

# The Holy Sepulcher, or the Garden Tomb?

By  
Sir Knight Joseph M. Gilbert

Sir Knight Shade's article "Guard the Sepulcher, An Account of the History of the Tomb of Christ from an Archaeological Perspective," *Knight Templar*, June 2012, is an excellent compression of a multi-century archaeological history. It takes the reader through a long, often historically disconnected, series of events that have led to a current perspective that this location is the traditionally accepted burial site of Jesus Christ. I compliment him on this guide

through that difficult historical journey.

The discussed archaeological history is, however, replete with caveats that cause the reader to pause. Such phrases as "for reasons never stated," "apparently," and "presumably" reinforce the factual status that this location is only accepted as the "traditional" site of Christ's tomb; it lacks any solid evidence on which to base a more definitive claim of authenticity. Per the author, the first visual evidence was over 400 years old,



1. "Golgotha" near Garden Tomb, viewed from slightly off direct center. When viewed from directly in front, the "skull" is much more pronounced.



2. Part of “wine press” in garden, near the Garden Tomb.

and that constituted drawings. We do not actually know what it really looked like, so the drawings may be inaccurate. Further statements such as “... depends on the assumption...” reinforce this limitation of authenticity. The author further amplifies this uncertainty in his own statement that “Everything learned... but there is no proof.” That statement is true; there is no proof that this site is the actual burial site of Jesus Christ.

Further, the author’s assertion that the known facts “...can only be interpreted in light of existing knowledge of Jewish burial practices...” by its face eliminates other considerations if only one interpretation is acceptable. Likewise, his assertion of “logical reasons” is suspect, as no such reasons are given.

All of what the author describes may be true. The Tomb of the Holy Sepulcher may be the burial tomb of Christ, but the author, by his own words of focusing on only one source, stretches the credibility of the assertion that the Tomb of

the Holy Sepulcher is the tomb of Christ. The additional uncertainties, properly included by the author, also raise real questions about the validity of this claim.

The author makes passing mention of the “Garden Tomb” and then only as an example of what might have been such a tomb 2000 years ago.

The Garden Tomb is much more than a mere example.

1. It is located adjacent to a hill so resembling a skull as to be frighteningly eerie. (picture 1)

2. It has a passing roadway at the base of the skull where the condemned and crucified were observed, mocked, ridiculed, and insulted and where close proximity to the torture of the cross insured that those observing would clearly recognize the awful punishment for any who threatened or challenged the power of Rome.

3. It is outside the city.

4. There is a garden there (picture 2), one which archeologists tell us (for rea-



3. "Tomb" opening at the Garden Tomb. Entrance is directly in the center, the rectangle opening in the solid wall.

sons such as the part of the wine press shown) belonged to a wealthy person.

5. There is a tomb (picture 3) which requires one to stoop, and the features inside the tomb are of biblical descriptions. The features which are described as absent at the Tomb of the Holy Sepulcher, are precisely presented in the Garden Tomb.

The Tomb of the Holy Sepulcher may in fact be the burial place of Jesus Christ. However, there is a growing body of archeological evidence to the contrary. Based on the location, the proximity to a very probable site of Golgotha and the roadway, the location outside the city, a garden of a wealthy man, and a tomb of precise biblical description, the Garden Tomb is more likely the actual burial site of Christ. This is "evidence based," not based on apparent data, presumed information, visual "evidence" 400 years old when first recorded, limitations on considerations of other options, unsubstantiated logical knight templar

reasons, and Eusebius' assumption.

Although not as well known or as highly publicized as the Tomb of the Holy Sepulcher, the Garden Tomb deserves at least equal consideration as the actual burial site of Jesus Christ. It may well be that Eusebius' assumption which is basically the entire foundation of the Tomb of the Holy Sepulcher's claim is an invalid assumption, thus vitiating that claim of the Tomb of the Holy Sepulcher.

Like Sir Knight Shade, I too have had the opportunity to visit the Tomb of the Holy Sepulcher. Personally, the commercialization and publicity there far outweighed its religious contribution. I found no peace there. I also had the opportunity to visit the Garden Tomb, to observe "Golgotha," to walk through the garden, and to actually enter a tomb, more probably, The tomb. There, I truly felt I was walking where Jesus trod. And I truly felt His presence there.

Either the Tomb of the Holy Sepulcher or the Garden Tomb may be the

burial site of Christ, or it may be that even another location, lost in obscurity to the darkness of unrecorded history, has the valid claim. We may never know with certainty. But wherever the actual Tomb site of Christ is, or was, we absolutely know with certainty, it is EMPTY.

Sir Knight Joseph Gilbert also took the photos in the article above. He is Senior Warden of Cyrene Commandery No. 42 in Dayton Tennessee. He resides at 193 Pin Oak Dr. N.E., Cleveland, TN 37323 and can be contacted by e-mail at [jmgilbert98@yahoo.com](mailto:jmgilbert98@yahoo.com).

# Knighly News

At the 65<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conclave of Knights Templar held at Alexandria, Virginia, on August 14, 2012, the Republic of Panama was granted a Grand Commandery. Celebrating the Grand Commandery and installation of officers at the Grand Master's Banquet were from left to right; Alexander Lopez, Grand Warden; Ruben Jose Levy, Grand Sword Bearer; Raul de Obaldia, Past Grand Master of Panama; Marcos David Ostrander, Deputy Grand Commander; Donald Prieto Garrido, KCT, Grand Commander; and Ricaurte Antonio Arrocha, Grand Sentinel.



## Letter from the Holy Land Pilgrimage

Dear Duane (and Friends),

I am amazed at how the Holy Land Pilgrimage continues to unfold its impact in my life and ministry! I must mention again my gratitude and deepest appreciation to the Knight Templar organization and their cause. My experience in Israel lives with me every day, and there is no turning in the pages of Holy Scripture but that I do not recount some detail of the trip. Walking in the very footsteps of the ancient people of God and of my Lord has caused me to feel a connection in my faith that has never been felt before and one that I will forever cherish. I still have to pinch myself to believe that I actually have "been there and done that!" To God be all glory, praise, and honor, now and forever!

In Christ,  
Lonnie Darnell

