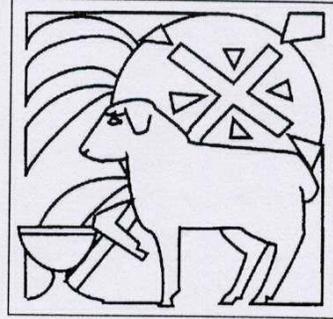


THE HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

EASTER SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY

Matthew 28



1. After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.
2. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.
3. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.
4. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.
5. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified."
6. **He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.** Come and see the place where he lay.
7. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: '**He has risen from the dead** and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."
8. So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.
9. **Suddenly Jesus met them.** "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him.
10. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there **they will see me.**"
11. While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened.
12. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money,
13. telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.'"
14. If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble."
15. So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

Mark 16

1. When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.
 2. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb
 3. and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"
 4. But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.
 5. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.
 6. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. **He has risen! He is not here.**
- See the place where they laid him.**
7. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"
 8. Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.
 9. **When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week,** he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons.
 10. She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping.
 11. When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.
 12. Afterward **Jesus appeared** in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country.
 13. These returned and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either.
 14. **Later Jesus appeared** to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.

Luke 24

1. On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.
2. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb,
3. but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.
4. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.
5. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"

6. **He is not here; he has risen!** Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee:
7. The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and **on the third day be raised again.**"
8. Then they remembered his words.
9. When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others.
10. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles.
11. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.
12. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.
13. Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.
14. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened.
15. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, **Jesus himself came up and walked along with them;**
16. but they were kept from recognizing him.
17. He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast.
18. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"
19. "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.
20. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him;
21. but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.
22. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning
23. but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive.
24. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."
25. **He said to them,** "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!
26. Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"
27. And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.
28. As they approached the village to which they were going, **Jesus acted as if he were going farther.**
29. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.
30. **When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.**
31. **Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.**
32. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"
33. They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together
34. and saying, "**It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.**"
35. Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how **Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.**
36. While they were still talking about this, **Jesus himself stood among them** and said to them, "Peace be with you."
37. They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.
38. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?"
39. **Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."**
40. **When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.**
41. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?"
42. **They gave him a piece of broiled fish,**
43. **and he took it and ate it in their presence.**
44. He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."
45. Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.
46. He told them, "This is what is written: **The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,**
47. and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.
48. You are witnesses of these things.
49. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

John 20

1. Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.
2. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"
3. So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb.
4. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.
5. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.
6. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there,
7. as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.
8. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.
9. (They still did not understand from Scripture **that Jesus had to rise from the dead.**)
10. Then the disciples went back to their homes,
11. but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb
12. and saw two angels in white, seated **where Jesus' body had been**, one at the head and the other at the foot.
13. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."
14. At this, she turned around and **saw Jesus standing there**, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.
15. "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."
16. **Jesus said to her, "Mary."** She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).
17. **Jesus said,** "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"
18. Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: **"I have seen the Lord!"** And she told them that he had said these things to her.
19. On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, **Jesus came and stood among them** and said, "Peace be with you!"
20. **After he said this, he showed them his hands and side.** The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.
21. Again **Jesus said,** "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."
22. And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.
23. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."
24. Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.
25. So the other disciples told him, **"We have seen the Lord!"** But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."
26. A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were **locked, Jesus came and stood among them** and said, "Peace be with you!"
27. Then he said to Thomas, **"Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."**
28. Thomas said to him, **"My Lord and my God!"**
29. **Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."**
30. **Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.**
31. **But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

John 21

1. **Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples**, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way:
2. Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together.
3. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.
4. **Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.**
5. **He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"** "No," they answered.
6. **He said,** "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

7. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "**It is the Lord!**" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "**It is the Lord,**" he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.
8. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.
9. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.
10. **Jesus** said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."
11. Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.
12. **Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."** None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.
13. **Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.**
14. **This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead**

Acts 1

1. In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that **Jesus** began to do and to teach
2. until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.
3. After his suffering, **he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days** and spoke about the kingdom of God.

Note: The entire Book of Acts is eyewitness testimony to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It also then describes his continuing presence among us in the preaching of the Gospel and administering of the Sacraments by the Church - after his ascension and till he returns!

1 Corinthians 15

1. Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.
2. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.
3. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance : that **Christ** died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
4. that he was buried, that **he was raised on the third day** according to the Scriptures,
5. **and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.**
6. **After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.**
7. **Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,**
8. **and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.**
9. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.
10. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them--yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.
11. Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed

NOTE: The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the best attested historical event in ancient history. This eyewitness evidence will hold up in a court of law. It really happened, whether people believe it or not! And most important for us baptized Christians is that his resurrection is also a daily present reality for us as St. Paul says in:

Romans 6

1. What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?
2. By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?
3. Or don't you know that **all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus** were baptized into his death?
4. We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, **just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**
5. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also **be united with him in his resurrection.**
6. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin--
7. because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.
8. Now if we died **with Christ**, we believe that **we will also live with him.**
9. For we know that **since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.**
10. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but **the life he lives, he lives to God.**
11. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but **alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

THE EVENTS OF HOLY WEEK

Passion Week

Bethany, the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem

4. Clearing of the temple MONDAY

Mt 21:10-17
Mk 11:15-18
Lk 19:45-48

The next day he returned to the temple and found the court of the Gentiles full of traders and money changers making a large profit as they gave out Jewish coins in exchange for "pagan" money. Jesus drove them out and overturned their tables.

5. Day of controversy and parables TUESDAY

Mt 21:23-24:51;
Mk 11:27-13:37; Lk 20:1-21:36

IN JERUSALEM

Jesus evaded the traps set by the priests.

ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES OVERLOOKING JERUSALEM (Tuesday afternoon, exact location unknown)

He taught in parables and warned the people against the Pharisees. He predicted the destruction of Herod's great temple and told his disciples about future events, including his own return.

6. Day of rest WEDNESDAY

Not mentioned in the Gospels

The Scriptures do not mention this day, but the counting of the days (Mk 14:1; Jn 12:1) seems to indicate that there was another day concerning which the Gospels record nothing.

7. Passover Last Supper THURSDAY

Mt 26:17-30; Mk 14:12-26;
Lk 22:7-23; Jn 13:1-30

In an upper room Jesus prepared both himself and his disciples for his death. He gave the Passover meal the meaning of the new covenant. And so he instituted the "Lord's Supper." After singing a hymn they went to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed in agony, knowing what lay ahead for him.

8. Crucifixion—FRIDAY Mt 27:1-66; Mk 15:1-47; Lk 22:66-23:56; Jn 18:28-19:37

Following betrayal, arrest, desertion, false trials, denial, condemnation, beatings and mockery, Jesus was required to carry his cross to "The Place of the Skull," where he was crucified with two other prisoners.

9. In the tomb

Jesus' body was placed in the tomb before 6:00 P.M. Friday night, when the Sabbath began and all work stopped, and it lay in the tomb throughout the Sabbath.

10. Resurrection—SUNDAY Mt 28:1-13; Mk 16:1-20; Lk 24:1-49; Jn 20:1-31

Early in the morning, women went to the tomb and found that the stone closing the tomb's entrance had been rolled back. An angel told them Jesus was alive and gave them a message. Jesus

appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden, to Peter, to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and later that day to all the disciples but Thomas. His resurrection was established as a fact.

3. The Triumphal Entry SUNDAY

Mt 21:1-11; Mk 11:1-11;
Lk 19:28-44; Jn 12:12-19

On the first day of the week Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling an ancient prophecy (Zec 9:9). The crowd welcomed him with "Hosanna" and the words of Ps 118:25-26, thus ascribing to him a Messianic title as the agent of the Lord, the coming King of Israel.

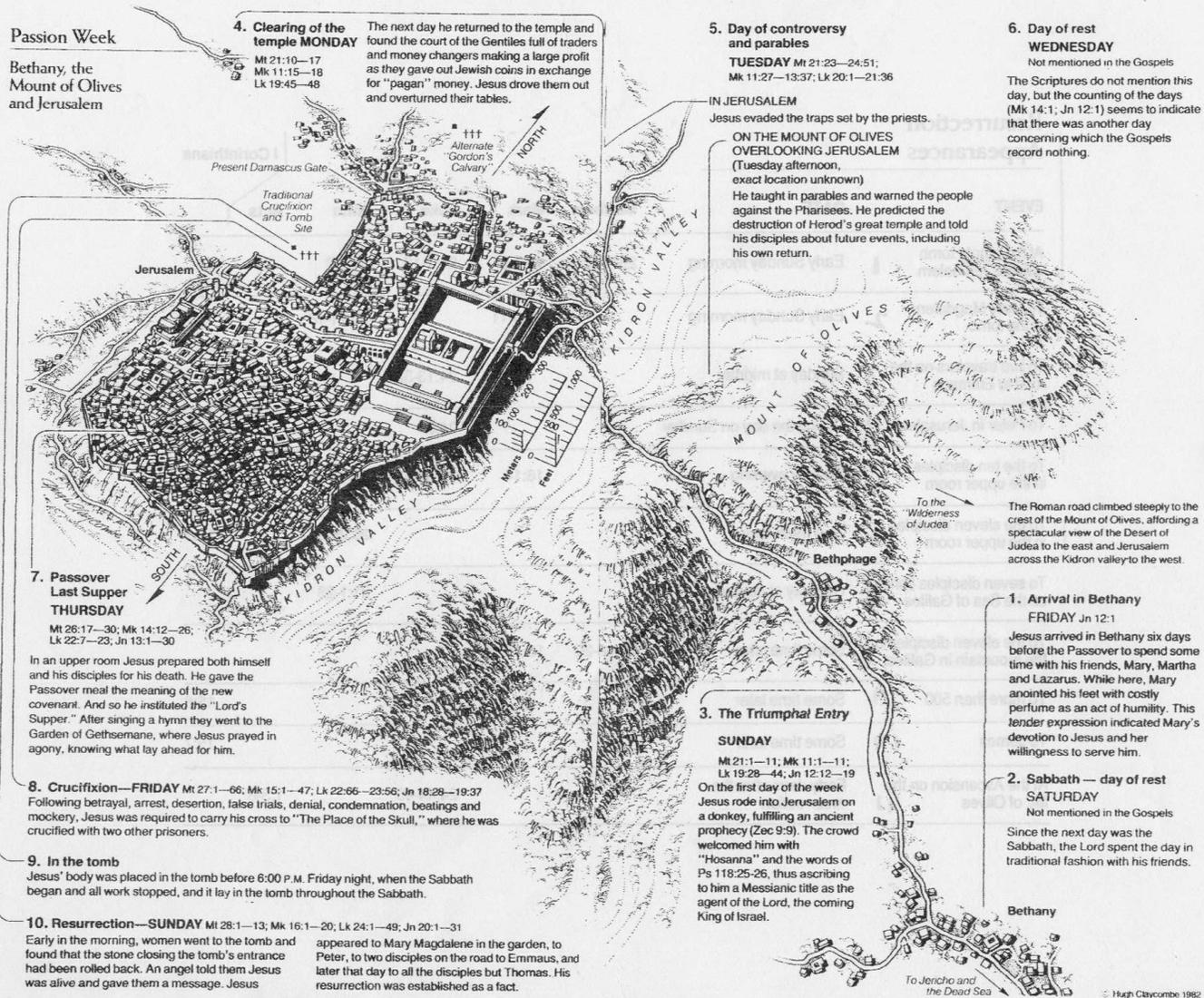
1. Arrival in Bethany FRIDAY Jn 12:1

Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover to spend some time with his friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus. While here, Mary anointed his feet with costly perfume as an act of humility. This tender expression indicated Mary's devotion to Jesus and her willingness to serve him.

2. Sabbath—day of rest SATURDAY

Not mentioned in the Gospels

Since the next day was the Sabbath, the Lord spent the day in traditional fashion with his friends.

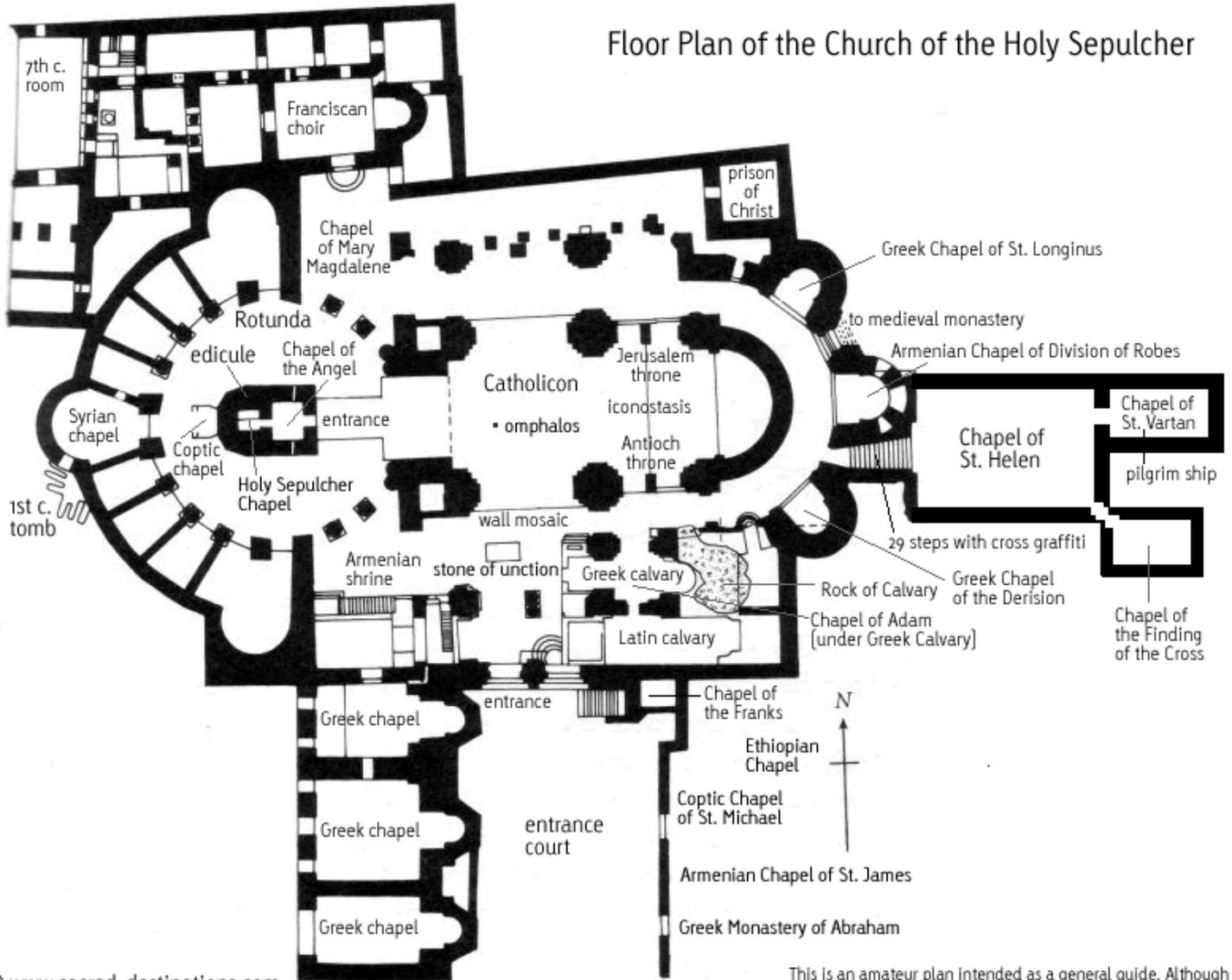


Resurrection Appearances

I Corinthians

| EVENT | DATE | Matthew | Mark | Luke | John | Acts |
|--|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------|
| At the empty tomb outside Jerusalem | 1 Early Sunday morning | 28:1-10 | 16:1-8 | 24:1-12 | 20:1-9 | |
| To Mary Magdalene at the tomb | 2 Early Sunday morning | | 16:9-11 | | 20:11-18 | |
| To two travelers on the road to Emmaus | 3 Sunday at midday | | | 24:13-32 | | |
| To Peter in Jerusalem | 4 During the day on Sunday | | | 24:34 | | 15:5 |
| To the ten disciples in the upper room | 5 Sunday evening | | 16:14 | 24:36-43 | 20:19-25 | |
| To the eleven disciples in the upper room | 6 One week later | | | | 20:26-31 | 15:5 |
| To seven disciples fishing on the Sea of Galilee | 7 One day at daybreak | | | | 21:1-23 | |
| To the eleven disciples on the mountain in Galilee | 8 Some time later | 28:16-20 | 16:15-18 | | | |
| To more than 500 | 9 Some time later | | | | | 15:6 |
| To James | 10 Some time later | | | | | 15:7 |
| At the Ascension on the Mt. of Olives | Forty days after the resurrection | | | 24:44-49 | | 1:3-8 |

Floor Plan of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher



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This is an amateur plan intended as a general guide. Although based on reliable sources, scale and precise locations may not be exact.



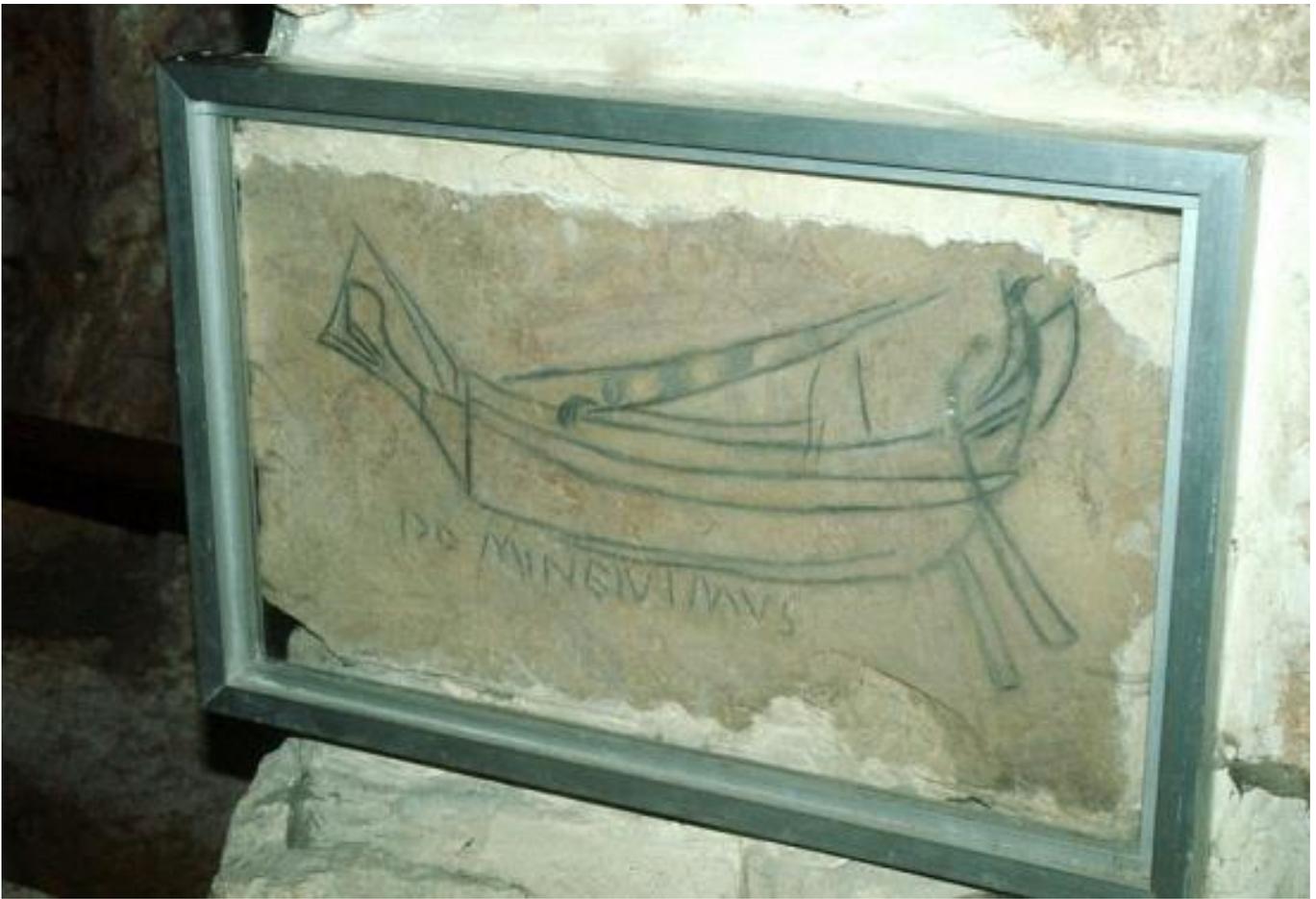
























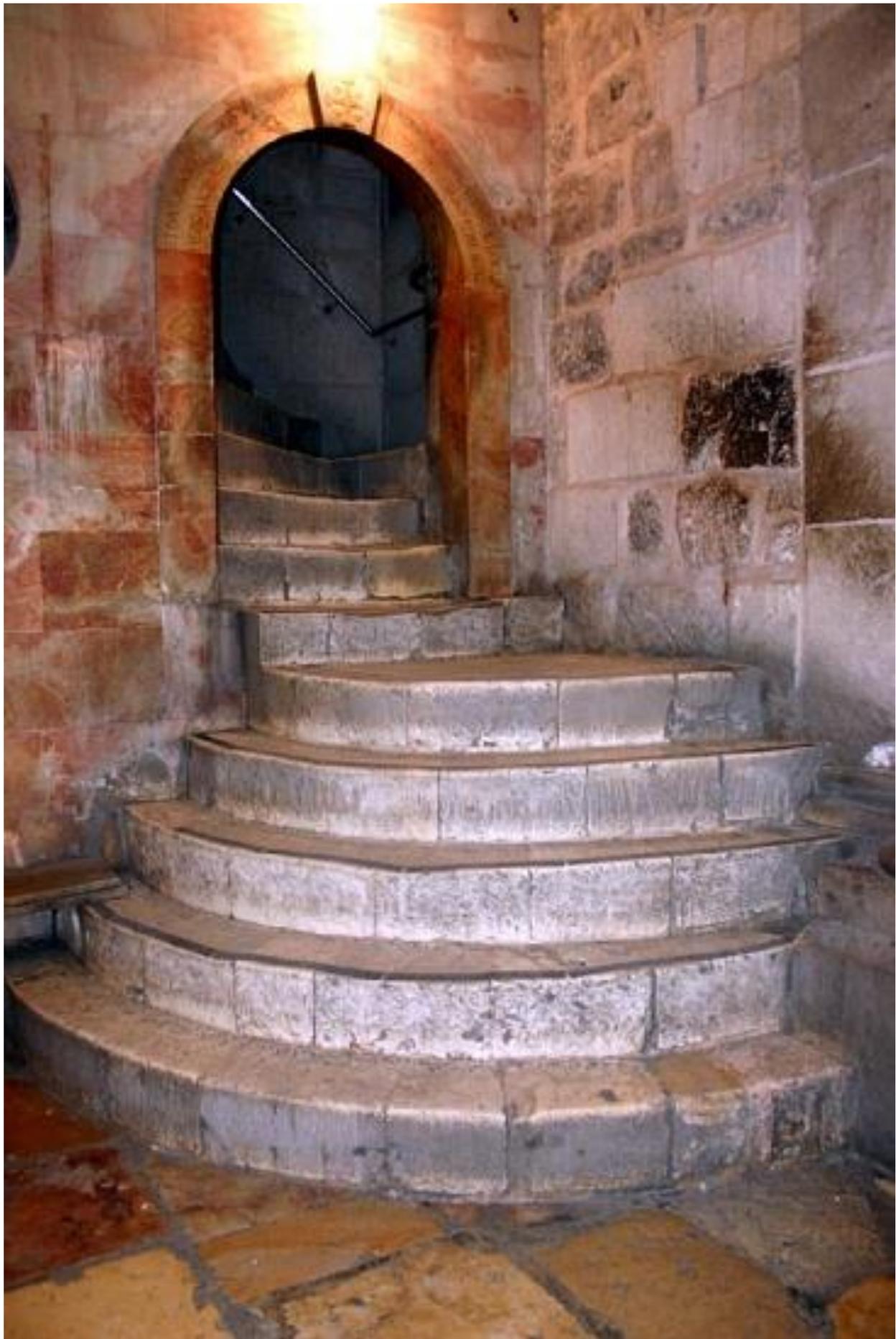














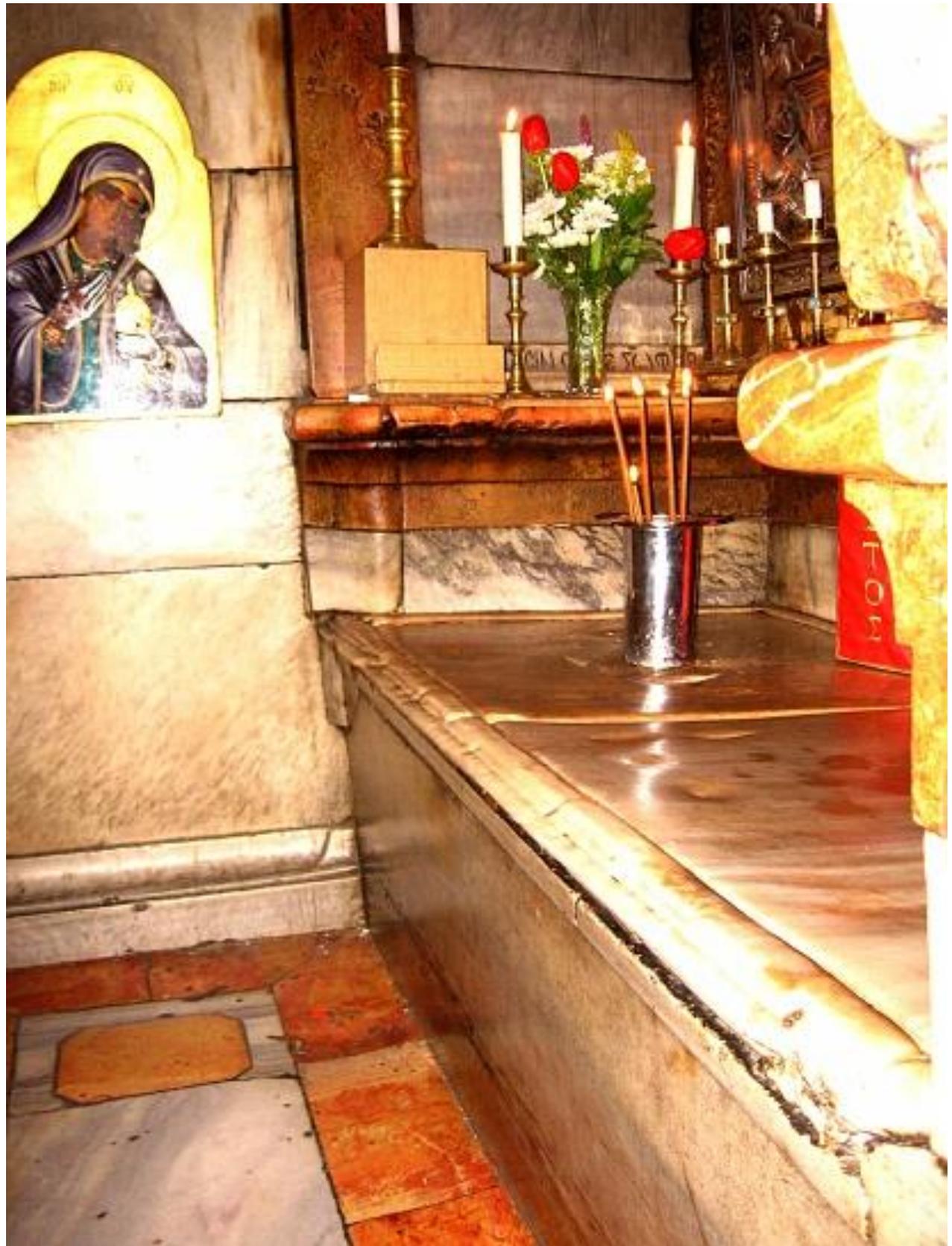






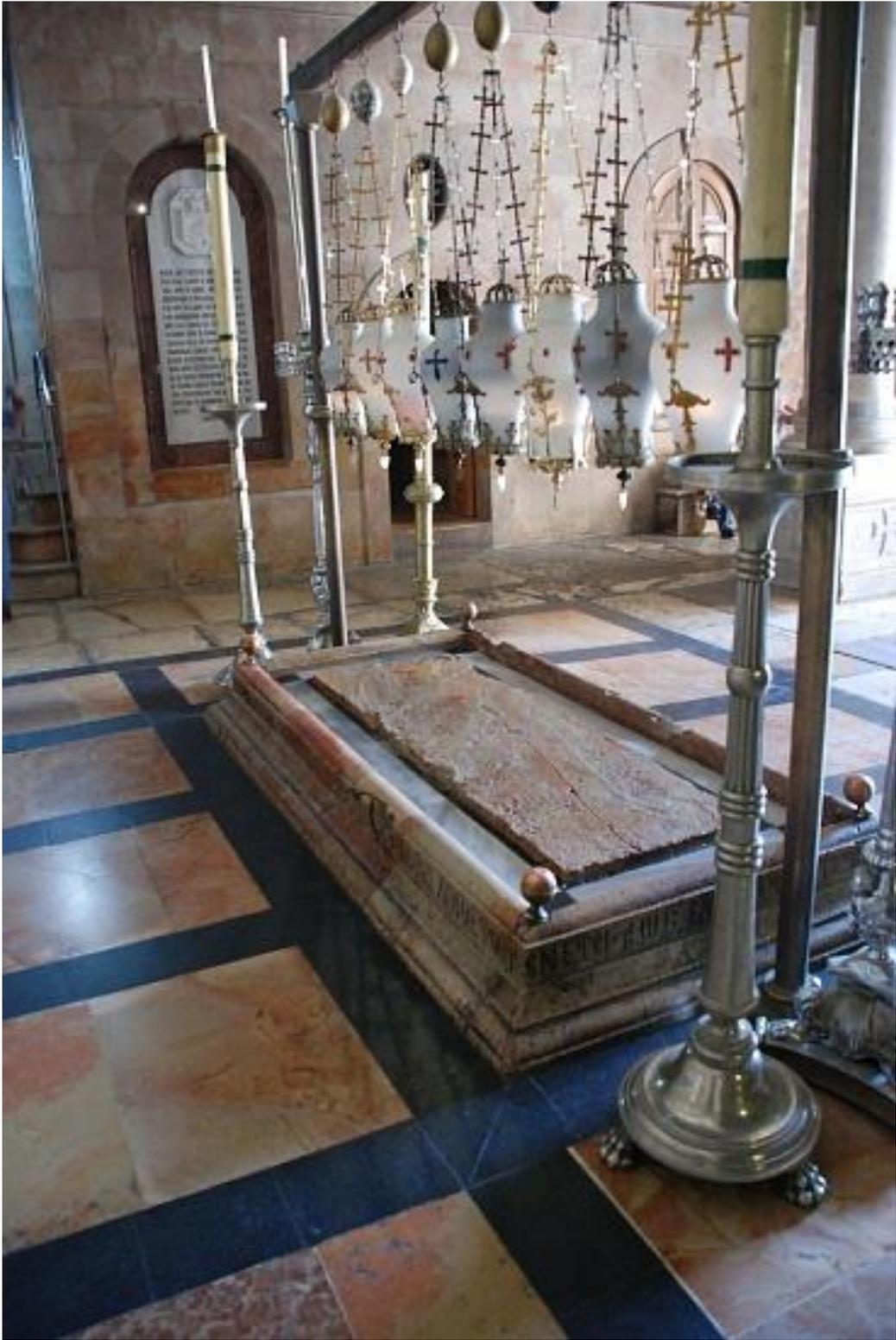




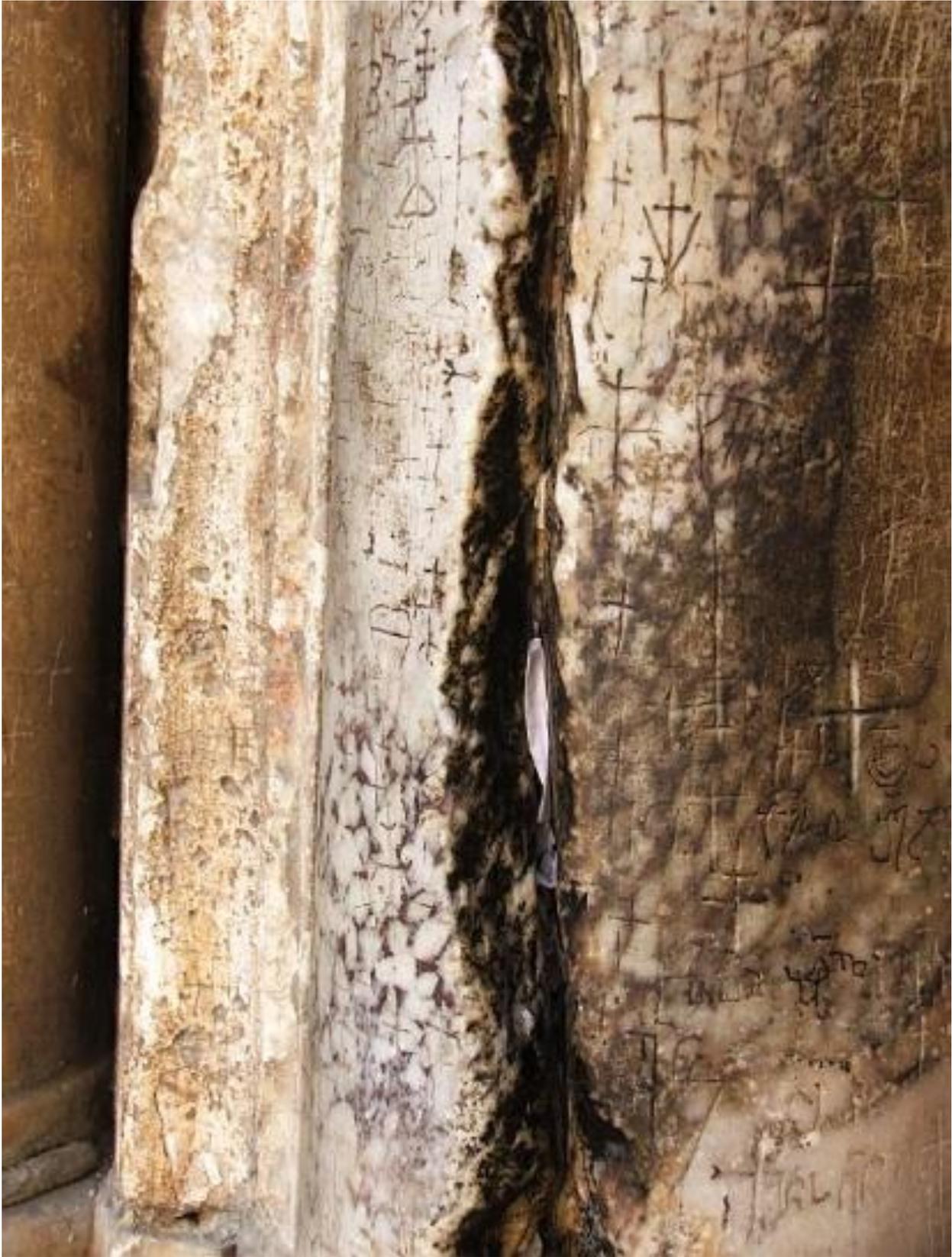












The **Church of the Holy Sepulchre**, known as the **Church of the Resurrection** (*Anastasis*) to Eastern Orthodox Christians, is a church in the Old City of [Jerusalem](#) that is the **holiest Christian site** in the world. It stands on a site that encompasses both Golgotha, or Calvary, where Jesus was crucified, and the tomb (sepulchre) where he was buried. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre has been an important pilgrimage destination since the 4th century.

Authenticity

Although it is not certain, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre could be located over the actual tomb of Christ. The most important supporting evidence is as follows: [\[1\]](#)

- In the early 1st century AD the site was a disused quarry outside the city walls. Tombs dated to the 1st centuries BC and AD had been cut into the vertical west wall left by the quarrymen.
- The topographical elements of the church's site are compatible with the Gospel descriptions, which say that Jesus was crucified on rock that looked like a skull outside the city (John 19:17) and there was a grave nearby (John 19:41-2). Windblown earth and seeds watered by winter rains would have created the green covering on the rock that John calls a "garden."
- The Christian community of Jerusalem held worship services at the site until 66 AD (at least according to historians Eusebius and Socrates Scholasticus, who wrote several centuries later).
- Even when the area was brought within the city walls in 41-43 AD it was not built over by the local inhabitants.
- The Roman Emperor Hadrian built a Temple of Venus over the site in 135 AD, which could be an indication that the site was regarded as holy by Christians and Hadrian wished to claim the site for traditional Roman religion.
- The local tradition of the community would have been scrutinized carefully when Constantine set out to build his church in 326 AD, because the chosen site was inconvenient and expensive. Substantial buildings had to be torn down, most notably the temple built over the site by Hadrian. Just to the south was a spot that would have been otherwise perfect - the open space of Hadrian's forum.
- The eyewitness historian Eusebius claimed that in the course of the excavations, the original memorial was discovered. However, he also claimed that all three crosses (those of Jesus and the two thieves) were found at the site, which seems less likely. ([Life of Constantine 3:28](#))

Based on the above factors, the [Oxford Archaeological Guide to the Holy Land](#) concludes:

"Is this the place where Christ died and was buried? Very probably, Yes."

The Israeli scholar Dan Bahat, former City Archaeologist of Jerusalem, has said this of the church:

"We may not be absolutely certain that the site of the Holy Sepulchre Church is the site of Jesus' burial, but we have no other site that can lay a claim nearly as weighty, and we really have no reason to reject the authenticity of the site."[\[2\]](#)

History

The early Christian community of Jerusalem appears to have held liturgical celebrations at Christ's tomb from the time of the resurrection until the city was taken by the Romans in 66 AD. Less than a century later, in 135 AD, Emperor Hadrian filled in the quarry to provide a level foundation for a **temple to Aphrodite**.

The site remained buried beneath the pagan temple until Emperor **Constantine the Great** converted to Christianity in 312 AD. He soon showed an interest in the holy places associated with his new faith, and commissioned numerous churches to be built throughout the Holy Land. The most important of these, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, was begun in 326 AD.

Constantine's builders dug away the hillside to leave the rock-hewn tomb of Christ isolated and with enough room to build a church around it. They also cleared away Hadrian's temple and the material with which an old quarry had been filled to provide the temple's foundations. In the process, according to contemporary Christian historians, the Rock of Golgotha was found. The Church was formally dedicated in 335 with an [oration](#) by Constantine's biographer, Eusebius of [Caesarea](#).

In the course of the excavations, Constantine's mother St. Helena is said to have discovered the **True Cross** near the tomb. This is a relatively early legend, but was unknown by Eusebius, the historian and contemporary of Constantine. The legend says St. Helena actually discovered three crosses - those of the two thieves and that of Christ. To discern the one belonging to Christ, a sick man was brought to touch to each one, and he was miraculously healed by one of them.

The **Constantinian church** was much larger than the one that stands today, but had a simpler layout. It consisted of an atrium (which reused part of Hadrian's temenos wall), a covered basilica, an open courtyard with the stone of Golgotha in the southeast corner, and the tomb of Christ, enshrined in a small, circular edifice. The tomb of Christ was not completed until 384 AD, well after the dedication of the church, because of the immense labor involved in cutting away the rock cliff in order to isolate the tomb.

This building was severely damaged by fire in 614 AD when the **Persians** invaded Jerusalem. They also captured the True Cross, but in 630, Emperor Heraclius marched triumphantly into Jerusalem and restored the True Cross to the rebuilt Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The church was reconstructed under the patriarch Modestus with no major changes to the original plan.

In 638, the Christians were forced to surrender Jerusalem to Muslim control under caliph **Omar**. In a remarkable gesture for the time, Omar refused to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, saying, "If I had prayed in the church it would have been lost to you, for the Believers [Muslims] would have taken it saying: Omar prayed here." This act of generosity would have unfortunate consequences, however.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre continued to function as a Christian church under the protection of Omar and the early Muslim rulers, but this changed on October 18, 1009, when the "mad" Fatimid caliph **Hakim** brutally and systematically destroyed the great church.

Ironically, if Omar had turned the church into a mosque, Hakim would have left it alone. But instead, Hakim had wrecking crews knock over the walls and he attacked the tomb of Christ with picks and hammers, stopping only when the debris covered the remains. The east and west walls were completely destroyed, but the north and south walls were likely protected by the rubble from further damage.

The Christian community of Jerusalem could not afford repairs, but in 1048 Emperor **Constantine Monomachos** provided money for reconstruction, subject to stringent conditions imposed by the caliphate. The funds were not adequate to completely repair the original church, however, and a large part of it had to be abandoned. The atrium and the basilica were completely lost; only the courtyard and the rotunda remained. The latter was made into a church by the insertion of a large apse into the facade.

This was the church to which the knights of the **First Crusade** arrived to sing their *Te Deum* after capturing Jerusalem on July 15, 1099. The Crusader chief Godfrey of Bouillon, who became the first king of Jerusalem, declared himself *Advocatus Sancti Sepulchri*, "Defender of the Holy Sepulchre."

The **Crusaders** were slow to renovate the church, only beginning to make modifications in the Romanesque style in 1112. They first built a monastery where the Constantinian basilica used to be, having first excavated the Crypt of St. Helena. In 1119 the shrine of Christ's tomb was replaced. The coronation of Fulk and Melisende at the church in 1131 necessitated more radical modifications. The Constantinian courtyard was covered with a Romanesque church (dedicated in **1149**), which was connected to the rotunda by a great arched opening resulting from the demolition of the 11th-century apse. A bell tower was added in 1170.

The three primary **custodians** of the church, first appointed when Crusaders held Jerusalem, are the Greek Orthodox, the Armenian Apostolic and Roman Catholic churches. In the 19th century, the Coptic Orthodox, the Ethiopian Orthodox and the Syrian Orthodox acquired lesser responsibilities, which include shrines and other structures within and around the building. An agreement regulates times and places of worship for each Church.

Subsequent centuries were not altogether kind to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It suffered from **damage, desecration, and neglect**, and attempts at repair (a significant renovation was conducted by the Franciscans in 1555) often did more damage than good. In recent times, a fire (1808) and an earthquake (1927) did extensive damage.

Not until 1959 did the three major communities (Latins, Greeks, Armenians) agree on a major renovation plan. The guiding principle was that only elements incapable of fulfilling their structural function would be replaced. Local masons were trained to trim stone in the style of the 11th century for the rotunda, and in the 12th-century style for the church.

The church's chaotic history is evident in what visitors see today. Byzantine, medieval, Crusader, and modern elements mix in an odd mish-mash of styles, and each governing Christian community has decorated its shrines in its own distinctive way. In many ways, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is not what one would imagine for the holiest site in all Christendom, and it can easily disappoint. But at the same time, its noble history and immense religious importance is such that a visit can also be very meaningful.

What to See

See our [Holy Sepulchre Photo Gallery](#) for a virtual tour of the following sights.

The **exterior facade** of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, on the east side of the church, was built by the Crusaders sometime before 1180. A double arcade with frieze at both levels are each surmounted by a cornice. The right entrance door was blocked after 1187 as part of Muslim control of the site after the Crusaders were defeated.

Just inside the entrance to the left was the high bench where the **Muslim doorkeeper** sat: for years, a Muslim kept control of the keys to the church to prevent disputes between Christian sects over the holy site. Although this has been discontinued, the holiest site in Christendom remains carefully **divided between denominations** who guard their portions jealously.

The primary custodians are the Greek Orthodox, the Armenian Apostolic and Roman Catholic churches, with the Greeks having the lion's share. In the 19th century, the Coptic Orthodox, the Ethiopian Orthodox and the Syriac Orthodox acquired lesser responsibilities, which include shrines and other structures within and around the building. Times and places of worship for each community are strictly regulated in common areas.

Back out in the courtyard, the **west wall** (to your left as you face the entrance) contains 11th-century Greek Orthodox chapels built over the site of the Constantinian baptistery. The **east wall** has a small domed structure that was once the 12th-century Crusader entrance to the Church on Calvary. It later became the **Chapel of the Franks**.

Immediately inside the entrance to the church is the **Stone of Unction**, which commemorates the preparation of Jesus' body for burial. This limestone slab dates from 1808, when the prior 12th-century slab was destroyed. Ownership of this site has varied over the centuries, but it now belongs to the four main sects: the opulent lamps that hang over the stone slab are contributed by Armenians, Copts, Greeks and Latins.

Behind the Stone, a **mosaic** depicting Christ's anointing for burial decorates the outer wall of the Catholicon (on which see below). The Constantinian and Crusader churches did not have this wall, so one could see to the Holy Sepulchre from the entrance.

A stairway on the right just inside the entrance leads to **Calvary** (or **Golgotha**), the place where Jesus was crucified. The first chapel is the **Catholic (Franciscan) Chapel of the Nailing of the Cross**, which is **Station 11** on the Via Dolorosa. It features a 12th-century mosaic of Jesus being nailed to the cross on the vault and a Medici altar from Florence. Through a window in the south wall the Chapel of the Agony of the Virgin can be seen. Just to the left of the altar is a statue of Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, which is **Station 13** (Jesus' body removed from the cross and given to Mary).

Adjacent to the Catholic chapel is the Greek Orthodox Calvary, which contains the actual **Rock of Calvary** (**Station 12**) around which the church was built. The rock can be seen under glass on either side of the main altar, and beneath the altar there is a hole that allows you to touch the rock itself. The slot cut for the cross is shown in the east apse along with those of the two thieves.

Directly beneath Calvary on the main floor (entered through a door next to the Stone of Unction) is the **Chapel of Adam**, which enshrines a cracked slab of rock behind glass. This identification with Adam is based on the ancient tradition (noted by Origen in the 2nd century) that Christ was crucified over the place where Adam was buried. The crack in the rock is said to be caused by the earthquake that occurred during the Crucifixion. Archaeologists suggest it was probably an original flaw that caused the workmen to abandon this section of the old quarry. At one time, the tombs of the Crusader kings Godfrey of Bouillon, Baldwin I and Baldwin V were near the entrance to this chapel; they have long since disappeared.

Walking to the west from the Stone of Unction, visitors arrive at the focal point of the Holy Sepulchre Church. The round area of the church, known as the **Rotunda** or **Anastasis**, preserves the location and shape, and a few original columns, of Constantine's 4th-century Church of the Resurrection built on the site of Christ's tomb. The Rotunda is surmounted by a large **dome**, completed in the 1960s. This is decorated with a 12-pointed star (1997) whose rays symbolize the outreach of the 12 apostles. The diameter of the dome is about 20.5 meters; the height is 34 meters.

Underneath the large dome is the Tomb of Christ itself, enshrined in a large, boxy shrine. The shrine, referred to as the **edicule**, is supported by scaffolding on the outside due to earthquakes and is not terribly attractive. The current structure was built in 1809-10 after the severe fire of 1808. It replaced one dating from 1555, commissioned by the Franciscan friar Bonifacio da Ragusa. (The original 4th-century shrine constructed under Constantine was destroyed by the sultan Hakim in 1009.) The Armenians, the Latins and the Greeks serve Liturgy daily inside the Holy Sepulchre. It is also used for the Holy Saturday ceremony of the **Holy Fire**, which is celebrated by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch himself.

Inside, the shrine contains two small rooms. The first is the Greek Orthodox **Chapel of the Angel**, which features an altar containing a piece of the stone rolled away by angels at the Resurrection. In the wall by the entrance, steps lead to the roof of the edicule. A low door on the opposite side leads to the tiny **Chapel of the Holy**

Sepulchre, which contains the tomb of Christ itself. This is the 14th Station of the Cross and the holiest site in Christendom. Here a marble slab covers the place where the body of Christ was laid and from which he rose from the dead. A vase with candles marks the spot where his head rested. The slab was installed here in the 1555 reconstruction and purposely cracked to deter Ottoman looters.

After visiting the tomb, walk around to the back (west) of the edicule to an ironwork, cage-like structure containing the **Coptic chapel**. Beneath the altar is another piece of Christ's tomb. Opposite the Coptic chapel, inside a rough-hewn apse at the far west end of the Church is the **Syrian chapel**.

To the right (north) of the sepulchre is the **Roman Catholic** area, which consists of a large square chapel (the Chapel of St. Mary Magdalene) and another private chapel for Franciscan monks. The former is held to be the site where Jesus appeared to Mary after his resurrection. In the Crusader era, this chapel was approached from the street to the west via an impressive entrance portal.

Just opposite the entrance to the Sepulchre is the large nave of the church, which has been enclosed by a wall on all sides. Known as the **Catholicon**, this **Greek Orthodox cathedral** features a large iconostasis flanked by the thrones of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Antioch. Above is a colorful cupola, which dates from after the 1927 earthquake, decorated with an image of Christ and other icons.

An early tradition associated the site of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection as the center of the world, and by the 10th century it was marked by an **omphalos**. Today this is marked by a marble vessel in the west end of the Catholicon. (The pagan Greeks had their omphalos in [Delphi](#).)

At the east end of the north aisle is the the chapel of the **Prison of Christ**, which according to 12th-century tradition housed Jesus and the two thieves before the Crucifixion. The first known mention of this is in the 8th century, by Epiphanius the Monk. The chapel probably originated as a liturgical station where the Passion and Death of Christ were commemorated.

Taking a right at the Prison leads into the ambulatory of the Crusader church, which has **three chapels** located in three apses: the Greek Chapel of St. Longinus (the Roman soldier who pierced Jesus' side and then converted) in the northeast corner; the Armenian Chapel of the Dividing of the Robes in the center; and the Greek Chapel of Derision or the Crowning of Thorns in the southeast apse. The latter contains a relic of the Column of Derision.

Between the last two chapels is a stairway that descends to the large **Chapel of St. Helena**, which is owned by the Armenians and known to them as the Chapel of St. Gregory. On the stairway walls are many small crosses carved by medieval pilgrims. The chapel has three aisles and two apses: the north apse is dedicated to the penitent thief; the south apse to St. Helena, mother of Constantine. A seat in the southeast corner of the chapel is said to have been occupied by Helena as she searched for the True Cross, a story first mentioned around 351.

From this corner, 13 more steps descend into the **Chapel of the Finding of the Cross**. The left side is owned by the Catholics, whose altar features a life-sized statue of St. Helena holding a cross. The Greeks have the right side of the chapel.

A door on the north side of the Chapel of St. Helena leads to the **Chapel of St. Vartan**, an Armenian chapel. This area was just discovered and excavated in the 1970s. The finds include remnants of walls built by Hadrian in the 2nd century, one of which contains a stone with a celebrating drawing of a **merchant ship** with the inscription DOMINE IVIMVS, "Lord we shall go." This drawing probably dates from before the completion of Constantine's church. The chapel is locked and not normally open to the public. (See [Finding the Keys to the Chapel of St. Vartan](#) for one scholar's adventure in gaining access.)

After you leave the Church, you might wish to stop by the buildings that have their entrances in the east wall of the courtyard: the Coptic Chapel of St. Michael the Archangel, which includes a staircase leading to the

Ethiopian Orthodox Chapel and the Coptic convent to the northeast; the Armenian Chapel of St. James; and the Greek Monastery of Abraham in the southeast corner of the court.