging that tore in two at the time of Jesus' death. We are told that half of the Sanhedrin Hall was in the Court of the Israelites and half in the Court of the Priests (*Middoth* 5:1; *Sanhedrin* 11:2; *Yoma* 25a).

The particular *house* (*oikos*) and *courtyard* (*aule*) of the High

Priest were also located in the Temple complex and adjacent to the Chamber of Hewn Stones as one would expect for the High Priest (who was the President of the Sanhedrin and the political and religious head of the nation underneath the Romans). In the Mishnah (the earliest part of the Talmud), it states that the residence of the High Priest was at or near the “Wood Chamber” located west of the Chamber of Hewn Stones (*Mid.* 5:4) and next to the House of Abtinias (sometimes spelled Avtinias) where the incense was prepared for the Temple services. It was in the Upper Chamber of this “Temple House” that it is believed the House of the High Priest was located when he lived in his official residence upon the Temple Mount (*Ency. Judaica*, vol.III.991). These “Houses” of the priests abutting to the Chamber of Hewn Stones (the Sanhedrin) were built on the second story around and above a courtyard of columns below. Remarkably, the New Testament states specifically that Jesus was taken into the Upper Chamber of the High Priest’s house while Peter had to stay below near the vestibule of the courtyard (Mark 14:66). This answers precisely to the description of the second story residences for the High Priest (and other priestly dignitaries) which the Mishnah shows were supported by columns over a courtyard. These “Houses” were located just to the west and abutting to the Chamber of Hewn Stones (*Tam.* 1:1). Since these quarters of the High Priests were within the Temple, this explains why the Roman soldiers are no longer mentioned until Jesus met Pilate. Such soldiers, being Gentiles, were forbidden entry into the Temple enclosure itself where the High Priest lived during the festival periods. All Gentiles were banned from the Temple precincts

The Houses of the High Priest

The High Priest actually had more than one residence in Jerusalem. While it can be reasonably reckoned that he had a sumptuous home in the aristocratic region of Jerusalem on the southwest hill, he also had at least two other residences within the Temple itself in which he had to live at certain times of the year or when

special sacrifices were offered. For example, when the High Priest was required to offer the Red Heifer, he had to precede the sacrifice by a stay of seven days in what was called the “House of Stone” at the northeastern corner of the Temple building (*Parah* 3:1). And also before the Day of Atonement, he had to reside seven days in his “Temple House” near the Chamber of the Hewn Stones (of which we have been speaking above) (*Yoma* 1:1). Look what the Mishnah says about this particular event.

“Seven days before the Day of Atonement the High Priest was taken apart *from his own house* [that is, his regular home on the southwest hill] unto the Counselor’s Chamber and another priest was made ready in his stead lest aught should befall him to render him ineligible.”

This is very revealing information for our subject at hand. Note that it was customary at special times to have a *second* priest ready in case the High Priest was in some way unable to perform the ceremonies. And at the time of Jesus’ trial, there was both Annas and Caiaphas being called “High Priests” and they were housed in the same residential area in the *house (oikos)* of the High Priest. This was not his regular house (or palace) on the southwest hill, but Caiaphas had retired from that house into his special house on the Temple Mount. The Mishnah called this *house* the Counselor’s Chamber. It was designated with this title because the “Counselor” was the President of the Sanhedrin (who was the High Priest). This is why his Chamber (or *house*) was directly adjacent to the Chamber of Hewn Stones, the official building for sessions of the Sanhedrin. Would it not appear normal for the Chief Justice (President) of the Sanhedrin to have an official residence abutting to the Sanhedrin itself? Of course. And this was the case in the time of Jesus.

In addition to his normal *house* (or palace) on the southwest hill, it was necessary for the High Priest to have this *home* or official *house* within the Temple enclosure in order to perform certain ceremonies demanded in the Mosaic law. Such a separate residence

was required when each High Priest was consecrated. It was demanded in the Law that he stay seven days within the Temple and near the Holy Place (Leviticus 8:33). There were other times when this was necessary. Josephus (who himself was a priest) stated that the High Priest presided in the Temple over the ceremonies of the Sabbath, the new moons, “and on any national festival or annual assemblage of all the people” (*War* V.230). Since the trial of Jesus took place at the time of Passover, there can be no doubt that Caiaphas (along with his deputy Annas) were then away from their ordinary homes (or *houses*) and they were then resident in the Upper Chambers within the Temple adjacent to the Chamber of Hewn Stones where the Sanhedrin met. As a matter of fact, we have New Testament evidence that the “House of Caiaphas” at the time of Jesus’ trial was his “Temple House” and *not* his regular one on the southwest hill. Note that when false witnesses accused Jesus at Caiaphas’ House they said: “We heard him say *I will throw down THIS Temple* that was made with hands and in three days I will build another not made with hands” (Mark 14:58). It is important to realize that they did not say “*the* Temple,” as though it was situated at a distance from them. They referred to it as “*this* Temple,” which means they were then situated within the Temple complex itself.

This is New Testament evidence that the “House of Caiaphas” at the time of Jesus’ trial was not his ordinary residence, but it was his “House” within the Temple enclosure. It is important to realize that the *universal* testimony of early Jewish historical sources (from the start of the second to the end of the fifth centuries) shows that the Chamber of Hewn Stones in the year A.D.30 was the official seat of the Sanhedrin, and that it was located in the Temple about 40 yards southeast of the entrance to the Holy Place.

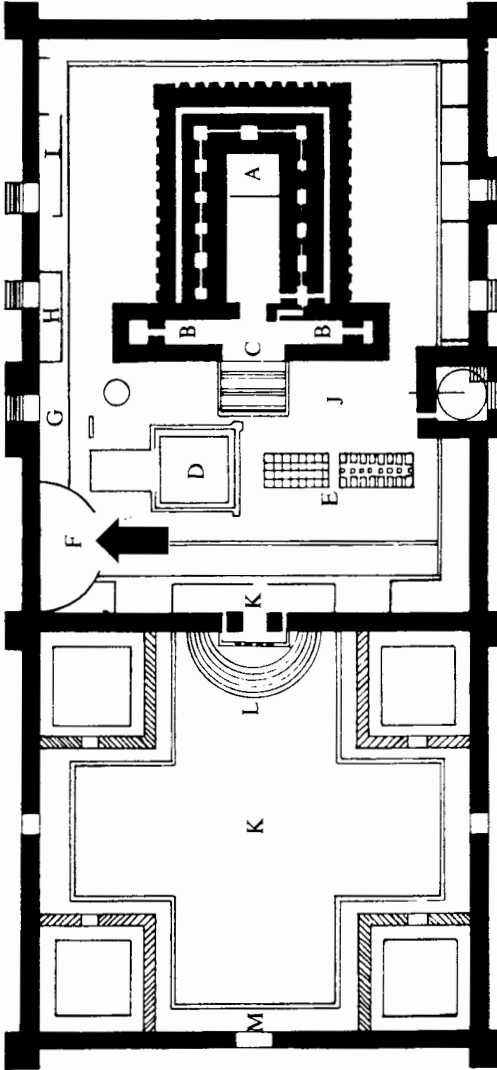
The Sanhedrin Met in the Temple

We are told, however, that in the year that Jesus was crucified (A.D.30), the Sanhedrin ceased holding its sessions in the official

Chamber of Hewn Stones. They were banished to an insignificant section of the Temple a little farther to the east called “the Trading Place.” It is not recorded in the early Jewish records why the Sanhedrin had to move from their palatial quarters in the Chamber of Hewn Stones (which must have been most beautiful and majestic) into a part of the Temple with much lesser esteem. But this did not end the matter. For some reason they did not remain long even at “the Trading Place,” because Josephus tells us that just before the Jewish/Roman War of A.D.66 to 70, the Sanhedrin was then meeting outside the Temple area and within a common part of the city of Jerusalem. This was at a gymnasium inside the city of Jerusalem just to the west of the Temple next to a building called the Xystus (*War* V.144; comp. *War* II.344). And then, after Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed in A.D.70, the Sanhedrin moved to a city called Jamnia (or Jabneh) about 30 miles west of Jerusalem.

These three moves of the Sanhedrin from the Chamber of Hewn Stones near the Holy Place in the Temple, to “the Trading Place,” and then to near the Xystus in the city of Jerusalem are mentioned in the Jewish Talmud (they also record seven additional moves of the Sanhedrin up to about A.D.429 when the Sanhedrin was abolished by the Romans). Note first a reference in *Shabbath* 15a followed by another in *Rosh ha-Shanah* 31a,b.

“Forty years before the destruction of the Temple [in A.D.30], the Sanhedrin was banished (from the Chamber of Hewn Stones) and sat in the trading-station (on the Temple Mount).” “The Sanhedrin suffered ten removals: from the Chamber of Hewn Stones to the trading-station, from the trading station to (the city of) Jerusalem [next to the Xystus on the western side of the Temple], from Jerusalem to Jabneh [after the destruction of Jerusalem], from Jabneh to Usha [in Galilee], from Usha back to Jabneh, then back to Usha, after that to Shaphraam, from Shaphraam to Beth Shearim, from Beth Shearim to Sepphoris, from Sepphoris to Tiberias” (the comments in brackets are mine, inside parentheses are translators).



The Temple at the time of Christ. A) Holy of Holies, B) Outer Holy Place, C) Outer Curtain, D) Altar of Burnt Offering, E) Slaughter Areas, F) Chamber of Hewn Stone (Sanhedrin Hall), G) Counselor's Chamber, H) House of Abtinias, I) Chamber of Wood, J) Court of Priests, K) Court of Israel, L) Steps to Nicanor Gate, M) Eastern Gate. Diagram by Norman Tenedora.

This is very important historical information because it indicates that at the time of the trial of Jesus the Sanhedrin was meeting in the Chamber of Hewn Stones on the Temple Mount. This must be the case because the New Testament tells us that the courtyard (*aule*) and house (*oikos*) of the High Priest were not far away from the Sanhedrin and Jewish documents show that the High Priest would have been in his *house* on the Temple mount next to the Chamber of Hewn Stones at that time of Passover. The festival seasons required the High Priest to be in his “Temple House.”

The Sanhedrin Banished From the Chamber of Hewn Stones

Something, however, caused the Sanhedrin to be banished (as the Talmud tells us) from the Chamber of Hewn Stones to “the Trading Place.” This happened in A.D.30. We are not told in what day or month that this “banishment” took place. Whatever the case, when Stephen (the first Christian martyr) was brought before the Sanhedrin for trial, we find that they were still meeting in a building that was still a part of the Temple. The Book of Acts tells us that Stephen was led “into the Sanhedrin” (Acts 6:12). While there, false witnesses were brought in who said: “This man does not stop speaking against *THIS Holy Place* and against the law. For example, we have heard him say that this Jesus the Nazarene will throw down *THIS Place* and change the customs that Moses handed down to us” (Acts 6:13,14). Clearly, these statements show that the accusers of Stephen, who were then within the official chambers of the Sanhedrin, were still located in *THIS Holy Place* [the Temple complex itself]. They did not say, simply, “the Temple,” as one would expect if they were then situated somewhere away from the Temple. The truth is, they were still meeting within the Temple complex when Stephen was tried before the Sanhedrin.

What we now need to ask is: What would have caused the Sanhedrin to abandon the official (and quite palatial) Chamber of Hewn Stones very near the Holy Place itself to meet in an insignif-

icant area on the Temple Mount called “the Trading Place”? The Talmud relates it was because of a “banishment.” But who would have “banished” them from their normal place for meeting in A.D.30? There would have been no reason for the Romans to have demanded such a move because they cared little for what the Jews did in a religious sense as long as they remained obedient to Rome and paid their taxes. It could hardly have been the Roman government that made them transfer their Sanhedrin a few yards east of the Chamber of Hewn Stones.

It may be explained by something else that happened in the same year. All right, then, what happened in A.D.30 that the Jewish authorities had to move the Sanhedrin to this eastern region of the Temple? There is a Jewish record that the doors in back of the huge curtain in front of the Holy Place *opened of their own accord* sometime during the year A.D.30. Note what the account relates:

“Forty years before the Temple was destroyed [in A.D.30]...the gates of the Hekel [the Holy Place] opened by themselves, until Rabbi Yohanan B. Zakkai rebuked them [the gates] saying: Hekel, Hekel, why alarmist thou us? We know that thou art destined to be destroyed. For of thee hath prophesied Zechariah ben Iddo [Zech.11:1]: Open thy doors, O Lebanon, and the fire shall eat thy cedars” (Yoma 39b).

Some two days before Jesus was crucified, he told his disciples that Jerusalem and the Temple would soon be destroyed. And in the very year that Jesus said this, Rabbi Yohanan B. Zakkai was commenting on the mysterious opening of the doors behind the curtain of the Holy Place. Edersheim (in his *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*) was of the opinion that the opening of these Temple doors was in some way associated with the tearing of the curtain which happened at the precise time of Jesus’ death (vol.II, pp.610,611). This would be a logical conclusion because the doors were positioned directly in back of the curtain itself. For the tearing of the curtain to be a symbolic gesture that God the Father had now “destroyed” the real barrier into the Holy of Holies itself, then the

symbol would have been meaningless had the doors behind the curtain remained closed. In fact, for the intended symbol to have had any relevance whatever, the two events would have had to occur simultaneously.

So spectacular would both events have been (the tearing of the curtain and the opening of the doors) that it would have been most unusual for such circumstances to have happened at different times in the same year. Only a simultaneous occurrence makes any sense at all (as Edersheim observed).

The Tearing of the Temple Curtain

But how did the doors of the Holy Place open? As explained in chapter seven of this book, a Jewish Christian work of the early second century called "The Gospel of the Nazaraeans" said that the large stone lintel which supported the curtain (which no doubt had the inner doors attached to it for stability) split in two at the same time as the curtain (*cf.* Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *The New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. I, pp.150,153). There is no reason to deny the possibility that the collapse of this lintel (which was an enormous stone at least 30 feet long and weighing around 30 tons) was the "natural cause" of the curtain rending in two. The fact that the curtain was severed from the top to the bottom also suggests that it was the force of the falling lintel (which happened at the exact time of a great earthquake) that caused the curtain of the Holy Place to tear in two.

But what has this to do with the Sanhedrin having to abandon the Chamber of Hewn Stones in which they normally met? It has very much to do with it. If an earthquake of the magnitude capable of breaking the stone lintel at the top of the entrance to the Holy Place was occurring at the exact time of Jesus' death, then what would such an earthquake have done to the Chamber of Hewn Stones (a vaulted structure with columns) no more than 40 yards away from where the stone lintel fell and the curtain tore in two?

The Destruction of the Chamber of Hewn Stones

There is every reason to believe that the Chamber of Hewn Stones was so damaged in the same earthquake that it became structurally unsafe from that time forward. Something like this had to have happened because the Sanhedrin would not have left this majestic chamber (to take up residence in the insignificant “Trading Place”) unless something approaching this explanation took place. If this is actually what happened (and I have no doubt that it did), we then have a most remarkable witness that God the Father engineered every action happening on the day of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion. It means that the judgment made by the official Sanhedrin against Jesus within the Chamber of Hewn Stones *was THE LAST JUDGMENT* ever given by the official Sanhedrin in their majestic chambers within the Temple. It would show that God the Father demonstrated by the earthquake at Jesus’ death that the *sentence* of the Sanhedrin against Jesus *would be the last judgment* it would ever make in that authorized place.

It should be remembered, that in normal circumstances it was felt proper that *all* judgments of God in the Jerusalem area had to take place “in the presence of God.” This concept was explained in chapter two of this book. That is one of the main reasons why the Sanhedrin was placed in the Temple directly east (and slightly south) of the entrance to the Holy Place. Since the entrances to the Holy Place and the inner Holy of Holies were on the *east*, it was reasoned that God faced *eastward* to see all events which were happening in “His House” (the Temple itself).

This is why the sacrifices were performed at the *eastern* entrance to the Holy Place, and even the remote Red Heifer sacrifice also was killed *east* (and in “*sight*” of God) at the summit of the Mount of Olives. This is the reason capital judgments made in the Sanhedrin were rendered (ideally) on the *east* side of the Temple, and why criminals condemned to die were executed near the top of the Mount of Olives in order for them to be a “sacrifice

Chapter 11 - Where Was the Sanhedrin Located?

of atonement” for themselves “in the presence of God.” Thus, Jesus was judged and executed “in the presence of God” so that the Old Testament requirements could be satisfied. In both his judgment and his execution, the action was carried out by the Sanhedrin east of the Holy Place in the Temple.

But the sentence of the Sanhedrin did not end the matter. There was still the Roman authorities that had to be consulted. It was then necessary to take Jesus to Pilate, the Roman representative, for his approval of the judgment. In what region of Jerusalem was Pilate at the time? Was he then in the Palace that Herod built on the southwestern hill or was he among the majority of his troops which would have been at the fortress called the Antonia situated just outside the northwestern angle of the Temple enclosure? The Fortress of Antonia (named after Mark Antony by Herod) has by far the best credentials. There are good reasons to believe that it was to *this* Praetorium that Jesus was brought to be finally judged by Pilate.

It appears that there were actually *two* Praetoriums in Jerusalem (the Jewish capital of the region) as there were in Caesarea on the coast (the Roman capital of the region). Note Acts 23:35 where we read that the Jews had their own Praetorium (Herod’s judgment hall) which was different from the Roman Imperial Praetorium. The same type of judicial arrangement must have been in existence in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, Jesus must have been taken to the Roman Imperial Praetorium at Fort Antonia, rather than the former Herod’s Praetorium located at Herod’s palace which would have been more parochial in authority.

The Roman Praetorium at Jerusalem was Located at Fort Antonia

This can be shown in several ways. It would have been unwise for any Roman commander to be anywhere else but the Antonia next to the Temple itself when there were thousands upon thousands of Jews assembling in the Temple for their national holy peri-

ods. While it was normal for Roman leaders to live in Herod's Palace on the southwest hill (as shown by Josephus in *War* II.325-329), at the times of the Jewish annual festivals it was customary for the Roman commander to take up residence with his main body of troops at the Antonia adjacent to the Temple. This is what Cumanus, the commander of Judaea who ruled in the middle of the first century, did at the time of Passover (*War* II.223-227).

There can hardly be a doubt that Pilate (at the time of Jesus) did the same thing. It should be noted that Pilate's wife sent him a message about a dream she had. This would have been unnecessary had Pilate been with his wife that night (Matthew 27:19). Pilate was clearly away from his ordinary living quarters at the time. At that Passover season he was where "the whole army" was stationed (Matthew 27:27). This is a description that favors the Antonia. Note also that the Jews did not want to enter into the Praetorium where Pilate was in fear of becoming impure and unfit to take the Passover (John 18:28). This fear of impurity would fit the Antonia far more than Herod's Palace. The truth is, the Antonia was really a "city" in itself and it was a Gentile one located right in the midst of Jerusalem. The only restriction against taking the Passover for Jews was to come in contact with a dead body (Numbers 9:6-12). Unless there was someone who had recently died (and was lying in state) in Herod's Palace, there would have been no restriction whatever to prevent the Jews from eating the Passover that they could not have overcome by simply washing themselves before sundown (Edersheim, *Life and Times*, vol.II, pp.556,557). But the Antonia was a very different place. It was virtually a large "Gentile town." Such places would ordinarily have had some dead bodies within them who were either waiting to be buried or cremated. There would also have been chambers for retaining the remains of dead soldiers (who died in line of duty) awaiting transport back to their home areas for interment. For any Jew to enter the central area of this "Gentile city" called the Antonia would have rendered the person unclean for at least a seven day period. Thus, again, the region

of the Antonia fits far better the description of the Praetorium in which Jesus was brought before Pilate rather than the Palace of Herod located on the southwest hill.

This belief is further strengthened by the information provided in this chapter, because all of the events of Jesus' interrogation and trial at the House of Annas and Caiaphas and in the Chambers of the Sanhedrin took place on the Temple Mount about 300 yards from the Antonia. For Pilate to have been at his ordinary residence on the southwestern hill would have involved a great deal of extended walking (and back-tracking) on the part of Jesus and the Sanhedrin members. But going the short distance from the Temple to the Antonia makes perfectly good sense. See the excellent account by Finegan, *The Archeology of the New Testament*, pp.156,157 which shows that Pilate was then at the Antonia and VanElderen's comprehensive article in the new *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (vol.III, p.929).

Jesus Was Judged and Convicted on the Temple Mount

When it is realized that the proceedings against Jesus by the Sanhedrin occurred on the Temple Mount and that Pilate judged him at the adjacent area called the Antonia, it gives a great deal of credence to the belief that all of the deliberations that took place that day were within the Law of Moses. Some commentators have thought the inquisition and trial of Jesus were illegal because they believe that the "House of Caiaphas" in which Jesus was interrogated was on the southwestern hill. True enough, had this been the case, then the proceedings against Jesus would have to be reckoned illegal. But this is not what happened. Since it was the Passover, the gates of the Temple were opened at midnight (Josephus, *Antiquities* XVIII.29; Mishnah *Yoma* 1:8) and it was proper for people to enter the Temple after that time. And with the sentence of Jesus *being after sunrise* (a definite requirement for legality and it occurred within the official Chamber of the Sanhedrin), then it can be shown that everything that happened to Jesus that day was within the Law

of Moses. The fact that some witnesses perjured themselves is of no consequence to the issue because even in legal trials (that result in false convictions because of perjury) it cannot be said that the trials themselves were illegal.

There is little doubt that people will continue to look at the details of Jesus' interrogation, his formal trial and sentence and find some fault (in their own minds) here and there. But such nit-picking can be eliminated if one will simply look at the actions of Pilate. The apostle John makes it clear that Pilate tried his best to prevent the execution of Jesus (at least at the time the Sanhedrin brought Jesus to him). Had Pilate found the slightest illegality in the manner of his trial even from the Jewish point of view (and it is only reasonable that Pilate had a bevy of lawyers around him trained in Jewish jurisprudence), he would have dismissed their charges against Jesus or demanded that they hold another trial under *legal* circumstances.

The accounts in the Gospels, however, make it clear that no such illegality was found by Pilate or his advisors. He then washed his hands of the whole affair and let them kill him according to the Jewish laws (John 18:31). The truth is, Jesus was not tried or executed to satisfy Roman laws because even Rome allowed a formal court hearing (and one scheduled on the court calendar) in which the defendant would be given time to produce witnesses for his defense. No such trial under the authority of Rome was given to Jesus. All Pilate did (as the Roman commander) was to give permission to the Sanhedrin to carry out *their* judgments upon Jesus because they did not have the power to execute criminals at the time (John 18:31).

But what about the fact that Jesus was crucified? Was that not a Roman means of execution? Yes, but not exclusively. Recall that the Gospels show that it was the inhabitants of Jerusalem who demanded of Pilate that he "crucify him" (John 19:6,15). The crucifixion and his death were to satisfy Jewish laws (in Pilate's opin-

ion), not those of Rome. And, to be explained in chapter twenty-two of this book, the *Temple Scroll* (found among the Dead Sea Scrolls) shows that it was then a Jewish practice to hang (or nail) a person to a tree and then have him stoned to death. The truth is, Pilate (and the Empire of Rome that he represented) washed their hands of the whole affair (Matthew 27:24). The trial, sentence and execution of Jesus was by Jewish laws (the Law of Moses). The only thing involving Pilate (and Rome) was to allow them to do it. As Pilate said: “Take you him, and judge him according to *your* law” (John 18:31).

The Execution of Jesus Was Legal

It was absolutely essential that Jesus was tried and convicted in a legal manner in order to fulfill all the laws and types of the Old Testament. This is a matter of profound theological importance. Look at it for a moment. Had Jesus’ death not been legal, then what he did for Christians and the world by dying for their sins (as the New Testament attests that he did) would have to be put aside as not legally proper. In no way would Peter or Paul have accepted such a proposition. If his death were not legal, then his atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world would also not be legal. But when Jesus died on the tree of crucifixion, *all legal requirements* of the Law of Moses had been met.

In the next chapter we will observe that there were two places that the Sanhedrin met in Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. The main region was at the Chamber of Hewn Stones (as I have shown in this chapter), but there was another region where the full body of the Sanhedrin would meet under special circumstances. That was at a place on the Mount of Olives called Bethphage. This was the village where Jesus obtained the donkey to make his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We now know that this village was a small walled town of priests situated just to the east of the Miphkad Altar. There was a significant reason why Jesus got the donkey for his triumphal entry at this priestly town. It was so important in the time of Jesus

that the Jewish authorities considered it to be a part of the city of Jerusalem in a legal sense. It was also where the Sanhedrin would meet for certain judicial affairs that could not be held in the Chamber of Hewn Stones on the Temple mount. What we now know is that Jesus was judged and convicted by the Sanhedrin on the Temple Mount, but he was officially excommunicated from Israelite society and sentenced to die at a final judgment held at the Court of the Sanhedrin located at Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. The next chapter will explain.



Chapter 12

THE SANHEDRIN AND THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

The village of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives was a most important religious center for the Jewish authorities in the period of Jesus and the apostles. It was a walled village which was the only area outside the walls and camp of Jerusalem that was considered by the Sanhedrin (the Supreme Court of the nation) to be an official part of the city of Jerusalem. In this village was one of the two seats of the great Sanhedrin of seventy-one members. The prime seat of the Sanhedrin was in the Temple at the Chamber of Hewn Stones located just to the south and east of the Altar of Burnt Offering.

The other seat of the Sanhedrin was at this walled village of Bethphage located just east of the western summit of the Mount of Olives (a little to the east of the Miphkad Altar where the Red Heifer was burnt to ashes and the Day of Atonement sacrifices were burnt). There were specific decisions of the Sanhedrin that were reserved for determination only at this official seat of the court in Bethphage. Those were decisions affecting what were the limits of the camp of Israel around the city of Jerusalem (and this included where the Red Heifer could be burnt). This also embraced what dis-

tricts surrounding Jerusalem were to be reckoned as inside the city of Jerusalem. This also included what were to be the dimensions of the Temple (whether enlarged or restricted). All measurements involving the finding of a dead body between two cities (Deuteronomy 21:1-9) were done by members of the Sanhedrin from Bethphage located “outside the camp.” Why? For one reason, measuring from a dead body necessitated the members of the Court having to touch the dead body. This rendered them “unclean” for seven days and they could not enter the Camp. So, the part of the Court that performed these functions was placed “outside the camp” at Bethphage. It was also at Bethphage where death sentences were validated for rebellious leaders of the nation as shown in Deuteronomy 17:8-13, and where excommunications of the extremely wicked took place (because excommunications required a person to be legally barred from entering the Camp of Israel in the future) (*Sanhedrin* 14a,b; *Sotah* 44b; 45a).

It is this latter requirement concerning rebellious elders that is important to us in our present context. Since Jesus was recognized as an Elder in Israel, he was consistently called “Rabbi” by the people (John 1:49; 6:25), the final judgment to condemn him to death had to be made at Bethphage to satisfy the legal demands that were enforced in the time of Jesus. Indeed, the Talmudic scholars specifically state that Jesus was accused and convicted by the Sanhedrin of practicing magic and leading Israel astray. For this he was excommunicated from Israel (*Sotah* 47a). Plainly stated, it meant that Jesus was “put out of the Camp of Israel.” This meant, that from the point of view of the Jewish authorities at Jerusalem, Jesus died on the tree of crucifixion as a Gentile, not as an Israelite!

This particular judgment of excommunication, which was given to Jesus just before his death, was validated as the final act of the Sanhedrin at Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. Once a person was excommunicated, it was later interpreted that the righteous Israelite had to remain at least four cubits (six feet) away from the one

excommunicated (*Baba Metzia* 59b). While judgments of the Sanhedrin against normal Israelites could be done “within the camp,” it appears that judgments for those who were excommunicated (who were “put out of the Camp” and made to be non-Israelites, as well as to be cursed) were performed “outside the camp” at the Court of the Sanhedrin at Bethphage. It makes sense that a rebellious elder was taken “outside the camp” (into the so-called “Land of Nod”) as a part of his excommunication process.

King David in his Trials Was a Type of Jesus, the Messiah

In regard to the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, it was held in Christian circles that King David of Israel was the person who most typified the role that Jesus played as the Messiah for Israel. In the New Testament, the experiences of David are often equated with those of Jesus. As a matter of fact, events in David’s life were seen to have a re-occurrence in a spiritual sense in the life of Jesus, and this is amply shown in the interpretations afforded by the New Testament (e.g. Psalm 22 was applied specifically to the trial and crucifixion of Jesus in Matthew 27:46, etc.). With this comparison of Jesus with King David, there is an interesting parallel in regard to the excommunication of Jesus before he met his death on the tree of crucifixion. Let us notice these important points.

King David was also Excommunicated from Israelite Society

We are told that David himself was exiled from his throne, exiled from his capital city Jerusalem, and exiled (and even excommunicated) from being an Israelite. This happened to David when his own son Absalom betrayed him and took over the kingdom and the hearts of the people of Israel. Not only that, at this moment in David’s life, the Ark of God (which was God’s residence) was sent to be with Absalom and it was no longer with David. At this same time David was being cursed and called a “Son of Belial” (a sign of excommunication), and David even allowed those judgments of excommunication to take place upon him (see II Samuel chapters

15 and 16 for the complete narrative explaining this).

And what is interesting to all of this, as seen through early Christian eyes, is the fact that David found himself in this excommunicated condition at a spot on the Mount of Olives just like Jesus found himself in the same type of condition on the same mountain. It was on the Mount of Olives that all the above mentioned events in David's life took place. Note what the Scriptures state:

“And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up” (II Samuel 15:30).

This is very typical of the same thing that happened to Jesus and under the same circumstances. While Pilate called Jesus the king of the Jews (John 18:39), we find Jesus while being that “king” ascending the Mount of Olives carrying the cross-piece for his crucifixion while his people (the Jews) were rejecting him just like the people of Israel rejected David at this time of David's trial. Indeed, David was being exiled by his own son and his relatives as well as some of his closest friends and colleagues. And at this very time, while at the summit of the Mount of Olives in this state of supreme degradation and humiliation, David composed some of his most stirring and effective Psalms.

If one will look carefully at the fourteen Psalms commencing with Psalm 20 and proceeding through to Psalm 33, it will be easily seen that these Psalms best depict the very time that David was expelled from his throne and from governing his people when his son Absalom took over the kingship and ordered that his father David be slain. The majority of people in Israel who had gone over to Absalom designed to kill David from that time forward. Psalm 22 must have been written at this time. Indeed, Psalm 22 has David beginning with a reference to God as One who had forsaken him (“My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me”). This was the very verse that Jesus used at the time of his crucifixion. By using

the phrase “My God,” rather than the familiar “My Lord” (or YHVH), David was approaching God in a non-intimate way, as though he was disfellowshipped from God and from the people of Israel whose God was YHVH.

The context of Psalm 22 shows that the historical circumstances surrounding the composition of the Psalm clearly reflect this very time when David was on the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem at the time of his lowest prestige in his life. This was when Absalom had taken over control of Israel and David was in an excommunicated state (even being called a “Son of Belial,” which signified an exceptionally evil person). No other time in the period of David’s life meets the historical conditions mentioned in Psalm 22 than the time he was excommunicated at Absalom’s rebellion. The same thing applies to Psalms 20 through 33.

The Psalms of David Reflect Important Periods of his Life

When one surveys the fourteen Psalms (Psalms 20 to 33) that were all written within the same type of context which shows degradation and humiliation at the lowest level of David’s career, there can be no doubt that they were composed at the same period of time. One should read these 14 Psalms with this suggestion in mind. When one reads them in sequence, there are a number of things within those Psalms that reflect what happened to King David as he was on the Mount of Olives at the time of his excommunication, and they reflect remarkably with the very things that Jesus experienced while he was also on the Mount of Olives at the time of Jesus’ excommunication from Israelite society. But, along with the sign of degradation within these Psalms, there is also a glimmer of hope that is given now and then. Indeed, in Psalm 30 there is the statement that provides a type of resurrection theme. Note what David said. “O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave” (Psalm 30:3). David considered that the victory over his ordeal at that time in his life was tantamount to being resurrected from the dead. Interestingly, this is precisely what happened to

Jesus after his ordeal was over on the same Mount of Olives. The resurrection of Jesus took place on the Mount of Olives. [One should put a comma between the word “house” and the words “of David” that are found in the title of Psalm 30. It was not David’s house that was being dedicated at the time, but the dedication was to another house that is not identified in the text. It could well have been a “house” dedicated on the Mount of Olives at the time for a place of worship, because we later read of the Beth ha-Deshen, “The House of the Ashes” which was a part of the Temple ritual of the Red Heifer sacrifice for Israel, and this “house” was on the Mount of Olives.] And remarkably, it was at this very spot on Olivet where King David was judged by God for the things that brought Absalom to power, and David allowed the judgment to happen (II Samuel 16:9-14). And it was also the spot where Jesus was judged by God for the sins of the world that were placed on the back of Jesus, according to the teachings of the New Testament.

King David was like Jesus, and Jesus was like King David

These events in the life of David all happened just on the *eastern* outskirts of the city of Jerusalem at the summit of the Mount of Olives. It is interesting that Jesus while he was on the tree of crucifixion stated about his executioners: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34), and we also find King David stating at a later time when he found out that his son Absalom was killed (who had done everything in his power to kill his own father): “O my son Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom! *would God I had died for thee*, O Absalom, my son, my son!”(II Samuel 18:33). In other words, David, in spite of what his son had done to him, would have died in the place of his own murderous son so that Absalom could live. Jesus did the same thing, but his forgiveness reached out to include the whole world. In fact, Jesus did die in the place of the whole world on the Mount of Olives in the same region where King David had his trial of excommunication and where he wrote Psalm 22.

Judgments at the Gates of Cities

This region of the Mount of Olives became important in later times, not only because of what happened to King David at the summit of Olivet, but because the mountain was intimately connected with many of the rituals and ceremonies of the Temple. The reason that these special types of decisions were to be made at this select village of Bethphage on the east side of Jerusalem (which was at the *eastern* limits of the city of Jerusalem) is because it was necessary that certain judicial actions be made at the entrance or the gate to Jerusalem (or if local decisions were made by lesser Sanhedrins associated with the various towns throughout Judaea, they were held in the gates or entrances to the towns). Some of these judgments involved people who were unclean and could not enter the cities. For this reason, many of the early courts of Israel were conducted at the entrance to cities or their territories. There were biblical reasons for certain courts to be at the gates of cities. Note Proverbs 31:23 which says “Her husband is known *in the gates*, when he sitteth among the elders.” Also: “Execute the judgment of truth and peace *in your gates*” (Zechariah 8:16).

It must be understood that the early societies of Israel were dominated by their basic adherence to the Law of Moses. That Law made strict distinctions between people who were “clean” and “unclean,” and these categories of purification had nothing to do with a person’s righteousness or lack of righteousness. For example, if a woman were in the period of menstruation, she was automatically rendered as an “unclean” person and could not perform certain religious duties designed only for those who were in a state of purification. She was “unclean” for seven days (no matter if her actual period of menstruation was shorter) (Leviticus 15:25-28). Even if her husband touch her or the bed on which she slept, he would also be ceremonially “unclean.”

Though such “uncleanness” was a very common thing in Israel (both for men and women), the courts still had to function in rela-

tionship to such people. This is why special areas were devised “at the gates” of the cities so that such people could be judged when times demanded it. They could not enter the cities (or holy regions) until they were “clean.” In the case of Jerusalem, which was the capital city of the nation, the principal gate to the city was on the eastern side just beyond the camp (that is, outside the camp). This judicial center for these special matters also resembled the location of the Tent of Meeting (Moses’ own tent) that was located on some occasions on the east side of the encampment, “outside the camp” of Israel, while they were in the wilderness (Exodus 33:7-11). This eastern entrance to the camp was considered to be the eastern gate into the proper city limits of Jerusalem. There was no actual gate that we know of at this eastern entrance on the Mount of Olives, just as there was no actual gate into the camp in the time of Moses (Exodus 32:26,27). This is where Moses judged Israel in the time Aaron raised up the golden calf. This is where Moses counted the dead people, 3000 in number, who died in judgment because they sinned regarding the calf that Aaron had raised up (Exodus 32:28). This counting (or census) of dead people by Moses had to be done “outside the camp.” Indeed, all censuses were conducted at this center “outside the camp” because most censuses involved people who were permanently or temporarily unclean and for this reason all matters of censuses (and measurements involving dead bodies) had to be conducted by the Sanhedrin at this location “outside the camp.” This is why the walled priestly village of Bethphage with its Court of the Sanhedrin was located just east of the Miphkad Altar on the Mount of Olives.

The reasons that such things were done at the gate to the camp was to fulfill the biblical stipulation that the elders of the land were supposed to sit in the gates (or the entrance) to the cities of the Israelites at certain times of judgment when people were unclean and could not enter the camp. Thus, the Sanhedrin had the village of Bethphage built just to the east of the city limits of Jerusalem to resemble this type of Tent of Moses where he judged Israel and it

also fulfilled the example of having elders to make certain judgments at the gates into Jerusalem.

Bethphage was a Priestly Center throughout History

There was also a further example from the Old Testament that gave them a reason for having such a priestly village at the summit of Olivet. There had been a village of priests at this very spot in the time of David. It was called Nob. The village of Nob, however, was destroyed by Doeg the Edomite. Note that after the Philistines took the Ark of God from Shiloh (the first Sanctuary site), the Tabernacle finally came to rest at a place called Nob which became the chief sanctuary of YHVH before Solomon built the Temple. This is where Jesus said David illegally ate the shewbread (Matthew 12:3,4). It was a center for the priests (I Samuel 22:11) but it was destroyed not long after David was there by Doeg the Edomite (I Samuel 22:20-23; see Psalm 52). When David at a later time went to the summit of Olivet to mourn for the actions of his son Absalom (II Samuel 15:30-37), there was no city there, just an altar for worshipping God. Yet, the fact that David built an altar at the site and prayed for himself and Jerusalem at this spot was important to later people. This is where the most severe of David's trials took place when he was excommunicated from Israel at the time Absalom took over the kingship. But David gained the victory and his Psalms (Psalm 20 to 33) that he wrote at the time show this. The subsequent victory of David was no doubt one of the reasons the Jewish authorities raised up a village of priests to take the place of the earlier Nob after the time of David. Isaiah later spoke of the village of Nob as overlooking the Temple and the city of Jerusalem (see Isaiah 10:24-34 and especially verse 32). It is most probable that the Bethphage of Jesus' time was simply a replacement for this earlier city with which David and Isaiah were acquainted. That is why it retained its priestly status. It was a village of priests.

This place that was called Nob, though scholars are not yet sure

of its exact location, was clearly on the Mount of Olives because the Temple and all Jerusalem could be seen from it. Jones in his *Proper Names of the Old Testament* says that Nob means High Place, and this refers to a top of a mountain. This could answer to the later Bethphage which was a city of priests in the time of Jesus and Origen in the third century said priests lived in Bethphage.

Now note this important point. The word Bethphage means the House of Unripe Figs. There were two symbolic reasons for naming this priestly village by this name. It will be remembered that in the Garden in Eden there were two trees that God specifically selected for the attention of Adam and Eve. One was the Tree of Life and the other was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Our first parents partook of this latter tree and they were then expelled from the Garden for this sin (the first sins ever committed by mankind). What type of tree was this that Adam and Eve partook of? While many different types of trees have been guessed (the pomegranate, date, grape and even the apple), the only tree mentioned in the context of Genesis describing the “fall” of Adam and Eve is the “fig.” It is to be noted that as soon as Adam and Eve knew they had sinned, they sewed fig leaves together to hide their shame. It is well documented among the Jews that this was understood to be the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

“What was the tree of which Adam and Eve ate? Rabbi Yosi says: It was the fig tree. . .the fig whereof he ate the fruit opened its doors and took him in” (Midrash, *Bereshith Raba*, 15,7).

“The fig leaf which brought remorse to the world” (*ibid.*, 19,11).

“The tree of which the first man ate. . .Rabbi Nehemiah says: It was the fig, the thing wherewith they were spoilt, yet were they redressed by it. As it is said: And they stitched a fig-leaf” (*Berakoth* 40a, and see *Sanhedrin* 70a).

In the non-canonical Book of Adam and Eve (20:5) it says: “I sought a leaf to cover up my nakedness and found none, for, when I ate, the leaves withered off every tree in my plot except for the fig,

and from it I took leaves and it made me a girdle, *even from the tree of which I ate.*”

Thus the fig tree was believed to represent the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Some might ask at this juncture: What difference does it make? Granted, it may seem like an exercise in futility and unnecessary speculation. But this would be a mistake. The fact is, the symbol of the fig tree as being the “evil” tree in the Garden of Eden figures in a prominent episode that occurred during the week just before Jesus was crucified. Once the symbolic meaning of the fig tree is recognized, then this special event can make a great deal of doctrinal sense in regard to the role that Jesus played in expelling “sin” from the world. I am talking about the time when he saw a fig tree on the Mount of Olives as he was approaching Jerusalem, and he cursed it. This fig tree would have been very near if not directly adjacent to the village of Bethphage which meant “House of Unripe Figs.” Before that day was over that particular fig tree was withered up and completely dead. This has a remarkable figurative meaning to it.

Four days before his crucifixion, Jesus left Bethany and started walking towards Jerusalem. When he was near the summit of the Mount of Olives, opposite Bethphage, he noticed on the side of the road a fig tree. He went to it and finding no figs on its branches (yet the tree was covered with leaves), he cursed *that fig tree* and said: “Let no man eat fruit from you henceforth forever. And his disciples heard it” (Mark 11:14). The *cursing* of that particular fig tree has baffled men ever since. The truth is, even Mark said that “it was not the season of figs” (verse 13). Indeed, difficulty in understanding the curse of Jesus went further than that. It was not even the time for fig trees to have leaves! It has puzzled people for generations why Jesus was so upset with a fig tree that by nature should not have had figs or leaves.

It is certain that the whole event was a miracle from start to finish. To produce a sign of this nature must have involved a great deal

of symbolic importance. If it were not of major significance then the event makes little sense and certainly there would be little relevance for its occurrence. But it does have symbolic meaning.

The fact that the fig tree had leaves was in itself a miracle because leaves would not have naturally been on the fig tree for at least a month later. Also, there should not have been any figs on the tree. Since the tree was located on a main thoroughfare into Jerusalem and with the heavy population around the city at that Passover season, it is not to be imagined that Jesus expected to find a few dried figs of last year's crop on the branches. The tree would surely have been stripped clean of its fruit. Jesus must have known that he would not find any figs on this unusual fig tree. The truth is, however, the lack of figs and the abundance of leaves were important factors in this miraculous occurrence. In this scene we are provided with a most important symbolic teaching by Jesus with his actions. It will figure in with the crucifixion of Jesus.

The Fig Tree and its Symbolism

Note that the next day after Jesus cursed that fig tree, the disciples found it *withered* (Mark 11: 20,22; Matthew 21:18-21). What was significant about this? It meant that the type of tree that Adam and Eve first ate which brought sin and death to them (and in an extended sense to all humanity) was now *withered* and *dead*.

Tradition had it that the only tree under Adam's care in the Garden of Eden that did not shed its leaves after our first parents took of the fruit was the fig tree. It was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But with this miracle of Jesus on the Mount of Olives, it meant *that* symbolic tree was now withered and dead. It signified that no longer would that type of tree be in the midst of humanity to encourage mankind to sin in the manner of our first parents.

But there is even more teaching. It meant that when Jesus went to that miraculous tree looking for some figs to eat (like Eve did),

Jesus could not find any whatsoever. This signified that there was not going to be a repetition of what Eve (and later Adam) did in regard to the fig tree that they partook of. One fig tree was the instrument to bring “sin” into the world, but the Son of God could not find any figs on his fig tree that was typical of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Jesus cursed *that* symbolic tree at the top of Olivet so that no man would eat of it again. And to complete his victory over sin, a short time later Jesus was going to be sacrificed for the sins of the world just a few yards away from this *withered* and *dead* tree. What Jesus was doing in the last week of his life on earth was acting out a symbolic victory over all the factors in the Garden of Eden around which our first parents failed. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was now *withered* and *dead* .

But there was a second symbolic meaning to the withering of the fig tree. There was the village of priests called Bethphage (House of Unripe Figs) along side that withered tree. And Bethphage was where the Sanhedrin met for special sentencing, especially that dealing with whom they considered to be a rebellious elder who needed to be excommunicated. And why was this priestly village called Bethphage? It meant “The House of Unripe Figs.” The Jewish authorities understood that the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil from which Adam and Eve ate that brought sin into the world was the fig (not the apple). Adam and Eve took leaves from that very tree from which they ate to hide their nakedness from God. But, in the case of the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem at Bethphage, they were supposed to act as God’s judges and thereby they were supposed to be rendered free of sin in their adjudications. This is probably why they named the village on Olivet the “House of Unripe Figs” because at this place of the court there were supposed to be no ripe figs available to tempt the judges to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil like was the case with Adam and Eve.

The Village of Bethphage was most Important

There was another reason for naming the village Bethphage. Figs are always unripe at the start of the growing season. This place of Bethphage was the site where the Sanhedrin determined legal measurements for the nation. It was where they set the limits on sacred and secular things (the size of the city, the Temple, the day to start the sacred calendar, when to observe the festival days, the conducting of censuses, etc.). This part of the court was located east of Jerusalem and away from the city lights so that the heavens could be observed for determining when the new season for the months and years would commence, etc. It was also from Bethphage where fire signals were sent to the Jewish communities outside Jerusalem so that they could determine when to observe the festival seasons with those at Jerusalem. In a word, it was from Bethphage where the official measurement standards for the nation were enacted and legalized.

The site of the Sanhedrin at Bethphage also had another unique role. It was also the place where the most rebellious of the elders in Israel were either excommunicated or sentenced to die. Indeed, after Jesus was tried by the Sanhedrin at the Chamber of Hewn Stones in the Temple itself, and afterward he was taken to Pilate to obtain Roman permission for his death, he was then taken to the Mount of Olives to await the final sentence of the Sanhedrin when they gave their decision for his death at Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. The New Testament says that all the chief priests, scribes and elders of the Jews witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus (Matthew 27:41), and in the Talmud it states that all the elders of the Sanhedrin including the High Priest had to make the decision for such things at the site of the Sanhedrin at Bethphage (*Sanhedrin* 14b). While crucifixion was regarded more particularly as a Gentile form of execution than a Jewish one, it has to be remembered that the Sanhedrin had officially excommunicated Jesus from being an Israelite, so from their point of view Jesus died a Gentile, not a Jew.

The Symbolic Importance of Bethphage

There is even further New Testament significance to these matters. It was no accident that Jesus told his disciples to go into Bethphage and obtain a donkey for him to ride into Jerusalem to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah about the Jews adoring their king riding on a donkey. By getting this donkey at Bethphage was like saying that Jesus went to the Supreme Court for his transport.

But there is even more. Note that when Jesus departed on the donkey from Bethphage that the people praised him as the King of Israel (Matthew 21:1-17). Jesus then returned to Bethany on the east side of the Mount of Olives and the next morning started once again into Jerusalem. He then saw the fig tree (note carefully that this was a fig tree) that had no eatable fruit on it. Indeed, the texts say that it was *not yet the time for ripe figs* because it was so early in the season. But Christ, finding no ripe figs on it, cursed it then and there. This event occurred on the Mount of Olives and right next to the village of Bethphage (the House of Unripe Figs). Soon that fig tree withered away and died, within a matter of hours.

Jews living at the time in Jerusalem (without the slightest doubt in their minds) would have known the significance that Jesus was placing on that miraculous event. That fig tree itself was a “Tree of Unripe Figs” which was located next to the village of Bethphage (with the name “House of Unripe Figs”) which was the site where the Sanhedrin determined the limits of things that were holy and things not holy. In effect, Jesus through the miraculous withering of that fig tree of unripe figs was showing the demise and final authority of the Sanhedrin to make decisions at Bethphage (the House of Unripe Figs). Later Jewish interpretation said that the verse in the Song of Songs which said: “the fig tree putteth forth her green figs” (2:13) was figurative of the coming days of the Messiah, see the fifth century Jewish work called the *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana* (Piska 5:9). But here was Jesus, doing the work of the Messiah, causing the fig tree with no figs to dry up. The official work of God was to

be given to a nation bringing forth proper results. Recall, Jesus later stated in the Temple: “Therefore say I unto you. The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Matthew 21:43).

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil No Longer on Earth

Yet there is even more symbolism to this withering of the fig tree and its unripe figs. Since it was recognized that the fig tree represented the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (again, not the apple), Jesus cursed the tree that introduced sin into the world with our first parents. The symbol Jesus was creating showed that the type of tree that introduced sin into the world will not be available for humans as a temptation to sin in the future. This, of course, became the case when he was crucified a short time later for the sins of the world not but a few yards from that symbolically accursed tree. It was also the spot where King David composed Psalm 22 (the very Psalm that Jesus quoted at his crucifixion).

It also ought to be pointed out once again that just to the west of Bethphage was the Beth ha-Deshen (the House of the Ashes) where the Red Heifer and other sin offerings were burnt to ashes at a “clean place” called by the prophet Ezekiel “the *OUTWARD* Sanctuary” (Ezekiel 44:1). It seems reasonable to believe that Bethphage, which was exclusively a village of priests, was a site designed to be the living quarters for those who attended this “*OUTWARD* Sanctuary” on the Mount of Olives. Since this area was also “without the Camp,” this allowed it to be a place where the defiled and impure Israelites as well as those ritualistically clean could assemble for legal purposes involving matters of state. This allowed even the non-purified Israelites to be heard by the Sanhedrin in its chambers located on Bethphage. This was also where the censuses of the nation could take place because both the defiled and the purified could be personally counted and numbered at the *Miphkad* (Numbering) Altar.

Chapter 13

ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

While it became popular by the first century for many Jewish people to think that the spot of the Altar of Burnt Offering just east of the Holy Place in the Temple was the site where the ram was caught in the thicket at the time of Abraham, there are biblical reasons for believing that the spot was actually on the Mount of Olives. Since Isaac was recognized as a type of the Messiah (and Christians certainly considered him to be typical of Jesus who was actually allowed to be sacrificed by the Father, unlike Isaac whom Abraham received back without having to sacrifice him), it seems logical that the site of the crucifixion of Jesus would be at or near the same place that Abraham intended to sacrifice Isaac. This brings us again to the summit of the Mount of Olives.

One of the cardinal reasons that the Jewish authorities in the first century considered the place of the Second Temple to be the site where the altar for Isaac was built by his father Abraham was because the Book of Chronicles states the place was on a Mount Moriah (II Chronicles 3:1). Until 1994, I also sided with the early Jewish authorities in stating that this Mount Moriah was the site

where the Temples were built and also the place where Abraham sacrificed the ram caught in the thicket. But now, new research causes one to look for another mountain for that important event in world history. What we find is the fact that the term “Moriah” refers to a mountain range in which is located the Mount of Olives and the other mountains surrounding the immediate area of Jerusalem. We will find that the altar of Abraham was at the southern summit of the Mount of Olives, at the very area where Jesus was later crucified as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. It means that the Mount of Olives was also called Mount Moriah, but more accurately, it should be reckoned as Upper Moriah; while the Temple mount itself should be called Lower Moriah. This chapter will show the geographical distinction.

Where was the Land of Moriah?

When Abraham was about 130 years of age and living in Beersheba (in the desert region about 50 miles south and west of what was later to become Jerusalem), God came to him and told him to take his son Isaac with two young men and make a trip to the Land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon ONE of the MOUNTAINS in the region (Genesis 22:2).

The first thing to notice in regard to Genesis 22:2 is the fact that the word “Moriah” refers to a district of land and it had several mountains within its region because God told Abraham to go to *one of the mountains* in that district of Moriah. This geographical indication makes it clear that every mountain within that district of Moriah could be called a Mount of Moriah. Just like every mountain within the Alps range in Europe could be called an Alpine mountain (a mountain of the Alps), so likewise, all the mountains in the district of Moriah could be called the mounts (or mountains) of Moriah. But Abraham was told to go to *one* of the mountains, not simply to any or all of the various mountains in the Moriah district.

Abraham then saddled his donkey and took two of his young

men with him along with Isaac his son (Genesis 22:3). There is a major point to notice that is usually not observed by modern interpreters regarding this important event. We should carefully note that in Hebrew, the word which denotes “young men” is precisely the same word (though plural) of the Hebrew word for “lad” which described Isaac in Genesis 22:5. This shows that Isaac was no small child (or infant) when Abraham took him with the two young men on their journey to the Land of Moriah. Indeed, the same word for “lad” and “young men” was used to describe Joshua when he was 40 years of age (Exodus 33:11). Isaac could well have been in his 30’s when the event concerning his intended sacrifice took place. After all, the two young men who accompanied Abraham (to help Abraham who was a very old man at the time) would have been of little help if they were mere children. It would not be unreasonable to state that Isaac at the time of this great trial was in his early 30’s (as was Jesus when he was sacrificed on the Mount of Olives). It is important to realize the chronology of this event because it shows that Isaac was no mere child (or infant). Isaac was indeed a young man of vigorous age and he could well have resisted his father Abraham when Abraham took the knife to slay him.

Abraham Expected Isaac to be Resurrected

Another point needs to be made. Note that Abraham had been ordered by God to slay Isaac. He was his only begotten legal son through whom the promises of God that much glory would come from Isaac and not from other children that he had. But now, God was telling Abraham to slay his only legal son for inheritance. Since Abraham was well aware of God’s former promises to him that Abraham would have descendants to come from Isaac, the only conclusion Abraham could make if he did indeed kill Isaac was that God would have to resurrect Isaac from the dead for God’s promises to be fulfilled. This is why Abraham said to the two young men who went with them to wait at the bottom of the mount and that he and Isaac (both of them together) would soon come again to them

(Genesis 22:5). The author of the Book of Hebrews used this very verse in Genesis to show that Abraham believed that Isaac would have to be resurrected from the dead if he did indeed slay him on the mount. Hebrews said: “Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him [Isaac] in a figure” (Hebrews 11:19).

So, from the author’s point of view, Abraham (as a figure) did indeed slay his son when the substitute ram was offered in his place but he received his son Isaac back to life through a resurrection from the dead. Abraham was assured that this would certainly happen even in a literal way (had God not provided the substitute sacrifice) because he confidently told the two young men who waited at the bottom of the mountain that both he and Isaac would come [plural] again to you (Genesis 22:5). This trial of Abraham’s faith (and also the trial of Isaac’s faith as well, because Isaac was certainly around 30 years of age when this all happened) occurred on a mountain in the Land of Moriah. It was the Mount of Olives.

The Mountain of Moriah that Abraham Selected

We are given some good hints in Genesis 22 itself about the mountain where the ram was caught in the thicket. When we combine II Chronicles 3:1 with several other statements concerning the location of Zion (of which I will have more to say in a moment), we can know for a certainty the precise mountain in the region (or land) of Moriah where this event took place. The event was symbolically significant and highly important.

Note that it took Abraham and his group three days to reach the region of Moriah (which the Chronicler identified with the later area of Jerusalem). This journey of three days was from Beersheba (Genesis 22:4). This would accord well, in a strict geographical sense, with the later Jerusalem region. Once they got there, God told Abraham some geographical details that described the place God had in mind. The text says that Abraham was able to see the

place *afar off* (verse 4). It must have been quite a prominent mountain (among the mountains of Moriah) that Abraham could observe from a distance. When he got to the top of that particular mount, and he finally saw the ram caught in a thicket by its horns, he knew God was substituting the ram for Isaac. This could hardly have been the rocky outcrop area that made up the later place where the Temple was built because that was an area where a threshing floor was in evidence. Threshing floors in the region of Palestine are almost always associated with sites that are bare of trees or thickets. They are normally natural rock outcroppings without any vegetation around them to afford a chance for the free flow of the wind over their surfaces so that no impediments to the winnowing would be in the area. Besides this, it was common to place altars on the highest point of a high place (or mountain peak), and since the ram was caught in a thicket directly behind Abraham (a very short distance away), this clearly shows that the summit of this particular mountain was covered with much vegetation. This evidence alone leads a person to look in a different area than where the Temple was later built over an outcropping of rock which was a normal threshing floor.

There is, however, even greater evidence in the Bible to identify the spot where the altar was built for Isaac. When Ezra the priest wrote the Book of Chronicles he tells us that the Temple was built on Mount Moriah. In this single verse (if that is all we had) the impression left with the English reader is that Ezra is referring to a single mountain that is called Mount Moriah. But if one will simply continue reading the Book of Chronicles, Ezra states in II Chronicles 13:4 that King Abijah stood up upon "*mount Zemaraim, which is in mount Ephraim.*" The Hebrew word for *mount* in both cases is the same. Scholars have long recognized that Ezra is not stating that this "*mount Zemaraim*" was superimposed upon top of another mountain called "*mount Ephraim.*" In no way does Ezra mean such a thing. Most modern translators render (and rightly so) *the second mount* as "*the hill country*" (or the mountain range) of

Ephraim. Certainly, there were several score mountains (not one mount alone) located in the tribal area of Ephraim, and Ezra used the precise word for “mount” in II Chronicles 13:4 that he did in II Chronicles 3:1 when he referred to “mount Moriah.” Ezra was actually showing that the Temple was built in the mountain region of Moriah, not on a single mountain that alone had the name Mount Moriah. This means that the “Moriah” of Genesis 22 and the “Moriah” of the Book of Chronicles refer to a mountain region or a mountain district called the Land of Moriah. The word “Moriah” itself applies to the whole land or territory of that area. This is why in Genesis the region is simply called the Land of Moriah and it covered a wide area of land.

Abraham Selected a Mount in the Land of Moriah

It was on top of one of the mountains in this region called “Moriah” which later became known as Jerusalem that Abraham built the altar for Isaac. Normally, in such cases, it was the highest of the mountains in any region that was selected to raise up an altar to God. It would be like selecting Mount Blanc in the mountain range of the Alps, or Mount Whitney in the mountain range of the Sierra Nevadas in California. And in the region of Jerusalem, the highest mountain would have been the Mount of Olives. It would have been called, correctly, “Mount Moriah,” while the later Temple mount itself (located just to the west and across the Kidron valley) would also have been called “Mount Moriah,” or better yet “Lower Mount Moriah.” The higher mountain of the same name, however, would have been called Upper Mount Moriah. That would have been the southern summit of the Mount of Olives (the highest mount in the metropolitan area of Jerusalem). This is where the altar for Isaac was built by Abraham. And this is the same area where Jesus was in fact crucified (and later resurrected) for the sins of the world. He became to God, like the ram for Isaac, a substitute sacrifice for all human beings in the world and in all ages in which they would live.

Biblical Evidence Confirms these Matters

Let us see more evidence that confirms this. The next proof for this concerns the site of Zion, which later became identified with the mountain that became the City of David (located in the south-eastern part of what became Jerusalem) and by extension Zion came to be applied to the Temple mount itself. But the term Zion was far more extensive than the mount of the City of David and the later mount of the Temple.

The word Zion (which is sometimes spelled Sion in Christian circles) is a very familiar term to those who read the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments. Though the original meaning of the word is not clear to scholars, it no doubt denoted a geographical feature of some kind. When we first meet with the word we find it identifying an area where there was a citadel or fortress. It has been suggested by some scholars that its root meaning probably suggests a citadel of some kind. We are introduced to the word when David successfully captured the Jebusite stronghold which was called the fortress of Zion located on the southeast hill of Jerusalem (it was located directly south of Lower Moriah and between the Tyropaeon Valley on the west and the Kidron Valley on the east). After conquering that stronghold, David changed its official name to the City of David (II Samuel 5:7; I Chronicles 11:5). This is the spot to which David brought the Ark of the Covenant (the holiest piece of furniture in the Tabernacle). From the time the Ark came to rest in Zion (before it was moved to the new Temple built by Solomon on Lower Moriah), Zion was identified with the place on earth where God had his dwelling. So, that particular hill known as the Stronghold of Zion, became the place in the Jerusalem area which was officially designated the place for the House of God. The original Mount Zion on the southeast hill continued to be called that place for the House of God until the Ark was moved to the site of the new first Temple in the time of Solomon.

It is interesting that as soon as Solomon had the Ark moved to

the new first Temple, the name Zion (though originally associated only with the southeast hill) was moved northward to include Lower Mount Moriah in its designation. It then became fashionable to call either the original mountain of David by the name Zion, or to call Lower Mount Moriah of the Temple by the name Zion. This effectively meant, if one took God's word literally, that there were two Mount Zions in Jerusalem. But that does not end the matter. The word Zion began to take on even greater geographical significance.

The Designation of Zion became quite Extensive in Meaning

The word Zion came to denote the political capital of the nation of Judah (David made the Stronghold of Zion his headquarters in governing the nation), but it also came to identify the spiritual capital of the nation (when Solomon built the Temple on Lower Moriah). When Solomon did this, people in the Middle East then began to reckon the city of Jerusalem as housing the two Zions of God: the secular capital on the southeast hill and the religious capital on Lower Mount Moriah. There was even a further extension in the use of the name Zion. Besides the two mounts being called Zion, the whole city of Jerusalem itself, being the capital of Judah, became known as Zion. That still did not end the use of the name. Because the people of God were Israel and Judah and God was supposed to dwell among (or even within) them, we find that the people of Israel as a corporate body also, in a poetic sense, began to be denominated by the word Zion. There is yet even more expansiveness to the word. Since the original dwelling place for God was at his palace in heaven, we find that the heavenly throne of God also became known as the heavenly Zion (Hebrews 12:22). What we find in the Bible is the fact that there were several sites beginning to be called Zion. This is an important point to realize because we are going to find out that even the Mount of Olives began to be called Zion because of the significant events that occurred on that

mount which is the highest in the Jerusalem area.

A Variety of Places called Zion

Even from a geographical point of view regarding areas on earth, we find the word Zion being used in the Bible for a number of places. For example, the prophet Micah (4:10) said that Zion (as a metaphor for the people of Jerusalem) would one day leave Jerusalem and dwell outside the city gates. “You [Zion] shall go forth out of the city, and you shall dwell in the field” (Micah 4:10). Micah, however, said that Zion would not remain in that field for long. It was to be further removed, and far off from Jerusalem. “And you [Zion] shall go even to Babylon” (verse 10). That’s right. Micah stated quite categorically that Zion, because of her sins, would be removed from Jerusalem and be placed within the heathen area of Babylon. Indeed, Zion would stay in Babylon long enough to bear children to God before returning to Jerusalem (verse 10). The prophet Zechariah also confirmed this prophecy of Micah by stating that Zion would one day be located in Babylon, yet it would be given deliverance for her plight. Zechariah said: “Deliver yourself, O Zion, that dwells with the daughter of Babylon” (Zechariah 2:7).

The Bible shows the fact that the name Zion, as a geographical or spiritual designation, has moved around quite a bit in various contexts of the Holy Scriptures. While still retaining its name for the southeast hill, the name was extended to include Lower Mount Moriah of the Temple. From there it came to embrace the whole city of Jerusalem, and this also included the highest mountain in the Jerusalem area, the Mount of Olives (which could then be designated as Upper Mount Zion). What? Is it possible for the Mount of Olives to be called Zion just like the two western mountains across the Kidron Valley? That’s right. Look at the messages in the fifteen degree psalms which were collected and put into the Bible by King Hezekiah. In Psalm 125:2 we read: “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from hence-

forth.” Yes, God was prophesied to dwell (not only in one mountain in Jerusalem) but in all of the mountains surrounding the capital city. But to be more specific, in Psalm 133 (still one of the fifteen degree psalms of Hezekiah), we are told by the writer that the region of Zion is made up of several mountains, not just one mountain, or even two mountains. The psalmist said there were the “MOUNTAINS of Zion” (Psalm 133:3). This means that all the mountains that make up Jerusalem are called the mountains of Zion. But those mountains are also denominated as being the mountains of Moriah.

The Mountains of Moriah

The word “Moriah” itself means God sees, or the place to which God gives his utmost attention. Or, as Moses explained the word in Genesis 22:14, it signified “the Mount of the Lord,” and he added to that phrase the meaning that the Mount was where “it shall be seen.” It meant the region or the mountain that God would look upon as the place of his singular attention. And the highest mountain in the region of Moriah (where Abraham built the altar for Isaac) was the Mount of Olives. This is why the Mount of Olives should be called Upper Mount Moriah, and the place where the Temples were later built as Lower Mount Moriah. Also, these mountains in Jerusalem (the Zion of God) became known as the “mountains of Zion” (Psalm 133:3). And since the Mount of Olives was the highest, it could technically be called either Upper Mount Moriah or Upper Mount Zion.

Later Jewish Authorities Recognized the Importance of Olivet

There are good biblical reasons why the Mount of Olives could be called Upper Mount Moriah or Upper Mount Zion. The Jewish people were well acquainted with the scriptures regarding the use of the words “Moriah” and “Zion.” The region was intimately connected with the ritualistic ceremonies associated with the Temple at

Jerusalem. This is where the Third Altar of the Temple was located which was associated with the sacrifice of the Red Heifer. This is one reason why the Jewish authorities in the time of Jesus had the priestly village called Bethphage built on the Mount of Olives to attend to the holy places located on its summit. Recall that this village was even an important area of the Sanhedrin and we now know that this region became known by Jewish authorities after the time of Jesus as the place where God had placed his footstool on earth.

After the time of Islam, the Jewish authorities were well aware of the importance of the summit of the Mount of Olives as a place where God focused his special attention. There are Jewish records showing this. *The Encyclopaedia Judaica* under the article "Mount of Olives" has an important survey about the significance of Olivet in these later times. The encyclopaedia shows that by the end of the eighth century, when the Jews were no longer allowed to enter the Temple Mount, the Mount of Olives became the place (like in the time Bethphage was in operation in the period of Jesus) for proclaiming the beginning of the calendar years. This is the precise spot where the Jewish people raised up what the authorities called a Great Sanhedrin to regulate legal matters involving the people of Israel.

The Jewish authorities stated they had the right to pick this spot on the Mount of Olives because the Shekinah moved to this exact region after the fall of the Temple in A.D.70 (I will have more to say on this move of the Shekinah to the Mount of Olives in later chapters of this book). They even came to believe that this area on the Mount of Olives was the footstool of God because it stated in Zechariah 14 that God would certainly stand on the Mount of Olives. A rock outcropping was even shown in the summit area which was supposed to represent the footstool of God. They came to believe that this was the footstool of God (as mentioned in Isaiah 60:13; 66:1; also see Acts 7:49 and we should connect Isaiah with Zechariah 14). After the destruction of the Temple in A.D.70, the

Jewish authorities came to see that the Mount of Olives was the spot where God would teach his people his laws and his ways. They began to give it a status that made it to almost reach the significance of the dwelling place of God while the Temple remained in ruins. Let us see how this came to be understood.

The Footstool of God in later Jewish Interpretation

The Jewish authorities came to believe that the “footstool of God” as mentioned in Isaiah 60:13 and 66:1 should be connected with the Mount of Olives mentioned in Zechariah 14 which spoke of God’s feet standing on Olivet. They also had the teaching of Ezekiel 11:23 where the prophet Ezekiel saw the Shekinah Glory of God retreat from the Temple Mount (Lower Mount Moriah) and ascend to the top of the Mount of Olives (which could be called Upper Mount Moriah). They saw that YHVH was to stand on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4).

The symbol of the footstool for God’s feet came to be identified with the summit of the Mount of Olives. This is the spot where it was thought that God figuratively dwelt on earth after the destruction of the Temple and where God’s people were to gather to worship him. In other words, the phrase “footstool of God” came to represent God’s holy residence on earth (like was the case in his Tabernacle and even in his Temple). The phrase “footstool of God” came to mean the official place to worship God. Note what the scriptures teach. “We will go into his tabernacles [the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies]: we will worship at his footstool” (Psalm 132:7). “Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy” (Psalm 99:5). “How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool [his Temple] in the day of his anger” (Lamentations 2:1). It was called “the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious” (Isaiah 60:13).

Worshipping God at his Footstool

These scriptures indicate that the “footstool of God” was reckoned as the holiest place on earth and where people were officially required to worship God. It is no accident that the later Jewish authorities (when Islam began) returned to Jerusalem and went directly to the Mount of Olives and re-established the Sanhedrin on that mount. They called that mount God’s footstool. They seemed to know that God had certainly abandoned Lower Mount Moriah as the place of his footstool and that God was now reckoning the Mount of Olives (Upper Mount Moriah) as the proper footstool of God. But in the fifteenth century, Jews seem to forget the importance of Olivet and they started again to assemble at their Western Wall. This still made them to direct their prayers *eastward* from the Wall to Olivet which they formerly called “God’s footstool.”

We will come to see in the next chapter that the Christian community at Jerusalem after the destruction of the city and Temple in A.D.70, also came to see this region on the Mount of Olives as being the official “footstool of God.” In fact, it can now be shown that Christians established their headquarters after A.D.70 (and in one way of looking at it, until the time of Constantine) at the summit of the Mount of Olives. So influential did the Christian authorities become in this area on the Mount of Olives (and they continued to be powerful until Constantine built the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the western side of Jerusalem) that the Jewish authorities felt it better to move their Sanhedrin away from the Christian region of Jerusalem after A.D.70. They went to Jabneh (Jamnia) on the coast of Palestine. The Jewish Sanhedrin remained there until A.D.135 and then it moved into regions of Galilee until A.D.429 when the Romans had the Sanhedrin disbanded. Only later, with the arrival of Islam, did the Jewish authorities finally raise up another Sanhedrin (which they began to call the Great Sanhedrin) and they did this by returning to the summit of the Mount of Olives (the place of God’s footstool) in order to be in close association with the

God of their fathers (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol.XII.481-485).

Abraham took Isaac to the Mount of Olives. This Symbolized Jesus

It can now be shown from the information that I have presented in this chapter, that the Mount of Olives becomes important for reasons that many people have not realized. That is the fact that Abraham actually had his trial concerning Isaac NOT on Lower Mount Moriah where the Temple was later built by Solomon, but it was at the summit of Olivet. It is no wonder that early Christians began to see the importance of the Mount of Olives. Indeed, it was long recognized in Christian circles that Isaac was a type of the Christ who was to come so it was expected that several parallels between Isaac and Jesus would be apparent. And when one compares the history of Isaac with that of Jesus, the similarities are very profound. Let us notice what some of those parallels were that prompted the early Christians to make the typical connection between Isaac and Jesus. Note the agreements.

- (1) The birth of Isaac was miraculous (Genesis 18), so was the birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:18).
- (2) In Abraham's attempt to sacrifice Isaac, Isaac even assisted Abraham in carrying the wood to the altar (Genesis 22:6). In like manner Jesus also helped to carry his own crosspiece to his crucifixion.
- (3) Isaac did not dispute Abraham's will in the matter of his own sacrifice, nor did Jesus with God the Father.
- (4) Jesus and Isaac were both "offered" on the Mount of Olives. It is this parallel that makes the geographical information I am presenting in this book to be a valuable source for proper Christian interpretation.

- (5) Isaac was willing to lay down his life of his own free will, just as Jesus did. Note that Isaac was younger and stronger than his father Abraham. No one knows the exact age of Isaac when this attempted “offering” occurred, but he was not a child. The word “lad” simply refers to a younger man as distinct from one of old age. Isaac could well have been just over 30 years of age, as was Jesus.

- (6) Abraham also was willing to sacrifice his only son who was his only legal son (or legitimate son for inheritance) while God the Father did in fact give up his only begotten Son. As God provided a ram caught in the thicket as a substitute sacrifice for Isaac so that Isaac could live, New Testament teaching shows that the Father provided Jesus as a substitute sacrifice for Israel and the world so that they may live forever. This theme was well recognized in early Christian circles.

- (7) Abraham came down from the mountain of sacrifice (which was the Mount of Olives) with Isaac still alive. The author of the book of Hebrews said that this was tantamount to Isaac having been resurrected from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19). And similarly, Jesus was also resurrected (in a literal sense) at the same site and on the same mountain. And remember, Isaac had a three day journey to the spot to be “offered” and figuratively resurrected from the dead, while it is interesting that the resurrection of Jesus also took place after a period of three days.

Typical Teachings were Important to Early Christians

Since it was clear that Jesus was indeed crucified for the sins of the world on the Mount of Olives, one can easily see that the sup-

posed sacrifice of Isaac in the same location has strong symbolic attachments to that event (especially when one considers all the other similarities of Isaac and Jesus given above). The accounts of Isaac and Jesus are too close to be accidental, and there is no doubt that early Christians saw the importance of this symbolic teaching. This fact is just another reason why it is important for us to know the exact spot in the Jerusalem area where Jesus was crucified. It makes the symbolic teachings in the Old Testament regarding the spiritual significance of the sin and burnt offerings to apply to Jesus. It shows the substitutionary role that Jesus played in his crucifixion in redeeming Israel and the world to the Father.

When these matters are understood, a new way of looking at prophetic and doctrinal geography emerges on the scene. Whole sections of the Scriptures that were too incoherent (and which many people simply allegorized because of the obscurities of the language) now begin to make perfectly good practical sense. Prophetic statements that have been hidden from knowledge for so long, now become crystal clear in meaning. And what a significance emerges. The glorious majesty given to Jesus, now takes on a role that is infinitely more grand and important than what most people have formerly observed from the Holy Scriptures. Indeed, parts of Scripture that used to make little sense, now take on deep meanings and within a theme of full simplicity. This is why it is important to know that Jesus was crucified and resurrected on the Mount of Olives.



Chapter 14

***CHRISTIAN
BELIEFS AND
THE MOUNT
OF OLIVES***

One of the main reasons why scholars today are willing to allow the possibility that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre located on the west side of Jerusalem could be the site of the crucifixion is because it seems sensible that a succession of traditions about its location would have been continually available among the Christian population of Jerusalem. Would not Christians have wanted to remember where the site was and have retained its memory in Constantine's time?

While this supposition appears reasonable, it must be recalled that Jerusalem and its surroundings underwent two devastating destructions (A.D.70 and A.D.135) which drastically altered its geographical features. There were also major political upheavals within those two and a half centuries. Indeed, there is almost nothing known about the Christian bishops of Jerusalem for a hundred years after the emperor Hadrian destroyed the city in A D.135 nor are Christian activities precisely documented for the Jerusalem area during that time. In spite of these "unknowns," most scholars feel the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is "probably" the proper site for

Jesus' crucifixion. But when the biblical and historical data given in this book are considered, the area of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre has no credentials whatever. Only Olivet is proper.

This is supported by a further fact. During those two and a half centuries of obscurity, there is only one tradition of any "holy place" which Christians esteemed in the Jerusalem area. And that place was located on the Mount of Olives. Their attention was drawn to a *cave* that Christians were accustomed to visit and to assemble at the site for worship. Indeed, people came from around the world to see that *cave*. And amazingly, there was no other site in the Jerusalem area that attracted the attention of visitors and those in Jerusalem but that *cave* on the Mount of Olives. I will have more to say on this geographical site in a moment.

Interestingly, when it was finally determined in the time of Constantine (A.D.326) that the sepulchre of Jesus was situated under a Shrine of Venus which became the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Eusebius (the great historian who lived in Palestine and one who was well acquainted with the early traditions of the Christians) expressed surprise that Jesus' tomb was found at the pagan shrine. In his written work called the *Life of Constantine*, he candidly stated that the discovery at that site was "contrary to expectation" (3:28). That's right, neither Eusebius nor others in the Jerusalem area of which we have records expected the tomb to be discovered at the Shrine of Venus. Even Constantine, when he was exulting over the discovery, wrote the governors of the eastern provinces that the site had "remained unknown for so many cycles of years" (*ibid.*, 3:30).

Such statements as these coming from the top authorities of the time do not give the impression that Christians in Jerusalem (or anywhere else) thought that Jesus' tomb was located at the site of the Venus Shrine which had been built by the emperor Hadrian at the end of the Jewish/Roman war of A.D.132 to 135. In fact, they show that it was totally *unexpected* to find the tomb of Jesus in that

area of Jerusalem. It was “contrary to expectation.”

Constantine and Supernatural Signs

Actually, the “discovery” in the time of Constantine came about through the intervention of a miracle, various visionary experiences and information supplied by a non-Christian man that convinced Helena, the mother of Constantine, that the Shrine of Venus was the precise spot to find Jesus’ tomb. Constantine himself acknowledged that the “discovery” was prompted *by divine direction* — through a “wonder” (*ibid.*). To people of the fourth century, miraculous events were of profound importance in revealing the “authentic” locations of Christian holy places. In the vast majority of circumstances this was the medium through which the early sites associated with Jesus, the apostles and prophets were determined. Indeed, the historian Sozomen, writing about a hundred years after the “discovery” of the so-called tomb of Jesus, said:

“The place was discovered... *by means of signs and dreams; for I do not think that human information is required* when God thinks it best to make manifest the same” (*Hist.II.1 italics mine*).

Thankfully, most archaeologists today do not rely on “signs and dreams” to tell them where ancient historical sites are to be located. But in the fourth century, this was the accepted way (and even authorized by the imperial authorities) for discovering important holy places whose locations had been lost to knowledge. Indeed, about 25 years after Helena supposedly rediscovered the new “Golgotha” at the Venus Shrine, Cyril (the bishop of Jerusalem) reminded Constantine’s son that it was by “divine grace” (not by historical or archaeological data) that Christians were able to locate “*the long hidden holy places*” (*Letter to Constantius 3, italics and underlining mine*). In fact, when Cyril tried to convince some of his doubting parishioners as to the truthfulness of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre being the correct site for Jesus’ tomb, all that Cyril could provide them for proof was a discourse on the Song of Solomon which he said had the mystical clue as to the whereabouts

of Jesus' crucifixion and burial (see Parrot's *Golgotha and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre*, pp.56,57 for more information on this interesting point).

The Significance of the Mount of Olives

As far as real traditional and historical records go (written at least 100 years before the "discoveries" of Helena and reconfirmed by Eusebius about 25 years before Helena came to Jerusalem), there was only *one spot* in the Jerusalem region which Christians held in esteem as a "holy place." And that *one spot* of all things, was a *cave* on the Mount of Olives. Dr. Wilkinson has some excellent comments about this site.

"Since before the early third century, when it is mentioned in the apocryphal Acts of John, *one particular cave* on the Mount of Olives had been regarded by Christians as the place where Jesus imparted his teaching to his inner group" (*The Jerusalem Jesus Knew*, p.119).

There is another reference about this *cave* on the Mount of Olives before Constantine began to build the Church of the Holy Sepulchre west of the Temple mount. This is from Eusebius himself in his *Demonstratio Evangelica* (*Proof of the Gospel*) written in A.D.303. Eusebius gave a powerful confirmation that there was *only one site* at Jerusalem [at least he mentioned no other] to which Christians from around the world came to visit and it was to the *cave* on the summit of Olivet.

"And *this Mount of Olives* is said to be over against Jerusalem, instead of the old earthly Jerusalem and its worship. For as Scripture has said with reference to Jerusalem: The city shall be taken, and the nations that are her enemies and foes shall be gathered together against her, and her spoils shall be divided, it could not say that the feet of the Lord should stand upon Jerusalem. How could that be, once it was destroyed? But it says that they will stand with them that depart from it, to the mount opposite the city called *the Mount of Olives*...since *believers in Jesus all congregate from all parts of the world*, not of old time because of the glory of

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Jerusalem, but they rest *there* [on the Mount of Olives] that they may learn both about the city being taken and devastated as the prophets foretold, and that they *may worship at the Mount of Olives* opposite to the city...*TO THE CAVE* that is shown there” (Bk. VI. ch.18 all emphases mine).

It is interesting that Eusebius tells us (about 25 years before “signs and dreams” supposedly discovered the “lost” tomb of Jesus by Helena) that Christians were coming to Jerusalem from all over the world to congregate at a *cave* near the summit of the Mount of Olives. There was no other area in the region of Jerusalem that Christian pilgrims were coming to see or at which they wanted to worship God. And note this point. Eusebius in this early period said nothing about Christians coming to Jerusalem to give homage to God at the Shrine of Venus on the west side of the city. This oversight is most conspicuous. Only two places in Palestine were important to people who came from around the world. Eusebius said in this early work that one place was the *cave* on the Mount of Olives and the other was where Jesus was born.

“Bethlehem the place of his birth, which is today so famous *that men still hasten from the ends of the earth to see it*” (Bk. I. ch.1).

In actual fact, the place of the Venus Shrine (which after the time of Constantine became the most revered spot in all Christendom) was not even remotely discussed as important by Eusebius in his early work called the *Demonstratio Evangelica*. This helps to show that the “Golgotha” of Constantine was of no significance whatever to Eusebius in the period before Helena “discovered” the site by the use of “signs and dreams.”

Helena Transfers Site to the Western Part of Jerusalem

But with the “discoveries” of Helena at the Shrine of Venus, it was the *western* side of Jerusalem that became all important to Christians around the world. The location of the *cave* on the Mount of Olives, however, had been so ingrained as significant to Christians at Jerusalem that Helena was forced to erect a church

over the Olivet *cave*. She called her structure the Eleona Church which indicated that it was situated on the Mount of Olives. As soon as this church was built, people in Jerusalem then began to associate it with the site of Jesus' ascension to heaven.

The actual ascension, on the other hand, took place near Bethany about a mile *east* of the cave (Luke 24:50). On this Dr. Wilkinson comments:

“Where did the Apostles experience this final parting? Though Luke says at the end of his Gospel that it was at Bethany no later pilgrims or Jerusalem Christians ever seemed to remember it there. Nor indeed was it in the place where the Jerusalemites first commemorated it, for this was none other than the Eleona Cave, and Acts 1:10 demands that the place of the Ascension should be in some open place from which it was possible to look up into the sky. The unsuitability of *the cave* as a scene for the Ascension no doubt led to plans to build a sanctuary for the Ascension elsewhere” (*ibid.*, p.173 italics mine).

The fact is, the *cave* on the Mount of Olives in the early references was not connected with the Ascension. However, near the end of the fourth century, the *monticulus* [the Imbomon] mentioned by the Bordeaux Pilgrim was erroneously selected as the Ascension site though it was actually much farther *east* near Bethany (Luke 24:50). The *cave*, however, finally came to be called *the Cave of Christ's Teaching*. It was considered a spot where Jesus did a considerable amount of speaking to his disciples when he was in the area of Jerusalem. What is not usually recognized even by many Christian people today is the fact that the area of the Mount of Olives was where Jesus actually *lived* when he was in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Not only was the region his “habitual” place for meeting with his apostles (Luke 22:39), and “where he many times met there with his disciples” (John 18:2), but “by day he was teaching in the Temple, but by night he would go out and lodge on the Mount of Olives” (Luke 21:37). Even the village of Bethany where he sometimes resided was on the eastern slopes of this same Mount

of Olives (Mark 11:1). Jesus' home in Jerusalem was on Olivet.

It could be rightly said that the district of the Mount of Olives was the "home" of Jesus when he was in Jerusalem. Other than the time he taught in the Temple or the occasion of the Last Supper (which took place within the city of Jerusalem), *all* the other teachings of Jesus near Jerusalem were conducted on the Mount of Olives.

The Messiah and the Mount of Olives

And what a fit place for the expected Messiah (the Anointed One) to teach. It was customary in Jewish circles to call the Mount of Olives by the name "the Mount of the Anointing" (*Parah* 3:6). If one use the Greek language to translate this Hebrew rendering, it is quite a significant sign of identification. Through the Greek the Mount of Olives would be called "the Mount of the Christ." Christians were well aware of this significance. When Jesus was in the Jerusalem area it was on the Mount of Olives that he made his abode (Mark 11:1; Luke 21:37; 22:39; John 18:2). Olivet was truly "his" mount.

There were other things that made it "the Mount of the Anointing (Christ)." The Mount of Olives was also the holiest area around Jerusalem other than the Temple itself. I have explained the reason for this in previous chapters. We should recall that the Mount of Olives had its special sanctification because it housed the Miphkad Altar (where the Red Heifer and the other sin offerings were burnt *outside* the camp). But to Christians it had even a greater anointing. More significant than anything else, it was the area where Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected from the dead. It was also near the place of Jesus' ascension, and the site to which he will return from heaven (Acts 1:9-11; Zechariah 14:1-4). Besides this, Christians saw another importance to the Mount of Olives. Rabbi Jonathan (a few years after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D.70) reported that the Shekinah glory of God left the inner

Temple in A.D.66. For three and a half years, he said the Shekinah...

“abode on the Mount of Olives hoping that Israel would repent, but they did not; while a *Bet Kol* [a supernatural voice from heaven] issued forth announcing, *Return, O backsliding children* [Jeremiah 3:14]. *Return unto Me, and I will return unto you* [Malachi 3:7], when they did not repent, it said, *I will return to my place* [Hosea 5:15]” (Midrash *Rabbah*, Lamentations 2:11).

Early Jewish Christians in Jerusalem would have known about this event mentioned by Rabbi Jonathan which both Jewish Christians and ordinary Jews reckoned as a miraculous sign concerning the holiness of the Mount of Olives. Christians in particular would no doubt have seen in this miraculous event much more significance than may meet the eye today. And indeed they did! Eusebius mentioned the importance of this removal of the Shekinah glory from the Temple mount to the Mount of Olives in his *Proof of the Gospel* (Bk. VI. ch.18).

“Believers in Christ congregate from all parts of the world, not as of old time because of the glory of Jerusalem, nor that they may worship in the ancient Temple at Jerusalem, but...that they may worship at the Mount of Olives opposite the city, *whither the glory* [the Shekinah Glory] *of the Lord migrated when it left the former city.*”

To Eusebius, it was a sign that God had departed from the Temple on the western hill and had retreated to the Mount of Olives on the *east* as the *new* place of his divine residence. This event of the Shekinah glory leaving the Temple and abiding on the Mount of Olives became highly significant to Christians because this was the mountain where Jesus did most of his teachings in Jerusalem (and telling the Jews to repent in his day). It was also understood by Christians that this will be the exact area to which Jesus returns to earth at his second advent. These matters alone show how symbolically important the Mount of Olives was to Christians in the first century.

In the period before Constantine it is not difficult to see why Christians from around the world would pay attention to the Mount of Olives as a place of special holiness. What may be surprising to some of us is the fact that they paid particular attention to the *cave* very near the summit of Olivet and located about a hundred yards to the south and a little west of the *monticulus* “the little hill on the mountain” that the Bordeaux Pilgrim described. But why a *cave*? This may at first seem puzzling because there is not the slightest mention of such a *cave* in the Gospels nor in any place in the New Testament. That’s right, there is no attention attached to any *cave*, but there is considerable importance shown to a *TOMB* — the *tomb* of Jesus from whence he came forth from the dead!

What was the Cave on the Mount of Olives?

Could the *cave* on the Mount of Olives have been the *tomb* of Jesus? There is every reason to believe that it was! Look at it this way. We are told by Josephus that the Tenth Legion of the Romans occupied the whole area of Olivet for the 3 and ½ years’ war with the Jews (*War* V.70,135). The legion bivouacked in all areas of the mountain and this would have decimated most of the buildings, gardens and grave areas in the region. This was especially so in the last stages of the war when the Romans stripped the whole landscape of trees (for almost a 10 miles’ radius from Jerusalem) in order to build armaments and bulwarks against the Jews. Listen to Josephus’ lament about the countryside surrounding Jerusalem at the end of the war.

“The Romans though struggling terribly in collecting the timber...stripped the whole area around the town to a distance of 90 stadia [about 10 miles]. The countryside like the city was a pitiful sight, for where once there had been a multitude of trees and parks, there was now an utter wilderness stripped bare of timber; and no stranger who had seen the old Judaea and the glorious suburbs of her capital, and now beheld utter desolation, could refrain from tears or suppress a groan at so terrible a change. The war had blotted out every trace of beauty, and no one who had known it in the

past and came upon it suddenly would have recognized the place, for though he was already there, he would still be looking for the city" (*War* VI.5-8 Cornfeld trans.).

This eyewitness description tells us much about the terrible circumstances that came to the Mount of Olives and the city of Jerusalem after the war was over. The area was left in sheer desolation! What was no doubt a beautifully decorated tomb made by Joseph of Arimathea in which Jesus was buried would certainly have been left in shambles (as well as all other buildings, tombs, etc. on Olivet) at the conclusion of the war in A.D.70. Stripped of its ornaments and interior decorations and serving as a shelter for Roman troops of the Tenth Legion for 3 and ½ years would have left the *tomb* looking more like a *cave* rather than a resplendent *tomb* of a rich man. Indeed, when the *tomb* of Jesus is described by Jewish Christians in the early second century, they were then calling it a *cave*.

But there was another reason for calling it a *cave*. In the work called "The Gospel of the Nazaraeans" (written in the second century) it was said that a guard of armed soldiers sent to the tomb of Jesus were set "over against *THE CAVE*" (Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *The New Testament Apocrypha*, vol.I,p.150). This record shows that even the tomb itself was already reckoned as a *cave* at the time that Jesus was placed in it. But there is more. In the late second or early third century work called "The Acts of Pilate," Jesus' burial place was called both a *tomb* and a *cave* in the same context. That work has Joseph of Arimathea saying: "See, I have placed it [the body of Jesus] in my *NEW TOMB*, having wrapped it in clean linen, and I rolled a stone before the door *OF THE CAVE*" (Acts of Pilate,Bk.XII). The sepulchre for Jesus was both a "new tomb" and a "cave" at the same time. And there is more that shows this. In "The Acts of Pilate," the *tomb* of Jesus is called a *cave*. "And we saw an angel descend from heaven, and he rolled away the stone from the mouth of *THE CAVE*" (*ibid.*, Bk.XIII).

The Tomb of Jesus

Could it be that the tomb in which Jesus was placed was itself a *cave* that had been fashioned anew into a tomb area by Joseph of Arimathea? The historical records that we have been reading above would suggest that this is true. But there is even more important information to suggest this than the second and third century works mentioned above. This comes from the New Testament itself. Note that when Lazarus (the brother of Mary and Martha) died, the Gospel of John states that they placed him in a memorial tomb. The Greek word to denote that memorial tomb of Lazarus was precisely the same one that described the sepulchre (or memorial tomb) of Jesus. But with Lazarus, the New Testament gives us a further bit of information about his memorial tomb. It says it was also A CAVE. Notice what the New Testament states; “Jesus therefore again, groaning in himself, cometh *to the GRAVE* [memorial tomb]. It was A CAVE, and a stone lay upon it” (John 11:38). Interestingly, the same type of memorial tomb (or sepulchre) of Jesus also had a stone which covered its entrance. And even more to the point, the tomb/cave of Lazarus was located on the same Mount of Olives as was the tomb of Jesus, only Lazarus was laid to rest on the east side of the mountain while Jesus was entombed on its west side.

This is excellent New Testament evidence that Jesus’ tomb could also have been a cave or a type of grotto that Joseph of Arimathea had newly enlarged to make it a memorial tomb (Luke 23:53). He could have carved out the tomb of Jesus from a grotto type of entombment area which was made for several bodies in certain parts of the sepulchre (see Luke 23:53). There are many such examples in and around the Jerusalem area of these grotto/cave tomb areas that have been enlarged by hewing. It is no wonder that the Jewish Christians who wrote “The Gospel of the Nazaraeans” and when “The Acts of Pilate” was written, stated that the *tomb* of Jesus was indeed a *cave*. They must be right. With the strong evidence from the New Testament itself that the tomb of Lazarus was

a cave (or grotto), this is powerful information that the tomb of Jesus was probably the same type. At least, in later literature it is described as being a cave. This means that the *tomb* of Joseph of Arimathea had been a cave or grotto that had been enlarged.

Remarkably, another work called the “Acts of John” referred to earlier by Dr. Wilkinson (and probably written in the late second century) has Jesus talking to the apostle John at *this CAVE* on the Mount of Olives at the exact time of the crucifixion — and even with the *real* crucifixion of Jesus as occurring on the Mount of Olives. As stated by Hennecke-Schneemelcher in their work *The New Testament Apocrypha*, we find that Jesus gave to the apostle John some last minute instructions: “Jesus said to John on the Mount of Olives at the moment of the crucifixion: ‘John, someone must hear this from me; for I have need of one who will hear it’” (Vol.I, p.301). And with this statement, what is interesting is the fact that this gnostic work actually places the apostle John (whom the New Testament puts in eyeshot of Jesus’ crucifixion) standing opposite the *cave* on the Mount of Olives at the exact time Jesus was crucified. This gnostic account describing the apostle John being on Olivet when Jesus was crucified can only be considered a further indication that Jesus was executed on the Mount of Olives.

But this is not all the important information about this *cave* on the Mount of Olives. It should be recalled that the church historian Eusebius (who was himself a native Palestinian and well versed in the history of Jerusalem as well as an astute observer of what was happening in Christian circles at the end of the third century) said that Christians were coming to Jerusalem from all over the world to assemble at the *cave* on the Mount of Olives in order to worship God.

“Believers in Jesus all congregate from all parts of the world...that they may worship at the Mount of Olives opposite the city...*TO THE CAVE* that is shown there” (*Proof of the Gospel*, Bk. VI. ch.18).

The Tomb of Jesus was Formerly a Cave

What we find from this historical information is that there are good credentials that the *cave/tomb* on the Mount of Olives is indeed the very *tomb* (carved out of an existing grotto) which belonged to Joseph of Arimathea and in which Jesus was placed after his crucifixion. There is not *any other place than this CAVE* in the Jerusalem area that the historical records reveal Christians as accepting as a “holy place” before the time of Constantine. Even Eusebius is completely silent about any other site, and especially he says *nothing* about the region of the Temple of Venus on the west side of Jerusalem as having the slightest significance.

In closing this chapter, it would be profitable to see the summation of Dr. Wilkinson on this matter of the *cave* before the time of Constantine. He says:

“Besides the places where events mentioned in the New Testament had actually taken place there were evidently places set aside for prayer. *Such was THE CAVE on the Mount of Olives*, which is first mentioned about a century before Constantine erected a church over it... Perhaps there were other places being used before Christianity finally came out in the open under Constantine. If there were, we have no firm evidence about them” (*ibid.*, p.177 emphasizes mine).

This means that the *only place* recognized in history as being “holy” to the Christians around Jerusalem before A.D.326 was the *cave/tomb* on the Mount of Olives. Remarkably, it was somewhere near this *cave* that the early bishops of Jerusalem were buried. When the cave is examined today (or what is left of it), there can be seen a newer tomb built in the second century directly adjacent to the *cave* with spaces for five bodies. The fact that more burials were made at the cave suggests that it was indeed a grotto type of cave that could be enlarged by later people. And there can be seen this newer extension for five more bodies to be placed in the cave. Dr. Wilkinson does not think that this newer tomb was built for some of the bishops because it is too crudely constructed (*ibid.*,

p.122), yet the bishops were certainly buried not far away. It was normal for high ecclesiastical authorities to be entombed in prominent burial grounds and this *cave/tomb* must have been reckoned important to the early Jerusalem bishops. Did they not want to be buried near the place where their Lord was buried and resurrected from the dead? From what has been shown in this book, this may be the reason the bishops chose this *cave/tomb* region.

What is most significant is that the early bishops of Jerusalem expressed not the slightest interest in being buried *near* or *at* the Venus Shrine in the western part of Jerusalem that Helena and Constantine eventually called the holiest place on earth. The bishops, on the other hand, were very concerned in being interred around the *cave/tomb* on the Mount of Olives. This procedure of the many bishops in itself ought to tell us that something of importance was recognized as applying to the *cave/tomb*. It appears to me that we should also be as interested in that spot as were the early bishops, and consign the area of the Venus Shrine to irrelevance in matters dealing with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

The next chapter has an abundance of *new* evidence which helps to substantiate this proposition.



Chapter 15

***THE NEW
MOUNT ZION
FOR
CHRISTIANS***

The historical records show that the only Christian area of significance in Jerusalem before the time of Constantine was the Mount of Olives, and specifically to the *cave* that must surely represent the ruined tomb of Jesus. But suddenly, with the advent of Constantine and his mother Helena, churches began to be built (and rebuilt) in Jerusalem after A.D.325. From then on, the most important areas for Christian attention became the former site of the Temple of Venus in the western part of Jerusalem and also the low hill that was located to the south of the Venus Shrine. Granted, Constantine had a church erected over the cave on the Mount of Olives, but the other two western regions took on a more significant role than the Mount of Olives. In fact, the area of the Venus Shrine became known as the “New Jerusalem” and the hill to the south (the large southwest hill of Jerusalem) began to be called “Mount Zion.”

This transfer of attention from the *eastern* region abutting to Jerusalem over to the *western* section of the city was accomplished primarily through the belief in (and the application of) visions,

dreams and miracles. The “signs and wonders” were instrumental in establishing the supposed western site of *Golgotha* as being at the Shrine of Venus. It was also determined at the same time that the southwest hill was the place where Jesus held his Last Supper with his disciples as well as the area where (on Pentecost day after Jesus’ resurrection) the Holy Spirit descended upon the first Christians (Acts 2). Because of this, it became common after the time of Constantine to call the southwest hill “Mount Zion” (usually spelled in Christian circles “Mount Sion”).

But before A.D.325 a very different attitude prevailed among Christians at Jerusalem. In no way was the region of the Venus Shrine called “New Jerusalem” nor was the southwest hill reckoned as “Mount Sion.” It may come as a surprise to many people but the “Mount Sion” for Christians prior to the time of Constantine was none other than *the Mount of Olives*! We have absolute evidence that this was the case from no less than Eusebius (the first Christian historian and an eyewitness to what was happening in Palestine in the early fourth century). At this early time, Eusebius was consistent in stating that Christians acknowledged the Mount of Olives as *the new* Mount Sion. This did not mean that the original “Mount Sion” of the Bible was lost sight of. There was never any doubt where the *real* Mount Sion was. It was on the southeast hill of Jerusalem and by figurative extension it reached north to include the Temple mount.

The Early Written Works of Eusebius

These historical facts are found in one of Eusebius’ early works (written several years before A.D.325). It is called the *Demonstratio Evangelica* (or in English, *Proof of the Gospel*). In this work, Eusebius records that after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70, the “spiritual” headquarters of the *Ekklesia* of God [the the word *Ekklesia* is usually translated “Church”] came to be established on the Mount of Olives. A church building was constructed on this mount and it was called the “Mother Church” (the founda-

tional *Ekklesia*) for all Christendom. The information concerning these matters comes directly from Eusebius in this pre-Constantine work. It is surprising that scholars over the centuries (as far as I am able to determine) have *not* referred to these important early opinions of Eusebius.

In simple terms, Eusebius in this early work shows that a building of the *Ekklesia* existed on the Christian Mount Sion (the Mount of Olives) and that it had been there from shortly after A.D.70. This building was founded to take the place of the old Jerusalem and it became the *new* and *spiritual* Mount Sion for Christians. He called it no less than the “House of God” for Christians (using the phrase that Jews called the Temple). This building on Olivet was the “Mother Church [*Ekklesia*]” for those of the Christian faith.

Let us now look at the information that Eusebius provides in his early work called the *Proof of the Gospel*. The first thing that we should note is the fact that Eusebius was well aware of the actual site of the original Mount Sion. His primary identification was the Temple mount. Notice how Eusebius shows this.

“The hill called Sion and Jerusalem, the buildings there, that is to say, the Temple, the Holy of Holies, the Altar, and whatever else was there dedicated to the glory of God, has been utterly removed or shaken in fulfillment of the Word.... Therefore for your sake the land of Sion shall be ploughed, and Jerusalem shall be a quarry of stones, for being inhabited by men of foreign race it is even now like a quarry, all the inhabitants of the city choosing stones from its ruins as they will, for private as well as public buildings. And it is sad for the eyes to see stones from the Temple itself, and from the sanctuary and holy place, used for building of idol temples, and of theatres for the populace. These things that are open for the eyes to see” (VIII.3).

“Their once famous Mount Sion...is a Roman farm like the rest of the country, yea, with my own eyes I have seen the bulls ploughing there, and the sacred site sown with seed. And Jerusalem itself is become but a storehouse of its fruit of old days now destroyed, or better, as the Hebrew has it, a stonequarry” (ibid.).

“*Mount Sion* was burned and left utterly desolate, and the *Mount of the House of God* became as a grove of wood. If our own observation has any value, we have seen in our own time *Sion* once so famous ploughed with yokes of oxen by the Romans and utterly devastated, and Jerusalem, as the oracle says, deserted like a lodge” (VI.13).

There can be no doubt that at this pre-Constantine period, Eusebius essentially reckoned the original *Sion* to be the Temple mount. And the Temple with the old city area of Jerusalem on the south (the early City of David) were then in ruins. Pagans for the most part were occupying Jerusalem when Eusebius saw these activities going on. They were building idol temples in which to worship false gods and for entertainment the general populace were resorting to the theatres. To Eusebius, with the Temple in ruins and the people in the city of Jerusalem performing their sacrilegious deeds, such things were not pleasant to behold. It is no wonder that the Christian pilgrims who came to Jerusalem retreated to the Mount of Olives *east* of Jerusalem for their worship services and left the city to the “theatre-goers.”

Be this as it may, the point I wish to make in my present context is that Eusebius knew full well that the actual *Sion* was primarily the Temple mount. At no time in this early work did he even remotely suggest that the *southwest* hill was the *real* *Sion* or that it was even the *spiritual* *Sion* of Christians.

A hundred years before Eusebius, the great scholar Origen went to Jerusalem and viewed the region. In his writings he always identified “*Sion*” with the Temple mount and *not* the *southwest* hill (*In John* iv.19,20; and see *ISBE* (1929), Vol.V, p.3151). Even about a hundred years after the time of Eusebius, we find Jerome pointing out the City of David as *real Sion* and that it extended to the Temple mount (*In Isaiah*, i.21; ii,3; xxii.1,2; xxxvi; xli.25; *In Zech.* ix.9,10; xiii. 1,2; xiv.5). Jerome also made the correct identification in his New Testament commentary (*Matthew* x.28). But from the time of Constantine onward, it became common to transfer *Sion* from its

actual location in the eastern side of the city to the *southwest* hill, and in Jerome's translation of Eusebius' *Onomasticon* (one of the latest works of Eusebius, and added to and "brought up to date" by Jerome), Jerome apparently allows for the *new* interpretation to satisfy the beliefs of people about a hundred years after Eusebius (*Palestine Pilgrim Text*, Vol.I, pp.60-62). This only occurred, however, when the Venus Shrine became the *New Jerusalem* after A.D.325. From then on, it became quite acceptable for Christians to call the southwest hill "Sion." The Bordeaux Pilgrim even made the association.

This was not the case before the time of Constantine's ascendancy over the Empire in A.D.324. In the period before A.D.324, Eusebius was consistent in referring to the Mount of Olives as the Christian "Mount Sion." This is because the original "Church [*Ekklesia*] of God," as Eusebius stated it, had been established after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70 near the *cave* on Olivet.

"The Mount of Olives is therefore literally opposite to Jerusalem and to the east of it, but also THE HOLY CHURCH OF GOD, and the mount UPON WHICH IT WAS FOUNDED, of which the Saviour teaches: A city set on a hill cannot be hid, RAISED UP IN PLACE OF JERUSALEM that is fallen never to rise again, and thought worthy of the feet of the Lord, is figuratively not only opposite Jerusalem, but east of it as well, receiving the rays of the divine light, and become much before Jerusalem [in prominence], and near the Sun of Righteousness himself" (ibid., VI.18 emphases mine).

This account of Eusebius shows that the Holy Church [*Ekklesia*] of God "was founded on the Mount of Olives." This is a statement of great importance to the modern historian of the New Testament because this is the opinion of Eusebius himself, the first ecclesiastical historian of the Christian faith and one who was a native of Palestine and the curator of the large library at Caesarea. He said that "the Holy Church of God" of Christendom came into being *on the Mount of Olives!* Note that he did not say that the Church of the

Holy Sepulchre built by Constantine was the *foundation* Church (as one would expect if that area was truly where Jesus was crucified and resurrected from the dead). No, to Eusebius the Holy Church of God “*was founded on the Mount of Olives.*” Most significantly, Eusebius made this remarkable historical observation several years *before* Constantine and his mother Helena came on the scene to insist by visions, dreams and supposed miracles that Christendom was really founded in the direct opposite direction from Olivet.

The Holy Church of God on the Mount of Olives

Eusebius, however, doesn’t stop with this revealing bit of information. He went on to say that the “Holy Church of God” on the Mount of Olives was “raised up instead of Jerusalem.” It was a type of headquarters church with its associated buildings. It even became, in the eyes of later Christians, the city on the hill that Jesus spoke about. This city on Olivet was to Eusebius a new city — a new mount, and one that was to be exalted before the Jerusalem of old. Indeed, Eusebius in the plainest of words (in this pre-Constantine work) said that the Mount of Olives was the place where a new “House of God” [a synonym for a new Temple or Sanctuary of God] was built after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70. Eusebius said the Scriptures “tell of a new Mount, and the righteousness of ANOTHER HOUSE OF GOD, besides the one in Jerusalem” (*ibid.*, II.3).

What was established on the Mount of Olives was a type of new city (that was later compared to the city set on a hill that Jesus spoke about) which was raised up instead of the old Jerusalem. Eusebius is consistent with this theme.

“And *this Mount of Olives* is said to be over against Jerusalem, because it was established by God *after the fall of Jerusalem*, INSTEAD OF THE OLD EARTHLY JERUSALEM” (*ibid.*, VI.18).

After A.D.70, the Mount of Olives became the new site of the

“House of God” *instead* of the Temple that was located on old Mount Sion. To Eusebius, that Christian headquarters church with its attendant buildings became so prominent on the Mount of Olives that this Mother Church became geographically indistinguishable from the Mount of Olives itself. Eusebius himself makes this parallel identification.

“His Church which is metaphorically called *the Mount of Olives*” (*ibid.*).

“And *this* mount of the Lord was *the Mount of Olives*, which is called Asael in the Septuagint. And this word in Hebrew is ‘Work of God’...[it represents] *the Christian Church and the work of God*” (*ibid.*).

“*The Mount of Olives* is therefore literally opposite to Jerusalem and to the *east* of it, but [it is] *also the Church of God*, and the mount on which it [the Church of God] is founded” (*ibid.*).

Since Eusebius before the time of Constantine believed that the Church of God was located atop the Mount of Olives, it can be seen why Christians of the time began to call the Mount of Olives the *new* “Mount Sion.”

The Scriptures “tell of *a new mount, and the manifesting of another House of God*, besides the one in Jerusalem” (*ibid.*, II.3).

“The Word announces this to the daughter of Sion, calling the Church of God by that name” (*ibid.*, VI.17).

“The Church of God might be called the daughter of Sion” (*ibid.*).

This is certainly the reason why the Mount of Olives prior to Constantine was the only site in all Jerusalem where pilgrims from around the world came to worship. The principal area of interest, so Eusebius tells us, was the *cave/tomb* near the southern summit of Olivet.

“And this Mount of Olives is said to be over against Jerusalem, instead of the old earthly Jerusalem and its worship...believers in Christ congregate from all parts of the world...that they may worship at the Mount of Olives opposite the city...TO THE CAVE that

is shown there" (*ibid.*, VI.18, all emphases are mine).

Note again (and this point bears emphasizing), Eusebius said *nothing* at this pre-Constantine date about Christian pilgrims from around the world coming to Jerusalem to worship at or near the Temple of Venus (which after A.D.325 became the *new* "Golgotha") or even that they paid any attention whatever to locations on the southwest hill. The only area of interest to pre-Constantinian pilgrims, as far as this early evidence of Eusebius is concerned, was the *cave* on the Mount of Olives. And in this period the Mount of Olives was also being called the Christian "Mount Sion." Even the Jewish authorities were calling it "the Mount of the Anointing (the Christ)." This fact is made even clearer by Eusebius when he referred to the law going forth from Mount Sion in Isaiah 2:2-4. He gave the Christian interpretation of that prophecy in Book I, Chapter 4. He showed that the new Mount Sion was Olivet!

"This law going forth from Sion, different from the law enacted in the desert by Moses on Mount Sinai, what can it be but the word of the Gospel, *going forth from Sion* through our Saviour Jesus Christ, and going through all nations? For it is plain, that it was in Jerusalem *AND MOUNT SION ADJACENT THERETO* (*where our Lord and Saviour for the most part lived and taught*) that the law of the new covenant began *and from THENCE* went forth and shone upon all, according to the commands which he gave his disciples when he said: 'Go ye, and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you'."

Though the command of Jesus that Eusebius quotes was given in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20), no one ever thought that the Mount Sion of the New Covenant was located that far north. This *new* Mount Sion of Eusebius was near Jerusalem. Indeed, he made the plain statement (shown in the above quote) that this *new* Mount Sion was "ADJACENT" to the city of Jerusalem. That's right. It was a mount that was *adjacent* to the city of Jerusalem, but it was not a part of the actual city. This is precisely the description that Eusebius used to describe the geographical position of the Mount

of Olives. He said it was “over against” Jerusalem (*ibid.*, VI.18), and in another section Eusebius said: “the Mount of Olives is therefore *literally opposite* Jerusalem and to the east of it” (*ibid.*, VI.18). These descriptions of Eusebius fit perfectly with his statement that the *new* Mount Zion for Christians was also “*adjacent*” to Jerusalem.

Strangely, there have been some scholars who have read this description of this *new* Mount Zion being *adjacent* to Jerusalem and have assumed it meant the southwestern mount that became the so-called Christian Sion when the Temple of Venus was selected to be “Golgotha.” The fact is, however, the southwest mount had always been within the walls of Jerusalem as they existed in the time of Jesus. This identification will not work, because Eusebius made it clear in the context of his work *Proof of the Gospel* that he was speaking about the Mount of Olives since he made the clear references that Olivet was “over against” Jerusalem, or was “opposite Jerusalem,” or (in identifying it with Mount Zion) it was “adjacent” to Jerusalem. The only candidate possible for the *new* Mount Zion of the Christians before the time of Constantine was the Mount of Olives, and this is the only mountain emphasized by Eusebius in this section of his *Proof of the Gospel*.

The New Mount Zion became the Mount of Olives

There can be no doubt of this identification when we consider the next piece of evidence from Eusebius in reference to the above quote. He said that this *new* Mount Zion was the “MOUNT SION (in which our Lord and Saviour *spent so much time*)” (*ibid.*, VI.13). This statement of Eusebius is one of the most important in helping to identify the *new* Sion with the Mount of Olives. Why is this? It is simple to answer. This is because the New Testament tells us plainly that it was on the Mount of Olives where Jesus lived and taught while in the area of Jerusalem. It was his “habitual” place for meeting with his apostles (Luke 22:39). On Olivet is where he many times met there with his disciples (John 18:2). And by “day

he was teaching in the Temple; but at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives” (Luke 21:37). Even the village of Bethany where he sometimes resided was on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives (Mark 11:1).

There is not the slightest evidence in the New Testament, however, that the southwest hill located within the city of Jerusalem in Jesus’ time was where Jesus met many times with his disciples. The home of Jesus in the Jerusalem area was clearly on the Mount of Olives. Eusebius called it: “Mount Sion *adjacent thereto* [to Jerusalem] where our Lord and Saviour for the most part lived and taught” (*ibid.*, I.4). And, of course, the Mount of Olives was directly *adjacent* to Jerusalem, or as Eusebius said twice in another section of the *Proof of the Gospel*: “this Mount of Olives is *over against* Jerusalem” and also “the Mount of Olives *opposite* the city” (*ibid.*, VI.18).

And remember. It was on this Mount of Olives that the “Mother Church” of all Christendom was built after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D.70 and Eusebius said the Scriptures called it “a *new* mount, and the manifesting of *another House of God*, besides the one in Jerusalem” (*ibid.*, II.3). Quoting Isaiah 2:1-4 Eusebius said that from this *new* mount, the Law of God would go forth (*ibid.*, I.4). He said: “This law going forth from Sion, different from the Law enacted in the desert by Moses at Mount Sinai” would be the “Gospel *going forth from Sion* through our Savior Jesus Christ” (*ibid.*, VI.18). Eusebius was teaching that the Gospel itself would go forth from the top of this *new* Mount Sion which he identified with the Mount of Olives. This *new* Law was to be sent to the world from a *new* “House of God.” What did he mean by his reference to this “House of God” atop the Mount of Olives? Other writings of Eusebius show that he meant a church building as well as an administrative center. In his *Oration* he said *churches* are called “the Houses of the Lord” (XVII.4). This was the common designation which began to be used for church buildings in the early fourth cen-

ture (see *Eccl.Hist.*, IX,10). And after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D.70, Eusebius stated that the *new* "House of God" became located on the Mount of Olives. Indeed, he made a direct statement to this effect. "The Mount of Olives is therefore literally opposite to Jerusalem and to the *east* of it, but also *the Holy Church of God*" (*ibid.*, I.4). Eusebius could not make the identification any plainer.

The New Covenant and the Mount of Olives

There is even more information about the Mount of Olives. Eusebius stated that on this very mountain (called the *new* Mount Zion), the New Covenant had its beginning. He said: "The law of the New Covenant began [on the Mount of Olives], and *from THENCE* [the Mount of Olives] went forth and shone upon all" (*ibid.*, I.4). The New Testament makes it clear that it was the shedding of the blood of Jesus that brought into existence the New Covenant as interpreted by the apostles (Hebrews 9:12-15). With Eusebius stating that the New Covenant began on the *new* Mount Zion which he identified with Olivet, then we have his plain teaching that the death of Jesus took place on that mountain *adjacent* to Jerusalem. As a matter of fact, Eusebius makes the clear statements in his *Commentary of Isaiah* in reference to Isaiah 2:1-4 that it was on Mount Zion where Jesus met his death and from which he was resurrected from the dead. Dr. Peter Walker in his book "Holy City, Holy Places?" shows this belief of Eusebius. He translates Eusebius' words in his *Commentary* thusly: "Earthly Zion *in which occurred* the Saviour's death and resurrection" (p.305, Oxford Univ.Press, 1990, italics mine). This "Mount Zion" of Eusebius is without doubt the Mount of Olives. It is no wonder that Eusebius thought that the New Covenant itself began with the sprinkling of Jesus' blood on the *new* Mount Zion because that is precisely where he believed Jesus was crucified and resurrected from the dead. Once this is understood, a flood of light comes on the scene in recognizing the significance of the "Mother Church" of Christendom being built as a *new* "House of God" on the Mount of Olives where

the greatest event in history took place.

More Christian Significance

The Mount of Olives must have been the most important area in pre-Constantine Jerusalem for other reasons. Even the bishops of Jerusalem were buried near the *cave/tomb* on the Mount of Olives and it was significant enough in the early history of Christianity that Constantine had a church built over this site (the Eleona Church) shortly after A.D.325. And sometime in the second century, a tomb chamber was carved out of the rock adjacent to the *cave* itself (with spaces for five bodies). It appears from this that some people felt inspired to be buried near the *cave/tomb*. Dr. Wilkinson states: "It is hardly likely that this particular chamber was used for burying the bishops of Jerusalem, since it is a crude affair, which obviously existed before Constantine's church. We are told, however, that their tombs [those of the bishops] were at the church, and therefore they cannot have been far away" (*The Jerusalem Jesus Knew*, p.122).

Since bishops were ordinarily buried in the most important church grounds (or cemetery), it is remarkable that the early bishops of Jerusalem chose their burial spots very near the *cave/tomb* on Olivet. The reason for this should be clear. If one believes Eusebius' statements that the "Mother Church" of all Christendom was built in this very region shortly after A.D.70, then it can be easily seen why ecclesiastical authorities of the Christian church in Jerusalem would want to be buried near that "Mother Church."

The Shekinah Glory Retreated to the Mount of Olives

There is also another reason why Christians in the first century were very interested in the Mount of Olives. This is because it was believed that the Shekinah Glory of God (the Spirit or Presence of God) which supposedly dwelt inside the Holy of Holies at the Temple *left the sanctuary* and went to the Mount of Olives and hovered over that spot at the time of the Roman/Jewish War which

ended in A.D.70. The fact that the Shekinah Glory left the old Temple and migrated to the top of the Mount of Olives was an important event to Eusebius. Notice some aggregate quotes from Eusebius which come from Book VI. Chapter 18 (288) of his *Proof of the Gospel* which show its significance.

“Believers in Christ congregate from all parts of the world, not as of old time because of the glory of Jerusalem, nor that they may worship in the ancient Temple at Jerusalem, but...that they may worship at the Mount of Olives opposite to the city, *whither the glory [the Shekinah Glory] of the Lord migrated when it left the former city.*”

Eusebius gave a prophecy that the Shekinah Glory was to leave the Temple and old Jerusalem not long before they were to be destroyed. He said the Shekinah Glory of God would —

“depart from it [from Jerusalem] to the mount opposite the city called the Mount of Olives. And this, too, the prophet Ezekiel anticipates by the Holy Spirit and foretells. For he says: ‘And the Cherubim lifted their wings, and wheels beside them, and *the glory of the God of Israel* was on them [and] above them, and *he stood on the mount which was opposite to the city*.’”

This prophecy of Ezekiel was believed by Eusebius to have been fulfilled just prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. This is why the Jewish Christians just after A.D.70 built their “Mother Church” at this site on the Mount of Olives. Even Jerome, almost a hundred years after Eusebius, acknowledged that the Cherubim carried the Shekinah Glory near the summit of Olivet and founded the church of Christ.

“Here also [the Mount of Olives] according to Ezekiel the Cherubim after leaving the Temple *FOUNDED the Church of the Lord*” (*Letter CVIII.12*).

This shows that Jerome also followed Eusebius in showing that the Cherubim “*founded* the Church of the Lord” near the summit of Olivet. Indeed, Jerome goes further. He states that when the Antichrist comes to the Jerusalem area to establish his headquarters

on top of what the Bible calls “the glorious holy mountain,” Jerome says that this mountain is the Mount of Olives (See *Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel*, 11:45, note Archer’s trans., Baker Book House, 1958). So, the “Mother Church” of all Christendom was not founded on the old Mount Zion of the Temple Mount, nor was it founded on the southwest hill of Jerusalem, neither was it founded at what later became known as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Even Jerome recognized that “the glorious holy mountain” in Jerusalem had actually become *the Mount of Olives*. This was an official change for the “House of God” in the eyes of Jerome because the Shekinah Glory had retreated from the Temple Mount and it went to the top of the Mount of Olives and, as Jerome said, “founded the Church of the Lord.” But when did the Shekinah Glory leave the Temple and hover over the Mount of Olives? Eusebius states that it was during “the siege of Jerusalem” (A.D.66 to 70) that “*the passing of the Lord to the Mount of Olives*” took place (*Proof of the Gospel*, XVIII sect.294).

Jewish Authorities Believed the Same Thing

Eusebius and Jerome, however, were not the only observers who said the Shekinah Glory left the Temple before the destruction of the Temple and hovered over the Mount of Olives. A Jewish rabbi named Jonathan (an eyewitness to the destruction of Jerusalem) said the Shekinah Glory left the Temple and (for three and a half years) —

“abode on the Mount of Olives hoping that Israel would repent, but they did not; while a *Bet Kol* [a supernatural voice from heaven] issued forth announcing, *Return, O backsliding children* [Jeremiah 3:14]. *Return unto me, and I will return unto you* [Malachi 3:7]. When they did not repent, it said, *I will return to my place* [in heaven] [Hosea 5:15]” (Midrash, *Rabbah Lamentations* 2:11).

Josephus and the Removal of the Shekinah Glory

Besides these evidences, there was another writer (besides

Eusebius, Jerome and Jonathan) who mentioned the Shekinah Glory of God leaving the Temple at Jerusalem just prior to the war with the Romans. This was the Jewish historian, Josephus. Josephus said that in the Spring of A.D.66 some remarkable events took place that involved the Temple at Jerusalem. In fact, Josephus gave three miracles associated with the Shekinah Glory and the Temple and each one showed that the “Glory” was *departing* the Holy Sanctuary. In *War VI.290* he stated that a great light shone over the altar for thirty minutes at 3 o’clock in the morning (a week before Passover in A.D.66) and then it *departed*. He said the sacred scribes interpreted this sign as a bad omen for the Temple. It was like the Shekinah Glory moving away from the Tabernacle in the wilderness as a sign to disassemble the Tabernacle and transport it to another location. This may have been fine for the Tabernacle (which was portable), but it was impossible to move the Temple which was made of stone and timber. Then, a few days later (during Passover itself) the enormous brass gates of Nicanor, requiring twenty men to open and close them, opened at midnight of their own accord (*War VI.293-295*). This was also interpreted as showing a desolation coming upon the Temple. And then, about fifty days later, on Pentecost, the final sign was given which definitely showed that the Shekinah Glory was *departing* the Temple as the other signs indicated.

“Moreover, at the festival which is called Pentecost, the priests on entering the inner court of the Temple at nightfall, as their custom was in accomplishment of their ministrations, stated that they first became aware of a commotion and a roar, and after that the voice of a great multitude saying ‘*We are departing hence*’” (*War VI.299*).

This is the testimony of Josephus (who was an eyewitness to these times) that the Shekinah Glory left the old Temple on that Pentecost day in A.D.66. When we couple this information with that of Rabbi Jonathan (also an eyewitness), we find that the “Glory” went directly to the Mount of Olives and in some manner

that the Jewish people were aware remained over the top of Olivet for 3 and 1/2 years (this would mean from late Spring in A.D.66 to about December of A.D.69, nearly eight months before the Temple was destroyed) and then it went back to heaven according to Rabbi Jonathan, and it has not returned since.

This was highly significant to Christians. It certainly was to Eusebius in his early work *The Proof of the Gospel* and to Jerome. This meant that the Shekinah Glory which made the Temple holy in the first place retreated from the Temple and positioned itself directly over the very region where Jesus died for mankind and where he was resurrected from the dead. From that region it apparently manifested itself as a divine apparition from time to time (as it once did when it was associated with the Temple) and, according to Rabbi Jonathan, it gave its warnings to repent to the people of Jerusalem over a period of 3 and 1/2 years.

Now if people wish to believe that all of this was a figment of imagination for Rabbi Jonathan, then they can dismiss the matter (or criticize away his statement) but this is what the Jewish Rabbi stated and I have no reason to doubt that the Shekinah Glory could have done that very thing Jonathan said. At least, Eusebius and Jerome himself believed the “Glory” retreated to the Mount of Olives just prior to the destruction of the Temple.

The Shekinah Glory Points Out the Mount of Olives

This means that the Shekinah Glory went, after leaving the Temple, to the very region where Jesus died and was resurrected from the dead. This was also the place from which Jesus prophesied the ruin of Jerusalem (Matthew 24). And this was the spot where Eusebius said the Christian “House of God” was *founded* (and Jerome believed the same thing) just after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70. Indeed, Eusebius connected the final sign given to the twenty-four priests at Pentecost in A.D.66 with an oracle given to Christians at this same period which warned them to

abandon Jerusalem in accordance with Jesus' prophecies.

“The whole body of the church at Jerusalem having been commanded by a divine revelation, given to men of approved piety before the war [the 24 priests who entered the Temple on Pentecost], removed from the city and dwelt in a certain town beyond Jordan called Pella” (*Eccl.Hist.*, III.5; cf. Epiphanius, *Haeres. Nazaraeorum*, 7).

That does not end the story. Not long after the war was over in A.D.70, Eusebius reports that Christians returned to the region of Jerusalem and that fifteen Jewish bishops ruled in the city for the next 62 years (*Eccl.Hist.*, IV.5). Once the Jewish Christians returned to the Jerusalem area from Pella, they installed their first bishop to head the Jerusalem church. They selected Simeon, the brother of James and one of the children of Joseph and Mary (Simeon was a “half-brother” of Jesus by physical descent). These Jewish Christians, according to Eusebius, established their church headquarters on the Mount of Olives. Notice his *Proof of the Gospel*.

“And *this Mount of Olives* is said to be over against Jerusalem, because it was established by God *after the fall of Jerusalem, instead of the old earthly Jerusalem*” (VI.18).

“*The Mount of Olives* is therefore literally opposite to Jerusalem and to the east of it, *but also* [is located] *the Holy Church of God, and the mount on which it is founded*, of which the Saviour teaches: ‘A city set on a hill cannot be hid, *raised up in place of Jerusalem* that is fallen never to rise again’” (VI.18).

These references of Eusebius show that the Jewish Christians after their return from Pella *did not* select a site as their headquarters on the southwest hill. They also avoided the area where the Temple of Venus was built after the time the emperor Hadrian constructed the city of Aelia on the site of Jerusalem after A.D.135. And within that 62 year period (from A.D.70 to A.D.132) it would have been perfectly allowable, one would think, to erect a church or to recognize as a “holy place” the spot where the Temple of Venus was later built after A.D.135. But, according to Eusebius,

those Jewish Christians were not persuaded to do anything of the kind. Those Christians, right after A.D.70, homed in on only one area in the environs of Jerusalem as being geographically important to them. This was where the “*OUTWARD Sanctuary*” for sacrificing the Red Heifer and other sin offerings was located in the time of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 44:1). Also, it was on the Mount of Olives where Jesus was crucified and resurrected from the dead and the area the Shekinah Glory selected as the place of “holiness” just before Jerusalem was destroyed.

The Mount of Olives became Significant to Christians

There were also other reasons why these Jewish Christians picked the Mount of Olives for their headquarters. When the Jewish Christians returned to the area of Jerusalem after A.D.70, they were able to observe that most of the city on the western hills which comprised the Temple region, as well as the old aristocratic area on the southwest hill and all the western areas that once represented the old city of Jerusalem were now in utter devastation. So thorough was the ruin of Jerusalem that a visitor to the area would never have believed that a city once graced the former metropolitan precincts. Josephus gave an eyewitness account of the devastation. He said: “Now as soon as the army had no more people to slay or plunder, Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish *the entire city and temple* [except a few towers and parts of some walls] but for the rest of the wall encircling the city, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those who dug it up to the foundation that there was nothing left to make people who came later to the area to believe that the region had ever been inhabited” (*War*, VII.1-3).

The city of Jerusalem was completely demolished. On the western and southwestern hill the camp of the Tenth Legion of the Roman army was established. As Prof. Mazar describes it, Jerusalem was “hardly more than a military base for the Roman garrison” (*The Mountain of the Lord*, p.233). And this was true.

Indeed, no walls were left around the city (and the city remained without walls until the end of the second or the beginning of the third century) (Mazar, *ibid.*, p.237). Without walls to protect the city, no region in the environs of Jerusalem offered any protection to people who wished a normal security. The whole region was an open one. And after A.D.70, the Tenth Legion began to construct brick barracks on most of the southwestern hill. With the Roman military camp in that area, who would want to build a church in that region? Or, even more to the point, what Roman military commander would allow a Christian church to be constructed within (or very near) his encampment? This would have been highly irregular if not impossible. In no way were the western parts of Jerusalem or the southwest hill proper places to construct a new Christian church. The Mount of Olives, however, was an entirely different proposition. That region would have been possible, and in fact, that is exactly where Eusebius said the Jewish Christians when they returned from Pella in A.D.70 built their church, and Jerome said this was the *foundational* church for all Christians. It became the “Mother Church” for Christendom.

Even ordinary Jews (that is, non-Christian Jews) had the same problem in trying to relocate their administrative offices in the desolate areas which once were Jerusalem. Not only were all the regions in abject ruins, but the area of Jerusalem itself had become nothing more than a Roman military camp. With this being the situation, the Jewish authorities decided that they had no alternative but to leave Jerusalem altogether. They finally got permission from the Roman authorities to move their administrative headquarters for Jewish affairs to the town of Jamnia near the Mediterranean coast. And that is what they did. Jerusalem proved to be an improper place for the Jews to conduct any further their religious obligations, and so they abandoned it.

This identical predicament also faced the Jewish Christians who had just returned from Pella in the latter part of A.D.70. What were

they to do? It was impossible to build on the southwest hill because the Tenth Legion was encamped in that area. All the rest of Jerusalem was in desolation. So, what region could serve as a proper place to build their headquarters buildings? The answer was not difficult to come by.

The Book of Hebrews Provides Essential Answers

In the Book of Hebrews (which Christians now reckoned as inspired literature), the answer was made plain. It even recommended that Christians should abandon the old city of Jerusalem and journey outside its gates and outside its camp (Hebrews 13:10-14). To be outside the camp of Jerusalem meant that they had to be at least 2000 cubits (about 3000 feet) away from the former Holy Place in the Temple. And indeed, the author of Hebrews made it clear, from his continual reference to the Tabernacle in the wilderness (at the time of Moses), that *the* gate [that is, the *single* gate] through which Christians should retreat from Jerusalem was the *eastern* gate, because in the Tabernacle there were only gateways opening on its *east* side. To go through *the* gate [that is, the outer gate of the sanctuary] that the author of the Book of Hebrews commanded Christians to do, meant that Christians had to go *eastward* — through the *east* gate. This would have led them away from old Jerusalem and directly up to the summit of the Mount of Olives. And that is exactly where Eusebius said the Jewish Christians built their new “House of God” (and headquarters) right after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70. And Jerome confirmed the same thing. There would have been no more logical region.

Thus, Eusebius gave us some very revealing information in his early work *Proof of the Gospel* that the Christian “House of God” (the “Holy Church of God”) was erected at the top of the Mount of Olives (VI.18). This church continued to exist as the center of Palestinian Christendom until the beginning of the fourth century. In fact, that church was still in operation when Eusebius wrote his historical work called *Proof of the Gospel*.

It must be recalled that there were no walls surrounding Jerusalem after A.D.70, and the historical evidence shows that no walls were built to enclose the city until the start of the third century. Speaking of an event in the early third century, Eusebius mentioned that there were then “gates” to the city (*Eccl.Hist*, IX,11). It was no doubt felt unnecessary to construct walls around Aelia (the name for Jerusalem) as long as the Tenth Legion occupied the southwest hill and dominated the former areas of the city. The Tenth Legion remained headquartered in the southwest region of Jerusalem until about A.D.285 when it removed to Eilat on the Red Sea (Mazar, *ibid.*, p.237).

Once the Roman army ceased to occupy the southwestern area, it is possible that a small Christian church was built on the southwest hill and this could have been referred to by Epiphanius in the next century (*Weights and Measures* 14). Though a small church could have been constructed in the region, it is difficult to believe that it could have survived the destruction of churches and other Christian buildings in the Diocletian persecution that began in A.D.303 and lasted for ten years. This is because Eusebius (who was an eyewitness to affairs in Palestine at the time) said that there was a total devastation of all Christian churches in the region (*Eccl.Hist.*, VII.30,32). In no way could Epiphanius’ “small church” have survived this utter desolation of the churches in Palestine. “In the nineteenth year of Diocletian’s reign an imperial decree was published everywhere, ordering the churches to be razed to the ground” (*ibid.*, VIII.2). Or, as Eusebius said: “No longer satisfied with the old buildings, they raised from the foundation in all the cities churches spacious in plan” (*ibid.*, VIII.1). And, “I saw with my own eyes the places of worship thrown down from top to bottom, to the very foundations” (*ibid.*, VIII.2). Such destruction would have included, of course, any church on the southwest hill, but it also included the grandest church of all in Jerusalem, the “Mother Church” which had existed on the Mount of Olives from shortly after A.D.70.

Only the Cave/Tomb was Important to Jerusalem Christians

What must be understood, however, is the fact that before the Diocletian persecution which began in A.D.303 (and the destruction of all the churches in Jerusalem), the only place that Christians worshipped was near the *cave/tomb* on the Mount of Olives. It was there that the building called the “House of God” was built. And this is the area to which the Shekinah Glory hovered for 3 and 1/2 years before Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D.70 to point out where the real region of “holiness” was located around the city of Jerusalem. This is where Jesus was crucified and resurrected from the dead. It is no wonder that the Mount of Olives became known to early Christians as the new Mount Sion.

It is also significant that in the period before A D.303, there is not the slightest mention that the region of the Temple of Venus in the western part of Jerusalem, or the area of the southwest hill, were in any way important. It was only after Constantine came on the scene as the first Christian emperor of the Roman Empire that these western locales began to be looked on as holy places.

It is also important to realize that Eusebius wrote the main part of his *Proof of the Gospel* just before (or during) the year of A.D.303. This was the very year that the Diocletian persecution began. But what does Eusebius describe was the historical environment in his *Proof of the Gospel*? At this early time, pilgrims were able to travel from around the Roman world to visit Jerusalem and Bethlehem [Book VI. 18 (288)]. But Eusebius made it clear that during the ten years of what is called the Diocletian persecution it was not possible to navigate the Mediterranean (*Eccl.Hist.* VIII.15.1). This continued until Constantine secured domination over the eastern half of the Roman Empire. But before A.D.303 (when Eusebius wrote the *Proof of the Gospel*) he was saying that “men still hasten from the ends of the earth” to visit Palestine [*Proof of the Gospel*, I.1 (4)] and that people were then flocking from abroad to come to the Holy Land [*ibid.*, III.2 (97)]. When

Eusebius wrote this work there were then enormous churches found everywhere in the world [*ibid.*, III.7 (138)]. But this prosperous condition that Eusebius was describing in his *Proof of the Gospel* changed in the very year he was writing this book. In spite of the prosperity that was then evident, he began to say that persecution was setting in [*ibid.*, III.5 (119)]. From these historical indications it is pretty easy to date the writing of Eusebius' *Proof of the Gospel* to the year A.D.303. The reasons this is important is to show that the Christianity of A.D.303 that Eusebius was writing about in his *Proof of the Gospel* was very different from that which emerged with Constantine a short 25 years later.

In the next chapter I will show just why the attention of Christians was finally directed away from the Mount of Olives on the *east* of Jerusalem, and why they turned westward to the area of the Temple of Venus and the southwest hill. It was not because of any historical evidence described in the teaching of the New Testament that prompted these later Christians to make the change, nor was it because of early records maintained by the Christian authorities at Jerusalem. No, it was none of these things. The reason for their selection of the Temple of Venus in the time of Constantine was because Christians began to pay heed to (and to trust in) many *new* spiritual revelations which began to come to Christian authorities through the medium of dreams, visions and wonders. The following chapter will explain.



Chapter 16

VISIONS, DREAMS AND SIGNS

It has become customary since A.D.326 for the majority of the Christian world to accept the site now occupied by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as the area for the resurrection of Jesus. The reason this location was selected rests solely with the opinions of one man. That person was Constantine the Great who became the first emperor of the Romans to publicly accept Jesus as his Savior and Lord. Of course, once Constantine became convinced that the Venus Shrine in the western part of Jerusalem was the true place of Jesus' passion, he was able to persuade a number of people that his proofs were legitimate. One must remember that the emperor's authority was supreme and people found it prudent not to arbitrarily question his convictions.

Did Constantine, however, select the correct spot? What prompted him to pick the region of the Venus Shrine? There is really no difficulty in answering these questions if we pay attention to the documentary evidence written during and immediately after the time of Constantine. The prime information comes from the top theologian and historian living in that period. This was Eusebius

Pamphilus, bishop of Caesarea on the Palestinian coast.

Constantine and the Shrine of Venus

The decision to select the Venus Shrine in Jerusalem as the site of Jesus' resurrection was Constantine's alone. There was no theologian, or any council of theologians prior to A.D.326 (as recorded in the accounts we have available), who recommended to Constantine that the Venus Shrine was historically proper nor did anyone suggest that a memorial church should be built there. So surprising was Constantine's discovery to Eusebius that when the knowledge of it reached him, he said that the tomb of Jesus located in that region was "*contrary TO ALL expectation*" (*Life of Constantine*, III.28). Simply put, Eusebius was astonished at the revelation of Constantine. And he wasn't the only one who expressed surprise. When Eusebius said the location was "contrary to all expectation," his expression signified (by his use of the word "all") that no other theologian or historian of the fourth century had expected the Venus Shrine either to be selected. This interpretation of Eusebius' text is not my reading something into his statement that is not there. This is plainly what Eusebius was conveying to his readers.

Constantine, however, insisted that his location was correct. What prompted the emperor to demand such a location? Eusebius was well aware of why the emperor did what he did, but it still baffled him why he would insist that the Venus Shrine was the proper place when the Holy Scriptures and history did not support his interpretation. Constantine had a profound reason why he selected the western site. The emperor believed himself to possess special and superior intelligence that gave him an almost infallible assurance that he was correct in his decisions concerning matters such as these. His conviction that the Venus Shrine was proper was based on evidences that Constantine considered unassailable. The proof of the spot came to Constantine by visions and dreams which, according to Constantine, came to him by no less than Jesus him-

self. It was visions and dreams that were more important to Constantine than what the Holy Scriptures had to say or what the historical records related as shown to him by men of lesser rank than he, and this included the testimonies of theologians and bishops of the Church. Constantine thought he was in possession of *secret* knowledge that even the ordained bishops did not have.

Eusebius was Not Convinced the Venus Shrine was Correct

Eusebius called attention to this belief of Constantine at the time the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was dedicated at Jerusalem in A.D.336 (some ten years after the spot was selected by Constantine). In Eusebius' speech of dedication, he petitioned the emperor to inform him and the other Christian bishops why he insisted on *this* spot as the place for Jesus' resurrection. Though Constantine was not present at the ceremonies (an official was in Jerusalem who represented him), Eusebius nonetheless directed his dedicatory remarks to the emperor himself. In Eusebius' closing statement of his oration, he asked the emperor (as the spokesman for the combined assembly of ecclesiastical dignitaries who had come from most of the Roman world) to reveal to his bishops the *secret* intelligence that only the emperor seemed to possess which caused him to select the Venus Shrine. And though Eusebius was aware that Constantine was utterly convinced that he was correct in his selection of the Venus Shrine, Eusebius wanted to know *why* the emperor was convinced.

Eusebius commenced this summing up of his dedicatory remarks in chapter XVIII of his *Oration* by mentioning the profound convictions of Constantine regarding the site of the Holy Sepulchre: "*convinced as you are by FREQUENT and PERSONAL experience of our Savior's Deity.*" Because of supernatural experiences which so frequently accompanied the emperor, Eusebius made a plea to Constantine that at some future time when he had the leisure to explain more about his extraordinary intelligence concerning divine things that he might "relate *to us* [the bishops of the

Christian Church] the abundant manifestations which your Saviour has accorded you of His presence, and the *oft-repeated VISIONS of Himself* that have attended you in the hours of sleep. I speak not of those *secret suggestions which to us are unrevealed*: but of those principles which He has instilled into *your own mind*, which are fraught with general interest and benefit to the human race... You [Constantine] will, it may be, also detail *to us* [the bishops] those particulars of His favor *which are SECRET to us, but known to YOU ALONE*, and treasured in your royal memory as *in SECRET storehouses*. Such, doubtless, are the reasons, and such the *convincing proofs* of your Saviour's power, *which caused YOU to RAISE UP that sacred edifice* [the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which was then being dedicated] which presents to all, believers and unbelievers alike, a trophy of victory over death, *a holy temple of the Holy God*" (*The Oration of Eusebius*, XVIII emphases mine).

In simple language, Eusebius was asking Constantine to explain to his bishops why his supernatural visions had directed his attention to *this* place then being dedicated. Eusebius knew that Constantine was convinced in the reliability of his visionary experiences, but to Eusebius and the bishops then assembled in Jerusalem it was not clear to them why the area of the Venus Shrine was selected. None of them had been graced with such "secret" knowledge. Indeed, such particulars, said Eusebius, "*are secret TO US, but known to YOU ALONE.*" Eusebius petitioned Constantine to show him and the assembled bishops "*the convincing proofs...which caused YOU to RAISE UP that sacred edifice* [the Church of the Holy Sepulchre]."

Eusebius was Careful in what he Wrote

Note that Eusebius couched his queries to Constantine amongst a great deal of laudatory language designed not to infuriate the emperor's sensitivities regarding his spiritual opinions and certainly not to question the visions or their genuineness. After all, Eusebius and the other bishops were quite interested in maintaining

the top part of their anatomies attached to their nether parts. And this cautious approach of Eusebius is no exaggeration because at this time of Constantine's life he was very stern in his demeanor with his subjects.

The truth is, there was not the slightest biblical or historical evidence to sustain the selection of this western site as the proper place of Jesus' passion. Indeed, just the opposite was the case and Eusebius provides the evidence (as will be shown) which demonstrates this fact. Yet, Constantine's opinion prevailed while he remained alive. And fourteen years after his death a celestial event took place (which I will explain in chapter eighteen) that convinced many people that Constantine's selection of the Venus Shrine was correct.

What must be understood by us of modern times, however, is the fact that the present Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was selected as the site of Jesus' passion exclusively through the agency of *visionary signs* and *dreams* that Constantine had experienced. This is attested by the historian Sozomen about a hundred years after Constantine. Notice what he said in Book Two, chapter one.

“It was no easy matter to discover the Lord's sepulchre...however the place was discovered...*by means of signs and dreams*; for I do not think that human information [that is, any historical record] is required when God thinks it best to make manifest the same”
(*Eccl.Hist.*, II.1).

The supernatural signs and dreams to which Sozomen was referring came from Constantine and his mother Helena. His mother had been sent to Jerusalem for the express purpose of discovering the true site of Jesus' resurrection. And she found the exact spot all right (at least to her satisfaction), and she did it through visions and dreams, not through biblical or historical records.

Constantine Was Long Interested in Holy Places

Constantine had earlier been interested in the “holy places” in

Jerusalem. He issued an edict to his eastern subjects after the defeat of Licinius (about A.D.324) which included a remarkable prayer to God in which he asked that there might be a “restoration of Thy most holy dwelling-place” (*Life of Constantine*, II.55). This prayer showed Constantine’s desire to rebuild the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem at this early date. The edict was taken with such joy by the Jews that they began to rebuild the Temple. This rebuilding activity is mentioned by John Chrysostom in his oration *Against the Jews*, VI. But after the Nicean Council in the summer of A.D.325, Constantine began to have a belligerent attitude to the Jews and he caused them to cease their rebuilding of the Temple. So insistent was Constantine that the Jewish authorities cease their building activities in reconstructing the Temple, that he had the ears cut off of the ones who were the professional craftsmen and the priests that supervised them. And indeed, this put a stop to the construction of the Jewish Temple.

After the Temple was denied to the Jews, the emperor’s attention turned to another project that had been occupying his mind for some time. Instead of rebuilding the Temple of the Jews as an honor to God, he decided to erect a memorial in Jerusalem to the resurrection of Jesus. Eusebius explains.

“After these things [after the events resulting from the Nicean Council], the pious emperor addressed himself to another work truly worthy of record, in the province of Palestine. What was this work? He judged it incumbent on him to render *the blessed locality* of our Saviour’s resurrection an object of attraction and veneration to all. He issued immediate injunctions, therefore, for the erection in that spot of a house of prayer: and this he did, *not on mere natural impulse* of his own mind, but *being moved IN SPIRIT by the Saviour himself*” (*Life of Constantine*, III.25).

Constantine was moved by preternatural forces to build the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. And his intention to do so took place even before the Nicean Council. Eusebius said Constantine had a visionary experience “that a house of prayer worthy of the worship

of God should be erected near the Saviour's tomb" (*ibid.*, III.29). "This object he had indeed *FOR SOME TIME* kept in view *AND HAD FORESEEN* as if by the aid of a superior intelligence, that which should afterwards come to pass" (*ibid.*). Professor T.D. Barnes gives the correct translation of Eusebius' *Oration* (11:1) to show that Constantine was used to "frequent divine visions" (*Constantine and Eusebius*, p.368).

Constantine had Frequent Visions and Dreams

Indeed, Constantine was long used to visionary experiences. From the year A.D.312 they had become a regular part of the emperor's life. From that year he had frequent supernatural occurrences happening in his career. And what is extraordinary, according to Constantine, he never had a reversal of his quests if he followed the advice of his supernatural advisors.

The start of his trust in the supernatural happened at a momentous time in Constantine's life. Just before the battle at Milvian Bridge outside Rome which gained for him the mastery of the western part of the Roman Empire, he witnessed (along with his troops) a parhelion of the sun which appeared to him as a cross in the heavens. He noticed with the cross were the Greek letters (Chi Rho) accompanied with the words "by this sign conquer." That evening he said that in his sleep "the Christ of God" came and told him to adopt the sign of the "Chi Rho" as a symbol to protect him and his armies and that he would ever be victorious (*Life of Constantine*, I.29). Constantine immediately had his army portray on their shields this sign of the "Chi Rho" which became the Labarum (a Roman shield symbol) for his conquering armies. And no wonder, the "Chi Rho" symbol was a very common one that the Roman Imperial Army had long used extensively. It was an abbreviation for a commissioned officer, notably a "centurion" (see Fink, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus*, for many examples of the "Chi Rho" being used as an abbreviation of the officer class even as early as the second century). In essence, the "Chi Rho" signified the seal

(sign or insignia) of the officer class of the Roman Imperial Army, and to Constantine he could easily have interpreted the “Chi Rho” as meaning that the Army was now to be the “Army of Christ Jesus” under the control of Constantine to control the whole of the world. Amazingly, after Constantine adopted the “Chi Rho” as a sacred and salutary sign, from that time forward Constantine never lost a decisive battle but he blazed forth with victory after victory until he became emperor of the whole Roman Empire.

The emperor Constantine came to believe that this “Chi Rho” symbol not only represented the officer class of the Roman Imperial Army but it also represented the first two letters in Greek for “Christ.” And after talking with Christian theologians, he identifying it with the Christ of the Christians. To Constantine, it became a miraculous sign. It was the extraordinary “supernatural sign” (as Constantine believed it was) that prompted the emperor to think he had been divinely selected to bring in a universal kingdom that would recognize the deity of Jesus the Christ and that it was through Christ (and his servant Constantine) that divine salvation and peace would finally be brought to the world.

This visionary experience of seeing the “Chi Rho” in the sky had a profound effect upon Constantine. In the following years he featured himself as the divinely chosen instrument of God to bring in the universal (catholic) kingdom to the totality of the world. It gave Constantine great confidence that he was a special and elect vessel of God himself. And all the battles that Constantine fought from A.D.312 onward, with what he called the salutary sign of the “Chi Rho” in the advance of his armies, convinced him that he was indeed that special person selected by God to bring to pass the universal kingdom of Jesus on earth.

The Consequence of the Vision at Milvian Bridge

Not long after the visionary experience at Milvian Bridge, Constantine began to conceive of himself as a *new* Moses to lead

the true people of God into a *new* world kingdom with Constantine as its head (*ibid.*, I.12). He reckoned that he was the instrument to inaugurate the “new Jerusalem” of the prophets (*ibid.*, III.33). And to accommodate Constantine’s identification with Moses, he had a special tent constructed in the form of a cross which he, like Moses, placed “outside the camp” (alluding to Exodus 33:7). Into this tent only he and his trusted advisors would enter before any engagement with the enemy. It was there that he sought divine counsel to direct him in what he should do. “And making earnest supplications to God, he was *always* honored after a little while with a manifestation of His [God’s] presence. And then, as if moved *by a divine impulse*, he would rush from the tent, and suddenly give orders to his army to move at once without delay, and on the instant to draw their swords. On this they would immediately commence the attack, fight vigorously, so as with incredible celerity to secure the victory, and raise trophies of victory over their enemies” (*ibid.*, II.12).

Constantine was always in the habit of consulting his heavenly advisors and he was not disappointed in his petitions. Things were “miraculously revealed by God *through VISIONS to His servant* [Constantine]. For He [God] *frequently* vouchsafed to him manifestations of Himself, the Divine presence appearing to him in a most marvelous manner, and according to him *manifold intimations* of future events. Indeed, it is impossible to express in words the indescribable *wonders of Divine grace* which God was pleased to vouchsafe to His servant [Constantine]” (*ibid.*, I.47).

And very *frequent* indeed were the manifestations that Constantine received from his celestial advisors. Eusebius said that Constantine’s visions and other supernatural encounters became such a regular part of his career that “a *thousand* such acts as these were *familiarly* and *habitually* done by the emperor” (*ibid.*, II.14 compare with 12). Constantine’s life was replete with visions, dreams and supernatural wonders and they were a dominant factor

in all his major decisions. There was no exception to this procedure in his selection of the Venus Shrine in Jerusalem as being the “true” spot of Jesus’ passion. There was not any biblical or historical teaching that prompted Constantine to select this western area for the location of Jesus’ tomb nor was there any biblical encouragement for him to build a memorial church in that place. Eusebius informs us that it was “not on the mere natural impulse of his own mind [that he picked the Venus Shrine in Jerusalem], but *being moved in spirit by the Saviour himself*” (*ibid.*, III.25). Eusebius simply reported that Constantine selected the location because of supernatural signs given to him.

The decision to build a church at the place of Jesus’ resurrection was made by Constantine in A.D.326 probably while he was in Rome (and after he executed his son Crispus and his wife Fausta and felt sorry for his deeds). As a means of atoning for his actions against his own family (and to get over his melancholy attitude that was afflicting him at the time) he came to the conclusion that it was necessary to raise up a monument to Jesus’ passion in Jerusalem. Indeed, his initial desire to build such a memorial church at the site appears to have occurred to him even before A.D.326. Eusebius mentions that some kind of supernatural impulse had long before inspired Constantine to build a memorial church at the place of Jesus’ tomb. Note what Eusebius said on the matter: “This object he had indeed *for some time* [in the past] kept in view, *and had FORESEEN*, as if by the aid of a superior intelligence, that which should afterwards come to pass” (*ibid.*, III.29).

But in A.D.326, and in a sense of urgency, he sent his mother Helena to Jerusalem to discover the spot that he “*had foreseen*” as the place of Jesus’ resurrection. To Constantine “foreseeing things” was nothing new. As an example of this, Eusebius records that at one time while Constantine was in his imperial palace some 700 miles away from Lebanon, and like an eagle that could look down and see distant objects which no ordinary human could perceive,

the emperor was able to observe quite vividly a foul Venus Shrine in the mountains of Lebanon. What Constantine saw in vision (or in a dream) was a school for training initiates in the religious debauchery of the mysteries of Venus. The emperor was so incensed at what his visionary experience revealed to him that he gave an immediate command to utterly destroy that secret Venus Shrine. This was done as soon as Constantine's orders reached his army in Lebanon (*ibid.*, III.55; *The Oration of Eusebius*, VIII.5,6).

Constantine had Extraordinary Visionary Powers

Eusebius himself was amazed at the supernatural power of Constantine to observe things at a great distance that no other ordinary humans could perceive. Interestingly, no one in the metropolitan area of Lebanon knew that such a Venus Shrine existed in their mountains. But Constantine far away in Constantinople was able to describe the details of the debauchery that were going on at the site, and his description was with such precision that even Eusebius was startled at the emperor's perceptions. But this was no uncommon thing to Constantine. Eusebius said that such supernatural "forethought" of Constantine was a frequent characteristic of the unusual psychic powers that the emperor seemed to possess with his determinations (*The Oration of Eusebius*, VIII.7).

The Shrines to Venus which were located throughout the Roman Empire were particularly offensive to Constantine (as they would be to any decent person who respected commonsense morality). Though Constantine gave an order to destroy heathen shrines in the empire, he was foremostly hostile to the pagan temples that advocated orgiastic rites and at the top of his list for destruction were Venus Shrines. Those sacred areas of debauchery were in the "first" category for annihilation in the opinion of Constantine (*The Oration of Eusebius*, VII.3). Most other pagan temples which simply honored the national gods and goddesses of the various peoples of the empire were normally allowed to continue their rites, yet the ones which advocated orgiastic activities with effeminate men as

priests and temple prostitutes as their chief protagonists (especially the Venus Shrines where such things were commonly done) were especially abhorrent to Constantine and he leveled them to the ground.

Eusebius began to Express Concern

The common practice of Constantine was to destroy the most offensive of pagan temples and build in their locations Christian churches. He suppressed the immoral practices at a pagan temple in Heliopolis of Lebanon and built a church in its place (*ibid.*, III.58). It was recognized that Constantine overturned many celebrated temples to raise churches upon their ruins. Thus, when Eusebius saw the army of Constantine tearing down the Temple of Venus in Jerusalem, this would have caused him little surprise (and even if Constantine gave the orders that a Christian church was to be built there), but when it came to Eusebius' attention that Helena, who in late A.D.326 was in Jerusalem, began to call the site of the Venus Shrine the place of Jesus' sepulchre, Eusebius began to express alarm. This must be the case because somewhere in this very period Eusebius urgently sent a message to Constantine *begging* him for permission to present to him a scriptural discourse on the subject of our Saviour's sepulchre (*ibid.*, IV,33). Eusebius was so anxious to present his teaching about this matter that he informed those who were reading his work *The Life of Constantine* that this was one event "I must by no means omit to record." He made a special journey from his home in Palestine to the imperial palace in Constantinople to present this material on Jesus' tomb to the emperor himself.

Eusebius' Dismay over Constantine's Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Upon his arrival at the palace and in the midst of the emperor and a large number of Constantine's advisors, Eusebius commenced his discourse on the subject of Jesus' sepulchre. All

seemed quite in order except for one thing. While Eusebius lectured, the emperor refused to sit down! Constantine remained standing with fixed attention on Eusebius. This attitude of the emperor was disturbing to Eusebius (as it would be to anyone trying to present a subject of importance to those in his audience). The body-language of Constantine was rather easy for Eusebius to read. "I entreated him, but in vain, to seat himself on the imperial throne which stood near, but he continued with fixed attention to weigh the topics of my discourse" (*ibid.*, IV,33). And up to this point in Eusebius' lecture the emperor gave his assent "to the truth of the theological doctrines it contained," but he still refused to sit down and he exhorted Eusebius to continue his presentation. So, Eusebius proceeded with his essential teaching about Jesus' sepulchre. And what did Constantine do? He continued to stand with fixed attention and he weighed every word Eusebius was saying. Now notice what happened.

"After some time had passed, the oration being of considerable length, I was myself desirous of concluding; *but this he would not permit*, and exhorted me to proceed to the very end. On my again *ENTREATING HIM TO SIT*, he in his turn was displeased and said that it was not right to listen in a careless manner to the discussion of doctrines relating to God; and again, that this posture [of standing with fixed attention] was good and profitable to himself, since it was reverent *TO STAND* while listening to sacred truths. Having therefore, concluded my discourse, *I returned home and resumed my usual occupations*" (*Life of Constantine*, IV,33).

This was a most unnerving experience for Eusebius. There was nothing courteous to Eusebius by this action of Constantine. Indeed, it was an overbearing display. Revealingly, Eusebius stated three chapters before (*Life of Constantine*, IV,29) that when the emperor was in the habit of standing erect at the time sacred topics were discussed he would then assume "a grave aspect and subdued tone of voice." The truth is, when Constantine remained standing throughout the long discourse of Eusebius about Jesus' sepulchre in Jerusalem, he was showing forth an obstinate and fixed attitude

toward the topic being discussed. In a word, Eusebius was being intimidated! And what was the outcome of this crucial conference about Jesus' sepulchre that brought Eusebius all the way to Constantinople to present to the emperor? The emperor won the day! Eusebius summed it up very well. In a curt and matter-of-fact way, Eusebius (in so many words) said: "With Constantine in the attitude he was in, I packed up my belongings and went on home to Palestine where I continued my usual occupations." Eusebius apparently got nowhere with the emperor.

Constantine was Convinced in his Visionary Experiences

At this point in history there was no turning back for Constantine. He had now identified, to his satisfaction, the exact area where Jesus had been resurrected from the dead. Visions, dreams and miracles had succeeded. In his letter to Macarius, the bishop in Jerusalem, Constantine admitted it was a "wondrous circumstance" that had revealed the site of Jesus' passion (*Life of Constantine*, III.30). The emperor acknowledged to Macarius that the place had "remained *unknown* for so long a series of years" but now the site had once again been discovered by Constantine. The emperor called it "*this miracle* as far transcends the capacity of human reason as heavenly things are superior to human affairs" (*ibid.*). In other words, human reasoning [what he meant was "historical documents" and ordinary proofs that most humans accept as evidence] was not the proof that Constantine had for substantiating that his site for Jesus' sepulchre was correct. Indeed, the emperor said that the location was being confirmed "by fresh wonders" revealed in Constantinople (not in Palestine) that made the location certain in the opinion of Constantine.

The emperor simply told Macarius that it was by divine knowledge that the place where the Venus Shrine stood had been legitimized as Jesus' sepulchre. In his official orders to Macarius to build a church at the site which was to be "the most marvelous place in the world" (*ibid.*, III.31), Constantine said "I have disen-

cumbered that sacred spot *under divine direction*” and he informed Macarius that he had “a clear assurance” that his determination of the spot was correct (*ibid.*). Eusebius wrote that Constantine was the “discoverer” (and no one else) of the sacred places in Palestine (*ibid.*, III.41), and that he was “under the guidance of the divine Spirit” in accomplishing this (*ibid.*, III.26).

One might wonder by what authority did Constantine sustain his beliefs even when Eusebius and the other bishops had no evidence of a biblical or historical nature to vouch for such teachings? That is not difficult to determine. Constantine felt himself to be of higher authority in making judgments on religious matters than even the theologians and bishops of the church. After all, it was Constantine who approved the final decisions of the bishops at the Nicean Council and he put the edicts into effect. Eusebius records that “once on the occasion of his entertaining a company of bishops, he let fall the expression, ‘that he himself too was a bishop,’ addressing them in my hearing in the following words: ‘You are bishops whose jurisdiction is within the Church: *I am also a bishop, ordained by God to overlook what is external to the Church*’” (*Life of Constantine*, IV,24).

Constantine was More Powerful than the Bishops

Truly, Constantine came to feel that his prestige was far more eminent than the authority possessed by the bishops. He even reckoned himself as equal to the apostles of Jesus. When he designed a church in Constantinople in honor of the twelve apostles, he placed twelve coffins in the midst of the church. But in the middle of them (with six on one side and six on the other) he placed his own monumental coffin in which he was placed after death. This is because, as Eusebius tells us, the emperor felt that he “shared his title with the apostles themselves” (*ibid.*, IV,60). And interestingly, the Greek Church to this day recognizes Constantine as “Equal to the Apostles” (Hastings, *Dict. Religion and Ethics*, vol.IV,p.78). The fact is, how could anyone in the fourth century disagree with the

emperor who thought himself to be an “apostle” of Jesus? Constantine had such an exalted opinion of his authority (and this was recognized by others at the time) that he saw his rule within the Roman Empire as being like that of Moses at the time of the Exodus (*ibid.*, I.12) and better than that of Cyrus or Alexander the Great. No one in the world (including Eusebius or even the bishop of Rome) could approach Constantine’s “divine stature” in the authority he thought he had.

Eusebius Gave Up Trying to Influence Constantine

After Eusebius’ encounter with Constantine at his palace in Constantinople, Eusebius returned to Caesarea. He now found it hopeless to deal with the opinions of Constantine. The emperor was now utterly convinced that his visionary experiences were guiding him correctly in the identification of the place of the Holy Sepulchre, that anyone who disagreed with him was made to think he was disagreeing with Jesus himself because Constantine consistently stated that it was Christ who presented the visions to him and told him what he had to do. This matter put Eusebius and the other bishops into a precarious position. If they showed from their interpretations from history and the Bible that Constantine was wrong, they ran the risk of calling into question the visions that Constantine relied on. Eusebius saw that those visions were a formidable obstacle to proclaiming the truth to Constantine. Interestingly, from A.D.326 onward we find Eusebius making no written comments whatever that the Mount Sion of the early Christians was the Mount of Olives and that is where Jesus was crucified and resurrected from the dead. Dr. Peter Walker in his book “Holy City, Holy Places?” makes the correct observation that “Mount Sion as such disappears from Eusebius’ map and from his writings after that date.... Mount Sion was conveniently forgotten” (p.306). Indeed, avoiding any mention of Mount Sion from that time forward, Dr. Walker states was “a policy of seemingly quite conscious silence” (p.307). That’s right. Eusebius simply called a

halt at writing any longer that the Mount of Olives was the place of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

Eusebius Regains Courage

About ten years later, however, Eusebius, speaking at the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in A.D.336, asked Constantine to reveal to his bishops the reason *why* he selected the Venus Shrine for the site of Jesus' resurrection. Eusebius was not insubordinate in his request. He said that he and the other bishops in Jerusalem were not "presuming to instruct *you* [Constantine] who is yourself taught of God; nor to disclose to *you* those secret wonders which He himself, not through the agency of man, but through our common Saviour, and the *frequent light* of His divine presence *has long since revealed and unfolded TO YOUR VIEW*" (*The Oration of Eusebius*, XI.1). At this dedication, Eusebius acknowledged that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and its adjacent buildings were "lofty and noble structures, imperial monuments of an imperial spirit, which you [Constantine] have erected in honor of the everlasting memory of the Saviour's tomb, *the cause*, I say, of these things *IS NOT EQUALLY OBVIOUS TO ALL*" (*ibid.*).

It was not discernible to Eusebius and the other bishops *why* Constantine picked *this* spot which became the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In fact the site did not seem obvious to anybody except Constantine. Of course it was realized that the emperor was guided by supernatural signs to pick the place then being dedicated. "These works are the result, to appreciate the *more than human impulse* by which our emperor *was guided* to admire his piety toward God, and to believe his care for the memorial of our Saviour's resurrection to be a desire *imparted from above*" (*ibid.*, XI.6).

To Eusebius there was no obvious reason which most humans relied on (such as historical documents) for erecting the monuments to Jesus' resurrection at the location where the Venus Shrine

formerly stood. That's why he asked Constantine at this dedication ceremony of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, "convinced as you are by *frequent* and *personal* experience...that you will at a time of leisure to relate to us [the bishops of the Church] the abundant manifestations which your Saviour has accorded you of His presence, and the *oft-repeated VISIONS of Himself* which have attended you in the hours of sleep.... You will, it may be, also detail to us [the bishops] those particulars of His favor *which are SECRET to us*, but *KNOWN TO YOU ALONE*, and treasured in your royal memory as in *secret storehouses*. Such, doubtless, are the reasons, and such the convincing proofs of your Saviour's power, *which caused you* [Constantine] *TO RAISE THAT SACRED EDIFICE* [the Church of the Holy Sepulchre] which presents to all, believers and unbelievers alike, a trophy of his victory over death, a holy temple of the holy God" (*The Oration of Eusebius*, XVIII, captials and italics are mine).

Eusebius and the Bishops Knew it was the Wrong Place

In other words, Eusebius and the assembled bishops in Jerusalem saw no logical reason why Constantine would have picked the site of the Venus Shrine as the place for a church to the memory of Jesus' resurrection. The selection of the spot came through *secret* visions and supernatural revelations known only to Constantine. The emperor's opinions, however, prevailed. He claimed to possess divine knowledge, just like the apostles, and those visionary experiences gave him the essential teachings which he thought to have as their source his Saviour and which he considered necessary for all the Christian Church (including the bishops) to follow.

But where did Constantine get his authority to make decisions on such matters? True, Constantine was assured he had the power. Note that he even proclaimed himself a bishop along with the other bishops of the Church, and indeed, he thought himself of more exalted rank than the bishops because he reckoned himself as being

an apostle of Jesus (and in his burial he outranked all the original apostles of Jesus). And to demonstrate this authority that Constantine thought he possessed, he presided (and made the ultimate decisions on doctrines) of the first ecumenical meeting of the Church since the time of the apostles which was held at Nicaea. There was no individual (including the bishop of Rome or the bishop of Constantinople) who held more power in the Christian Church than that which Constantine thought himself to have. But note this. While all this authority of Constantine was being exercised within the Christian Church, Constantine himself *was not even a baptized member*.

The fact is, Constantine did not become a member of the Church through the normal ceremony of baptism until he was on his death bed. But in spite of this lack, it was he who made all the important decisions in matters concerning the Christian Church from A.D.325 until his death in A.D.337.

These extraordinary procedures show how a secular ruler of the Roman Empire (though he was giving lip-service to a belief in Jesus) could completely dominate the ordained "ministers of Jesus," even in deciding on crucial theological matters about which only the bishops of the Christian Church supposedly had authority to decide. And ever since Constantine took over essential control of the Christian Church, all Christians have had to be wedded to those decisions instigated by the emperor Constantine on prime theological matters affecting the Christian Church.

Some might wonder how it was possible for Constantine and his immediate successors to change so effectively the opinions of many people in the Roman world into the erroneous beliefs that then began to emerge? This can in part be explained by the extraordinary environmental circumstances that affected the people who lived within the first fifty years of the fourth century. There was no fifty years in recorded history that underwent such momentous and revolutionary changes in the whole of society than that period of time.

It started with the emperor Diocletian in A.D.303 with the greatest persecution ever perpetrated on Christians and their property (a policy of utter devastation was commenced in certain parts of the Empire that left many Christian regions leaderless and their buildings for assembly leveled to the ground). This lasted with lessening intensity until A.D.312 when Constantine took over control of the Empire in the west. But the Empire was in civil war until A.D.324 with the defeat and death of Licinius. When Constantine came to sole emperorship in A.D.324, and with his conviction that Christianity was true, a new age dawned for Christendom.

With the emperor now Christian oriented, the people who were Christians looked on the new society with a sense of exhilaration. Note what had happened in twenty-five years. Christianity had come from being a despised religion and highly persecuted by the imperial government to a leadership in the world. This success prompted many people in the Christian Church to express an exceptional euphoria. This condition caused many of the people and leaders to acquiesce (at the expense of biblical doctrine) to the ecumenical spirit among Christians which was perpetuated by Constantine and his successors. Christians were now striving for unity and harmony among themselves. It became common for many people to join the Church at this time because of the prestige that being a Christian afforded. People who were pagans and followers of the Greek, Egyptian and Roman religious beliefs swarmed into the bosom of the Church. These people brought with them their pagan ideas and theologies which began to make their appearances in the Christian churches at the time.

Before the end of the fourth century a new type of Christianity had emerged that was quite different from that described by Eusebius in the first part of the century. It was a Christianity where visions, dreams and signs took center stage and where pagan customs and philosophies began to permeate the whole of society. A brand new civilization had come on the scene. While the political

power resided with the emperors, church leaders began to exercise great influence. The religious center of Christianity within the Empire began to be attached symbolically to the new Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. It became reckoned as being the holiest spot in this new Christendom. And, as we will see in chapter eighteen, an astronomical event took place in A.D.350 that the people of Jerusalem witnessed, that made the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to be acknowledged as the legitimate site of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. It was the wrong place, but the emperors and the people were now prepared to accept its credentials, and that erroneous site has been accepted as proper even until our day.

The Dangers in Accepting Dreams and Visions

What actually happened in the early fourth century is that Constantine was able to persuade some bishops that his visions, dreams and signs were proper. If only the principal bishops would have had in their hands the teachings of St. John of the Cross who lived in the 16th century about the real dangers of trusting in visions, dreams and signs, they could have been spared the great falsehood concerning the whereabouts of Jesus' sepulchre that was being perpetrated upon some of the bishops of the Church (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Bk.II. XVI through XXIX). No one in early times has given a better appraisal of how dangerous and foolish it is to trust in visions, dreams and signs than the appraisal of St. John of the Cross. His classic evaluation should be read by all people today who rely upon such manifestations as visions, dreams and miracles as a means for establishing doctrines or religious principles. Such procedures are some of the most dangerous imaginable in their ability to produce falsehood and deception amongst the unwary. Had there been a "St. John of the Cross" at the time of Constantine (with the warnings he so ably presented to the theological world of the 16th century), and had he been believed, then the Christian Church would not have been saddled with the sup-

posedly “divine” teachings of Constantine and his advisors about the need to accept the place of the Temple of Venus as the place of Jesus’ passion. It would have been understood that visions, dreams and miracles are the most unreliable “proofs” for demonstrating historical, geographical and theological truths.

But in actual fact, there was indeed, at the time of Constantine, a “St. John of the Cross” who warned Constantine (and the Christian Church) of the dangers of the teachings that were being accepted because of the visionary experiences of Constantine. But his appeal for biblical and historical commonsense on these matters was not received by Constantine and his chief advisors. Who was this person? It was none other than Eusebius himself! That’s right. Eusebius actually stood up for the truth of history and the teachings in the Gospels. He tried, unsuccessfully, to get people to change their minds. The next chapter will explain.



Chapter 17

THE COUNTERFEIT GOLGOTHA

When it was realized by Eusebius that Constantine had abandoned the teaching of the Holy Scriptures in favor of the information he received from visions, dreams and signs, he decided on a different format of instruction for those who believed in the teaching of the Bible. What he did was to provide a way in which those trained in the Holy Scriptures could recognize his real teachings from the counterfeit.

Eusebius began by combining an oration given at Constantine's death with the discourse that he gave at the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. He made one document out of the two separate works and it has become known as *The Oration of Eusebius*. He provided an introduction to the whole work (the first chapter) then from chapter two to chapter ten (inclusively) he recorded his *Oration to Constantine* as a eulogy at the time of his death, then from chapter eleven to the end of chapter eighteen he recorded the discourse that he gave in Jerusalem at the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It was in his last chapter (XVIII) that he asked Constantine to tell him and the bish-

ops why his visions had him select the region of the Venus Shrine as the place of Jesus' passion.

The most important part of the two "*Oration*s," however, is the "Introduction" itself. It is a powerful testimony of Eusebius that gives his own opinions on what the truth really was concerning the activities of Constantine. Though these two "*Oration*s" are filled with much laudatory praise about Constantine (indeed, Eusebius gave excessive flattery to the point of *ad nauseam*), it appears to me that this maneuver of Eusebius was a literary device to get his readers' attention. The fact is, this style of writing was so out-of-character with Eusebius. Never had he resorted to such honeycombed fawning of a person. This was so unlike Eusebius. And that is no doubt the exact appraisal that Eusebius wanted his readers to make. Anyone who would have known Eusebius before the time of Constantine (and those familiar with his early writings) would have said: "*This is NOT* the Eusebius that we have known in the past." With this in mind, Eusebius was actually saying to his readers: "Anyone reading these *Oration*s should know me better than this, so don't take me seriously in these teachings about Constantine." He gave two major "keys" in the text of the *Oration*s to show this.

Eusebius Provides a Key to Understand his Writings

In his Introduction Eusebius gave some instructions on how to interpret what he was actually meaning. Once this first "key" to his type of discourse was understood, Eusebius then informed his readers not to deviate from that "key." This "key" would show that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as the place of Jesus' passion is a counterfeit manufactured by Constantine. To recognize this first (as well as his second) "key," one must strip away all of his sycophant comments about Constantine that he gave in his "Introduction" and in the two "*Oration*s," and one will be left with some revealing information that shows the real character of Constantine and the actual type of government Eusebius thought Constantine was introducing. Eusebius shows that Constantine and his government were

contrary to the simple teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

Eusebius starts out his Introduction by saying: “I come not forward prepared with a fictitious narrative, nor with elegance of language to captivate the ear, desiring to charm my hearers.” The fact is, Eusebius wanted to tell the truth, but it would not be understood by “the common crowd.” He said that he was “leaving the common track of men to pursue the untrodden path which it is unlawful to enter with unwashed feet.” Yes, but Eusebius gave clues to help those truly tuned in with the holy teachings of God to perceive what the truth really is. He said his teaching was only for those “who are *initiated* into the universal science [the queen of sciences, real theology], and have attained to Divine as well as human knowledge.” Eusebius adopted this method of hiding his true meaning because he got his example from the Holy Scriptures themselves which he said were written in such a “disguised form” (*Proof of the Gospel*, VI.257c) or in a “veiled way” (*ibid.*, 265c). Eusebius believed the Bible was written in veiled meanings written “darkly and in obscurity by some secret and hidden words” (*ibid.*, 268d).

Though in the Introduction, Eusebius shows (with excessive laudation) that Constantine was great and noble and had celestial wisdom with things in reference to God, Eusebius was really telling the initiated something quite different. These are the people to whom Eusebius was appealing. He said: “Let those, however, who are within the sanctuary, and have access to its inmost and untrodden recesses, close the doors against every profane ear, and unfold, as it were, the secret mysteries of our emperor’s character TO THE INITIATED ALONE.” To Eusebius, only those who were initiated would be able to perceive the secrets of Constantine’s character. And who were those “initiated”? The true “initiated” were those who obtained their instruction from “the sacred oracles [the Holy Scriptures], given not by the spirit of divination, or rather let me say of madness and folly, but by the inspiration of Divine truth, [let them] BE OUR INSTRUCTORS in these mysteries.”

Never Deviate from the Holy Scriptures

As plain as Eusebius could make it, he directed his readers to the one standard by which all mysteries can be understood. He told his readers to let the Holy Scriptures “*be our instructors*” and *never to deviate from them*. This is the “key” that Eusebius was giving to his readers. He insisted that only the Holy Scriptures should be consulted and relied on for the understanding of secret mysteries and not “the spirit of divination, or rather let me say, of madness and folly” that was prompting Constantine and his advisors.

Eusebius taught that one should stay with the Holy Scriptures to discover all matters of divine truth. Doing this would allow his readers to discern “THE COUNTERFEIT COIN.” Or, as Eusebius closed his Introduction, “With these oracles [the Holy Scriptures], then, *to initiate us* in the knowledge of the sacred mysteries, let us essay, as follows the commencement of our divine mysteries.”

Common Practice to Hide Meanings in Writings

It was quite common in this period (and several centuries before) for many authors to record information in their works that only their initiates would understand. As for Eusebius, he called attention to this literary device that he thought was used even in the Scriptures and it was also utilized by Plato to record his true feelings concerning any subject if he found it prudent to do so. This is how Eusebius thought the Holy Scriptures were written (as well as Plato). It was one thing to read the outward teaching and gain excellent information, but the wise were advised to dig beneath the surface and find secret communications which only the initiated could understand. Note what Eusebius said.

“But the deep and hidden reason of these things [in the Scriptures] they [the prophets] left to be sought out and learned *in secret communications* by those who were capable of being initiated in matters of this kind. It will be well, however, to describe in a general way a few points in the contemplation of these matters, and to show that herein also Plato entertained the sentiments which were

dear to the said people” (*Preparation of the Gospel*, Bk.XI.7).

And to show this principle adopted by Plato to instruct those initiated into his real doctrines, Eusebius said that the philosopher actually believed that there was in reality a singular God but that he commonly referred to the Deity in the plural when he was talking to the uninitiated.

“But that he [Plato] had a knowledge of one God, even though in accordance with the custom of the Greeks he commonly speaks of them as many, is evident from the *Epistle to Dionysius*, in which, giving marks to distinguish his letters written in earnest from those thrown off at random, he said that he would put the name of ‘The gods’ as a sign at the head of those which contained nothing serious, but the name of ‘God’ at the head of those which were thoughtfully composed by him. Accordingly he thus speaks word for word: ‘With regard then to the distinctive mark concerning the letters which I may write seriously, and those which not, though I suppose you remember it, nevertheless bear it in mind and give great attention to it. For there are many who bid me to write, whom it is not easy for me openly to refuse. So then the serious letter begins with ‘God,’ and the less serious with ‘gods’” (*ibid.*, XI.13).

Eusebius had the same problem Plato encountered. He was also called on to give orations and to write discourses by those “whom it is not easy for me openly to refuse.” The bishop found himself having to resort to this common stratagem in order (not simply to preserve his life, which was no doubt a factor) but that his early writings might be preserved for posterity. Had Eusebius been *utterly plain* in his dealings with Constantine, there was a chance that not only he, but his writings as well would have been destroyed. His historical works were most important for those of the future who would need to know the truth of what was happening to Christianity at this crucial period of time. Eusebius was used to resorting to the literary devices that most authors were forced to apply if they found themselves in a hostile environment to their teachings. So, Eusebius tells his readers of the Introduction to his

“*Orations*” that those who are truly initiated into the divine and secret mysteries of the Holy Scriptures will be able to identify the true character of Constantine and the actual source of his government which he was then forcing on the Christian world and the Roman Empire itself. But to do so the initiated would have to pay attention to the “key” that Eusebius provides to understand his true teaching. And what is that “key”? He said:

“Let those, however, who are within the sanctuary, and have access to its inmost and untrodden recesses, close the doors against every profane ear, and unfold, as it were, the secret mysteries of our emperor’s character *to the initiated alone*. And let those who have purified their ears in the streams of piety, and raised their thoughts on the soaring wing of the mind itself, join the company which surrounds the Sovereign Lord of all [God], and learn in silence the divine mysteries. Meanwhile *let the sacred oracles* [the Holy Scriptures], given not by the spirit of divination, or rather let me say of madness and folly, but by *the inspiration of divine truth*, be our instructors in these mysteries; speaking to us of the sovereignty, generally: of him who is the Supreme Sovereign of all, and the heavenly array which surrounds the Lord of all; of that [true] example of imperial power which is before us, AND THAT COUNTERFEIT COIN” (*The Oration of Eusebius*, I.4,5).

Eusebius told the *initiated* to stay away from the madness, the folly, the spirit of divination and the counterfeit coin and remain solidly with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures (which he called “the sacred oracles”). Eusebius provided much secret teaching if the *initiated* retained the interpretation which came solely from the Holy Scriptures. Note this. When he gave his *Oration* concerning the thirtieth anniversary of Constantine’s coming to power in the Roman Empire, Eusebius said this number of years represented “the revolution of three cycles of ten years” (*The Oration of Eusebius*, VI.1). And then he went into a long discourse on the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 and that in a special way the number 4 produces 10. But how can 4 lead directly to the number 10? Eusebius gave the answer: “The number four produces the number ten. For

the aggregate of one, and two, and three, and four, is ten” (*ibid.*, VI.5). True enough, but what significance does it have?

The Mysterious Chapter Six of Eusebius

The whole of his sixth chapter is devoted to the discussion on the significance of these numbers and the importance of a triad of tens which equals thirty (the number of years of Constantine’s rule). The commentator of the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (vol.I, p.587) did not know why Eusebius saw significance in the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 giving an aggregate of 10, but he thought the concept was probably Pythagorean in origin. He called attention to the fact that Philo in the first century (*de Mund. Opif.* ch. 15) also mentioned that the sum of the first four numbers produced 10 (and that it was significant in matters dealing with creation). Did Eusebius have the same thing in mind? Without doubt he did. It is pretty clear what Eusebius was trying to show his readers what was being created right in front of their eyes in the early part of the fourth century if they would simply let the Holy Scriptures (not Pythagoras) be their inspired guide.

All of those *initiated* into the divine mysteries of the Sacred Scriptures should have been able to know what Eusebius was talking about. It is not difficult for us to see as well. In the Book of Daniel we have an example of the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 leading directly to 10. Using the interpretation of Daniel’s four kingdoms and ten toes (horns) as understood by Eusebius (*Proof of the Gospel* 15 Fragment 1), the number 1 represented Babylon, number 2 was Medo-Persia, 3 was Macedon, and 4 was the Roman Empire, and this led directly to number 10 which was the empire of ten toes, “iron mixed with miry clay” (the last heathen empire of 10 kings prophesied to exist just before Jesus’ Second Advent).

In his *secret* teaching to those *initiated* into the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, Eusebius was saying they were seeing the culmination of the heathen empires prophesied by Daniel in the emer-

gence of Constantine's empire. Indeed, Eusebius made it clear in his use of the number 10 that he wanted his readers to realize that it represented the final number, and no matter how many series of 10's that they would witness in the future, the present "10" (which came from the 1, 2, 3 and 4; that is, from Babylon, Medo-Persia, Macedon and the Roman Empire of Augustus) would remain as a unit and a steadfast empire until that "10" would be destroyed by the Second Advent of Jesus. Look at how Eusebius said that this "10" of Constantine was the final "10" no matter how many cycles of 10's would exist in the future.

"For the unit is the tenth of ten, and ten units make up a decade, which is itself the limit [the final number], the settled goal and boundary [the terminus] of units; it is that which terminates the infinity of number [that is, the number 10 reaches out to infinity], the term AND END of units" (*The Oration of Eusebius*, VI.16).

It was this 1, 2, 3 and 4 leading to 10 that Eusebius associated with Constantine's empire. But it did not end there. The particular *Oration* that Eusebius was presenting (of which we have been speaking) was that given at the thirtieth anniversary of Constantine's rise to power. And Eusebius had a great deal to say about this thirtieth year of Constantine. It was, to him, a direct outgrowth of the "mysterious" 1, 2, 3, 4 and 10 that he was referring to in his chapter six. Continuing from the quote above, Eusebius said:

"Again, the triad combined with the decade, and performing a threefold circuit of tens, produces that most natural number, thirty. For as the triad is in respect to units, so is the number thirty in respect to tens" (*ibid.*, 17).

In simple language that the *initiated* would understand, Eusebius was informing his readers that even Constantine's thirtieth year was a part of the 10 kingdoms mentioned in the Book of Daniel. It did not make any difference how many series of decades there would be in the future, the philosophy that governed the Empire of Constantine would continue until the 10 kingdoms of Daniel would

be destroyed at Jesus' Second Advent. And more than that, the present thirtieth anniversary of Constantine was important because it was a triad of decades that equaled the course of the moon. Constantine's thirty years, according to Eusebius, was under the influence of the moon. Continuing with his discourse in chapter six he said:

“Again, the three combined with ten, and performing a threefold circuit of tens, produces that most natural number, thirty. For as the triad is in respect to units, so is the number thirty in respect to tens. It is also the constant limit to the course of that luminary which is second to the sun in brightness. For the course of the moon from one conjunction with the sun to the next, completes the period of a month; after which, receiving as it were a second birth, it recommences a new light, and other days, being adorned and honored with thirty units, three decades, and ten triads” (*ibid.*, VI. 16. 17).

This may appear as an exercise in philosophical nonsense (and many have accepted it as primitive reasoning on numerology which characterized the age of Eusebius), but Eusebius was telling his readers something in what appears as “mumbo jumbo” on the surface. He identified Constantine's empire with the 10 anti-christian kingdoms that the Bible says will exist just prior to Jesus' advent. And he said that the past thirty years of Constantine's reign was under the influence of the moon. Anyone knowing the symbolic usage of the moon in the Book of Revelation understands that this is the luminary equated with Satan the Devil and his government (Revelation 11:2; 13:5, the references here are to *lunar* motions). The Book of Revelation also shows that the heavenly virgin who gives birth to the man child destined to rule all nations with a rod of iron (Jesus), dominates the moon by having it “under her feet” (Revelation 12:1). To Eusebius, Constantine's “lunar” empire will be eclipsed by that of the true Jesus.

A Further Sign from Eusebius

There is yet another “sign” that Eusebius gave to his readers to

show when he was giving secret teaching in his outward discourses designed for public consumption. Note this: In Eusebius' early works (composed primarily *before* the ascendancy of Constantine over all the Roman Empire) it was common for him to use the name "Jesus" (or its various combinations, such as "the Lord Jesus Christ") with complete freedom and with an attitude of adoration and worship. Eusebius' *Preparation of the Gospel*, *The Proof of the Gospel* and his famous *Ecclesiastical History* contain the name "Jesus" (or its combinations) in all circumstances where it would have been natural to use it. But in the works intended for the general public (which we have been discussing) written after Constantine came to full power within the Roman Empire and after he began his campaign of governing the Christian Church (including its building activities and theological discussions), Eusebius NEVER used the name "Jesus." Thus, in his *Life of Constantine* and his two "*Orations*" in praise of Constantine the name "Jesus" is conspicuous for its ABSENCE! As Professor T.D.Barnes astutely observes in regard to Eusebius' work *Praise of Constantine*, he "deliberately eschews exclusively Christian terminology, never uttering the name Jesus or the word Christ" (*Constantine and Eusebius*, p. 253).

And though Eusebius was willing to use the title "Christ" in his *Life of Constantine* (and only in chapter XVI of the "*Orations*"), the normal titles he used in place of "Jesus" were "Saviour, Lord, Logos, Sovereign, Son of God and the Son." But it is easily recognized that all these titles were not exclusively biblical. They were equally used by priests of the pagan world to refer to their own deities. Though Eusebius honored the title "Christ" (he had a long discourse on its significance in *Proof of the Gospel*, IV.15,16), he showed that "Christ" could refer to many humans (priests, prophets, kings), but the name "Jesus" was in a higher classification to Eusebius. Eusebius said that the mere mention of the Name of Jesus could drive away all the work of the demons, and "every demon and unclean spirit shudders at the Name of Jesus" [*ibid.*,

III.6 (132,133)]. Eusebius called specific attention to the fact that “in the name of Jesus every knee should bow” [*ibid.*, III.7 (136)].

The title “Christ,” however, was not as important to Eusebius as the name “Jesus” (or combinations of titles with it). When it became obvious to Eusebius that Constantine was more interested in his visions and dreams than in what the Holy Scriptures themselves taught (note his long journey to Constantinople to give a scriptural discourse on the tomb of Jesus but he got nowhere with Constantine), Eusebius *then* had second thoughts about Constantine. Eusebius began to see very early that the Christian Empire of Constantine was going to be controlled not by the teachings of the Holy Scriptures but by the visionary experiences of Constantine and those near him. Thus, the whole demeanor of Eusebius in his writing (his style and contents) changed drastically after Constantine assumed full authority over the Roman Empire. So altered was Eusebius’ style and content that one would almost wonder if the same man wrote the later works which were so different from his former. But he was the same person all right. After AD.326, he simply had to couch his writings and discourses in a literary style that only those who were initiated into the secrets of the Holy Scriptures would understand.

Eusebius believed Constantine’s Empire was the “Babylon” of Scripture

So, what was Constantine’s Empire in the interpretation of Eusebius? He saw it as the 1, 2, 3 and 4 (its head was Babylon, followed by Persia, Macedon and then the Roman Empire) which had developed under Constantine into the 10 (the anti-christian kingdom of the prophet Daniel). If one stays squarely with the Holy Scriptures for the interpretation of these mysterious numbers of creation put forth by Eusebius, then one is led directly to Daniel’s account of the various world kingdoms of the heathen that would continue on earth until the coming of the Kingdom of God. Constantine’s thirtieth year was, to Eusebius, a triad of decades

which answered to the course of the moon and this signaled the Satanic power which motivated his government. Thus, Eusebius saw Constantine's Empire as lunar in origin (associated with darkness), and not that of the sun which represented God's (Malachi 4:2). To Eusebius, Constantine's empire was to be equated with the "Babylon" mentioned in Revelation 17 and 18 which was an extension of the "Babylonian" image of Daniel 2. Because of this, Eusebius simply refused to use the holy name of "Jesus" (the one that all people must use to be saved — Philippians 2:10,11) in his later works meant for the general public. He instead resorted to the use of the normal heathen titles that most people in the Roman Empire were accustomed to using for their pagan deities. In a word, Eusebius was saying that Constantine's Empire was not the Kingdom of our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ.

The above indications were some of the factors that represented Eusebius' "keys" (his use of the word "Jesus," or its lack of use, being the main one). This is what he used to teach the initiated after A.D.326. Thankfully, by this stratagem Eusebius was able to preserve his former (and true) writings for us today. If he would have been too plain with his personal feelings and would have objected most strenuously to the interpretation of the visions and dreams of Constantine, he would at the best have been sent into exile or at worst to a premature death, but (more importantly to Eusebius I am sure), he knew that such openness of his beliefs to Constantine would have meant the destruction of all his writings and the world would no longer have had these valuable documents to retain the truths that he thought were essential for preservation.

Eusebius' Writings were Edited

It was even essential to Eusebius that his early writings be edited so they would not be in danger of destruction after his death. It is well known that Eusebius was in the habit of bringing his works up-to-date when occasion merited it. And if there was ever a time to edit his earlier works, it was after A.D.326 when Constantine

began to establish his type of Christianity based on his visions and dreams. Eusebius' early historical works in many cases gave information which was counter to what Constantine was obtaining from his visionary experiences. For example, in no way was the real Sepulchre of Jesus on the western side of Jerusalem. This important event actually happened near the southern summit of the Mount of Olives and not where the Venus Shrine was later built. And in his early work called *Proof of the Gospel*, Eusebius made it clear that the real "Mother Church" for all Christendom was at the cave (which was really a *cave/tomb*) on the Mount of Olives. Even Jerome, a hundred years later, acknowledged that the Lord's Church was *founded* on Olivet (*Letter CVIII.8*). The Mount of Olives actually represented the spiritual "Mount Sion" for Christians, and before the time of Constantine it was to the *cave/tomb* on Olivet (and *only* to that spot) that Christians came from around the world to worship God. But after A.D.326, everything changed. All attention shifted to the western area of Jerusalem where the Venus Shrine had been built by the emperor Hadrian.

Now note an important point. Whereas Eusebius' early work called the *Preparation of the Gospel* was in fifteen complete books (all of which have come down to us), his sequel to that work called the *Proof of the Gospel* (which was at one time found in twenty books) is deficient in its latter TEN BOOKS. Eusebius' books eleven to twenty of his *Proof of the Gospel* have not come down to us. Why do we have only the first ten books of *Proof of the Gospel*? What happened to the last ten?

It ought to be obvious what happened to the latter portion of this early work of Eusebius if one looks closely at the subject matter that Eusebius was beginning to discuss at the end of book ten and the start of book eleven. Look at this point carefully. Eusebius in the first ten books of his *Proof of the Gospel* had just reached the history of Jesus up to the time of his crucifixion. And right at the

end of book ten, which was the very time we need the plain teaching of the historical records which Eusebius was referring to regarding the place of Jesus' crucifixion, burial and resurrection, all the teaching of Eusebius is ABRUPTLY BROKEN OFF. The events which Eusebius had written about concerning Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection (and the subsequent events leading to the establishment of the Christian Church at Jerusalem) are not brought down to us. In a word, those last ten books of Eusebius' *Proof of the Gospel* are missing. And the missing section began at the very time Eusebius began to write about the place of Jesus' crucifixion and the events that succeeded that momentous occasion. But why were the latter ten books of *Proof of the Gospel* taken out of this important work of Eusebius? The answer is not difficult to understand.

The problem was, Constantine had selected a place for Jesus' passion that was utterly contrary to the historical accounts that Eusebius had recorded in his early writings. This historical material which Eusebius had preserved that showed the essential truths of where Jesus was crucified and resurrected was either taken out of his *Proof of the Gospel* by Eusebius, or by later people shortly after Eusebius' death who destroyed the last ten books so that Constantine's new Golgotha (the one selected by his visions and dreams) would be retained as authoritative for the Christian Church.

Interestingly, however, if it was actually Eusebius himself who "hid" his latter ten books to his *Proof of the Gospel* (in order that the fifteen books of his *Preparation of the Gospel* and the first ten books of his *Proof of the Gospel* could be saved from destruction), then it would pay us to look carefully at what Eusebius finally presented to the world by his editing of those early twenty-five books. And no one will be disappointed if one looks carefully. It was in those early works that Eusebius was still able to show that the "Mother Church" of all Christendom was on the Mount of Olives

and that Olivet itself was indeed the spiritual “Mount Sion” of the early Christians before the time of Constantine. And not only that, notice what he said in *Proof of the Gospel* Book VI, chapter 18. Amongst a host of words that the superficial reader would pass over, Eusebius couched four central points that, when put together in a sequential pattern, identifies the actual spot of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection from the dead. At the commencement of section 294 of chapter 18 he said (point one) that Jesus’ “spiritual blood has fallen” in Jerusalem, and that (point two) this saving knowledge would “go forth from Mount Sion,” and that (point three) as the Shekinah Glory (the Holy Spirit) left the old Temple in Jerusalem and went “to the Mount of Olives,” and that from the Mount of Olives there came forth (point four) “the events of the day of His passion, and the living water, flowing into all the world, and to crown all, the Kingdom of the Lord ruling over all the nations, and His One Name, filling all the earth.”

What this conclusion to chapter 18 shows (of Eusebius’ Book VI of his *Proof of the Gospel*) is that (when the four points he raised are put in a sequential sentence format) we have a remarkable testimony of Eusebius himself where the actual crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus took place. Condensing his four points into a simple sentence that all can understand, Eusebius said: “Jesus’ blood fell on the spiritual Mount Sion which is the Mount of Olives to which the Holy Spirit retreated after its departure from the Temple at Jerusalem and that the events of Jesus’ holy passion took place at that Mount Sion.” It takes a careful analysis of the concluding part of chapter 18 to comprehend the teaching of Eusebius on this matter, but those *initiated* into the secrets of the Holy Scriptures, according to Eusebius, would be able to discover the truth without difficulty.

In short, Eusebius was showing that Jesus was crucified and resurrected from the dead near the southern summit of the Mount of Olives. And, of course, this is exactly what the Holy Scriptures

reveal as the truth as we have demonstrated in the early chapters of this book. Eusebius in his later works is stating that anyone who is initiated into the principal factors of scriptural interpretation can know what the truth is in regard to the true place of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. But more importantly, Eusebius was showing that the *initiated* will also be able to discover the truth of the type of government that Constantine was then establishing and it was not in accordance with the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. As he said in his introduction to his *Oration in Praise of Constantine* that the *initiated* would be able to discover what is true from the counterfeit. And to Eusebius the "truth" was exactly opposite of what Constantine was then advocating.

Constantine Took Over Control of the Christian Church

What Eusebius was able to see was that Constantine had not only conquered all secular opposition to his rule within the Roman Empire, he had effectively taken over control of the Christian Church as well. With his visions, dreams and signs Constantine positioned himself within the Christian community as the overall "bishop" with an apostolic rank which he concluded was higher than the original apostles (including Peter) because at his burial he positioned himself higher in rank than the apostles themselves.

Constantine established in the fourth century what became known as *Caesaro-papism* (Caesar is Pope). So different had the Church become from that of the apostles that St. Bernard (died 1153) called it the "Church of Constantine," not that of Peter (McBrien, *Catholicism*, pp.612,825). Interestingly, while Constantine dominated the Church from A.D.325 until his death, his control was accomplished while he was *unbaptized* and *not even a member of the Church*.

In effect, what Constantine established in the fourth century was a politico-religious empire based on philosophical and theological principles that were completely contrary to the doctrines of the

Holy Scriptures and the early teachings dispensed by the original apostles. This is what Eusebius was able to observe without the slightest difficulty and why he explained this fact in his *Oration of Eusebius*. In those eighteen chapters, Eusebius told those who were truly initiated into the teachings of the Holy Scriptures what the real character of Constantine was like and that he was actually being motivated by the spirit of divination (which, to Eusebius, was an expression of madness and folly) (*The Oration of Eusebius*, I.4,5). In the next chapter it will be explained why the majority of the world finally went over to the interpretation of Constantine and his mother Helena that the site of the Temple of Venus was the place for Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection from the dead. It is an interesting matter indeed.



Chapter 18

ACCEPTING THE SITE OF THE TEMPLE OF VENUS

The evidence in this book demonstrates that the site of Jesus' crucifixion was on the Mount of Olives. Even Christian traditions down to the time of Constantine show that the only area revered by Christians as having any sign of holiness was the *cave/tomb* on the Mount of Olives. But the queen mother Helena and Constantine selected a spot at the Temple of Venus built by the emperor Hadrian right after A.D.135. This region was in *the exact opposite direction* from the true site which the Scriptures show was *east* of Jerusalem and the Temple. In doing this maneuver they had to resort to dreams and visions in determining the site (and the church historian Sozomen about 100 years later said this was the safest method in deciding such issues, *Eccl.Hist.* II.1). Another historian who wrote slightly earlier admitted that Helena, in trying to locate Jesus' sepulchre, finally "*after much difficulty, by God's help, she discovered it*" (Socrates, *Eccl.Hist.* I.17). Sozomen also recorded how difficult it was to find the crucifixion site: "It was no easy matter to discover the Lord's sepulchre" (*ibid.*).

One wonders why locating the tomb of Jesus was so "difficult"

and “no easy matter” if there had been a consistent and prevailing tradition among the Christians in Jerusalem that the site of the Temple of Venus was where Jesus’ passion took place? The truth is, there were no traditions whatever to support that pagan shrine as being the proper place. This is one of the main reasons why Constantine and Helena relied on visions and dreams to discover the “true” sepulchre. As a matter of fact, Sozomen related that Helena not only depended on the intervention of God with supernatural signs but she also sought professional human help as well.

“Some say that the facts [about Jesus’ tomb] were first disclosed by a Hebrew who dwelt in the East, and who derived his information from some documents which had come down to him by paternal inheritance” (Sozomen, *Eccl.Hist.*, II.1).

It was actually more than a single Jewish man that she consulted. Paulinus of Nola in A.D.403 gave the following explanation of how Helena uncovered the lost tomb of Jesus.

“She became eager to obtain information solely on the site of the crucifixion. So she sought out not only Christians full of learning and holiness, *but also the most learned of the Jews* to inform her of their native wickedness in which, the poor Jews, they even boast. Having summoned *them* she assembled *them* in Jerusalem. Her resolve was strengthened by *the unanimous witness of all* about the site. There was then, undoubtedly under the impulse of a revelation she had experienced, that she ordered digging operations to be prepared on that very site” (*Letter 31.5*).

Again, one might wonder why Jewish leaders, who had been summoned from around Palestine, would be eager to point out the Temple of Venus as the place of Jesus’ crucifixion? Whatever the case, Paulinus of Nola said the Jewish authorities told Helena that the pagan shrine was the proper place. But if Helena had to rely on the knowledge of Jewish scholars, why would this have been necessary if a realization of the true sepulchre had been handed down by Christian people in Jerusalem from generation to generation? What Helena apparently wanted from the Jewish authorities was a

confirmation of the visions and dreams which she and her son Constantine had experienced. So she called in the Jewish authorities to substantiate the reliability of her persuasions. She no doubt thought the “wicked Jews” had kept a record of the site and had been hiding it from Christian knowledge. And what happened? The Jewish leaders obliged the queen mother with their expert understanding on the matter! They pointed out the Temple of Venus as the true site — or rather, it was one of their spokesmen who apparently had the actual documentation handed down to him from his parents which could prove the Temple of Venus to be the real place of Jesus’ passion. Only this *one man* had the written evidence to support the truth of the site.

Only One Jewish Resident of Jerusalem had the Historical Documents

Interestingly, the individual who supposedly had the historical documentation was a Jewish man whose name was *Judas*. This Judas told Helena that the Temple of Venus was indeed the proper site of Jesus’ crucifixion. With this valuable historical evidence provided by Judas, Helena then, “by an impulse of a revelation” (as Paulinus of Nola supposed it to have been), had her attendants dig into the ground at the place which Judas told her. And amazingly, they came upon three crosses superimposed upon one another. But that wasn’t the end of it. Nearby was found a tablet which had upon it the exact words which the New Testament said Pilate placed above Jesus’ head. Also, some early references state that they found in the same spot a sponge and a reed like those associated with Jesus’ passion. One might ask how such delicate items could survive some 300 years buried in the earth, but the fact that these perishable items were found with the three crosses was apparently not questioned.

Finding these wonderful artifacts in the place which Judas told Helena was the site of Jesus’ crucifixion (especially unearthing the three crosses) was an outstanding archaeological discovery as far as

the queen mother was concerned. But this didn't finish the story. Which of the three crosses was the one on which Jesus was crucified? The answer soon came. They found a woman who was sick nigh unto death. They took the three crosses to her bedside and placed one on her. Nothing happened! They placed the second. Nothing happened! They placed the third on the woman and she was supposedly healed at once. This, to the Christian people of the fourth century, was proof positive that they had indeed found the true cross on which Jesus was crucified. (One other tradition says they put the final cross on a dead man and he was restored to life.) From this time forward, there was no turning back for many of the Christians in Jerusalem and the world (when they heard what happened). But it is most remarkable, and something that has surprised scholars for years, that the great historian Eusebius as well as the Bordeaux Pilgrim (who were in Palestine during this period) said not one word about this so-called "discovery" of the crosses which were "so conveniently" located several feet underground at the Temple of Venus.

These significant omissions by these observant eyewitnesses have caused many modern scholars to call into question the so-called discovery of the crosses themselves (e.g. E.D.Hunt, "Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire," pp.38-42). But the fact that some pieces of wood were indeed found at the site of the Temple of Venus and identified by people in Jerusalem as the true cross of Jesus is well substantiated by the historical details and most scholars accept that something was certainly found that convinced the population at Jerusalem (Drijvers, *Helena Augusta*, pp.81-93, Brill, Leiden, 1992; also Borgehammar, *How The Holy Cross Was Found*, Almqvist, Stockholm, 1991). The reason for the silence of Eusebius on the "discovery" is because he knew the matter was a hoax from the beginning. Indeed, I will show in chapter twenty-one that Jesus was not even crucified on a Latin or a Greek cross. He met his death on an entirely different form of executionary instrument that was nothing like some boards of timber nailed

together in the form of a Latin type of cross we are accustomed to.

The Discovery of the Crosses Convinced People

Getting back to the story at hand, once these “crosses” were found in the very region that Judas had pointed out, there was no turning back for many Christian believers (and this was especially so when an event occurred at Jerusalem in the year A.D.350, some 24 years later, which proved to be the catalyst that secured the belief that Judas was right in what he told Helena). Finding this “true” cross pointed out by Judas also helped to “prove” that the site of Golgotha had been discovered. No matter what people may have thought about the importance of the Mount of Olives before this time, the queen mother and the emperor Constantine (with Judas) now bestowed their authority on the Temple of Venus.

It is interesting that the historical records written not long after these events credit this Jewish man, named *Judas*, with the actual discovery of the “true” cross.

“The venerable wood of the cross was discovered through the zeal of Helena, the Hebrew Judas revealing the spot, who was afterwards baptized and named Quiriacus” (Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, I.36).

It was Judas (a man who was not even a Christian believer) who was responsible for all of Christendom since that time revering the site of the Venus Shrine as the most holy place on earth. Of course, there were also the visions and dreams of Helena and Constantine that provided the first incentive that the Venus Shrine was correct, but the discovery of the three crosses (which Judas said would be found under the pagan shrine) was the clincher! So famous did Judas become in the Christian world for the discovery, that he was even made a bishop of Jerusalem and canonized as a saint.

“The altar in the middle is dedicated to St. Helena, and that on the left to St. Quiriacus, *whose name was also Judas*, who showed the cross...and was made Bishop of Jerusalem” (The Palestine Pilgrim’s Text Society, *Anony.Pilgrim.*, II [12th cent.], vol. VI, p.6).

The account that Judas was the one who discovered and gave the cross of Jesus to Helena became a very popular story in Europe, and in the Middle Ages it was so well known that most Christians were aware of it (Drijvers, *ibid.*, pp.165-180). But what is interesting is the fact that it was the Jews who were *the only ones* (NOT the Christians) in the time of Constantine, and this *Judas* in particular, who supposedly knew where Jesus was crucified and buried? This was in spite of the fact that all Christian records show that no Jews were allowed to live in Jerusalem or its environs for almost 200 years (from A.D.135 to the time of Constantine). This does not mean that Jewish people were unaware of important geographical sites in Jerusalem (after all, it was *their* holy city), but would they not have been more interested in remembering Jewish holy places than Christian ones? And what is remarkable is the fact that only *Judas* seemed to know the exact place of Jesus' crucifixion while Christian authorities (who lived in Jerusalem and Palestine at the time) were unaware of the importance of the Temple of Venus. Indeed, Eusebius, the chief spokesman for the Palestinian Christians, found *Judas*' suggestion to be "contrary to all expectation" (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, III.28). Of course, it must be remembered that *Judas*' so-called documentation agreed precisely with the visionary experiences of Constantine and his mother Helena. This amazing coincidence gave the "historical evidence" of *Judas* (handed down supposedly from his parents) a notable ring of truth (as understood through the spiritual principles accepted by many Christians living at the time).

Judas Deceived the Queen Mother

This brings up a significant point to consider. We should ask a question about this *Judas* (the only man in Palestine who supposedly had any documentation on the matter of Jesus' crucifixion). Could it be that *Judas* pointed out the Temple of Venus as the place of Jesus' crucifixion for a particular reason? Christian authorities (including Eusebius) did not possess any historical knowledge that

would support the site of the Venus Shrine. In fact, Eusebius showed that the Christian “Mount Sion” before the time of Constantine’s exaltation in A.D.324 was actually the Mount of Olives and that the summit of Olivet was, in reality, the place of Jesus’ crucifixion. Since this is the case, it may mean that Helena, the mother of Constantine (and even Constantine himself), was deliberately deceived by this man called Judas concerning this *new* site for Jesus’ crucifixion. The fact is, Judas may have had definite reasons for misleading them. (This point will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.) Whatever the case, practically the whole Christian world went over to the belief that the place selected by Judas (along with the visions and dreams of Constantine and Helena) was indeed the correct site for Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. This belief was further strengthened because of an event that occurred in Jerusalem in the late Spring of A.D.350. Let us now look at that occurrence which clinched Christian belief that the true site of Jesus’ passion had now been discovered anew in the western part of Jerusalem at the Temple of Venus.

Proof Positive Evidence from Heaven

In the year A.D.350, Cyril became bishop of Jerusalem. And at the very beginning of his bishopric (on May 7th) a most significant celestial phenomenon occurred in the skies over Jerusalem. So elated was Cyril at the event that he immediately dispatched a letter to the emperor Constantius (the son of Constantine) to tell him of the wondrous sign given to the people of Jerusalem. What all the people saw was a parhelion of the sun which astonished the whole population of the city. Here is what Cyril said:

“During these holy days of the holy Paschal [Passover] season, on the Nones of May [May 7th] at about nine in the morning, a gigantic luminous cross was seen in the sky above holy Golgotha, extending as far as the holy Mount of Olives; not seen by one or two only, but clearly visible to the whole population of the city; nor, as might be expected, quickly vanishing like an optical illusion, but suspended for several hours above the earth in the gener-

al sight of all and by its dazzling display conquering even the rays of the sun” (Cyril, *Letter to Constantius* 4).

This was a normal parhelion of the sun which is a well-known type of halo phenomenon seen at various times when cirrus (ice crystal) clouds are in evidence in the upper atmosphere. Almost always one observes a large circle of 22 degrees width, but in the interior of the halo there is often a refraction of light that gives the appearance of a cross in the heavens. This is a very normal circumstance that is easily explained. As Van Nostrand’s *Scientific Encyclopedia* states: “Much supernatural lore was built by such displays by the ancients” (p.228). But these phenomena are quite normal. From the years 1950 to 1954 my job was in the Air Weather Service of the United States Air Force (I was sent by the United States government to the University of New Mexico to become a meteorologist, which profession I would still be in today had I not taken an interest in biblical history). These displays of solar activity in the form of various types of halos are quite common and there need be nothing supernatural about any of them.

Of course, these natural phenomena were not understood properly by the ancients and they almost always thought them to be a sign from God (or from some supernatural being) that something special and significant was being given to mankind. Constantine just before his battle at Milvian Bridge saw such a parhelion (with the same type of optical effect of a “cross” seen in the sky). But to Cyril and the people of Jerusalem, it seemed completely providential that this same type of solar halo as formerly seen by the emperor Constantine had now happened in the skies over Jerusalem in the late Spring of A.D.350. So spectacular was this parhelion to Cyril that he immediately came to the conclusion that God was now vindicating the *new* site of “Golgotha” that had been pointed out by Judas (and the visions of Constantine and his mother Helena). And though Cyril did not mention it, there must have been in his mind the similarity of this *type* of heavenly display that “God” had appar-

ently given to Constantine. The comparison must have seemed too close to be a mere coincidence. Whatever the case, in the mind of Cyril and the Christian people of Jerusalem, the true site of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection had now been properly identified from heaven itself. The site had been vindicated by this heavenly sign.

Heavenly Approved of the New Golgotha

To Cyril, and the people of Jerusalem, this heavenly display was proof positive that the *new* site for "Golgotha" was correct. And even though there was not the slightest historical or geographical evidence to support this supposition, this celestial halo (in the form of a cross that stretched from the former Temple of Venus up to the Mount of Olives) was the final evidence that they needed that Constantine's "Golgotha" was proper. After all, it was considered profane to argue with heaven.

This was the "heavenly sign" for proving the true site of "Golgotha" that the people of Jerusalem were waiting for and they got it on May 7th, A.D.350. With this "heavenly approval" there remained no doubt in the minds of Christians in Jerusalem that they had found the true site of the passion of Jesus. Constantine, Helena and Judas had won the day. And from then on, there was no turning back for the majority of Christian opinion. From the time of Constantine on, visions, signs and dreams became the official criterion of the Christian Church for the establishment of important biblical sites and artifacts in the Holyland. Look at the following evidence that proves this point.

Visions, Signs and Dreams

If there was ever a time in history when visions, signs and dreams were used to locate holy places and the long lost tombs of prophets, etc., it was the fourth century. Such "miraculous" events were held in much higher esteem than documentary evidence written by humans which was found in the historical records. The principal authors of the fourth century (and at the beginning of the fifth)

were Cyril, Socrates, Theodoret, Evagrius and Sozomen. The latter historian could serve as their spokesman when speaking of Jesus' crucifixion.

“The place was *discovered*, and the fraud about it so zealously maintained was detected [the “fraud” was supposedly done by Hadrian who covered up the site with the Venus Shrine]; some say that the facts were first disclosed by a Hebrew who dwelt in the East, and who derived his information *from some documents* which had come to him by parental inheritance; but it seems more accordant with truth to suppose that God revealed the fact *by means of signs and dreams*; *FOR I DO NOT THINK that human information is required* when God thinks it best to make manifest the same” (*Hist.*, II.1).

To people of the fourth century, historical evidence went by the wayside as important in determining geographical sites associated with Jesus, the apostles and the earlier prophets. Dreams, visions and miraculous signs had come into vogue in finding such important sites (as well as artifacts accompanying the holy men of the Old and New Testaments). As an example of this, notice how the tombs of Micah and Habakkuk of the Old Testament were discovered.

“The relics of the proto-prophets, Habakkuk, and a little while after, Micah, were brought to light about this time. As I understand, God made known the place where both these bodies were deposited *by a divine vision in a dream to Zebennus*, who was then acting as bishop of Eleutheropolis” (Sozomen, *Hist.*, VII.29).

But this did not stop the wonderful discoveries. The people of the time were able to locate the tomb of Zechariah the prophet and the New Testament martyr Stephen.

“Among other relics, those of Zechariah, the very ancient prophet, and of Stephen, who was ordained deacon by the apostles, were discovered; and it seems incumbent on me to describe the mode, *since the discovery of each was marvelous and divine*...the prophet stood beside him *in a dream* and manifested himself” (*ibid.*, ch.2).

There is even more. In chapter two of this section just quoted, Sozomen shows how the empress Pulcheria beheld a vision of forty early martyrs who disclosed the whereabouts of their graves and they were discovered where her vision informed her. “Then the princess returned thanks to God for having accounted her worthy of so great a manifestation and for attaining the discovery of the holy relics” (bk.IX, ch.2).

Multitudes of Relics Discovered Miraculously

But this did not end the matter. By dreams, visions and signs to various people at the end of the fourth century, almost every artifact associated with Jesus, the apostles and the prophets of old was “miraculously” discovered for people to adore and to treasure for their wondrous powers and effects. Notice this. The people of the fourth century found the very column to which Jesus was bound when he was whipped by the Roman soldiers, the anointing horn for consecrating the kings of ancient Israel, the lance that pierced Jesus’ side, the stones that stoned Stephen, the stone on which the cock stood when it crowed before Peter at Jesus’ trial, the chalice used by the apostles at the last supper, the tomb and the skull of Adam which were located at the *new* Golgotha selected by Constantine, Helena and Judas (e.g. Hoade, *Guide to the Holy Land*, p.306).

The “discoveries” even went beyond these just mentioned. Great miracles began to happen in regard to the “true” cross that was pointed out by Judas. It wasn’t long until pieces of it were sent to all parts of the Christian world (Cyril, *Cat.* xiii.3). And what is most remarkable, the “true” cross had the unusual powers, so the story goes, of replenishing itself when pieces of it were sent to individuals or to churches throughout the world. So many pieces of this “true” cross were “supernaturally” multiplied that John Calvin in his time estimated that 300 men could not carry all the fragments. Indeed, virtually *every* item minutely associated with Jesus, the apostles or other biblical personalities was “discovered” and placed

in churches over the world — including even milk from Mary’s breasts and several foreskins of our Lord (*Ency.Rel.Ethics*, vol.X,pp.653-658).

Pious Frauds Used Extensively

All rational people today realize that all such “discoveries” are nothing more than pious frauds. But what needs to be recognized is that the so-called “true” cross was equally spurious. This is especially true since it can be demonstrated (as we will show in a later chapter) that Jesus was not even crucified on a Latin or Greek cross. People should realize that Judas Quiriacus was simply an opportunist and they should have dismissed his so-called “discovery” of the cross of Jesus. But that was an age of credulity — when dreams, visions and signs ruled the day. The common people, and even theologians, began to accept the evidence afforded by this great outpouring of “miracles” in the fourth century, and to the people living at the time such supernatural occurrences proved to be of more authority in locating Christian holy places and artifacts than historical documents.

If people would have, as Eusebius suggested to his readers, depended upon the teachings of the Holy Scriptures to be their guide in determining these matters than the visions, dreams and signs which were replete at the time, then the world would not have been subjected to the hoax provided by Judas Quiriacus to satisfy the “visions and dreams” of Constantine and his mother Helena. In actual fact, if people in the fourth century would have paid proper attention to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, it would have been understood that “visions and dreams” are not always the vehicles by which divine truths are revealed to mankind. The prophet Ezekiel chastised the prophets of Israel who came in the name of Yahweh (the true God of Israel). Ezekiel called the majority of prophets in Israel as “foolish prophets” because they were depending on lying divination (Ezekiel 13:3-6). Such lying prophets were seeing numerous *visions* to substantiate their claims of representing

God (Yahweh himself). Ezekiel was angry with the teachings of these prophets. He said that Yahweh was against “the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem and which *SEE VISIONS* of peace for her, and there is not peace, saith the Lord God” (Ezekiel 13:16).

To the prophet Ezekiel the prophets of Israel were seeing many visions (and they were all showing peace for Israel) and he was condemning them for their *visions* which were not true. What we find in the scriptural revelation is that it is not always wise to trust in the visionary experiences of individuals, especially if those supernatural manifestations lead people away from the simple historical and geographical teachings afforded by the biblical revelation. Moses even commanded Israel to have nothing to do with “dreamers of dreams” and “miracle workers” who directed people away from the true worship of God (Deuteronomy 13:1-5). And Jesus was equally adamant that even people who came in his name (and doing wondrous signs and uttering prophecies) were not necessarily his representatives (Matthew 7:21-23). It was considered essential by Jesus and the apostles that people tell the truth in matters concerning the teaching of Christianity (John 17:17).

Christians became Convinced of Visions, Dreams and Miracles

If only the Christian Church at that time would have had (and believed) the later teachings that St. John of the Cross, given in the 16th century about the dangers of trusting in visions, dreams and miracles, the Church of the fourth century would have been spared the nonsense that Constantine and his advisors were forcing on the Christian Church. And let me state once again, the teaching of St. John of the Cross on the perils of trusting in visions, dreams and miracles to establish essential truths of the Gospel is one of the most important discourses on the subject. Anyone desiring to believe such “divine evidences” should read (and with utmost attention) what St. John of the Cross said (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*,

Book II, XVI to XXIX). The only reason I mention his teachings on these matters is that they have *never* been improved on to this day. True, the visions given in the Old and New Testaments are valid, but St. John of the Cross shows *how* they are true and also *how* so many visions, dreams and miraculous signs since the time of the apostles have led people into the most profound errors that can be imagined. Constantine's visions are an example.

What St. John of the Cross said (as well as Eusebius in the fourth century) is that the teachings found in the biblical revelation can always be relied upon. Eusebius tried to tell his readers that those who trust implicitly and explicitly in the Holy Scriptures will have the real "key" to comprehend all essential truths that have been given to mankind by the Father and Christ Jesus. What the New Testament actually shows is that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives. And Eusebius (before Constantine began to assert his visionary authority in determining religious sites) showed that the Mount of Olives was not only the place of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, but it was also where the "House of God" (the headquarters church of Jerusalem) was built right after A.D.70. Eusebius indicated as well that the Mount of Olives was the new (and spiritual) Mount Sion for Christians. No wonder Eusebius said nothing about the discovery of the "true" cross which was found under the Shrine of Venus (as disclosed by Judas Quiriacus) because he knew it was a hoax concocted by Judas from the very beginning.

Indeed, even if one accepted the parhelion as observed by the people of Jerusalem on May 7th, A.D.350 as a divine sign (in which a cross was seen stretching from the newly discovered "Golgotha" to the Mount of Olives), it could just as well have been interpreted that God was telling the people to abandon the *new* "Golgotha" located in the western part of Jerusalem and return to the true site of the crucifixion on the Mount of Olives! Be this as it may, Cyril (the bishop of Jerusalem) decided that the parhelion was

a wonder from heaven that the *newly* selected “Golgotha” was correct. This prompted him to deliver a sermon in the *new* Church of the Holy Sepulchre that would demonstrate that the *new* site was proper. The biblical evidence he gave was a mystical interpretation of the Song of Songs (the scriptural song written by King Solomon). He felt that the evidence for the *new* location for Jesus’ crucifixion had long been hidden in that book written almost 1000 years before the birth of Jesus (see Parrot’s *Golgotha and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre*, pp.56,57 for more information on this interesting point). The truth is, however, Cyril did not have any substantial proof from history or the Bible that the former Temple of Venus was the real site for Jesus’ crucifixion.

What this means is that visions, dreams and signs were the determining factors in convincing Christians in the middle and later fourth century that the *new* “Golgotha” of Constantine, Helena and Judas Quiriacus was correct. Sound historical and geographical proofs given in the New Testament and later documents were substituted for “supernatural proofs” and people in the world have been subjected to the teachings of Constantine ever since.

In the next chapter we will show why Judas Quiriacus (and especially the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem) pointed out the Temple of Venus as the place of Jesus’ passion. There was an important reason why this was done. It was one of the most clever subterfuges ever accomplished and the deception has held fast unto our modern times.



Chapter 19

WHY THE TEMPLE OF VENUS?

The main attraction to objective historians today that there may be a kernel of truth in believing that the Temple of Venus in Jerusalem stood over the former site of Jesus' crucifixion is because they think it reasonable that people living in Jerusalem from A.D.70 to A.D.326 would have retained numerous traditions that *this* was the true site. This belief, on the surface, makes perfectly good sense. But what many scholars have not considered are the teachings of Eusebius that in the pre-Constantine period it was common for Christians to call the Mount of Olives the *spiritual* Mount Sion; also that Christians from around the world came to visit the *tomb/cave* on the Mount of Olives (and no other site in Jerusalem was indicated as having any significance); that the "House of God" (the headquarters church for Jerusalem) was located on the Mount of Olives until it was destroyed in the Diocletian persecution beginning in A.D.303; and that Eusebius said the Shekinah Glory of God left the old Temple at Jerusalem and went to the top of the Mount of Olives just before the destruction of the city in A.D.70. Eusebius said *nothing* (nor did anyone else) about the Temple of Venus site. In actual fact, *before* the time of

Constantine, the *only* place in the Jerusalem area that was sanctified as being important in Christian tradition was the *tomb/cave* near the southern summit of Olivet.

While Eusebius said that by the early third century there was a trend for people to journey to Palestine “to examine the historic sites” (*Eccl.Hist.* 6:11), we have no evidence that people saw any efficaciousness in the sites themselves, or that they would afford some spiritual benefit to the people who attended them. In the New Testament and the writings of the Apostolic Fathers in the second century, there is no evidence that Christians saw any special significance to the sites associated with Jesus or the apostles. But with the time of Constantine, all that changed drastically. We find that the places (or artifacts) supposedly associated with people of the biblical period began to take on unique spiritual and physical powers in themselves. People then began to journey to the Holyland to worship at what became known as the “holy places.” It even went further than that. The places themselves began to take on a sanctification and “miracles” became associated with the sites and with certain artifacts connected with the holy men of old. Christians then started to visit the “holy places” for the spiritual amenities that the sites themselves could afford.

Interest in Holy Places in Palestine Began with Constantine

This all commenced in the time of Constantine and the ardor has not diminished to this day. Indeed, wars and arguments have taken place over the past 1500 years to secure in proper hands the custodianship of those “holy places.” One of the main reasons for the Crusades (which dominated the activities of most European nations from A.D.1096 to 1291) was to recapture and put in Christian hands these sacred areas in Palestine — this especially applied to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre that Constantine selected as the spot of Jesus’ crucifixion. Such interest did not abate even with the failure of the Crusades to secure proper guardianship over the areas sanctified since the time of Constantine. As late as the middle of the

last century there were many disputes concerning the “holy places” between European nations and the Turks (who were then controlling Jerusalem). The main contention concerned who had the authority to protect and supervise these revered areas in Jerusalem — and, again, this particularly applied to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. So heated did the arguments become (especially when the Czar of Russia began to express his divine right to be protector of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre) that major hostilities broke out between the claimants and the conflict became known as the Crimean War. England, France and Turkey went to war with the Russians over who had the right to the “keys” that opened the doors to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The cause of that war can be deduced to that trivial matter, yet the “keys” represented a powerful interpretation of just who were the people God had chosen.

Though the war was concluded in a little over a year, the outcome was a defeat for the Russians. It finally ended with what has become known as the *status quo* regarding who has protection and supervision over the various “holy places” in Palestine. This especially applied to the parties who claimed to have the right to certain parts of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Indeed, the matter of the “holy places” is still a major bone of contention between many Christians, Muslims and Jews. Many are feuding over wrong spots.

The Early Roman Emperors showed Little Disdain for Christians

Selecting the wrong spots for “holy places” (and the place of “Golgotha” in particular) began in earnest with the visions of Constantine and his mother Helena, and with the so-called “documentation” provided by Judas. The truth is, these fourth century Christians selected the wrong site. But they became confident that the crucifixion happened at the place where the Temple of Venus was located. What was it that prompted them (other than dreams and visions) to decide on this spot? There was a major reason that Christians invented from early history. Many Christian folk in the

latter part of the fourth century came to believe that the emperor Hadrian (beginning in A.D.135) built the Temple of Venus over the site of Jesus' crucifixion because he hated the Christians so much and wished to intimidate them by the sacrilege. While it is true that Hadrian had an utter disdain for the Jews (and he raised up a Shrine of Jupiter on the site of Herod's Temple, and probably other Jewish holy places), new research by historians over the past 50 years has raised serious doubts that Hadrian had any animosity against his Christian subjects.

Even earlier emperors were not systematically hostile to Christians (except the persecution that developed in Nero's time after the fire of Rome in A.D.64). There is not a tissue of evidence that the emperors Vespasian and Titus persecuted Christians in a general and consistent way. Even the problems under Domitian (A.D.96) have been greatly overplayed. And though there were some government reprisals about A.D.112 under Trajan, these were all local and certainly temporary. Indeed, under Trajan (98-117), Hadrian (117-138) and Antonius (138-161) there is no clear evidence of any general persecution of Christians by the imperial authorities of Rome. True enough, there was the martyrdom of Ignatius in Trajan's reign, but it must be recognized that the judgment was against Ignatius personally and that he had begged for a martyr's death. Ignatius' seven epistles make it plain that the Christian Church as a whole was under a period of general peace and safety as far as matters concerning the Roman government were concerned. Even with Ignatius (if one reads him carefully), his death could have been averted by the appeal of Christians in Rome. But Ignatius for some reason did not want them to step in to gain him clemency. In the period of the Apostolic Fathers (95-161), their records show in the main that the Christian Church was developing steadily within an environment of peace and security in relation to the imperial government. There were the martyrdoms of prominent men such as Ignatius, Polycarp and Justin, but these were isolated occurrences and were in no way indicative of what

was happening to most Christians throughout the Roman Empire. It was not until A.D.177 with the persecution in Lyons that the imperial government began actively to take an interest in persecuting Christians in general.

As a matter of fact, in A.D.112 the emperor Trajan gave a decree which for all practical purposes gave a toleration for Christian activities that were within the law. This was also reiterated by the next emperor, Hadrian, and the policy appears to have continued under Antonius to the year A.D.161. There is no evidence to show any universal Roman government hostility to Christians (no matter where they were in the Roman world) from A.D.98 to 161. The situation is summed up well by Professor Frend in his excellent work *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*:

“Even in Asia Minor, where the Church was strongest, Christianity was one of the lesser problems which confronted Pliny in his investigations into provincial mismanagement in 112-113. In Antioch and in Palestine there were isolated conflicts between authorities and the Christians, but none in Alexandria nor the remainder of the Hellenistic world. The total recorded ‘incidents’ in the whole empire for two generations *may be counted on the fingers of one hand*” (p.181, italics mine).

It can truly be said that under the emperors Trajan, Hadrian and Antonius the Christian Church, as far as general government policy was concerned, was not being systematically persecuted or in serious jeopardy.

Early Roman Emperors Persecuted the Jews, Not Christians

But wait a moment. Does that mean that Christians had very little persecution? No, not in the least. What I have been discussing are relations between Christians and the Roman imperial government, not between Jews and Christians or Christians and other Christians. The fact is, between Jews and Christians there are abundant indications to show continuing and often violent contentions among the two groups between A.D.70 and 161. There was such a

prevailing hatred between the two religious societies that it was almost an impossible task to convoke any harmony between them. Only on rare occasions (like the dialogue of Justin the Christian with Trypho the Jew about A.D.140) did any civilized spirit of discussion take place. There was such a deep cleavage in religious belief with Jews and Christians that only an open belligerence and persecution prevailed among them. (It should be mentioned that there were also squabbles and fights within the Christian communities among those expressing diverse and contrary doctrines from others, but the Roman government itself was in the main tolerant of Christian affairs.)

What has all this to do with our present discussion about the site of the Holy Sepulchre and the place where Jesus was crucified? Very much. This is because there is a belief among scholars today (and among a number of theologians of the late fourth and early fifth centuries) that Hadrian built the Temple of Venus over the site of Jesus' passion because he supposedly hated Christians so much that he wanted to desecrate their object of chief devotion. But in no way is this theory correct. The truth is, Hadrian had his quarrels with Jews, and not with Christians. This point is very important to the issue we are discussing and it will help us to pay close attention to it.

Truthfully, Hadrian had no animosities towards Christians. If anything, he found them allies with him (or at least sympathetic to him) in his wars with the Jews. The reason for this is clear. Since the A.D.66-70 Roman/Jewish War there had been a deep rupture in Jewish and Christian relationships, and this especially applied to Jewish Christians. Professor Frend has a long section surveying the ordinary Jewish attitude towards Jewish Christians from A.D.70 up to 135 (pp.178-181). And, as stated before, it was one of utter hostility. After all, the Jewish authorities had reckoned that the Jewish Christians in particular had deliberately abandoned and forsaken the principles of proper religion when they accepted Jesus as their

Messiah. One thing that irritated them among other things was the Christian refusal to join them in their conflicts for independence from Rome in the wars of A.D.66-70, 115-117 and 132-135. These three wars were in one way or another inspired with a Jewish belief that the political Messiah of the Old Testament (as the Jews understood him) would come to destroy the Romans and raise up a Jewish world kingdom.

Christians did not share this belief with other Jews. Real believers in Jesus could not participate in those wars of the Jews against the Romans without Jesus himself returning from heaven to bring in the Messianic kingdom. This particularly applied to the Roman/Jewish War of A.D.132 to 135. During that war the Jewish people had come to the conclusion that a man by the name of Simon (who was the general in charge of the Jewish armies) was indeed the Messiah, and he was called "Simon Bar-Kokhba" (the Son of the Star). No Christian in any way, shape or form could have accepted such a man as the Messiah, and they didn't! Even in the time of Domitian (about A.D.96) it is recorded that the grandsons of Jude (the brother of Jesus) were brought before the emperor for interrogation. They were dismissed when it was discovered that they were farmers having no revolutionary tendencies and that they proclaimed the Messianic kingdom would be manifested in the future when Jesus would return from heaven (Eusebius, *Eccl.Hist.* III.20, quoting the second century author Hegisippus).

The Emperor Hadrian was Not Openly Hostile to Christians

This, and other historical factors, prove that the Christians (even Jewish Christians) would have had nothing to do in siding with the Jews against the Romans in the Bar-Kokhba Revolt (A.D.132-135). The evidence would support the Christians as being decidedly on the side of Hadrian against Jewish aspirations. This must be the case because Hadrian allowed Gentile Christians to carry on with their worship in Jerusalem (without interruption) even after the war was over. This alone shows that Hadrian had no quarrel with Jesus

or Christians. There is even evidence that the emperor reckoned Jesus to have been a holy man and thought him to be a god. Aelius Lampridius mentioned a report that Hadrian even purposed to erect temples to Jesus as one of the gods, but was deterred by the priests of Rome who declared that all the world would become Christians if he did (*Alexander Severus*, 43). This clearly indicates that Hadrian would not have been prone to desecrate a Christian “holy place” with his Temple of Venus as the Capitol of his new city called Aelia. But there was every reason for Hadrian to humiliate Jewish “holy places” or monuments.

Since the builders of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre found a tomb (and adjacent tombs) associated with the Venus Shrine, what if it were an important “Jewish tomb” or tomb area that Hadrian was endeavoring to humiliate in A.D.135? This is surely the answer to the whole matter. Remarkably, the authorities (both ancient and modern) who have examined the tombs in and around the immediate site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre agree that the tombs date to the period of the Second Temple. This means they were constructed before A.D.70. and it gives us archaeological evidence that the tombs under the Venus Shrine were indeed Jewish. The way the tombs were situated seems to show one central tomb with others as subsidiary. This arrangement could very well be indicating that the main tomb was of a prominent Jewish person. But whose tomb was it?

There was Once a Tomb Complex at the Temple of Venus

The Bordeaux Pilgrim in A.D.333 said that this “Calvary” located at the former Temple of Venus was then a small hill that apparently stood out around an area of flat ground. This made the hill or any structure built on it a prominent one. The site must have had a natural geographical eminence or Hadrian himself would not have placed there the Capitol of his new city which he called Aelia. The early descriptions of the site show that it represented a prime landmark which was easily recognized by the people of Jerusalem.

Could it have been a conspicuous tomb/monument that was there in the time of Jesus? There is every reason to believe that this was the case.

Since Josephus saw this area and described it before the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in A.D.70 (and Josephus' description would have given a reasonable approximation to that which existed in the time of Jesus), we should ask if Josephus mentioned such a significant tomb/monument in this area? He most certainly does.

The Identification of the Tomb

This region in Jesus' time was sparsely populated (*War* V.260) and consequently there were only a few houses and other buildings within the general vicinity. This factor would tend to make this Jewish tomb to stand out as a central landmark. And this is exactly what Josephus states. There was a tomb/monument in this very region which had geographical prominence. He referred to it four times in his description of the war with the Romans, and on all four occasions he used the location of the tomb/monument as a landmark to identify the places where major events took place. It was the *Tomb of John Hyrcanus* — the famous and respected High Priest ruler of the Jews who reigned from 135 to 104 B.C. He was the son of Simon (the first ruler of the Hasmonean dynasty) and the one who was most responsible for creating a prosperous Jewish Commonwealth that was the envy of other Middle Eastern powers. His father could be considered the “George Washington” of the new Jewish nation, while he himself might be called the “Thomas Jefferson.” So important was he to the Jewish people that at his death a splendid monumental tomb was made for him.

It is important to note that John Hyrcanus had the deep respect of most Jews and he was one who was a proper example of righteousness. John Hyrcanus was also a recent hero who epitomized the valiant quest for Jewish liberation from their Gentile oppressors. His example could very well have been a rallying point

around which the liberators of A.D.132 gained confidence to overthrow the Roman yoke. The former monument area of John Hyrcanus (being a revolutionary Maccabee) could have provided a patriotic sense of encouragement to the fighters of Bar-Kokhba. Since the former buildings which made up Jerusalem before A.D.70 had all been destroyed, the freedom fighters could have symbolically used the site of John Hyrcanus' Tomb as their own "Jefferson" or "Lincoln" Memorial.

Where was this prominent tomb/monument located in Jerusalem? Josephus used it as a benchmark to identify the place where the Roman general Titus (later emperor) penetrated the western wall of Jerusalem which had been built by Agrippa (*War* V.258-260). Since the place of the breach is reasonably known, we can use this breach of Titus as a means of discovering the site of Hyrcanus' Tomb. Titus broke through the western wall (which was built in a northwest/southeast direction) about 300 yards north and west of where the Old Wall began near the present Jaffa Gate. Since Josephus stated that Titus' breach was *exactly opposite* the Tomb of John Hyrcanus, we can rationally say that the Tomb was located about 300 yards north of the Old Wall. This would place it on an east/west line which connects precisely with today's Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

We are later told (*War* V.304) that the Jewish forces of Simon held the Second Wall *near the Tomb of John Hyrcanus*. From this northern point of the Second Wall, Simon controlled the Second Wall itself southward until it intersected with the Old Wall east of the Water Gate of the Hippicus Tower (which is near the present Jaffa Gate). With Josephus saying that Simon's northern limit of occupation was on the Second Wall *opposite Hyrcanus' Tomb*, this indication in itself puts his position on a line directly opposite the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

But there is even more. Directly south and alongside Hyrcanus' Tomb, Josephus said that Titus raised an embankment to provide a

ramp in order to bring up his engines of destruction to breach the Old Wall to the south (*War V.356*). To be “alongside” (as Josephus stated) suggests that the tomb area of Hyrcanus was in a rectangular shape much like a football field today (with its broadside oriented east/west). But also, the Tomb of Hyrcanus was positioned *opposite* a gate in the Old Wall (probably the Gennath, which means the Garden Gate) because a Jewish soldier came out to do single combat with a Roman soldier “opposite Hyrcanus’ Tomb” (*War VI.169*). The Garden Gate no doubt led to the gardens surrounding the monumental Tomb of Hyrcanus.

We should note that the Madaba mosaic near Mount Nebo in Jordan also shows the original area of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to have been rectangular in shape and this would agree with what Josephus indicated about the Tomb of John Hyrcanus. And since it is well known that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built over some kind of tomb area with its origin before Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D.70, this also gives reasonable evidence that the site was actually that of John Hyrcanus’ Tomb.

Jewish Authorities were Well Aware that the Site was That of Hyrcanus

What should be understood is that Jewish people at the time of Constantine must have been well aware that this area (at which the Temple of Venus was constructed by Hadrian after A.D.135) was the tomb area of John Hyrcanus. The man Judas Quiriacus must surely have known this! What seems evident is the fact that the Jewish people in the time of Constantine (through Judas their intermediary) pointed out the Tomb of John Hyrcanus to Helena as the place for all Christians to adore as the tomb of Jesus. But would not Christians in Jerusalem have known this site was wrong and that the evidence pointed to the Mount of Olives as the true place? Yes, that is true. Indeed, we even have Eusebius making a journey all the way to Constantinople begging the emperor to hear him out on this matter of the Holy Sepulchre. But the emperor (and even the peo-

ple) of the time were more interested in what visions, dreams and signs afforded as proof. And when Judas Quiriacus was able to show three crosses, along with the tablet of Pilate, the sponge and the reed supposedly associated with Jesus' crucifixion, and especially when on May 7th, A.D.350 a parhelion of the sun pointed out "Golgotha" with a "cross" that stretched all the way to the Mount of Olives, all further inquiry on the matter was closed. The former importance of Olivet became totally eclipsed by these "wonderful signs" that God had supposedly given.

What we find is that after A.D.326 Christians were more "led by the spirit" in finding the holy places than relying on historical and geographical facts. It is well known that this technique resulted in enormous blunders in trying to locate the early sites associated with Jesus, the apostles and Old Testament prophets. As an example, they moved (with utter confidence so it seems) the hill of Sion from its actual location on Jerusalem's southeast ridge up to the large southwest hill just south of the *newly discovered* "Golgotha" in the western part of Jerusalem. And note this. Since all early manuscripts of Josephus fell into Christian hands, it appears that the Christians of the fourth century even changed the text of Josephus (see what scholars say on *War* V.137) to make him supposedly say the citadel of David was on the southwest hill. They forgot, however, to alter what Josephus said in his *Antiquities* VII.65-67 where he indicated that the actual "Mount Sion" was the lower southeast hill. And, as already explained in this book, Eusebius and even Jerome explained in their writings that the real "Mount Sion" of the Bible was on the southeast hill of Jerusalem (and by extension to the Temple mount itself). In no way would Josephus have said that the southwest hill was the "Mount Sion" of King David. There is not the slightest indication in the Bible that this is true.

Unauthorized Editing of Josephus

Such tampering with the text of Josephus is not only unfair with history and geography, it represents a deliberate fraud against the

original writings of Josephus. Whatever one thinks of the motives of such people, they cannot be accepted as honorable by anyone who respects the teaching of the truth. The fact is, the Christian editors of the fourth century had no justification (either morally, ethically or historically) for altering Josephus to make him support the later visions, dreams and miracles associated with Constantine, Helena and Judas Quiriacus.

But this did not end the matter in identifying other holy sites or artifacts. The people of the fourth century came to the conclusion that they did not need historical evidences to show them where such things could be discovered. The “Holy Spirit” (as they conceived it to be) was able to reveal the location of such things. Eusebius himself became very concerned about Constantine’s selection of the Temple of Venus as the site of Jesus’ crucifixion, but he ran up against a brick wall in convincing Constantine that his visionary experiences were in error. Even he and the assembled bishops at Jerusalem asked Constantine to provide them with the evidence that his visionary experiences were proper, but the appeal of Eusebius had little effect on Constantine. The important things to the emperor and his mother were visions, dreams and signs (and we must not forget the discovery of the “true” cross and other artifacts by Judas Quiriacus under the Shrine of Venus).

Visions and Dreams Took Precedence over Historical Documents

What we find is that visions, dreams and signs won the day. From the time of Constantine, it was open season on the acceptance of many miraculous discoveries. But were these so-called signs telling the truth? Let us look at the facts. People who could not find ten acres of Sion and misplaced David’s Tomb by half a mile, were still able to identify the precise pillar Jesus was tied to at his scourging, the place where Mary stood when Jesus was anointed after his death, the Tomb of Melchizedek, and even the stone on which the cock crowed at Peter’s denial. Not only that, they discovered at the

new “Golgotha” to their satisfaction, the very Tomb of Adam, our first parent. Since fourth century Christians somehow thought that the Jews had a tradition that the Tomb (and even the skull) of Adam would be located on the Temple Mount, they simply transferred the tradition from the Temple Mount to the *new* Golgotha. Since “Golgotha” can mean “Place of the Skull,” this convenient designation simply gave fuel to the so-called legitimacy of Adam’s tomb, or even his skull, being found in that area.

As for me, I hope my friends who rely on these traditional “discoveries” will forgive me if I express doubt in their authenticity. The simple truth is, these “miraculous discoveries” are pious frauds that no legitimate historian today would consider as true. No wonder fourth century Christians needed visions, dreams and miracles to locate such “holy places” and “holy crosses.” They claimed to have the Holy Spirit to tell *where* these important events took place, or what these things were, and it was not felt needful to rely on biblical or historical documents to identify the truth of any of them.

Christian Credulity

It is a sad commentary, but the credulity shown by Christian authorities at the time of Constantine (and the hundred years that followed) was at an all time high. It was an age in which religious “proofs” took precedence over the type of objective evidence that most historians utilize today. The church historian Sozomen was very candid in stating that dreams and visions were more able to show truths than historical documents.

“The place [of Jesus’ crucifixion] was *discovered*, and the fraud about it so zealously maintained [that the emperor Hadrian had hidden the site] was detected; some say that the facts were first disclosed by a Hebrew who dwelt in the East, and who derived his information *from some documents* which had come to him by paternal inheritance; but it seems *more accordant with truth to suppose* that God revealed the fact by means of signs and dreams; **FOR I DO NOT THINK** that human information is required when God thinks it best to make manifest the same” (*Hist.*, II.1).

Though Sozomen did not think that documents were on a par with signs and dreams, it was believed that Judas the Hebrew had such documents to justify the site of the Venus Shrine as the place of Jesus' crucifixion. Interestingly, we find that Christians themselves in the fourth century possessed no such documents. However, the Christians and Jewish authorities that Helena assembled in Jerusalem agreed that Judas had picked out the right place (Paulinus of Nola, *Letter* 31.5). And what a significant spot they selected! It was really the tomb area of the Maccabean priest/king, John Hyrcanus. He was one of the greatest Jewish heroes from the past. What "luck" that the cross of Jesus (and the other artifacts associated with the crucifixion) were conveniently found under the soil at the Venus Shrine. And now, every Christian in the world, including the Roman emperor himself, would be reverently bowing before the monumental Tomb of John Hyrcanus.

Jewish Authorities were Acquainted with the Geography of Jerusalem

There can really be no doubt that the Jewish scholars would have known that the Venus Shrine was actually the Tomb of John Hyrcanus (or very near the spot) and that it was not actually the place of Jesus' crucifixion. The Jewish leaders would have remembered the location of *every* significant site in pre-70 A.D. Jerusalem. After all, it was *their* Holy City (not some common city such as Rome, Alexandria or Antioch). Even Hadrian's restriction which forbade any circumcised person from entering Jerusalem was of no relevance because the decree did not apply to *women* or young Jewish men posing as Gentiles (who could always be circumcised at a later time in their lives.) Indeed, there are Jewish accounts that near the end of the second century and onward, it was common for some Jewish scholars to visit Jerusalem.

One might ask why the Jewish authorities were willing to oblige Helena and Constantine with the wrong spot, and the Tomb of John Hyrcanus at that? It may have been in retaliation for Constantine's

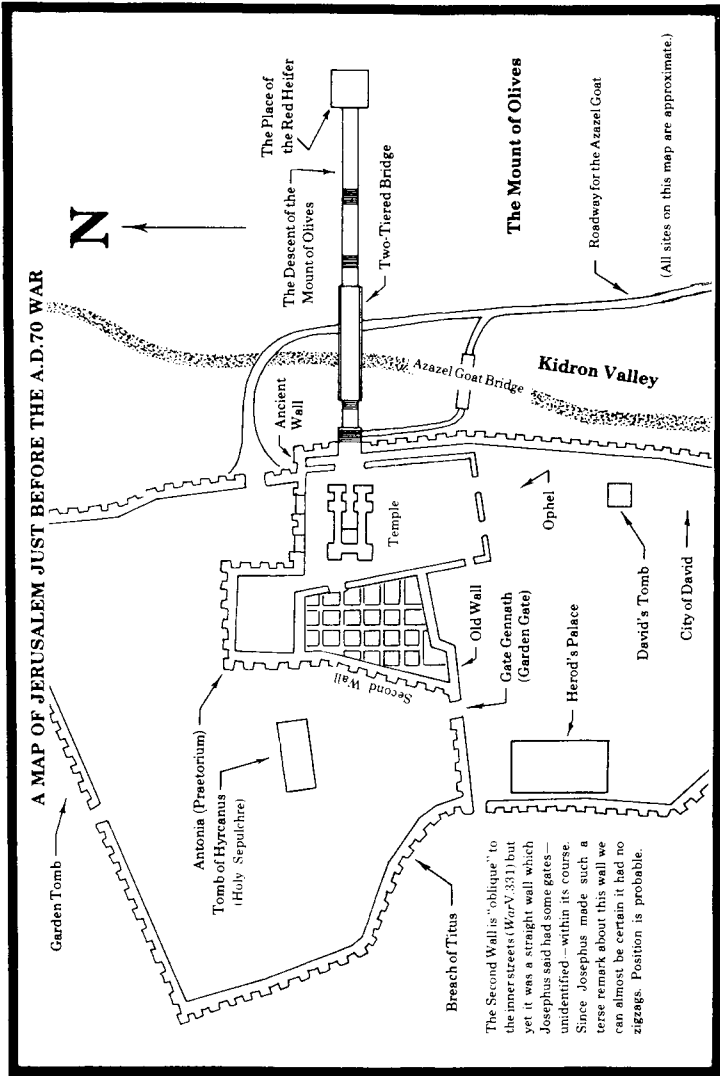
unfair persecution. We find that the emperor, upon becoming sole ruler at the defeat of Licinius in A.D.324, issued a decree which included his prayer to God for “the restoration of thy most holy dwelling-place” [that is, that the Temple of God in Jerusalem could be restored] (*Life of Constantine* II.55). But he had a change of heart at the Nicean Council in A.D.325. With advice from his Christian bishops, Constantine developed a hostile attitude towards anything Jewish, and this even included his decree of a year earlier that the Temple of God could be rebuilt in Jerusalem. At the Council of Nicaea he reversed his opinion of giving full religious toleration to the Jews. From A.D.325 onwards, it was: “Let us have nothing to do with the detestable Jewish crowd” (*ibid.*, III.18). And what happened? When the Jews in Jerusalem got the first decree of Constantine in A.D.324 that the Temple of God could be rebuilt, they immediately commenced its reconstruction. But by late A.D.325, Constantine’s mind had changed drastically on this matter. What he did was to order a stop to such building activities and he had the ears of the Jews cut off who were doing the construction. Since the Scriptures demanded that no maimed person of the Jews (including the priests) could take part in Temple rituals, this effectively put a stop to this rebuilding of the Temple in A.D.325 (John Chrysostom, *Against Judaizing*, Disc.V.10; VI.2).

Once this happened, Constantine then began to devote his energy to the construction of the basilica at the *newly* discovered “Golgotha.” Constantine began to look on this *new* Church of the Holy Sepulchre as the *new* Temple of God, and that this *new* structure was built to take the place of the Temple of Solomon and that of Herod. Some of the ceremonies in the Holy Sepulchre were modeled after those of the Jewish Temple and even the dedication of the building coincided with the date on which Solomon’s Temple was consecrated (see Drijvers, *Helena Augusta*, pp.83,84). This action was intended by Constantine to place further salt in the wounds of the Jews.

Constantine's falling out of favor with the Jews made him command the Jews to quit building the Temple. He put a permanent stop to it by cutting off the ears of the builders. With such imperial afflictions lashed out against the Jewish people, it can be understood why they soon retaliated by pointing out the "true" site of Jesus' tomb to the queen mother in A.D.326. They, along with their spokesman named Judas, simply pointed out the Tomb of John Hyrcanus (which was then covered by the Temple of Venus) as the proper spot. And queen Helena bought their story hook, line and sinker! She was more than prone to do this because she and Constantine had received visions, dreams and signs that *this* must have been the true site of Jesus' passion. And when the "true" cross (and the other artifacts associated with the crucifixion) were conveniently discovered after digging into the soil at the site, there was then no turning back. This was enough to "prove" that the holiest spot in all Christendom had been found. And ever since, Christians from around the world have been reverently worshipping at the Tomb of John Hyrcanus.

Eusebius tried to Explain the Errors of Constantine, but to No Avail

As already explained in this book, Eusebius (on discovering what was happening in Jerusalem) hastily went to the emperor in Constantinople "and begged permission to pronounce a discourse on the subject of our Savior's sepulchre in his hearing" (*Life of Constantine* IV.33). To Eusebius the spot selected by Constantine was a most unfortunate one. That Temple of Venus was to Eusebius a "gloomy shrine of lifeless idols" and "a truly dreadful sepulchre of souls" (*ibid.*,33-40 for Eusebius' description). Eusebius knew it was a tomb area, but not where Jesus was buried. Eusebius, however, was thoroughly rebuffed by the emperor who would not even give him the courtesy of sitting down while he spoke! Constantine had made up his mind and there was no changing it. The only thing that Eusebius could do to justify the site was to call "this



“Golgotha” a “new Jerusalem” which had nothing to do with the history or geography of the Jerusalem that existed in Jesus’ time. He said: “And *it may be* that this was that *second* and *new* Jerusalem spoken of in the predictions of the prophets, concerning which such abundant testimony is given in the divinely inspired records” (*Life of Constantine* III.33). Constantine even approved of this appraisal because he looked on the new basilica as a *new* Temple of God instead of the old Temple of the Jews.

In other words, Eusebius could not find the slightest historical proof to show that the Venus Shrine was the place of Jesus’ crucifixion, so he simply said it may be reckoned the prophesied *second* or *new* Jerusalem, because it certainly had nothing to do with the history and geography of the Jerusalem here on this earth. Even as late as the dedication of the *new* Church of the Holy Sepulchre in A.D.336, Eusebius was still asking Constantine for some real and substantial evidence why he insisted on *this spot* (*The Oration of Eusebius* XVIII)? The fact is, Eusebius, and several other bishops at the time, knew that the Jewish authorities (particularly Judas who showed where the “true” cross of Jesus was located) were not telling the truth to Constantine and Helena. But the opinions of Eusebius went counter to the visions, dreams and signs that Constantine had experienced, and for the next 1600 years (unto our time today) Christians have been subjected to calling the Tomb of John Hyrcanus the holiest place on earth.

In closing this chapter, one might ask why the Jewish authorities (and Judas in particular) were so willing to point out the site of the Temple of Venus as the place of Jesus’ passion? It wasn’t simply to get back at Constantine for his cruel behavior to them (which some people might think was justification alone), but their motives were prompted for more serious reasons. By directing Christians to the Venus Shrine, it kept the area of the important Miphkad Altar on the Mount of Olives where the Red Heifer sacrifices (and those of the major sin offerings) were consumed to ashes free from

Christian shrines. The Jews knew that if the Temple of God were ever to be rebuilt (as the prophecies in the Bible said that it would be), then not only the Temple mount but the top of Olivet had to be free of foreign and, to them, unauthorized shrines and holy places.

Indeed, at the same time these Jewish authorities began pointing the Christians to the wrong locations, they also started to say that the place where the ashes of the sin offerings were placed was to the *north* of Jerusalem. In no way was this true (as I have explained in chapter one of this book). The Jews even went along with Christian belief and perpetuated the *new* teaching that the southwest hill (which has not the slightest significance with Old Testament rituals) was actually the “Mount Sion” of David. Anyone with any historical and geographical sense would have known this to be wrong. But this was a time when visions, dreams and signs ruled the day, and the Jews simply capitalized on the credulity of Constantine and the other Christians. One would find it difficult to blame them because of the way they had been recently treated by Constantine.

And Eusebius, why did not he and his fellow bishops protest more vigorously when they saw the Church of the Holy Sepulchre being built (and dedicated) in the wrong place? I feel that Eusebius believed that after Constantine’s death it would soon be remembered that it was the Mount of Olives where the actual crucifixion of Jesus took place and that an adjustment would then be made by Christians. What Eusebius did not count on was the parhelion that took place in A.D.350 which Christians interpreted as a direct sign from heaven that the *new* basilica was in fact the true place. With that marvelous heavenly sign, all historical evidences for the Mount of Olives evaporated into thin air. Heaven itself had now “picked” the proper spot and for the past 1600 years that parhelion has made Christians worship at the wrong site.

The Jewish Authorities were Jubilant

As for the Jewish authorities, nothing better could have happened in relation to protecting the true sacred sites mentioned in the Old Testament and those that existed in the time of Jesus. The hoax was ideal for the protection of the true sites. Indeed, what has been the outcome of this subterfuge? From that time forward, Christian attention was directed *away from* the *REAL* Mount Sion (located on the southeast hill of Jerusalem and by extension it embraced the Temple mount). And, by the Jewish leaders pointing out to Helena the site of the Temple of Venus as the place of Jesus' crucifixion, it had the effect of turning Christian attention *away from* the Miphkad Altar area on the top of the Mount of Olives (which had to be free of non-authorized shrines in order for a new Temple to function properly).

So, for the Jewish authorities to direct Christians of the fourth century to the southwest hill as being "Sion" and that the Tomb of John Hyrcanus underneath the Temple of Venus was the "true" site of the crucifixion of Jesus made good practical sense to them. It was a stroke of good luck that the extraordinary series of events involving the various dreams and visions of Constantine and his mother (and the parhelion of A.D.350) played directly into the hands of the Jewish authorities. Their plan to mis-direct Constantine and his mother to the wrong place was a stunning success. In accomplishing their task, they adequately protected the *real* biblical sites from having alien and unauthorized shrines raised up which would make it difficult in the future to build another Temple to God.

What is amazing is the fact that the Jewish authorities were so successful in proving this hoax to the Christians at the time, and that the hoax has persisted until today. This particular subterfuge must be reckoned the most ingenious plan for the safe keeping of Jewish holy places ever found in the records of history. And for the last 1600 years their plan has continued to work with the most pres-

tigious of Christian institutions agreeing with the hoax. Most Christians around the world to this very day (including those Christian authorities who are the highest ranking in the world) are still calling their most holy place the Church of the Holy Sepulchre without the slightest idea that this “holy place” is actually the tomb of the early Jewish king, John Hyrcanus. True enough, Christians are today bowing before the tomb of a Jewish king with their adoration and divine worship, but that king is not Jesus Christ, it is John Hyrcanus!



Chapter 20

BURIAL GROUNDS IN JERUSALEM

The Tomb of John Hyrcanus located just outside the Second Wall of Jerusalem in the time of Jesus was the site chosen by the emperor Hadrian to build his Temple of Venus. This area was later selected by Constantine for his Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The situation of this tomb, however, was *within* the 2000 cubits' radius from the Holy of Holies which designated the *camp of Israel*. In other words, John Hyrcanus' Tomb was *within* the camp in the time of Jesus and this prohibits the area from being considered as the site of Jesus' crucifixion since the author of the Book of Hebrews said Jesus was executed "*outside the camp*" (Hebrews 13:11-13). Indeed, Hyrcanus' Tomb was not the only tomb positioned *within* the camp, so was that of his son Alexander who died in 78 B.C. (*War* V.304). And there are the monumental tombs in the Kidron Valley (traditionally called those of Absalom, Jehoshaphat, James and Zechariah) constructed in the late second or middle first century before Jesus. These tombs were also *within* the camp which encircled Jerusalem in the time of Jesus (the latter four are within a stone's throw of the Temple itself).

But legislation concerning tombs around Jerusalem began to change by the time Jesus commenced his ministry. It then became unlawful to construct any new tombs within any district of the camp of Israel that encircled Jerusalem. Within a 2000 cubits' radius from the zodiacal center of the camp located in the Holy Place of the Temple, it was not allowed for new tombs to be constructed. Indeed, even the older ones within the limits of the camp had to be cleansed and the remains of the dead transported to other areas *outside* the camp. These older tombs were especially a problem during Jewish festival periods. With tens of thousands of Jews assembling in Jerusalem at the beginning of the first century, it was so easy within the central area for people to accidentally touch a tomb. This automatically disqualified them from entering the Temple for a seven day period (Numbers 19:11-21). So the authorities simply decided it would be best to cleanse all tombs in the "camp area" by removing the bones of the prophets and righteous people out of Jerusalem and to prohibit new tombs being built in the area.

Remember one point. It was even necessary to execute Jesus *outside the camp* (Numbers 15:35,36), and it was also considered essential in Jesus' time for his burial (which took place a short distance away) to be *outside the camp*. It was this outer limit of the camp that represented the city limits of Jerusalem. Burial was only permitted beyond 50 cubits from what was considered the outer boundaries of the city (Tosefta, *Baba Bathra* 1:11). But many old tombs and graves were located within the camp area just before the time of Jesus and they presented problems to the Jerusalem authorities. It wasn't that the tombs themselves were the difficulty, but it was the bones within the tombs or graves that made them ritualistically unclean. It was possible *to cleanse* them if the bones and other body remains could be removed. There is archaeological and historical information which reasonably shows that shortly after A.D.16 there began to be a lot of activity to remove the bones and other remains from these tombs and to place them in new tomb

areas outside the camp area. Let us notice this evidence.

An Important Archaeological Discovery

In 1953 an extensive cemetery containing more than 500 burial places was discovered at the Franciscan sanctuary of the Dominus Flevit which is located half way down the slope of the Mount of Olives and it was well *within the camp* in Jesus' time. What is interesting is the fact that the coins found in these tombs are all dated before A.D.15/16 (Finegan, *The Archaeology of the New Testament*, p.243). This suggests that no more burials were allowed in this area after A.D.16 (or somewhere soon after that date). This gives us good information that the ban against burying people within the 2000 cubits' radius surrounding the central Temple at Jerusalem only started about A.D.20 and lasted until the destruction of the Temple in A.D.70.

The reason I say "ban" is because a rule was legislated (somewhere near the time Jesus began his ministry) that no more tombs could be built so close to Jerusalem and that even the existing ones that were above ground had to have the bodily remains of the dead removed to places *outside the camp*. "In Jerusalem it was not permitted *to leave tombs* [within Jerusalem] with the exception of those of the house of David and that of the prophetess Hulda" (Tosefta, *Baba Bathra*, 1:2). By tombs, the rule meant that the bones in the tombs had to be transported to other non-sacred areas, not that the physical tombs themselves were removed (many of which were carved in solid rock). The Jewish authorities at Jerusalem simply enacted a law which made it illegal for Jews "*to leave tombs*" within the city limits of the holy city. It became custom to place the bones of those buried within the city limits in specially designed chests of wood or stone called ossuaries. These were then transported out of the sacred regions of Jerusalem and *outside the camp* into *newly built* tomb areas on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

These ossuaries were small chests of wood or stone (about 20 to 32 inches in length, 11 to 20 inches in width, and 10 to 16 inches in depth). Ossuaries were used as secondary burials. Many of them have been found. One is most interesting because it illustrates the custom near the time of Jesus of not leaving tombs (or the bodily remains in the tombs) within the city limits of Jerusalem. Inscribed on one of these ossuaries is the following: “Hither were brought the bones of Uzziah, king of Judah—do not open” (Thompson, *Archaeology and the New Testament*, p.336). This reference is very important to our present discussion because the early king Uzziah became a leper and was buried, in the first place, *outside* Jerusalem. His original tomb was located in the field and not among the royal sepulchres in the City of David (II Chronicles 26:23). But near the time of Jesus, having a tomb “in the field” (though outside the walls of Jerusalem) was then being reckoned as still *within the camp*. This is why it was thought necessary to transfer his bones *outside the camp* of the larger Jerusalem that existed in Jesus’ time. The bones of King Uzziah were placed in a *newly made* tomb area beyond the sacred limits of Jerusalem. There must have been several of these outer tomb areas that were designed not only for the burials of important people living in the first century but also to house the bones of the early prophets and righteous people who had been buried *within the camp* of Israel inside and surrounding the city of Jerusalem.

The Building of New Tombs in the Time of Jesus

The building of these *new* tomb areas is mentioned by Jesus as occurring at the very time he was preaching the Gospel in Jerusalem. Notice what he said:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, because *you are building* [present tense] the graves of the prophets and *you are decorating* [present tense] the tombs of the righteous” (Matthew 23:29).

Since the prophets had died centuries before, it is ridiculous to think the Jewish authorities were building their tombs for the first



This is a photograph from the Israel Museum which shows the tomb slab of Uzziah the early leper king of Jerusalem. It is written in the Aramaic (the common language spoken by many of the Jews in the Jerusalem area in the first century of our era) and it says: "Hither were brought the bones of Uzziah, king of Judah -- do not open." Scholars date this tomb slab to about the first century A.D. and what we have shown in this book, the greatest activity for the removal of bones from earlier tombs located "within the camp" at Jerusalem was precisely at the time that Christ was preaching. He said: "*You are building* [present tense] the graves of the prophets and *you are decorating* [present tense] the tombs of the righteous" (Matt.23:29). The bones of the righteous were then being transported to other tomb areas located "outside the camp" encircling Jerusalem.

time. What Jesus was referring to was the making of *new* tombs for them. The tombs of all the prophets and righteous people *within the camp* of Israel that surrounded Jerusalem were (in Jesus' time) being transferred to other areas outside the city limits. Until the bones and other remains of those dead were removed, it was customary to whitewash their tombs within the sacred area of Jerusalem in order that people would be able to distinguish them so that they would not become ritualistically unclean by touching them (Matthew 23:27). But the Jewish authorities were at the very time of Jesus in the process of *building* [present tense, and the text means *presently building*] the tombs of the early prophets (this is also mentioned in Luke 11:47,48 as well as Matthew 23:29). The transferal of the bones of the righteous dead (including the early prophets) outside the camp of Jerusalem was going on right at the time of Jesus' preaching in early A.D.30.

It appears that there were two principal regions (which archaeologists are able to locate) that represent these areas for the re-burial of the early prophets and righteous. One of the main sites has become known as the Sanhedriyya Tombs located a little over a mile northwest of the Temple Mount and well outside the limits of the "camp." The contents found in those tombs were dated from the beginning of Herod's reign (36 B.C.) to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D.70. And since Jesus said that the authorities were *decorating* the memorial tombs of the righteous, it is interesting that the Sanhedriyya Tombs have at their entrance various carvings of acanthus leaves, pomegranates and citrons. These may have been the very *decorations* to which Jesus had reference. But besides that, most of the ossuaries in which the bones of the prophets and righteous were deposited were also *decorated*. And this is precisely what Jesus said they were doing in his time.

But the area of the Sanhedriyya Tombs was not the only region of re-burial. There was another to which the remains of the early Jewish dead were transferred. This was a rock-hewn chamber locat-

ed on the Mount of Offense to the southeast of Jerusalem (Finegan, *Archaeology of the New Testament*, pp.238-240). It must be reckoned that the time for depositing the remains of the dead at this location was associated with that of the Sanhedriyya Tombs.

No New Tombs Allowed within the Camp at Jerusalem

This information is important in relation to the execution and burial of Jesus. Obviously, if old tombs were then being relocated *outside the camp*, it cannot be imagined that new ones could be placed *inside the camp*. In fact, we have information that major tombs (that is, *new ones*) which were constructed within twenty or so years after Jesus were built a little distance *outside the camp* which surrounded Jerusalem. One such tomb was that of Queen Helena of Adiabene. She was a convert to Judaism and died about thirty years after Jesus. It is significant that her royal tomb area was located north of Jerusalem about 300 yards from the boundary of the "camp." It is important to note that archaeologists have *not* found *one tomb* which was built from the time of Herod to the fall of Jerusalem *north* of the wall of Jerusalem up to the tomb area of Helena (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, March/April, 1986, pp.51,52).

Had tombs been permitted inside the camp at that time, one would imagine that Queen Helena would surely have been granted a site near the Temple or somewhere near the City of David. But, since we know that even the prophets, as well as other righteous people, were having *new* tombs built for them outside the city limits in the time of Jesus, we can understand why Queen Helena had her own tomb area constructed well to the north and "outside the camp."

This rule also applied to the Herodian family tomb located westward of the Temple. These tombs were situated almost the same distance away from the Sanctuary as was the tomb area of Queen Helena. These Herodian tombs which were referred to by the

Jewish historian Josephus (*War* V.507) were not those associated with Herod the Great because he was buried at the Herodian located about 10 miles south of Jerusalem. This tomb complex no doubt belongs to Herod Agrippa the First (Acts 12:1) and he lived near the same period as Queen Helena of Adiabene. If this is the case, and it seems to be so, then this also shows that the royal tombs of even Herod Agrippa had to be located outside the limits of the camp which were reckoned at the time to be 2000 cubits from the central part of the Temple. The tomb of the High Priest Ananus was located about the same distance southwest of the Sanctuary as Herod's tomb (*War* V.506), and even the tomb of the High Priest Caiaphas, whose name is associated with the trial of Jesus, was just recently found in the southern part of Jerusalem and it is also located just outside the 2000 cubits limit of the camp. This shows that even royal and sacerdotal authorities at Jerusalem (no matter how high in power they were) were not allowed a burial within the 2000 cubits' limit of the camp. If this is the case with royal and priestly authorities, one can be assured that no criminal (as Jesus was convicted of being) would find a burial with that 2000 radius. Interestingly, however, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Garden Tomb area are well within the 2000 cubits' zone.

The summit of the Mount of Olives, on the other hand, was different. Joseph of Arimathea, in whose tomb Jesus was placed, though a rich man and a member of the Sanhedrin, also had to have his *newly hewn tomb* (the enlargement of an already existing *cave*) located outside the 2000 cubits' zone. And, of course, the area just south of the southern summit of the Mount of Olives fits the requirements precisely. This region was situated not far south of where the Red Heifer was burnt to ashes (which had to be offered just *outside the camp*). Thus, the summit of Olivet was just outside the city limits of Jerusalem. Remember, the 2000 cubits' radius was figured with a measure at ground level and not as a bird would fly in a direct path. This brought the camp limits closer to the Temple.

Executions were Not Allowed in the City of Jerusalem

What is certain is that no one could officially be executed or buried “in the middle” of the city of Jerusalem during the time of Jesus. This must be emphasized because there is a second century account by Melito of Sardis that Jesus was crucified “in the middle” of Jerusalem (*On Pascha* 72,94), even “in the middle of the Broadway and in the middle of the city” (para.94). Since Melito made his journey to Jerusalem (then called Aelia) about A.D.160, some scholars have believed that this indication may show that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre could have some credentials because the Temple of Venus which Constantine and his mother selected as the site of Jesus’ passion was clearly, in the time of Melito, “in the middle” of Jerusalem. See the article “Melito and Jerusalem” by A.E.Harvey in *JTS*, n.s. 17 (1966), 401-404.

While this suggestion may appear a reasonable proposition on the surface, there are major difficulties with such an appraisal. Actually, there was no city called “Jerusalem” in Melito’s time. On its site was a thoroughly pagan city called “Aelia” and no Jews in Melito’s period were permitted to step foot within its boundaries (or even to approach sight of it). Melito’s reference to “Jerusalem” was not to “Aelia” (the city in Melito’s time). Melito was referring to the middle of Jerusalem that existed in Jesus’ time. Melito even called *his Jerusalem* “the city of the Hebrews” and it is certain that the Aelia of Melito’s time was clearly *no city* of the Hebrews. Indeed, it can easily be seen what Melito meant by his statement that Jesus was killed in the middle of Jerusalem. Melito was criticizing the Jews in his work *On Pascha* in the same context that Jesus himself gave his rebuke to them in Luke 13:33-35. Jesus said that it was not possible for prophets to be killed *outside* Jerusalem. Notice what Jesus said.

“For it cannot be that a prophet perish *outside* of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth those sent unto her. How oft would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and

you would not.” [Jesus was referring to the whole of Jerusalem.]

Melito’s castigations and his reference to Jerusalem were so similar to those of Jesus. Certainly, it is not to be imagined that Jesus in Luke 13:33 intended to be geographically specific in his statement that it was impossible for righteous persons or prophets to be killed “outside Jerusalem” (for many of them were, and even Jesus was crucified “outside the camp”). Jesus simply meant that his own death would occur in the heart of Israel’s society (at the very capital itself). Jesus did not mean, of course, that his death would occur inside the city of Jerusalem itself (which, of course, was prohibited in the first place).

Melito meant the same thing. He did not literally mean (nor did he intend his readers to understand) that Jesus was actually killed in the middle of the new city called Aelia. This has to be the case because Melito also said that Jesus’ death occurred “in the middle of the day” (para.94) and it would be absurd to think he meant that Jesus died precisely at noontime, and this is especially so since he stated in paragraph 71 that Jesus died in the Hebrew evening (which was understood as our afternoon). What Melito meant was that Jesus was crucified in broad daylight and in view of all the people gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover season.

The reference of Melito was not the Aelia which existed in his time (A.D.160). He meant the Jerusalem before its destruction in A.D.70 — “the city of the Hebrews” (which Aelia never was). This fact is even reinforced by his reference to his Jerusalem as the “city of the law, the city accounted righteous” (para.94). In no way could Aelia of the second century (a thoroughly pagan city in every facet of its existence) have met these descriptions of Melito. What Melito had in mind was the Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. And his reference that Jesus was crucified “in the middle” of Jerusalem was not to be understood literally. He was simply referring to Luke 13:33 and not that Jesus was executed at the site of the Temple of Venus which in his day was “in the middle” of Aelia.

Crucifixions Could Occur on the Main Road into Jerusalem

Melito, however, did mention a point that should be noticed. He said Jesus was crucified “in the middle *of the Broadway*” (para.94). This is interesting because the two witnesses referred to by the apostle John in Revelation are also prophesied to be crucified where their Lord was killed. Many have not noticed this significant point but Revelation 11:8 says that these future witnesses would be killed “*where* their Lord was *ALSO* crucified.” Note the word “also.” It shows that the two witnesses will *also* be crucified, but Revelation 11:8 states as well that their bodies would be exposed to view for three days and a half “*where* their Lord was *also* crucified.” This was *on* or *beside* “the Broadway of the Great City.”

The word “Broadway” in the Greek is *plateia* and it means a wide thoroughfare associated with Jerusalem, not simply the streets and lanes of the city. Could it be that the apostle John is describing a main “Broadway” into the city or into the Temple beside which Jesus himself was earlier crucified? Remember that it was Roman custom to crucify people in prominent places, especially alongside major roads. Quintilian said: “the most crowded roads are chosen [for crucifixions]” (*Declamationes*, 274). In *Alexander Severus*, 23:8 we read: “as a deterrent to others he had them crucified on the street which his slaves used most frequently.” And we are told that Pilate placed the title above the head of Jesus because many Jews were passing that area. The apostle John said “the place where Jesus was crucified was near The Place [the Temple] of the City” (John 19:20, Greek). This means the site of Jesus’ crucifixion was in a well-traveled place where many people could witness his execution.

As we have shown in the earlier chapters of this book, Jesus was crucified near the southern summit of the Mount of Olives and beside a major thoroughfare leading into Jerusalem and the Temple. The apostle John in the Book of Revelation refers to this by saying that the two witnesses will have their dead bodies displayed “*where*

their Lord was *also* crucified.” This location was *on* (or better, *beside*) “The Broadway” (one of the principal boulevards which was a part of the city of Jerusalem).

The only thoroughfare that fits the evidence we have been presenting in this book is the “Broadway” which came from the east over the summit of the Mount of Olives (going beside the village of Bethphage and near the place of the Miphkad Altar). The roadway descended down the western slopes of the mountain, across the Kidron Valley by the two-tiered arched bridge and through the Gate Beautiful (also called the Miphkad Gate) into the eastern precincts of the Temple. From the summit of Olivet into Jerusalem, Luke called it “The Descent of the Mount of Olives” (Luke 19:37).

This “Broadway” must have been very beautiful to behold. In no way could it have been a dirt or a gravel track leading into the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. It was especially holy and constructed in such a manner so that no ritualistic impurities could possibly be allowed on or near it. The one responsible for building this roadway and the bridge was no doubt Herod called the Great (though it was priestly funds that paid for it, *Shekalim* 4:2). He was responsible for constructing the Temple and its adjacent buildings and this certainly included the roads into Jerusalem and the Sanctuary. The fact is, Jerusalem was one of the most beautiful cities on earth in the first century. Josephus took considerable pains to describe the sumptuousness of the kingdom of Herod (the many cities, aqueducts, gymnasiums, theaters, etc. that he constructed) (*War* I.401-428). And this grandeur especially applied to his capital city of Jerusalem. So rich had Jerusalem become in the time of Jesus that Josephus said it was the envy of the world (*War* VI.408).

But Jerusalem and Judaea were not the only areas made glorious by Herod. His generosity spread even to foreign lands. The same type of “Broadway” leading into the city of Antioch was once in need of massive repair, so Herod had two and a half miles of it paved “with polished marble, and as a protection from the rain,

adorned it with a colonnade of equal length” (*War* I.425).

If Herod was so generous with Syrian Antioch in providing them with such a beautiful “Broadway” leading up to their city, it can hardly be imagined that he did less for his own capital city which was considered one of the most majestic urban areas in the Roman Empire. With this in mind, let us recall that the dead bodies of the two witnesses were prophesied by the apostle John to be displayed beside “The Broadway of the Great City” (Jerusalem) “*WHERE ALSO their Lord was crucified*”(Revelation 11:8).

Where was the Broadway of Jerusalem Located?

If one reads the text strictly, the apostle John is telling his readers that this main street of Jerusalem was “the Broadway” of the city itself. The use of the definite article by John suggests that *this* “Broadway” was either the *only one* leading into Jerusalem or at least one of the principal boulevards. And since the two witnesses are prophesied to have their dead bodies displayed after their crucifixions *on* or *beside* “The Broadway of the Great City (Jerusalem),” it had to be “outside the camp.” We should ask “*Where* was this *Broadway* located that led into Jerusalem?” The apostle John said it was “*where* their Lord was *also* crucified.” From the evidence in this book, it can reasonably be shown that “The Descent of the Mount of Olives” was that “Broadway.”

What we find is that the summit region of the Mount of Olives fits perfectly with all the requirements of the Jews regarding the place of execution for criminals. When the evidence of the New Testament and history are brought together (as I have tried to provide in this book), we can show that Jesus was crucified *east* of Jerusalem (just “outside the camp”) and alongside the principal “Broadway” called “The Descent of the Mount of Olives” which led into the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. This was the area most crowded in Jerusalem at Passover time. And then, after his death, he was buried in the newly-hewn tomb of Joseph of

Arimathea just south of the southern summit of the Mount of Olives.



This is a photograph of the Madaba Mosaic constructed in the sixth century found in a church near the traditional area of Mount Nebo in Jordan. The view is looking eastward and it shows how the city of Jerusalem appeared (in outline form) at the time. Note the immediate center of the photograph (but below the columned street running north to south). There is a rectangular shaped area (with a rounded aspect on its west). This represents the site of the Holy Sepulchre. As mentioned in the text, it gives the appearance of an area a little larger than a football field. It is not orientated directly east and west, but is a little north of east. This region fits precisely with the description of the Monument to John Hyrcanus that Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century, described in his history. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is not the place of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, but it is the memorial tomb area of John Hyrcanus. (Photo: Prof. William S. LaSor)



Chapter 21

THE MANNER OF JESUS' CRUCIFIXION

One of the greatest secrets associated with Golgotha concerns the manner in which Jesus was crucified. Almost everyone for the past 1600 years has imagined that Jesus was martyred on either a Roman or Greek type of cross or perhaps a simple stake without a crosspiece. The New Testament, however, gives information on this matter that is counter to all these suggestions. The truth is, Jesus was not killed on a cross which was a beam of timber on which were nailed one or more crosspieces, nor was it a single upright pole (without a crosspiece) with his hands brought together and nailed above his head. In this chapter we will discuss the actual way in which he was crucified.

What first must be understood is that Jesus met his death in a garden (John 19:41). Actually, the word garden in the Greek has the meaning of *orchard* or *plantation* — a place of trees. It appears that Golgotha (which the Bordeaux Pilgrim called a *monticulus* — a small hill on top of a mount) must have had trees associated with it. It was to this hill that Jesus carried his cross on which he was crucified. Many scholars today believe it is inconceivable that Jesus,

who had been subjected to extensive beatings and whippings, could have carried a fully assembled Latin cross that would have weighed 200 pounds or more. Such a heavy weight certainly has to be the case for an assembled Latin or Greek cross. But this is NOT what happened. The cross he transported was only the upper crosspiece which was nailed to a larger and more substantial support. It was to this board plank that Jesus' arms or his wrists were affixed, and what Simon of Cyrene carried the final distance to Golgotha. Such crosspieces associated with crucifixions were given a technical name in Latin. This upper part of the cross was called a *patibulum*.

When Golgotha was finally reached, Jesus then had his arms or wrists nailed to the *patibulum*. Both he and the *patibulum* were then hoisted upwards and the crosspiece was nailed to some substantial stock of wood large enough to support the person being crucified. It was also common to bend the victim's legs upwards and nail the feet to the stock of wood itself. Sometimes a wood block was attached to the main support near the midsection of the body on which the buttocks of the victim could rest.

There were also two robbers who were crucified with him. There can hardly be any doubt that the same procedure of crucifixion was adopted for them. This would mean that the two robbers were each affixed to an individual *patibulum*, and then each *patibulum* was nailed to a large stock of wood. But what kind of wooden support was this that Jesus had his *patibulum* and his feet nailed to? The Bible shows that it was something entirely different from what most people believe today. It was not a dead piece of timber. Indeed, both the apostles Peter and Paul said that Jesus was nailed to a *tree*, not to pieces of timber. He was crucified on a *living tree*.

This fact should not appear at all unreasonable considering the circumstances connected with Jesus' crucifixion. His crucifixion and those of the two robbers was a hurry-up affair. The main reason to get their executions over quickly was because the Passover of the Jews was soon approaching and it was biblical law that no

one could hang on an instrument of death beyond sundown. Indeed, scholars have recognized that it was common in times of haste to nail criminals to trees (Hastings, *Christ and the Gospels*, vol.II,p.749).

Jesus was Crucified on a Living Tree

Using a living tree as the main stock of wood for the *patibulum*s of Jesus and the two robbers gave the soldiers the advantage of not having to dig holes some five or six feet deep in order to secure three large standing poles to support the *patibulum*s of the three men. The soldiers, at first, simply nailed their arms to the *patibulum*s and then lifted each board plank up to the middle of a tree, and then each of the *patibulum*s was nailed to the tree. Finally, each of the three men had his lower legs nailed to the trunk of the tree. This was an ordinary tree like any tree found in an orchard today. And this is precisely what Peter and Paul said in the New Testament. Jesus was nailed to a tree (in Greek: *xylon*) which in this case was a *living tree*. Notice what Peter said.

“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged *on a TREE*” (Acts 5:30).

“We are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem: whom they slew and hanged *on a TREE*” (Acts 10:39).

“Who his own body bare our sins in his own body *on the TREE*” (I Peter 2:24).

The apostle Paul spoke the same thing.

“They took him down *from the TREE*” (Acts 13:29).

In all these instances *the tree* was a living tree. Jesus himself said at the very time of his crucifixion: For if they do these things in (dative: *with*) a *green TREE*, what shall be done in (dative: *with*) the dry? (Luke 23:31). This indication shows that Jesus was crucified *with* (or *by means of*) a living tree (Greek: *xylon*). It was the instrument by which he was executed. Paul also emphasized this

fact in Galatians 3:13.

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, ‘Cursed is every one that hangeth *on a TREE.*’”

Paul was quoting Deuteronomy 21:23 where it states that the Israelites in the time of Moses were to hang the dead bodies of criminals on the bough or limbs of a tree until sundown. In no circumstances does this mean a type of crucifixion where single poles or beams with crosspieces were used to execute people. The tree in Deuteronomy meant a plain and simple tree, and in the later examples where this type of punishment was exacted by the Israelites, the trees in question were all ordinary living trees (Joshua 8:29; 10:26,27). And this must have been the same situation in the case of Jesus. He was executed in a garden (really, in an orchard of trees). In such a location it makes perfectly good sense why a tree was used by the Romans, especially since there was an urgency to get his crucifixion over in haste. As late as the time of Mohammed, it is stated in a section of the Koran speaking about punishing a criminal that “I will crucify you on the trunks of palm trees” (Koran, Sura XX,71). Indeed, people were crucified to any standing object which was near at hand that would afford support to the one being executed. Trees were the most convenient objects on which to crucify people. We are told that the proconsul of Africa punished the priests of the Saturn “by crucifying them *on the very trees of their temple*” (Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, 9:2). This method of crucifying was really the normal one, while using pieces of cut lumber (as is usually depicted) was the least used because such cut timber was not easy to come by.

But wait a moment. Have we not been told that Jesus was crucified on a *stauros* (the KJV always translates this Greek word by the English word “cross,” but I will retain in this book the transliterated word *stauros*). The New Testament usage, however, does not demand the Latin type of cross (or any other type of cross made up

of dry pieces of timber in some way nailed together). The Greek word *stauros* by the first century had come to have a variety of meanings. The original significance of the word *stauros* meant simply an upright pole or a stake. Like today, even we may speak of a pole to which one tethers an animal. In such a case we almost always think of a single stake secured to the ground. But if we should say telephone pole, we could think of a single stake or a pole with one, two or even five crosspieces attached to it. Even our English word pole can have several similar meanings. The Greek word *stauros* fits into the same category.

Words Change Meanings

The fact is, words change meanings over the years and can often take on opposite significations. For example, if a person were going to England from the United States one might fly by airplane or sail by ship. But if one wishes to sail today (in 99% of the cases), one means to go on a vessel that has no sails at all. Indeed, in naval terminology (to use another such word that indicates a change of meaning) a captain of a ship may say he is going full steam ahead when he is actually burning diesel fuel or nuclear power.

These changes of the meanings of words (and hundreds more could be given) are examples of what happened to the Greek word *stauros* from its earlier usages to those of the first century. Remarkably, however, there are some religious denominations who demand that Jesus was crucified on a simple upright pole or stake because that was the original meaning of the word *stauros*. Yes, that was the first meaning but for such interpreters to say that *stauros* had that exclusive significance in the first century is to deny the abundant literary evidence which shows it did not. If they should insist on the original meaning for all usages in the New Testament, then they should also (to be consistent) demand that anyone who says he sails to England today must in all circumstances go on a *sailing vessel*.

Actually, the word *stauros* in the first century could refer to all kinds of executionary impalements in which individuals were nailed or tied to *any* supportive timbers or trees for judgment. Like today, we may call a very severe judge a hanging judge (if he is prone to issue the death penalty without mercy), yet the state in which the judge presides could use the gas chamber, lethal injection or the electric chair for its means of executing convicted murderers. There is an old saying in the interpretation of words within their historical contexts. It is: An *ounce* of usage is worth a whole *pound* of etymology. How true this principle is.

In the case of the word *stauros* in first century usage this is certainly the case. It had at least three different meanings in the New Testament alone (which the KJV simply translates “cross”). Note that the board plank which supported the arms of Jesus (called the *patibulum* in Latin) was called a *stauros* (Luke 23:26). But it had a further meaning. The actual pole or the tree trunk on which the *patibulum* was nailed was also called a *stauros* (John 19:19). And the complex together (both *patibulum* and the bough of the tree were reckoned as a single executionary device) was called a *stauros* (John 19:25).

The Stauros was a Living Tree

This means that the living tree on which Jesus was crucified was known itself as a *stauros*. In almost all situations where quickness was demanded for a crucifixion, it was common to nail or to tie the victims to living trees. As a matter of fact, even as early as the fifth century B.C., we find that the word for gallows in the Book of Esther on which Haman and his sons were hanged (Esther 5:14 and seven more instances), the Hebrew simply means a tree that was fifty cubits high — a single tree — which the Greek translation of the third century B.C. rendered as being a tree (*xylon*) on which people were impaled (and the LXX translators used the root word *stauros* to describe the procedure of impalement) (see Esther 7:9).

In a literary sense, using the word *stauros* (or its derivatives) to describe the executing of individuals on a *tree* (*xylon*) was not an uncommon practice. This was especially the case when the shortness of time was a part of the procedure. Crucifying people to living trees was the easiest way to get the task done since it required less work and less time for the executioners. Recall that Pilate, up to the last moment, was trying to release Jesus. There was no lengthy trial that would have allowed time to dig holes into which timber beams could be placed and then crosspieces (*patibulum*s) nailed to the poles. The quickness of the crucifixion was made a cardinal point in the New Testament since the Jews wanted the crucifixion of Jesus to be over quickly because the Passover was just on the horizon and they wanted to be able to take of the Passover without being defiled with dead bodies (John 19:31). This is one of the reasons why the executioners decided to crucify Jesus and the two robbers to a living tree, and they did.

Early Christian Authorities knew Jesus was Crucified on a Tree

The early Christians who lived after the apostles were fully aware of this fact that the *stauros* on which Jesus was crucified was actually a *living tree*. The author of Barnabas (who wrote in the late first or early second century) consistently called the *stauros* of Jesus a *tree* (5:13; 7:5; 8:5; 12:1,5). The descriptive context which he provides shows he meant a *living tree*. In mentioning the ritual of the Red Heifer, Barnabas said that the priests tied a crimson thread to a *tree* which represented the *stauros* of Jesus (8:1,5). He said that Psalm 1:3 (He shall be like *the tree* planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth fruit in season, and his leaf shall not wither) signified the *stauros* on which Jesus was crucified (11:1,8). Even the top crosspiece that is found in the letter T was acknowledged by Barnabas as a *stauros* apart from the stem that supports it, and even the evangelist Luke himself said the same thing by calling the *patibulum* which Jesus (and Simon of Cyrene) carried to the

crucifixion site a *stauros* (Luke 23:26). Barnabas stated that the incident of Moses in making the brass serpent showed Moses nailing the serpent to a *tree*, not to an upright pole (12:1,2), and Jesus himself said that this incident was analogous to his own crucifixion (John 3:14).

More Evidence the Stauros was a Tree

There is even more evidence of this recognition in the early second century. Ignatius also referred to the *stauros* as a tree, and was alive and that it even bore fruit (*Smyr.* 1:2) and that it had branches (*Trall.* 11). In the writings of Ignatius he said it was believed that the instrument of death on which Jesus was crucified represented the Tree of Life which was mentioned in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 2:7; 22:2,14), and of course that Tree of Life was a living *xylon* (tree) just as the apostles Peter and Paul said Jesus was crucified on a similar *xylon* (tree). There is no doubt that Christians up to the middle of the second century knew Jesus was crucified on a literal tree. Melito of Sardis consistently said the cross of Jesus was a *tree*. He said: Just as from a tree came sin, so also from a tree came salvation (*New Fragment*, III.4).

There are numerous other references from early Christian writings that refer to the *stauros* on which Jesus was placed as a *living tree*. But it is not only in literature that we find this fact. It was also common in early drawings of the crucifixion to depict branches and leaves as protruding from the bough of the *stauros*. The *stauros* of Jesus was shown as a living symbol which represented life itself.

“Early Christian art indicates a close relationship between the tree of life and the cross. The cross of Christ, the wood of suffering and death, is for Christians a *tree of life*. In the tomb paintings of the 2nd century it is thus depicted for the first time as the symbol of victory over death. It then recurs again and again. The idea that the *living* trunk of the cross *bears twigs and leaves* is a common motif in Christian antiquity” (Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, Vol.V, pp.40.41 italics mine).

Three Individuals Crucified on One Tree

There is another important point that must be made to make the story of Jesus' crucifixion properly understood by us of modern times, and it is also very different from what most people today have imagined. It may be surprising but the apostle John shows that Jesus and the two robbers were crucified together on ONE TREE, not on three separate trees. Notice what he recorded.

“The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies [note the plural, BODIES] should not remain on the STAUROS [singular] on the sabbath day (for that day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs” (John 19:31-33).

These verses tell us very much. They show that there were three men crucified ON ONE STAUROS. This is even indicated in the Greek word *sunstaurothentos* found in John 19:32. The fact is, it not only means that the two robbers were simply with him, but both of them were crucified together with him. And indeed they were together with him on the same *stauros*—a single living tree.

Even breaking the legs of the two robbers shows that Jesus and the two malefactors were affixed to one tree. Note that the Scripture shows that one robber was on one side of Jesus and the other robber on the opposite side. Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left (Matthew 27:38). If one robber was crucified on a separate cross on Jesus' left side (as is normally depicted), and the other robber on another cross on his right (so that there were three crosses placed side by side with one another with Jesus situated in the middle), we then have a major problem with the deaths of the two robbers. This is because the soldiers killed first the two robbers and last of all they came to Jesus in the middle to slay him. Being in the middle should have made Jesus the second to be killed.

A Major Problem Acknowledged

It was this very circumstance that caused Dr. Bullinger (in his *Companion Bible*) to reckon that the Bible indicated, at least this is the way the texts read to him, that there were actually four others besides Jesus who were crucified that day. He thought that the Bible was showing that there were two others on each side of Jesus who were crucified with him. Here was Bullinger's reasoning. Since the New Testament called those crucified with Jesus both robbers (Matthew 27:38) and also malefactors (criminals) (Luke 23:32), Bullinger came to the conclusion that there were two malefactors and also two robbers. This is why Bullinger believed the two malefactors on one side had their legs broken first and then the soldiers came to Jesus in the midst of the two malefactors and two robbers. But there is no need for such an interpretation (though Bullinger's suggestion was ingenious). Actually, all robbers are criminals (malefactors), but it is not true that all criminals are robbers. Luke simply used the generic term malefactors (criminals) to refer to the two robbers who were crucified with Jesus.

However, Bullinger had a real point. How could soldiers first break the legs of the two robbers and then come to Jesus who was in the midst of them? The answer is simple. Since we are told by the apostle John (being an eyewitness to the scene) that all three were crucified on ONE *stauros* (that is, *a single tree*), it is easy to see how the soldiers broke the legs of the robber on Jesus' right side (who had his back to Jesus and was located on the northeast side of him) and then they broke the legs of the robber on Jesus' left side (who also had his back to Jesus but located on the southeast side of him). So, proceeding from the northeast side of the tree of crucifixion, the soldiers killed the first robber, went to the southeast side and killed the second robber, but they then came to Jesus who was facing (let us say) westward towards his Father's Temple. When they reached Jesus they found him dead already. All of this makes perfectly good sense as to what happened.

Three Men Crucified on One Stauros

This factor is important to show that the apostle John wants his readers to know that the three men were nailed to *one tree* (a *single stauros* — see John 19:31). These indications show that the traditions of three Latin type crosses that were associated with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the west side of Jerusalem have nothing to do with the real crucifixion of Jesus. When Judas Quiriacus revealed to Helena the three crosses (with Pilate's tablet, the sponge and reed that were supposedly those associated with Jesus), he was presenting to the Christian world one of the greatest hoaxes ever devised. The Bible itself and the early Christians of the second century state that Jesus was crucified on a *living tree*, not on some dead Roman crosses. And besides that, the two robbers were crucified with Jesus *on the same tree*.

This fact seems illustrated in later works. For what it's worth, the Arabic Infancy Gospel has Jesus prophesying to his mother at a young age: "in thirty years, mother, the Jews will crucify me in Jerusalem, and those two robbers *will be fastened to the stauros WITH ME*, Titus on my right [the supposed name of the first robber] and Dumachus on my left" (Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *The New Testament Apocrypha*, vol.I, p.408). And in a work titled Jesus' Descent into Hell, one of the robbers is reported to have said: "Truly, I was a robber, and the Jews hanged me *on a stauros WITH my Lord Jesus Christ*" (*ibid.*, p.480 emphasizes mine in both quotes). Whatever reliability one wishes to place on these later (and Gnostic) works is only of academic interest, but we have the certain word of the apostle John himself that Jesus and the two robbers were indeed crucified to one *stauros*, and that *stauros* was a living tree. And though some scholars may wish to see in the *singular stauros* of the apostle John a simple figure of speech (in which the singular might be stretched to signify the plural), I will let them argue the matter with John. As for me, within the grammar of John 19:31 is the clear statement that Jesus and the two robbers (all three

of them) were crucified *on one stauros*, and it makes perfectly good sense that this was the case.

Since all three of those men who were crucified that morning on the Mount of Olives were crucified on a single tree, it is an absurd proposition to imagine that all three men were nailed to one Latin or Greek cross (made up of dry wooden timbers nailed together). How could two robbers be nailed to ONE *stauros* (as John said they were) with Jesus nailed to the same *stauros* and at the same time Jesus is described as being in the middle of the robbers? Each of the victims would have had to display some unusual bodily contortions to accomplish such a feat.

But away with such nonsense. Actually, the Holy Scriptures state that Jesus and the two robbers were crucified together *on one tree* (and anyone should realize that a normal size tree would be large enough to allow ample room for all three to be on the same *stauros*). And this is exactly what happened. Jesus and the two robbers were executed on one living tree near the summit of the Mount of Olives. Recall again what Melito said in the middle of the second century: "Just as from a tree came sin [in the Garden of Eden], so also from a tree came salvation [at Jesus' crucifixion]" (*New Fragment*, III.4). Indeed, there are many references in early second and third century Christian writings to show that it was a literal tree on which Jesus met his death in Jerusalem (*cf.* Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, pp.275-288).

The Stauros was a Literal Living Tree

There are some, however, who might question the crucifixion of Jesus as being on a living tree (*xylon*). This is because the word *xylon* sometimes means a dry piece of wood (a stock or stave) and this is even the case in the New Testament (Matthew 26:47; Acts 16:24; Revelation 18:12). One might think that the word *xylon* could mean, after all, that it was on some dry timber beams that Jesus was crucified.

True enough, if we had no context in the New Testament regarding the events of the crucifixion to show that *xylon* means a green tree (as it does most often), then we might have to consider the possibility that the *stauros* was made up of some dry pieces of timber. But, we have a cardinal reference by Jesus himself, right in the context of the crucifixion scene, that the *xylon* on which Jesus was crucified was a green and living tree which had roots in the ground. At the very time Jesus was being led up to the crucifixion site, he said to the women following him: "If they do these things *in* (Greek dative: *with*) a green tree (*xylon*), what will occur in (Greek dative: *with*) the dry tree?" (Luke 23:31). Jesus was saying that it was *with* (or *by means of*) a green tree (*xylon*) that he would meet his death.

Jesus was Crucified on a Green Tree (a Living Tree)

This reference in Luke's Gospel shows that the instrument of Jesus' execution was a green tree (*xylon*) and not with some dry pieces of timber nailed together in the form of a Latin or Greek cross (or any other configuration of dry timber beams). Jesus was truly crucified on *a living tree*, and in the next chapter it will be shown why this was absolutely necessary to fulfill the symbolic teaching of the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament which predicted the coming of the true Messiah to Israel.

But what happened to *that* tree on which Jesus was impaled? The Jewish historian Josephus said that all trees around Jerusalem (and certainly on the Mount of Olives) were cut down by Titus the Roman general in the A.D.66-70 war with the Romans (*War VI.1*). That destruction would have put an end to that tree if it had continued to exist to that time. But did that tree remain on the Mount of Olives for the next 40 years following Jesus' crucifixion? There is reason to believe that the tree itself was destroyed soon after the burial of Jesus.

It should be remembered that Jesus was charged by the Jewish authorities with the most heinous of crimes, that of blasphemy

(Matthew 26:65). This meant that Jesus was looked on by the people as accursed of God and this is exactly how the apostle Paul described him (Galatians 3:13). Paul's reference was to Deuteronomy 21:22,23 where it states that such an accursed person defiled even the soil (the very land) where the execution of an accursed person took place. This defilement also applied to the tree on which a person was hanged. The apostle Paul said that the tree (the *stauros*) was itself reckoned a shame (Hebrews 12:2) and he called the crosspiece (Latin: *patibulum*) the reproach (Hebrews 13:13). All the instruments were accursed because they came in contact with the accursed one.

The Old Testament Demanded that Jesus be Hanged on a Tree

The essential teaching on how to cleanse the land of such accursedness is found in Deuteronomy 21:22,23, and in the previous verse 21 it says this purging was to be done by burning (Hebrew: *bahgar*). In the Old Testament example of such purging, it was thought necessary to burn the possessions of such an accursed one because the abominable sin of the person was even transferred to the things owned by the sinner (since he had touched them and this reckoned even his possessions accursed). This was the case with the things belonging to Achan who sinned so grievously in the time of Joshua (Joshua 7:15,24-26). What happened was that Achan himself was killed (with his children and animals) and all his accursed things were burnt up together with him. This practice of utter destruction was considered the only way to purify the land of Israel from such defilements.

With this as the cardinal example of what happened to an accursed one and the accursed things which he had touched, it must be that the tree on which Jesus was crucified was consigned to be burnt to ashes. After all, it was reckoned a shame (itself accursed). To keep the land from being polluted, Jesus had to be destroyed before sundown and the accursed *stauros* had to be burnt up so that

no person could ever touch it again. The only thing of Jesus that was considered worth saving was his cloak, but it must be noted that it was the Roman soldiers who cast lots for the garment since they had no scruples about Jewish matters.

What the Jewish authorities wanted to do was to take the dead body of Jesus and the accursed (shameful) tree and burn them up together just as the Israelites did with Achan in the Old Testament. This is the reason that Joseph of Arimathea gathered up courage and made a daring entrance into the presence of Pilate (in a sense of urgency) in order to gain Jesus' body for burial before the authorities could burn it to ashes (Mark 15:43). Had not Pilate given Joseph of Arimathea charge over Jesus' dead body, it would indeed have been consumed in the flames along with the tree on which he was crucified.

Actually, there was a prophecy that many people at the time interpreted as referring to the Messiah and his death. It showed that the tree and the person on the tree would be destroyed together. Though the original teaching of this Old Testament prophecy seemed to refer to the prophet Jeremiah, later Christians came to feel that it was a direct prophecy of what happened to Jesus at his crucifixion. The prophecy is found in Jeremiah 11:19.

“But I as a lamb that is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree *with* the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered” (italics mine — the subsidiary word *ox* in the King James Version is not in the original Hebrew).

The Anglican Commentary (London: 1875) gives an interesting quote from Jerome in the fourth century about this very verse.

“Jerome well says on this verse; ‘All the churches agree in understanding that under the person of Jeremiah these things are said of Christ. For he is the lamb brought to the slaughter that opened not its mouth. The tree is his cross, and the bread [fruit] his body: for he says himself, I am the bread that came down from heaven. And

of him they purposed to cut him off from the land of the living that his name should no more be remembered'" (vol.V, p.395).

And though later Christians interpreted Jeremiah 11:19 in various ways, it is interesting that the Hebrew made one think that the tree WITH the fruit [the body] were prophesied to be destroyed together. This is a most important factor in our present discussion. While the prophecy (acknowledged by Christians as referring to Jesus) has the tree of Jesus' crucifixion *destroyed* WITH Jesus (and this would seem to mean that both would be consumed *together* — perhaps in a burning as in the case of Achan), we know that Joseph of Arimathea was able, at the last moment, to rescue Jesus' body from such a fate. But this biblical reference still shows that the tree itself was *destroyed*. And typically, in the judgment rendered by the Sanhedrin against Jesus, it could be reckoned that Jesus was destroyed with the tree (at least he should have been destroyed *with* the tree) had not Joseph of Arimathea rescued his body from the flames. The prophecy of Jeremiah 11:19, as understood in the original Hebrew (and interpreted as referring to Jesus and the tree on which he was crucified), is further proof that early Christians knew that the tree itself was not spared from destruction.

The Nonsense that Followed Constantine

Yet after the time of Constantine many Christians began to believe that the cross escaped destruction (including the two crosses of the robbers) and that it was preserved in a miraculous way in order for it to become a relic in later times. Paulinus of Nola said:

"It is certain that if it [the cross] would have fallen into the hands of the Jews (who were taking every precaution to crush belief in Jesus), it would inevitably have been broken into pieces and burnt" (*Letter 31*).

But Paulinus thought that the cross of Jesus and those of the robbers in some way were taken immediately away by Christians and hidden near the site of Jesus' tomb. Paulinus did not explain why Christians thought it necessary to preserve the robbers' crosses as

well. He also believed that as the decades passed, all recollection of where the crosses were buried passed from the knowledge of Christians until they were discovered by Helena the queen mother when the Temple of Venus was being cleared in order to build the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (*Letter 31*).

The Flagrant Hoaxes Perpetrated by Later Christians

All of these late fourth century stories about the hiding of the crosses of Jesus and the robbers, could have been put to rest as hoaxes if those later Christians would simply have paid attention to the New Testament revelation that the centurion and the others around the crucifixion site were able to see the curtain of the Temple tear in two. Such an indication alone is enough to jettison the *western* Golgotha discovered at the Shrine of Venus as even being a contender for the true site because such an occurrence could only have been viewed from near the summit of the Mount of Olives. And had they read (and believed) the apostles Peter and Paul that Jesus was actually crucified on *a living tree* (and that Jesus and the robbers were executed on a single tree), they would also have been spared the nonsense that Judas Quiriacus was foisting off on Helena, Constantine and the Christian world.

But with Constantine having seen the cross in the sky before the battle of Milvian Bridge and subsequently identifying the Shrine of Venus with the site of Jesus' crucifixion (with the use of visions and dreams and in association with the so-called supernatural revelations shown to his mother Helena), both Helena and Constantine became prime targets for Judas Quiriacus to pull off his subterfuge. The capstone for accepting all these hoaxes, however, must have come when Cyril (then bishop of Jerusalem) said that all the city saw a great cross in the sky stretching from new Golgotha to the Mount of Olives. This parhelion of the sun (on May 7th, A.D.350) was interpreted by the Christian authorities in Jerusalem as a wonderful sign from God that vindicated the newly discovered *western* site for Jesus' passion. Visions, dreams and signs had won the day.

And from that time until now the world has been honoring the wrong spot for Jesus' crucifixion. Most people have also accepted the wrong type of *stauros* by embracing the legitimacy of the Roman type of crosses that Judas Quiriacus unearthed for Helena. However, the actual *stauros* of Jesus was a living tree which was growing in the ground near the southern summit of the Mount of Olives.



Chapter 22

THE SURPRISING CAUSE OF JESUS' DEATH

Jesus was certainly crucified by the Romans but his death came about in a far different way than is normally supposed. The fact is, he did not die by crucifixion alone. Recall that Pilate wondered whether Jesus had died so early because it was usually an hour or so before sundown that the Jewish authorities broke the legs of those crucified in order to kill them. But it was reported to Pilate that Jesus had died about two hours earlier than this (Mark 15:44). Something else caused Jesus to die more quickly, and it presents us with a terrifying spectacle of what actually happened to him.

In one way, I almost wish we could be spared a knowledge of what took place at his crucifixion. It was most gruesome, and sad. But there is no use hiding our heads in the sand concerning the sufferings that Jesus endured. After all, the description of what happened is recorded in the Holy Scriptures (though overlooked by many people throughout the last 1500 years) and for that reason it is essential that each of us knows what occurred at that Passover season in A.D.30. When it is fully understood, it is truly a heart-breaking and horrendous scene. But the New Testament records

that a triumph and victory emerged because of the resurrection of Jesus and his subsequent exaltation to supreme power at the very throne of God the Father.

To understand just what punishment Jesus underwent, it is necessary to recall a prime scripture that is found in Isaiah's prophecy about the Suffering Servant recorded from Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12. The principal verse that allows us to comprehend the full meaning of the prophecy is given at its beginning in Isaiah 52:14.

"As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men."

Also coupled with this description of the Suffering Servant is a further prophetic account in Psalm 22 (personified in the sufferings of King David). Notice Psalm 22:16,17.

"For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and feet, I may tell all my bones: they look and stare at me."

While it appears that David applied Psalm 22 as belonging to himself in an allegorical sense, it was seen by the apostles as having a literal fulfillment in the person of Jesus. It is interesting, however, that these verses are usually not fully applied today in connection with Jesus' crucifixion. But let us do so. Coupling these two sections of the Bible together (as certainly was done by the writers of the New Testament) gives us a further indication to the type of death that Jesus encountered. Had there been no literal application of these verses above to Jesus it is difficult to see how the apostles could have defended them as describing the role of Jesus at his crucifixion (which, of course, was quite *literal*).

The Real Prophetic Descriptions of the Crucifixion of Jesus

If these prophetic descriptions in Isaiah and the Psalms are to be literally interpreted (and it appears that they were by the apostles) then we have the characterization of a man who was not only crucified but one who had some of his flesh so torn away from his

bones that people looking upon him after his ordeal could hardly tell he was a human being. As Isaiah said: His visage was so marred more than any man (Isaiah 52:14). Even the bones of his body were able to be seen penetrating outward through his skin (not simply observed under his skin). The text means that even his bare bones themselves were being exposed because so much skin and flesh had been rent away from them.

This is what the prophet Isaiah was saying in his description of the Suffering Servant. His flesh was to be so mangled and his body so disfigured that it was almost impossible to recognize him as being a normal human (Isaiah 52:14). What did his tormentors do to him (other than simple crucifixion) that much skin and flesh were torn away from the parts of his body facing them? I realize that such a description may seem offensive to some people, but it is time for all of us to take stock of what the scriptural revelation actually says and not be squeamish about the truth of the crucifixion scene. The prophet Isaiah described the Suffering Servant with his visage and form marred more than any man. Some people may find it distasteful to imagine Jesus in this fashion, but that is what Isaiah wrote and it seems reasonable to accept his description. The apostles certainly did, and several of them were also eyewitnesses to the crucifixion.

The Terrible Judgment on the Suffering Servant

What type of judicial punishment could produce such an awful description of the Suffering Servant? The scourging that Jesus was subjected to before his crucifixion cannot account for such mangling since Pilate intended to let him go after the soldiers had chastised him, and from this it shows that Pilate fully believed he would recover (Luke 23:22). No, it was not the beatings that Jesus endured under the abuse of the soldiers. There is really only one type of execution that could fit the scriptural descriptions (which was a common one in Jerusalem at the time). Interestingly, it is the only kind of punishment that the Mosaic legislation allowed for capital

crimes. What we find in these prophecies is a classic portrayal of a person who was pelted with stones.

There is no doubt that Jesus experienced the torment of volleys of small, sharp stones thrown at the front parts of his naked body while he was nailed to the tree of crucifixion. The stones were hurled at his face, at his mid-section and his legs. These must have been like sharp flintstones (many of which are on the Mount of Olives) that would break the skin and dislodge the flesh but without the force to break his bones. Such volleys of stones hitting his body persistently for almost six hours could produce the description of Isaiah: "As many were astonished at thee: his visage [his outward appearance] was *so marred* more than any man, and his form [*so marred*] more than the sons of man."

Old Testament Law Required the Execution by Stoning a Person

In the Old Testament stoning was the only type of execution that was prescribed for those committing capital crimes. Notice what Hasting's *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church* says about the Old Testament legislation concerning stoning.

"Stoning was the pelting of stones by a mob at a person who had merited their ill-will (Exo.8:26; 17:4; II Chron.24:20ff; cf. Heb.11:37; Acts 5:26) or the infliction of the death penalty by stoning (Lev.20:2; Deut.13:10). The method which an enraged crowd took of executing vengeance with the weapons lying readiest to their hand came to be employed afterwards as a regular and legal method of inflicting the death sentence on a criminal. Stoning is the *ONLY* form of capital punishment recognized in the *Mosaic Law*" (vol.II, pp.528,529 emphases mine).

In the time when Jesus was put to death, the Romans forbade the people of Judaea from applying the death penalty on anyone (John 18:31). It was Pilate who had the only authority to execute Jesus and the Roman method for crimes against the state for non-Romans was normally by crucifixion. And, without doubt, Jesus was indeed

crucified to a tree in the Roman fashion. But there was much more to Jesus' death than a simple crucifixion. Pilate also permitted the authorities in Jerusalem to kill him according to biblical law. He told them to "take ye him and judge him according to your law" (John 18:31). This was an extraordinary allowance because it subjected Jesus to suffer both the Roman method of execution for terrible crimes (the Gentile practice) but it also gave permission to the people of Jerusalem to pelt him with stones in the scriptural (Mosaic) manner. In Leviticus 24:15-18 Moses commanded that all Israelites and aliens in sight of a blasphemer should take up stones and stone the profane and ungodly person to death. The Hebrew actually means that Israel was to overwhelm the criminal with countless volleys of stones being thrown at his naked body (Rashi, *Commentary*, vol.II, p.111).

The Crime of Blasphemy was Punished by Stoning

It should be remembered that the crime which the authorities in Jerusalem charged against Jesus was that of blasphemy (Mark 14:64). This was the most dastardly crime imaginable to the people of Judaea. And the official judgment against him made him worthy of death in the most despicable fashion (Matthew 26:65,66). It is interesting that it was Jesus' claim that he was the Son of God that made the authorities proclaim him a blasphemer. With such a terrible charge against him, the leaders went to Pilate and asked him to allow Jesus to be killed in the manner prescribed by the Law of Moses. "We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he has made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7). To the authorities, Jesus' appraisal of himself was tantamount to blasphemy. The law that they were referring to was that of Leviticus 24:16.

"And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord [Yahweh], he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well as the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death."

Thus, all the residents of the land (Jews and Gentiles alike) were

required to barrage the blasphemer with volleys of stones. During the time of Jesus' ministry, many of the people who did not like his teaching had several times tried to carry out this Mosaic Law against Jesus. "Then they took up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going throughout the midst of them, and so passed by" (John 8:59). "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do you stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone you not; but for blasphemy; and because you, being a man, make yourself God" (John 10:31-33). The fact is, time and again the authorities were trying to kill him by stoning. "His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone you; and go you [to Jerusalem] again?" (John 11:8).

The Common People knew that Stoning was the Means for Execution

It is made clear in the Gospel record that the people who were hostile to Jesus were looking for every opportunity to stone him for his blasphemy (as they considered it). And they finally got their wish when they went to Pilate and said: "We have a law, *and by THAT LAW* he ought to die" (John 19:7). And Pilate acquiesced to their wishes. "Take you him *and judge him ACCORDING TO YOUR LAW*" (John 18:31). [Note that all the references in the previous paragraph about the people desiring him to be *stoned*, are found in the Gospel of John which records the appeal of the authorities to Pilate to have Jesus killed according to the Law of Moses. And this type of capital punishment was, of course, by stoning. There can be no doubt that this is what the authorities in Jerusalem were petitioning Pilate for permission to do. And Pilate gave the allowance.]

It should be realized that when the one being stoned was charged with the most heinous of crimes, such as blasphemy, then it was common for the stoning to be done with as much humiliation upon

the person as possible. The main part of the anatomy towards which the stones were hurled was to the face and eyes. Jesus himself stated that the stoning of an individual was normally for people to cast the stones at the head. "And again he sent unto them another servant: and at him they cast stones, *and wounded him in the head*" (Mark 12:4). It was to the head and the eyes that the stones were predominantly thrown, at least in the initial stages of the execution. Indeed, in Psalm 38 (one of the Psalms of David which reflects in a typical way what David's son, the Messiah, would have to suffer), it is stated that the person so described *was to be blinded* (see particularly verse 10 and read through verse 14). This was a section of Scripture that even the prophet Isaiah later quoted regarding the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53:7). There can hardly be a doubt that sometime during those six hours of being barraged by stones, several of the stones hit his eyes and Jesus was blinded by them.

Prophecy in the Old Testament Demanded that Jesus be Stoned

The fact that Jesus was stoned to satisfy the prophecy of Isaiah 52:14 that his appearance and form would be *marred* more than any man also helps to explain another New Testament reference that has long puzzled scholars. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on the eve of his crucifixion, he took bread and *broke* it and he said this *breaking* was like his body would be *broken* for them (Matthew 26:26). He spoke of the *breaking* of his body in the same context as the wine which represented his blood which was shed at his crucifixion for the remission of sins. But it has baffled scholars how *breaking off* pieces of flat and crispy bread just like the unleavened bread that Jews eat at Passover today called *matzos* could in any way represent the body of Jesus at his crucifixion? Since the New Testament specifically states that no bones in his body would be broken (John 19:36), many scholars can see no reference whatever to the death of Jesus in the *breaking* of the unleavened bread. To many of them they feel that the breaking of bread must only refer

to a ceremony at fellowship meals without any significance in regard to the crucifixion of Jesus. But many early Christians did not view it that way at all. Let us look at what early Christians thought.

There are a number of Greek manuscripts and writings of several Church Fathers which provide a comment of explanation to the text of First Corinthians 11:24 concerning the *breaking* of the bread at the Lord's Supper and they associated it with the *breaking* of Jesus' body at his crucifixion. They added their comments that the bread represented Jesus' body: "*which is broken for you*" (see *The Greek New Testament*, UBS, p.604). This means that there were early beliefs that the *broken bread* in the ceremony of the Lord's Supper did indeed represent the *broken body* of Jesus at the time of his crucifixion. For one thing, in the prophecy of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12 there was the statement in Hebrew that the person of the prophecy would be *broken* for our iniquities (*bruised*: King James). There is no question that the Hebrew word *dahchah* in Isaiah 53:5 means *broken* (cf. Isaiah 19:10).

The Body of Jesus had to be Broken Open with his Flesh Exposed

Thus, we have the beliefs of early Christians and the prophecy of Isaiah itself that Jesus' body would indeed be *broken* like *breaking off* pieces of unleavened bread. But the scourging of the soldiers before his crucifixion or the simple act of crucifixion itself could not account for such *breaking off* of pieces of his body. But the act of *stoning* would fit the description precisely. The hurling of small and sharp stones at Jesus' body would tear away pieces of his flesh ever so slowly until after about six hours of such treatment he would have been hanging on the tree of crucifixion as a person whose visage and form would have been so marred that he would not have resembled a normal human any longer. This is how Isaiah 52:14 describes the Suffering Servant, whom all the New Testament writers identified with Jesus, and I see no reason for not believing it. This is just another evidence that Jesus met his death

by *stoning* (his body torn to shreds in its frontal areas) and that he did not die from the crucifixion alone.

The apostle Paul was fully aware that Jesus was not only crucified in the Roman fashion of execution but he knew that the main reason for his death (and punishment) was through the Israelite method of stoning. In Paul's classic statement that Jesus had become a curse for us, he did not mean that it was simply by crucifixion alone that he had become such an accursed thing. Note what he said in Galatians 3:13.

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree.”

The apostle Paul was in no way intending his quote, concerning the application of the Mosaic Law in the death of Jesus, as pertaining to the Roman method of crucifixion alone. Paul selected the scripture in Deuteronomy 21:23 as describing Jesus' death for another reason. Anyone who is acquainted with the Old Testament legislation is well aware that Moses in this reference was in no way speaking about hanging someone on a tree *in order to kill him*. On the contrary, Moses ordered the authorities within Israel to hang the corpse of the accursed one on a tree with ropes *AFTER* the person had already been killed by *STONING*. Notice the quote in full that the apostle Paul referred to. It had nothing to do with killing a person by the Roman method of crucifixion, and no such thing was in Moses' mind. Moses meant simply to hang the corpse on a tree *after* the stoning.

“And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones that he die: so shall you put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear and fear. And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and you hang him on a tree: and his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall certainly bury him that day (for he that hangs is accursed of God), that your land be not defiled, which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance” (Deuteronomy 21:21-23).

Paul realized that though Jesus was indeed crucified in the Roman manner (and this contributed to his death), it was actually the stoning by the people of Jerusalem (both by Jews and Gentiles as the Law of Moses required) that caused his death. And while the original Mosaic legislation stated that the Israelites should first stone a blasphemer to death and *then* hang him on a tree until near sunset, in the case of Jesus it was Pilate who first nailed him to a tree and then he allowed the people at Jerusalem to stone him. Even using this reversal technique (first hanging on a tree and *then* stoning the criminal) was utilized by the people in Jerusalem within the first century. We now have new discoveries from the Dead Sea area that fully demonstrate this fact with certainty. The Jewish authorities in the first century had re-evaluated the strict wording of Deuteronomy 21: 21-23 and they were now interpreting it in the reverse order. The hanging could take place before the stoning.

The Old Testament also Required the Blasphemer be Hanged on a Tree

It is now proved that blasphemers and traitors were sometimes *first* hanged on a tree and *then* they were killed. One of the important Dead Sea Scrolls is called The Temple Scroll. The late Yigael Yadin wrote a major work about the contents of this scroll and there is an English version of the full text provided by Johann Maier (edited by Clines and Davies). These scholars were surprised to find a reference in Column 64 of the text that spoke about hanging traitors on a tree *and THEN* they would be killed while they were suspended from the tree. I will quote the section of the scroll concerning this important point.

“If a man informs against his people, and delivers up his people to a foreign nation, and does harm to his people, *you shall hang him on a tree, and he shall die....* And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death, and has defected into the midst of the nations, and has cursed his people and the children of Israel, *you shall hang him also on the tree, and he shall die*” (emphases mine).

Both Yadin and Maier considered that these texts in the *Temple Scroll* which spoke about Israelite executions were referring to crucifixions like the Romans were performing on criminals in the first century. At first glance one might come to that conclusion. But in no way is this what the authors of the *Temple Scroll* had in mind. The text does not say nail him to a tree and leave him there to die. Had the scroll meant that he was nailed to the tree and then left there without food or water to die, then it would have signified the type of crucifixion that Romans were used to in the first century. But this is not what the *Temple Scroll* meant because it says right in the text itself that they shall not let *his corpse* hang on the wood, but must bury it on the same day. The *Temple Scroll* itself demands that the criminal which was hanged alive on the tree would be a corpse before sundown of the day he was tied (or nailed) to the tree of execution.

This means that every criminal who was alive and tied (or nailed) to a tree for execution was going to be a dead person (according to the *Temple Scroll*) before sundown of the day the criminal was hoisted up to the tree. But how was such a person to be killed? In the case of the two robbers who were crucified with Jesus, the Roman soldiers broke their legs which killed them. But Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead without his legs being broken to bring on his death. Something had already killed him. Even the *Temple Scroll* informs us how those who had committed abominable crimes were to be killed. In the very context of the *Temple Scroll* of which we are referring it said (in the previous section): “Then all the men of the city *shall stone him*, so that he die.” The only official method of execution in the Mosaic Law (which the *Temple Scroll* was trying to implement) was by stoning. Only by stoning was the blasphemer or traitor executed according to Mosaic Law. And this is the method by which the *Temple Scroll* itself shows that anyone tied (or nailed) to a tree would die before sundown of the day on which the person was hoisted to the tree.

This is clearly what the *Temple Scroll* means, and interestingly, this is the exact method by which Jesus was put to death. Professor Yadin even showed that such an interpretation was understood by the ancients. He pointed out that the Syriac translation of Deuteronomy 21:22 shows a close relationship to what the *Temple Scroll* related. Note what the Syriac states.

The Hanging Took Place First and Then the Stoning

The Syriac manuscript says: "He is hanged on a tree AND is put to death" (p.207). This plainly shows that the criminal was first hanged on the tree in order to be put to death. He was certainly not tied (or nailed) to the tree to die a lingering death some days later. The criminal was suspended on a tree in order to be put to death. And what kind of death did the person experience? It was the only one sanctioned in the Mosaic Law and also in the *Temple Scroll* for ultra-criminals. Again, the death was by stoning.

And note this point. Not only does the Syriac translation of Deuteronomy 21:22 state that the blasphemer was to be hanged on a tree AND put to death but even in the Christian portion of the *Ascension of Isaiah* the text states that Jesus was crucified on a tree (3:13; 9:15; 11:21) and in some manuscripts it shows that Jesus was killed *after* he was hanged on the tree. The text states: "he will hang him upon a tree AND kill him." This shows that Jesus was actually killed *after* having been hanged on the tree of crucifixion. The Slavic Version of the same states: "and they will hang...AND he [the executioner] will kill" (Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol.II, p.170 emphases mine). Again, these references show that Jesus was at first hanged on the tree and then, after he was hanged, he was killed. He was killed by stoning.

The Temple Scroll States the Same Thing

These early opinions agree remarkably with the *Temple Scroll* in the method of executing criminals and blasphemers at the time of Jesus. These indications also agree with the teachings of the New

Testament regarding Jesus' death when all the evidence is brought into play. The truth is, though Jesus was certainly crucified to a tree on the Mount of Olives to satisfy the Roman methods of execution, he was also *stoned* by those in Jerusalem to make his death in accordance with Mosaic Law. It was the stoning that actually caused him to die after six hours of enduring the tearing of his flesh away from many of his bones.

The early Jewish people have long known that this was the manner in which Jesus met his death. In *Sanhedrin* 43a of the Talmud we have the following account of the crucifixion of Jesus.

“On the eve of the Passover Yeshu the Nazarean [Hebrew for Jesus the Nazarean] was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, ‘He is going forth TO BE STONED because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Any one who can say anything in his favour, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.’ But since nothing was brought forward in his favour he was hanged on the eve of Passover.”

True enough, Jewish authorities knew that Jesus was *hanged*, but they also were aware that he was also *stoned* to satisfy the Law of Moses. This is what was reserved for blasphemers and those who practiced sorcery. What we find in this Jewish historical reference is the fact that they were knowledgeable that Jesus was actually *stoned* while he was *hanging* on the tree of crucifixion.

The Jewish Authorities had Long Planned to Execute Jesus

This reference in the Talmud shows that the authorities in Jerusalem had been publicly proclaiming (for a period of 40 days before the Passover in A.D.30) that Jesus deserved to be stoned for his statements and teachings. The apostles were well aware of this public pronouncement and they reminded Jesus of it. His disciples say unto him, “Master, the Jews of late thought to stone you; and go you [to Jerusalem] again?” (John 11:8). Jesus knew that the environment at Jerusalem was hostile to him and his teachings, but

he went anyway to the capital. And true enough, the public pronouncements that were being made by the authorities in Jerusalem (starting 40 days before the Passover) were indeed carried out. They were true to their word. Jesus was hanged on a living tree and then stoned in order that the commands of Moses would be fulfilled regarding a person who blasphemed against God.

There is even more Jewish evidence on this matter. Professor Jacob Z. Lauterbach in his book "Rabbinic Essays" recalls a Jewish *Baraita* (a Jewish teaching that was not codified when the first part of the Talmud was devised or that no longer appears in the Talmud) in which it says that Jesus actually met his death *by stoning* and not by crucifixion alone. In a long discourse on this subject, the *Baraita* recorded: "he [Jesus] is going out *to be stoned*" followed by "they *hanged* him" (pp.494-497). This early Jewish tradition shows that Jesus was indeed stoned to death while he was hanging on the tree. This is similar to what the *Temple Scroll* said, but in the case of the *Temple Scroll* the victim was tied (not nailed) to the tree and then he was stoned to death.

Of course, the Gospels make it clear that Jesus was truly crucified to a tree in the Roman manner. But once it is recognized that people were also throwing stones at his naked body for almost a six hour period, it can be understood why he died so quickly. The robbers who were crucified with him were not stoned as he was (because they were not judged as being blasphemers). They had to have their legs broken to kill them (as would have happened to Jesus under normal circumstances) so that their bodies would not remain on the tree after sundown to accord with the Law of Moses.

Prophecies Showed that Jesus was to be Maimed above other Humans

It was Jesus, however, not the robbers, that Isaiah was talking about when he said that the Suffering Servant of his prophecy would have his visage and form *more marred* than any man (Isaiah

52:14). And with a barrage of stones being thrown at the front parts of his body (after about six hours of stoning), it can easily be understood how the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled precisely. And this is how the apostles (some of whom were eyewitnesses to the death of Jesus on the tree of crucifixion) were able to interpret the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus' ordeal in paying for the sins of the world. This evidence shows that it was actually the *stoning* that caused Jesus' death and not his crucifixion alone.

But this doesn't end the story as far as Jesus' punishment was concerned. To complete the humiliation for such an accursed one, there was one other Old Testament example that had to be accomplished to fulfill the totality of the Old Testament legislation on the punishment of despicable criminals. We find that the tree on which the ultra-criminal was hanged had to be consumed by fire as was Achan and all his goods in the time of Joshua. Note what the scriptural example shows for individuals who had been censured as being an accursed one as was Jesus.

“And it shall be, that *he that is taken with the accursed thing SHALL BE BURNT WITH FIRE*, he and all that he has: because he has transgressed the covenant of the Lord [Yahweh], and because he has wrought folly in Israel” (Joshua 7:15).

And this is exactly what the authorities in Jerusalem were intending to do with Jesus. But, as explained in the last chapter, Joseph of Arimathea stepped in hurriedly to prevent this fate from happening to the body of Jesus. Though it is probable that the tree on which Jesus was killed (being considered accursed) was uprooted and burnt to ashes to keep the land from being contaminated, Jesus himself was spared this judicial requirement because Pilate granted Joseph of Arimathea his request to bury Jesus in his newly hewn tomb not far away from the crucifixion site.

The Apostle Paul Substantiates the Stoning of Jesus

The fact that Jesus' death was brought about by *stoning* and not

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simply by crucifixion alone is also shown by the example of what happened to the apostle Paul. The first act of persecution against the apostle Paul which the New Testament records is his enduring the punishment of *stoning* (Acts 14:19,20). This occurred to Paul while he was in the area of Galatia about the year A.D.45. Let us now notice an important fact which Paul records about himself when he wrote to the Galatian Christians about four years later. Paul said that he, at that time, *bore in his body* the marks (really, the *SCARS*) which Jesus also had. Notice how he worded it:

“From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks [the *scars*] of the Lord Jesus” (Galatians 6:17).

Paul was saying that he had the scars of Jesus in his body and he was not speaking allegorically. Now, those *scars* were not piercings in his hands, feet and side as a result of being crucified like Jesus. No, Paul had never been crucified. But he had been *stoned* and left for dead (Acts 14:19,20). Though the type of stoning Paul endured was an illegal act, it was so severe that the people who stoned him (and then they dragged his body on the ground beyond the city limits) thought he was certainly dead. By a miracle, however, the apostle Paul got up and walked away.

And though Paul was not pelted for almost six hours, as was Jesus, he was still greatly tormented by this stoning. It resulted in many scars being on his body. And, as Jesus said, the part of the anatomy that persecutors normally injured in stoning was the face or the eyes (Mark 12:4). Is it not remarkable that the apostle Paul about four years after he was stoned told the Galatian Christians that he had at first been teaching them under great physical pain and he indicates that his principal affliction had something to do with his eyes?

“Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my trial which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected: but received me as an angel of God, even as Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I

bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would *have plucked out your own eyes* and have given them to me” (Galatians 4:13-15). [Note that Paul compared his ordeal as “like Jesus.”]

Though Paul had survived his stoning in a miraculous way, he was no doubt still suffering from its consequences. Since it was common for hostile people to hurl stones at the face of a person, it can readily be understood why such a stoning could have almost blinded Paul. He wrote with large alphabetic letters (Galatians 6:11), and this may well indicate that he had difficulty in seeing clearly. The lacerations had apparently so injured Paul that there was permanent damage to his eyes and face. When he told the Galatians that my trial in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected, it strongly implies that his wounds (even four years after his stoning) were ostensibly so bad and unattractive that the common thing for people to do would be to reject him from being in their company. The Galatians, however, did not reject him, but treated him like an angel of God, even as Jesus (because they knew that Jesus was also stoned and blinded). Since there were no plastic surgeons to improve Paul’s outward appearance, this is no doubt why Paul made a special point in telling the Galatians that he bore the *scars* of Jesus in his body (6:17). Those *scars* no doubt came from the wounds he suffered during his stoning.

This reference by Paul to his own *scars* as being the *scars* of Jesus is just another proof that Jesus himself had been subjected to stoning and not crucifixion alone. So many sharp stones had been thrown toward the front parts of his body that Jesus was made to appear like an unrecognizable bloody mass of flesh. It must have drastically altered his appearance. His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men (Isaiah 52:14).

People Should Not become Squeamish about the Crucifixion

Now I am fully aware that most people will not like this description of Jesus’ appearance, but this is what the prophet Isaiah said

would occur and such a scene would apply precisely to someone pelted with small, sharp stones for almost a six hour period. Many people are simply not able to psychologically accept such a different appraisal of the scene of Jesus crucifixion because they have never heard such a teaching before. That's true, the description of what Isaiah said of the Suffering Servant is so unknown in most religious circles that the teaching that Jesus was an unrecognizable bloody mass of flesh can hardly be believed by many people. And interestingly, this is exactly what Isaiah said would be the reaction to the very prophecy of which we are speaking.

“Kings shall shut their mouths at him [keep silent in astonishment]: for that which HAS NOT BEEN TOLD THEM shall they see and that which THEY HAD NOT HEARD shall they consider” (Isaiah 52:15).

Even the educated leaders of the people, so Isaiah tells us, will be utterly amazed at the real teaching about the Suffering Servant. They will be astonished at the actual report of Isaiah because it had not been told them by anyone. Yet *they shall see* and *they shall consider* the report carefully. But even when the leaders here it, will they believe Isaiah's report? Isaiah asks a question of these people who have had their eyes and ears opened to the truth about the Suffering Servant. Notice his question (though in our modern translations the question is placed in the following chapter [Isaiah 53:1]).

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

Isaiah knew that most people (even the kings of the world) would *not* believe his report. He realized that people would miss the full force of what he was saying. This has happened to all of us today, and this includes me. For the first 35 years of my professional life in the fields of history and theology, I missed the impact of Isaiah's prophecy entirely. And I dare say that most of my readers have missed it too. Most of us have never heard nor have we

read *anything* that would suggest that Isaiah's Suffering Servant (whom the apostles identified with Jesus) was an unrecognizable bloody mass of flesh whose outward appearance was so altered by his ordeal that hardly anyone seeing him near the time of his death would have thought him as having a normal human form.

The World knows Little about the Real Crucifixion of Jesus

This description of Isaiah about the Suffering Servant is so unknown to most of us (even to Christian people) that even kings will be astonished when they understand it. Even then, however, Isaiah still asks the question: Who hath believed our report? Many people find it difficult to accept that Jesus had the front parts of his body torn to shreds in order to fulfill the prophecy of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52:14). But this is what happened to him if all of the evidence is considered.

The actual description of Isaiah's Suffering Servant may help us to understand other matters in the New Testament that we have wondered about. For example, when Jesus was resurrected from the dead, the New Testament states that he appeared quite differently from what he was like before. Even Mary Magdalene and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus were not able to recognize him at first. Surely the apostles understood that his flesh had been restored in a much more glorious way than before (to accord with the prophetic description in Psalm 45:2), but we are told that the scars in his hands (or wrists) and feet, and the scar from the deep sword wound that penetrated his side (where the stones could not easily reach), were allowed to remain on his glorified body as a proof of his identity (John 20:24-31) and probably as a reminder to all of what *He* accomplished for the human race.

In closing this chapter, it should be mentioned that the fact of Jesus being killed because of the effects of stoning also helps to show the area in which he was executed. We read in early Jewish writings (written within a century and a half of Jesus' death) that

there was *only ONE place* in the Jerusalem area that was designated as the place of stoning. We read: “*The Place of Stoning* was outside [far away from] the court [located in the Temple], as it is written, Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp” (*Sanhedrin* 6:1 and also see sections 2,3 and 4). As explained in chapter five of this book, this place of execution in the time of Jesus was located near the summit of the Mount of Olives but slightly downslope towards the Temple so that the criminal could be killed in the presence of God.

Others were Stoned in this Area

There must have been an area on Olivet that encompassed Golgotha (the Place of the Poll) at which executions by stoning (as well as legal crucifixions) could take place. It is interesting that when Stephen the first Christian martyr was stoned, he first gave his witness inside the court of the Sanhedrin (Acts 6:12-15). The Sanhedrin was then located at the trading station on the Temple Mount (Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud*, p.302), and even Luke mentioned that the Sanhedrin was *in* this Holy Place which was the Temple (Acts 6:13,14). We are then told that Stephen was taken *outside the city* and the people began casting stones until he died. Where did this event take place? It was understood by early Christians to have occurred near the summit of the Mount of Olives. Wilkinson states: “The Martyrium of St. Stephen, built by Melania the Younger, and dedicated in 439, was inside the colonnade of the Imbomon...and the Martyrium on the Mount of Olives was probably the principal sanctuary of St. Stephen” (*Egeria's Travels*, p.185, note 1).

We thus find that early Christians built a Martyrium for Stephen inside the colonnade area of what we call the Imbomon today. A Martyrium was originally a place where a martyr suffered martyrdom (Smith, *Dict. of Christian Antiquities*, vol.II, p.1132). As soon as Constantine had the Church of the Holy Sepulchre built in Jerusalem, it became common for ecclesiastics to call it the

Martyrium of Jesus because they supposed that is where Jesus was martyred (*ibid.*). And so it was with Stephen. Since his execution was considered a legal one by the Sanhedrin, it would have been essential for Stephen to have been stoned at *The Place of Stoning*. And, the site of the Imbomon fits precisely.

But where is the Imbomon (the place of Stephen's Martyrium) situated? It was at the southern summit of the Mount of Olives. And importantly, we have earlier in this book identified the Imbomon area with Golgotha (the place where Jesus was also stoned and crucified). This information is just another reason why it is important to know that Jesus was *stoned* by the Jerusalem authorities (as was Stephen) and that both executions took place in the legal site for *stoning* called by the Jews the Place of Stoning.

This fact is now being acknowledged by scholars. The classical historian Enoch Powell of Britain (who became a politician and almost head of the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom) has just written a research study called "The Evolution of the Gospel" in which he claims Jesus was stoned to death. United Press reports are saying that his suggestion is causing quite a controversy in Britain. His suggestion is correct. Jesus was indeed stoned to death.

It is also important to remember that the events that happened to King David when he was ousted from his kingship (and even excommunicated from the society of Israel) at the time of Absalom's rebellion (II Samuel chapter 15 & 16). These events typified Jesus at his crucifixion. Recall that it was on the Mount of Olives where David experienced his humiliation and degradation (II Samuel 15:30,32; 16:1). This is where David composed Psalm 22 which Jesus cited as referring to himself at the time of his crucifixion (Matthew 27:46). And on this same mountain at Bahurim (located just east of the summit before descending into the Jordan Valley), a man of Benjamin began to call David accursed and tried incessantly to stone the king (II Samuel 16:5-14). This was typical of Jesus being accursed and stoned on the same Mount of Olives. It

is interesting that in New Testament times another son of Benjamin also came to hate Jesus and the early Christians so much that he lashed out at them in a similar way. That man was named Saul, who later became the apostle Paul (Acts 26:9-11). Whether there is any symbolic equation with Paul to this event that happened on Olivet to King David remains to be seen

Conclusion

The information I have given in this chapter provides a reasonable amount of evidence that Jesus met his death by *stoning* and not only by crucifixion. It also helps to show that Jesus was executed on the Mount of Olives because that is where the Place of Stoning was situated as shown by the Martyrium of Stephen. Once it is understood that Jesus died principally from *being stoned*, we can now know just how awful his crucifixion was.

This also helps us to realize in a better way why the apostles emphasized that Christians are saved through Jesus' blood. It has always been a mystery to theologians why so much emphasis is given in the New Testament to the spilling of Jesus' blood, while in normal crucifixions little blood ever reached the ground. Only a small amount of blood would ordinarily have issued from Jesus' wounds in his hands or feet while he was hanging on the tree (the blood that came forth by use of the spear would not count in a theological sense because that occurred after his death). But with the realization that Jesus was also *stoned* with small, sharp stones for almost six hours (and the front parts of his body torn to shreds), this scenario makes it easy to understand why Jesus' blood flowing copiously (as a theological symbol for the remission of sins) became an essential feature in Christian theology. Such a condition as described by Isaiah in his Suffering Servant prophecy would account for a great deal of his blood being shed for mankind at the time of his crucifixion. This is just another reason why *stoning* was a part of the crucifixion and death of Jesus atop the Mount of Olives.



Chapter 23

THE REAL JESUS OF THE BIBLE

It is amazing that few people today refer to the full prophecy of the Suffering Servant as mentioned by Isaiah when it comes to describing the historical events associated with Jesus' life and death. If they did, a new appreciation would emerge of what happened throughout Jesus' life and at the time of his crucifixion. But because the information about Jesus' body being torn to shreds is primarily based on a prophecy given about 750 years before the event, it has not been seriously considered as having a literal fulfillment. This is a mistake. If it were understood that Jesus was indeed stoned while he was nailed to the tree of crucifixion, then more attention would no doubt be given to what Isaiah said. Let us look more closely at the prophecy of Isaiah's Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12). It will tell us far more what happened throughout Jesus' life as well as the full story of his agony at "Golgotha."

First note a prime misinterpretation that many Christian teachers have insisted on for almost the past 1600 years. It is popular to believe that the last part of Isaiah's prophecy of the Suffering

Servant pertains to the final twenty-four hours of Jesus' life. As an example of this, note that when the King James Version states "with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5), it is almost consistently interpreted that this refers to the beatings given to him by the Roman soldiers just before his crucifixion. And when Isaiah spoke of his "griefs," "sorrows," "chastisement," "oppression," "affliction," along with the fact that no one would desire him for "beauty, comeliness and form," and that he would be "despised and rejected," it is almost universally believed that *all* these prophetic descriptions of Isaiah must apply *only* to the ordeal of his trial and crucifixion. But a big mistake is made when this is taught.

Did Jesus even have a Sniffle?

It is a popular Christian belief today that Jesus never experienced a day of sickness in his life. So certain are most people in this persuasion that even the mention of Jesus having sniffles associated with a cold is held by many to be anathema. The reason for their convictions centers primarily in the New Testament teachings that Jesus never sinned at any time during his life on earth. And true enough, this is precisely what the New Testament teaches (I Peter 2:21,22; II Corinthians 5:21). Since we read of Jesus' sinlessness, it is normally assumed by Christian interpreters that he could never have been ill at any time during his life. This is because there is biblical teaching that sickness can certainly be a result of sin (John 5:14), but this is not *always* the case and Jesus himself made this point quite plainly (John 9:3).

Indeed, common sense ought to show anyone that sicknesses are not always caused by sin (that is, the transgression of divine or human law). For example, animals get ill but they are quite incapable of sinning as we humans know it. Also, when bubonic plague swept through Europe in the Middle Ages, it infected the righteous as well as the wayward. And remember, a child might be accidentally bitten by a rabid animal, and the disease of rabies would set in, but it could not be imagined that the resultant sickness was

because of some sinful act done by the child. Still, it is a prevalent belief among many Christians that sickness is more often than not a punishment for sin. Since we are assured that Jesus never sinned once in the entirety of his life, and because he is symbolically compared to the *unblemished* Passover Lamb, it is felt by many that these factors exempt Jesus from even having a sniffle.

Was Jesus Healthy in a Perfect Sense?

It may appear a reasonable proposition on the surface that Jesus was totally sound in body and full of vibrant health, but there are major difficulties with this interpretation. The problem comes from the New Testament itself. It shows that Jesus was put under trial in *all things* as are other humans, and this of necessity must include the experience of sickness. And certainly, the Book of Hebrews states assuredly that Jesus was subjected to sicknesses while he was in the flesh. “For we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our *infirmities* [translated sicknesses in several contexts]; but one that has been in ALL POINTS tempted [put under trial] like as we are, *yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15).

There was not a major type of trial that all of us humans ordinarily go through that did not afflict Jesus. And that includes the common trials associated with *sicknesses* that are very much a part of our human experience. However, one must admit that it is difficult to understand how a sinless person (as the New Testament insists that Jesus was) could ever be sick. But the author of the Book of Hebrews said he was sick, and he came under the same type of trials that all humans go through. And though Jesus was indeed sick in a variety of ways, yet the Book of Hebrews states he was “without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). The reason the phrase “yet without sin” was tacked on to the teaching given above is because most people were then under the impression (as most people still are today) that experiencing infirmities [sicknesses] was very much a consequence of sinning. The writer of Hebrews, knowing the inclination of humans to make this assertion, emphatically stated that

Jesus (though he underwent many sicknesses as other humans) was still “without sin.”

Jesus Was Sickly and Sinless at the Same Time

The explanation in the Book of Hebrews would not have satisfied many of Jesus’ hometown people who thought him to be a sinner. They chided him because they were told that he could heal others, yet he was unable to heal himself. Jesus said they would say of him: “Physician, heal yourself” (Luke 4:23). When they observed how Jesus appeared, they could tell that he needed *healing*. This reference of Jesus concerning the opinion of his hometown people of Nazareth was not some well-known proverb or philosophical statement that they were applying to Jesus. They were simply observing the facts in front of their eyes. It was quite obvious to them that Jesus had been subjected to sicknesses in the past and that he was presently *sickly* in appearance.

It is important to note that it was his own hometown people who were ridiculing him by saying “*heal yourself*.” They had grown up with him, and they were well aware that he had been frequently *SICK*. I have emphasized this point, and it needs emphasizing because most people today know very little about these scriptural truths. To the Jewish people at the time, this meant that he was being subjected to the consequences of sin in his body. It appeared certain to them that he could not be a sinless person since he experienced sickness just as all humans. And, this opinion is the common one that is believed by most Christians today. They find it difficult to believe that Jesus even had a sniffle, let alone experience real sicknesses as do most humans. But it was very different with the author of the Book of Hebrews. Though he admitted that Jesus was indeed subjected to *sicknesses*, he still insisted that he was “*without sin*.” And so did the rest of the apostles (I Peter 2:21,22; II Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus Experienced Numerous Sicknesses

The truth is, Jesus was not free of sicknesses while he was growing up in Nazareth, nor was he a person showing forth a vibrant and healthy constitution while he was preaching the Gospel. Indeed, he appeared just the opposite of what most people imagine today. Jesus himself made reference to the fact that people looking on his physical frame would have wanted to reject him, because he did not look “perfect” as most people would think the Son of God should. This is shown by a reference that Jesus himself made. Recall his statement that the stone which the builders rejected had become the head of the corner (Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42; Ephesians 2:20 and I Peter 2:4-7). The masterbuilders of the early Temple could observe, without doubt, that the external condition of “that particular stone” was in an “imperfect state.” This appraisal was so positive to them that they disqualified that stone (and rightly so) from being a part of the Temple which had been ordained of God to contain only “perfect” stones. But who was that “imperfect stone” that the masterbuilders rejected as imperfect? Jesus said it applied to him. Most people looking on the outward fleshly condition of Jesus would have considered him “quite imperfect” (if one relied on physical appearance alone). He was one that most people would have rejected had he not been a great miracle worker and people followed him for that primary reason (John 6:2) or that they wanted to be fed with the free food he provided for them (John 6:26).

This illustration of the “stone rejected of men” was given by Jesus to show that when people of his time looked upon him they all saw him as an “imperfect” specimen of humanity. This made them wonder how he could be God’s Son. How could a person who was obviously “imperfect” in his outward flesh be the prophesied Messiah to redeem mankind to God? But they were not paying close attention to the description of the prophet Isaiah about the Suffering Servant. Had they done so, they would have realized that Jesus was precisely fulfilling the prophecy. And we today also need

to pay close attention to what Isaiah said because he reveals a Jesus that many people have never been introduced to in the flesh. Let us now look at what the Suffering Servant would be like from his birth to his death.

“For he shall grow up before him [Yahweh] as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he has no form or comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief [rendered sickness in the King James 12 times]: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isaiah 53:2,3).

The first point that one should recognize is Isaiah’s statement that the prophecy gives a historical description of the Suffering Servant from the time of his birth to that of his manhood and finally his death. “For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant” (Isaiah 53:2). His physical appearance throughout the time of his growing years would be like a tender plant, not a strong, robust and hearty one. He was also to be like “a root out of a dry ground.” This shows that he would be like a parched and undernourished plant, not full-fleshed, abundantly healthy or handsome. In fact, Isaiah (in the kindness of language that he could use yet remain truthful) said that he would actually be ugly as far as human opinion was concerned. “He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2). In no way was he like the handsome Anglo-Saxon or Italian gentlemen as he is so often depicted today. Indeed, he was just the opposite. To describe him in practical language today, he was frail in physique, homely in appearance and was subject to many infirmities and sicknesses of the flesh. This is precisely what the prophet Isaiah said the Suffering Servant would be like and it fits Jesus perfectly as shown by the narratives about his person given in the New Testament.

Jesus was Bearing our Sicknesses throughout his Life

In fact, when one understands what the actual Hebrew means in regard to the Suffering Servant, we find that he was “*knowing sickness*” [translated “acquainted with grief” in the King James]. That he was “*bearing sicknesses*” in his body [King James: “borne our griefs” though in the New Testament quote of this verse they correctly translate the phrase as “*bare our sicknesses*” (Matthew 8:17)]. And while the King James Version translates verse 10 as: “he hath put him to grief,” the actual intent of the original is: “he has made him *to be sick*.” And though the King James says: “for the transgression of my people was he stricken,” the actual intent is: “for the transgression of my people *was he plagued*.” The truth is, Jesus was bearing sicknesses and infirmities in his body. He was being plagued with illnesses. And all of these things were happening to him not simply when he was on the tree of crucifixion, *but throughout his life*. This can easily be shown if a person will pay close attention to the fulfillment of these prophecies about the Suffering Servant as understood by the apostles.

The apostles recorded that Isaiah’s prophecy was being fulfilled by Jesus long before his crucifixion. They saw him bearing sicknesses even during the height of his ministry. His personal experience with sickness gave him knowledgeable power over spirits and the sicknesses of others.

“When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with demons: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses*”(Matthew 8:16,17).

Jesus even learned to be obedient to God because of *bearing* those infirmities and sicknesses which he suffered (Hebrews 5:8).

Experiencing Sufferings was Beneficial to Jesus

His sufferings led to continual obedience, and that obedience gave him power and authority over evil spirits and the sicknesses of

others. By *BEARING* sicknesses he learned how bad they can be. He was even *BEARING* the evidence of sin in his body at the start of his ministry. When John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus' Messiahship at the first he said: "Behold the Lamb of God which *TAKES AWAY* [present tense] the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The verb can mean either "*TAKES UPON* him" (that is, he bears in the present tense) or "*TAKES AWAY*" (meaning, *CARRIES AWAY*). What did John mean?

There can be little doubt that John the Baptist had reference to Isaiah's prophecy which said "he hath *BORNE* our griefs [Hebrew: sicknesses], and *CARRIED* our sorrows" and "the Lord has *LAI*D on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4,6). Thus, Jesus was then bearing [present tense] the sin of the world on his shoulders and in his body (as John the Baptist said). Or, as Matthew put it, "he *CARRIED* our diseases" (see Matthew 8:17 Greek), and this carrying of those sicknesses in his body was long before his passion. Since Isaiah commenced the prophecy of the Suffering Servant with his birth, we can see why the New Testament writers show that Jesus was *BEARING* the sins of the world (not his own, because he had none) throughout his life in the flesh.

What Kind of Sicknesses did Jesus Experience?

The reader of the Bible needs to know what kind of sicknesses Jesus experienced throughout his lifetime? Actually, the prophecy of the Suffering Servant is most important to inform us of this matter. If one will pay close attention to what the prophecy actually relates we can gain a great deal of information to illumine this subject for us. I now wish to refer to a book published in 1969 of an out-of-print volume first printed in 1877 which gives a rundown of Jewish interpretation over the past twenty-two centuries on the meaning of Isaiah 52 and 53 in regard to the Suffering Servant. It is titled *The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah* by S.R.Driver and A. Neubauer (printed by Ktav Publishing, NY). The work is in two volumes. The first gives the original Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, etc.

of the ancient documents which were consulted. The second volume gives the English translations. It is a remarkable work and is indispensable in gaining the Jewish understanding of Isaiah's prophecy about the Suffering Servant from the historical viewpoint. And almost all of these early Jewish scholars did not feel Jesus fit the role of the Suffering Servant because of what their Christian contemporaries were telling them about the experiences of Jesus while he was in the flesh.

What is significant is the fact that the majority of about 60 Jewish sources (which the authors referred to) claim that the prophecy COULD NOT refer to Jesus because, among other things, Isaiah said that the man of the prophecy would be sickly, while the Jewish scholars had been told over the centuries by their Christian counterparts that Jesus had never been sick a day in his life. And true enough, that is what most Christians erroneously have taught about Jesus. This has been one of the main reasons why Jewish scholars (who adhere to the simple teachings of Isaiah's prophecy about the Suffering Servant) fail to see Jesus in it. They have taken Christian professors at their word that this was what the New Testament taught.

The Errors of Traditional Christian Teaching

But in no way does the New Testament teach what most Christian interpreters have been stating over the centuries. If one will read carefully what the apostles wrote, it can be recognized that they were well aware that Jesus had been sickly during his life (*BEARING* the sicknesses and sins of mankind in his body), though he never sinned once. This is exactly what the author of the Book of Hebrews stated (Hebrews 4:15). The apostles (many of whom were eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry) thought that he was precisely fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy of the Suffering Servant. The hometown people of Jesus were not uttering some kind of proverb when they said of him: "*Physician, heal yourself*" (Luke 4:23). They knew that he needed *healing* himself.

Let us now look at the catalog of Jewish references about the Suffering Servant from the book cited above. They are given in chronological order from the third century before Jesus onward.

Even Pre-Christian Scholars knew the Suffering Servant would be Sick

The first citation is that from the Septuagint Version. This is a Greek translation of the Old Testament began in the third century before Jesus. We will concentrate on the first five verses of Isaiah 53 since that is the primary section that shows the Suffering Servant as being frail and sickly. This Version is important to the issue because the apostles were familiar with it and it was a pre-Christian translation.

“O Lord, who has believed our report? and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? We brought a report as of a child before him: he is as a root *in a thirsty land*: he has no form or comeliness; and we saw him but he had no form or beauty. But his form was *ignoble*, and *inferior* to that of the children of men; he was a man in suffering, and acquainted with *the bearing of sickness*.... But he was wounded for our sins, and was *made sick* because of our transgressions” (emphases mine).

The Septuagint Version shows that the Suffering Servant would certainly be sickly (but, as the text says, not because of his own sins). Let us now go on to other references. There are three second century A D. translators who indicate the same thing. Aquila said: “a man of pains and known to illness.” Symmachus: “a man of pains and known to sickness.” Symmachus went on to say: “Surely he took up our sins, and endured our labors: but it thought him to be under the touch [of disease], plagued by God and humiliated.” Theodotion said: “a man of pains and known to sickness.”

It is certain from the above translators that they understood the Hebrew of Isaiah to mean that the Suffering Servant was prophesied to be sickly, even that he was subject to what was called “the plague.” But they were not the only ones who understood Isaiah in

this fashion. The Targum of Jonathan (an early paraphrase from the Hebrew into the Aramaic) rendered the verse: “like a man of pains and like one destined to sickness.”

Early Jewish Theologians were Specific Regarding the Sicknesses

References in the Jewish Talmud are even more specific. Mentioning the verse: “Surely he hath borne our sicknesses,” the Talmud states that this verse does not refer to Jesus, but to their prophesied Messianic redeemer. They said: “The Messiah, what is his name? The Rabbis say, *The Leprous One* [or] *The Sick One*” (*Sanhedrin* 98b). Also: “The Lord was pleased to bruise him, *he made him to be sick*” (*Berekoth* 5a).

Certainly, Jesus was not leprous because he was not isolated from the people in all his preaching experiences like a leper was required to be. But the strong language of Isaiah 53 is so similar to that which describes a leper in other contexts that it became a common teaching among some Jewish scholars to think that Isaiah’s Suffering Servant would be so sickly that only a leprous condition could properly describe him. And this opinion is reflected in what later Jewish scholars after the time of the Talmud understood Isaiah to be saying. We will now look at several of their remarks as recorded in our book under discussion.

Yepheth Ben Ali (10th century) gave the following comment: “By the words, ‘surely he hath carried our sicknesses,’ they mean that the pains and sickness which he fell into were merited by Israel, but that he bore them instead: the next words ‘yet we did esteem him, etc.’ intimate that they [the common people] thought him afflicted by God for his own sins, as they distinctly say, ‘smitten of God and afflicted.’ And here I think it necessary to pause a moment [said Yepheth] in order to explain why God caused these *sicknesses* to attach themselves to the Messiah for the sake of Israel.”

Rabbi Shelomoh Yizhaqi (Rashi, 11th century) said that Isaiah

53 spoke of the person of the prophecy “like a person stricken with leprosy...and that the sickness which ought to have fallen on us was carried by him.”

Rabbi Yoseph Qara (12th century) thought that the Suffering Servant carried “sicknesses and pains which for our iniquities should have been borne by us.”

Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra (12th century) said the verses suggest that people “thought that he had been stricken with the stroke or plague of leprosy.... It was God who smote him and afflicted him because the sickness ought to have come on us.”

Rabbi Jacob Ben Reuben (The Rabbanite, 12th century) is even more specific. He wrote: “The prophet declares that he was ‘despised and forlorn of men,’ a ‘man of pains and known to sickness.’ It seems to me [said Jacob Ben Reuben] that no one would be called ‘known to sickness’ or a ‘man of pains’ except a man who suffered from *severe sickness continually*” [emphasis mine].

Rabbi Jacob Ben Reuben went on to censure Christian interpreters who were saying that Jesus was the Suffering Servant of Isaiah though they taught that he was always free of sickness because of his sinlessness. He continued: “I know in fact that Christians will not find either in their New Testament, or in the words of the wise men of their own religion who tell them about the Messiah and his deeds, or, in fact, in any book in the world, that he [Jesus] ever had a pain, even a headache, up to the day of his death when he was delivered into the hands of those who smote him: we see then that the very terms themselves which are employed, ‘pain’ and ‘sickness,’ were not realized in his person, and consequently cannot apply to him.”

The New Testament was Misread or Misunderstood by the Jews

Rabbi Jacob could probably be excused for his error in stating that the New Testament did not state that Jesus was ever sick. This

is because he would not have studied it carefully. But the New Testament has Jesus even saying of himself that he was “the stone that the builders rejected,” and that the people said “Physician, heal yourself,” and the Book of Hebrews said he had infirmities and was subjected to all the things that humans are commonly afflicted with. While Rabbi Jacob can be excused, the Christian scholars of his own time have no excuse because many of them could read what the Hebrew of Isaiah 53 actually said, *and they failed to apply it to Jesus* even when the New Testament did.

Let us now go on with early Jewish interpretation of what Isaiah 53 said the Suffering Servant would undergo. Rabbi Jacob Ben Reuben (the Karaite, 12th century), a different person from the Rabbi of the previous paragraph, said that Isaiah stated the Suffering Servant would be “continually sick: he was like a leper from whom all hid their faces.... He became as one who was sick.”

Rabbi Eliezer of Beaugenci (12th century): “It was our sicknesses, those which for our sins we ought to have endured, he carried, sighing and groaning, and afflicting himself with sickness.... and by his stripes and sickness, which we ought to have laid to heart and made our own, we were healed.”

Rabbi Yoseph Ben Nathan (13th century): “He was a man of pains, and broken by sickness...but he carried our sickness, which ought to have come on us, came upon him.”

Rabbi Yeshaeyah Ben Mali (13th century): “The Lord was pleased to bruise him and sicken him, and therefore delivered him into the hands of the Gentiles.”

Rabbi Mosheh Ben Nahman (13th century): “He was pained for the iniquities of Israel, which occasion his tarrying, holding him back from becoming king over his people; and known to sickness, because a man who is sick is continually distressed with pain. Yet he carried our sicknesses, being himself sick and distressed for the transgressions which should have caused sickness and distress in us, and bearing the pains we ought to have experienced.”

Rabbi Aaron Ben Yoseph (the Elder, 14th century) said Isaiah 53 showed the prophesied atonement bearer was “to be made sick...but the Lord was pleased to bruise him in order to increase his reward, and to make him sick with long-continued sicknesses.”

Rabbi Mosheh Kohen Ibn Crispin (14th century): “Despised, and forlorn of men: despised, namely, in the eyes of the world *because of his loathsome appearance* [emphasis mine]. A man of pains and destined to sicknesses: as all that see him will say of him.” And, of course, this is exactly what those of Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth said of him: “Physician, heal yourself” (Luke 4:23).

Rabbi Shelomon Astruc (14th century) is even more to the point: “He was despised and forlorn of men, that is, he was not permitted to enter the society of men, because he was a man of pains, and broken by sickness. Perhaps the world denotes that he was so well known generally for the sicknesses which he endured, that in oaths made by men people would say ‘May such an one be like him’.”

Rabbi Abraham Farissol (16th century): “He was in truth despised and forlorn of men, exposed to accidents and sickness...but he was made sick and punished in our stead. He carried our sicknesses.”

Rabbi Mosheh El Sheikh (16th century) has a most interesting recognition of what Isaiah intended: “In spite of his holiness, he was a man of pains and broken by sicknesses: now there are two species of sickness, one when a man is in pain but is still able to move about, the other when he is attacked by some such disease as consumption or fever, when he is prostrated upon his bed but is free from pain; in the latter case he is said to be ‘broken by sickness.’ The prophet Isaiah says that both descriptions unite against the man spoken of.”

The Suffering Servant appeared Very Different than Most Imagine

All these early Jewish scholars which we have just mentioned

were simply endeavoring to show what the Hebrew of Isaiah actually was stating about what would happen to the Suffering Servant. Many of them felt that the “Jesus” of the Christians could in no way fulfill what Isaiah was saying because the majority of Christian theologians were united in their belief that Jesus had never been sick a day in his life. According to Christian authorities, Jesus never once had a sniffle. If this were the case, then the “Jesus” of the Christians could in no way be the Suffering Servant prophesied by Isaiah. This is one of the main reasons that Jewish interpreters (who could easily read the Hebrew of Isaiah 53) simply dismissed the Jesus of the Christians, and they focused their eyes on a future Suffering Servant who would fulfill what the prophet Isaiah said would one day occur. And one could hardly blame them.

The truth is, a great disservice has been done to people in the world who have been wanting to hear the Christian message from theologians of the Christian faith for the past 1600 years. People (including the Jews) have been told just the opposite of what the New Testament (and Isaiah the prophet) said happened in the person of Jesus. Though he was indeed faultless, he was nevertheless burdened with many pains, humiliations and sicknesses all his life. He was bearing the sins of the world long before he went to the tree of crucifixion.

It is interesting, however, that non-Gnostic Christian teachers before the time of Constantine (A.D.325) were consistent in showing forth the real Jesus of history. They truly portrayed him as one who was under continual suffering and that he was repulsive to look at, just as the prophet Isaiah stated he would be. Note what Keil and Delitzsch said in their commentary on Isaiah 53 (vol.II, p.307 note 1).

“The Church before the time of Constantine pictured to itself the Lord, as He walked on earth, as repulsive in His appearance; whereas the Church after Constantine pictured Him as having quite an ideal beauty.”

Smith's *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities* provides a number of historical references to show that the early fathers of the Church (before the time of Constantine) were well aware (and believed) that Jesus was repulsive in appearance (vol.I, p.875). But from the time of Constantine the description of Jesus in the flesh changed drastically. After Constantine he was portrayed by many Christians as the most handsome of men (the same article in Smith's *Dictionary* quotes these later references too).

The Creation of a New Jesus

With the fourth and fifth centuries, a new Jesus comes on the scene that was far different from the Suffering Servant of Isaiah or from what the New Testament and the early fathers had to relate. It became common to quote sections of Scripture which described God as a king and that he was fair in his divine appearance (Psalm 45:3). And true enough, the apostles believed that Jesus was a person of beauty before he came to earth and also *after* his resurrection. But while he was on the earth, and in the flesh, they understood him to have appeared very differently. The apostle Paul said that Jesus gave up the glory that he had before his birth and became Jesus, the one who no longer had any kingly glory or fair appearance. When Jesus came to earth, he became the lowly Jesus who manifested himself among mankind as a servant. He was then lacking in beauty. He was even poor and forlorn. Paul said: "For you know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich he became poor for your sakes, that you might become rich through his poverty" (II Corinthians 8:9). Paul went on to say:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, *being in the form of God*, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: *but made himself of NO REPUTATION*, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in the fashion of a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death"(Philippians 2:5-7).

But in the fourth century, theologians began to abandon the

teachings of Isaiah concerning the Suffering Servant and the indications within the New Testament about Jesus' fleshly existence and they imagined him as maintaining his God-like characteristics (even in his physical appearance). The Constantinian and post-Constantinian theologians emphasized the teaching that Jesus was like the unblemished Passover Lamb and they applied this to his outward appearance as well as to his character. But anyone who understands the scriptural records knows that this evaluation can only refer to his character, not to his outward, physical frame. Actually, even the "unblemishness" of the sacrificial lamb only meant that it was not to be deformed at the time of sacrifice, not that it could never have been sick in its life. Certainly, Jesus was not deformed in his outward physique, but he was nonetheless reckoned as the "stone" that the builders rejected (Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42; Ephesians 2:20 and I Peter 2:4-7). It was his character that resembled the unblemished lamb and not his outward appearance. The New Testament writers were well aware of this. They knew that Jesus did not retain his form and glory that he possessed before his incarnation. He emptied himself and became the *Jesus* who fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah's Suffering Servant.

Chapter 24

THE NEW JESUS OF THE FOURTH CENTURY

Christian people in the fourth century began to portray Jesus very differently from what earlier Christians believed. Not only did they start to make him *handsome* and *healthy* during his term of preaching, they also changed his actual appearance by putting long hair and a beard on him. And the image they chose closely resembled those of the pagan gods and the early Greek philosophers. The real interest in pictures and paintings of Jesus began in earnest in the early part of the fourth century. Before that time, it was very uncommon in orthodox circles to find any Christian having a picture, painting (and certainly not an idol or statue) of Jesus, the apostles or some of the early prophets or leaders. But early in the fourth century, the trend began to change. Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, whom we have mentioned in earlier chapters, was not pleased with Constantia Augusta (the daughter of Constantine and wife of Caesar Gallus) when she wanted Eusebius to provide her with a portrait of Jesus. Indignantly, he wrote:

“Since you have written about some image, it seems of Christ, wishing the said image to be sent to you by us, what, and of what kind, is this image which you call that of Christ?... Has this scrip-

ture alone escaped you, in which God by law forbids to make the likeness of anything in heaven, or on earth beneath? Have you ever seen such a thing in a church yourself or heard it from another? Have not such things been banished throughout the whole world, and driven off out of the churches; and has it been proclaimed to us alone among all men that it is not lawful to do such a thing” (quoted in Smith’s, *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*. vol.I, p.814).

The Invention of the Long Haired Jesus

The *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities* (vol.I,p.875) provides evidence that it was during the fourth century that the depiction of the Jesus we are accustomed to today had its invention. This is when the *handsome*, bearded, long-haired Jesus came into existence. Earlier portraits showed him to be beardless and short-haired which answered more closely to what was his true appearance. But whether shown as beardless and short-haired (as in pre-Constantine times) or with a beard and long haired (after Constantine), theologians even in the fourth/fifth centuries knew that the Holy Scriptures forbade any such depictions of deity. Augustine in the early fifth century showed how unlawful this was.

“It is not to be thought that God the Father is circumscribed by human form.... It is unlawful to set up such an image to God in a Christian temple. Much more is it wicked to set it up in the heart where the temple of God truly is” (quoted in *the Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, vol.I, p.875).

Actually, it is easy to show that Jesus did not have the long hair that many in the fourth century began to imagine he had while he taught in Judaea. The apostle Paul said the male was head of the wife as Jesus is head of the Church (I Corinthians 11:3) and that the human male resembles God in shape and form (verse 7). Paul then went on to state that it was a shame for any male person to have long hair since he was in the image of God (verse 14). He noted that it was custom in all the Churches of God (whether in Judaea or in Gentile lands) for men to have short hair and women to have their

hair long (verse 16). In the Book of Revelation women's hair in the first century is shown to have been quite distinct from men's (Revelation 9:8). If Jesus himself would have had long hair, Judas (at the time of his arrest) would only have needed to point out "the man with the long hair" rather than singling him out with a kiss (Luke 22:48) because it was quite out of the ordinary for normal Jewish men to have long hair.

Jewish Priests Required to Wear their Hair Short

There was a definite reason why Jewish men (especially in the time of Jesus) wore their hair short as common custom. The people knew that the Aaronic priests in the Temple at Jerusalem had the role of being mediators between the ordinary people of Israel and God. Sometimes the priests took the place of the people in petitioning God, while at other times the priests became a substitute for God in instructing the people. In the time of Jesus most of the Sadducees were priests, while the majority of the remainder of the Jews were Pharisees. The Pharisees applied the Scripture that the whole nation of Israel should be reckoned as priests (Exodus 19:6) and they invented some strict customs even for themselves and the common people that were actually designed for priests. And what was a principal custom (indeed, it was a command from God) that characterized the priests because of their roles in being like God to the people and the rest of the world? God commanded all His priests to have **SHORT HAIR**. That's right. The priests who administered in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple at Jerusalem were required by God to have short hair, not long hair in the manner that women adorned themselves.

Such a command had been in effect since the time of Moses. Whereas the King James Version translates Leviticus 10:6 as "uncover not your heads," the Jewish authorities always knew that this should be rendered "Let the hair of your heads **NOT** grow long" (see Rashi on Leviticus 10:6; and it is so translated in *The Jerusalem Bible*, Koren ed.).

This command of God was given again in the time of the prophet Ezekiel. “They [the priests] shall not shave their heads [that is, to be made bald], or let their locks grow LONG; they shall only trim the hair of their heads” (Ezekiel 44:20 RSV).

This shows that the priests of God (who represented God before the people) were forbidden by God to have long hair. In fact, if a priest let his hair grow more than thirty days without cutting it, it was reckoned as being as guilty as being intoxicated if they entered the Temple and the consequence of their infraction was *death* (*Sanhedrin* 22b, 36b). The ideal length was called “the Julian” which was a reference to the hair style of the Roman Emperors from Julius Caesar on through to Nero, who had their hair very short as their statues to this day show. It was the type of haircut on men that was in fashion in the 1950’s.

The priests were required to keep their hair trimmed short in order to do the divine administrations in the Temple. This is because they were looked on by the common Jewish people as substitutes for God. This was unlike some heathen priests, however, who wore long hair to mimic the gods they worshipped. But Jewish men in the first century followed the example of their priests who were required by God to wear their hair short. After all, the ordinary men wanted to be groomed like God, not like pagan gods, or the heathen philosophers or some alien Gentile priests whom they usually considered vile.

Long Haired Persons could Not Enter the Temple

While it can easily be shown that ordinary Jewish men wore their hair short, did not a special group known as Nazarites among the Jews let their hair grow without cutting it? Only when Jewish men were under a Nazarite vow which normally lasted for 30 days, and rarely beyond 100 days (see M’Clintock and Strong, *Cyclopaedia*, vol.VI, pp.881,882) or when in short periods of mourning (see early Jewish commentaries on Leviticus 10:6) did

Jewish men refrain from going to a barber. And interestingly, during the time Jewish men would let their hair grow (not to long lengths like the hair of women), they were forbidden by God to enter his Temple. The Hebrew word from which the term Nazarite gets its origin means “separation”. While these men under a Nazarite vow devoted themselves to contrition and humility (even shame for some of their actions), they were required to stay out of God’s Temple during their period of vow (that is, they were to stay away from God’s own home).

The teaching of the Holy Scriptures would not allow such men letting their hair grow to come before Him in the Temple. That is why they were called Nazarites (*separated ones*). While undergoing the period of their vow, these men were separated from the physical presence of God. But when their period of shame and contrition was over, the Scriptures permitted them to cut their hair at the threshold of the Temple and then, with the sacrifice of an animal and other purification rites, they could re-enter the Temple. But God wanted no long haired men in His presence in His Holy House.

Jesus Taught Openly in the Temple

This fact has some interesting bearing on the appearance of Jesus. Since we know that Jesus drank wine, and this shows He was not a Nazarite (Numbers 6:3), Jesus also taught openly in the Temple and the authorities in the time of Jesus would not allow long haired men to enter the Temple enclosure. Such men had to be separated from God.

As for lifetime Nazarites, it was common for them to braid the hair, like the seven braids on Samson (Judges 16:13) and to wind the braids around the head under a turban or other headgear. Samson was a warrior and he would never have allowed his braids to reach below his neck lest they be grasped by his enemies and cut off. Samson knew that cutting off his braided hair meant his strength was gone. This is why Samson would have wanted to

secure his braids as close to his head as possible. But even with long hair, lifetime Nazarites among the Israelites (and they were rare) did not let their hair hang down like the hair of women in the pagan style that Christians of the fourth century began to portray Jesus. In the Bible, it is evil spirits who are masculine but have long hair like women, and like the modern Jesus (Revelation 9:8). The teaching of the Holy Scriptures prohibits long haired men from coming into His presence. The Jewish people were well aware of this common trait that was demanded for the men to enter the Temple, and they kept their hair short because of it. And so did the *real* Jesus.

The truth is, the real Jesus of the Bible did *not* have long hair. Nor was he handsome in his outward form. According to the writers of the New Testament, he came into the world to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy of the Suffering Servant and they believed that Jesus performed the role perfectly. This means that the real Jesus who was crucified (and stoned to death) at Golgotha on the Mount of Olives was in actual fact continually frail and sickly in body and was bordering on what the world would call ugliness in appearance. The simple truth is, Jesus while teaching on earth had short hair and all the early portraits of him made in the hundred or so years before the time of Constantine show him also as beardless.

First Century Men Commonly wore their Hair Short

It was common custom throughout the Roman Empire in the first century for men to have their hair short. They followed the examples of the Caesars of Rome who always wore short hair. As far as males were concerned, Paul demanded that they keep their hair short. Indeed, even with the Greeks it was customary for men to wear their hair short except, as the Jews, for short periods of mourning. Charles Goodwin of Pusan, Korea supplied me with this quotation from the Loeb edition of Plutarch's *Moralia* on "The Roman Questions" 267B. "In Greece, whenever any misfortune comes, the women cut off their hair and the men let it grow, for it

is usual for men to have their hair cut and for women to let it grow” (emphasis mine, and note that short hair on men was normal).

Paul reminded his Greek readers in Corinth of this custom which he called the way of nature [instinct] among the Greeks. So, both Jewish and Greek men normally wore their hair short. It was even a religious duty for Jewish men. “Does not nature [instinct] itself teach you, that if a man have long hair it is a shame to him?” (I Corinthians 11:14).

Gentile Philosophers were Different

Most philosophers and most of the pagan gods were depicted with long hair. Dio Chrysostom, the practical philosopher who lived in the first century, told his readers that he and other philosophers wore their *hair long* (*Oration Thirty-Five*, vol.III. pp.391,401 Loeb ed.). Epictetus in his *Discourses* (Chapter 8) urged people not to adopt quickly the grooming habits of the professionals such as wearing the cloak, *wearing long hair and beard of the philosophers*. In Epictetus’ opinion only those who were true philosophers should adopt such grooming habits. Since Epictetus lived about 50 years after the apostle Paul, this is again proof that ordinary Greek men wore their hair short. But by the fourth century, some Christians began to teach that Jesus should be depicted like the heathen gods — with a beard and long hair.

The following excerpts from early historical documents can show the opposition by several Christian theologians during and soon after the time of Constantine to the pagan portrayals of Jesus that were then beginning to be adopted. This is when the long-haired Jesus with a beard first appeared. It is a major error.

The Opinion of Eusebius

The following quote (abridged) is from Eusebius’ “Letter to Constantia” (the sister of Constantine the Great). It shows the utter disdain of Eusebius for what was then occurring among some

Christians who wanted to portray Jesus as some were guessing that he appeared in his human flesh. All words in brackets are my explanations:

“You also wrote me about some supposed image of Christ, which image you wished me to send to you. Now what kind of thing is that you refer to as the image of Christ? I do not know what compelled you to request that an image of Our Savior should be shown. What kind of image of Christ are you seeking? Is it the true and unadulterated one which bears His essential characteristics [His divine image], or the one which He assumed for our sake when He took up the form of a servant [His human form]?... Granted, He has two forms, and even I do not think that your petition has to do with His divine form....

“Surely then, you are seeking His image as a servant, that of the flesh which He assumed for our sake.... How can one paint an image so unattainable...unless, as so the unbelieving pagans, one is to represent things that have no possible resemblance to anything...? For they [the pagans] make such idols when they wish to form the likeness of what they think to be a god or, as they might say, one of the heroes or anything else of like nature, yet they are unable even to approach a likeness, and accurately represent some strange human forms. Surely, even you will agree with me that such practices are illegal for us. [Eusebius believed, accurately so, that even a *true* likeness of Jesus — if one were available — was still not allowed to be displayed by biblical teaching.] Have you ever heard of such a resemblance yourself in church or from another person? Are not such things excluded and banished from churches all over the world, and does not everyone know that such practices are not permitted to us alone?

“Once there was a woman, I do not know how, brought me in her hands a picture of two men in the demeanor of philosophers [Dio Chrysostom, “Oration Thirty-Five,” vol.III,pp.391,401, Loeb ed., stated that Gentile philosophers generally wore *long hair*] and the woman mentioned that they were Paul and the Savior. I have no way of knowing where she got this information or where she learned it. But in order that neither she nor others might receive offense, I took the picture away from her and kept it in my house, as I thought it was improper for such things to be displayed to others, lest we appear, like idol worshippers, to carry our God around

in an image. I note that Paul informs all of us not to hold any more to things of the flesh; because he tells us that though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet from now on we know Him no more.”

The Warning of Epiphanius

The following quotation is from Epiphanius of Salamis in his “Letter to the Emperor Theodosius” (written somewhere between A.D.379-395).

“Which of the earlier Fathers ever painted an image of Christ and put it in a church or a private home? [None of them ever did such a thing.] Which early bishop ever dishonored Christ by portraying Him on door curtains?... Moreover, they are deceiving who represent the likeness of [biblical] saints in various forms according to their fancy, sometimes showing the same persons as old men, sometimes as youths, intruding into things which they have not seen. For they paint the Savior *with long hair*, and this by guessing because He is called a Nazarene, and Nazarenes wear long hair. They are in error if they try to attach stereotypes to Him, because the Savior drank wine, whereas the Nazarenes [the Nazarites] did not.

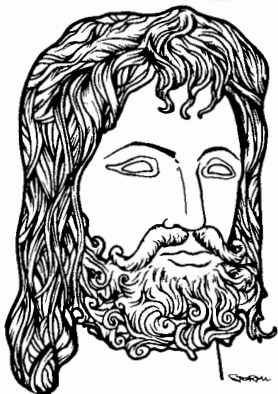
“They also show forth deception by inventing things according to their fancies. These impostors represent the holy apostle Peter as an elderly man with hair and beard cut short; some represent holy Paul as a man with receding hair, others as being bald and bearded, and the other apostles are shown having their hair closely cropped. If then the Savior *had long hair* while his apostles were cropped, and since by not being cropped, He was unlike them in appearance, for what reason did the Pharisees and scribes give a fee of thirty silver pieces to Judas that he might kiss Him and show them that He was the one they looked for, when they might themselves or by means of others have determined by reason of *His [long] hair* Him whom they were seeking to find, and thereby without paying a fee?....

“Can you not see, O most God-loving emperor, that this state of things is not agreeable to God? [Which trend was then sweeping the Christian world.] Wherefore I beg of you...that the curtains which may be found that have such false depictions of the apostles

or prophets or of the Lord Christ Himself should be collected from churches, baptisteries, houses and martyria [sites where martyrs were buried or honored] and that you should give them over for the burial of the poor, and as [concerning the depictions] on walls, that they should be whitewashed. As for those that have already been represented in mosaics, realizing that their removal is difficult you know what to command in the wisdom that God has given you. If it be possible to remove them [the mosaics], well and good; but if it proves impossible, let that which has already been accomplished be sufficient, and let no one paint in this fashion from now on.”

Not only did the early Christian authorities believe it was wrong to display even a true image of Jesus, but now the artists in the time of Constantine began to show Jesus with *long hair* and a *beard* like we see Him predominantly depicted today. In the fourth century it became common for many Gentile peoples throughout the Roman Empire (who had long worshipped pagan gods and goddesses) to begin identifying their deities of old with the newly honored “Jesus,” “Mary,” and the “twelve apostles” (plus other saints of the Old and New Testaments). One particular deity that seemed to blend together the attributes of several gods into a unified portrayal of deity was the Egyptian god “Sarapis.” This god had been famous for 600 years in Egypt and now his worship was found all over the Roman Empire. He was equated with the Greek Zeus (the chief god over all other gods) along with Asclepius (the god of healing). Professor Everett Ferguson in his excellent work titled *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (page 174) shows an example that the statues of Asclepius (the pagan god of healing) were images “that imitated Zeus... and that his portraiture influenced artists in depicting both Sarapis [the Egyptian Zeus] and Christ.”

Remarkably, the pagan god Sarapis of the fourth century appeared very much like what Christians (from the time of Constantine onwards) began to depict as their “Jesus.” At that time the people began to abandon all of the early depictions of Jesus made in the previous hundred years or so (which showed “Jesus”



With the time of Constantine a new type of JESUS began to be portrayed among the Christian population of the Roman Empire. They took the style of grooming which was typical of the pagan gods and adopted it as their "JESUS." The above drawing is from a bust in the British Museum of Sarapis, the Egyptian version of Zeus (the chief of the Gentile gods). See reference Harper's "Dictionary of Classical Literature and Antiquities," article "Coma."



Though Eusebius said that making any depiction of Christ was contrary to the Second Commandment, in the pre-Constantine period we find people in some quarters making Jesus to appear as the Good Shepherd, youthful, beardless and with short hair. From Didron's "Christian Iconography," vol.I, p.339.

normally as young, beardless and with hair like ordinary men — not with long flowing feminine type of hair). But now, with Constantine, the people began to want “Jesus” to appear like the pagan gods, so they selected the model of Zeus after the Egyptian rendition of Sarapis (the Egyptian Zeus) to be their new “Jesus.” What they actually did was to change the name of “Zeus” (Sarapis) into “Jesus.” The people kept on worshipping Zeus (Sarapis) but they now called him “Jesus.” This is the kind of “another Jesus” that the apostle Paul talked about (II Corinthians 11:4).

The *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, has a relevant comment about the proliferation of the practice of idolatry among Christians since the fourth century.

“No religion can rival Christianity in the multiplicity of its images. In some large churches, such as the French cathedrals of Paris, Chartres, Reims, and Amiens, there are as many as two, three, or four thousand statues; and in the cathedrals of Chartres, Bourges, and Le Mans, three, four, or five thousand figures on stained-glass. Although quite a number of these are figures of unimportant personages, nevertheless we have here what has been called a whole bible for use of the unlettered. Next to Christianity comes Buddhism, which has covered India, Ceylon, and the Malay Archipelago with its bas-reliefs, and flooded Tibet, China, and Japan with its painted images; in this it has been imitated by the other religions of the Far East, including Hinduism. It is superfluous to mention here the service rendered to art by the mythological compositions of Graeco-Roman sculpture. Of less importance from an aesthetic point of view, but nonetheless interesting, are the bas-reliefs and paintings of Egypt, and the sculptures of Mesopotamia and Asia Minor. It may be said that the region where religious images are found forms a belt on the surface of the globe which includes the northern hemisphere from Japan to Mexico, while in the southern hemisphere there are only some rudiments of art” (vol. VII. p.111).

Is it not interesting that Christianity out performs all of Buddhism and Hinduism in the use of religious images in their worship services today? Not only that, modern Christianity also far

out performs ancient Egypt in heeding images, and even more revealing is the fact that Christendom even out produces ancient Mesopotamia in idolatry (which was the very heartland of idolatry and image usage that the biblical prophets condemned the most). And yes, our indulgence in the western world to the use of images in religious services or for reminders in our homes of deity and saints is even greater than that of early Greece and Rome.

This is one of the main reasons that people of Judaism and those in Islam have shunned the “Jesus” of Christian tradition. The Jewish people see modern Christianity as indulging in the principles of rank idolatry. And this opinion equally applies to people today who practice Islam. These people are very well aware of what constitutes idolatry in the classical sense, and it is easy to see that Christendom today is firmly engaged in its practice.

It is no use saying to those in Judaism and Islam that Christians really are not idolaters because Christians do not worship statues and images but they are only utilizing them to remind them of God and the saints. That theory will go over like a lead balloon among Jews, Muslims and any scholar of history. It is evident from the historical records that, in the main, that theory is precisely what the ancient idolaters of Babylon, Greece and Rome would have said to any inquisitive person some two thousand years ago. The truth is, by any standard of judgment that is historically legitimate, the world’s main idolaters today are those of mainline Christendom with their pictures of a long haired Zeus (whom they call “Jesus”) and their statues and images of dead people they call “saints.”

It is no wonder that the Jewish people today do not want to call the modern “Jesus” as their Messiah. The world since the time of Constantine have adopted the appearance of the pagan gods (not the real Jesus of the New Testament) as their Jesus they wish to worship.



Chapter 25

***THE YEAR OF
JESUS'
CRUCIFIXION***

The Jewish records that have come down to us reckon some unusual events in Jewish history that began in the year A.D.30. This is the very year in which Jesus was crucified. This is shown in more detail in Addendum One. The one generation of 40 years that followed the crucifixion of Jesus was of profound significance to the Jewish rabbis who lived at the time and even for those who succeeded them for the next 400 years. It is time that we look at these Jewish records that most Christian theologians and scholars seem completely unaware of. These early records supply us with some of the most interesting and informative teachings regarding Jerusalem, the Temple and the Jewish people themselves in the single generation of 40 years that followed the crucifixion of Jesus. Indeed, the most significant thing that occurred at the very end of that period of 40 years was the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem that Jesus had prophesied would occur (Matthew 24:1-43). Let us notice some of these important events that happened in history that most people today know nothing about. What occurred will show that the Jewish authorities were well aware that something of supreme importance began in the year A.D.30 that finally

culminated in the destruction of their Temple and the city of Jerusalem in A.D.70. This period of 40 years was singularly significant in symbolic occurrences involving the Temple at Jerusalem. There was something very special with that span of 40 years. Indeed, an interval of 40 years was looked on as prophetically important to the Jewish people. The Book of Hebrews recorded: "Your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works *forty years*. Wherefore I was grieved with *that generation*" (Hebrews 3:9,10).

The Prophetic Importance of a Forty Year Period

The fact that 40 years was one generation in prophetic interpretation was a well established belief. The number 40 itself was normally attached to the symbol of trial, punishment, or a span of time associated with special human experiences. There are numerous examples to show this. Jesus' temptation with Satan continued 40 days (Matthew 4:2). The time between Jesus' resurrection and his ascension was 40 days (Acts 1:3). Moses spent 40 days on Mount Sinai receiving God's law (Exodus 24:18), and there was the 40 days' trip to the same area by the prophet Elijah (I Kings 19:8). There were 40 days and nights of the Flood (Genesis 7:4,17) and Nineveh was granted 40 days to repent (Jonah 3:4). We even have 40 days becoming 40 years in the judgment upon the rebellious Israelites for not entering the Promised Land (Numbers 14:34). Later, the Philistine servitude lasted 40 years (Judges 13:1), and the punishment on Egypt was prophesied to last for a period of 40 years (Ezekiel 29:11).

Even important periods associated with human life had the number 40 associated with them. The human gestation period, for example, is normally 40 weeks and in biblical parlance this was considered 40 weeks of trial on women. A boy baby was purified 40 days after his birth (Leviticus 12:3,4) and 80 days (2 times 40) for a female (verse 5). While a human became of spiritual age at 30 years (Numbers 4:3; Luke 3:23), the person was ideally given a fur-

ther 40 years of trial (or experience) in adult life (30 plus 40 years equaling the ideal 70 years of Psalm 90:10). Joseph, however, being reckoned the firstborn of Jacob was given a double blessing, and this included among other things a double period of full, adult life. He lived to be 110 years of age (30 plus two 40 year periods). Joshua also attained to the same 110 years of life (Genesis 50:22; Joshua 24:29). Moses, on the other hand, was even more blessed and lived 120 years (3 times 40). The ancients considered it no accident that Moses was not only selected for his historic role at 40 years of age, but he also led the children of Israel out of Egypt at 80 (2 times 40) and died at 120 (3 times 40).

In fact, the 40 years' period of the Exodus became the standard number of years for reckoning a generation. This is found in important historical time periods mentioned in the Bible. The time from the Exodus to the building of the Temple in Solomon's reign was understood as being 480 years (12 times 40) (I Kings 6:1). David and Solomon were considered having ruled for 40 years each (II Samuel 5:4; I Kings 11:42). Even King Saul was given 40 years (Acts 13:21) though his exact period of Saul's reign is difficult to determine in the Old Testament. And recall, the Exodus period itself was exactly 40 years, which the Book of Hebrews called "that generation" (Hebrews 3:9,10). In short, it became common to acknowledge any generation, ideally, as being 40 years in length.

"Forty years represented a generation, and thus the number 40 became a round number for a full period, a complete epoch"
(Hastings, *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, vol. II.p.250).

As a matter of fact, the Jewish authorities in the 40 years between Jesus' crucifixion in A.D.30 to A.D.70 were given some marvelous signs from God to show that Jesus' teaching about the coming destruction of the Temple would indeed take place. It is easy to see a preoccupation that the apostles (and other Christians) must have had regarding the 40 years' period after Jesus' resurrection. When Jesus delivered the Olivet Prophecy in A.D.30 about the

destruction of Jerusalem, he said it would occur in that generation. And remarkably, the catastrophe did in fact happen in A.D.70 exactly 40 years later.

Supernatural Signs for the Temple's Destruction

There were four miraculous signs in particular that the apostles and the Jewish people witnessed in the 40 years before the destruction of the Temple and the historical accuracy of these four signs are recorded in both the Jerusalem and the Babylonian Talmuds. This shows that the knowledge of these four special signs was well recognized by the Jewish authorities in the period when the Talmuds were compiled. It is now time that all of us who desire to know the history of Palestine in the first century be made aware of those outstanding warning signs. These signs all started with the exact year in which Jesus was crucified and anyone with any common sense should be able to tell that they were signs from God that had their significance beginning with that very year of the crucifixion of Jesus. This fact is not only important for Christians to know, but it is equally significant for all the Jewish people today. What were those four signs?

First, note what the Jerusalem Talmud has to say on this matter. [The following translation is that of Jacob Neusner from his book *The Yerushalmi*, pages 156,157.]

“Forty years before the destruction of the Temple [starting in A.D.30] the western light went out, the crimson thread remained crimson, and the lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand. They would close the gates of the Temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open. Said Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai to the Temple, ‘O Temple, why do you frighten us? We know that you will end up destroyed. For it has been said ‘Open your doors, O Lebanon [a symbol for the Temple at Jerusalem which was made from Lebanese timbers], that the fire may devour your cedars’ (Zechariah 11:1)” (*Sotah* 6:3).

Let us now look at what the Babylonian Talmud has to say

(quoted from the Soncino Version).

“Our rabbis taught: During **the last forty years** before the destruction of the Temple the lot [‘For the Lord’] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-coloured strap become white; nor did the western most light shine; and the doors of the *Hekel* would open by themselves, until Yohanan ben Zakkai rebuked them, saying: *Hekel, Hekel*, why wilt thou be the alarmer thyself? I know about thee that thou wilt be destroyed, for Zechariah ben Iddo has already prophesied concerning thee: *Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars*” (*Yoma* 39b the bold letters are mine, but the words in brackets and italics are part of the Soncino text).

The four signs are precisely the same in both Talmuds, and both state that the signs began in the year A.D.30 (which is the very year in which Jesus died on the tree of crucifixion). As explained earlier in this book, there was another important historical event which happened to the Jewish nation that occurred in that same year. Let me record it again in this chapter.

“**Forty years before** the destruction of Jerusalem, the Sanhedrin was banished [from the Chamber of Hewn Stones in the Temple] and sat in the Trading Station [also in the Temple, but east of its former location]” (*Shabbath* 15a the bold letters and words in brackets are mine).

As I explained in my earlier chapter, the move of the official Sanhedrin from the Chamber of Hewn Stones (near the Altar of Burnt Offering in the Temple) could be accounted for by the falling stone-work that was over the entrance to the Hekel [the Holy Place] which supported the curtain that tore in two at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus. Something must have happened to that vaulted structure called the Chamber of Hewn Stones that rendered it unfit for the Sanhedrin to enter from A.D.30 onward. The earthquake at the crucifixion could well have caused the damage. No other explanation that is discernible in the historical records makes sense. This would mean that the last trial ever held in that prestigious and beautiful building on the Temple mount was that of Jesus.

Miraculous Signs for the Jews Commence with the Crucifixion of Jesus

With the event which destroyed the beautiful chambers of the Supreme Court (the Sanhedrin) on the Temple Mount (which occurred exactly forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple), there began a series of important signs that the Temple and its ritualistic system were destined to come to an end. The apostles of Jesus would have been well aware of these signs as were the Jewish people in Judaea. Indeed, the signs were looked on as being most important to the Jewish authorities. The four signs involving the Temple were interpreted by Yohanan ben Zakkai (the most important rabbi at the time) as being warnings that the Temple was to be destroyed. This witness of Yohanan is significant because he lived both before and after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. He was the most important person in the Jewish hierarchy during the period after the destruction in A.D.70. He became head of the new seat of Jewish government which was established after A.D.70 at Jabneh (Jamnia) about thirty miles west of Jerusalem. His witness and interpretation is paramount to justify the reliability of the occurrence of these four signs.

One thing must be noticed by us all. Yohanan ben Zakkai (and all the later rabbis for the next 400 years) maintained that these four signs in the Temple were given by God to denote the coming destruction of the Temple, not that the people had gone over to Christianity or some other reason. While the four signs commenced precisely with A.D.30, the year Jesus was crucified and resurrected from the dead, none of the signs was associated by Yohanan ben Zakkai or the later rabbis as a disapproval from God because of the arrival of Christianity. The Jewish rabbis at the time saw no displeasure on God's part with the vast numbers of Jewish people who had gone over to a belief in Jesus in the forty years following the crucifixion. James stated that tens of thousands of Jews then believed the Gospel (Acts 21:20 Greek). Indeed, it was because the

vast majority of those Jewish Christians turned away from the faith of (and in) Jesus that Peter and Jude wrote their epistles of warning to the Jews (Second Peter and Jude) that their erroneous actions would lead the nation into becoming as desolate as were Sodom and Gomorrah. See my book *Restoring the Original Bible* where I have the significance of these events in greater detail.

The Jewish Authorities saw the Fate of the Temple beginning in A.D.30

The truth is, Jesus had foretold, just two days before his crucifixion, that Jerusalem and the Temple were destined to be destroyed (Matthew 24:1-3). He had also told the authorities that he, himself, was the new Temple and that he (being that new Temple) would be raised from the dead after three days (John 2:19-21). All Jewish Christians who believed Jesus were looking for the destruction of the physical Temple that existed in Jerusalem, and Yohanan ben Zakkai (who lived at the time of the apostles, and afterward) also knew that God was prophesying the destruction of the Temple by the four major signs that were given at the time. Let us now look closely at what those signs were.

Notice How Powerful were the Four Signs

The Babylonian Talmud lists the first sign as being that in which the lot 'for the Lord' did not come up in the right hand (*Yoma* 39b). What was meant by this? The Holy Scriptures speak about this ceremony (Leviticus 16:5-34). On the Day of Atonement two identical goats were brought before the High Priest and lots were cast over them (one source says the lots were in the form of a white and black stone, the white stone was 'for the Lord' and the black was 'for the Scapegoat'). The priest would put his right hand into a receptacle containing the two stones and without looking down, select a stone with his right hand and place it over the right hand goat. The Babylonian Talmud says that in the previous two hundred years the stone would be sometimes white and sometimes black as

most people would have expected (that is, a random selection each year would bring up the black stone as often as the white). But beginning in A.D.30 (the very year in which Jesus prophesied the coming destruction of the Temple, and the very year of his death and resurrection), the right hand of the High Priest selected the black stone every time for forty straight years.

The odds of a black stone coming up forty times in a row are almost astronomical in scope. And, according to *Pascal's Table of Binominal Coefficients* (a table of odds first devised by the French scientist Pascal who lived from A.D.1623 to 1662 in which he showed odds in a pyramid style), the numerical odds of this happening under normal circumstances would be one chance in 1,099,511,627,776.

Whew!

But the Jewish records show this rare phenomenon occurred with regular consistency for forty straight years. The apostles would have been well aware of this occurrence and with each year passing with the same consistency of the black stone coming up in the High Priest's hand, they would have been amazed with its significance. Some Jewish authorities at the time (and certainly later) were also impressed.

An Even Greater Miraculous Event in the Temple

That does not conclude the matter. Both Talmuds also report another sign (from eye-witness accounts) that boggles the imagination. Also beginning in A.D.30 (the very year of Jesus' crucifixion), the western light of the Menorah (which is the Hebrew name for the seven branched lampstand in the Holy Place) went out for the same period of forty years. This Menorah was positioned with its seven lamps facing north. The western lamp was that which was next to the Holy of Holies and it was the most important for that reason. In fact, we are told in the Talmud that at dusk the lamps that were unlit in the daytime (the middle four lamps remained unlit,

while the two eastern lamps normally stayed lit during the day) were to be reignited from the flames of the western lamp (which was a lamp that was supposed to stay lit all the time — it was like the eternal flame that we see today in some national monuments). Josephus, citing an earlier historian, said that on the Temple Menorah there was a flame that was supposed to be kept lit night and day (*Apion* 1:22; and also see *Tam.* 3,9; 6,1; *Sifra, Emor* 13,7; *Sif. Num.* 59; *Yoma* 33a; etc.).

This western lamp was to be kept lit at all times. For that reason, the priests kept extra reservoirs of olive oil and other implements in ready supply to make sure that the western lamp (under all circumstances) would stay lit. But what happened in the forty years from the very year Jesus said the physical Temple would be destroyed and in the very year that Jesus became a new, resurrected Temple for the Jewish people and for all the world? *Every night* for forty years *the western lamp went out* and this was in spite of the priests each evening preparing the western lamp so that it would remain burning all night. This is eyewitness Jewish testimony!

Now, using the chances, according to *Pascal's Table of Binominal Coefficients* (which shows that there can be only one chance in 1,099,511,627,776 for a black stone to come up in the right hand for forty occasions), imagine what the odds would be for the western lamp (that was supposed to be the eternal flame for the nation) *to go out* each of the 365 days of a year for forty years? The odds of that happening are so astronomical that even mathematicians would stagger at trying to show a normal decimal answer like that given in Pascal's pyramidal illustration.

There were even Further Signs in the Temple

But that is still not all. For forty straight years (during that single generation following Jesus' crucifixion) the crimson strap never changed its color to white as it had often done in the previous two hundred years. This is a ceremony not mentioned in the Holy

Scriptures, but it was associated with the Day of Atonement from at least the time of Simon the Righteous (an honorable and upright High Priest who lived in the third century B.C.). It was noticed that on the Day of Atonement, when Simon would go into the Holy of Holies, that a crimson-colored thread that he had in association with his person miraculously turned white for the forty years he was priest and that the 'lot of the Lord' always came up in his right hand (*Yoma* 39b). It appears that this positive indication in both ceremonies (with the white constantly in evidence in the time of Simon the Righteous) became a pattern for future signs to the Jewish people in showing God's appraisal of the Temple and its rituals. They came to believe that these signs showed God's pleasure or displeasure with their activities. This is because of a special sign given in the year of Simon the Righteous's death that showed what the white and the black indications were intended to mean. Note how the Jewish rabbis came to understand these things.

"Our Rabbis taught: In the year in which Simon the Righteous died, he foretold them that he would die. They said: Whence do you know that? He replied: On every Day of Atonement an old man, dressed in white, wrapped in white, would join me, entering the Holy of Holies and leaving it with me, but today [on that final Day of Atonement that Simon performed his high priestly duties] I was joined by an old man, dressed in black, wrapped in black, who entered, but did not leave, with me. After the festival of Tabernacles he [Simon the Righteous] was sick for seven days and then died" (*Yoma* 39b words in brackets are mine).

From that moment on, the priests began to notice that the 'lot for the Lord' (which was the ceremony ordained in the Old Testament) would come up randomly, one time white and one time black. But that was not all. The crimson thread would sometimes also turn white and at other times it would remain its crimson color. This procedure prompted the Jewish rabbis to interpret that if the crimson thread turned white, then God approved of the Day of Atonement rituals every year and Israel could then be assured that they were forgiven their sins as the Holy Scriptures stated. Thus,

these traditional rites of the crimson colored thread and the biblical ceremony of the black and white stones were established as official signs of God's pleasure or displeasure. But note this. With the year A.D.30, the crimson thread never turned white again and the white stone never came up in the right hand of the high priest (for the period of forty years) from the time of Jesus' crucifixion until the complete destruction of the Temple in A.D.70.

The Temple Doors would also Open by Themselves

Yet still, there is even more to relate from the historical records of the early rabbis. During that same period of forty years, the doors of the Hekel (the doors in back of the Temple curtain that tore in two at Jesus' precise time of death) were found to be opening of their own accord at night during the time the Temple was off limits to the people. Both the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds state that this opening of the Hekel doors was something that happened throughout the whole period of forty years. And recall, the fact of these signs was vouched for by no less than Yohanan ben Zakkai (the top rabbi after the fall of Jerusalem) who was an eyewitness to all the things that had happened in the Temple in those forty years before its destruction.

By reckoning all these four signs together (with their multiplied occurrences) as being mere coincidences and that they happened in a natural and normal way is entering the realm of patent absurdity. The odds of those things occurring by chance are so astronomical that to express the odds in a linear decimal fashion would stretch the limits of human terms to reckon it. But that these four signs were directly from God (and that their wonderful consistency of action was showing the coming destruction of the Temple that Jesus foretold) is something that made sense to the early rabbis who lived from the time of the Temple's destruction and for almost four hundred years afterward. The apostles would also have been knowledgeable of these matters. In my estimation, those remarkable signs to the Jewish people came through the direct intervention of God.

To believe they happened by chance is absurd.

What does this Mean for Jewish People Today?

These supernatural signs which were accomplished in the Temple at Jerusalem beginning precisely in the year when Jesus was crucified and resurrected from the dead should have an appraisal of supreme importance to Jewish people today. Indeed, they ought to be considered as signs that even Christians and other Gentiles should acknowledge as being essential in understanding the role that Jesus has played in matters dealing with the former Temple and the city of Jerusalem that were destroyed in A.D.70.

These miraculous events were not done in a corner. They were available for all the Jewish people at the time to witness and to appraise. They are also available for the Jewish people and Christians to appraise at the present time. These records have not been maintained in Christian sources, but they have come down in the Jewish records themselves. Every Jewish person ought to read them and to be aware of the significance of these signs which God gave to them over that 40 years from the crucifixion of Jesus to the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. When they are considered, the wise would surmise that something of great consequence took place in A.D.30 that prompted these supernatural signs to be given to the Jewish people. And note, these signs were not done somewhere in the desert so that no one could justify their occurrence or not, but they were done in the very heart of the Temple itself where all the priests and the highest authorities of the Jewish nation were attentive. It is time that these signs be known, once again, to the Jewish people and to all people in the world so that people can appraise just what significance they might mean for all people.

One thing for certain, if these signs did in fact occur (and the evidence is plainly given in both Talmuds maintained by the Jewish authorities), then we are directed to something of great importance

and of profound influence beginning in the year A.D.30. And what was the most outstanding event to occur in that year (that all historians today would recognize as a fact)? That very year was the year for the crucifixion of Jesus, and for the next 40 years there was a constant reminder by God of the coming destruction of the Temple, the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish way of life, just as Jesus had foretold on the very Mount of Olives in which he was crucified. It is time that all the world begin to realize the importance of these significant events.



Chapter 26

***TEMPLE RITUALS
AND THE
CRUCIFIXION***

We now arrive at one of the most important aspects of this new research. When it is realized that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus took place near the southern summit of the Mount of Olives, the spiritual significance behind many historical, prophetic and doctrinal teachings of the Old and New Testaments becomes much more intelligible. Sections of scripture that may have been difficult in the past to comprehend can now make perfectly good sense. In this chapter I wish to discuss some of the interesting teachings that are able to emerge once the true site of Golgotha is recognized.

Let us now rehearse some of those important Temple rituals involving the sacrifices that *typified* Jesus and his role in human salvation. Indeed, Christians in the first century believed that Jesus fulfilled *all* of the sacrificial rituals performed in and around the Temple. For example, every animal which was considered a Burnt Offering (Leviticus 1) had to be killed at the slaughter area just to the north of the Altar of Burnt Offering. *All* the peace offerings (Leviticus 2) and the sin and trespass offerings (Leviticus 4 and 5) also had to be killed at the same place. The single exception to this

was the Red Heifer which was killed and burnt to ashes at the Miphkad Altar on top the Mount of Olives (Numbers 19). Even the bullock and the goat which were sacrificed on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) had to be killed near the Altar of Burnt Offering within the Temple and then their carcasses were required to be taken out the eastern gate to the Miphkad Altar at the Mount of Olives and there they were burnt to ashes (Leviticus 4). Besides that, *all* of the ashes of the animals killed and burnt in the Temple were required to be taken to the area of the Miphkad Altar on Olivet and poured out at the base of the Altar which was called the Beth ha-Deshen (which was the Ash Pit) (Leviticus 4:12,21; 6:11). The ashes were poured out at this location so that, with rain water or water carried to the area was poured out, the ashes could descend through a conduit system into the Valley of the Kidron below.

Jesus is Compared in the New Testament with the Temple Rituals

With these ritualistic facts in mind, look at what happened to Jesus. Since we now know that he was officially condemned and sentenced to die by the High Priest and the Sanhedrin at the Chamber of Hewn Stones *on the Temple Mount*, then (for symbolic purposes) Jesus himself was reckoned “killed” in the very heart of the Temple. That is where he was judged to be killed. But there is more. Let us look at the sin offerings associated with the Day of Atonement. Since it was necessary for those sin offerings on that most holy day to be taken eastwards from the Temple, out the eastern gate, over the two-tiered arched bridge that crossed the Valley of the Kidron, and then up to the summit of the Mount of Olives to be burnt to ashes, so Jesus was also taken from the same Temple, out the same eastern gate (Hebrews 13:10-13), also over the two-tiered bridge, and up to the summit of Olivet just south of the Miphkad Altar and there he was crucified (and stoned to death). The similarity involving these geographical features must have struck early Christians as highly significant. Even the ashes of *all*

the animals sacrificed and burnt in the Temple had to be taken out the same eastern gate, over the two-tiered bridge, and up to the summit of Olivet to be poured out at the base of the Miphkad Altar.

This means that Jesus, with the events that happened to him on the day of his trial and crucifixion, followed the *same* path of *all* the animal sacrifices (or their ashes) in the ritualistic ceremonies of the Temple. With an understanding of these geographical and ritualistic indications associated with the passion of Jesus, we are provided with even more symbolic and theological teaching that Jesus did in fact fulfill the role of the sin-bearer, and that he was the prophesied one to offer a pure and complete sacrifice to God for all people in the world.

Jesus was Likened to the Sin Offerings

And another point. Let us look at a ritual which also *typically* prefigured Jesus in his role as the sin-bearer. Notice the most mysterious of the sin offerings (as the Jewish authorities have reckoned it to be over the centuries). This was the burning of the Red Heifer at the Miphkad Altar on the summit of Olivet. There is hardly any offering that figuratively represents Jesus more precisely than that of the Red Heifer. Let us notice the parallel.

When it was time to offer a new Red Heifer (and in the time of Jesus only *nine* had been burnt since the time of Moses, see *Parah* 3:5), it was essential for a priest (traditionally the High Priest) to leave his own residence in Jerusalem and spend seven days being purified at what was called the House of Stone at the northeast corner of the Temple complex (*Parah* 3:1). After this seven days' stay on the Temple Mount in one of the priests' residence, the priest then took the Red Heifer and escorted it out of the Temple area via the *eastern* gate, over the two-tiered arched bridge spanning the Valley of the Kidron, and up to the Miphkad Altar where it was killed and burnt to ashes.

The Miphkad Altar was not the normal type of altar which was

made of stones with a ramp to an elevated square area. It was in the form of a pit (*Parah* 4:2). The transport of the Red Heifer to this spot was a very solemn procession from the Temple Mount to the summit of the Mount of Olives. Not only did priests ascend the mountain, but it was led by all of the elders of the land (*Parah* 3:6,7). And once at the designated place, the Red Heifer was placed with its head facing the Temple and it was then killed and burnt to ashes. These ashes were then mixed with pure spring water and they served for all matters of purification dealing with the holiest affairs associated with the Temple.

Remarkable Parallels with Jesus

Now note how this *typically* prefigured what happened to Jesus. He was judged to be killed by the High Priest and the Sanhedrin in the Temple itself. This is where the Red Heifer was selected. After Pilate gave his permission for them to carry out the sentence of death according to *their* Law, Jesus was then led from Fort Antonia past the Temple on his right, out the *eastern* gate of the Temple, over the two-tiered arched bridge, up to the summit of the Mount of Olives. But instead of being killed at the Miphkad Altar, he was taken a short distance south (to where criminals could be executed “in the presence of God,” that is, in sight of the Temple) and there he was crucified (and stoned to death). And what is interesting, just as the Red Heifer was preceded by all of the top officials of the nation, the apostle John said that it was the chief priests themselves that led Jesus up to the place of crucifixion and it was they who had him put to death (John 19:15,16). We now know that the final sentence of excommunication and death happened in the Sanhedrin chamber at Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. So, Jesus was proclaimed a Gentile (a non-Israelite and a blasphemer) and then led to the site of the crucifixion. In a geographical sense, there could hardly be any closer agreement between Jesus and the Red Heifer. It is no wonder that the first century author who wrote the *Letter of Barnabas*, stated quite categorically that Jesus and the calf (the Red

Heifer) were identical (8:2).

Of course, these *typical* parallels between the Red Heifer sacrifice (and the other sin and burnt offerings) are only possible if we recognize that Jesus was judged in the Temple (his own Father's House) and taken up to the Mount of Olives to Bethphage and then to his execution. But with the new information in this book showing the *real* geographical locations where these important events took place, we are granted a marvelous historical scenario of the figurative agreements of Jesus' sacrifice for the sins of the world with the sin and burnt offerings that Moses gave to ancient Israel.

There is one other point, however, that needs to be mentioned. Since the Red Heifer was taken to the summit of Olivet and *burnt* to ashes, why was not Jesus also *burnt* in order for the figure to be precise? This is a good question. But even here it is possible to see a major parallel. What needs to be recognized is the fact that the example of the Old Testament regarding the disposition of a dead body of a *blasphemer* (or one who was considered "accursed of God") was that of Achan in the time of Joshua. What happened to the body of Achan after he was killed by stoning? He and his possessions were grouped together into a pile and they were then *burnt* to ashes (Joshua 7:15,25,26).

An Accursed One

Achan was the example of dealing with an "accursed one," as the apostle Paul said Jesus was reckoned (Galatians 3:13), and this meant that his corpse had to be treated like that of Achan who was also reckoned as "accursed" (Joshua 7:15). There can hardly be a doubt that the authorities in Jerusalem were in the very process of placing Jesus' dead body on a pile of wood (along with the tree on which he was nailed) and they were getting ready to *burn up the accursed thing* with all the items that had come in contact with him. Only his garment was going to be spared which the Roman soldiers (being Gentiles) secured for themselves.

It is no wonder that Joseph of Arimathea rushed quickly to Pilate to crave for the body of Jesus to be given to him, and the Greek wording shows his boldness was because of utmost urgency (Mark 15:43). Pilate then gave Joseph his request and the body of Jesus was placed in his charge. Had this not happened, there is every reason to believe that the body of Jesus would have been *burnt* to ashes like the body of Achan, the accursed (thus fulfilling the sacrifice of the Red Heifer to a tee). The reason the authorities were wanting his body burnt up was to prevent his disciples from stealing the body and making out later that he was resurrected from the dead as he had been telling people would happen (Matthew 27:63-66).

The Severity of Judgment if One were Accursed

But note this point. Though Jesus' body was not actually burnt up (as the authorities in Jerusalem no doubt wanted), it could be said that he was "burnt up" in a typical sense (just as the author of the Book of Hebrews taught that Isaac was figuratively resurrected from the dead when a ram became a substitute for him). Though the body of Jesus was spared from being burnt up, this fate could hardly have escaped the tree on which he was crucified. Since *everything* that touched an "accursed one" was itself considered "accursed" (even the land around the place of execution "was defiled") (Deuteronomy 21:22,23), then it can hardly be imagined that the tree (or even if one considers the instrument of his execution to have been a Roman cross) would have survived their judgment. That instrument of execution had to be *burnt* to ashes. And it no doubt was. This would mean that the three crosses found under the Temple of Venus in the time of Constantine (that the people of the fourth century thought were those associated with the crucifixion of Jesus) could in no way have been genuine. One of the greatest hoaxes in history was accomplished (and it has proved so successful over the past sixteen hundred years) by Judas Quiriacus when he showed those false crosses to Helena the mother of

Constantine. Judas was pulling a trick on the emperor's mother.

Be this as it may, there is still more New Testament teaching to survey about the significance of the Red Heifer. There are several analogies from the apostle Paul that seem to be directly associated with the ritual of the Red Heifer and it is important that we consider them. Let us once again turn our attention to this most holy of sin offerings — the Red Heifer sacrifice.

New Testament Teaching and the Red Heifer

The first point to consider is that the sin offering of the Red Heifer had to be a perfect female with red colored hair, never yoked (Numbers 19:2) and the rabbis understood that it should never have been mounted by a male (Mishnah, *Parah* 2:4). This Red Heifer was burnt to ashes and the ashes were mixed with clean spring water. It was with these purification waters that not only Israelites were purified from ceremonial defilements, but even the priests and the Temple itself were cleansed and purified in certain ways with these holy waters.

Thus, the Red Heifer was a most important sin offering. But what did it represent to first century Christians? The fact is, the animal was a *female* and how could this relate to Jesus who was a male? This is an interesting point, and we may find that the apostle Paul gave the proper interpretation of how this *female* sin offering (the holiest of all) represented Jesus in a figurative way though Jesus was a male.

Let us look at one central teaching of Paul in which he reckoned Jesus to be “female” in a figurative (or mystical) way. This was in regard to his “Body,” which Paul called the *Ekklesia* (which most translators today render as “Church”). Interestingly, the word *Ekklesia* is feminine. In using the word *Ekklesia* in the feminine was not simply a grammatical formality of Paul, but it had profound *typical* significance. This is because Paul called “the *Ekklesia*” the “Body of Christ” (I Corinthians 12:12-27). In this

case, the “Body” is feminine, not the actual masculine body of Jesus. This feminine “Body” certainly represented the Body of Christ because it was equivalent to “his flesh” (his *one* flesh). This “*one* flesh” relationship is what Paul called the marriage union that Jesus has with his *Ekklesia*. In Paul’s teaching the husband and wife represented “one flesh.” To Paul, one was masculine (the husband) and the *Ekklesia* was feminine (the wife). Notice how Paul explained his teaching.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it.... So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the Church: *for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.* This is a great mystery, *but I speak concerning Christ and the Church*” (Ephesians 5:25-32).

In a *typical* sense the *Ekklesia* is the “wife” of Jesus who is glorified as the Christ. To Paul, the *Ekklesia* was *his* body, *his* flesh, and *his* bones. Since this figurative teaching of Paul was a central part of his theological understanding of what Christianity was all about, we may find that it explains (from Paul’s point of view) how the Red Heifer could be feminine and yet denote Jesus as well. Note that the Red Heifer was an animal that was required to be *free*, *unblemished*, and to be a *female virgin*. So holy were the ashes of this sin offering that even the most sacred items of the Temple itself were purified by the waters mixed with its ashes. In a word, the Red Heifer had to be “holy, without blemish” and not having spot. Also, its purification waters were able to sanctify people, to cleanse them, and to wash them clean from all impurities.

The Similarity of the Ekklesia and the Red Heifer

Remarkably, these are the identical factors the apostle Paul associated with the *Ekklesia* (the “wife” of Christ), because he thought that the *Ekklesia* was also a *free* woman and one “without

a yoke” as the Red Heifer (see Galatians 4:22-31). He told the Galatians to “stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free” (Galatians 5:1).

But Paul was even more specific. In the section of Ephesians quoted above, there is one portion I deliberately left out of the context a few paragraphs back, but it needs to be re-inserted and emphasized. Paul’s description of the *Ekklesia* as being Jesus’ wife is typical of the requirements associated with the ritual of the Red Heifer. Here is the quote.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might *sanctify it* and *cleanse it with the washing of the word*, that he might present it a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be *holy* and *without blemish*” (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Everything that Paul was saying in this scripture (even the technical words he was using) fits the ritualistic qualifications of the Red Heifer. But the apostle Paul’s analogy doesn’t stop here. Note that the *Ekklesia*, like the Red Heifer, was considered by Paul a chaste virgin.

“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as *a chaste virgin* to Christ” (II Corinthians 11:2).

This figurative analogy is even carried further by the apostle John in the Book of Revelation when he spoke of the hundred and forty four thousand.

“These are they which were not defiled with women; for *they are virgins*. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God” (Revelation 14:4,5).

These figurative descriptions make good sense when one recognizes that the apostles Paul and John were applying familiar and

typical teachings of the ritualistic ceremonies of the Law of Moses that Christians at the time would have understood. The apostles saw Jesus as fulfilling the rituals involving the animal sacrifices as substitutes for the sin of humans in a precise way. But in the case of the Red Heifer (being feminine), it no doubt represented the virgin wife of Jesus who had become the Christ. The *Ekklesia* was (and is) Christ's feminine Body, and it is reckoned as being as much a part of his body as his own flesh. "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Ephesians 5:30).

The Red Heifer and Jesus

Thus, the Red Heifer sacrifice being *feminine* can also be applied to Jesus, but to the *feminine* part of Jesus — the *Ekklesia*, his mystical wife. In a spiritual way, Paul identified the *Ekklesia* as also "dying" with Jesus when he met his death on the Mount of Olives (Colossians 2:20). And when Jesus was raised from the dead, so were the members of the *Ekklesia* (in a typical sense). And this resurrection from the dead of the *Ekklesia* is made abundantly clear in Colossians 3:1. And, as a result of the *Ekklesia* being resurrected with Jesus, the *Ekklesia* is now figuratively seated (in Jesus) on the very throne of God in heaven (Ephesians 2:6).

Of course, all of this is symbolic teaching, but so was every ritualistic act associated with the Red Heifer and all the other animal sacrifices. This could mean, in a mystical way, that the *Ekklesia* (as Jesus' "wife" and being "one flesh" with him) also died "with him" as shown by the sacrifice of the Red Heifer. Paul's spiritual language and his knowledge of the Temple ceremonies (and his penchant for explaining their significance in a symbolic way) would certainly allow this interpretation.

If it be true that the early Christians saw the symbolism of the Red Heifer as fulfilled in Jesus through his feminine body, the *Ekklesia*, then this is just another reason why the Jewish Christians right after they returned to Jerusalem subsequent to its destruction

by the Romans in A.D.70, built a building for the Mother *Ekklesia* of all Christendom at the summit of the Mount of Olives as Eusebius said they did. But more important than anything, the southern summit of Olivet also pointed out the precise place where Jesus was crucified (and stoned to death) and where he was buried and resurrected from the dead. It was at Olivet where the greatest purification for sin (the sacrifice of Jesus) ever took place. That place was even analogous (besides other sin offerings) to the altar where the sin offering promised to Cain and his descendants was to be sacrificed for them.

When the proper geographical locations for Jesus' trial, his sentence by the Sanhedrin, and the actual place of his crucifixion (on the southern summit of the Mount of Olives) are recognized, then we are provided with a much better understanding of what the New Testament teachings are all about. In the next chapter we will see just how important these historical and geographical evidences really are in comprehending spiritual principles.



Chapter 27

***THE SPIRITUAL
SIGNIFICANCE
OF GOLGOTHA***

When it is recognized that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives east of the main Temple, a whole new perspective awaits us than what is normally believed today. This necessitates looking at the biblical accounts in a far different way. Once the proper geographical locations are realized events which have not been understood for their symbolic value can now take on substantial significance. In this chapter we will look at some of these important points associated with the crucifixion of Jesus at Golgotha.

First, look at the crucifixion scene itself. Realizing that it occurred near the southern summit of Olivet but facing the Temple and Jerusalem, we are provided with quite a dramatic spectacle. Imagine people walking down the road-way called "The Descent of the Mount of Olives" (Luke 19:37) with their Passover lambs in their arms going into the Temple to have them killed (the worshippers would afterwards take the animals to their homes for roasting). On the way to the Temple these people would have seen the building housing the Miphkad Altar (called the Beth ha-Deshen) on their right. At the summit itself (but on their left) they would have

seen three men crucified to a tree. It would have been an extraordinary scene for the Passover season. This would have been especially so *if* Jesus were looking westward towards his Father's House.

This would mean that one robber was nailed to the same tree with his back to Jesus and facing northeastwards, while the other would be in a similar position but facing southeastwards. There would have been six arms extended upwards suspended from each of their *patibulums* (crosspieces) while in the center of this scene would have been the trunk of the tree with its upper part exposed above them all. There may be much symbolic teaching in this view of the crucifixion and it will pay us to give attention to it. But first, we need to ask ourselves if symbolism is important in understanding biblical themes?

The Bible Not Only Contains Symbolic Teaching, IT IS Symbolic Teaching

The truth is, the Bible is filled with symbolic teaching, and all of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures are couched in utter symbolism. Since the people of Palestine in the first century were dominated by the teachings of Scripture (and their whole lives were governed by scriptural application), what we are suggesting in this chapter could have had a definite relevance to them. In the study of history, it is important that we do not read back into the historical accounts what we are accustomed to believe or to appreciate in our own modern societies. The proper interpretation of history is to account and record what the people *at the time* believed no matter if we consider their opinions irrelevant and even absurd. So, in this chapter we will show some of the significant symbolic themes that were common-place among the Jews in the first century.

Let us look at the symbolism of the seven branched lampstand. First of all, it represented the Tree of Life which was once located in the Garden of Eden. In a fascinating book titled "The Tree of

Light,” written by Leon Yarden of Jerusalem, he gives us a penetrating study into the meaning of the Menorah. He concluded his investigation with the recognition that the Menorah figuratively depicted an *almond* tree, and not just any *almond tree*, but the one that represented the Tree of Life. There is every reason to believe that Yarden is correct in his research. The Old Testament description of the Menorah constructed in the time of Moses showed that it was intimately connected with the *almond tree* motif. Note that the flowers and the bowls for the oil on each of the seven branches of the Menorah were designed to be like those of the *almond tree* (Exodus 37:17-24).

This almond tree type of lampstand was placed by Moses in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle just outside the Holy of Holies. But inside the inner sanctum itself was deposited the rod of Aaron that budded. It too had the symbol of the *almond tree* associated with it. The rod brought forth almond flowers and even almonds themselves in a supernatural manner (Numbers 17:1-13). Because Moses placed this *almond rod of Aaron* inside the Holy of Holies, this goes a long way in showing that the rod (with its *almond tree genre*) was the symbolic Tree of Life which had been in the Garden of Eden.

Philo, in the time of Jesus, said the almond tree was “the emblem of the priesthood” (*Life of Moses*, III.22) because it was the first to bloom in the springtime and the last to lose its leaves. This tree showed the greatest longevity of life each year and it was a fit symbol for the Tree of Life.

The Garden of Eden was Typical of the Temple

We should recall that the Tabernacle and the Temple at Jerusalem were built to be a pattern of God’s heavenly abode (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23,24), but they also represented the Garden of Eden in which our first parents were placed. When one reads the early chapters of Genesis carefully, it will be noticed that there is a

distinct “Temple imagery” associated with almost every event or item of interest. For example, we are told that God appeared in the Garden “at the cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8). This time of day answers to the period of the evening sacrifice in the Temple (I Kings 18:36; Daniel 9:21). While Adam and Eve were talking to God, they were considered in the “presence of God” (Genesis 3:8), just as one who was in the Temple was also in the “presence of God” (II Chronicles 20:9). And where was the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden? It was in the midst of the Garden — its inner part (Genesis 2:9). Significantly, in the inner Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle there was the rod of Aaron which also represented a symbolic Tree of Life that budded miraculously. The rest of the Garden area of Eden (other than where God talked to Adam and Eve) was analogous to the outer Holy Place of the Temple where only the priests could enter. And in this Holy Place in the Tabernacle (and later Temples) was the seven branched lampstand which was also a replica of the Tree of Life.

Recall that Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Bad). They were then expelled *eastward* from the Garden (note that the entrance to the Garden was from the *east*) (Genesis 3:22-24). Cherubim were positioned at this eastern portal to prevent re-entry to the Garden. This was to keep Adam and Eve from the Tree of Life. The rest of the story of what happened to Cain and Abel is recorded in the introduction to this book.

The Tree of Life

What we need to recognize, however, is that the Tree of Life was reckoned by the early Jews to have been *the almond tree*. And early Christians considered the tree on which Jesus was crucified as being the Tree of Life. Since Jesus was crucified on a literal tree, could it have been an *almond*?

“Early Christian art indicates a close relationship between *the tree of life* and the cross. The cross of Jesus, the wood of suffering and

death, is for Christians a *tree of life*. In the tomb paintings of the 2nd century it is thus depicted for the first time as the symbol of victory over death. It then recurs again and again. The idea that the *living* trunk of the cross bears *twigs* and *leaves* is a common motif in Christian antiquity” (Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, V, pp.49, 41 italics mine).

If the Tree of Life motif is to be followed in detail, then the most logical tree with which we are familiar would have been “the tree of the priesthood” — the almond. There are presently a number of almond trees growing on the slopes of Olivet and it is feasible for three men to be impaled on the larger ones.

Some have thought that the tree of crucifixion might be the olive. While the olive has a great deal of symbolic significance in the Scriptures, it is unlikely to be the Tree of Life. As is well known, olives cannot be eaten directly from the tree because of the extreme bitter taste of uncured olives. But in all symbolic contexts of the Bible which concern the Tree of Life, not only can its fruit be eaten from the tree but even its leaves are useful (*cf.* Revelation 22:2). In Christian symbolism, the real “fruit” of the Tree of Life is symbolically represented as the “flesh of Jesus” (John 6:51-58). He was the actual “edible part” that all people must consume in order to inherit everlasting life. The life-giving fruit hanging on that symbolic Tree of Life (represented by the almond tree?) was reckoned by early Christians as the spiritual “fruit” of immortality (John 6:51ff).

The Other Principal Tree of the Garden

If the almond tree was figuratively associated with the Tree of Life, what was the other significant tree in the Garden of Eden — the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? While many different types of trees have been guessed (the pomegranate, date, grape and even the apple), as I have shown in an earlier part of this book, the context in the Book of Genesis describing the “fall” shows it to be the *fig*, and many early rabbis of the Jews recognized this. It is

to be noted that as soon as Adam and Eve knew they had sinned, they sewed fig leaves together to hide their shame. It is well documented among the Jews that the fig was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Some might ask at this juncture: What difference does it make? Granted, it may seem like an exercise in futility and unnecessary speculation. But this would be a mistake. The fact is, the symbol of the fig tree as being the “evil” tree in the Garden of Eden, figures in a prominent episode that occurred during the week just before Jesus was crucified. Once the symbolic meaning of the fig tree is recognized, then this special event can make a great deal of doctrinal sense in regard to the role that Jesus played in expelling “sin” from the world. I am talking about the time when he saw a fig tree on the Mount of Olives as he was approaching Jerusalem, and he cursed it. Before that day was over that particular fig tree was withered up and completely dead. This has a remarkable figurative meaning to it.

The Significance of the Withered Fig Tree

What happened to that fig tree four days before Jesus’ crucifixion has a real bearing on the symbolism of the crucifixion itself. This can be shown because we now know that Jesus was executed on the Mount of Olives. The interesting thing is, the cursing of the fig tree and the impaling of Jesus to another tree (not a short distance away) has a remarkable parallel theme to events that occurred in the Garden of Eden with our first parents. Let us see how this is shown.

Four days before his crucifixion, Jesus left Bethany and started walking towards Jerusalem. When he was near the summit of the Mount of Olives near the village of Bethphage (which means the House of Unripe Figs), he noticed on the side of the road *a fig tree*. He went to it and finding no figs on its branches (but the tree was covered with leaves), he cursed *that fig tree* and said: “Let no man

eat fruit from you henceforth forever. And his disciples heard it” (Mark 11:14). The *cursing* of that particular fig tree has baffled men ever since. The truth is, even Mark said that “it was not the season of figs” (verse 13). It was the time of “Unripe Figs.” Indeed, it went further than that. It was not even the time for fig trees to have leaves in their fullness. It has puzzled people for generations why Jesus was so upset with a fig tree that by nature should not have had figs or leaves.

It is certain that the whole event was a miracle from start to finish. To produce a sign of this nature must have involved a great deal of symbolic importance. If it were not of major significance then the event makes little sense and certainly there would be little relevance for its occurrence. But it does have symbolic meaning.

The fact that the fig tree had leaves was in itself a miracle because leaves would not have naturally been on the fig tree for at least a month later. Also, there should not have been any figs on the tree. Since the tree was located on a main thoroughfare into Jerusalem and with the heavy population around the city at that Passover season, it is not to be imagined that Jesus expected to find a few dried figs of last year’s crop on the branches. The tree would surely have been stripped clean of its fruit. Jesus must have known that he would not find any figs on this unusual fig tree. The truth is, however, the lack of figs and the abundance of leaves were important factors in this miraculous occurrence. In this scene we are provided with a most important symbolic teaching by Jesus with his actions.

Note that the next day after Jesus’ cursing, the disciples found it *withered* (Mark 11:20,22; Matthew 21:18-21). What was significant about this? It meant that the type of tree that Adam and Eve first ate which brought sin and death to them (and in an extended sense to all humanity) was now *withered* and *dead*.

Tradition had it that the only tree under Adam’s care in the

Garden of Eden that did not shed its leaves after our first parents took of the fruit was the fig tree. It was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But with Jesus' miracle on the Mount of Olives, it meant *that symbolic tree* was now withered and dead. It signified that no longer would that symbolic tree be in the midst of humanity to encourage mankind to sin in the manner of our first parents. But there is even more teaching. It meant that when Jesus went to that miraculous tree looking for some figs to eat (like Eve did), Jesus could not find any whatsoever. This signified that there was not going to be a repetition of what Eve (and later Adam) did in regard to the fig tree of which they partook. One fig tree was the instrument to bring "sin" into the world, but the Son of God could not find any figs on his fig tree (the miraculous tree on the Mount of Olives that was typical of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil). Jesus cursed *that symbolic tree* at the top of Olivet so that no man would eat of it again. And to complete his victory over sin, four days later Jesus was going to be sacrificed for the sins of the world just a few yards away from this *withered and dead tree*.

The Miracle of the Fig Tree occurred Near Bethphage

Also recall that this miracle of the *withered* fig tree also occurred adjacent to the village of Bethphage, which was a village of priests and the second court of the Sanhedrin. This was the very court where "rebellious elders" were excommunicated and sentenced to death (Deuteronomy 17:8-13). See chapter twelve of this book where the significance of Bethphage is given. What Jesus was doing in the last week of his life on earth was acting out a symbolic victory over all the factors in the Garden of Eden around which our first parents failed, and showing that the Sanhedrin of the nation of Israel at Bethphage (the House of Unripe Figs) would also be *withered* and made *dead*.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Sanhedrin were now withered and dead and the Tree of Life a short distance away (probably an *almond* for the symbol to be carried out fully)

became the very tree on which Jesus was crucified. This did not take place within the former area of the Garden of Eden located hundreds of miles north east of Jerusalem, nor did it occur inside the Temple which typified the Garden and Eden. The miracle of these two trees happened “in the midst of the world” (near the outside Miphkad Altar which represented the altar promised to Cain and his descendants at the top of the Mount of Olives). The two trees on Olivet symbolized those two principal trees in the Garden of Eden which were now located in the “midst of the world.”

The Bible is a Book of Symbols

Of course, all these matters we have been discussing are *symbols*. They must be understood in the allegorical and mystical sense. But even those scholars who demand actual historical data as the only criteria for belief still recognize that Christians in the first century were thoroughly convinced in the spiritual messages embedded within the figurative teachings of the Bible. As a matter of fact, it can be stated without fear of contradiction that every major doctrine of Christianity is in some way dependent upon symbolic teachings, including all facets of interpretation concerning the crucifixion of Jesus. One cannot begin to grasp what the principles of Christianity really entail without the use of symbolic illustrations. It makes no difference if we of modern times approve or disapprove the application of such teachings, no one will find any meaning to Christianity without the recognition and understanding of biblical symbols.

This certainly applies to the spiritual significance surrounding the purpose of Jesus' crucifixion. Every ritualistic, geographical and chronological detail associated with the crucifixion is symbolically full of meaning. It is not possible to comprehend the New Testament teachings concerning this matter without taking into consideration these figurative meanings. In reality, the physical details are always given in the Bible to support the symbolic teachings. With this in mind let us carry the symbolic teaching of Jesus'

crucifixion a little farther. Things become clearer when we do.

Symbolizing the Scene of the Crucifixion

Mention has been made in chapter twenty-one of this book that Jesus was crucified on a tree with two robbers also affixed to the same tree. This would have meant that there were six arms extending upwards around the tree itself.

This scene could provide a symbolic spectacle of a living Menorah (the seven branched lampstand). The Menorah did in fact represent the Tree of Life and the Light of the World. And notice the irony of the crucifixion scene. Here was Jesus east of the Holy of Holies and looking westwards towards the curtain of his Father's House. Beyond that curtain were supposed to be a mercy seat (denoting the Throne of God) with the wings of two cherubim outstretched over that throne. Both cherubim were made to face one another and to face the One who symbolically sat on the mercy seat. These were found in the original Temple within the inner curtain of the Holy Place.

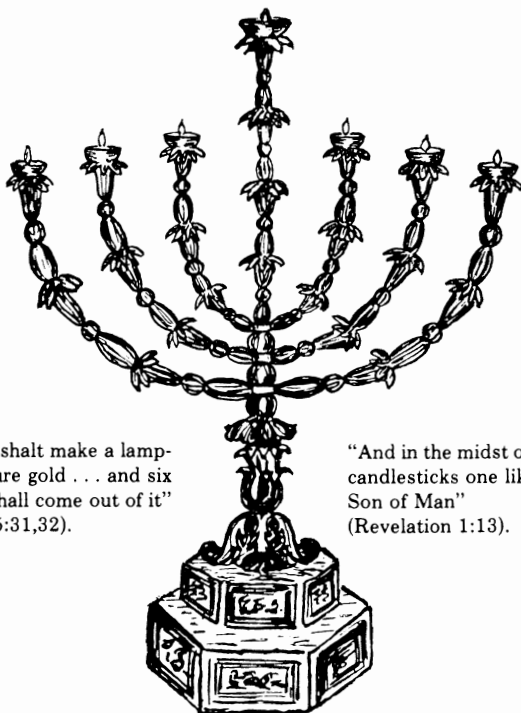
Now look at the scene of the crucifixion "outside the camp." It was a significant reversal to what was originally designed by God to be within the Holy of Holies. According to Christian teaching, here was the real Lord having been excommunicated from Israel and being crucified on a tree having two robbers as his "cherubim" with their arms stretched upwards and their faces turned away from him in the opposite direction. And if the tree of crucifixion were an almond, we have Jesus and the two robbers being sacrificed on the tree that Philo called "the tree of the priesthood." It represented the Tree of Life.

Their six arms extending upwards around a central part of a tree (the tree itself as the seventh "arm") could be reckoned a symbol of a living Menorah. Jesus was pictured after his resurrection as standing in the midst of the seven branched lampstand (Revelation 1:13) in a glorious and living existence with the unlimited power of the

universe at his beck and call. Was his crucifixion intended to show an opposite signification on a “Menorah” of degradation and shame? Whereas he should have been sitting on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, he was in a diametrically contrary situation as a sin offering banned from being a member of his own nation and being crucified near the outside altar of the Sanctuary. The scene, from the Christian point of view, would have been totally opposite from what should have been.

If there is anything to this symbolism, then the national symbol of the modern State of Israel (the seven branched lampstand) represents Jesus being crucified between two robbers (his “cherubim”) for the sins of the world. This would mean that the Menorah is the symbolic crucifix of Jesus, not the kind that is normally seen in Christian society today. The representation of the cross (and its various forms) that most Christians look to today (atop churches, around peoples’ necks, and even embossed on Bibles) is made of two pieces of dry (not *living*) wood which could have no connection to the *living* Tree of Life.

And further, the people who were carrying their Passover lambs to be killed in the Temple at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion were turning their backs on the individual to whom they were intending to present those Passover lambs. This is because the roadway that led to the eastern gate of the Temple was descending from the top of the Mount of Olives. The people would have passed directly by Jesus hanging on a tree of crucifixion. And while worshippers were entering the Temple to pay tribute to the One sitting within the Holy of Holies (originally enthroned between two cherubim), the crowds were actually turning their backs on the real Jesus from heaven and his two “cherubim” (the robbers nailed to the same tree with their backs to him as well). And when Jesus finally died on the tree (while all had their backs to him), he cried out: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” This Psalm was composed by David on the same Mount of Olives when he had been excommunicated



“And thou shalt make a lampstand of pure gold . . . and six branches shall come out of it” (Exodus 25:31,32).

“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man” (Revelation 1:13).

It is not usually understood by the general public but the Menorah (the seven branched lampstand which was deposited in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle) actually denotes a living tree — a Tree of Light. Indeed, its prime significance is its relation to the Tree of Life which was found not only in the Garden of Eden but is talked about in the concluding book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation. The symbolic motif of the lampstand was that of an almond tree. Just as Aaron's rod that budded and brought forth fruit was an almond, so likewise (as we have shown in this book) the Menorah denotes an allegorical almond tree. It may well be that Christ and the two robbers were actually crucified on such an almond tree. If so, then Christ ironically died on the tree that represented the Tree of Life.

from his throne and people at the time of Absalom's rebellion (read all of II Samuel 15:19 through 18:33). This means that God the Father himself (momentarily) also turned his face away from him. Jesus truly died *rejected* of men (Isaiah 53:3) — rejected and excommunicated by all including the Father himself. This is because in symbol he was carrying all the sins of the world on his back when he found himself in that final sacrificial position.

More Significant Symbols

That does not end the story. There is another symbolic parallel to the events of the crucifixion that should be mentioned. It was then the custom in Jerusalem of releasing a notable prisoner during the season of Passover. Pilate wanted to restore Jesus to the people, but they demanded that he release a man called Barabbas. This person was a prominent prisoner (Matthew 27:16) who had been charged with the crimes of sedition and murder (Mark 15:7; Luke 23:18,19). This could well mean that he was some kind of revolutionary hero to the Jews — one who endeavored to overthrow the Roman yoke and bring in the expected Jewish domination over the Middle East and the world. Whatever the reason, the authorities in Jerusalem requested and received the release of Barabbas.

Now to an interesting point in regard to this Barabbas. In some important manuscripts of Matthew 27:16,17 Barabbas is given a first name. Ironically, it was *Jesus*. The fact that there were biblical texts that called *Barabbas* by his first name *Jesus* was noted by Origen (early third century). It was Origen's opinion that it was not proper to call him *Jesus* because he was not aware of any sinner in Scripture who had ever been called by such an august name. The truth is, however, the majority of scholars who comprised the United Bible Societies' committee to judge the genuineness of New Testament texts believed that *Jesus Barabbas* was the original reading (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, pp.67,68).

This information provides us with more ironical comparisons.

The name “Barabbas” was a title and meant: “The Son of the Father.” In this case, the name signified “The Son of the High Father” (like that which Paul used in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6 where he referred to God as “Abba, Father”). It was also used by Jesus on the eve of his crucifixion: “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto you; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what you will” (Mark 14:36). The word “Abba” in these usages signified *the Exalted Father*, and meant none other than God the Father. Thus, the name and title of Barabbas, by interpretation, meant: “Jesus, the Son of the High Father.”

What a paradox. Here were two men. One was a seditionist and murderer and the other in New Testament interpretation as the sinless Son of God — and *both with the same name and title*. And who did the authorities choose to be released? They selected the criminal, while the Jesus who was the actual “Son of the High Father” was led out to be crucified between two robbers.

The recording of this unique situation may have been intended by the writers of the New Testament to show the fulfillment of a most unusual ritual that occurred on the Day of Atonement. On that day two identical goats were selected. There was not the slightest difference between them as far as appearance was concerned. They were brought into the Temple and lots were drawn over them. One became a goat designated as “the Lord’s” and the other was “the Azazel” (the goat of the evil one). The goat selected to be “the Lord’s” was killed, its blood sprinkled in the Holy of Holies and its carcass was taken to the Miphkad Altar on the Mount of Olives and burnt to ashes (Leviticus 16:27). The other goat was led away into the wilderness by the hand of a fit man and let go alive in that desolate area as commanded in the original Law of Moses (Leviticus 16:20-22).

The Two Goats and the Two Persons Named “Jesus, the Son of the Father.”

Now look at the remarkable similarity between these two identical goats and the two men standing before Pilate. Both had the same first name and title. Strangely, the people picked *Jesus Barabbas* the seditionist and murderer (and they let him go free), but the real *Jesus Barabbas* (the actual Son of God the Father in heaven) they led out the eastern gate of the Temple (the easiest way to reach the two-tiered bridge over the Kidron Valley from Fort Antonia) and up to the summit of the Mount of Olives where they executed him. The parallel of Jesus to the sin offering of the “Lord’s goat” on the Day of Atonement is too close to be coincidental. But this symbol can only be understood if it is realized that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives.

A Further Symbol

There is yet another incident that happened on the day of Jesus’ crucifixion that has ritualistic significance to it. It is the fulfillment of a major part of the sacrificial services that were performed in the Temple. It concerns the role that Judas Iscariot played in the drama of that day. Let us notice this matter carefully.

We are told by Jesus that Judas was selected to be one of the apostles even though it was known by Jesus that he was an adversary (a *devil*). “Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” (John 6:70). This recognition by Jesus was stated a full year before he was betrayed by Judas. The New Testament writers show that it was Satan who inspired Judas to perform his deed at that Passover season. “And supper being ended, *the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him*” (John 13:2).

Be this as it may, why was Judas picked by Jesus for the role that he played? If one will look closely at the text of the New Testament, it shows that Judas was not a common person such as a fisherman

or a tax collector. Judas was actually a high ranking ecclesiastical official. He *was a priest* of the line of Aaron. This can be proved by paying close attention to what the New Testament says of him.

Note that after Judas betrayed Jesus to the chief priests, they gave him thirty pieces of silver to hand Jesus over to them when there were no crowds around that might prevent his arrest (Luke 22:6). Later, when Judas had realized what he had done (and became remorseful for it), he took those coins to the Temple and threw them over the floor of the *naos* (a Greek word meaning the “holy place” into which only Aaronic priests could enter) (Matthew 27:5). But note this! The original Greek of a large number of New Testament manuscripts on Matthew 27:5 says that Judas scattered the coins while *IN* the holy place (see *The Greek New Testament*, UBS, p.108). This verse shows that Judas was *inside* a part of the Temple which was reserved only for priests. It means that Judas was in fact “a priest.” But that is not all.

The best reading of Mark 14:10 shows that Judas was more than an ordinary apostle. He was “*the one*” of the twelve. This expression gave Judas a preeminence among the apostles. Prof. Wright (*Synopsis of the Gospels in Greek*, p.31) was of the belief that Mark makes Judas “the chief of the apostles.” Field, the New Testament scholar in his *Notes on the Translation of the New Testament*, said Mark meant that Judas was “*the first* [that is number one] of the apostles.” This may be going a little too far, but even the *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* (vol.I.p.908) states that Mark’s definition gave Judas some kind of priority.

This makes sense if Judas was an Aaronic priest. The authorities among the Israelites of the first century, as far as spiritual offices were concerned, were *first*, priests; *second*, Levites; and *third* were the ordinary Israelites (see Jesus’ Good Samaritan parable of Luke 10:30-37 for a use of this type of ranking). This fact concerning the preeminence of priests can explain the puzzle of who sat on Jesus’ left side and right side at the Last Supper. We know that John sat on

one side because he was able to hear Jesus whisper a statement to Judas Iscariot that the other apostles did not hear, and we are told he was reclining in Jesus' bosom (John 13:26) — compare John 13:26-28 where it shows how John was the only one who heard distinctly what Jesus said to Judas. This indicates that Judas sat *next to Jesus* on the opposite side of John. And since it was customary for top priests to have the best positions at festivals or other functions, this shows that Judas (as a priest) was no doubt on Jesus' right side. (There is also evidence that the apostle John was a priest. See my book *Restoring the Original Bible* where this possibility is explained.) This makes the crime of Judas even more heinous. One of the persons ordained in the Old Testament to be an official representative for God was the very person to betray Jesus. Many are familiar with a common epithet that signifies the ecclesiastical rank of Judas. It is: "Judas Priest." These historical evidences show that Judas was in fact a priest.

Judas Iscariot and the Temple Rituals

What has this to do with the rituals of the Temple and the crucifixion of Jesus? Very much indeed. In the primary sin offering for the sins of a priest, a bullock was killed at the Altar of Burnt Offering at the entrance to the Holy Place and some of its blood was taken *into the Holy Place* and *sprinkled* before the inner curtain of the Temple (Leviticus 4:6). A similar sin offering was that for the whole congregation of Israel (verse 17). The carcasses of these sin offerings were then taken up to the Miphkad Altar at the summit of Olivet and there they were burnt to ashes (Leviticus 4:12,21).

With this in mind, we need to ask how the blood of those two sin offerings could represent the blood of Jesus in his atoning sacrifice for sin because Jesus' literal blood was not taken into the Holy Place and sprinkled before the inner curtain. No, but the thirty shekels that Judas obtained (no doubt from moneys deposited in the Temple treasury) were reckoned by the chief priests to be "blood

money” (Matthew 27:6-8). Importantly, we have seen in Matthew 27:5 that Judas the priest scattered the thirty shekels (representing the blood of Jesus) while he was *within* the very Holy Place where the priests sprinkled the blood of the sin offerings which we have just mentioned (Leviticus 4:1-21). This would have been, in a symbolic sense, an official sprinkling of the blood of Jesus by an ordained priest (Judas) within the actual place ordained by Moses.

Again, the symbolic parallel is too close for these circumstances to be coincidental. At least the apostles must have understood that this was a priestly requirement of the Law of Moses that was being carried out by Judas the priest.

Another Important Symbol

One more thing should be mentioned. There is one parallel between the Temple sacrifices and Jesus’ trial and crucifixion in one important ritual that took place on the Day of Atonement that *was NOT fulfilled in a figurative sense* by the High Priest or by other priests at the time of Jesus’ ordeal. That was taking the blood of the sin offerings on the Day of Atonement into the Holy of Holies (Leviticus 16). But, interestingly, even this type was fulfilled by Jesus. This important figurative teaching was not accomplished by a surrogate priest on behalf of Jesus or on behalf of the nation of Israel. It was done by Jesus himself.

The author of the Book of Hebrews says that this single most important ritual was reserved to be fulfilled by Jesus himself. Instead of going with his own blood into the Holy of Holies located in the Temple on earth, we are told that after his resurrection Jesus took a portion of his own blood and went into heaven and sprinkled the celestial Holy of Holies with his own purifying blood right at the place where God the Father was seated on his throne of glory and that the Father accepted it as valid (Hebrews 9:12,23,24). With this final act of Jesus, *all the sacrificial rituals* associated with the Tabernacle and Temple were fulfilled precisely by the ordained

Son of God as far as the New Testament writers were concerned.

What is important for us to realize is that all of these remarkable symbolic parallels (which were no doubt very impressive to the apostles and early Christians) can only be understood as fulfilled precisely if it is realized that Jesus was judged on the Temple Mount and that he was crucified on the Mount of Olives.



Chapter 28

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

What difference does it make *where* Jesus was judged by the Sanhedrin and *where* he was crucified? It is sometimes thought (even by people who love the biblical revelation) that as long as Jesus was in fact judged, crucified and resurrected from the dead then it is non-essential to determine *where* those events took place. A superficial knowledge of such events seems adequate and sufficient to many. But for all of you who have read this book up to this chapter, I would hope that you can now realize that it makes all the difference in the world. One of the most important subjects in biblical study is to know the exact geographical areas where Jesus' passion occurred. Once these true sites are recognized, then whole sections of doctrinal material in the Old and New Testaments (hitherto unrealized) as well as historical accounts of early Christendom (which have not been referred to by most historians) become much more understandable. By solving these "Secrets of Golgotha," we find that many mysteries of the biblical revelation become plain.

The Futile Actions of Mankind in the Past

It makes a great deal of difference to know the true geographi-

cal sites associated with Jesus' trial and crucifixion. For one thing it shows that the many wars over the centuries that have been fought between Christians and Christians, between Christians and Muslims and squabbles between Muslims and Jews over many of the holy sites in Jerusalem were fought for *the wrong places*. Even to this very hour we find open hostility among the above groups, and still for the most part they are fighting for *the wrong places*. It would seem to be an effort in vanity to fight and kill in order to keep or to secure *the wrong places* in the hands of certain religious or ethnic groups. Perhaps, if nothing more, the information in this book might cause people today to sit back and survey the futility of those wars of the past and the fighting that is presently going on for control of the religious sites in the city of Jerusalem. The truth is, many of them are *the wrong places* to begin with.

As far as Christians are concerned, there is a great advantage that the information in this book can afford. If this historical and biblical evidence is taken seriously, then the present arguments and fights over who controls various parts of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre could be accounted as futile attempts to continue obvious errors within Christendom, and common sense would suggest that such fightings to promote such errors should cease. The fact is, the whole site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is clearly *the wrong place*. Without doubt, the best credentials for the site of Jesus' burial and resurrection is the cave/tomb under the ruins of the Eleona Church of which the Carmelite Convent at the Pater Noster Church is the custodian. This fact has some interesting ramifications associated with it. It signifies that the Roman Catholic Church is presently exercising a caretaker role over what most Christians would reckon to be the holiest spot in all Christendom, if Christians recognize the truth. Legally, however, I am told that the property was actually donated to the French nation in the last century and its actual owners are the citizens of France. The legal title holder is the French consulate in Israel who in turn holds it in trust as a possession of all French citizens. With this information, it

could be interpreted that God has placed in the hands of the French nation the care of Jesus' tomb. Could there be a special reason why the French nation should be in charge?

At the present, it is remarkable that it is the Carmelite Order that is allowed to have the privilege of being the caretakers of the property. That Order traditionally has its origin with Elijah the prophet and such eminent personalities as Elisha and John the Baptist (so the Carmelites believe) have been members of that Order. It may be looked on as significant in some circles that the "Elijahan Order" of the Roman Church has been given custodianship by the French consulate of the holiest of Christian shrines (though most people are not yet aware that it is the "holiest of Christian shrines"). It is interesting that there are prophecies in the Bible that Elijah, or a person permeated with the spirit of Elijah, would be functioning as a prophet just prior to the Second Advent of Jesus to restore all things (Matthew 17:10,11). Jesus said that John the Baptist was a similar precursor for Jesus' first advent (verse 12). The apostle Peter made the definitive prophecy that such a restoration of essential knowledge, no doubt by *this* Elijah, would occur before Jesus' return from heaven (Acts 3:19-21). Also, the prophecy of Malachi in the Old Testament stated the same thing (Malachi 4:4-6).

Whatever the case, it is interesting that the Carmelite Order of the Roman Catholic Church has the custodianship of the real Tomb of Jesus while the legal owners are the French nation. And who better to have custodianship of this significant site (as Catholics would no doubt view it) than the very Order which traditionally has its origin with Elijah himself and having as one of its members a person of no less distinction than John the Baptist?

Are these Present Circumstances Important?

It could well be that some ecclesiastical leaders may account more importance to these matters than I do. As for me, my profession is that of a historian and I have no religious interest in holy

places on earth. Such things are only of archaeological and historical relevance to me. Though I take pleasure in visiting them (and even honoring them because others do), they are only of academic interest to me. Still, the true sites contain a great deal of spiritual symbolism associated with them. In my view, it is important to determine the actual locations of these geographical spots since such symbolism can provide us of modern times a better comprehension of the messages in the Gospel. For that reason I am happy to present this historical research to the general public.

What about the Value of the Erroneous Sites?

Now that history shows that the present Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Garden Tomb area are *NOT* authentic as the “Golgotha” of Jesus, what should one do in regard to these sites? They are revered by millions upon millions of people. All I can suggest, for what it’s worth, is to give my personal opinion. From my point of view, I see no reason why these two sites cannot be honored and respected as memorials for Jesus’ burial and resurrection. There may be biblical evidence to allow this. In the time of Jesus even the Tomb of Rachel was located just outside Bethlehem (where it is still situated to this day), but the Old Testament makes it clear that her actual tomb was at least ten miles north of Bethlehem. I have explained this in detail in a research paper titled “The Tomb of Rachel.” The present tomb of Rachel is thus a cenotaph (a memorial to a dead person buried elsewhere) and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or the Garden Tomb sites could be equally honored. It would only be right, however, that those who might continue to honor those places should tell Christians that they are only cenotaphs and that Jesus was actually buried and resurrected from the dead at the cave/tomb underneath the ruins of the Eleona Church on the Mount of Olives.

Should the Real Holy Sepulchre be made a Shrine?

What about the *real* Holy Sepulchre on Olivet? As far as

Christians are concerned, will it be preserved by God for all time as a memorial of the true site of the holiest occurrence ever to happen on earth? The truth is, even that place itself will be utterly destroyed into insignificance when Jesus returns from heaven according to the Holy Scriptures. “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south” (Zechariah 14:4). It seems that God himself is not interested in the preservation of “holy places” on earth — even though they be the holiest. In the final analysis, physical things on earth appear to be of relative unimportance in the eyes of God when compared to spiritual matters dealing with the heart.

As a final point, I wish to state my opinion that finding the true locations for the trial, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus *makes all the difference in the world* in recognizing what the real teaching of the Gospel of Jesus is all about. And when the “Secrets of Golgotha” are revealed to everyone’s knowledge a new dimension in New Testament understanding will emerge on the scene. Be that as it may, I also want to state that the research in this book is not intended to change the religious thinking of people. I am simply endeavoring to show the historical and biblical evidences that identify the exact spot of Golgotha [Latin: Calvary] (which was located at the site of the Imbomon at the southern summit of Olivet and now under control of the Muslim authorities). I am also providing historical and biblical evidence which shows the actual place of Jesus’ burial and resurrection to be at the cave/tomb at the Eleona church on the Mount of Olives (which the French Nation now owns). What people do with these historical and geographical matters in regard to their personal religious lives is their business, not mine or anyone else’s. I do feel, however, that a reasonable case has been made that Jesus’ passion took place near the southern summit

of the Mount of Olives. And I have not the slightest doubt that this is correct. But if readers of this book can show me where I am wrong, I will honor their criticisms and thank them for their help.



Chapter 29

EPILOGUE

Why is it that many of the significant points of evidence to show that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives have not been realized before? This is a good question. Before August, 1983 I did not recognize a single one of the major factors shown in this book which identifies Olivet as the crucifixion site. About two years before, I noticed that the apostle John used the word *stauros* in the singular number to describe the instrument on which Jesus and the two robbers were executed (John 19:31), but because it seemed absurd to imagine that three men could have been crucified together on one Latin cross (which it is), I dismissed the matter as a grammatical oddity without any significance. Indeed, about three weeks before discovering that the altar of Cain (located on the *east* side of Eden) could symbolically identify the crucifixion site of Jesus, I had a rather intense discussion with a friend (J.M.Gray) who was insistent that the New Testament said Jesus was crucified on a literal tree and not two pieces of dead wood nailed together in the form of a Latin or Greek cross. At the time I was adamant that the Greek word for "tree" (*xylon*) (used in the crucifixion contexts) only meant some dry pieces of wood (and in some contexts within

Greek literature it does have that meaning). Though Ms. Gray was unable to convince me at the time, it wasn't long until I found out she was right. After all, Jesus used the word *xylon* for a living tree at the very time of his crucifixion (Luke 23:31) and the "Tree of Life" in the Book of Revelation was certainly a living tree. Thus, it finally became simple to see that Jesus and the two robbers were nailed to a single tree — the singular *stauros* that the apostle John referred to (John 19:31).

Within a matter of two days of understanding that the identification of Cain's altar could help point out the crucifixion site of Jesus, I was able to piece together the essential teachings which are now found in this book to identify the Mount of Olives with the place of the crucifixion. The first thing I saw was the phrase "the Place of the City" in John 19:20 that helped to point out the site. From then on, things began to fall into place. Mr. Ken Fischer, my executive assistant, wrote an editorial at the very time of the discovery explaining how this biblical matter was finally understood. He wrote: "The key to the new discovery came to his [Dr. Martin's] attention while writing a chapter on the crucifixion for his new book, *The Original Bible Restored*. He decided to make a final analysis of all the scriptures pertaining to Christ's death. All appeared in order until he read John 19:20. It was a footnote regarding this verse that aroused his interest. The Greek actually said that Jesus was crucified near the Place of the City. By checking other sources, he came to the realization that the Place of the City was the Temple! This meant Jesus was crucified near the holy Temple! The importance of this indication had not been realized before. With this new clue, the doors began to really open up. It took only a short time to realize that to be near the Temple but outside Jerusalem could only be on the city's east side. And, for the Roman centurion to see the Temple curtain tear in two at the exact time of Christ's death meant that those at the crucifixion scene had to be standing on an elevated site looking westward into the Holy Place. This placed the crucifixion on the Mount of Olives — the only place out-

side the city where the Temple curtain could be observed! He explained his findings to other staff members and friends of FBR [the organization of which I was then president]. They then pitched in to supply many corroborative evidences. Mr. Gary Arvidson supplied much typical teaching. Leona McNair connected Golgotha with a numbering of Israel (Numbers 1) along with the Miphkad altar of Ezekiel 43:21 which must have been connected with the Miphkad Gate of Nehemiah 3:31. Dr. Martin thought it was now time to show that Christ's crucifixion was on a living tree" (comments in brackets are mine).

Since that time many people (scholars and lay persons alike) have read the basic material in this book and have given further suggestions to make the historical research much clearer and understandable. One of these who has been of constant help with his constructive criticisms and comments has been David Sielaff of Pasadena, California. He pointed out to me that Professor Glenn F. Chesnut in his informative work "The First Christian Histories" recounted that "Constantine was a man who saw visions with considerable regularity — not just occasionally, but *thousands* of them" (p.172, second edition, emphasis mine). This indication by Chesnut made me examine in detail the history surrounding Constantine and Eusebius the Bishop of Caesarea. This was of inestimable value. It showed that the Temple of Venus was selected as the spot of Jesus' crucifixion because of visions, dreams and signs, not because of sound historical or archaeological evidence. I am also indebted to Ed Blizzard for his ingenious suggestions that the fig tree represented the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and that the withering of the fig tree was prophetic in nature. Since that time, Professor W.H.C.Frend of Cambridge University in Britain read the original research and has responded with a favorable review. This was also followed with a favorable review by Dr. James Tabor of the University of North Carolina. I also have on file the written testimonials of scores of scholars in the fields of theology and history from around the world who have expressed favor-

able comments on the material. Even further evidences are now provided in this new Second Edition that prove the case that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives.

Why has this Information Not Been Published Before?

Most people realize that one of the biggest problems in discovering any truth is our resistance to change the traditionalism adopted by our societies. This is something that none of us can avoid. Our minds from youth have become so wedded to what society around us believes to be correct (whether the society is academic or not). All of us by nature are reluctant to “rock the boat” in most things we have grown up with. It is truly unpleasant (and in some cases quite devastating) to discover that some of our traditional beliefs are not what we thought them to be. Many of us, including myself, have endeavored to maintain the traditions which are common to us all. It is a most difficult thing having to admit that our forefathers whom we love could possibly be wrong. More important than that, it is the opinions of our present colleagues and our desire to maintain an economic security within the academic or religious society with which we are attached that impedes a free and unhampered attitude of research. I have personally been worried in the past what my academic friends would say of me if I publish new historical teachings which go contrary to accepted belief. Really, the whole thing is scary because not only is one’s prestige in jeopardy of being eroded away by critical colleagues, but even the economic security of maintaining a job (whether it be in a university, seminary or within an ecclesiastical administration) is a definite factor in trying to maintain the concepts which society presently accepts. The change of one’s cherished beliefs is at best a disquieting experience and at worst it can be a traumatic event if one loses friends, loved ones and the security of a job over it. However, is presenting the truth (or what one believes to be the truth) worth the risk? That is a question each of us individually must ask.

It is my belief, however, that the biblical and historical information in this book should be seriously considered, whether we are mainline or evangelical Protestants, Catholics of various persuasions, charismatics and/or members of various ethnic churches. The curse against any new research (and the greatest enemy of truth) is mankind's utter devotion to, and their love for, the cult of traditionalism.

As a note of gratitude, I must mention that this book could not have been produced without the support and encouragement of a wonderful group of people who are associated with the Associates for Scriptural Knowledge of which I am the director. No one could ask for finer individuals to be friends and supporters. I also wish to thank my son, Samuel, for his constant efforts in helping to make the contents of this book readable and comprehensive, and also a deep appreciation goes to my wife, Ramona Jean, for her encouragement, wise criticisms and patience with me while this book was in preparation. I finished the final research for this Second Edition on the anniversary of the day she was born. Because of her complete devotion to my efforts to present this material to all in the world who will read it, I want to dedicate this Second Edition to her.

As a closing comment, I wish to say that I have not tried, in a deliberate manner, to create new interpretations for the sake of shocking people or to overthrow any belief which Christians have accepted over the centuries. My intent is simply to publish what appears to me to be historical and biblical truth. My quest has been to make the "Secrets of Golgotha" understandable and appreciated by people today. True scholarship involves the sincere wish to weed out the errors that we are all plagued with and to accept new understandings with a humility of thankfulness. In this spirit I am submitting this research to those who are interested. My best critics will be those who show me, and the rest of the world, just where the truth lies.

I close with a quote from a man I admired very much for his academic excellence and the friendly criticisms that he gave me when I met him often in England. This was Professor F.F. Bruce. As a gesture of his continual good will toward me, he always insisted that I call him "Fred." His death a few years ago brought a real loss to the theological world.

"...we must bear in mind that the cause of learning has often been promoted by scholars who are prepared to take a risk and expose their brain-waves to the pitiless criticisms of others" (F.F.Bruce, "Modern Studies on the Judean Scrolls," *CT*,1 (11):5).



This is a photograph of the small Moslem Shrine situated at the very top of the southern summit of the Mount of Olives. Somewhere within twenty or thirty yards of this building is where Christ Jesus was crucified. It is most interesting that it is the Moslem authorities who have been graced with the preservation of this spot. Because of this there are no icons or pictures of deity anywhere on the grounds. It is a beautiful and significant site which is a pleasure to visit. Certainly, all who go to Jerusalem should see this area for its historic value. (Photo: Professor William S. LaSor)



Addendum 1

***THE YEAR OF
JESUS' DEATH***

New evidence has now become available which gives powerful proof for properly dating the years of Jesus' ministry and even the year of his crucifixion is able to be determined. This new information provides a major key which makes other chronological indications of the New Testament more understandable.

The Gospel of John records some prime chronological references for reckoning the years of Jesus' ministry which the other three Gospels do not report. For example, John mentions three Passovers which occurred during the ministry of Jesus (2:13; 6:4; 13:1). Other Jewish festivals were acknowledged as well. There was the "unknown feast" between the first two Passovers (5:1), and after the second Passover he mentions the feasts of Tabernacles (7:1) and Dedication (10:22). These feasts provide some chronological benchmarks for establishing the proper sequence of years associated with Jesus' ministry.

The new evidence which is presented in this research, centers on a statement given by Jesus which John positions between his first two Passovers (2:13 and 6:4) and before his "unknown" feast (5:1).

This reference is an important piece of historical information which, up to now, has been completely overlooked and misunderstood. But when the new research is recognized, we will have one of the most significant chronological keys for ironing out the historical difficulties associated with Jesus' ministry.

It is first essential to understand the historical environment in which the new evidence occurs. At the end of John's third chapter we are told that Jesus left Jerusalem after John's first Passover and started on his journey toward Galilee (John 4:3). His route necessitated traveling through Samaria. Upon his arrival at Jacob's Well, being weary of his journey, he talked to a Samaritan woman while his disciples went into the village to fetch food. No other people were around when the discussion mentioned by John took place (John 4:6-26). However, upon the conclusion of the dialogue, the disciples returned with food, whereupon Jesus gave them some spiritual teaching about what true food actually represented. It is this particular teaching (when the woman had left and no other Samaritans were around) that solves a major chronological problem in Jesus' ministry. Jesus said:

"Say ye not, 'There are yet four months and then cometh the harvest?' behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white [ripe] already for harvest" (John 4:35).

The real meaning of Jesus' words has not been understood, yet his intention is so easy to comprehend if the legal requirements governing Palestinian agriculture in the first century are taken into account. In a moment I will show what Jesus had in mind when he made this statement, but let us first review the normal interpretations given by scholars to explain what Jesus meant.

There are two explanations normally proffered by theologians.

- 1) Since Jesus was speaking within a context of sowing and reaping, it is recognized (correctly) that Jesus was calling attention to the barley and wheat harvest which

farmers reaped between Passover and Pentecost (from late March to early June). Scholars have seen significance in the phrase “four months unto the harvest.” If Jesus meant that there were yet four months until the time of the Palestinian grain harvest, then it is supposed he must have uttered his statement about late December or early January. This would allow the phrase four months to harvest to make reasonable sense. If this is the case, scholars have surmised, it would mean that Jesus gave this illustration to the disciples some 8 or 9 months after John’s first Passover, and about 4 months before the beginning of the regular grain harvest which started about late March. So, most conservative theologians have felt that this is a chronological statement which can be placed within the months of December or January near the end of Jesus’ first year of ministry.

- 2) The other theory, however, suggests that Jesus was simply stating a well-known proverb about some four month interval of time from sowing to harvest, and that no chronological significance is to be interpreted from his reference.

There are flaws in both suppositions. For one, Jesus’ statement could hardly have been made some 8 or 9 months after John’s first Passover because in verse 45 (given shortly after he had returned to Galilee) his Galilean acquaintances recalled the signs he had recently accomplished at John’s first Passover. These were Galileans who had gone to “the FEAST for they also went unto the FEAST.” Anyone should recognize that this refers to the first Passover mentioned by John which happened about six or seven weeks before. If this is not the case, then the words of John’s Gospel are incomprehensible. To say that the Galileans were referring to an unmentioned feast of Pentecost, or an unnamed feast of Tabernacles (or even the feasts of Dedication or Purim) is stretch-

ing the matter beyond reasonable belief. Truly, the Galileans must have been talking about the previous feast of Passover during which they had seen Jesus perform certain miracles and that Passover had been no more than 40 or 50 days before. This means that Jesus' statement (made at Jacob's Well, about a week before he met the Galileans in Nazareth) was not made in the months of December or January, and not 8 or 9 months after John's first Passover. It is clear that it was late May or early June. (The reason he did so at that time will be shown shortly.)

The second explanation offered by many scholars is also suspect because no proverb has been found in Jewish literature which refers to a four month season from sowing to harvest. The period for wheat was more like six months according to the Jewish Mishnah (*Ta'anith*, I.7).

The Real Meaning of Jesus' Statement

Jesus said that his disciples would reckon four more months to the harvest, yet his statement was proclaimed in late May or early June, right in the midst of the wheat harvest. There is really no doubt that this would have been the case. Origen who lived in Palestine in the third century recognized that Jesus' teachings in John 4:35 were stated in the middle of the actual harvest season (*in John*, tom.xiii.39,41). Even Jesus himself acknowledged that this time was during the regular grain harvest.

"Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields for they are white [ripe] already for harvest" (John 4:35).

This reference by Jesus shows that the grain was already available for harvest (after all, it was late May or early June), but for some reason he put it in the mouths of the disciples that they would not expect anyone to harvest for another four months. Why on earth did Jesus say there were yet four more months before harvest, when the harvest season was at its height?

The answer is simple if one remembers the agricultural legisla-

tion that Moses imposed on Jews and Samaritans living in the Holyland. There were agricultural rules that both groups observed in the first century. The truth is, Jesus made his statement in the midst of what the Jews and Samaritans called a Sabbatical Year. Such a year was one in which no sowing or reaping were permitted, from the New Year of one Autumn to the New Year of the next. When this is realized and understood, all chronological difficulties associated with John 4:35 (though they appear to be outright contradictions on the surface) thoroughly disappear.

Notice how plain the whole matter can become. Jesus gave his teaching near the end of the second Hebrew month or the start of the third (late May or early June). When a person counts forward four more months, the month of Tishri is reached. This is the month in which all Sabbatical Years ended and people could legally begin to harvest once again. Jesus was saying what the apostles and the general population were aware of. Since that year was a Sabbatical Year, no one could commence any harvesting (even though one were in the midst of the harvest season for grain) until the Sabbatical Year was over. This is the reason Jesus said it was still “four months” to the period of harvest.

There is more evidence to support this interpretation. Jesus elaborated on his teaching about the harvest by saying:

“And herein is this saying true, ‘One soweth and another reapeth.’
I send you to reap that which ye bestowed no labor” (verses 37,38).

Even Jesus adopted the theme of a Sabbatical Year by telling his disciples that the harvest he asked them to engage in was one in which they **HAD DONE NO LABOR**. How true this illustration would have been even for the physical harvest of a Sabbatical Year. During Sabbatical Years no one could labor on the land. No sowing, plowing, pruning or harvesting were permitted. So even Jesus’ statement that the disciples had bestowed no labor on the harvest that he was talking about, is indicative of the fact that that year was

sabbatical. Jesus used terms applicable to Sabbatical Years.

Another point needs to be made. Since Jesus gave his illustrations in John 4:35-38 at the time the fields were already white for harvest, he strongly implies that no one was in the fields doing any reaping. If all the fields were then ripe for harvest (and that is what Jesus said), this is a powerful suggestion that none of the fields (no matter how many there were) was then being harvested by the people. And, of course, this would have been the case in a Sabbatical Year.

In case some might doubt that fields in Sabbatical Years would produce much grain, since they had not been sowed in the previous Autumn and Winter, all one has to do is to recall that Leviticus 25:5 indicates there would always be a crop during the fallow Sabbatical Year from the grains that fell on the ground in the sixth year of harvest.

The Day of Pentecost?

There is yet another probable proof that the event which occurred at Jacob's Well happened in a Sabbatical Year. This is Luke's parallel account of what transpired in Galilee soon after Jesus had returned to his hometown of Nazareth from the Passover at Jerusalem. Luke tells us that on "The Day of the Sabbaths" (or, "The Day of the Weeks" is another possible way of saying Pentecost to agree with the terminology of Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10; II Chronicles 8:13), Jesus was handed the scroll of Isaiah and he read chapter 61, verses 1 and 2. Luke recorded the occasion. [I am translating directly from the Greek.]

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the Day of the Sabbaths [or, The Day of the Weeks] and stood up to read. And he was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the scroll, and found the place where it was written: 'The Lord's Spirit is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and sight to

the blind, to set free the bruised, to proclaim the Lord's acceptable year.' And he rolled up the scroll, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon him. And he began to say unto them, 'Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears'" (Luke 4:17-21).

It should be noted that the synagogue attendant handed Jesus the scroll of Isaiah. This hints that the synagogue liturgy required Isaiah to be read that day. If so, this could indicate that Jesus read the regular triennial cycle selection from the prophets that accompanied the sequential readings from the five books of Moses. It is interesting that the section that Jesus quoted was that which paralleled the readings from the Law of Moses for Pentecost on the second year of the triennial cycle. (See the chart accompanying the article on the Triennial Cycle in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Funk and Wagnalls, 1906.) This may well be another indication that this event in the synagogue in Nazareth occurred on Pentecost.

Though I am in no way insisting that the phrase "The Day of the Weeks" on which Jesus read Isaiah 61:1,2 was Pentecost (yet it may have been), it is still clear that the event happened in the late Springtime just after Jesus had returned from Jerusalem from John's first Passover. It was certainly the same year that Jesus said his teaching about the Sabbatical Year in John 4:35. With this in mind, we may have a further reference that that year was sabbatical. Note that Jesus called that year "the acceptable year of the Lord." This is a phrase indicating the time of release.

These terms Jesus was using in his discourse at the synagogue at Nazareth were those associated with Sabbatical Years (and with the Jubilee which was a type of Sabbatical Year). [Jubilee Years were not being celebrated by the Jews in the first century, yet the ordinary seven year sabbatical cycle was very much in evidence among the Jews and Samaritans.]

Look at the factors within Jesus' quote from Isaiah which suggest this. He said that he was anointed (1) to preach good tidings to

the poor. This is a reflection on the sabbatical regulations that the poor and the stranger could eat from the fields without hinder. (2) He was to proclaim a release and to free the bruised. This recalls the sabbatical release regulations and being free of debt as mentioned in Deuteronomy 15:1-6. And (3), Jesus was ordained to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. This is a reference to a sabbatical period (which years officially commenced on the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 25:9 and Isaiah 58:1-14). Such years are always associated with “unloosing the bands of wickedness, undoing heavy burdens, letting the oppressed go free, and the breaking of every yoke” (Isaiah 58:6). This is the type of “acceptable year” that Jesus was proclaiming at the synagogue in Nazareth, and the theme smacks of a Sabbatical Year.

If it can thus be shown that the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry and that of Jesus' started in a Sabbatical Year, then it makes excellent sense why so many people were able to follow both of them during the times of their preaching. Many of the people would have been off from their farm labor and able to travel at leisure over the land of Palestine.

The Sequence of Sabbatical Years

Though over the past few centuries historians studying the records about Sabbatical Years have been able to arrive at their sequence within a year or two, only within the last 50 years (and especially the last 30), has it become possible, through archaeological discoveries, etc., to determine with an almost certainty what the exact Sabbatical Years' sequence was and is. This can be known from 163 B.C. to the present. Two brilliant historical studies by Prof. Wacholder of Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, have solved the riddle of when the Sabbatical Years occurred in ancient times, and when they ought to be observed today. His first study is in the Hebrew Union College Annual, 1973, titled “The Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles During the Second Temple and the Early Rabbinic Period” (pp.183-196), and the same Annual for 1975 has

his “The Timing of Messianic Movements and the Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles” (pp. 201-218). In this paper I will summarize the results of Prof. Wacholder’s excellent studies. I also will give some research material of my own from three further references in Josephus which substantiates the conclusions of Wacholder. It will demonstrate the number of precise years over the centuries as sabbaticals, and how we can know the exact sequence of the seventh years for the period we are discussing.

- 1) We are told by I Maccabees 6:49 that Judas Maccabee’s defeat at Beth-Zur was on a Sabbatical Year. And this can be dated to the Sabbatical Year from the Autumn of 163 to Autumn 162 B.C.
- 2) Josephus, the Jewish historian, shows the murder of Simon the Hasmonean as happening in the Sabbatical Year of Autumn 135 to Autumn 134 B.C.
- 3) Josephus shows Herod’s conquest of Jerusalem as occurring in the Sabbatical Year of 37 to 36 B.C.
- 4) King Agrippa the First recited the section of Deuteronomy which a king was required to do as associated with the Sabbatical Year (Deuteronomy 31:10-13). He performed it at a time which historically shows that Agrippa’s Sabbatical Year was A.D.41 to 42.
- 5) A papyrus document written in Aramaic has recently been found in Palestine which is dated to the second year of Nero, and it says that that year was a Sabbatical Year. Thus, A.D.55 to 56 was sabbatical.
- 6) A reference in the second century Jewish work called the *Seder Olam* can be interpreted as showing the Temple at Jerusalem being destroyed in a Sabbatical

Year. That would have been A.D.69 to 70.

- 7) Dated documents have been found concerning the Bar Kokhba revolt of the Jews against the Romans which show that the year A.D.132 to 133 was also a Sabbatical Year.
- 8) The ruins of an ancient synagogue have recently been uncovered which have a date, in a mosaic, for the Jewish year 4000, and that it was the second year of a sabbatical cycle. This answers to A.D.237 to 238.
- 9) There is a reference in the Jewish Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 97b) that the Messiah will release the world from its bondage of corruption in the year after 4291 of the Jewish calendar. Since it was believed this would occur in a Sabbatical Year, this reference becomes important (though the prophecy did not occur) because the year after 4291 was A.D.531 to 532, and it was sabbatical.

The interesting thing about these Sabbatical Years is the fact that they are all in proper sequence. This gives the historian a great deal of confidence that they are correct. This would mean that all the Sabbatical Years in between can be known. (Schurer, following Zuckermann, felt that the Sabbatical Years' cycle was a year earlier than the one presented here, but Wacholder has shown this to be untenable. For example, in Schurer's sequence, the year A.D.40 to 41 was sabbatical, but Josephus says that crops were able to be harvested that year *War* II.200; *Antiquities* XVIII.271-284 and even Schurer admits to the difficulty (*JPJC*, I,I,pp.42,43). Indeed, to use Zuckermann's and Schurer's cycle of years, A.D. 61 to 62 would have been sabbatical, but Josephus makes it clear that in the Spring of A.D.62 people were working at the threshing floors (*Antiquities*, XX.206). But, in the very next year (A.D.62 to 63), Agrippa II started to rebuild Caesarea Philippi which is what would ordinarily

have happened when many farmers were seeking work in the building trade during a Sabbatical Year (*ibid.*, 211-214). Prof. Wacholder has given us the proper sequence of Sabbatical Years, and my references to Josephus just given above corroborate his findings. (See also *The Interpreter's Dict. of the Bible*, Suppl. Vol., pp.762,763.)

Historical Events in Judaea Can Now Make Better Sense

Once the proper annual occurrences of sabbaticals are understood, all other intervening years in sequence can be tallied. We then discover how important events occurred on them. Those years were times when the majority of the population (being mostly in agriculture) were off from their ordinary jobs, and something had to be done in order to keep them busy at earning a proper living. There was a simple answer to this that many people have not thought of. During the six years of farm labor the government took some grain and foodstuffs (like Joseph did in Egypt) and when the Sabbatical Year came around, they paid the people this produce to work at construction or other types of work. Since there was a vast reservoir of workers then available, new buildings, cities, walls, roads, irrigation projects were undertaken. And for the most part the people did the work willingly because they believed God to be behind their efforts of keeping the Sabbatical Years. Note examples of this.

Herod commenced his work on the outer parts of the great Temple of God on the Sabbatical Year of 23/22 B.C. (*cf. War* I.101 and *Loeb*, vol.VIII,p.184 note c). This was also the exact year he commenced work on building the new city of Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast (*cf. Antiquities* XV.341 and *Loeb* note d). And later, Herod's son Philip started to build Caesarea Philippi (*cf. Schurer*, rev. II.169-171) in the Sabbatical Year 2/1 B.C. The city of Tiberias probably had its founding in A.D.20, which was also the beginning of a Sabbatical Year (*cf. Schurer, ibid.*, p.179). Also the expansive third wall around the northern parts of Jerusalem (which, if finished, Josephus said would have made Jerusalem impreg-

nable) was no doubt started by King Agrippa the First in the Sabbatical Year of A.D. 41/42 (*cf. War II.218*). And, as I stated earlier, his son Agrippa II also began huge construction projects in similar circumstances in the Sabbatical Year of A D 62/63. Josephus said that “King Agrippa enlarged Caesarea Philippi and renamed it in honor of Nero. He furthermore built at great expense a theatre for the people of Beirut and presented them with animal spectacles, spending many tens of thousands of drachmas upon this project” (*Antiquities XX.211*).

It is because so many Jews had to take different types of jobs in Sabbatical Years that it was common for most of them in the first century to have two trades. Recall that the apostle Paul was a trained tentmaker (Acts 18:3). Most learned these secondary trades during the Sabbatical Years when so many new construction projects were then underway. This is one of the main reasons that the Jewish people put up with many of the building endeavors of Herod during Sabbatical Years.

The Sabbatical Year of Jesus' Ministry

The sequence of Sabbatical Years is now established with almost certainty by Professor Wacholder. His information, with the new interpretation of John 4:35 that I am giving in this book, provide a logical chronology for the years of Jesus' ministry. We can now know that Jesus gave his information about the “four months to harvest” in a Sabbatical Year and that year has to be the one from the Autumn of A.D.27 to the Autumn of A.D.28.

There is another chronological indication in Luke's Gospel that helps substantiate this. Luke said that John the Baptist began his ministry in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1). Scholars have recognized several ways of reckoning this fifteenth year, but with our new information identifying Jesus' first year of teaching as the Sabbatical Year of A.D.27 to A.D.28, we are now helped in understanding the regnal years of Tiberius as reckoned by

Luke. (For a full discussion on the various ways that Tiberius' fifteenth year have been reckoned, see the works of Prof. Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, pp.259-273, and Prof. Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, pp.29-37.) We can now consider two of the explanations which blend in perfectly well with this new chronological information.

If one acknowledges the fifteenth year of Tiberius as being in conformity with the non-accession method based on the official Roman Year (called the Julian), that fifteenth year would be from January 1, A.D.28 to December 31, A.D.28. This would dovetail nicely with our new proposal, yet it would mean that John the Baptist began baptizing in January A.D.28 in the Jordan Valley. This would be acceptable since it was not excessively cold in the Jordan depression even during mid-winter. However, it does press events between January and the next Passover (which occurred in late March or early April) into a "hurry up" situation. (Recall that Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness after his baptism.) Though this reckoning for the fifteenth year is not improbable, it is not to be preferred over the following determination which fits in much better with all factors. Let's notice it.

Since Luke was a Gentile and writing to a nobleman named Theophilus (traditionally both were from Antioch, Syria), it is possible that Luke was using the non-accession method of reckoning regnal years in Syria from the time of Augustus to Nerva. The fifteenth year of Tiberius was then from Tishri 1, A.D.27 to Tishri 1, A.D.28. This would mean that Luke was calculating the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry (and consequently that of Jesus') according to the calendar with which he and Theophilus would have been familiar (Hoehner, pp.34,35). It also has the advantage of paralleling the Jewish Year which also commenced with Tishri 1 (near our September). And more than that, this reckoning would also correspond precisely with the Sabbatical Year' from the Autumn of A.D.27 to the Autumn of A.D.28.

What a significant symbolic time for John and Jesus to start their ministries. The Jewish people were keenly aware of the prophetic significance of Sabbatical Years as they related to prominent people of the Old Testament periods, and also to the advent of the Messiah into the world. In literature written not long before Jesus began to preach, we have these symbolic features about sabbatical years emphasized. The Book of Enoch presents an apocalyptic account based on the seven sabbatical ages, and in 91:12-17 it adds three more, a total of ten sabbatical periods. The Book of Jubilees records that at the creation God partitioned off time periods into sabbatical and jubilee cycles (Jubilees 1:27-29). The births of significant people such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, and other patriarchs were timed to dovetail precisely with sabbatical eras (4Q181, fragments 1-2). The Dead Sea sectarians recognized future reigns of the Kings of Wickedness and Righteousness relative to a sabbatical calendar, and believing that the last year of the cycle would be the start of the Messianic age (1 *QMelch*.3:2).

These early opinions on the symbolic teaching concerning Sabbatical Years were no doubt prompted by the sabbatical periods recorded by the Prophet Daniel. His Seventy Weeks' prophecy was an extension of a Sabbatical Years' theme, and this prophecy was the prime reference point for the advent of the Messianic age that the Jews were expecting in the first century. "Passover of the Sabbatical Year became the period when the redeemer's coming was expected most" (Wacholder, *Int.Dict One Vol.* supplement, p.763).

It is thus no surprise that vast crowds of people came out in the Sabbatical Year of A.D.27 to A.D.28 to be baptized of John the Baptist and Jesus. This was not only a time when a great percentage of the people would have been free of agricultural duties and able to travel at leisure following the great teachers around Palestine, but it was also the Sabbatical Year when many of them were expecting Messianic signs to occur.

It makes perfectly good sense that John the Baptist would have started his ministry in the Autumn, at the beginning of the Sabbatical Year, and that Jesus would have commenced his own teaching a little later.

This would indicate that John the Baptist inaugurated his teaching ministry at the beginning of a Sabbatical Year. Soon after that, Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days and then returned to Galilee. It appears that he was waiting for Passover in A.D.28 to begin officially his ministry. As Prof. Wacholder states, "Passover of the Sabbatical Year became the period when the redeemer's coming was expected most."

It was also in the Sabbatical Year of A.D.27 to A.D.28 that Jesus was 30 years of age. (The historical and astronomical proof that Jesus was born in 3 B.C. is given in my book "The Star that Astonished the World.") At the Passover of A.D.28, when he officially began his ministry, he was within his year 30. There was rather a strange way to us westerners of reckoning the years of a person's life. During the whole of a person's 30th year the word meaning "about" or "as if" was used to denote the year. Luke records: "Jesus began [his ministry] *about* thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23). Irenaeus, however, shows what Luke meant. "For when he [Jesus] was baptized, *he had not yet completed his thirtieth year* [he was indeed 30 already, but he had not completed year 30], but was *beginning to be about* thirty years of age" (*Against Heresies*, II, xxii, 5). Irenaeus had just said he was already 30 in paragraph 4. So, "beginning to be about 30" was used of a person all the way from the beginning to the ending of a person's year 30. During the whole of a person's year 30, the word meaning "about" or "as if" was applied. When his year 30 ended, he had then concluded his year 30. This means that Jesus was 30 when he began his ministry, but he had not yet completed his 30th year.

The Chronological Indications of John

Since it looks evident that John the Baptist and Jesus began to teach in the Sabbatical Year from Tishri 1, A.D.27 to Tishri 1, A.D.28, it is a simple procedure to follow the apostle John through his other chronological references to the year of the crucifixion. The first Passover mentioned by John can now be reckoned to A.D.28. At the following Pentecost season he was in Galilee, probably at Nazareth. The next festival of John was his "unknown" feast (5:1). This "unknown" festival occurred some time before John's next Passover mentioned in 6:4.

What was this "unknown" feast? Westcott makes an excellent case for the Day of Trumpets which was the beginning of the Jewish New Year (*The Gospel According to John*, pp.92-94). This suggestion is an attractive one. The theme of Jesus' teaching at that feast was on the judgment and the resurrection (John 5:25-31), the exact symbolic teaching associated with the Day of Trumpets.

Both Professors Finegan and Hoehner accept the "unknown" feast as Tabernacles. This may be true, but for our present chronological purposes, Trumpets and Tabernacles are only separated from one another by 15 days, and this short interval presents no difficulty. (It is only fair, however, to mention that both Finegan and Hoehner place this "unknown" feast not in the first year of Jesus' ministry, as I do in this book, but in the second. To do this, an "unknown" (and unmentioned) Passover is usually inserted between the Passovers of John 2:13 and 6:4. My new proposal, however, shows no need to create another unmentioned Passover.

Whatever the case, the "unknown" feast of John 5:1 was probably New Year's Day (Trumpets) or Tabernacles in A.D.28. This would mean that the following Passover (6:4) was in A.D.29 when Jesus fed the 5000 in Galilee. The next feast in John was that of Tabernacles in A.D.29 (7:2), and then the Dedication (10:22), which was in the winter of A.D.29/30. The next Passover mentioned by John was that at which Jesus was crucified. This would

have been in the year A.D.30. The year A.D.30 is the most reasonable date that can be given for the crucifixion of Jesus, and this is the year that most scholars have come to believe is the proper one. And when all the historical evidence is surveyed, along with the Jewish records that I have given in this book, the year A.D.30 has the best credentials.

The Crucifixion on Friday?

The year A.D.30 for the crucifixion is also attested by the fact that only in that year (or in A.D.33) could Jesus' death have occurred on a Friday (and for A.D.30, it is astronomically possible for it to be on a Thursday). Friday is the most likely day if the third day (mentioned by the disciples on the road to Emmaus) was reckoned inclusively or a Thursday if it were figured exclusively (Luke 24:13-31). The supposition that Jesus died on a Wednesday, however, as some few have suggested, is not possible in the light of New Testament historical and astronomical indications. This is easily demonstrated. In no way can a late Sunday afternoon when Jesus met the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:29) be reckoned a third day from a Wednesday. Only a Friday (inclusively) or a Thursday (exclusively) will work. A Thursday is attractive for one other reason. The reference to three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40) would be literal if Jesus were crucified on a Thursday, and it is astronomically possible for the crucifixion to have happened on a Thursday in A.D.30, but not in A.D.33. (Those in favor of a Thursday crucifixion are Westcott, Aldrich and recently Rusk. See Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects*, p.68.)

Let us, however, notice the biblical events if the day were a Friday. We find Jesus being crucified on the day of the preparation of the sabbath (Matthew 27:62) and put in the tomb before sunset. The next day (a sabbath) the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate and asked for a guard and a sealing of the stone at the entrance to the tomb (v.64) because they remembered Jesus saying he would rise from the dead after three days (v.63). This might give

a person the decided impression that a full 72 hours (a full three days and three nights) were needed to set a guard at the entrance and for the stone to be sealed. But this was not the case. They followed their “after three days” remark by asking for a watch until the third day (v.64). They were aware that one night had passed already. They were asking that a guard be placed at the tomb until the next night was over (v.64) only until the third day. So, Pilate gave them permission to set a guard and to seal the stone. When the sabbath was over, the priests and Pharisees carried out the orders of Pilate. In no way would they have worked at sealing the stone while the sabbath day was still in evidence. They waited until it was over. And this is exactly what Matthew said. Note the wording: “So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch, in the end of the sabbaths [sabbaths, plural]” (Matthew 27:66 with 28:1a). In fact, the phrase “end of the sabbaths” should be attached to the end of chapter 27, not at the beginning of chapter 28. The original Greek text had no chapter breaks, but modern editors have divided the text to where “the end of the sabbaths” becomes the “dawn” of the next day. Actually, the first part of Matthew 28:1 belongs to “sealing the stone,” and the second part to Jesus’ resurrection at dawn on Sunday morning.

The chronological account in the Gospels concerning the crucifixion is really quite simple. Jesus died about three o’clock in the afternoon of Friday. He was placed in the tomb before the weekly sabbath (that day was also the First Day of Unleavened Bread, so that one sabbath became “two sabbaths” in tandem if the day were a Thursday, or superimposed if on a Friday (John 19:31). Then the Pharisees went to Pilate asking him to secure the tomb and to have it sealed for another night. And at the “end of the sabbaths,” (that is, after sundown) they set the guard and labored at sealing the stone. But the next morning, about dawn, the resurrection of Jesus took place. This would have been “the third day” from his crucifixion reckoning in the normal inclusive manner.

One may wonder why we are belaboring the matter of showing a Friday (or, perhaps, a Thursday) crucifixion. The reason is important. A Wednesday crucifixion could only have occurred in A.D.31, while a Friday crucifixion was possible only in A.D.30 or 33 (Finegan, *ibid.*, p.298). Our new information shows that Jesus' ministry began in a Sabbatical Year, and that year was A.D.27 to A.D.28. Then the year of the crucifixion (by following the apostle John precisely and without inventing some unmentioned or "unknown" Passover) comes out to A.D.30. This also fits in well with the Jewish historical records as shown in the body of this book that the period of 40 years (from A.D.30 to 70) were all linked together to give some outstanding miraculous events associated with the priesthood and the Temple at Jerusalem. Only A.D.30 for the crucifixion of Jesus make these Jewish historical records relevant.

A Ministry of Two Years Plus

In short, A.D.30 was the year of the crucifixion. By following John's Gospel, the time from Jesus' baptism to his crucifixion was about two years and three or four months. This length of time was maintained by Apollinaris, bishop of Laodicea in Syria (c.310-390) and Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis in Cyprus (c.315-403). Among modern scholars who hold this view are Sutcliffe, Blinzler, Caird, Ruckstuhl, Schnackenburg, F.F.Bruce, and Duncan. See Hoehner for references, pp.48,49. Why Professor Hoehner says it is necessary to transpose chapters 5 and 6 of John to sustain a two years' ministry for Jesus (plus a few months) is a mystery. With our new information, there is really no need to make such a shift in chapters 5 and 6, and likewise, it is not necessary to invent another Passover which John does not mention between 2:13 and 6:4.

More Evidence

There is even further proof for an A.D.30 date for the passion of Jesus. This concerns the time the Book of Galatians was written.

This book was certainly composed by the apostle Paul before the Jerusalem Council held in A.D.49. This has to be the case because it is inconceivable that six full chapters had to be written about the non-need for Gentiles to observe circumcision and the Mosaic law if Paul could simply have referred the Galatians to the official decrees concerning the matter which were ordained by the apostles, and all others, at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).

Note this. Paul mentioned in Galatians that he went to Jerusalem two times to discuss doctrinal issues with the “pillar” apostles. One was three years after his conversion and then fourteen years after that (Galatians 1:18; 2:1). It is not to be imagined that Paul meant he only went to Jerusalem twice in that seventeen year period. Not at all. Paul may have visited the capital several times during the interval, and one such time is mentioned in Acts 11:30. In the Book of Galatians, Paul meant that he had gone to Jerusalem twice to discuss doctrine and the relevance of his special commission. In Paul’s other visits over that period of seventeen years (and there must have been several) the issue of doctrine and Paul’s special commission must not have come up because there is nothing about it in his writings. That’s why he never mentioned his other journeys to Jerusalem in the Book of Galatians.

Since Paul wrote Galatians not long before the Jerusalem Council (and the controversy in Galatia may well have provoked the need for the Council in the first place), he said that he, Barnabas and Titus had gone by revelation to the apostles in Jerusalem to discuss their special commissions of preaching to the Gentiles. This visit probably occurred in the previous year to the Council. If this is so, it would have been in A.D.48 (or perhaps very early in A.D.49). This is an excellent chronological clue. Seventeen years before that pre-Council meeting, Paul saw the great vision on the road to Damascus. This leads us back, obviously, to A.D.31 for the conversion of Paul. And since there must have been at least one year’s active persecution by Saul (before he became Paul) against

believers in Jesus throughout Judaea, these historical references focus squarely on Jesus' crucifixion as happening in A.D.30.

There is even further proof that the seventeen years mentioned by Paul in Galatians lead back to A.D.31. He stated that the Galatians were suddenly going over to keeping the Mosaic law because people from Jerusalem taught them the need to do so. Indeed, the Galatians were "observing days, months, times, and *years*" (Galatians 4: 10). Note the italicized word "*years*." Within the context of Paul's rebuke to the Galatian Gentiles, this can only refer to their observing (the verb is in the present tense) the Sabbatical Years of the Mosaic law. This, again, is an important chronological clue. The sequence of Sabbatical Years in the period when the Book of Galatians could have been written was A.D.41/42, A.D.48/49; and A.D.55/56. Since A.D.55/56 is well after the Jerusalem Council of A.D.49, this could not be the Sabbatical Year the Galatians were observing. It is manifestly too early for A.D.41/42 to be considered. The only possibility is the Sabbatical Year of A.D.48/49.

If this were the Sabbatical Year they were actively observing (and note that Paul used the present tense "observing"), one can understand the apostle Paul's urgent concern for their behavior. The truth is, it was not even necessary for Jews to observe Sabbatical Years outside the designated lands associated with Palestine, but here were the Galatians (and Gentiles at that) now observing the official Sabbatical Year of A.D.48/49 in Asia Minor. And only that year fits.

Important New Testament Deductions

Once the proper sequence of Sabbatical Years is understood, we can now appraise some significant New Testament historical statements in a much better way. For one, we now know that the Autumn of A.D.48 to Autumn A.D.49 was a Sabbatical Year. This is a time when all agricultural activity in Palestine would have

ceased. Such ritualistic requirements were often very traumatic for the Jewish people who lived in the Holyland and this was especially true in the six months' period that succeeded any Sabbatical Year. The fact is, they had effectively been cut off from earning any money from land products during the sabbatical period. This point is a major one in interpreting several statements in various sections of the New Testament.

Since Palestinian Jews were usually in dire economic straits during Sabbatical Years, and the six months that followed, it was customary for Jews in the Diaspora (those living outside Palestine) to send money and foodstuffs to their brethren in the Holyland. However, when Palestine was not undergoing drought or keeping Sabbatical Years, there is ample evidence to show that the region was very productive in which to live. Even Titus, the later Roman emperor, said that Judaea was proportionately more prosperous than Rome itself (*War* III.516-521; VI.317, 333-336; *Antiquities* V.76-79). But when the Jews ceased agricultural pursuits in Sabbatical Years, many of them became poor as the Scriptures attest.

It may seem like a moot point, but when Paul and Barnabas were given the right hand of fellowship that they should go to the Gentiles and the "pillar" apostles were assigned to the circumcision, the only extra requirement imposed on Paul was that he "remember the poor" (Galatians 2:10). The poor in question, as the context certainly shows, were the poor among the Jews in Palestine because Paul and Barnabas would surely have considered it incumbent on them to show benevolence upon the Gentiles to whom they were commissioned to preach. But why were the Jews poor? The answer should be evident once the sequence of Sabbatical Years is recognized. The truth is, A.D.48 to A.D.49 was a Sabbatical Year, and the apostle Paul had the conference with the "pillar" apostles sometime in A.D.48 right at the start of a Sabbatical Year. There would have indeed been many poor in Palestine during the next

year or so. It was always the year after a Sabbatical that was most severe in food shortages.

Yet there is more. The apostle Paul went to Corinth while on his second journey, arriving there near the Autumn of A.D.50 or early A.D.51. He spent 18 months in Corinth (Acts 18:11). There is archaeological information which shows that Gallio, the Roman proconsul, was in office between January 25, A.D.52 and before August 1, A.D.52 (Finegan, *ibid.*, pp.316-318). Paul went before Gallio at that time (Acts 18:12-17). Afterward, in the middle part of A.D.52, Paul went to Jerusalem, and finally back to his homebase in Antioch of Syria (Acts 18:21,22). Then in the Spring of A.D.53, Paul started out on his third journey (Acts 18:23), reaching Ephesus in late Spring of A.D.53. He stayed there for two years (Acts 19:10) and near that end of that period, and just before the Passover season in A.D.55, he wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 16). He ordered them, as he had those in Galatia, to save up money and goods to give to the poor saints at Jerusalem (I Corinthians 16:15). Afterwards, he went to Macedonia (from whence he wrote II Corinthians in late A.D.55). He again wrote the Corinthians (two long chapters) about the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, praising them that even "from before" the Sabbatical Year began with Tishri in A.D.55, the Corinthians had started to save their money and produce (II Corinthians 8:10; 9:2). Then, in late A.D.55, Paul went on to Corinth, where he wintered with them for three months (Acts 20:3). This is when he wrote his epistle to the Romans, telling them he was soon journeying to Jerusalem to deliver the collections he had secured from Galatia, Macedonia, and Greece (Romans 15:25-33). The Book of Romans was written in the early Spring of A.D.56. He then left Corinth and went to Ephesus, now telling them it had been three years since he started preaching to them (Acts 20:31). He got to Jerusalem about Pentecost in A.D.56 (Acts 20:16) approaching the end of the Sabbatical Year.

Why are these chronological data important to know? Because they show that Paul was taking produce and money to Jerusalem to help them through the Sabbatical Year from Autumn A.D.55 to Autumn A.D.56. Not only does this information help us date the times when the epistles I and II Corinthians (as well as Romans) were written, but the evidence helps to confirm the sequence of Sabbatical Years which Professor Wacholder has provided.

When the complete ramifications of this chronological subject are recognized, it will be seen how important the proper interpretation of John 4:35-38 really is. Jesus is in that verse talking about a Sabbatical Year. That indication represents a powerful chronological benchmark which can help us identify the years when the festivals took place that John mentioned in his Gospel. When it is realized that the Sabbatical Year of A.D.27 to A.D.28 is the first year of Jesus' ministry, most of the other chronological indications in the Gospels and epistles can make much better sense. And more importantly, it gives us, with an almost certainty, the true year of the crucifixion as being in A.D.30. What is important in this matter is the fact that this year (and only this year) dovetails remarkably with the Jewish historical records that beginning in the year A.D.30 (and lasting for 40 years until the destruction of the Temple), some marvelous events took place regarding the priesthood and Temple that were a wonderful witness to the Jewish people that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.



Addendum 2

JESUS AND MODERN JUDAISM

Look what has happened to both Christians and Jews. When Constantine turned his back on Jesus and his teachings to rely on his visions, dreams and signs, Constantine and all Christians who followed him began to direct their prayers to the monumental tomb area of the Jewish Priest John Hyrcanus. I have shown in this book that it was the Jewish authorities who showed the mother of Constantine the site. They no doubt rejoiced in their success in pulling off such a clever subterfuge on Constantine and the Christians. Then, a few years later, the Jewish leaders selected their most holy place on earth to honor their God and Messiah. They picked a spot that had long been looked on as significant to the Jewish people. They selected the Western Wall, or popularly called today the “Wailing Wall.”

During the fourth century, the Jewish authorities unknowingly (at least, apparently so) directed the mourning of the Jewish people toward this most interesting site at the Western Wall. In a fifth century work titled the *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana* (a work which summarizes and synthesizes Jewish teaching from the Holy Scriptures and the Talmud for teaching in the synagogues), we are told that

this area of the Western Wall was selected because God and also a person they called the “second Moses” (the Messiah) were located “behind our wall” (*Pesikta*, *Piska* 5:8). That is, God and the “second Moses” were somewhere on the *east* side of the Western Wall. Also, the Shekinah Glory was thought to be *east* of the Western Wall. These teachings are often mentioned by Jews today as the reason for worshipping and mourning at the Western Wall. But why would the Jewish Messiah be located *east* of a part of the Western Wall that was about 300 feet south of where the actual Temple stood? There was nothing but an empty space located *east* of this region of the wall in the time of the Temple.

What most Jewish people are unaware of, however, is the fact that their mourning at their “Wailing Wall” is directed *eastward* toward a place that the New Testament shows was highly significant in the ministry of Jesus. They are mourning and wailing directly toward the spot on the Mount of Olives where Christians until the time of Constantine always assembled in Jerusalem to honor and worship God. What site was this? This was to the very tomb where Jesus was buried and from which he was resurrected from the dead.

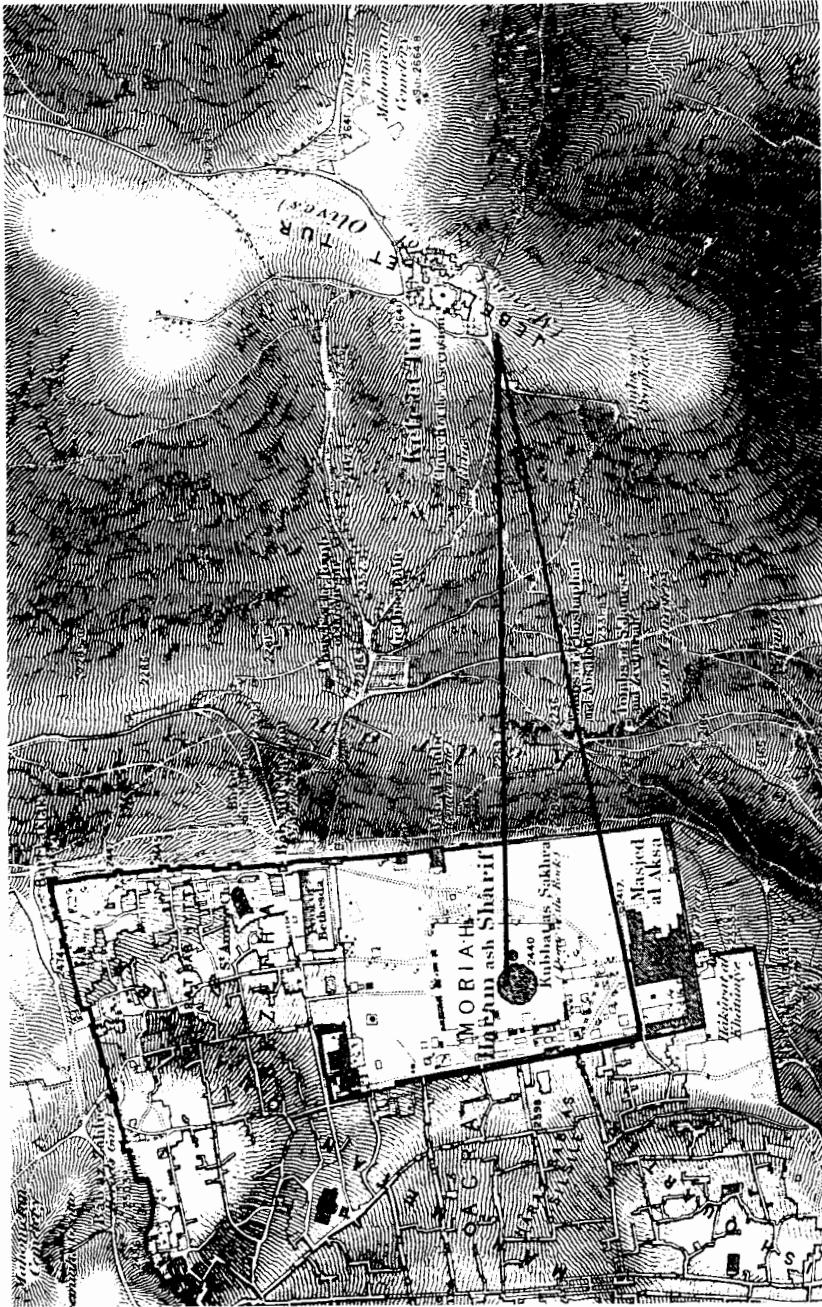
Whether the Jewish people today realize it or not, they are themselves giving an unrecognized homage to Jesus, by consistently praying and mourning toward the exact spot of his burial and resurrection. This is precisely what Mary Magdalene earlier did in front of the tomb of Jesus (John 20:13-15). And while the Jewish officials in the fourth century were clever enough to get Christendom (including the emperor himself) to direct Christian prayers toward the monumental tomb area of the Jewish Priest called John Hyrcanus, the Jewish people themselves have selected a spot to pray and weep (at what they now call their holiest place on earth) that demands they bow directly toward the very tomb of Jesus. That is a fact.

Jewish People are Ignorant of their Prayers being directed to Jesus' Tomb

If you ask most Jewish people today what their traditions tell them regarding the reason they pray *eastward* at that particular spot which they call the “Wailing Wall,” the majority will tell you that they have been told that God (and in other traditions, their Messiah) can be found dwelling *eastward* beyond the wall. They can cite the *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana* and other historical works as proof of this. And though from the Byzantine period to the fifteenth century the Jewish authorities saw the importance of the Mount of Olives (and they met there for official assembly and even with a type of Sanhedrin being there on some occasions), they finally came to see the Western Wall as the holiest spot in Judaism from the fifteenth century onward. There were reasons for this. For one, it was believed that the Shekinah never left the Western Wall, and that this was a reason for concentrating on the western site. This belief, however, is contradicted by the first century Jewish and Christian references that the Shekinah went from the Temple to the Mount of Olives just before the Roman/Jewish War of A.D.70.

Whatever the case, the Jewish authorities (at least from the fourth century onward) state that they could find their Messiah behind the Western Wall (toward the *east*), and from the fifteenth century until now, this is certainly a belief. In this they are correct, for their direction of prayer is precisely to the very cave/tomb at the Pater Noster Church on the Mount of Olives where Jesus was buried and resurrected from the dead. This is an extraordinary circumstance. There is another point to note. They are not praying directly toward the *east* at the Western Wall. Since the western wall of the Temple is inclined slightly toward the west of north a few degrees, this makes the Jewish mourners direct their prayers those few degrees north of east (precisely to Jesus' tomb on Olivet).

That, however, does not end the story. If one draws an imaginary line *directly east* from a point about 35 feet north of the highest point of Mount Moriah where most Jews reckon the former Altar of



The top line is from the center of the Temple (just north of the Altar of Burnt Offering) and leads to the tomb area of Jesus. The bottom line goes directly from the Western Wall (the "Wailing Wall") and leads to the tomb area of Jesus.

Burnt Offering was positioned (precisely where the center of the Dome of the Rock now exists), that line going directly east would intersect with the other eastward line projected from the “Wailing Wall” precisely at the cave/tomb of Jesus at the Pater Noster Church. So, whether one measures directly eastward from the Temple of Herod or those few degrees north of east from the “Wailing Wall,” the cave/tomb on Olivet is encountered by these two lines.

The Messiah to Come from the East

It was thought by early Jews that the Messiah (or God himself) in his glorified state would actually bring a renewed holiness to the Temple from the *east* of the Temple (Ezekiel 43:2). Even Jesus himself said that his glorious Second Advent would be observed by people looking toward the *east* (Matthew 24:27). With this in mind, look at what has happened (and something that can be observed every day in Jerusalem). The prophet Zechariah said that a time was coming in which the Jews would be looking toward the very person whom “they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zechariah 12:10). Early Christians identified this prophecy as referring to Jesus (John 19:34; Revelation 1:10). Remarkably, this is exactly what the early Jewish records of the fourth and later centuries relate the Jews were then starting to do (and they are still doing it today at their “Wailing Wall”). Indeed, Zechariah the prophet went on to say that the Jewish men and the Jewish women would be wailing toward the person they pierced while they would be separated from one another. “All the families that remain, every family apart, and the wives apart” (Zechariah 12:14). And look at what is occurring at the “Wailing Wall.” Jewish men pray and mourn on the north side of the site, while separated from the women on the south side.

Isn't it interesting that all religious Jews in the world, if they participate in the activities at the “Wailing Wall,” are mourning direct-

ly toward “the one they have pierced”? If you ask ordinary Jews why they pray in that direction, they will say they are mourning for the destruction of their Temple — their physical Temple. But why are they praying at the western part of the outer Temple walls (praying with God’s back to them)? Remember, God is always depicted as facing eastward in the former Temples. There is a prophecy in Jeremiah that can justify the people when they do this. It says: “I will scatter them as with an east wind [they shall be sent into captivity in a westerly direction] before the enemy; I will show them the back [God’s back parts], and not the face, in the day of their calamity” (Jeremiah 18:17). So, religious Jews can say they approach the ruined Temple area from the west (in which God was supposed to have faced east) with God’s face turned away from them because of this prophecy.

Understanding this Symbolic Teaching from the Jewish Point of View

Still, the Jewish people who are religious (almost to a man, woman and child) maintain their reverence and attention to their “Wailing Wall.” The Jewish people from the fifth century onward have believed that the Messiah (or God in the presence of his Shekinah) is located *east* of their Western Wall at the southwestern corner of the Temple mount. A great deal about this is in Judah Nadich’s *Jewish Legends of the Second Commonwealth*, pp.368, 369,400,401, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1983.

The early Jewish authorities obtained this teaching that their Messiah was *east* of this Western Wall through their interpretation of the Song of Songs. Note verse 2:9: “He standeth behind our wall.” They referred this to the Messiah or the Shekinah of God. The Jewish authorities made this distinction while reading the Song of Songs every year by their liturgical readings that were once performed in the Temple and later perpetuated in their synagogue services. This Song of Songs is one biblical book that gave much allegorical meaning to the early Jewish authorities. The book was read

in the Temple each year at the Passover service. It was Ezra the Priest in the Persian period who ordained this liturgical reading in the Temple at that sacred time. The Jews came to see a symbolic emphasis within the Song of Songs. It was looked on as a type of parable to give Israel spiritual teaching about God and the Messiah.

What was remarkable to the Jews of Temple times (and even today) is the fact that the word “God” (or any outward reference to deity) is not found once in the whole of the Song of Songs (except a cryptic or hidden reference to God as a vehement flame in chapter 8 verse 6). Still, the book was ordained to be read during the week of Passover. To the early Jews, this meant that they were to look beneath the surface of the text to see the spiritual teachings behind that book. It was easy to see that the book contained a spiritual love story concerning a royal scion of David and a woman who loved him dearly. He was called “the Beloved” who was like a deer or gazelle (he represented in Jewish interpretation the Messiah or the Shekinah) who leaped from mountain to mountain (2:8) to find a resting place in order to pursue the woman of the story. The “woman” was recognized as the people of Israel. The “Beloved” of the story finally positions himself “behind our wall” (Song of Solomon 2:9). He beckons the “woman” to come to him who is standing on the other side of the wall. Indeed, the “woman” recognizes that he was not directly “behind our wall,” but he was standing further away at a place with windows and a lattice that hides his countenance (2:9). What is interesting is the fact that there are no windows or lattices in the Herodian stones at the Western Wall. The windows and lattices were somewhere else. The “Beloved” was actually standing “upon the Mountains of Bether [Separation]” (Song of Songs 2:17).

Where is “Bether,” the “Mountains of Separation?” They were certainly close to Jerusalem because the daughters of Jerusalem considered themselves near enough on occasion to watch “the Beloved” sleeping (2:7), yet “the Beloved” was not to be found in

the streets or broadways of the city of Jerusalem (3:1,2). Still, he was near to Jerusalem, and more precisely he was on the “Mountains of Bether.” He would be found up a steep slope “in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs” (2:14) — that is to say, up a steep slope of stairs where there were “clefts” (caves or holes) in the rock. That is fine, but where was the steep slope of “Bether,” the “Mountains of Separation”? The truth is, Bether is not difficult to locate.

When looking *east* from the Temple Mount, one sees the Mount of Olives. Though Olivet is actually one mountain, it has a northern and a southern summit with a division line (a separation fault line) between the summits. By using the name “Bether” (“the Mountains of Separation”), we find a perfect description of the Mount of Olives. This separation line may be the location where the seismic disturbance occurs that the Book of Zechariah prophesies about when it states that the Mount of Olives “shall cleave in the midst thereof” and become two separate and independent mountains divided by a valley (Zechariah 14:4,5). Thus, the symbolic name for the Mount of Olives was “Bether” (“Separation”). However, there was also a literal name that the early Jews gave to the Mount of Olives. It was “the Mountain of the Anointing” (that is, “the Mountain of the Messiah,” or through the Greek, “the Mountain of the Christ”). This is shown in the Mishnah (*Parah* 3:6). This is a highly significant designation that the Jews adopted.

Isn't it interesting that Jesus was indeed crucified on the very “Mountain of the Messiah” (near the southern summit of the mountains which made up Olivet) and that he was buried and resurrected from the dead “up a steep slope” at one of the “holes of the rock” (a tomb) found near the summit? Since the tomb of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead, was once a cave made into a tomb (and located on the eastern side of Olivet — see John 11:38), this could account for the same type of memorial tomb for Jesus. The original tomb was reckoned as being a cave. And indeed, that is the very

thing that I have given abundant historical evidence to sustain in this book. What we find is that the New Testament tells us that such a “hole in the rock” had been hewn out of the stone escarpment as a tomb for Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57-60). So, “the Beloved of Israel” of the Song of Songs can be discovered when the Jewish people apply the allegorical interpretation of the Jewish authorities which tells them to assemble at the “Wailing Wall.” Their Messiah will be found “beyond our wall” (not immediately behind the Western Wall which has no windows or lattices in its Herodian stones, but on “Bethel” which is the “Mountain of the Messiah,” that is, the Mount of Olives). He can be recognized in a hidden place (behind some lattices that hide his countenance). This is a place found “up a steep slope” at a spot associated with one of the “holes of the rock.” This describes the tomb of Jesus precisely.

The Jewish people at their Western Wall are *NOT* praying *eastward* to lament the ruins of their former Temple. Indeed, there are no ruins of the Temple directly *east* of the Western Wall. What the Jewish people are doing is praying *through an empty area* of the Temple Mount and toward another spot on the top of the Mount of Olives. They are mourning toward another Temple. In this general area on Olivet is where “the *OUTWARD* Sanctuary” of Ezekiel was once located (Ezekiel 44:1). But few Jewish people recognize this important part of the Temple apparatus. The truth is, they are praying toward another type of Temple. Remember what Jesus told the Jewish people: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he [Jesus] spake of the temple of his body” (John 2:19-21). While modern Jews realize they are mourning because of the destruction of their Temple, they do not understand that their mourning is for the body of their true “Temple” who was raised from the dead at one of the “holes in the rock” in Bethel, the Mount of Olives. When they do begin to comprehend the significance of what they are doing at their Western Wall, they will become wise to the truth and the apostle

Paul said: “All Israel shall be saved” (Romans 11:26).

The only biblical source the Jewish authorities possess that provides a reason for the Jewish people to assemble and to pray at the Western Wall is the Song of Songs. The great Rabbi Akiva just after the destruction of the Temple showed the sanctity and the importance of the Song of Songs in Jewish interpretation. It was destined to become the holiest of their sacred books. He said: “For all the world is not worthy as the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel, for all the Writings are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies” (*Yad.* 3:5; *cf. Eduy.* 5:3; *Tosef. Yad.* 2:14).

The Song of Songs is so important to Jewish interpreters simply because it is the only biblical source that points them to the need to assemble at their Western Wall (which is presently the holiest of geographical sites to the Jewish people). The Song of Songs asks that the countenance of “the Beloved” might be seen and that he will speak pleasantly to them (2:14). What this Jewish allegory shows is that their Messiah will be found “beyond our wall,” and “up a steep slope” of the “Mount of the Anointing, the Messiah” (Olivet) and to one of the “holes of the rock.” There is where the tomb of Jesus is found from which he was resurrected to life.

What is most remarkable from all of this is the fact that when the Jewish people today worship God at their Wailing Wall, they are actually directing their prayers to the cave/tomb on the Mount of Olives where Jesus was buried and resurrected from the dead. So, while the majority of Christians are erroneously calling their most holy place the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (which is actually the tomb area of the Jewish King John Hyrcanus), the Jewish people themselves are actually praying (unknown to them) to the actual and true Sepulchre of Jesus. What a strange turn of events this happens to be. It makes one wonder if it is all circumstantial? It appears to me that God has a very conspicuous and revealing manner of maintaining a fastidious precision over the geography of Jerusalem and over His people who are Christians and Jews.