

**THE IMPACT OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS  
ON CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE:  
THE CASE OF THE BURIAL SITES OF JESUS**

by

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**SUPERVISOR: PROF. C.L. DE WET**

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# DECLARATION

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Student number: 438-8236-6

I declare that **THE IMPACT OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS ON CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE: THE CASE OF THE BURIAL SITES OF JESUS** is my own work, and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

SIGNATURE

(FR. S. SMUTS)

.....

DATE

# SUMMARY

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This dissertation comparatively explores and critically evaluates the historical and traditional notions that are commonly held by Christian pilgrims visiting the Holy Land; and it does so by examining the archaeological, historical, and literary evidence, with specific reference to the existent material remnants that are closely associated with the burial of Christ Jesus.

The research will highlight the impact that biblical archaeological findings and the results thereof have had on these identified pilgrimage sites. Both the strengths and the weaknesses of the evidence will be enumerated; and the implications for the practice and significance of pilgrimages will be set out.

## **Key terms:**

Archaeology; Bible; Biblical Archaeology; Burial; Christianity; Historical; Holy Land; Jesus; New Testament; Pilgrim; Pilgrimage; Tomb; Tourism.

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# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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Figure 1:	The Boat Inscription .....	26
Figure 2:	The Crusaders setting sail for Jerusalem .....	35
Figure 3:	The Clover map showing Jerusalem as the centre of the world.....	40
Figure 4:	Holy Places for the pilgrims of all three religions in Jerusalem.....	42
Figure 5:	W.F. Albright and William G. Dever.....	58
Figure 6:	The Wheeler-Kenyon method.....	60
Figure 7:	Group of burial caves found during the excavation of Samaria.....	77
Figure 8:	Loculi found during the excavation of Akeldama, Jerusalem, dating to the Second Temple Period.....	80
Figure 9:	Ossuaries with engraved rosettes, dating to the first century period.....	81
Figure 10:	The Church of the Holy Sepulchre built on the traditional site of Calvary and the Tomb of Jesus.....	87
Figure 11:	The floor plan of the modern Church of the Holy Sepulchre.....	88
Figure 12:	The Garden Tomb in Jerusalem. ....	90
Figure 13:	Gordon's Calvary.....	91
Figure 14:	An image of the chevron-adorned entrance to the Talpiot Tomb, unearthed in 1980.....	94
Figure 15:	The sealed Talpiot Tomb ..	95

Figure 16:	Today's Church of the Holy Sepulchre set over two sites: Calvary and the tomb of Jesus.....	119
Figure 17:	Plan of the Garden Tomb.....	112
Figure 18:	The modern door at the Garden Tomb.....	113
Figure 19:	Plan of the Talpiot Tomb.....	115

# TIMELINE

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Relevant archaeological periods<sup>1</sup> in the Holy Land

Neolithic	8300–4500 BC
Chalcolithic	4500–3200 BC
Early Bronze Age	3200–2200 BC
Middle Bronze Age	2200–1550 BC
Late Bronze Age	1550–1200 BC
Iron Age I	1200–1000 BC
Iron Age I	1000–586 BC
Babylonian/Exilic Period	586–539 BC
Persian Period	539–332 BC
Hellenistic	332–141 BC
Hasmonean Period	41–37 BC
Roman Period	37 BC–AD 133
Byzantine Period	AD 324–638
Arab Period	AD 638–1516
Crusader Period	AD 1099–1291
Ottoman Period	AD 1517–1917
British Mandate	AD 1917–1948
Modern Israel	AD 1948–present

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<sup>1</sup> This timeline was adapted from Kaiser (2005:xix).

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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DECLARATION.....	i
SUMMARY.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	iv
TIMELINE.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

1.1	BACKGROUND INFORMATION.....	1
1.2	OBJECTIVE AND AIM OF THE STUDY.....	2
1.3	PROPOSED METHODOLOGY.....	6
1.4	LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS.....	7
1.5	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
1.6	CHAPTER BREAKDOWN.....	11

## CHAPTER TWO

### CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND—PAST TO PRESENT

2.1	INTRODUCTION.....	13
2.2	CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE: TOWARDS A DEFINITION.....	14
2.3	PILGRIMAGE IN THE BIBLE.....	14



2.3.1	Pilgrimage in the Old Testament.....	15
2.3.2	Pilgrimage in the New Testament.....	19
2.4	CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND.....	22
2.4.1	Pilgrimage in the Early Church (ca. AD 30–500).....	22
2.4.2	Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages (ca. AD 500–1000).....	28
2.4.2.1	<i>The Byzantine Era (AD 324–638)</i> .....	31
2.4.2.2	<i>The Arab Period (AD 640–1099)</i> .....	33
2.4.2.3	<i>The Crusader Period (AD 1099–1291)</i> .....	35
2.4.2.4	<i>The Mameluke Period (AD 1517–1917)</i> .....	37
2.4.3	Pilgrimage in the Reformation Period (ca. AD 1500–1700).....	38
2.4.4	Pilgrimage in the Modern Church (ca. AD 1700→).....	40
2.4.5	Conclusion.....	44
2.5	HOLY PLACES.....	44
2.5.1	Transmission: Eyewitness, Oral tradition, Collective Memory and Writ.....	45
2.5.2	A Christian Presence.....	47
2.5.3	Relics and Holy Objects.....	48
2.5.4	Conclusion.....	48
2.6	CONCLUSION.....	49

## CHAPTER THREE

### BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY: APPROACHING THE BIBLICAL WORLD

3.1	INTRODUCTION.....	50
3.2	ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE.....	51

3.2.1	Definition of Archaeology.....	51
3.2.2	The Bible.....	52
3.3	ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE HOLY LAND—AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW.....	53
3.3.1	The Inception of Archaeology in the Holy Land.....	53
3.3.2	A ‘Golden Age’—The Interwar Period.....	56
3.3.3	After the British Mandate.....	59
3.3.4	‘New Archaeology’ (1970–Present).....	61
3.4	ARCHAEOLOGY IN BIBLICAL STUDIES.....	63
3.4.1	Development and Legitimacy of Biblical Archaeology as an Academic Study.....	63
3.4.2	Motives Behind Biblical Archaeological Research.....	64
3.4.3	The Minimalist-Maximalist Dispute.....	67
3.4.4	The Complex Relationship Between Text and Artefact.....	68
3.5	THE ROLE OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES...	69
3.6	CHRISTIAN OR BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY?.....	70
3.7	CONCLUSION.....	71

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE BURIAL SITE(S) OF JESUS

4.1	INTRODUCTION.....	73
4.2	BIBLICAL BURIALS.....	74
4.2.1	Burial Practices in the Old Testament.....	74
4.2.2	Burial Practices in the New Testament.....	79

4.3	THE BURIAL OF JESUS.....	82
4.4	THE LOCATION OF THE BURIAL SITE OF JESUS.....	84
4.5	THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE BURIAL SITE(S) OF JESUS.....	85
4.5.1	The Church of the Holy Sepulchre.....	88
4.5.2	The Garden Tomb.....	89
4.5.3	The Talpiot Tomb.....	93
4.6	CONCLUSION.....	96

## CHAPTER FIVE

### BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE TOMB OF JESUS

5.1	INTRODUCTION.....	97
5.2	THE TOMB OF JESUS WITHIN ECCLESIASTICAL TRADITION.....	98
5.2.1	Ecclesiastical Tradition at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.....	98
5.2.2	Ecclesiastical Tradition at the Garden Tomb.....	100
5.2.3	Ecclesiastical Tradition at the Talpiot Tomb.....	101
5.3	BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND TOMB OF JESUS.....	102
5.3.1	Exegetical Observations.....	103
5.3.2	Archaeological Observations.....	105
5.4	A BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE BURIAL SITE(S) OF JESUS.....	106
5.4.1	The Church of the Holy Sepulchre—Archaeological Evidence.....	106
5.4.2	The Garden Tomb—Archaeological Evidence.....	110
5.4.3	The Talpiot Tomb—Archaeological Evidence.....	117

5.5	SUMMARY OF THE BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS: THE BURIAL SITE(S) OF JESUS.....	116
5.5.1	The Church of the Holy Sepulchre.....	117
5.5.2	The Garden Tomb.....	118
5.5.3	The Talpiot Tomb.....	118
5.6	BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS VERSUS PILGRIMAGE IMAGINATION.....	119
5.7	BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS.....	121
5.8	CONCLUSION.....	122

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

6.1	INTRODUCTION.....	123
6.2	SUMMARY OF RESULTS.....	124
6.3	CONCLUSION OF THE RESEARCH.....	128
6.4	THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS TO PILGRIMAGE .....	128
6.4.1	Biblical Archaeological Education.....	129
6.4.2	Historical Contribution .....	129
6.4.3	Scientific and Research Potential of Biblical Archaeology.....	129
6.4.4	An Apologetical Contribution .....	130
6.4.5	Impassioning Biblical Archaeology.....	130
6.5	JOURNEYING ON: RECOMMENDATIONS.....	130
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	133

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the inception of Christianity, the Holy Land<sup>1</sup> has acted as a focal point for Christian pilgrimage. Pilgrimage has been defined as: 'A journey resulting from religious causes, external to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding' (Barber 1993:1). Unquestionably, some of the most important pilgrim sites to the Christian faithful remain those material places that are associated with and connected to the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus; the places where God chose to become man. This has been so ever since Jewish-Christians first kept alive, through tradition and memory, and, where possible, physical preservation, the places considered sacred to their faith, while at the same time arguing for and fervently defending the historicity of these said sites.

In the Holy Land today, there is a plethora of churches, chapels, shrines, and monuments, some centuries old, to be found erected over the places understood and purported to be the historic locations of important biblical events. This is well evidenced by the various existent structures and ruins that lay scattered across the Holy Land, that are still venerated by the many tourists who travel from all over the globe, in order to visit them.

Many Churches—including those here in South Africa—actively encourage their members to undertake 'journeys of faith,' pilgrimage; and in doing so, to follow on in the ancient custom of seeking to walk in the footsteps of Christ Jesus. The Holy Land, as a place testified to in Scripture and antiquity, is a most desired location for Christian pilgrimages. Going on such a pilgrimage is, therefore, often seen as far more than a mere journey into the past, but rather the process of rendering one's faith into a tangible, living experience.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'Holy Land' will be used periodically in this study, and as understood by Christians, encompasses the biblical geographical region of Palestine, or, the 'lands' of the Bible.

The hope and expectation, ultimately, is of having a profound, life-changing encounter, while simultaneously experiencing and gaining a first-hand appreciation of, and a deeper insight into, the core traditional and material elements of one's faith. As Patterson (2004: xiii) observes, G.K. Chesterton once rightly affirmed: 'It is not only the visible, but the invisible deeper associations of the sacred sites, which have drawn hundreds of millions to visit the Holy Land down through the ages.' Clearly then, faith and the material remnant are intricately intertwined; and many people believe that visiting the Holy Land will illuminate and make their connection with the sacred texts of the Bible more meaningful.

Both historically and traditionally, pilgrimage has been evidenced as the best way to discover the Holy Land; and this has not changed. Out of that first-hand experience, many Christians have come to better understand and appreciate the Scriptures. It is, therefore, with good reason that the Holy Land is sometimes referred to as the 'Fifth Gospel' (Simmermacher 2012:4). Bargil Pixner (1996:1) explains: 'Five gospels record the life of Jesus. Four you will find in books; and one you will find in the land they call holy. Read the fifth gospel; and the world of the four will open to you.'

## 1.2 OBJECTIVE AND AIM OF THE STUDY

In undertaking this study, the objective will be to comparatively investigate and critically evaluate the historical and traditional notions that are commonly held by Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land. This will be accomplished by examining the current archaeological, historical, and literary evidence, with specific reference to the existent material remnant that is closely associated with the burial of Christ Jesus.

In doing so, the researcher will endeavour to highlight the impact that biblical archaeological findings and results have on these identified pilgrimage sites. Both the strengths and the weaknesses of the evidence will be enumerated; and the implications for the practice and significance of pilgrimage, will be set out.

Research here will thus centre on one religion, Christianity, and on one tradition, the burial of Christ Jesus. Therein, it will seek to explore the preserved sacred sites relating to His physical burial; since these still serve as pilgrimage destinations. Noticeably, both

His death and burial, biblically, are listed as being of 'first importance' by Paul (1 Cor 15:3–4)<sup>2</sup>.

Given that archaeology is the 'study of the material remains of the past' (Currid 1999:16), it has long come to be recognised an indispensable tool for shedding light on the Bible and its stories and depictions (Cline 2009:4); and this is done by searching for and through the relevant material and cultural remains. This discipline, which serves as both an art and a science, deals with the evidences of past human activity and behaviour; and it does so by recovering and reconstructing 'extinct social systems' (Dever 2001:54). In doing so, it provides integrative the geographical, historical, cultural, societal, and religious context and content.

Through an interpretive archaeological lens, moderns have come to better understand and contextualise ancient civilisations and the world in which they lived. In its 'biblical' variant, archaeology is an ideal instrument through which one can historically trace the ancient custom of pilgrimage, as well as the development of those sites that are associated with and afforded special meaning in the pilgrimage tradition. Ross (2011:xxix–xxx) explains: '[The] academic study of pilgrimage has received attention from many fields, including anthropology, archaeology, art, history, geography, the sociology of religion, and theology. Pilgrimage is a field of cross-disciplinary interest and focus; and each academic discipline brings its own unique questions to bear on the topic.'

Some of these questions are of relevance and particular interest to the academic discipline of Biblical Archaeology; and they could further inform this study, such as:

- What is pilgrimage and how did it develop in the ancient world?
- As the Holy Land became a central part of Christian pilgrimage, thereby creating a new sacred geo-religious landscape, specific places were assigned sacred meanings. What criteria were used to determine the locations of these holy sites before the advent of modern Biblical Archaeology?

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version* (NIV).

- How has the academic discipline of Biblical Archaeology been able to explore, trace, and illuminate the archaeological, historical, and literary actualities relating to these Christian holy sites?
- To what degree does the antecedent pilgrimage record and the experience of that which is collectively held sacred, compared with the data that is physically presented by Biblical Archaeology?
- Can any of the sites, that so often seem to topically hold competing claims, be considered an accurate location for this purported biblical event?

The hypothesis of this study is that biblical archaeological findings and results are able to critically impact upon traditionally held pilgrimage notions, with specific reference to the locus of the burial site of Jesus.

At present, there are three locations possibly connected with (and having claims to be) the burial site of Jesus, and they are: the tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Garden Tomb, and of late, the Talpiot Tomb (which is also known popularly as the 'Lost Tomb of Jesus'). The two former sites are more established in traditional pilgrimage circles.

In Christian pilgrimage and spirituality, it is held that the place of the Incarnation cannot go unnoticed (Scott 2004:153). This is important, as Patterson (2004:xi) points out: 'The word became flesh and dwelt among us—in a definite place at a specific time in history.' So, of particular concern and emphasis in pilgrimage to the Holy Land is the Incarnation—that Christ Jesus was born of a woman, into a human family, and lived during a specific time and in a relatively fixed location—a 'place in which eternity entered time; and the created world was invaded by its Creator' (Walker 2006:24). Whether or not one actually subscribes to these Christian beliefs, archaeology is and remains extremely relevant when it comes to better understanding the historical person that is Jesus, and His world.

By visiting the Holy Land and praying and meditating there, many pilgrims really believe that they are interacting with the places where Christ Jesus lived. Scott (2004:153) has that it is the incarnation of God in Christ Jesus that defines a holy place. Visiting sacred places essentially helps those that visit them, to both verify and reinforce their beliefs,



through seeing that the personages they through faith believe in, were truly real people who lived in the world, but in another time (Rojo 2007:2).

Recognising this theological reality is a great conduit for understanding the Christian appeal to the act of making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and the innate desire of drawing closer to the historical person of Jesus, who, according to Simmermacher (2012:6), can be found with varying degrees of certainty in the Holy Land.

At this juncture, Biblical Archaeology is able to enter as an established, equitable, independent, interdisciplinary tool, with the fundamental ability to assess the historicity and trace the development of the material remains belonging to existent Christian holy sites.

However, with these objectives and aims in mind, it should furthermore be noted that Biblical Archaeology, as a discipline, was in effect born out of theology, and a deep desire to illuminate the world of the Bible, and hopefully prove that the Bible was true (Dever 2001:20–21). As such, it was clearly able to act as a ‘confirmatory tool’ (Hoffmeier 2008a:2591) by providing external evidence and some affirmation. But this was an ideological approach that became, in and of itself, very problematic and marred much of the archaeological work being done (Dever 2001:56).

While a lot of the detailed research has been done, and the focus placed in modern times on Christian holy sites themselves, much of the research methodology is arguably outdated. The historically religious and theological motivations that once dominated the field have given way, acquiescing almost quietly to more modern (and post-modern) philosophical contentions and higher critical arguments. Indeed, the last twenty to thirty years have seen a concerted effort by certain academics of the so-called ‘higher critical’ persuasion, to withdraw and separate archaeology from the biblical texts.

But against them, and their more extreme ideological attempts to deny the very historicity of the biblical narrative, the tide of academic thinking has also turned. For the topic to be successfully researched, it is the contention of this researcher that all the ideological differences that exist between both the biblical maximalist<sup>3</sup> and the

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<sup>3</sup> Maximalism tends to approach the biblical texts as historically factual, and reliable as such. The biblical narrative in this tradition is often read to correspond closely with extra-biblical data.

biblical minimalist<sup>4</sup> positions, must be put aside, in order to harmonise and release the full potential of Biblical Archaeology; and, in doing so, to allow for this well-balanced academic discipline to freely do what it can—which may well best be illustrated in the latter attempts here to explore the historicity of archaeologically preserved Christian holy sites relating to the burial of Christ Jesus.

While the ‘crucial issue of particular bias or prejudice and its ability to obfuscate objectivity inevitably enters into any discussion involving human historical evaluations’ (Holden & Geisler 2013:180), objectivity is, and will remain key, if one wishes to validate or refute the existing evidence(s). As with any other historical studies, ‘valid reasoning from present evidence... could perhaps guarantee truth—even though we could never observe the past that we are writing about. And once we have achieved truth, we must admit that we have achieved objectivity also,’ according to Gorman (1992:25).

It is worth noting too, at this point, that very little research has been done within the South African context to assess the impact of biblical archaeological findings and results on the traditional pilgrimage sites—those special places physically associated with the revelation of God. The University of South Africa is currently the only academic institution in Southern Africa offering the opportunity for participation (academic and otherwise) in archaeological excavations in Israel at the ancient biblical sites, while also allowing for tours to other historical locations.

Even a casual survey of some of the popular Christian publications (magazines and newspapers) in South Africa reveals an abundance of pilgrimage advertising for tours and travel to the Holy Land. Clearly, a lot of Christian pilgrimage must be taking place from this country. Yet very few of those going in faith are however thinking of it seriously from the perspective of biblical archaeological elements. The research done in this dissertation will attempt to fill that gap.

### 1.3 THE PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

Within the theoretical framework of Biblical Archaeology and the goal of this study being to survey the extent to which (if indeed it does) the current archaeological, historical, and

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<sup>4</sup> Minimalism is critical of the biblical texts and sees little to no historical correspondence between the text and extra-biblical evidence. The biblical text in this tradition is approached with suspicion and often considered to be an untrustworthy source for historical facts.

literary evidences and models impact upon the notions commonly and collectively held within Christian pilgrimage circles, the following methodological approach will be adopted: to administer the independent, yet interdisciplinary, discipline of Biblical Archaeology to examine the locations and material archaeological remains that are allegedly held to relate to the burial of Jesus of Nazareth, and to visit them.

Here, archaeological (locus and preserved material-cultural remains and artefacts), and textual (biblical, as well as extra-biblical) sources are to be considered as the 'primary' data, in other words, as those sources that provide direct evidence. Both the archaeological and the textual data 'must be considered together; or, more precisely, they must be interpreted separately and similarly, and then compared' (Dever 2001:78–79).

The findings will then be extrapolated, analysed, and systematically set out; and in doing so, they will act as a frame of reference that will inform the entire study.

Once the historicity and reliability of the locus and material remnant have been ascertained, established, and determined (through the above method), the researcher will bring that knowledge to bear against, and compare it with, the anecdotal evidence presented in and through the testimony of Christian pilgrimage. This will best be achieved by utilising what Renfrew and Bahn (1996:469–473) have termed, a 'cognitive-processual' archaeological approach. A cognitive-processual application seeks to archaeologically understand the symbolism, the concepts, the beliefs, and the role of ideology within the past societies.

#### 1.4 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

Limitations within the scope of this study are unavoidable; since the 'primary data'—at least, as far as the interpretation thereof goes—are open to a certain degree of subjectivity and even, admittedly, the possibility of inherent bias. This is almost inevitable and naturally so, whenever and wherever the human component is involved.

However, as has been noted, all subjectivism and biases should be timeously identified (where and when possible) and eliminated, thereby confirming academic objectivity throughout. This will be one of the constructive means of overcoming some of the shortcomings in this research. However impossible it may be to achieve, absolute objectivity is still worthwhile and an essential goal (Dever 2001:90).

The delimitations of this study lie in the reality that the study is designed to specifically assess the impact of biblical archaeological finding on the beliefs, notions, and assumptions held by those visiting the *Christian* holy sites in the Holy Land on *Christian* pilgrimages (i.e. those who purposefully engage in Christian pilgrimages from that theological point of departure). This then, presupposes Christian faith, which becomes a delimiting factor.

## 1.5 THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The archaeological information, undergirding this work, will be assimilated, correlated, evaluated, and discussed from the vast corpus of existent books, journals, and periodicals—most of which are readily available—relating to Biblical Archaeology.

Authors, such as Albright (1949), Cline (2009), Cobbing (2002), Currid (1999), Craffert (1998), Davis (2004), Dever (1980, 1990, 2001), Finkelstein and Silberman (2002), Freund (2009), Halpren (1997), Hoffmeier (2008a,b), Holden and Geisler (2013), Hoppe (2011), Kaiser (2005), Laughlin (2000), Miller (1982), Moorey (1991), Negev and Gibson (2001), Simkins (2011), and others, have well dealt with and covered the broader subject of Biblical Archaeology, presenting the prevailing models, theories, problems, ideas, and approaches, but also the milieux within which the research done here will rest.

Archaeology that concentrates on the New Testament will be drawn upon. Charlesworth (2006), de Vaux (1967), Evans (2012), McRay (2008), Rousseau and Arav (1995), and Unger (1962) assist in narrowing the field of research down to the relevant and applicable archaeological period. Hoffmeier (2008a:2593) affirms that, ‘while archaeological finds occasionally confirm the historicity of the NT, the archaeological discoveries regularly provide insight into the ancient culture. Moreover, archaeology serves as a reminder that the NT events actually did occur in real life.’

Again, ‘that the NT events occurred in real life’ is of fundamental importance in Christian pilgrimage, which began rather ‘abruptly when the tomb of Christ was discovered’, suggests Hoppe (2000:11). Hoppe (2000:14) goes on to say that it was the discovery of Jesus’ tomb in Jerusalem that resulted in numerous Christian pilgrimages to Jerusalem, which continue to this day. A fuller understanding of the New Testament, its places, events, and material remnants can and should be reached via archaeology.

Bowes (2008), Hassett (1913), and Niccacci (1988) complement Christian Archaeology, which has been defined as the branch archaeology that is concerned with the study of ancient Christian monuments (Hassett 1913:705). Christian Archaeology is of great relevance in this study, as monumental sources, together with literary sources, are essential in appreciating the aspects of Christian antiquity, and especially, as in this case, the sepulchral features thereof.

Both Christian Archaeology and Biblical Archaeology are subdivisions of the discipline of archaeology, that draws upon material, literary, and oral sources—although Biblical Archaeology has of late attempted to throw off many of the apparent connotations to matters of faith and/or theology (Dever 2001:62).

The homogeneity and complex relationship that exists between text and artefact is spelt out by Dever (2001), Halpern (1997), and Miller (1982). This is a rather thorny juncture. Besides the prevailing and prevalent notion that objectivity is more readily achieved in an archaeological (as opposed to a textual) environment, when dealing with the relationship that exists between the archaeological data and the biblical (and extra-biblical) texts, there are plenty of innate pre-suppositional and ideological biases at play. It should be worth mentioning here, that there are major challenges for archaeologists and biblical scholars of a so-called 'faith' persuasion, when it comes to critical issues relating to the trustworthiness of Scripture (Kaiser 2005:xii); and there are many opposing views (e.g. secular) frequently being exemplified. It almost goes without saying that one's theological outlook or position in relation to the Scriptures would undoubtedly reflect in all one's subsequent work. This is not to say that open, critical, and objective thinking is not possible in an otherwise subjective environment. Inherent biases and issues of subjectivism should be identified and always critically managed within in the academic realm, with evidence(s) being allowed to reflect freely. It is the contention of this researcher that neither archaeological nor textual studies are sure or exact sciences, simply because they are and remain areas that are heavily subject to interpretation. As Dever (1996:30) aptly points out: 'Good scholars, honest scholars, will continue to differ on the interpretation of archaeological remains, simply because archaeology is not an exact science. It is an art. And sometimes, it is not even a very good art.'

As such, multidimensional analysis, corroboration of work, and peer review are all essential—if credibility and accuracy in research are to be achieved. Again, it is objectivity that is crucial and will be critically sought after, as far as is possible, in this

study. All the literary review is further treated with this point of departure in mind. It is so, that within Biblical Archaeology—as within many other forms of popular scholarship—there is a lot of amateurism, misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda. Advocating and following a strictly academic approach should be able to effectively negate, filter off, and optimally deal with any such pseudo-effects.

The outworking of archaeological discoveries and their effect and interpretive influence on pilgrimage history is explored by Hoppe (2000) and Walker (1992, 2006), amongst others. Because there are literally hundreds of sites in the Holy Land relating to the life of Jesus, enumerating them all in a paper with a scope such as proposed here, would be impossible. Particular attention will therefore be devoted to a typology of the sepulchral sites that are both historically and archaeologically related to the life of Jesus; the main ones being, the tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Garden Tomb, and of late, the Talpiot Tomb (or the so-called Lost Tomb of Jesus).

Murphy-O'Connor (2008), Gibson and Taylor (1994), Knight (2011), Negev and Gibson (2001), Patterson (2004), Simmermacher (2012), and Walker (2006) provide the researcher with a broad yet helpful guide to the archaeological heritage of the region, while covering and still having a sufficient focus on the specific sites mentioned above. Pixner (2010) surveys the archaeological excavations and data from the sites of the early Church, and therein diachronically traces the development of these germane Christian holy sites.

The reconstruction of the cultural and social world of the historical person Jesus, is surveyed by Crossan and Reed (2001), and Rousseau and Arav (1995), who have also evaluated the 'graves and tombs, sepulchres and mausoleums, death rituals and burial practices' (Crossan & Reed 2001:272) of the first century.

Pilgrimage, a key interest in this study, both in origin, development, and in Christian attitudes towards the Holy Land, has been extensively researched by Baldwin (2007, 2015), Bartholomew and Hughes (2004), Collins-Kreiner (2009), Dyas (1998, 2004), Walker (2006), and Wright (1999). Elsner and Rutherford (2010) present various case-studies of Classical and Hellenistic pilgrimage, pilgrimage in the Roman Empire, and Early Christian pilgrimage set within Greco-Roman antiquity. Bitton-Ashkelony (2005) and Wilken (1992) discuss how Palestine became a Holy Land integral to Christian pilgrims.

Pilgrimage as an archaeological, ecclesiastical, historical, sociological, theological, and touristic concept, does require deeper extrapolation and articulation. This is clearly yet to be done within the South African context, making the research done here significant and rather unique, although still fitting in with the current global trends. How and why the practice of pilgrimage is conducted, contemporarily, however, could well be reconsidered if realised, interpreted, and engaged in from a biblical and archaeological perspective.

The use of the electronic media will be made, when and where applicable and/or needed.

## 1.6 CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

The dissertation will essentially be divided into three parts:

Chapter One is the introductory chapter; and it comprises the setting and background to this study.

Chapter Two presents a historical overview of Christian pilgrimage that begins by asking: What is Christian pilgrimage? The historical expansion of Christian pilgrimage in antiquity and in the Holy Land as a geo-religious landscape will be examined and set out using documentary and archaeological records. What criteria were used to determine the location of holy sites (many centuries before Biblical Archaeology began as an academic discipline)? While many valuable lessons can surely be learnt from the early pilgrims, just how accurate were they really in their initial assessments and conclusions?

The second part explores Biblical Archaeology, its legitimacy, position, and academic capacity for tracing the historicity, growth, and authenticity of the pilgrimage sites.

The historical development of Biblical Archaeology will be sketched in Chapter Three. Both the association and the distinction between Biblical and Christian Archaeology will also be explored.

The historical background, development, and importance of the material remnant, specifically relating to Jesus' burial, will be examined in Chapter Four. Just how these holy sites came to be, grew, and how they stand today, will be assessed in detail.

The third and final part begins in Chapter Five, where the hypothesis of this study will be tested: That biblical archaeological findings and results critically impact upon traditional pilgrimage notions—and that with special reference to the locus of the tomb of Jesus.

Relevant subsisting artefactual and textual evidence will also be evaluated from a biblical archaeological point of view. It is here where the discipline of Biblical Archaeology will best come into place, acting as an independent, academic, research tool. Archaeology will be used to enumerate and adjudicate the material remnant as held sacred by Christians.

Chapter Six is the concluding chapter, and it deals with the outcomes that have been reached, by drawing on all the information gained from the discussions in each chapter. Finally, the chapter ends with the application of the research and makes some necessary recommendations.



## CHAPTER TWO

### CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND—PAST TO PRESENT

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

‘Come and see.’ With these simple terms, the incumbent Catholic Archbishop of Cape Town, Archbishop Stephen Brislin, begins the foreword to a popular South African pilgrims’ guide to the holy places in the Holy Land (Simmermacher 2012:1); and they, perhaps, succinctly best capture the intention and desire behind every conscious act of Christian pilgrimage: To go and see, to discover and observe, first-hand, the places where the historical Jesus was recorded as having been born, lived, taught, healed, loved, suffered and died (Simmermacher 2012:1).

Clearly, Christian pilgrims—past and present—have corporately and commonly held the ontological belief that a journey to the Holy Land is both a devout expression of faith, as much as it is an opportunity to gain greater insights into the geographical world of the Bible; and therein lies the hope of enjoying a clearer comprehension and deeper appreciation of the Bible itself—a book that has a profound impact on every Christian believer. As such, pilgrimage to a ‘God-trodden land’ (Wilken 1992:192) has become an integral and sacred tradition within the Christian religion.

The faith act of Christian pilgrimage—as historically and presently manifested—juxtaposed against the actual material, topographic and spatial dimensions, is worthy of further consideration. Moreover, Biblical Archaeology, in a cognitive-processual (Renfrew & Bahn 1996:469–473) application and the findings thereof, can be enhanced, so as to look at and trace the complex relationship, and even, at points, the tensions that exist between the traditional notions long-held by Christian pilgrims to holy places in the Holy Land, and the actual physical, evidential and material remnant subsisting in these same said places today.

Discussing and understanding Christian pilgrimage, therefore, becomes the first and necessary step towards reaching the goal of this study, which is to draw on Biblical

Archaeology as an academic discipline, in order to test and survey the extent to which the current archaeological, historical and literary evidences and models, challenge and/or impact the very notions that are collectively held within Christian pilgrimage circles.

## 2.2 CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE: TOWARDS A DEFINITION

What is Christian pilgrimage? Pilgrimage is best described as journeying to a site that is for some religious reason considered to be either sacred or spiritual (Davidson & Gitlitz 2002:478). The word ‘pilgrim’ derives from the Latin word *peregrinum*, which conveys the idea of wandering over a distance (Campbell & Court 2004:236). The Latin verb *peregrinari* literally means to ‘sojourn’ or ‘travel’ abroad (Davidson & Gitlitz 2002:478). Therefore, a pilgrim—especially for the purpose of this study—can be thought of as one who embarks on a physical journey to a sacred space for a spiritual reason or intent (Baldwin 2015:10); someone who goes ‘in the hope of encountering God, or meeting him in a new way’ (Wright 1999:13). Pilgrimage, essentially, is probably one of the most basic and oldest-known forms of population movement that is known and recorded by society (Collins-Kreiner 2009:440).

While pilgrimage is by no means solely confined to Christianity (Bartholomew & Llewelyn 2004: xii), Christian believers have been embarking on pilgrimage continuously over the past two millennia that comprise the religion’s history. These devout pilgrims, after having carefully planned and piously prayed for direction, have undertaken journeys to places sacred to their faith—and that, primarily for spiritual reasons. Going to see, is and remains, a powerful motivation indeed.

Since it is periodically adduced that almost all the observable practices of early Christian pilgrimage are paralleled by and even borrowed from certain pre-Christian pagan and Jewish practices (Elsner & Rutherford 2010:3), it serves this study well to trace and explore, as well as establish, both the pre- and early Christian origins and development of pilgrimage. One of the best places to start, is with the pilgrimage in the Bible.

## 2.3 PILGRIMAGE IN THE BIBLE

Christians do take seriously the biblical faith: that ‘the Word became flesh and dwelt among us’ (Jn 1:14 NKJV), not only as God’s incarnated Son, Jesus Christ, but also as is revealed within the pages of what has now become known as the Holy Bible (McRay

2008:11). So, given the Bible's importance and general standing as a correct rule of faith and practice (Compton 2010:11), and that it is considered an unequalled source of guidance (Kodell 2011:11) within Christendom (and as such, is what delineates, in faith and practice, Christian believers from non-believers), the biblical foundations of pilgrimage can simply not be overlooked.

Because the books that comprise the biblical canon are split into distinct parts, an 'Old' and a 'New' Testament—both being considered of equal importance—Christian pilgrimage sources in each will be surveyed.

To reinforce this exposition, the concept of pilgrimage (as mentioned previously) has a long recorded history that predates Christianity, and it is also known and recorded in many other religions (Brefeld 1994:14). Much of that history, however, lies well beyond the scope of this study, which intends to focus on only one religion, Christianity, and pilgrimage relating to that faith. A close continuity and critical parallels between the practice and model of Christian pilgrimage, and pilgrimage as it is found in the Bible, can however be readily drawn. It also here where Biblical Archaeology has a rather positive input and voice.

### **2.3.1 Pilgrimage in the Old Testament**

Pilgrimage developed and was established in the Old Testament through the religious concept of affording certain places a sacred significance; in other words, places being deemed 'holy,' stood out. The traditions of ancient Near Eastern religion often resulted in shrines being built at sites that were associated with some form of divine activity, but especially a theophany (Hoppe 2000:32). The custom of going on a pilgrimage has its roots in what has been understood to be the almost universal human belief that certain places are sacred; because they have been uniquely favoured and chosen by the Godhead (Brefeld 1994:13).

Continuing in that train of thought, while writing on the interrelated motives for going on pilgrimage, Brefeld (1994:13) suggests that the intention or desire is to get closer to God by travelling to a place where He was felt to be more present than at home. This then becomes, according to Cragg (2004:2), a theme of seeking 'blessing by proximity.' A key element of pilgrimage is seeking closeness or proximity to God on earth.

If we were to push this religious concept a step further, it might be rightly concluded that the idea of pilgrimage is deeply embedded in the Old Testament; and that Old Testament pilgrimage, in turn, is rooted in the land of Israel (McConville 2004:17). The focal point of worship for the ancient Israelites was ‘within the land once fully possessed’ (Cragg 2004:3), where numerous ‘local shrines and foci of worship, like Bethel and Shiloh and the “seats of the tabernacle”, that serve as symbols of the divine Presence during nomadism’ (Cragg 2004:3) could be found. Yahweh had given them a land; they were His covenantal people, and He was with them (Gn 17:4–8; Ex 6:6–8; cf. Ps 68).

Prior to the Davidic wars of expansion (ca. 1000–961 BC), Israelite religious and cultic practice was more apparent in decentralised local places of worship in a variety of forms, ‘including mountains, portable shrines, like the Ark or the tabernacle, provincial sanctuaries, and *bāmôt* (singular, *bāmā*), conventionally rendered “high places”’ (King & Stager 2001:319). Hoppe (2000:32) considers these shrines the goal of pilgrimage then. Included within this ancient Israelite expression and form of religious practice and cult is worship, ritual, prayer, pilgrimage and sacrifice (King & Stager 2001:319). There appears, however, to be no clear central religious authority or control at the time (Iron Age I—which is usually dated ca.1200–1000 BC) (cf. Jdg17:6), with the habitual worship of pagan deities, another common Israelite practice and occurrence (cf. Jdg 6).

Archaeological evidence here is understandably thin and apart from some Iron I pottery shards, a few pieces of a terra-cotta cult-stand, iron fragments, and a rather well-conserved bronze bull figurine (Dever 2001:113–114), there is ‘no clear archaeological evidence of Israelite religion and cult before the monarchy in the 10th-9th centuries’ (Dever 2001:114).

However, once Israel settled with the establishment of Jerusalem under the United Monarchy of David and his successor son, Solomon, pilgrimage to Jerusalem essentially became mandatory. Mount Zion in Jerusalem was where God was routinely said to reside amongst the Israelite people. It was ‘his “address”, as it were’ (Bartholomew & Llewelyn 2004: xii). When David acquired Jerusalem (Cragg 2004:3), the rise and spread of the Davidic-Solomonic monarchy, eventually lead to the building of the most magnificent temple for God in Jerusalem.

The Temple of Solomon became the focus of worship within the entire land of Israel, and that in fulfilment of the Deuteronomistic tradition, which explicitly identified the one

shrine: Jerusalem (Hoppe 2000:32). It was their expressed intention to create a centralised space in which to worship God. Biblical data, as a consequence, becomes far more extensive here. The construction of the temple in Jerusalem (975 BC) is described in quite remarkable detail in 1 Kings 5–6.

With its erection, Torahic injunction, which obligated all Jewish men to make three annual pilgrimages for the feasts of Passover, Weeks, and Tabernacles, became mandatory: ‘Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks and the Festival of Tabernacles. No one should appear before the LORD empty-handed’ (Dt 16:16). The ‘place’ He chose, was deemed to be the temple in Jerusalem.

‘Ironically’, remarks Dyas (1998:18), ‘these celebrations of the experience of being God’s people on the move came to be celebrated in a fixed spot: the city of Jerusalem. For with the gradual establishment of the people of Israel in the Promised Land, there came also the development of place pilgrimage.’ The emotional and spiritual attachment to this ‘place’, in Jewish religious and political narrative, simply cannot be overstated. So while the Jews, through circumstances that were often out of their control, sometimes had to settle away from the land they called home, and their beloved city Jerusalem, without being able to visit that city, they would never really be complete (Dyas 1998:21).

The Psalmist, accordingly, relates a number of pilgrim songs or songs of ascent that Jewish pilgrims would have joyously sung as they made their way up to Jerusalem. Psalms 120–134 all have the title, ‘Songs of ascent,’ probably because they are collectively thought of as being the ‘pilgrims’ hymnal,’ used, traditionally, by pilgrims who were travelling to Jerusalem (Bartholomew & Llewelyn 2004: xii). It is not hard to picture the pilgrims on their long and arduous journey to Jerusalem, singing: ‘I lift my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth’ (Ps 121:1 NKJV) (Bartholomew & Llewelyn 2004: xii).

Even after the seemingly catastrophic destruction of the Solomonic Temple, with the ensuing political and religious turmoil and subsequent division amongst the Israelites (930 BC→), culminating in their eventual exile from the land, we can still see the temple playing a fundamental and pivotal role in Jewish national and religious aspirations. And it is at this point, that we find pilgrimage to Jerusalem taking on an even deeper spiritual meaning. Those Jews who were later deported to other countries, or who, for economic

considerations, may have migrated elsewhere, remained bound in their affection, love, and loyalty to the land, and to Jerusalem in particular (Dyas 1998:20), and this by the ongoing observance and practice of pilgrimage.

Psalm 122 captures the pilgrimage ethos and the appeal well:

- <sup>1</sup> I was glad when they said to me,  
‘Let us go to the house of the LORD!’  
<sup>2</sup> Our feet are standing  
within your gates, O Jerusalem.
- <sup>3</sup> Jerusalem—built as a city  
that is bound firmly together.  
<sup>4</sup> To it the tribes go up,  
the tribes of the LORD,  
as was decreed for Israel,  
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.  
<sup>5</sup> For there the thrones for judgment were set up,  
the thrones of the house of David.
- <sup>6</sup> Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:  
‘May they prosper who love you.  
<sup>7</sup> Peace be within your walls,  
and security within your towers.’  
<sup>8</sup> For the sake of my relatives and friends  
I will say, ‘Peace be within you.’  
<sup>9</sup> For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,  
I will seek your good.

(RSV-CE)

So it is that within Old Testament pilgrimage there is a clear ever-present and self-evident deeper spiritual meaning to the act of pilgrimage to a ‘place’, with ubiquitous and undeniably strong Exodic undertones: having to leave one’s home, becoming a pilgrim or sojourner by taking on a physical journey, and enduring all the hardships that such a trip would inevitably entail, in order to be and draw closer to God, all while trusting in His guidance, provision, and protection along the way. It is this same mind-set that would later pervade and undergird the thinking of the early Christian pilgrims. Pilgrimage, therefore, has always expressed a deep attachment to place (McConville 2004:17). Or, as Keeble (2002:245) has it: The Old Testament narrates Israel’s election and recounts the history and course of their close covenantal relationship with Jehovah through narratives depicting and connecting the land and nomadic wanderings with specific moral conditions and spiritual destinations.

Indeed much of what was written in the Old Testament—pilgrimage included—was later transposed by the Church, thus becoming an exercise in biblical hermeneutics, by

changing Old Testament accounts into a Christian purpose, through what might best be described as an 'experiential typology' (Keeble 2002:245).

### **2.3.2 Pilgrimage in the New Testament**

The New Testament almost seamlessly picks up many of the Old Testament motifs, and the temple in Jerusalem is found to be just as significant in Jewish national and religious pride and thought, as it was then (Rousseau & Arav 1995:279). Captivity and exile had, however, given way to occupation, and the Jews found themselves residing under the *Pax Romana*—the peace of Rome. The powerful eastern empires formally behind the exile and desolation of Israel and Judah, namely Assyria, Babylon, and Persia (720–332 BC), were no longer influencing factors. Neither was the ensuing Greek rule (332–141 BC), although many lingering effects of the process of Hellenization moved forward, with some of the societal leaders wholly embracing Greek culture and religion (Kaiser 2005:xxii), which could thus still be acutely felt. A new and mighty imperial power, having risen relatively quickly in the West, however, now controlled the Levant instead: the Roman Empire.

This became the historical setting of the first-century world of the New Testament: a Greco-Roman cultural melting pot characterised by a mixture of Hellenism and Romanisation, smattered with a distinctly Judaic flavour. With the land now repopulated, many Jews were found to be worshipping not only in the Second Temple, as reconstructed by Herod the Great, between 20–19 BC (Catto 2008), but also in the decentralised synagogues that were scattered throughout the region in the towns and the villages. There are many references to synagogues in the gospels and Acts, showing that their institution was already well developed in Jesus' time, both in Palestine as well as in the Diaspora (Rousseau & Arav 1995:269).

Synagogues became local sites for Jewish communal worship and prayer gatherings. Kaiser (2005:1783) explains: 'The synagogue played a complementary role to the temple by providing a venue for local services of word and prayer, as well as a forum for communal assemblies, study, hospitality and even religious courts.'

What then became of pilgrimage in this evolving political and religious environment? Biblically, the continuum of the three annual pilgrim journeys, as mandated and practised in the Old Testament (cf. Ex 23:17; 34:23; Dt 16:16)—the Passover, Weeks, and Tabernacles—is indicated in the New Testament. By way of example, Luke 2:41–43

records: 'Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it.' When reading the Gospel of Luke, the thought is conveyed that Jesus travelled to Jerusalem, the sacred city, yearly, at around the time of Pesach; and His family would have faithfully followed in this sacred and traditional Jewish custom (Patterson 2004:42). In other words, pilgrimage was and remained very much associated with national Jewish religious festivals.

Gibson (2009:38), while discussing New Testament pilgrimage routes in detail from an archaeological perspective in his book, *The Final Days of Jesus*, has it that the Jewish temple was, at the time, one of the true wonders of the ancient world. Quite literally, it glittered from a distance; and it stood out, acting as a beacon to the many pilgrims who would be flocking to the city for the sacred festivals. Quoting the famous Jewish historian Josephus, Gibson (2009:42) notes further that many groups of pilgrims came from the rural areas; and during one of these festivals, 'the whole neighbourhood of the temple and the entire city was crowded with country-folk.'

But with the emergence, development and rapid spread of a new religion, Christianity, there appears to be a gradual paradigmatic shift with a steady progression of theological thought in relation to pilgrimage, biblically, which would later go on to profoundly influence that faith's very beliefs regarding the phenomena. Dyas (1998:22) captures this reality by noting that for all the importance that Jerusalem held as a place, the emphasis of the New Testament was clearly more on spiritual issues, rather than on a physical pilgrimage. There is, therefore, a patent shift in focus from the physical to the metaphysical; and this change or realignment, was 'in the light of the coming of Jesus' (Walker 2004:73). And as the Church and the early believers spread out into the greater world, the Holy City, as a place, started taking on more and more symbolic and spiritual dimensions.

Within this evolving and changing theological paradigm, the face of pilgrimage began to change. The apocalyptic expectations of a 'people beset by trying circumstances' (Salim 2002:118) towards the end of the first century AD, prayerfully and expectantly saw Jesus as their soon-coming King (Rv 22:20; cf. 1 Cor 16:22). Imminent eschatological interpretation (cf. Ja 5:8; 1 Pt 4:7; 1 Jn 2:18) necessitated and forced a Christian justification for the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, that He was returning, even if He



seemingly did not fulfil all the componential geographical expectations that the Jewish people had held in the land (Hoppe 2000:9). The land—the physical dwelling of God amongst His people on earth—remains an essential element embedded in Jewish religious thought.

This obvious departure is revealed even in a casual reading of the Gospel of John, where Jerusalem plays no real significant role (Hoppe 2000:8), apart from being the setting for Jesus' glorification which was manifested through and in His passion and resurrection (Hoppe 2000:8). John portrays Jesus as the One embodying in His own Person, 'the significance invested by the Jewish people in the Jerusalem temple and the festival pilgrimages' (Lincoln 2004:37), which, at this point in history, have ceased.

The temple was then Jesus' body, as God's presence, previously concentrated in the tabernacle and superseded in the temple, was now fully concentrated, focused and revealed in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus. The Divine presence was located and found *in* Him: 'I and the Father are one' (Jn 10:30; cf. 17:21). Jesus Himself constituted 'the new temple of the eschatological order' (Lincoln 2004:38); and if God had an home on earth, it was no longer seen to be Mount Zion in Jerusalem, but rather in the *Logos* (Lincoln 2004:39); the Word becoming flesh and dwelling amongst us (Jn 1:14).

It was therefore not deemed necessary to go to an earthly sanctuary to draw close to God and His presence; and the early Christian sect, in accordance with their own Christological ideals, resorted to perpetually spiritualising and transforming pilgrimage into more of an apocalyptic vision: 'I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband' (Rv 21:2), and, 'For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come' (Heb 13:14).

Jerusalem, the Holy City, which now lay tattered, in desolation and ruin, proved to be no enduring city, which, in turn, only served to give greater credence and impetus to this train of early Christian imminent eschatological Messianic thought. The return of Christ Jesus was of primary importance. And with Christianity seemingly not requiring any central geographical location of its own (Dyas 2004:74), prior to the formal establishment and oversight of the institutionalised Christian Church, New Testament believers were largely left to freely worship an omnipresent God, wherever they were established.

## 2.4 CHRISTIAN PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND

The theology of Christian pilgrimage is a rather broad academic field; and within Christianity, there is a longstanding tradition of pilgrimage (Bartholomew & Llewelyn 2004: xii; Bitton-Ashkelony 2005). As has been observed previously, Christian notions of pilgrimage stem from, and are deeply rooted in, historical biblical associations; but they do emerge from and are contextualised in the revelation of the founder, Christ Jesus, who inevitably stands at the doctrinal centre of the religion that bears His name. So, in order for this study to successfully bring biblical archaeological findings to critically bear on Christian pilgrimage notions, in particular, as they have been traditionally held, the post-New Testament historicity thereof needs to be outlined. In order to achieve this objective, however, the researcher will need to synthesise and deconstruct an almost 2000 year-old corpus of Christian thinking on the subject. This will best be achieved by examining Christian teachings on pilgrimage within specific historical periods.

### 2.4.1 Pilgrimage in the Early Church (ca. AD 30–500)

The ‘Early Church’ is typically considered to be that period of Christian history from inception (ca. AD 30) up until and including that which existed prior to the First Council of Nicaea, which was held in AD 325. For the purposes of this study, however, and following in Bellitto’s (2008) well set pattern, Christian pilgrimage notions and actions under the heading ‘Early Church,’ will historically be explored up until around the year AD 500.

Although rooted in Judaism, Greek philosophy, and the Roman Empire, Christianity had to essentially start from scratch (Bellitto 2008:15). As the Church developed theologically, separated from Judaism, it emerged from many years of severe persecution, and started gaining traction over the previously dominant paganism; and then, describable Christian perspectives on pilgrimage, began to surface. Central to a better understanding of early Christian notions on pilgrimage, however, there must first come some understanding of the position and the attitude of the earliest Christians towards the Holy Land itself, and in particular the Holy City of Jerusalem: the location formerly considered the dwelling ‘place’ of God (in the temple of Solomon).

Walker (2004:73) suggests that Jerusalem should be substantially re-evaluated in the light of Jesus’ coming, which is as much a theological as a geographical issue. He (2004:73–73) explains: ‘Confirmed by the momentous events of 70 AD (when Jerusalem

and its temple were destroyed by the Romans), the apostolic church was launched into the world without the doctrine of a 'Holy City.' It functioned without a central geographical focus; and it was doubtful whether Jerusalem would ever again play a significant role in God's purposes.' In the mayhem that ensued, with Jerusalem razed to the ground and in ruins, and with Jesus' prophetic words (Mk 13:1–2) seemingly validated and surely still resounding in Christian collective memory, it is very difficult to ascertain whether or not the places that were strongly associated with God's revelation and Incarnation, were still appreciated and revered, or not.

The emphasis was certainly now more on the spiritual and universal nature of Christian worship, notes Walker (2004:74). Access to the Divine via contact with memorialised sacred 'spaces' or 'places,' therefore, does not appear to be of any primary concern to the first Christians. References to pilgrimage here are to be read more in spiritual, symbolic, and metaphorical terms, rather than in actual physical or geographical terms. A 'new' 'heavenly' Jerusalem—not the earthly one—was the focus and goal (Rev 21:9–22:5). Who needed an earthly Jerusalem? By then, it was in any event ostentatiously renamed *Aelia Capitolina* by Hadrian, with a Roman temple erected in honour of the goddess Venus on the Temple Mount.

The Holy City, once the dwelling place of God, seemed to be all but obliterated. And so, the early Christians met when and where they could, starting with synagogues (if they were Jewish), and moving on to what could be described as the equivalent of people's living rooms, or house-churches (Bellitto 2008:27). They did not have any special holy places or temples; and there were no shrines or altars for them to worship at, observes Bokenkotter (2004:45).

As the apostle Paul told them, 'Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?' (1 Cor 3:16). The whole focus was, therefore, not on a special holy place or temple, but rather on simply worshipping and praying in the community. Perrone (2012:1) points out that:

The historical and doctrinal developments in early Christianity up to the fourth century may explain the fact that Jerusalem never gained for the new religion a sanctity and centrality comparable to that which it had enjoyed within Judaism. Consequently, pilgrimage to the Holy City never became a pious obligation, one that the Christian faithful were expected to fulfil regularly (as in classical Judaism), or at least once in their lifetime, as would subsequently become the case in Islam with regard to Mecca.

There may well have been some marginal groups, essentially of Jewish-Christian origin, who would have still clung on to the Holy City of Jerusalem, as their own city of prayer (Perrone 2012:1); but for the most part, Christians had a rather negative attitude towards Jerusalem (Hoppe 2000:11), as Christianity moved more and more away from Judaism (Bellitto 2008:30). This emphasis historically dominated the teaching of the church for the first three centuries of its existence. The arrangement was, however, challenged in the fourth century, as the newly-converted Emperor Constantine, and his mother, Queen Helena, set about establishing and developing Palestine as a Holy Land, with Jerusalem, which was formerly scorned by the Christians, as its centre (Dyas 1998:x).

Christian attitudes towards Jerusalem seemingly changed suddenly, according to Hoppe (2000:11), when the tomb of Christ was discovered in there. It was this very discovery that gave new value to Jerusalem in the eyes of many Christians. The site in the city became a holy place in the psyche of believers. Henceforth, Christians found that they too had a 'place' that could be considered both sacred and meaningful to their faith.

It is, consequently, now more readily accepted, by general scholarly consensus, that the acceptable and actual development of Christian pilgrimage can be traced back to the fourth century (Dyas 1998: vii; Hoppe 2000:11; Simmermacher 2012:11; Walker 2004:77). When Constantine issued the edict of Milan in AD 313, effectively legalising Christian worship, Christianity became the imperially favoured religion of the Empire. Within a short period time, the church became a highly regarded and powerful social, political, and cultural institutional organisation (Page 2012:9). Within this 'officialdom,' there was a sudden explosion (Simmermacher 2012:11) of church-building throughout the Empire, as the institutionalised church was launched into the world.

Describing specifically the Roman Emperor's role in this change, the historian Thomas Bokenkotter (2004:45–46) writes that Christian architecture came into being, and Constantine was the prime initiator in this regard. Christianity flourished under his protection; simple buildings seemed no longer sufficient, they had to be converted into splendid, public, and imposing structures.

Even liturgical matters were affected, as the Eucharist was not concentrated on a simple table any longer, but on large altars that were large, beautiful and made of marble, precious stones, and gems (Bokenkotter 2004:45). As time passed, and the numbers grew, so the impact and influence of the institutionalised church spread throughout the

Empire. It was not long before political and religious attention shifted to and fell upon the Holy Land. This is how the roots of Christian pilgrimage begun.

Queen Helena, the British mother of the Emperor Constantine, in particular, took a special interest in the Holy Land. Helena, at an elderly age, embarked on a pilgrimage to Palestine in AD 326. With the help of her son, she carried out an expansive programme of restoring those places that were sacred to the memory of Jesus (Bokenkotter 2004:70). Following on her now famous recorded pilgrimage (AD 326–328), and the subsequent strategy of reclaiming pagan and Jewish sacred sites, Christian thinking on the holy places underwent a paradigm shift. The outcome resulted in a new sort of sacred topography (Dyas 1998:57). The Queen's actions gave great impetus to the practice of visiting the Holy Land (Bokenkotter 2004:70). The pilgrim industry 'mushroomed' rapidly as a result (Simmermacher 2012:13).

While the paradigmatic form of early Christian pilgrimage was to those places recorded and celebrated by Scripture (Elsner & Rutherford 2010:28), one site, in particular, stands out: the burial site of Jesus. This was the place to which local Christians took Queen Helena, when she came to Jerusalem and asked after the location of Jesus' death and resurrection (Holden & Geisler 2013:317). The site appears to have been selected on the basis of collective memory, oral tradition, the presence of a garden, and some rock-hewn tombs (Holden & Geisler 2013:317).

Queen Helena certainly came to the Holy Land, in order to venerate the sites of Jesus' life, and the events—as recorded in the Bible (Perrone 2012:4); and in agreement with her son, she devoted herself to restoring and the beautification of these sites with church buildings suitable for cult worship and prayer (Perrone 2012:4). One of these was the site of the present Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The original church was constructed and consecrated in AD 333, after Queen Helena marked the spot of Golgotha during her pilgrimage in AD 326. According to Walker (2004:81), Constantine himself never actually visited the Holy Land.

Broshi (1977:37–39) proposed that the earliest evidence of Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land came to light in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Modern archaeological excavations seem to support this notion. In the 1970s, excavations beneath the Armenian Chapel of St Vartan revealed the drawing of a boat with the inscription, *domine ivimus*; which, if the inscription was indeed made by Christian pilgrims from

Rome or perhaps some other Latin-speaking community, as Charlesworth (2006:36) suggests, then it probably means: 'Oh Lord, we came' or 'have arrived,' which reflects the first verse of Psalm 122, which was a pilgrimage psalm that was recited by Christian pilgrims while on their way to Jerusalem (Charlesworth 2006:36).

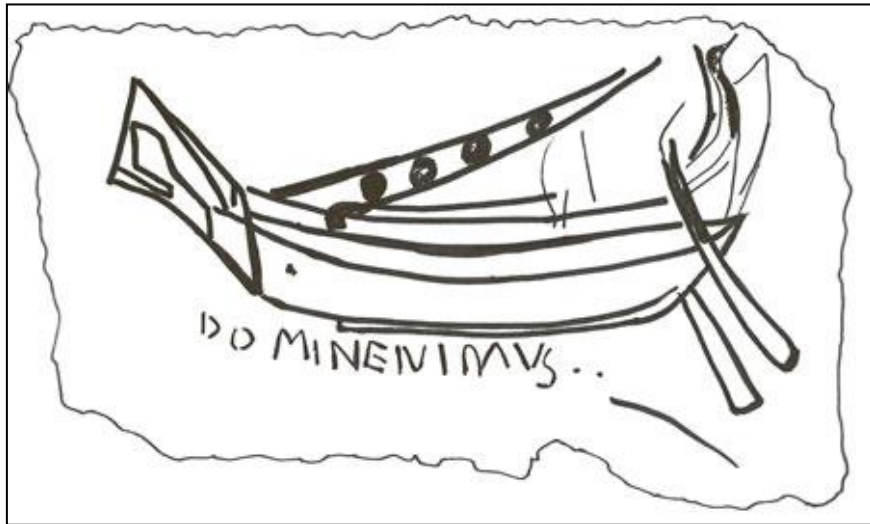


Figure 1: The Boat Inscription ([www.generationword.com](http://www.generationword.com)) [Accessed: 10 May 2014].

The Chapel and surrounding quarry were excavated and renovated in 1970–1971 under the close control and oversight of the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate. During the course of these excavations, six ancient walls were uncovered—four date to the Hadrianic period (second century), two are Constantinian (fourth century). The graffito of the boat was discovered, incised on one of the Hadrianic period walls, and the inscription is generally dated to ca. AD 330. The date is supported by both the boat's design, as well as the type of inscription made (although even earlier dates have been proposed; cf. Gibson & Taylor (1994:35), who suggested a second- or first-century dating for the boat).

Archaeologically, it is quite plausible to interpret this art and inscription as having been etched by a Christian pilgrim, arriving in Jerusalem having come via boat over sea and expressing his or her joy upon arrival, thus too well echoing and reflecting the Psalmist's delight: 'Let us go to the house of the Lord' (*in domum Domini ibimus*) (Ps 122[121]:1). It is quite conceivable that Christians coming from the West (most probably Rome), made the early Christian symbol, the sign of a boat, on arrival at or near the place where they believed that Jesus had most probably been crucified, buried, and resurrected (Charlesworth 2006:36).

Furthermore, the oldest extant travelogue is that of the anonymous Bordeaux Pilgrim (Simmermacher 2012:13), who visited the Holy Land in AD 333. The Bordeaux Itinerary, *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, 'does not make for inspiring reading,' says Simmermacher (2012:13); but it provides a good first-hand account of the routes, names, and locations (Simmermacher 2012:13). Both Old and New Testament sites were covered. Such documents stand as a continuation of earlier oral tradition; and they provide early documented evidence of sites and practices recorded by Christian pilgrims (Baldwin 2007:24). Beyond the anonymous Bordeaux Pilgrim, are the travels of Egeria, a Spanish nun, who recorded her visits some fifty years later (Baldwin 2007:24). To read these accounts is to be, in the words of Walker (2004:81), 'almost exhausted with the number of shrines, which have now been built throughout the land.'

In addition to these known records, Walker (2004:82) goes on to list as other known pilgrimage accounts of the time: Epiphanius from Cyprus (AD 393); Gregory of Nyssa (380 AD); Poemenia, a wealthy individual who financed building work on the Mount of Olives, as well as Melania, wife of Rufinus, who founded a monastery nearby; and Christians who came to Palestine for refuge, like those who had been accused of heresy, such as Arius (AD 335) and Pelagius (AD 415).

The Holy Land was thriving at the time, according to Simmermacher (2012:13). Interestingly, until the fourth century, it would appear as if pilgrimage was practiced more by the elite (Post, Pieper & Van Uden 1998:21). After that date, however, the phenomenon noticeably reached various and different layers of the pilgrimage population (Post, Pieper & Van Uden 1998:21). The desire to go, together with the spiritual importance of visiting the Holy Land in a pilgrimage, was notably promoted amongst the general Christian population, and with ongoing developments in the Holy Land, pilgrimage became more and more accessible to the ordinary believer.

Gibson (2009:9) argues further:

The need to know more about the places in which Jesus spent his last critical days began a long time ago. This is clearly reflected in the constant flow of Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, and particularly to Jerusalem, which began in the fourth century and continues to the present day. Most worshippers desire to see with their own eyes the main sites associated with the Gospel stories: the traditional site of the room of the Last Supper on Mount Zion; the gnarled olive trees of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives; the pavement of Gabbatha at the place where Jesus was tried by Pontius Pilate; the Via Dolorosa along which Jesus carried his cross; the Rock of Calvary where Jesus was brought for crucifixion; and the Edicule in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, covering the vestiges of the Tomb of Jesus.

### 2.4.2 Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages (ca. AD 500–1500)

Christian pilgrimages to the Holy Land during the Middle Ages proved to be very popular. But, as Dyas (1998:86) observed:

In the growing numbers who came to Palestine, however, there were undoubtedly those whose motives were mixed and those for whom pilgrimage to a place was not simply an aid to a lifetime pilgrimage to heaven; but it was in danger of becoming a substitute for it. As 'devotional tourism' grew, so local people responded to the demand for 'spiritual souvenirs' for pilgrims to take home, and opportunities for the fraud and exploitation later so evident in the medieval relic trade began to emerge.

Nickell (2007:13) defines a relic as an object that was, at some point and in some way, connected with the body of a saint, martyr, or other holy person. The relics (literally, an object 'left behind') or souvenirs that were taken back home from holy places by pilgrims, were meant to somehow perpetuate the experience of and prayers made at the sites associated with such mementos (Perrone 2012:13). The most famous, Perrone (2012:13) suggests, were the Holy Land ampullae; little flasks that held the oil of the lamps burning in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. These object were seemingly made more readily available to pilgrims by ecclesiastical authorities, especially after they tried to prevent those who sought to break off and get pieces of the scared wood of the Cross to be taken home and used as relics (Perrone 2012:13).

At the time, the most precious Christian relic of Jerusalem was the one positioned next to the tomb of Christ, namely, the wood of the Cross (Perrone 2012:6). Archaeologically speaking, it is most improbable that a piece of wood purported to be either the Cross that Christ was crucified and died on, or one of the crosses, 'two others—one on each side with Jesus in the middle' (Jn 19:18) could be positively identified after the many passing years filled with destruction, upheaval, and subsequent restoration, that culminated in the construction of the Temple of Venus over the site. And yet, as Nickell (2007:81) records, the legend holds:

Helena, the mother of Constantine, a woman of outstanding faith and deep piety, and also of exceptional munificence... was advised by divinely-sent visions to go to Jerusalem. There she made an enquiry among the inhabitants to find out the place where the sacred body of Christ had hung on the Cross. The spot was difficult to find, because the persecutors of old had set a statue of Venus over it, so that if any Christian wanted to worship Christ in that place, he would seem to be worshiping Venus. For this reason, the place was not much frequented; and it has all but been forgotten.

But when, as we related above, the pious lady hastened to the spot pointed out to her by a heavenly sign, she tore down all that was profane and polluted there. Deep beneath the rubble, she found three crosses lying in disorder. But the joy of finding this treasure was marred by the difficulty of distinguishing to whom each cross belonged. The board was there,



it is true, on which Pilate had placed an inscription written in Greek, Latin and Hebrew characters. But not even this provided sufficient evidence to identify the Lord's Cross. In such an ambiguous case, uncertainty requires divine proof.

The account goes on to reveal how the presiding bishop, Macarius, prayed over the wood of salvation; then a prominent lady who was suffering from a terminal illness, was brought near and miraculously healed by the correct cross, and this is how the true cross that bore Christ, was identified (Nickell 2007:81).

Could this account be one of the earliest documented forms of biblical archaeological exploration? Hardly. Divine revelation with miraculous healing reads more like fanciful legerdemain. Moreover, the attribution of the discovery of the cross to Helena, should be considered late, and not based on substantial, factual, or historical evidence, according to Drijvers (1992:80). Even the nails, purported to have nailed and attached Jesus' body to the cross, were said to have been uncovered (Nickell 2007:81). While nails may well have survived (though technically, there would be no guarantee as to where these said nails came from, how they were used, or for what, originally), wood, being an organic substance, would certainly not have survived the fire, mass destruction, and the other more natural erosive effects of time, intact, after so many years.

Besides the veneration of the wood of the cross, many other relics were, at this point, being conveniently discovered 'retroactively' (Nickell 2007:26). That which appealed greatly to the religious sentiment was that which could be 'touched' (as in a physical sensation); and by doing so, some contagious spiritual qualities or special power were perceived to be imparted and/or received. As the church sought to encourage faith, it tried to embrace and use the senses of sight and touch (Walker 2004:86). While the issue of relics would later go on to produce some serious theological reservations and controversy, for now, simple piety prevailed; and it was enough to see a booming cult of relics associated with Jesus Christ develop within Christian pilgrimage circles.

With a rapidly growing medieval pilgrim industry, religious institutions that catered for and took care of the needs of pilgrims begun springing up all over the Holy Land (Simmermacher 2012:13). These were supplemented by a flourishing and profitable souvenir peddling industry. With wealthy pilgrims came wealthy benefactors, who were able to finance further developments, which in turn saw an improved infrastructure: for example, roads, hospitals, accommodation and the like (Simmermacher 2012:13). The corollary was that pilgrimage to the Holy Land was both facilitated and expedited, and

ultimately, it was slowly becoming cheaper and less arduous and dangerous to undertake such a journey of faith.

Naturally, relics were by no means confined to the person of Christ. Progressively, the cult of the saints emerged. It is so that the inherent holiness of many a place was not in and of itself in the meta-peripheral and material remnant, but rather in the holiness of the person or saint associated with the place. These were the persons who had lived holy lives, imitating Christ, even unto death, which often came through martyrdom; and the mortal remains of their bodies, considered holy became, in turn, relics, through which living Christians could seek heavenly patronage, intercession and help. Or, as Brown (1981:1) has it: through contact with the dead, there was a joining of heaven and earth.

The cults of the saints and relics would go on to form an important part of the Christian faith community during late antiquity and the Middle Ages. Moreover, Dyas (1998:88) saw the importance and the significance of the cult of the saints in the development of Christian pilgrimage for two main reasons. Firstly, not only did the emergence and growth of the cult of the saints and martyrs launch the preliminary stages of the idea of Christian holy places; but secondly, their shrines, and those of their successors, became, during the Middle Ages, the main pilgrimage centres.

This development strongly influenced and shaped the medieval understanding of pilgrimage. Dyas (1998:88–89) contended, theologically, that:

Christian theology did not accept the concept of inherent holiness, which marked the recognition of sacred places in pagan tradition. Christians were, however, prepared to honour people. For a place to be recognised as holy within Christian thought, it therefore, required a specific association – either with one of the three persons of the Trinity (usually Jesus Christ) – or with a person whose relationship with God had endowed them (and hence their relics) with a particular sanctity. The growth of the cult of the saints and the multiplication of their shrines was, therefore, of crucial importance in the development of the practice of place-orientated pilgrimage, since it was the perceived presence of the saints through their relics, which drew pilgrims, and helped to establish a ‘new sacred geography’.

It was, in part, through the intermediary of the cult of saints that this ‘new sacred geography’ and holy places grew and gained prominence, particularly within the Holy Land. The physical presence of the holy, transmuted, was the ‘greatest joy’ that a Christian could enjoy, notes Brown (1981:88), a ‘blessing by proximity,’ as Cragg suggests (2004:2). Large shrines came to be erected over the tombs of saints, or the places to which the saintly bodies had been moved, specifically for veneration purposes.

These became pilgrim destinations, major attractions, places where the physical and the spiritual could meet, those points at which heaven and earth were thought to intersect (Dyas 1998:89), for the saint through death, had grown closer to Christ. This relational link and bond could spill over to the person who was physically in contact with a relic and/or tomb; a connection between the believer and his or her 'invisible companions' (Brown 1981:84).

The cult of the saints took on many and different forms and, as Perrone (2012:6) adds, the actual physical impact resulting in praying at a place deemed holy, because of a saint, included various other forms of corporeal worship like washing, the drinking of water, or sleeping at sites deemed sacred. Public worship would also frequently take place in close proximity to the body or relics of a saint or martyr. Liturgical forms, rituals, customs and rites grew within the cult of the saints, eventually culminating in the formation of a liturgical calendar or martyrology, which would be added to or amended as the celebration(s) of feasts dedicated to specific saints were included.

According to Brown (1981:73), the cult would actually serve to re-enact the memory and legacy of those upon whom the honour of sainthood had been bestowed. This was done at regular intervals throughout the year. A recorded account of the life and death of the saint or martyr would typically be passed on through the generations, standing as a testimony and an account of the life and witness of that particular person.

#### *2.4.2.1 The Byzantine Era (AD 324–638)*

The shift from the Roman to Byzantine periods did not necessarily imply a 'cultural shift,' writes Murphy-O'Connor (2008:4), when introducing this period. 'The capital of the empire was simply transferred from Rome to the Greek city of Byzantium, which was renamed Constantinople,' he (2008:4) notes. While this may be an oversimplification on the part of Murphy-O'Connor, following on the dramatic events that led up to the fragmentation, and ultimately, the fall of the Western Roman Empire (in 476 AD), the Eastern Roman Empire of late antiquity and the Middle Ages survived. This partial and surviving empire has been labelled the Byzantine Empire. From a religious perspective, it is characterised by an almost complete break from whatever form of Roman polytheism that still lingered within orthodox Christianity.

The predominantly Greek-speaking culture, with its capital firmly entrenched in Constantinople, survived and flourished, until it eventually fell to the Ottoman Turks (in AD 1453). It was, however, also perennially at war with the advancing Persians.

With regard to Christian pilgrimage patterns to the Holy Land, the erection of extravagant churches certainly awakened interest in holy places, according to Murphy-O'Connor (2008:4). Relics and the veneration of holy pictures of the saints (or icons) grew in popularity and importance. Murphy-O'Connor (2008:4) adds, rather dramatically, that pilgrims 'flocked' to the Holy Land, which stimulated development in all spheres. Churches and monasteries sprang up everywhere. Jerusalem once again grew to the size it had been under Herod the Great (Murphy-O'Connor 2008:4). Many monks themselves came as pilgrims. Soon enough, they populated parts of the Judean desert, as they sought to emulate the life of Christ Jesus in solitude in the wilderness.

It is worth noting, observes Simmermacher (2012:13), that the majority of surviving pilgrimage accounts of the Byzantine era come from European travellers, while most of the pilgrims then probably came from outside Europe. Simmermacher (2012:14) suggests that the reason for this may have been because for those pilgrims who came from the East, travelling to the Holy Land was not as 'exotic' as it would have been for those who came from the West; and the end result was that the recorded adventures of pilgrims from Europe found a far wider and more receptive audience than that in the East. If one were to add here, the many and notable abuses connected with pilgrimage to holy places abounding at the time, with the roads in Europe said to be crowded with the sick who were looking for healing at shrines, which in turn grew very wealthy from the needy and suffering; while 'gullible' believers honoured the relics of 'dubious provenance' (Dyas 2004:92); and we are able to have a fairly good perspective on pilgrimage at the time, as attested to and well affirmed by both various textual and archaeological evidences.

One of the 'indicators' or attestations of Byzantine pilgrimage to the holy places in the Holy Land, suggests Voltaggio (2011:197), was the spread of pilgrimage during the Byzantine period. This was largely due an existent network of structures and facilities, situated throughout the Holy Land, and set up to ensure that pilgrims were cared for and well received. It was furthermore regarded as a pious and worthy act to aid and care for a pilgrim.

To date, five sixth-century structures, receptive for pilgrims (Voltaggio 2011:204–205) have been excavated, with each one being located just outside the Byzantine city-wall of Jerusalem. All of them are strategically placed along well-travelled roads, leading to Jerusalem, notes Voltaggio (2011:204). And he concludes his (2011:207) paper by observing that this model could ‘constitute an archaeological and topographical indicator’ for the regular and steady flow of pilgrims to the Holy Land during the Byzantine era.

The ensuing reign of the Emperor Justinian I (AD 527–565) was characterised by the construction, restoration and further development of churches, shrines, and monasteries under imperial patronage. A distinctive point was reached with the shifting of the sacred centre of Jerusalem away from the Temple Mount to Golgotha. Perrone (2012:5) explains the significance of this by stating that the Christian reshaping of the religious topography of Jerusalem also affected another component: the area of Mount Zion. This was achieved through the shifting in focus from the original home of the Jerusalem church on Mount Zion, to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which became the new ‘core of religious life.’ The Tomb of Christ became the main focus, around which a complex of sites and buildings was erected. It was, to many Christians, what would be (and still perpetually is) viewed as the spiritual centre of their world. Archaeology has recovered the remains from many of these sites, and archaeological reports frequently include mention of these finds that stem from the Byzantine period (Kaiser 2005: xxiv).

#### *2.4.2.2 The Arab Period (AD 640–1099)*

Due to ‘internal intrigues and exhausted by the struggle against Persia, the Byzantine Empire could offer no resistance to the highly motivated cavalry who swept out of the Arabian desert inflamed by the new faith preached by Muhammad (AD 570–632),’ writes Murphy-O’Connor (2008:4), noting with this assault a sudden change in historical periods. After the call by the first caliph (successor to the Prophet), Abu Baker, for a jihad to take place throughout Palestine, the second caliph, Umar I, accepted the surrender of Jerusalem in AD 637. The conquest of the city essentially solidified Arab control over the region, and saw the beginning of Arabisation (Kaiser 2005: xxiv). As an interesting religious side-note here: for the first time in almost 500 years of oppressive Roman rule, Jews, under Arab rule, were once again allowed to return, live and even worship inside Jerusalem (Gil 1997:70; Hoppe 2000:15).

For Christian pilgrims, however, the Arab conquest did not put an end to Christian pilgrimage (Simmermacher 2012:16). Jerusalem was still recognized as a holy city because it was sacred to both Judaism and Christianity, and these religions were regarded as the predecessors of Islam (Murphy-O'Connor 2008:4). Jerusalem also became central in Muslim pilgrimage (Murphy-O'Connor (2008:4). The Dome of the Rock, designed and built by commissioned Byzantine architects, was erected on the Temple Mount in AD 691 over the spot where Mohammed was said to have ascended into heaven. Christians had formerly used the location as a dumping site for refuse from the city (Hoppe 2000:15). The original purpose of this Islamic shrine was apparently to emphasise, accentuate, and ultimately display the superiority of Islam over Judaism and Christianity, suggests Hoppe (2000:18).

Christians however continued in pilgrimage, regardless and unabated, their focus being set on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which for now, was well ensconced, as a record in the annals of Muslim chronicles shows, when caliph Umar I refused to pray in the rebuilt church upon the invitation of the Patriarch Sophronius. According to one tradition, he refused to perform his prayers in the church, because that could have led to the church being requisitioned by Muslims as the place in which the Khalif had prayed (Perrone 2012:16). This status-quo relationship remained intact under successive Muslim dynasties: Umayyad, Abbasid, Ikhshidid, and Fatimid. Christians were freely allowed to come on, and engage in, pilgrimage, but there was a special tax to be paid for enjoying that privilege (Hoppe 2000:12).

As the year 1000 drew near, Simmermacher (2012:16) observes that there was a 'sudden acceleration of pilgrims', many of whom were caught up in what he (2012:16) calls, 'millennial fever'. The year 1033, which was seen as the one thousandth year after Christ's death and Resurrection, was also 'invested with apocalyptic expectations', as 'floods of pilgrims' visited the Holy Land (Simmermacher 2012:16). Perhaps it was this influx of Christian pilgrims that saw the Fatimid rulers, and in particular, 'the mad caliph Hakim, unleash a savage persecution of Christians,' postulates Murphy-O'Connor (2008:4). Many churches were destroyed.

The caliph sought to put an end to all pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and ordered the mass destruction of all churches and synagogues under his domain (Hoppe 2000:13). The sole exception seems to have been the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, purely because the southern transept was used as a mosque by Muslims (Hoppe 2000:13).

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre itself was torn down; and the tomb of Jesus was totally demolished.

However, seemingly organised groups of pilgrims came regularly from Europe until Jerusalem was captured by the Seljuk Turks in AD 1071. The Turks did not co-operate and 'frustrated the religious fervour of Europe' (Murphy-O'Connor 2008:4) at the time. There are a number of documented killings of Christian pilgrims at this sad juncture in history (Simmermacher 2012:17). This continued unabated until 1095 when Pope Urban II called for a crusade to liberate the holy places in the Holy Land.

#### *2.4.2.3 The Crusader Period (AD 1099–1291)*

Seljuq-Turkish atrocities caused many of the pre-Crusade frustrations, says Tappan (2005:119-120). Caught up in eloquently stirred religious convictions with enticing promises, indignant Christians throughout Europe united and rallied, fully determined to liberate the holy places in the Holy Land (Tappan 2005:120).



Figure 2: The Crusaders setting sail for Jerusalem (Tappen 2005:117).

The sheer size of this movement essentially meant that once it was set in motion, it could not be easily halted, even though the Fatimids had retaken Jerusalem at the beginning of 1099 (Murphy-O'Connor 2008:5), and much of the Christian oppression had ended. Later that same year, Jerusalem and all its holy places, were securely in Crusader hands. In the bloody capture of Jerusalem by the Crusaders, most of the Muslim and Jewish population were massacred, and Jerusalem became, almost exclusively, a Christian city (Davidson & Gitlitz 2002:274).

Many impressive Christian churches were built, and most of these continue to be in use to the present time (Davidson & Gitlitz 2002:274). This was the First Crusade. Eight others over a period of about a hundred years would follow (Tappen 2005:123). Prolonged wars followed (Kaiser 2005: xxiv), with two powerful Crusader orders of knights standing out (Simmermacher 2012:17). These were the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitaller—the latter actually evolved from a hospital that tended, amongst others, to sick pilgrims (Simmermacher 2012:17).

It is further argued that one of the 'principal objectives' of the Crusaders, according to the Popes, who preached them (Gregory VII and Urban II), was to make sure that pilgrims could travel in safety to the Holy Land (Simmermacher 2012:17). The Crusaders, indeed, 'saw themselves as pilgrims, albeit pilgrims with a mission different from those who came only to pray and venerate' (Simmermacher 2012:17).

One can certainly make a case that the language used for both crusades and pilgrimages is quite similar, suggesting some relationship between them. Davidson and Gitlitz (2002:131) seem to concur with the statement that the 'line' between crusading and pilgrimage was often 'a fine one.' Many of the first Crusaders purposefully joined and went on these expeditions as pilgrims, for the clear intention of seeing holy sites first-hand (Davidson & Gitlitz 2002:131); and to a large extent, both the participants and the organisers thought of Crusaders as actually being pilgrims (Davidson & Gitlitz 2002:131). Whatever the case, it is clear that a series of military adventures in Palestine known as the Crusades had as a stated goal the end of Muslim control in Palestine, in order to make Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land safer (Hoppe 2000:13), as well as to favour a political *Christian* kingdom within the Holy Land.

But when Jerusalem fell to the Muslim Turks in AD 1244, and after the disastrous loss of the Crusader stronghold city of Acre in AD 1291, crusading activity in the Levant was halted, ending with it whatever remained of the so-called Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. The Holy Land was, once more, securely in Muslim hands (Kaiser 2005: xxv) and would so remain for nearly the next seven centuries—until Turkish Jerusalem fell to the British General Allenby in 1917 (Davidson & Gitlitz 2002:274). However, 'the spirit' of the Crusades, with its 'Church- and state-endorsed yearning to control the holy centre of Christianity (in part so as to be able to ensure access to the holy sites for Christian pilgrims), persisted long after the Christian military defeats,' remarked Davidson and Gitlitz (2002:274).



#### 2.4.2.4 The Mameluke Period (AD 1517–1917)

In the years AD 1250–1517 (also known as the Mameluke Period—so named after a military caste, originally of Turkish slaves, that ruled in Egypt and the Levant at the time) preceding Ottoman rule, the Holy Land once more became a ‘backwater,’ suggests Murphy-O’Connor (2008:5). Jerusalem, as a Holy City, ‘continued to attract scholars and pilgrims,’ he writes (2008:4), which was allowed, however, only under strictest of supervision (Hoppe 2000:13). Simmermacher (2012:19) holds a slightly more optimistic view of the historical situation: ‘The Crusader presence gradually diminished; but the Muslim rulers adroitly realised that pilgrims brought much money, and as a source of revenue, should be welcomed and made to feel safe. Pilgrimages actually increased after the expulsion of the Crusaders; and the Christians living in the Holy Land were relatively safe.’

Importantly, in AD 1342, Pope Clement entrusted the guardianship of the holy places in Jerusalem and the Holy Land to the Franciscans (Hoppe 2000:13). The Franciscan friars had already been in Palestine for over one hundred years because of Francis’ dream of converting Muslims to Christianity (Hoppe 2000:13). This was the beginning of what would eventually develop into and become the Franciscan ‘Custody of the Holy Land,’ under the office of the ‘Custodian’ or *Custos*—the head of all Franciscans residing there.

The incumbent Custodian of the Holy Land, Pierbattista Pizzaballa (2008:5–6), records and relays a pertinent portion of Pope Clement VI’s Papal Bull:

A short time ago, good news from the king and queen reached our Apostolic See, relating that, at great cost and following difficult negotiations, they had obtained a concession from the Sultan of Babylon (that is, Cairo), who to the intense shame of Christians occupies the Holy Sepulchre of the Lord and the other Holy Places beyond the sea that were sanctified by the blood of this same Redeemer, to wit that friars of your Order may reside continuously in the church known as the Sepulchre, and celebrate there Solemn Sung Masses and the Divine Office in the manner of the several friars of this Order, who are already present in this place; moreover, this same Sultan has also conceded to the King and Queen the Cenacle of the Lord, the chapel where the Holy Spirit was manifested to the Apostles and the other chapel in which Christ appeared to the Apostles after his resurrection, in the presence of blessed Thomas; and also the news of how the Queen built a convent on Mount Zion, where, what is known as the Cenacle and the said chapels are located; where for some time, she has had the intention of supporting twelve friars of your Order to ensure the divine Liturgy in the church of the Holy Sepulchre, along with three laymen charged with serving the friars and seeing to their needs.

Through the tremendous financial generosity of the King of Naples, Robert d’Anjou, and his wife, Queen Sancia de Majorca, the Catholic Church and their appointed Friars were able to take legally take control over many holy places.

Most of these churches and shrines (including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre) are still, to this day, in Franciscan hands (effectively being co-administered with the Jerusalem Orthodox and Armenian Orthodox patriarchs). It was, however, not long before the Near East convulsed under the invasion of the Mongols (Kaiser 2005: xxiv) and the weakened Mamelukes fell quickly to the Ottoman Turks in AD 1516.

#### **2.4.3 Pilgrimage in the Reformation Period (ca. AD 1500–1700)**

While the Islamic rule of the Ottoman Empire in the Holy Land (AD 1517–1917) was settling in, the winds of theological change were blowing across Europe, which would soon come to have a lasting impact on how Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land was to be viewed and practised. Under the Ottoman Turks, the Holy Land was orderly ruled. The guarantee of safe passage for European Christian pilgrims, as well as the freedom of religious practice, especially to the guardians of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, was offered. This was necessary, given the visible rivalry that developed and existed between Christians, particularly as this pertained to who was actually responsible for and looking after the holy places.

In addition to the Catholic Franciscans, there were also Greeks, Syrians, Copts, Ethiopians, and Armenian Orthodox Christians. The existent relationships between these Christian churches, was ‘not cordial,’ writes Hoppe (2000:13). Their passionate rivalry was extreme, at points, especially at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The effects of this rivalry were so serious that in 1757 the Ottoman Turks were compelled to issue a ruling called *The Status Quo in the Holy Places*. In this document, minute specificity with regard to the rights of possession and worship that each Christian group had at the shrines that are jointly administered, were laid down (Hoppe 2000:13). These remain in effect to the present day.

Meanwhile in Europe, as united as Christianity was in the Middle Ages, the Reformation that followed completely divided the Christian faith (Bellitto 2008:79). The Protestant Reformation, initiated by Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other Protestants, was a schism that hit the Western church, in what the Boekenlotter (2004:208) calls: ‘one of the most awesome of historic cataclysms.’ Without going into too much detail, it will suffice (for the purpose of this study) to say that one of Luther’s primary theological objections was to the practice of selling indulgences (which was, unfortunately, closely related to

the practice of Christian pilgrimage). Soon enough, however, the debate widened until other theological doctrines of dispute came under closer scrutiny and discussion.

Brefeld (1994:14–15) confirms that there were many interrelated motives that made people go on pilgrimage. One very important reason was that people wanted to gain indulgences (Brefeld 1994:14–15). Indulgences, maintains Bellitto (2008:80), ‘were typically earned by doing corporal works of mercy, going on pilgrimages, or performing other spiritual acts of prayer or service.’ Many indulgences could be gained and obtained by embarking on a pilgrimage of the Holy Land.

Tomlin (2004:10) remarks that when delving into the works of Luther, Calvin, or any other of the magisterial Reformers, it would not take one long to find ‘a very negative estimation of pilgrimage.’ The Protestant Reformers would soon go on to outlaw many pilgrimage beliefs and practices. To some Protestants, Catholic Christians were guilty of idolatry, on the one hand, and works of self-righteousness on the other hand, states Wright (1999:3). Hence, Tomlin (2004:10) could quip, and perhaps accurately so: ‘Protestants do not go on Pilgrimages—at least that is the common perception.’ The apophthegm remains one common and collectively held notion within Christian pilgrimage circles.

As this tumultuous period of church history also impacted on the Holy Land and the holy places located there—the radical shift that pilgrimage was no longer being deemed necessary for salvation notwithstanding (Arman, Bird & Wilkinson 2002:63)—Davidson and Gitlitz (2002:274) make some further arching observations:

In medieval Christian art, Jerusalem symbolized heaven, the longed-for final destination of human souls on the pilgrimage of life. Its steeples and stone towers, described in loving if not completely accurate detail by returning Crusaders, are depicted in innumerable works of art. They are the crenellated towers carved on baptismal fonts, the architectural detail framing the statues of saints on church façades or reredos, and the shining city on the hill glimpsed through the windows in late-medieval paintings. In Protestant Christian tradition, which de-emphasizes visual iconography, Jerusalem as the goal of life’s pilgrimage is a common motif in hymns and in allegorical literature.

While the ‘Protestant Reformation resulted in a decline in shrine formation and discouraged pilgrimage, for doctrinal reasons and because of its potential for abuse’ (Bartholomew & Llewelyn 2004: xii), their vociferous protestations and innate suspicions aside, Christians sempiternally continued in Holy Land pilgrimage. The spiritual desire lingered.

The essential nature of pilgrimage—going on a journey in the hope of encountering or meeting God in a new way (Wright 1993:13)—would stand and persist as an influential and universal metaphor in the Christian spiritual life. An additional point worth mentioning here is that back in the Holy Land, the Jews were the one community that continued show growth during this period, according to Murphy-O'Connor (2008:5). They came as groups of refugees from violent and continuous persecutions in Europe and Russia, managing to find some form of stability in Palestine, where anti-Semitic attacks were far less, observes Murphy-O'Connor (2008:5).

#### 2.4.4 Pilgrimage in the Modern Church (ca. AD 1700→)

The AD 1700 date given for the start of ecclesiastical modernity there, was prompted by the 'Age of Enlightenment,' in which individualism and reason began to supersede tradition. 'When it comes to modernity, you can't glibly declare, "This led to that,"' writes Bellitto (2008:112). Having said that, he (2008:112) continues, 'once the Earth was out of its privileged position, other long-held beliefs came under scrutiny, too... Switching from a geocentric (Earth-centred) to a heliocentric (Sun-centred) model influenced not only science and mathematics, but religion and philosophy as well, since it took the Earth – and Jerusalem, commonly seen as the centre of the Earth on medieval maps – out of the central position.' Religion and religious authority were quickly downgraded.

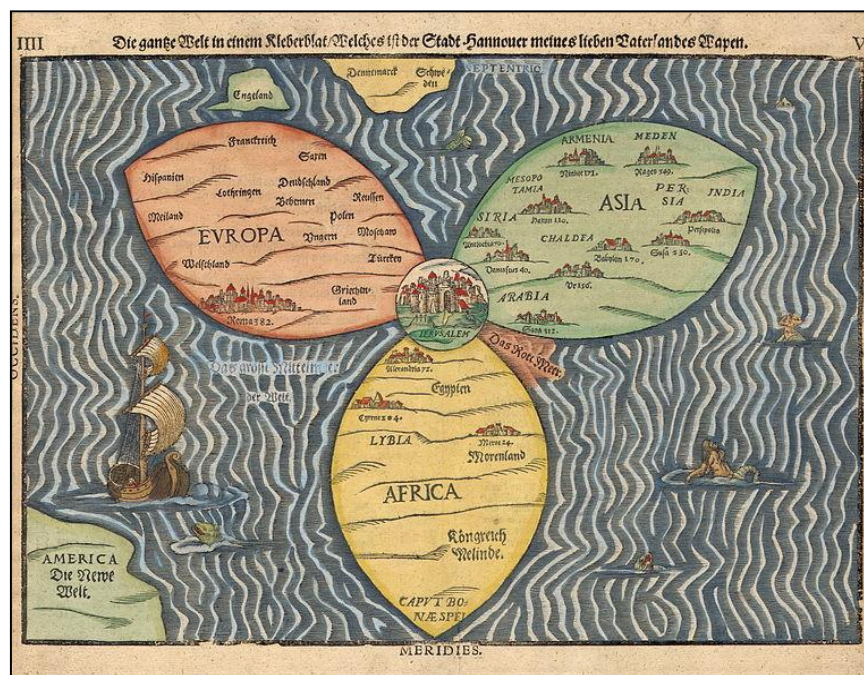


Figure 3: The Clover Map showing Jerusalem as the centre of the world; Heinrich Bünting, 1581 (<http://en.wikipedia.org>) [Accessed: 11 June 2014].

While the Reformers were deeply critical of pilgrimage on the whole, largely due to its interconnection with the practice of indulgences, former historical and traditionally held notions with regard to Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land were certainly not going to be encouraged nor rejuvenated some two centuries later by the Age of Enlightenment. But throughout all of the turbulent change, Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land never really seemed to completely die out.

The Enlightenment of eighteenth-century Europe and the modernity that followed had a profound effect on both ecclesiastical and societal thought, and intellectualism through science began to play a leading role in the advancement and progression of knowledge, leading to the creation of scientific disciplines, including archaeology. Archaeology, and more specifically, the development of bequeathed biblical archaeology, is the subject matter of the next chapter. Natural exploration and discovery followed Enlightenment as people determined to understand the world around them anew.

Orientalism was one emerging field, and a great deal of interest in the East, and especially the Middle East, was promoted. Systematic archaeological work in the Near East, however, did not begin until the turn of the nineteenth century (Currid 1999:18). And as Cline (2009:13) notes, the first archaeological endeavours in the Holy Land were not actually the work of professional archaeologists, but rather theologians, biblical scholars, and engineers, whose main interest was in locating those places that were mentioned in the Bible, while further mapping out the geography of the biblical lands. On singling out one of these early pioneers, Simmermacher (2012:19) writes:

One can't describe Edward Robinson, an American Protestant, as a pilgrim. His purpose in coming to the Holy Land was in the service of scholarship, as a biblical geographer. And yet, when he first set eyes on Jerusalem on 14 April 1838, his sentiments were those of a pilgrim, not those of an academic: 'The feeling of a Christian traveller on approaching Jerusalem can be better conceived than described. Mine were strongly excited [...] From the earliest childhood, I had read and studied the localities of this sacred spot. Now, I beheld them with my own eyes; and they all seemed familiar to me, as if the realisation of a former dream.'

In the Holy Land, the severely weakened Ottoman Empire—having lasted the better part of three hundred years—expired in the aftermath of World War I (Kaiser 2005: xxiv). The Turks had sided with Germany in the First World War, and the victors dismembered the empire. Britain was given the mandate to govern in Palestine (Murphy-O'Connor 2008:6). The historical period of British control (AD 1917–1948) has since become known as the 'British Mandate.'

It was during this period that most of the modern Christian churches in Jerusalem were erected (Davidson & Gitlitz (2002:275). Although the British actually favoured Arab control over the holy sites, doing all they could to discourage Jewish immigration, there was relatively free access to holy places for pilgrims of all three religions: Christianity, Judaism and Islam. It was this 'able administration' that gave the country its modern infrastructure, and further facilitated rapid development, says Murphy-O'Connor (2008:6).

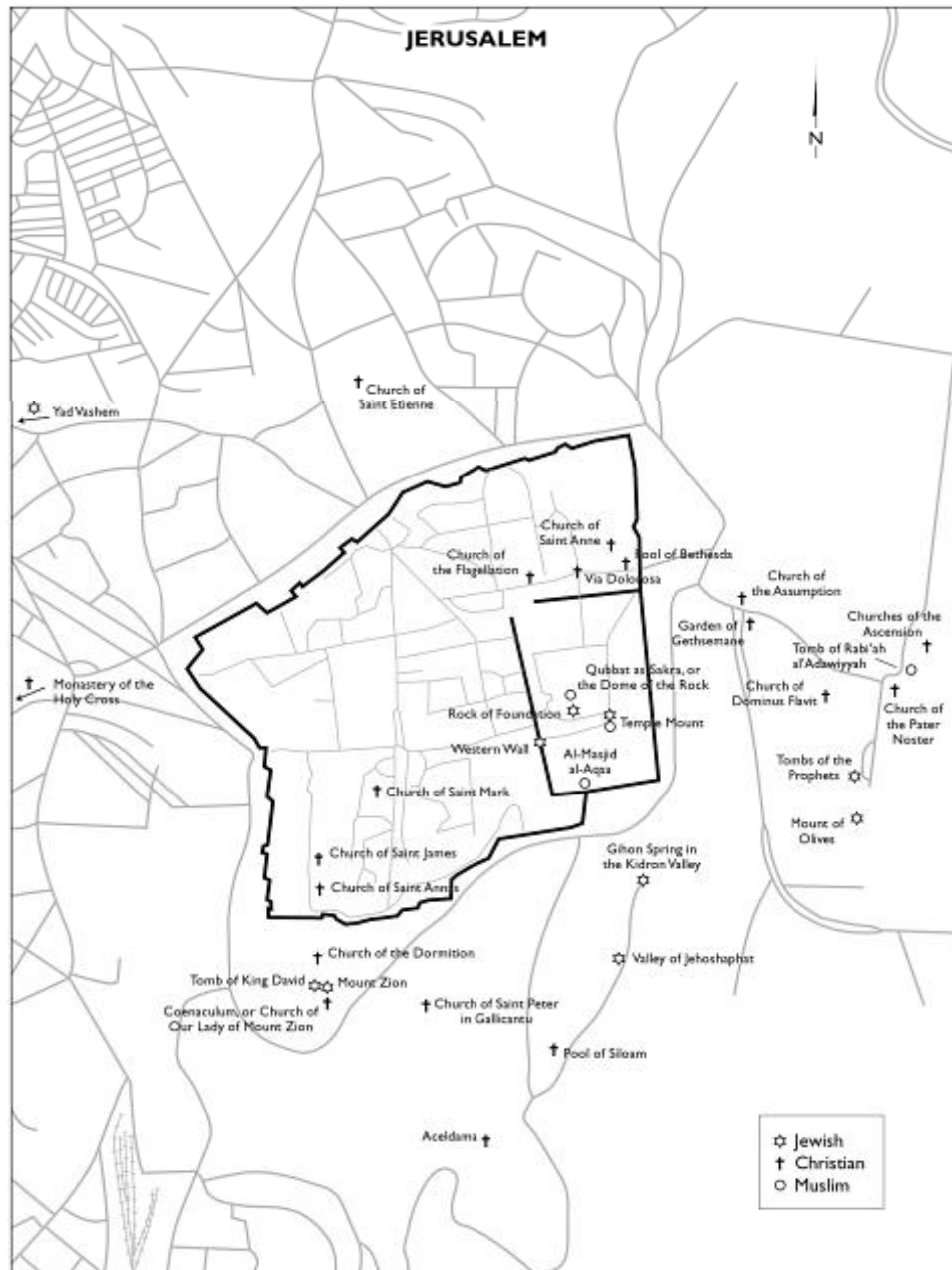


Figure 4: Holy places for pilgrims of all three religions in Jerusalem; Davidson & Gitlitz (2002:273)

World War II and the holocaust resulted in massive Jewish immigration into the region (Kaiser 2005: xxv). But this increased Jewish immigration led to racial strife, which grew in intensity to the point where the British felt unable to longer control the situation. They therefore turned the problem over to the United Nations, which made the recommendation in 1947 that Palestine be partitioned between Jews and Arabs (Murphy-O'Connor 2008:6). When war broke out between the two, the British withdrew on 14 May 1948.

After the British withdrawal, during the Israeli War of Independence (AD 1947–1949), pilgrimage was very much limited, with access to the holy sites generally being permitted to Christians only (Davidson & Gitlitz 2002:274). The progression of pilgrimage was (and is always), seriously hindered by armed conflict and war. Much changed in the aftermath of the war, however, and the creation of the modern state of Israel in 1948. By the end of that year, all opposing Arab armies had been wholly defeated, and Israel had gone on to become a fully recognised member of the United Nations (Kaiser 2005: xxv).

Contemporary Christian pilgrimage to Israel naturally continues unabated. In fact, it has taken on somewhat global proportions. Whenever it is safe and sound to visit, even the so-called Evangelical descendants of Protestantism flock to visit the Holy Land, remark Bartholomew & Llewelyn (2004: xiii), while the Catholic Church has continued to affirm the importance of pilgrimage in bringing the faithful closer to both the church and God, by piously visiting those places where revelation was said to have taken place (Catholic Church 1994:374).

*The Times of Israel* (Yaakov 2014) reported that 2013 was a 'record year' for tourism in the Holy Land, with over 3.54 million tourists entering Israel, based on the Tourism Ministry's statistics. The leading home countries for incoming tourism were said to be the United States, Russia, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom (Yaakov 2014); and importantly, with specific reference to this study, the majority of tourists visiting Israel in 2013 were Christians—53%; and half of those were Catholics. (Yaakov 2014). The city most visited by incoming tourists was Jerusalem (Yaakov 2014).

Understandably, with such substantial tourism figures, and the obviously derived economic benefits incorporated therewith, contemporary Christian pilgrimage has evolved into something of a well-organised commercially orientated venture, with tours, tourism and travel-related industries, ever growing. There are many travel companies,

including those in South Africa, that will readily organise and put together religiously orientated trips (or so-called 'packages'), so as to facilitate the mass movement of pilgrims and other travellers to the Holy Land. That said, one should be aware that the 'moral identity of a Christian *pilgrim* is different from that of a *tourist*' (Scott 1994:163). Pilgrimage and tourism are radically different in both intent and vested outcome(s).

#### **2.4.5 Conclusion**

At this point in the study, one should have a good idea of the background of Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the notions contained therein, and of what it was like historically; as well as how the Holy Land, with Jerusalem at its core, grew and developed and became a sacred geo-religious landscape. Davidson and Gitlitz (2002:272) help to recapitulate this:

Jerusalem is holy to Christians because of its Jewish past, interpreted as a prefiguration of Christian events, and because it was the site of Christian events in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Here, he exercised much of his short ministry. Here, he was arrested, tried, and crucified. Here, after his ascension, the Holy Spirit visited his disciples, most spectacularly during the Feast of Pentecost (Acts 2). From the earliest days of Christianity, Jerusalem has been a prime focus of pilgrimage.

It remains so, today. This is not a mere 'conjecture' or 'wistful statement,' affirms Baldwin (2007:7); but one that is backed by what he calls 'the presence and witness of the countless millions of pilgrims' who over the two millennia of Christian history, have continuously journeyed there, in both the good, as well as the bad times, and still do so, today (Baldwin 2007:7). They 'come' in order to 'see' (cf. Mt 28:6).

Ever since the Resurrection and the first day of the empty tomb, pilgrims have gone to that sacred location to ponder, notes Baldwin (2007:7), which is exactly why the preserved sacred sites relating to Jesus' physical burial, in particular, will be explored here and serve as a case study in this dissertation.

### **2.5 HOLY PLACES**

In order for any pilgrimage to be undertaken, the pilgrim, by definition, has to have in focus a site or place that is considered sacred or spiritual to which he or she can travel (Davidson & Gitlitz 2002:478). A holy place, in the Holy Land, in Christian pilgrimage notion, is a place that is very closely associated with an event in the life, ministry, death, and/or resurrection of the Object of that faith: the Incarnate Son of God, Christ Jesus.



The Incarnation requires the view that God is 'committed to particularities,' argues Scott (1994:152), and it is the very Incarnation of God in Christ Jesus that defines a place (Scott 1994:153).

According to Young (2011:11), as soon as the public building of churches was possible, there was a desire to find the sites that connect to the central events in Jesus' life. Arguably, the most holy place in all of Christendom is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, Young (2011:11) notes. Hoppe (2000:11) too affirms this notion: the tomb of Jesus became a 'visible' and 'tangible' connection with the events in the life and death of Jesus; and consequently, it became a holy place for Christian believers. But, as we have seen previously, over three hundred years of sub-apostolicity had passed by before any church was built over the site (in about AD 325/326). How sure and how accurate could the identification of this place be (or any subsequent, alternative, locus for that matter), as the tomb and burial place of Jesus?

Therefore, it becomes essential, in order for us to accomplish the objective of this study and fully understand the impact that biblical archaeological findings and results have on pilgrim notions in relation to the now identified holy places, to briefly examine and determine what criteria used, historically, to identify and authenticate the location of holy sites before the advent of reconstructive Biblical Archaeology, as the applied academic discipline it has now become.

### **2.5.1 Transmission: Eyewitness, Oral Tradition, Collective Memory and Writ**

The Christian message, its beliefs and customs, were traditionally transmitted, primarily in two ways, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994:24) explains:

- *Orally*, 'by the apostles who handed on, by the spoken word of their preaching, by the example they gave, by the institutions they established, what they themselves had received—whether from the lips of Christ, from his way of life and his works, or whether they had learned it at the prompting of the Holy Spirit'.

- *in writing*, 'by those apostles and other men associated with the apostles who, under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, committed the message of salvation to writing'.

... continued in the apostolic succession

'In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church, the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them their own position of teaching authority.' Indeed, 'the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time'.

This living transmission, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called Tradition...

‘Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together’...

It is reasonable to infer that the relevant material remnant, as well as those places directly associated with revelation and incarnation, would have been caught up and transmitted within this corpus of ‘Sacred Tradition’ and ‘Sacred Scripture.’ Sommer (2007: xiv) is adamant when he says that the early Christians insisted on concrete historicity: ‘They insisted on the historicity of Christ, in an age uninterested in historicity. And they made arguments based on historicity, arguments that were central to their own authority. Furthermore, they were arguments that in some cases could be verified or contradicted by living witnesses’ (Sommer 2007: xiv). And this is precisely how the tradition(s) surrounding the holy places related to Jesus, also developed, spread, and lasted over time.

Obviously, suspicious critical objections to the above complex and composite transmission process in a long-past early Christian world are very easily raised. For example, prompted by this realisation, a number of (approximately 150) critical scholars (including, notably, John Dominic Crossan), and laity, established the ‘Jesus Seminar,’ in what became a rather controversial attempt to reconstruct the life and setting of the historical person, Jesus. Voting collectively, using coloured beaded system, the group was in essence trying to test the historical accuracy of the transmission of certain words, actions, objects, and events in the life and times of the historical person, Jesus.

However, this approach has been called ‘highly speculative and arbitrary,’ as Hoffmeier (2008b:21) rightly points out, and ‘they typically ignore or trivialize archaeological materials that support the credibility of the Gospels.’ Almost mercifully, it could be argued, few biblical scholars outside the Jesus Seminar have actually been convinced by the results (Harrington 2007:39). Moreover, as from its historical perspective, suspicion of testimony, in such an aggressive way, is a kind of ‘epistemological suicide,’ according to Bauckham (2006:506). ‘It is no more practical in history than it is in ordinary life,’ he (2006:506) maintains.

While the tools of modern scholarship, such as thorough exegesis, may indeed go a long way in challenging much of the cynical polemic and literature surrounding transmission, one necessarily also needs to defer to other established, equitable, and interdisciplinary tools, such as Biblical Archaeology, so as to independently assess the

actual historicity, as well as (in the case of this study) trace and test the development and authenticity of the traditional claims made in relation to the said holy sites.

### **2.5.2 A Christian Presence**

Christian holy places are to be understood as sacred by reference to the presence of Christian believers there—in other words, by and through association (Scott 2004:164). For example, when Queen Helena went to Jerusalem and asked after the location of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, the place to which she was directed was the site upon which the Church of the Holy Sepulchre now stands (Holden & Geisler 2013:317). Although Christians were not actively worshipping on the site then—a pagan temple to the goddess Venus had been erected over the site, and Christians did not want to be associated with pagan worship in any way (Nickell 2007:81)—the place was still well engrained in the collective memory, oral tradition and writ. Although 'we lack more precise information about the history of Christianity in Roman Aelia Capitolina,' says Perrone (2012:2), 'we know for sure that a community of Jesus' followers was present here.'

It is, therefore, virtually impossible, that the early Christian cult in Jerusalem, did not remain together and gather in continuity, at those holy places associated with the events in the life and death of Jesus, while actively engaging in pray there, 'on the spot' (Perrone 2012:2). This would have been the case, even some time before the momentous changes that were effected by the Emperor Constantine (Perrone 2012:2). Jerusalem is, therefore, attractive to Christian pilgrims, especially when it is associated with holy Christian believers and their presence there (Scott 2004:164).

So over and above oral and written transmission through tradition, memory, and manuscripts, a known Christian presence in, near, or at a particular holy place, was considered to be an important early determining criterion for authenticity, and for a typological identification of a site. Such an identity is, according to Scott (2001:164) 'social,' and speaks to continuity. But an added word of caution is provided here by Walker (2004:82): It is really essential to bear in mind that those site traditions that emerged only for the first time in the fourth century, are to be considered especially suspect.

### **2.5.3 Relics and Holy Objects**

One clear pre-archaeological criterion, historically used to positively identify and authenticate the location of a holy place by early Christians, was the discovery of a relic or object deemed to be holy *in situ*. So, for example, are the Lord's Cross and the nails (which has already been discussed, previously) that were said to have attached His body to the Cross (Nickell 2007:81). These were said to have been discovered after Queen Helen ordered the Temple of Venus to be demolished. After praying and the ground being opened and excavated, the Tomb, the Cross, Pilate's inscription, and the nails were said to have been uncovered. As primitive, unsophisticated, and unscientific as this early example of site excavation may have been (the truth of the account, notwithstanding), it is evident that the discovery of related relics, objects, and artefacts constituted credibility when it came to site identification. It still does, today, at least for the modern archaeologist.

According to Walker (2004:85), the first relic 'discovered,' was also the most famous: the wood of the 'true cross.' He (2004:85) notes that while later legends abounded and have somewhat obscured matters, there was indeed some wood unearthed during those first excavations in the area that is now occupied by the modern Holy Sepulchre Church. These discoveries of wood were presented and thought of as being an original part of Jesus' cross (Walker 2004:85).

### **2.5.4 Conclusion**

The modern mind may be quick to dismiss as fanciful some of the notions and methodology involved and used for the confirmatory identification of holy places by early Christian pilgrims; with the limited resources at their disposal, they managed to leave behind a clear historic and discernible footprint for us to follow. Even if all the traditions surrounding holy places, and their coming to be may seem implausible, they were still recorded; and it behoves the modern researcher, now possessing far greater scientific means and methods, to impartially investigate the claims made by these first pilgrims and their contemporaries. This is best done by peeling a way through the narrative layers, while working through all the extraneous material, and permitting the epistemic evidence to speak in and of itself. Again, a great resource for leading and achieving this type of research is garnered by reading and understanding the impact of the biblical archaeological findings.

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

Thus, the first objective of this study has been to present an historical overview of Christian pilgrimage, to survey and explore the notions contained therein, as well as to establish the various elements that led to the development of Christian holy places in the Holy Land. 'It is not necessary to speculate about the effects of visits to the Holy Places on the lives of believers,' says Hoppe (2000:12), since 'several early pilgrims left behind diaries containing not only their itineraries, but also their emotions on seeing the Holy Places.' That seems to be a common and collective spiritual experience. Christian pilgrims have, throughout the history of the religion, considered themselves blessed by being able to proximately visit the places mentioned in the Bible, to have been able to 'come and see' (Simmermacher 2012:1), particularly those places that are associated with the Incarnation.

Jerusalem, as the anagogic city of God, with its various Christian holy sites, stands out at the centre, as an ultimate Christian pilgrimage destination. Many of the holy places in the city testify to Jesus Christ, and His having being there. And thus, they are inextricably caught up in the Christian history of salvation. This is, as it were, an intertwining of holy movement and holy places, or 'access by contact,' as Cragg (2004:2) puts it.

But as we have seen, some rather obvious and palpable points of tension exist between the traditional pilgrimage notions long held by Christians who sojourned as pilgrims to holy places in the Holy Land, and the subsisting existent material remnant found at these holy places. Some holy places have a high probability of being historically accurate and authentic, while others clearly do not. It is at this very conundrum that the faithfulness of Christian pilgrims over the centuries, and their pilgrimage notions, have been challenged or (often) even 'reduced to something akin to superstitions' (Simmermacher 2012:5).

So does the 'where' really matter? From a theological perspective, perhaps, yes. A biblical archaeological perspective would, however, allow for a critical investigation of the archaeological, historical, and literary material relating to and subsisting within any given holy place, by assessing its historicity, development, and reliability. The results and impact of such a course of inquiry would further demonstrate, and should hold definitive implications for the present and future practice, as well as the significance of pilgrimage.

## CHAPTER THREE

### BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY: APPROACHING THE BIBLICAL WORLD

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Biblical Archaeology is a relatively new field of study. Archaeology, unlike pilgrimage, that has its focus on the lands of the Bible, in a broad sense, has only been around for approximately one hundred and fifty years (Unger 1962:18; Currid 1999:15). But what started off, more or less, with a pilgrimage and a 'treasure-hunting mentality' (LaSor, Hubbard & Bush 1996:642) by visiting, digging, and rather haphazardly plundering the ancient Near Eastern lands in search of hidden treasure (Currid 1999:15), has grown and developed into a systematic, scientific, and studious academic discipline, one that demands nothing less than continual analysis, critical thinking, and exhaustive research.

Current archaeological, historical and literary evidence needs to be understood, in order to reach the goal of this study: drawing on biblical archaeology as an academic discipline, in order to survey the extent to which it challenges or impacts the notions that are commonly and collectively held within Christian pilgrimage circles in relation to the identified burial sites of Christ. It is, therefore, proper that in this study the origins, evolution, current standing, and the future direction of Biblical Archaeology be addressed. Included here will be the contentious and hotly debated methodological relationship in academia that exists between archaeological and textual (biblical) evidences. The magnetism and influence of theological, metaphysical, and other presuppositional factors in interpretation, both past and present, also need additional consideration here.

Because this study converges directly on the material remnant associated with the burial of Christ Jesus, and the importance thereof to Christian pilgrims, the spotlight will naturally fall upon the New Testament. Exploring and enumerating what McRay (2008:17) calls the 'invaluable contributions' that archaeological research has made to the historicity and our perception of the New Testament and the early Christian period, is crucial. Moreover, Christians have perpetually looked to archaeology to assess the

biblical record (Hoffmeier 2008a:2592). The similarities and differences between Biblical and Christian Archaeology therefore also need to be looked at in detail.

In this study, it is archaeology that will be used to independently investigate and adjudicate the material remains, as held sacred to Christian pilgrims: those physical structures, artefacts, and texts specifically related to and closely associated with the burial of Christ Jesus, which are held to date back to the places and culture in which He and His apostles lived, ministered, and died.

### 3.2 ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

Firstly, some basic terminological definitions: when scholars speak of 'Biblical Archaeology,' they are referring primarily to a branch of Near-Eastern archaeology that deals with ancient Palestine (Dever 2001:61). Perhaps more commonly designated, the 'biblical world,' these are the lands and times in which the biblical narrative is known to have unfolded. While other lands such as Syria, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Greece, and Italy also constitute 'biblical lands', the focus here will be on Palestine. The term 'Holy Land' is also periodically used, interchangeably, with 'biblical world;' and it is, as understood by Christian pilgrims, to encompass the biblical geographical region of Palestine.

#### 3.2.1 Definition of archaeology

Archaeology is basically studying the material remains of the past (Currid 1999:16). The subject may be defined, properly, as the 'systematic study of the material remains of human behaviour in the past' (Hoffmeier 2008a:2591). 'The term *archaeology* derives from two Greek words: *archaios*, which means "ancient, from the beginning," and *logos*, "a word." Etymologically, therefore, it signifies a word about—or a study of antiquity' (Currid 1999:15–16). In archaeology, different scientific methods are employed to recover, reconstruct and study the relevant cultural material remains; the results of which, in turn, are used to process and help in the reconstruction of ancient life (Currid 1999:16) by providing integrative geographical, historical, cultural, social, and religious content and context.

The material remnant includes the artefacts of everyday life, ranging from monumental structures to matter like seeds and even pollens (Hoppe 2011:41), and, occasionally, literary remains. These material remains are uncovered and studied through the academic discipline of archaeology. Perhaps it is the British archaeologist, Stuart

Piggott's, now famous description of his chosen occupation, that stands as the most simplistic of definitions, and yet one that still well resonates: Archaeology is 'the science of rubbish' (Inserra 2004:5). Through the lens of archaeology, moderns have come to better understand and contextualise ancient civilisations and the world in which they lived.

As a (now) mature academic discipline, general archaeology is an ever-evolving, composite and detailed field, with various divisions and subdivisions; each of these tends to focus on a different archaeological period, aspect, and/or geographical location. The archaeological sub-discipline, Biblical Archaeology, is a subset of Syro-Palestinian archaeology, which, in turn, is a subdivision of archaeology in the ancient Near East (ANE). Veteran archaeologist, John McRay (2008:20), rightly points out that: 'Biblical archaeology exists not as a separate discipline, but as a field of inquiry within the general discipline of archaeology.'

### **3.2.2 The Bible**

The Bible is a collection of sacred canonical texts, written by various authors in various places over a period of some 1 600 years, later compiled into the single volume it now is by the Christian church. It consists of sixty-six individual books (or seventy-three, when the Apocrypha is included). The Bible, as an anthology of Jewish and Christian Scriptures, is written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, and it is divided into two distinct, yet related divisions, characterised as the Old Testament and the New Testament. (Hoffmeier 2008b:22).

The Christian religion itself essentially rests on the axiological belief that God has elected to reveal Himself to an estranged humanity through His Son, Christ Jesus (Jn 3:16), who is, ultimately, revealed, better known, and understood in and through this collection of inspired (cf. 2 Tm 3:16; 2 Pt 1:20,21) holy writings. Thus, the Bible is frequently perceived to be God's revelation to humankind (Heb 1:1). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Catholic Church 1994:29) sums up this orthodox Christian presupposition well:

God inspired the human authors of the sacred books. To compose the sacred books, God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in this task, made full use of their own faculties and powers; so that, though he acted in them and by them, it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more.



Written in wide genre, the Bible is a primary source of textual information in and for this study; and it is traditionally, accepted to be the oldest available evidence attesting to the life of Jesus Christ. A particular focus necessarily falls on the New Testament, and especially the four canonical gospels, which record and describe His earthly life and ministry.

Today, there are around 5 000 manuscripts and fragments in existence that can be used in and for the reconstruction of the original gospels and epistles (Hoffmeier 2008b:27). Tracing the cultural backdrop, which includes the literary, socio-political, and historical circumstances of the Bible is essential to any proper understanding of the text. The resultant correlated information can then be expounded and comparatively brought to critically stand alongside the rational and prevalent theological interpretations and spiritual connotations of the day.

### 3.3 ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE HOLY LAND—AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Digging for objects and items that have been left buried, hidden within the sands of time, stirs up thoughts of exhilarating exploratory journeys that are filled with sheer excitement and anticipation. Captivating the fascination of many, particularly in Western society, the initial motivation behind the search for antiquities in the lands of the Bible appears to have been nothing more than visiting, digging and then plundering the land of any hidden treasure (LaSor, Hubbard & Bush 1996:642). As a result, these lands suffered, as they were haphazardly dug up and essentially looted in what archaeologist Larry G. Herr acerbically calls, ‘rape’ (1997:115).

The acclaimed British Brigadier and archaeologist, Sir Mortimer Wheeler (1954:16), was equally scathing: ‘Palestine: Where more sins have probably been committed in the name of archaeology than on any commensurate portion of the earth’s surface.’ A rather more diplomatic Hoffmeier simply states, that archaeology in the lands of the Bible, has a ‘checkered past’ (2008a:2581). The salient features of that ‘checkered past,’ will follow in the historical outline hereafter.

#### 3.3.1 The inception of archaeology in the Holy Land

Proper, systematic surveys, which ‘represent, temporarily speaking, the initial phase of archaeological intervention in the Bible lands were initiated by Edward Robinson in 1838; and they consisted of explorations, general surveys, and mapping projects’

(Craffert 1998:337). With topography being his main focus, Robinson, who was an American Congregationalist minister, biblical scholar, and pilgrim, has aptly been dubbed the 'father of biblical geography' (Hallote 1996:19).

With compass, telescope, thermometer, and measuring tape being his only equipment (Currid 1999:24; Cline 2009:14), and a Hebrew Bible in one hand, Robinson rode throughout the territory on a donkey's back, while attempting to physically locate, positively identify and graphically delineate as many of the recorded biblical sites as possible. Of his surface work, Moorey (1991:16) states that Robinson was both accurate and successful. Almost all of his identifications and biblical topographical notes have proven to be correct.

'Robinson stood at the threshold of scientific exploration,' says Davies (2004:4), 'yet he also looked back to the days of pilgrimage.' Cline (2009:14), in retrospect, is however of the opinion that Robinson's pioneering efforts, which took place in 1838 and 1852, under Ottoman rule, were not always accurate. Notwithstanding, the fields of Biblical Archaeology, in part, and certainly, that of Biblical Geography, are greatly indebted to Robinson and his fellow companion, the missionary Eli Smith, and our understanding of the topography of Palestine was really revolutionised by them (Laughlin 2000:5).

Before Robinson and Smith, the only primary source for the geographical location of biblical *loci* had been ecclesiastical tradition (Davies 2004:8). But, as Albright (1949:26) points out, afterwards, 'nothing was left for Robinson's successors but gleanings.'

It was not long thereafter that the British Palestine Exploration Society or Fund (North & King 1990:1197) began sponsoring fieldwork in the Holy Land (1865–). Relying largely on British army officers in the region, the Society intended to build upon and expand the previous cartography, and further chart, comprehensively, the biblical topography. Special mention here should be made of Major General Charles Warren who, between 1867 and 1870, was successfully commissioned by the British Palestine Exploration Society to explore and document the topographical aspects of ancient Jerusalem, and of the Temple Mount in particular.

The religious motivation and intent behind the work of the day should not be lost, as Cline (2009:15) sets out by quoting the then Archbishop of York, William Thomson, who, during the inaugural address of the British Palestine Exploration Society back in 1865, said: 'If you would really understand the Bible, you must understand also the country in

which the Bible was first written.’ The seminal motivational twin, the theological ideas behind the archaeology of Palestine, understanding (or illuminating) the world of the Bible, and establishing (or proving) the truth of the God’s Word, can be traced as far back as to this period.

Interest in the Holy Land, which began bordering on a romanticism of sorts, was sparked, exacerbated no doubt by reports of ongoing dramatic archaeological discoveries being made. This in turn fast led to the sermonising of the Land itself, and already the foundation for the eminent work of the *biblical* archaeologists—most of them, who were in fact, trained Protestant clergy—was being laid. As Hoffmeier (2008a:2591) quite correctly points out: ‘Historically, archaeology in Palestine has been uniquely the work of the biblical scholars.’

It is not wrong to suggest that many of these biblical archaeologists were themselves, in a sense, pilgrims, and their biblical archaeological expeditions can easily be equated to pilgrimages. Working towards the definition of a pilgrim in Chapter Two, it was established that a pilgrim could be thought of as one who embarks on a journey to a sacred space for a spiritual reason. Many of the first biblical archaeologists, who were biblical scholars, went to the Holy Land with religious motivations; and they fully intended to derive spiritual benefit, through seeking to affirm their faith—albeit within their particular academic speciality, and with their own theological identity and its ethos. As Davis (2004:3) well postulates, ‘The explorations of the biblical world that culminated in biblical archaeology found their source in the pilgrim impulse.’

But over and above these pilgrimage roots, as Protestants, for many of these pioneering biblical archaeologists, there was also a strong distrust in the prevailing ecclesiastical traditions and notions surrounding the contemporary holy sites, especially those of the Roman Catholic Church’s tradition (Davies 2004:8). Robinson, for example, was dismissive and saw these sites as being ‘of no value’ (Davies 2004:8). As a result, he refused to accept any of the historical and traditional claims made in relation to these said places. The Bible and the correct interpretation thereof were considered to be both authoritative and inerrant.

It was the Bible they sought to prove. Hence, someone like Robinson might not be thought of as a pilgrim (Simmermacher 2012:20) per se, at least, not in the typical or traditional sense of the word. In addition, seeking to objectively examine the ancient holy

sites became viewed as something of an anti-Catholic sentiment, and a rejection of the many recorded and existent preserved sacred sites, especially of those in and around Jerusalem (Davies 2004:8), followed. As a result, early biblical archaeologists clearly had difficulty differentiating and making unbiased evaluations of these sites, including that of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Davies 2004:11).

Subsequent British surveys that were undertaken by the Palestine Exploration Society (1871–1877), through men such as Lieutenant Claude Conder and Lieutenant Horatio H. Kitchener, mapped virtually all of Palestine (Cline 2009:16). The explorers positively reported back to the Society that ‘every site, ruin, and geographical feature of western Palestine had been dutifully recorded’ (Currid 1999:27).

The ‘honour’ (Laughlin 2000:5) of being regarded as the ‘father’ of Palestinian archaeology (Callaway 1980:44), however, goes to Sir William Flinders Petrie. Although there was mounting interest, true excavations did not begin until Petrie (Dever 2001:55). Despite having no formal education (Laughlin 2000:5), Petrie applied himself to Heinrich Schliemann’s groundbreaking work (Currid 2009:28). While working at ancient Troy, Schliemann had discovered stratigraphy: the study of the strata or the layers that make up an archaeological deposit.

It was Petrie, however, who laid the foundations of all subsequent fieldwork and research, by demonstrating the importance of detailed stratigraphy in Palestine’s complex, multi-layered tells or mounds (Dever 2001:55), and who realised the potential of comparative ceramic chronology and typology (Dever 2001:55). He conducted the first recorded stratified excavation in Palestine in 1890 at Tel el-Hesi (then mistakenly identified as Lachish), using seriation to construct a structured and systematic chronology. Tell excavation had formally begun. This formative era of archaeology in the Holy Land was ‘characterized by adventurism, nationalism and competition’ (Dever 2001:55), and an ever-increasing expectation that archaeology would ultimately be able shed additional light on the world of the Bible (Dever 2001:55).

### **3.3.2 A ‘Golden Age’—The interwar period**

As methodology and technique became more refined, a flurry of large-scale, structured and well-funded archaeological explorations were undertaken. A number of archaeological institutions were created: the French École Biblique (1890); the American Schools of Oriental Research (1900); the German Evangelical School (1902); and a little

later, the British School of Archaeology (1919). The desideratum of these academic institutions typically was biblical exegesis *and* archaeology.

World War I (1914–1918) brought about some decisive changes (Kaiser 2005: xxiv). Expedited by the fall of the ailing Ottoman Empire and the subsequent rise of the British Mandate (1922–1948), a new era of archaeological work was ushered in (Hoffmeier 2008b:17). Under the stability and security provided by British political dominance, the Department of Antiquities (or as it is known today, the Israel Antiquities Authority) came into being. With antiquity laws being promulgated, comprehensive scholarly archaeological investigations and research for the entire area could take place (Dever 2001:56). G. Ernest Wright would go on to christen this period: ‘the Golden Age’ (Davis 2004:47).

Many of the more famous of archaeologists of this period were unashamed people of faith. If one scholar stands out here, it would certainly be William Foxwell Albright. Eulogised as the ‘father’ (Dever 2001:56) or ‘dean’ (Cline 2009:31) of Biblical Archaeology and the ‘spiritual father’ of American Biblical Archaeology (Levy 1998:17), Albright was the son of devout American Evangelical Methodist missionaries. A prodigious biblicist and linguist, with a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University; as a gifted interdisciplinary scholar, he was quite at ease with the issues of archaeology, history, theology, philosophy, and geography (Lozny 2011:477).

His analysis of the past was noted for ‘interweaving all these disciplines into synthetic reconstructions’ (Lozny 2011:477). Albright managed to refine much of Petrie’s earlier basic ceramic chronological techniques and add a typological sequence that further aided in stratigraphic analysis and parallel on-site dating (Hoffmeier 2008b:17). His research, coupled with copious amounts of writing, would have a lasting impact and go on to greatly influence later archaeology in Palestine. It is with good reason that he is often referred to as ‘the greatest biblical archaeologist of all time’ (Cobbing 2002:352).

At the core of his academic work was the belief that the Bible was ‘essentially correct, from a historical point of view, and that archaeology could be used to prove it’ (Cline 2009:31). He thus, perpetually sought to ‘infuse archaeological data into exegesis’ (North & King 1990:1199).



Figure 5: W.F. Albright (centre) visiting Gezer with William G. Dever (pointing left) (Davis 2004:40)

The use of archaeological fieldwork, textual analysis, and biblical exegesis in combination is a methodological concern that continues to linger until the present day, and it lies at the heart of many of the polemical arguments still dogging the field of Biblical Archaeology.

Another noted archaeologist from the interwar period was the Rabbi Nelson Glueck. A protégé of Albright, Glueck was ordained as a Reformed Rabbi by the Hebrew Union College. With a Ph.D. from Jena, Germany, he added to exploration techniques by his 'mammoth survey of surface pottery deposits in Transjordan' (Brown et al. 1990:1199). As an expert in ceramics, Glueck, through his exploratory work, was able to identify numerous ancient biblical sites. He was of the belief that the Bible contained much tradition and historical memory, and that knowledge of archaeology went hand-in-hand with knowledge of the Bible (Currid 2009:35).

It should be mentioned here, that under the British Mandate, Catholic religious orders, the Dominicans and Jesuits in particular, set out to work, applying many of the newly acquired archaeological techniques to the holy places under their preservation and care.

Unlike many of the Protestant and Jewish archaeologists, these religious Catholics sought to test, and, where possible, affirm the authenticity of the preserved sacred Christian pilgrimage sites under their ecclesiastical jurisdiction. But, as Finkelstein and Silberman (2002:15) are quick to point out:

Although Western pilgrims and explorers had roamed over the land of the Bible since the Byzantine period; it was only with the rise of modern historical and geographical studies that scholars well-versed in both the Bible and other ancient sources began to reconstruct the landscape of ancient Israel on the basis of topography, biblical references, and archaeological remains, rather than relying on the ecclesiastical traditions of the various holy places.

The modern and ongoing developments within this period sparked the further involvement of Jewish archaeologists, who quickly became active within the lands of the Bible. These included, amongst others, Benjamin Mazar and Michael Avi-Yonah.

Worthy of mention at this juncture is the French Dominican priest, Roland de Vaux. He learnt his archaeology as he went along from the likes of Albright and Mazar after having come to Jerusalem with the specific intention of teaching theology before getting into excavations. Some scholars have subsequently sought to criticise De Vaux for his archaeological incompetency (cf. Davis 1988)—his excavation techniques were said to be less than scientific, and far too simple in nature. De Vaux, further, favoured habitually seeking the cohesion of site and text.

Surely, the culmination of this essentially classificatory period (Dever 2001:56) of unearthing, mapping, and scientific refinement was the discovery in 1947 at Khirbet Qumran of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Arguably, one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the twentieth century, as was claimed by the director of the École Biblique, Roland de Vaux, who was intimately involved in and is remembered for much of the initial archaeological ground work that was done at Qumran.

### **3.3.3 After the British Mandate**

With the founding of the state of Israel after the Israeli War of Independence (1948), archaeology, much like pilgrimage within the region, absolutely flourished. The partitioning of Palestine brought about a measure of military and political stability after the horrors of World War II. Much re-examination (Cline 2009:40) and further excavation of previously discovered sites could then take place.

There was, however, plenty of fresh controversy here as well. While the arguments had not yet matured into the current philosophical agendas; they rather tended to revolve more around methodological matters. What was the right way to approach an excavation?

An important figure emerged in the person of Dame Kathleen M. Kenyon. Appointed as Director of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, she was instrumental in adapting excavations and ongoing fieldwork by introducing to the Holy Land some of the more rigorous processes that had been developed in British archaeology (Hoffmeier 2008b:18). Her now deemed superior, elaborate stratigraphic technique (Laughlin 2000:9) dubbed the 'Wheeler-Kenyon' (after the renowned, Sir Mortimer Wheeler) or 'debris-layer' method (Moorey 1991:95), allowed for vertical trench penetration that was systematic and focused on stratified pottery contained within the different occupational levels. The strict separation of earth layers, or archaeological sediments, also allowed the strictest separation of ceramic assemblages (Herr 2002:53).

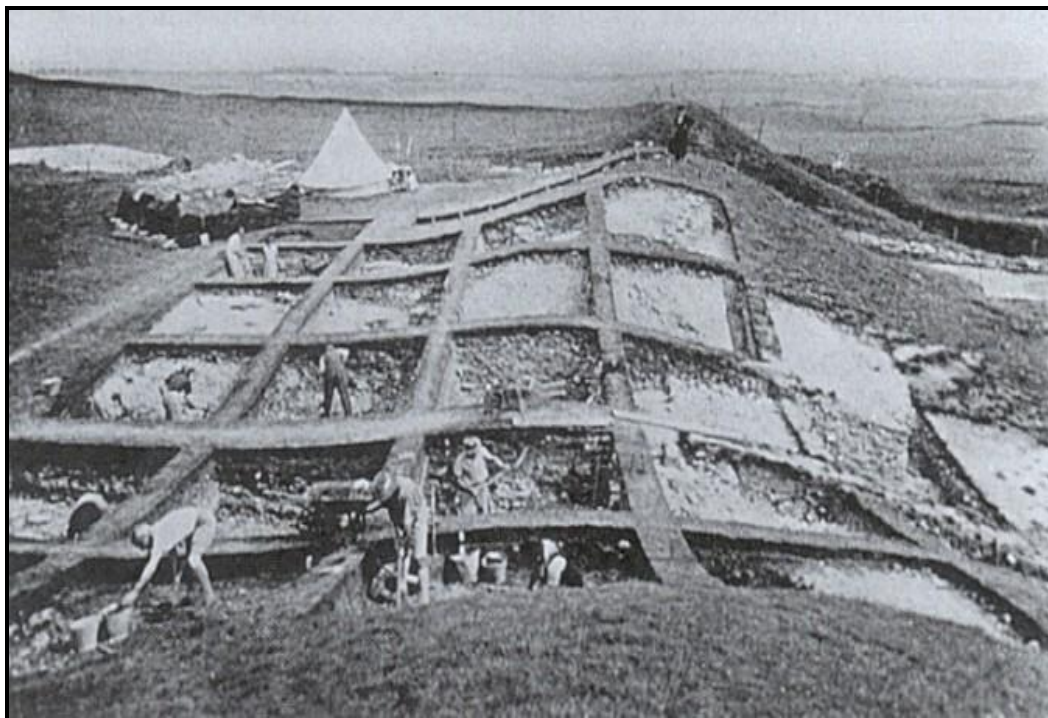


Figure 6: The Wheeler-Kenyon method ([www.dignubia.org](http://www.dignubia.org)) [Accessed 30 July 2014].

It was a sophisticated methodology that was, however, quickly faulted, being deemed tedious, laborious, and far too slow (Moorey 1991:96) and thus proved, initially, to be largely unacceptable to American and Israeli archaeologists; the latter who, at this stage,



had begun expanding their own exploratory work and who were clearly more interested in the exposure of monumental and architectural remains within sites (Dever 1980:45). Nationalism was, after all, the order of the day. The American (Albright and Wright) and Israeli (Aharoni and Amiran) archaeologists saw as a 'fatal flaw, the absence of any clear distinction in analysis between "building periods and pottery periods",' says Moorey (1991:96). But the 'Wheeler-Kenyon' field method, modified, was here to stay, notes Laughlin (2000:10). There is a lesser-known point of dispute spawned by Kenyon, which is, perhaps, more in line with the matter of this study, one that is well worth mentioning at this point, and that is her firm opinion that archaeology should be taught as an independent discipline, which, up until her time, had largely been done as a branch of theology (Brown et al. 1990:1199). That change would come.

### **3.3.4 'New Archaeology' (1970–)**

Leading Syro-Palestinian archaeologist, William G. Dever (2001), sees a further developmental period in the historical outline, which traces the rise and fall of Biblical Archaeology; and that was with the demise of the discipline itself and the emergence of the so-called 'New Archaeology' (Dever 2001:57–61).

Modern field work in Palestine is generally a methodological combination of both the Wheeler-Kenyon system and the architectural approach, says Currid (2009:33); and it has, indeed, become quite multi-disciplinary in outlook (Hoffmeier 2008b:18). Again, Dever (2001:59) sees in this 'New Archaeology,' an interdisciplinary character, that includes 'geomorphology and geology, paleo-botany and paleo-zoology, climatology and paleo-ecology, hydrology, physical and cultural anthropology, the history of technology, and any number of specialized branches of the natural and social sciences'—all bringing into excavations many new technical, analytical, and scientific methods.

With moves away from the historical to more of an anthropological orientation (Dever 2001:59) came the disassociation from Biblical Studies/Theology, and the secularisation of Biblical Archaeology, which, according to Dever (2001:58), was 'almost inevitable.' So, it was that the humanities-based approach gave way to a more scientific approach. Dever himself, in point of fact, was responsible for beginning a movement in the late 1970s that questioned the designation 'biblical archaeology' (Hoffmeier 2008b:20). Up until then, most of the directors at biblical sites were, in almost every case, clergy and/or professors of theology or religion (Dever 2001:56); and, as clergy, theologians or biblical

scholars, they seemingly lacked training in fieldwork, and were 'so committed in their literalist reading of the Bible that they were not objectively interpreting the archaeological data,' observes Hoffmeier (2008b:20). Many, furthermore, went and visited as pilgrims, or at the very least, with a pilgrimage intention—as those expecting to derive some sort of spiritual benefit, while seeking to affirm their faith. It was on this basis that their objectivity was called into question. Dever (2001:61) went so far as insisting upon and popularising the term 'Syro-Palestinian Archaeology' as a kind of geographical subdivision (covering Palestine), and that in rejection to, and in liberation from, the popular term: 'Biblical Archaeology.' He (2001:61) almost prided himself as being 'one of the first to observe biblical archaeology's passing, and to write its obituary back in the early 1970s.' Cline (2009:55) suggests that this led to 'a decades-long crusade to delete the words "biblical archaeology" from the lexicon.' Due, in part to Dever's efforts, it soon became commonly accepted that excavating with the Bible in one hand was no longer considered either acceptable or appropriate (Millar 1987:58).

All this change was not without conflict; and the years to the present have sadly been (and still are) marred by quibbling over methodology and philosophical contentions (individuals of theological/biblical persuasion (faith-based) versus secularists) as to whether or not biblical archaeology should be treated as an independent academic discipline. Is it a discipline of the humanities or a hard science? Pundits for either side appear filled with critique, suspicion, and stereotyping of and towards one another.

This situation has further been exacerbated by the rise of a school of thought that Dever himself had seemed not to have anticipated, and that was historical minimalism (Hoffmeier 2008b:17). The consequences were rapid and somewhat annihilatory: Literary criticism was advanced and some of the historical elements of the Bible were brought into question. Archaeology itself was being applied in an ideological attempt to deconstruct and disprove the very historicity of the Scriptures. Resultant archaeological finds and discoveries were further being applied and actively used in defence of certain post-modern minimalistic claims.

Dever would go on to polemically retort by attacking the core revisionist notions of minimalism, and he did so by employing both archaeology and the text, empirically. Forthwith, Dever (2001:39) chose and advocated a sophisticated reading of archaeology and textual evidence, which should be read together. 'One should be aware,' however, warns Cline (2009:59), 'that on the other side of the spectrum there are the so-called

biblical maximalists, who would argue that the biblical stories are indeed both completely factual and historically correct, even if they cannot always be verified by archaeology.'

The contention of this study is, therefore, has that differences must indeed be put aside in order to maximise the potential of Biblical Archaeology, and to allow for was is a well-balanced academic discipline to freely do what it can. This may well be illustrated best in our later attempts to examine, and in doing so, assess the authenticity of the archaeologically preserved Christian holy sites related to the burial of Jesus, which are of great interest to the Christian pilgrim. Objectivity, in so far as it is possible, would be the key.

### 3.4 ARCHAEOLOGY IN BIBLICAL STUDIES

It is reasonable that archaeological discoveries which are made in the lands wherein the biblical narrative was set, can, and necessarily will, have a bearing upon the interpretation and understanding of the text. This is particularly so in the area of demonstrating the historical accuracy and authenticity of the texts of the Scriptures—both the Old and New Testaments. Discoveries made in the field and the interpretation, implications, and the publication thereof, would inevitability find their way back to the classroom.

#### 3.4.1 Development and legitimacy of Biblical Archaeology as an academic study

Critically studying the Bible necessitates reading it and using different forms of analysis, in order to understand rightly just what it is saying. With archaeology's focus being on the material culture (Dever 2001:53), there was always the expectation that the new and exciting field of archaeology would be able to shed some innovative and rather unique light on the biblical world (Dever 2001:55).

As noted in our historical outline of archaeology in the Holy Land, previously, the majority of pioneering archaeologists—those who took the branch of learning in its formative years to the ground in Palestine—were in fact biblical scholars (Hoffmeier 2008a:2591); and the theologians were, at heart, sojourning pilgrims, people of faith, at least, prior to the (eventual) secularisation of Biblical Archaeology (Dever 2001:58).

These early scholars, who were interested in not only the physical, but the metaphysical aspect of the land, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, dominated the field, making it 'top-heavy' with theologians, according to Freund (2009:35). They truly believed that

the exploration, excavations, and discoveries made would settle, once and for all, the historical accuracy and value of in particular, the Old Testament narratives, especially with regard to the settlement of the tribes of Israel in Canaan (Hoppe 2011:41). These men and women saw ‘every rock and pot’ discovered as ‘verification and authentication of everything’ (Freund 2009:35). But as matters turned out, things were far more complicated, and the hopes that these searching scholars had, were soon dashed, and never realised fully (Hoppe 2011:42).

As archaeology quickly evolved, it became far more sophisticated, systematic, analytical, scientific, and interdisciplinary—both in nature and approach. In this regard, there can be no doubt as to its importance, legitimacy, and self-determining standing as an independent academic field of study (Dever 2001:60)—which it has now indeed become in major universities around the world (Holden & Geisler 2013:179). Simultaneously, it became clear that using the Bible in the one hand, and the trowel in the other, would simply no longer suffice. Sadly, this development has led to some archaeologists completely giving up on the idea or goal of ever being able to substantiate biblical historicity (Hoppe 2011:42).

Back in the classroom, the challenge was how to integrate the steadily incoming stream of archaeological discoveries, controversies, and the interpretation thereof, with the existent textual models. Because archaeology constantly raises historical questions, it does encourage scholars to search the written sources for clues and the possible answers to them (Millar 1982:213). But Hoffmeier (2008a:2591) brings us back to the crux of the problem, which in turn touches on the very legitimacy, standing, and critique of the archaeology that deals with the ancient Near East in its biblical expression—and that is: ‘No greater dilemma exists in archaeology in the lands of the Bible than the question of what motivates excavation.’

### **3.4.2 Motives behind biblical archaeological research**

What really motivates biblical archaeological research, excavation, and importantly, the interpretation of the resultant discoveries, lies at the core of the dilemma. The reasons for this often transcend mere semantics; they are deep, but they can be established. A good point in case is that of Professor William G. Dever, a retired faculty member of the University of Arizona in the United States of America. Dever, widely considered to be the doyen of Syro-Palestinian archaeology—with over thirty seasons worth of archaeological

field experience, and a leading scholar of the 'New Archaeology' (Freund 2009:15)—was one of the first to incorporate scientific and interdisciplinary methods in excavation (Hoffmeier 2008b:20).

He also strongly objected to the many biblical archaeologists, who in his opinion were biblical scholars and theologians so committed to a literalist reading of the Bible that they could not bring themselves to interpret archaeological data objectively (Hoffmeier 2008b:20). His protests became a significant methodological triumph; and many agreed with him, resulting in a clear shift in intellectual orientation (Dever 2001:60) and a rebranding of 'Biblical Archaeology' to 'Syro-Palestinian Archaeology.' It also gave rise to an unforeseen level of academic scepticism towards the historicity of the Bible and the historical minimalism (Hoffmeier 2008b:20). The consequences were effectively deleterious—the sacred texts were openly viewed with suspicion, and literary criticism was advanced. It was, in essence, the adverse effect and result of making a corrective from what was an original excess.

Dever's innate desire was to see archaeology that has its focus in the Bible, accepted, and taken seriously academically (specifically within secular intellectual establishment circles) as an independent, professional, and secular discipline (Dever 2001:62). But over and above that, clearly propelling him, was his own personal point of departure: that of being a self-proclaimed 'secular humanist' (Dever 2001: x). William Dever objected to the very concept of 'biblical archaeology,' and he insisted, says Millar (1987:58), 'that Palestinian archaeology must declare its independence from biblical studies. Otherwise, he claimed, there would continue to be an inherent bias that would limit the archaeologist's scope and distort his or her final conclusions.' As such, he sought to rip and divorce archaeology from its so-called 'biblical' roots.

However, it is a given fact that every person living is subject to some sort of presupposition(s) and bias(es)—William Dever included. Because secular humanism was his worldview, his thinking was ordered as such. This is made abundantly clear in the following Wikipedia (2014) statement:

I am not reading the Bible as Scripture... I am in fact not even a theist. My view all along—and especially in the recent books—is first that the biblical narratives are indeed 'stories,' often fictional and almost always propagandistic; but that here and there they contain some valid historical information.

Moreover, clergy and theologians practising archaeology—be they honestly and objectively seeking or not—are summarily dismissed by Dever as being too biased (Dever 2001:20–21), and being strongly influenced by what Millar (1982:211) suggest are numerous personal inclinations, agendas, and presuppositions.

That the Bible has influenced archaeology is undeniable. And while it is also true that much archaeological research was conducted with a pilgrimage aura, using the Bible in one's hand, and not always interpreting it objectively as such, unbiased *biblical* archaeology has been able to provided many confirmatory evidence(s) and corroborating insights into Scripture. The discipline has given moderns a far clearer and deeper appreciation of the culture, customs, events, and the historical setting of the literary material; and, in doing so, it has strengthened the belief (not only in the Bible, but as a result, its message) and reasoned faith of many Christian believers. Understanding and demonstrating the culture and historicity of the ancient world opens up the meaning of sacred texts; and thus, in part, it should support a reasoned faith and encourage a pilgrimage impulse.

Contrary to Dever's (2001) critique, it is supercilious, somewhat unmerited, and inherently biased to simply assume that open, critical, and moreover objective methodologies and dialogue are not possible within a biblical or theological environment. The extreme literalist, maximalists or fundamentalist (Dever 2001:20) past aside, biblical archaeology, that is governed by equitable and acceptable rules of interpretation, coupled with multidimensional analysis, corroboration of work, and peer review, is what ultimately guarantees credibility in research—regardless of the intentions or motives behind the research, or the milieu in which it takes place. Anything less than honest and open enquiry, while seeking to be as objective as is possible in research, is unacceptable and should be collectively rejected. However, that being said, it is also simply ridiculous to propagate and arrogate the patently false dictum, that objectivity in archaeological research is only best accomplished within a secular humanistic environment (which, in any event, also carries an array of presuppositions and biases).

Any modern inherent presuppositions, biases, and/or subjectivism should always be identified and critically managed within the academic realm; particularly in a field that is as subjected to interpretation as archaeology is, with balanced evidence(s) consistently being afforded.

### 3.4.3 The Minimalist—Maximalist dispute

Theological assumptions (Holden & Geisler 2013:183) with regard to biblical archaeological findings and the interpretation thereof, in relation to the confirmation of the Bible, as we have seen, have resulted in the development and rise of two diametrically opposed schools of thought: minimalism and maximalism.

Minimalism is typically characterised by a critical scholarship and revisionism that tends to cynically view the historicity of the biblical narratives as being suspicious and fictitious. The theological side of archaeology sparked its birth, when the proponents of the 'New Archaeology' began to ignore, 'minimise,' or challenge the importance of texts (Freund 2009:15) in favour of artefacts. Minimalists further 'led a campaign among professional archaeologists to abandon the term *biblical archaeology* altogether, for the more "scientific-sounding" term *Near-eastern archaeology*,' according to Holden and Geisler (2013:189).

Archaeology has to be allowed to stand on its own, as a scientific discipline, advocates Hoffmeier (2008a:2592). He (2008a:2592) adds, and quite realistically so: That is only natural for the two disciplines to work together; because both are sources of knowledge and discovery that inform each other. According to minimalism, a deconstructed Bible was no longer considered a reasonable primary-source document (Holden & Geisler 2013:189), and a 'historiographical crisis' (Dever 2001:24) regrettably ensued. While some minimalistic arguments have come to be either disputed, challenged outrightly, or rejected within mainstream biblical archaeology, the lingering effects of Minimalists—those who say there was no 'biblical Israel'—reverberate and can still be found persisting in biblical archaeological scholarship today.

Maximalists, antipodally, see and maximise all possible artefactual connection to the text (Freund 2009:35). The biblical text is viewed and deemed to be both factual and historically accurate (Cline 2009:59). As such, it is deemed to be a positive and reliable source of ancient history that can be allowed for use in the reconstruction of the past (Holden & Geisler 2013:186)—even if its historicity cannot always be verified by archaeology (Cline 2009:59).

Today, most scholars advocate a ‘middle-ground’ position between minimalist and maximalist arguments, electing to evaluate both the artefactual data and the textual material in tandem, and dialogically allowing archaeology and the biblical texts to ‘interact as legitimate sources of history writing’ (Dever 2001:9). Centrism has proven to be the only sure, viable, and sustainable way forward.

#### **3.4.4 The complex relationship between text and artefact**

The minimalist/maximalist debate has at its core, and brings to a head, the complex relationship that currently exists between text and artefact. Gone indeed are the days when biblical texts (as well as other extra-biblical writings) were used as the foundation for archaeological surveys and artefactual discoveries (Millar 1982:211). Given that the Bible is, itself, is essentially an archaeological document (Holden & Geisler 2013:186), there is a commonly held misperception that archaeological data are somehow ‘primary’ and ‘sometimes superior to biblical and other ancient Near Eastern texts’ (Dever 2001:89–90). This is however, a superficial and faulty assumption. Dever (2001:82) himself claims to see ‘two complementary classes of data—the textual and the artefactual.’ However, he belies this position somewhat by arguing, at points, for the inherent bias in textual data (Dever 2001:82), and he does so by exemplifying further the suspicious nature of interpretation, exegesis and hermeneutics (Dever 2001:68–77).

As mentioned before, his critique holds that objectivity cannot properly be accomplished within a biblical or theological—in other words, a textual—environment. Clearly, he sees the archaeological data as being superior, and he uses them as a tool to be used to supersede Scriptural harmony or authority, and the choice and determining factor as to what is historically verifiable or not (Dever 2001:19–21). It is at this juncture that J. Maxwell Millar (1982:213) makes an excellent point:

It is sometimes suggested, of course, that the literary-critical methodologies are more subjective than archaeological procedures. I doubt that. Having tried my hand at both, I am not at all convinced that analyzing a biblical passage in terms of source, form or traditional criticism is any more or less subjective than excavating a five-metre square on a tell. Both involve carefully worked out procedures designed to ensure objectivity; and both require judgmental decisions at almost every step of the way.

Both textual facts and artefacts remain subject to interpretation. Explication, of course, is the common goal. Both textual study and archaeology are given to subjectivity—neither is an exact science—which is why it is essential that acceptable rules of interpretation be drawn and applied to both classes of data. It is maintained, moreover, that because



archaeological research and the textual environment of biblical studies inform each other, and are both acceptable sources of interrelated information and discovery (Hoffmeier 2008a:2591), that this calls for a distinct separation of the two fields. However, these and like arguments, are simply superficial and largely premature.

### 3.5 THE ROLE OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

A cautionary note by John McRay (1991:20) is necessary at this point:

When we speak of 'biblical archaeology,' we must be aware of the limitations inherent in the use of the term, especially vis-à-vis the New Testament. The New Testament covers only about fifty years, as opposed to about fifteen hundred in the Old Testament. Further, the New Testament is largely limited to the immediate Mediterranean world; the Old Testament by contrast, covers the whole of the Middle East.

Indeed, much of biblical archaeology has tended to concentrate on the Old Testament. As Niccacci (1988:1) concedes, the New Testament seems 'rather neglected by archaeologists. When they speak of biblical archaeology, they normally mean OT archaeology.' But the discipline, with its principles and practices, has been able to play a crucial role in the reconstruction of the cultural and social world of the historical Jesus; and a 'fuller understanding of the meaning of the NT' (Hoffmeier 2008a:2593) can be gained through learning more details about the world in which its writers and recipients lived (Hoffmeier 2008a:2593). Now while all the books of the New Testament were written during the Roman Period (37 BC–AD 133), and although they contain some historical information, Simkins (2011:52) maintains that 'they give an uneven picture of the larger Judean and Roman worlds in which they are set.'

With the focus of this study being to draw on Biblical Archaeology as an academic discipline to survey the extent to which it (if indeed it does) confirms current archaeological, historical, and literary evidences and models, and impacts on the notions commonly and collectively held within Christian pilgrimage relating to the existent material remnant associated with the burial of Christ Jesus, the enquiry necessarily narrows down to the New Testament period. This is an archaeological period that is 'dominated by the many monumental building projects sponsored by Herod the Great' (Simkins 2011:53).

Here, archaeology is more than capable of independently evaluating, correlating, and verifying graves and tombs, sepulchres and mausoleums, rituals relating to the dead and their burial (Crossan & Reed 2001:272), while going back to and dating the

historical period in question. Biblical Archaeology may even go so far as to bring modern people into actual contact with the material cultures (Hoffmeier 2008a:2592) in which Jesus and the apostles lived, died and were buried, thereby serving as a reminder that the New Testament and its events 'occurred in real time-space history' (Hoffmeier 2008a:2593). Because Christian pilgrims look back to and are interested, specifically, in this period, there develops an obvious overlapping of archaeology and pilgrimage.

### 3.6 CHRISTIAN OR BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY?

Christian Archaeology has been defined as 'that branch of the science of archaeology the object of which is the study of ancient Christian monuments' (Hassett 1913:705). Christian Archaeology is of great relevance, particularly in this study, since monumental sources, together with literary sources, are essential in pilgrimage studies and for appreciating the various aspects of Christian antiquity, and especially, as in this case, the sepulchral features thereof.

Both Christian Archaeology and Biblical Archaeology are subdivisions of the discipline of Archaeology that draws upon material, literary, and oral sources—although Biblical Archaeology of late has attempted to throw off many of the apparent connotations with matters of faith and/or theology. But unlike Biblical Archaeology, which has its origins in the Holy Land, Christian Archaeology first began in Rome with the systematic excavation and exploration of ancient cemeteries and catacombs (Hassett 1913:706).

Under the auspices and oversight of the Catholic Church in a post-Reformational Rome (Bowes 2008:576), many Christian inscriptions, artefacts, tombs, frescoes and other relics have been uncovered. No longer confined merely to Rome and her assemblage of sites (Bowes 2008:575), Christian archaeology has since then spread and now encompasses the study of Christian material culture globally—the Holy Land included. 'Nowhere, however, has Christian archaeology carried more overt political baggage than in the Holy Land,' warns Bowes (2008:575), while adding: 'Christian archaeology in the Holy Land is a poster child for the challenges, from neglect to fanaticism, facing Christian archaeology, and a warning of the agendas inherent within even the most neutral cataloguing effort' (Bowes 2008:578). The fact that Christian Archaeology is, in a large part, directed and subsisting under the established patronage of various ecclesiastical bodies, is also inherently problematic.

But with ongoing developments in the areas of architectural stratigraphy, typology, and methodologies, the complex remains of the Christian material record can be legitimately traced (Bowes 2008:576). Combined with textual and text-based sources, there is much to be learnt. 'Christian literature and Christian monuments supplement one another,' according to Hasset (1913:707), by providing much reconstructed information on the origins of the Christian faith: how the early believers lived, and more details about the cultural the world in which they existed.

Because of the current and the many long-standing sensitivities towards, as well as the inferences, overtones, and connotations drawn and appellant to the epithetic designation, *Christian Archaeology*, and given that the stated aim of this study is to bring archaeological findings to critically bear against Christian pilgrimage notions, in order to achieve credibility in research, the maintenance of an unbiased standpoint remains absolutely essential. While the study sits well in a Christian Archaeological milieu, Biblical Archaeology—although on its own, this too is a loaded term—is the necessary and correct setting for this study.

### 3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a background to Biblical Archaeology, and it demonstrates its steady development into a relevant and independent academic discipline. With a knotty past, embedded in pilgrimage impulse, and having come a long way from its treasure-hunting origins (LaSor, Hubbard & Bush 1996:642), Biblical Archaeology is and remains 'a uniquely human activity,' according to Schoville (1978:154). He (1978:154) further points out: 'It is man attempting to piece together the story of mankind from the meagre clues, which he has been able to recover. In biblical archaeology, three factors are involved in the process of recovering the story—the Bible, archaeology, and the archaeologist—and each of these has its own peculiarities and limitations that affect the total phenomenon that we call archaeological research, including the final results.'

As this study progresses, archaeological research will remain crucial, as the material remnant and the literary evidence relating to the holy places associated with the burial of Christ Jesus, are explored. Again, as has been demonstrated in this chapter, objectivity, as far as it is possible, is the key. Archaeology and textual (biblical) evidence, sagaciously taken together, should verify and best act as a combinative and legitimate

source(s) of historical recovery, with a very carefully constructed, centrist, methodological and systematic approach being advocated and accentuated throughout.

Thus, the milieu and setting within which the study will reside, has been set out. A discussion of some of the potentially misunderstood or misconstrued terms and ideas, currently subsisting within the complex archaeological and textual dialogue, were also included and outlined. This will inform and assist us greatly when it comes to determining the impact that biblical archaeology has on Christian pilgrimage, and on the pilgrimage sites, which are later to be examined.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE BURIAL SITE(S) OF JESUS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter extends the biblical archaeological propositions made in Chapter 3. The focus here, however, shifts specifically to the historical background, the development and the importance of the material remnants as they now relate to the burial of Christ Jesus. Just how these venerated holy places came to be, have grown, and stand today, as pilgrimage locations, will be assessed in detail. The relevant artefactual and textual evidence will also be explored and assessed from an archaeological point of view. At present, there are three main historical contending sites insofar as they concern Christian pilgrims and the burial of Jesus. They will be dealt with individually and filtered according to their age in tradition. The three popular locations most closely associated with and having reasonable claims to be the location of the burial of Jesus are:

- The Holy Sepulchre;
- The Garden Tomb; and,
- The Talpiot Tomb.

All three are found in Jerusalem. While each has some rather unique features and claims to legitimacy, the former two are considered to be the more traditional within Christian pilgrimage circles. But before looking at these sites individually, it is important that burial practices, death rituals, as well as the graves, tombs, and sepulchres (Crossan & Reed 2001:272) of the first century, or, in other words, the world in which the historical person of Jesus lived, died and was buried, be well understood first. This is necessary in order to observe and exhibit the characteristics of both burial structures and the rituals and practices relating to death at the time.

## 4.2 BIBLICAL BURIALS

Burials in first-century Palestine followed established patterns that have generally been well documented. 'Burials, like religious activity, are inherently conservative, insofar as they tend to be a vehicle for the expression of long-held traditions,' observes Gilmour (2002:112). In predominately Jewish first-century Jerusalem, these long-held burial traditions, customs, and practices have their origins and continuity in oral tradition, as well as from the records contained within the pages of the Hebrew Scriptures. Biblically, the term burial 'may refer to the burial-preparation process, the interment of the body, or the place of burial' (Freedman, Myers & Beck 2000:203).

### 4.2.1 Burial Practices in the Old Testament

According to the cultural and religious traditions of ancient Near Eastern Palestine, first and foremost, provision had to be made for a proper and fitting burial. Genesis 50:5 records the ancient account of the funeral given to Jacob by Joseph, who says, in addressing the Pharaoh ruling Egypt at the time: 'My father made me swear an oath and said, "I am about to die; bury me in the tomb I dug for myself in the land of Canaan." Now let me go up and bury my father; then I will return.'

Dreaded, perhaps above all else, was the thought of being left dead, lying around unburied (Skolnik & Berenbaum 2007:291), which the Deuteronomist sets out in the form of a curse, exacted in disobedience towards the commandments of the Lord God: 'Your carcasses will be food for all the birds and the wild animals; and there will be no one to frighten them away' (Dt 28:26; cf. Ps 79:2). So, for the mortal body to end up unburied and devoured by birds, dogs, and wild animals, was a fate considered far too calamitous for the ancient Israelites even to contemplate. The place of burial, therefore, is of great importance in ancient Israelite thought, and preparations for death and a decent burial had to be made timeously, lest one fall under the sign of a divine judgment (King & Stager 2001:363) or curse.

Burial by interment in a father's tomb is an important feature of burial practices within the pages of the Old Testament. This is clearly reflected—almost at the onset—by Abraham's purchase of the cave at Machpelah in Genesis 23, to serve, specifically, as a family tomb. Abraham, as well as his wife Sarah and son Isaac, were buried in this cave in Hebron. The 'subsequent measures taken by later patriarchs to ensure that they would be buried there (Gn 49:29–33; 50:25–26) occupy a prominent place in the

patriarchal narratives,' note Skolnik and Berenbaum (2007:291). This prototype site then was venerated and remained preserved by the Israelites throughout the ages. A later monumental structure was built over this site during the reign of King Herod, which remains intact to the present day. Other persons referred to by name in the Old Testament Scriptures as having been buried in their father's tombs include: Gideon (Jdg 8:32), Samson (Jdg 16:31), Asahel (2 Sm 2:32), and Ahithophel (2 Sm 17:23). But as Matthews (2007:82) rightly suggests, it was not possible for every family to afford the purchase of a cave or to be able to carve out a tomb.

Freund (2009:269) postulates that burial within a family tomb appears to be a preferred custom in and amongst the biblical Israelites. For the Israelites, caves would have been the first obvious and most logical choice, when it came to selecting a family tomb, especially in those areas where caves were geographically prominent (Freund 2009:269). But in those areas where caves were not so easy to find, the next logical choice was to go in the ground; and then cyst burials were then favoured (Freund 2009:269). 'The OT-era people were buried in natural caves, rock-hewn tombs, shaft tombs, rock cairns, or cemeteries,' state Freedman, Myers and Beck (2000:203).

Again, only the wealthy could really afford to have a cave or rock-hewn tomb (Kaiser 2005:376). Magness (2012:118) asserts that even the most modest rock-hewn tombs were incredibly expensive. This meant that the poor were often consigned to common, simple graves, dug in the soil (cf. 2 Ki 23:6; Jr 26:23). Jeremiah alludes to this public burial of the 'common people,' where criminals, paupers, or those of social disrepute, could literally be 'thrown' (Jr 26:23) without any distinction. Matthews (2007:82) says that the biblical record indicates that those who were disgraced (Jos 8:23–26) or who had been vanquished (8:29), were given superficial burials, which usually meant being buried under a heap of stones, while the accursed were deliberately left unburied for scavengers to consume (2 Ki 9:35–37). The Israelites quite simply abhorred inadequate burial practices (King & Stager 2001:363).

Archaeological evidence in this respect is understandably thin, and the graves of the poor, generally, have not been preserved well (Kaiser 2005:376). Caves and rock-hewn family tombs have, however, provided ample archaeological evidence, with many examples from the Old Testament period, having been unearthed (Kaiser 2005:376). In fact, a large corpus of our knowledge of this period, which well supplements the available literary evidence, comes to us straight from burials and burial practices

(Laughlin 2000:46) and archaeological excavations in this regard. In these 'multiple-usage facilities' (Freedman, Myers & Beck 2000:203), the previously buried bodily remains were moved to the rear of the cave-tomb, and the newly interred corpse was laid in the primary position (Freedman, Myers & Beck 2000:203). This process was repeated, often numerous times, with some recorded examples of more than one hundred individuals being consecutively interred in a single cave-tomb (Kaiser 2005:376).

Burial practices of this nature saw the emergence and development of three common types of burial during this period. According to Laughlin (2000:46), they have been designated disarticulated (when the skeletal bones have been removed); secondary (when the bones have been reburied after decomposition); and articulated (when the bones are left undisturbed).

Cave-tombs gradually evolved to cater for the above practices. Before the later use of sarcophagi (stone coffins) and ossuaries (box-like depositories or receptacles used to house human skeletal remains), the Israelites would simply place the bones of the deceased in heaps on the floor (King & Stager 2001:364) in a square chamber. In more elaborately designed cave-tombs, up to nine chambers were hewn, in order to accommodate extended family members (Kaiser 2005:376). Bench cave-tombs began emerged at the beginning of the tenth century BC (King & Stager 2001:366).

Typically, each chamber contained a burial bench on which the deceased's corpse would be laid directly after death (Kaiser 2005:376). These benches were carved out of the rock alongside the three walls of the chamber, except for the entrance side. The benches had a slightly elevated ledge to keep the bodies from rolling off, and a horseshoe-shaped headrest which was carved out of the rock to support the head of the reposed. After complete bodily decay and decomposition, the skeletal remains were collected and deposited in a repository had been hewn into the floor beneath one of the burial benches (Kaiser 2005:376; King & Stager 2001:367).

In this way, successive generations of families and even extended families could be laid to rest in the same tomb. As Kaiser fittingly (2005:376) points out, 'the Biblical phrase "gathered to their fathers" (e.g. Jdg 2:10) was more than metaphorical.' Bench cave-tombs became very popular in Israel and Judah, with the majority being located in Judah, and especially around Jerusalem (King & Stager 2001:367).



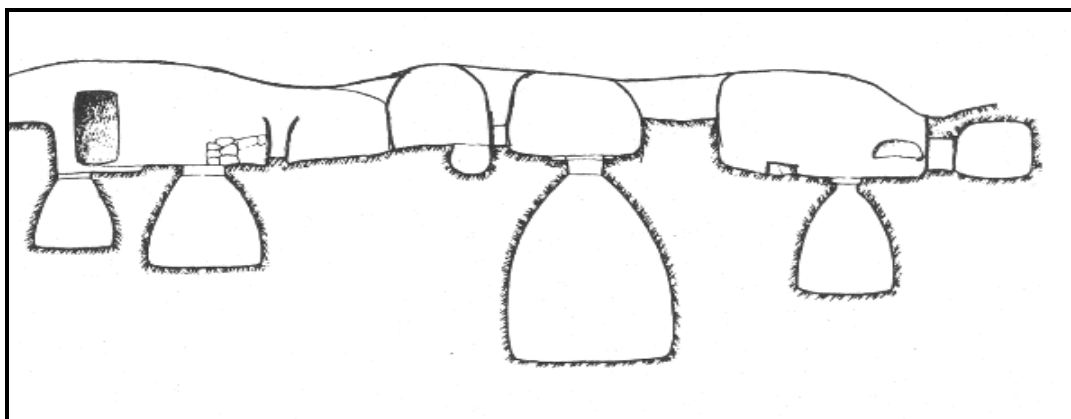


Figure 7: Group of burial caves found during the excavation of Samaria ([www.bible-archaeology.info](http://www.bible-archaeology.info)) [Accessed: 28 September 2014].

The above illustration indicates a typical group of cave-tombs discovered during an excavation in Samaria. The pattern is indicative and usually static—seldom deviating much or changing amongst the biblical Israelites, although the presence of storage pits here are suggestive of the influence and practice of a cult of the dead. The cult of the dead was a feature of Israelite society in where rituals were performed and offerings made on a continual basis by the living on behalf of the dead (King & Stager 2001:376)—although the actual practice thereof was an anomaly and snubbed by the more observant followers of Yahwehism (Lv 19:31).

The general association of caves or rock-hewn tombs with the wealthy and elite is further indicated by the high concentrations of these around areas commonly associated with the upper class and elite (Magneess 2012:118), particularly, again, in point of case, the city of Jerusalem, and their almost complete absence elsewhere. For example, in less-affluent Galilee, the absence of caves or rock-hewn tombs by comparison is quite telling. Jerusalem, literally, was a city surrounded by the dead (King & Stager 2001:370). More than a hundred cave or rock-hewn tombs have been discovered on the north, east, and west sides of the city, according to King and Stager (2001:370). And the majority of these date to the late First Temple and Second Temple periods, when an autonomous Jewish upper class and elite superintended (Magneess 2012:118).

As an additional point here, it is well worth noting that the burial benches (as described above) contained within these cave or rock-hewn tombs, that were so typical of the First Temple period, were later superseded by the more popular burial niches (or in Hebrew,

*kokhim*) that were characteristic of Second Temple period tombs; and with these came the later, popular, and clearly preferred use of ossuaries.

Besides the obvious socio-economic dimensions, Old Testament burial practices had tremendous religious significance, and were influenced greatly as such. Burial and interment remained, essentially, a sacred act (Freedman, Myers & Beck 2000:203). Death was not seen as the end. Hebraic belief in the after-life was significantly influenced by the surrounding religious and cultural practices of the Canaanites (King & Stager 2001:367). Even after monotheism took a hold, and the ancient Israelites abandoned many of the polytheistic influences of the surrounding Semitic cultures, they continued to believe that a shadowy, ethereal sort of existence carried on after death; with the dead habituating Sheol, cut off in the netherworld or stuck within in the family tomb (King & Stager 2001:364) (as the storage pits in *Figure 7* depict). King and Stager (2001:374) further affirm that the 'Hebrew words denoting the abode of the dead are *bôr* and *šahat*, both translated "pit".' Thus, the term Sheol can be used interchangeably and refer to either the underworld or the literal grave (Kaiser 2005:946) as well. Isaiah 38:18 states: 'For the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness.'

Burial gifts were often left with the dead in the tomb, including pottery items, bowls for food, weapons, oil lamps, perfume juglets, jewellery (Kaiser 2005:376) and various other kinds of daily household objects. The inclusion of these and like accompanying burial gifts is often interpreted as provisioning for the needs of the afterlife, or perhaps, as Freedman, Myers and Beck (2000:203) suggest, they are indicative of the social status of the person having been buried there. 'Nourishment in the afterlife was of paramount importance,' postulates Bloch-Smith (1992:218). Moreover, the improper or poor treatment of the dead through inferior or negative and/or indecorous funeral handling, or even the insufficient provisioning of burial gifts and offerings, was thought of negatively and as having a direct and adverse affect the deceased individual in the afterlife.

The disturbance of the dead and the desecration of a burial place, was considered another especially heinous act (Freedman, Myers & Beck 2000:203). Tombs and graves were, therefore, always carefully and securely closed, being sealed with either millstones or rocks (Kaiser 2005:1688), so as to guard against robbers, wild animals, or other forms of scavengers (cf. Job 21:32), for the bones of the dead were never to be disturbed (King & Stager 2001:375).

#### 4.2.2 Burial Practices in the New Testament

The everyday world of the first century in Palestine sees, more or less, a continuation of many of the existent and already well-established burial practices and patterns of the time. Death still required immediate attention (Kaiser 2005:1688). 'Problems of sanitation and fear of possible defilement through contact with a dead body,' notes Silva (2011:20) 'constituted the reason for such swiftness.' Then, there were also those Jewish ritual laws that strongly prohibited dead bodies from remaining confined overnight within the city walls (Kaiser 2005:1688). A planned, befitting, and timeous burial was therefore absolutely essential. The Israelites persisted with the burial of the dead, and there is, moreover, little evidence of them practising embalming like the Egyptians, or cremation like the surrounding Greek and Roman cultures (Longman 2013:699).

Socio-economic factors still remained largely determinative when it came to the degree and type of burial rites that were afforded an individual. The poor, mostly because of their circumstance, continued to be quickly interred in common, superficial holes in the ground in the form of graves or trenches. The criminal and accursed were simply left unburied (Matthews 2007:82). The Kidron valley, on the eastern side of Jerusalem, between the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives, was one such common public burial ground. It is so that the vast 'majority of the ancient Jewish population must have been disposed of in a manner that left few traces in the archaeological landscape,' suggests Magness (2012:120–121).

Prominent and wealthy families continued—as they did in the Old Testament period—to utilise rock-hewn tombs; however, archaeological evidence attests to some new burial practices that began to emerge in New Testament times. For example, instead of laying the corpse on benches carved out of the rock, narrow niches (*kohkim*) were cut, perpendicularly, into the cave-tomb sidewalls, and the deceased's mortal remains were placed inside these recesses to decompose, undisturbed.

These loculi-type tombs typically had a shaft leading down to a main chamber with the niches that usually branched off into the sidewalls (Freedman, Myers & Beck 2000:204). The niches would normally be sealed using a stone slab. After the full decomposition process, and skeletisation was complete (which customarily took one year), the bones would be recovered and placed in individual ossuaries.



Figure 8: Loculi found during the excavation of Akeldama, Jerusalem, dating to the Second Temple period ([www.antiquities.org](http://www.antiquities.org)) [Accessed: 29 September 2014].

These replaced the practice of depositing bones in pits (Crossan & Reed 2001:31), or hewn repositories in the floor. Frequently, the name of the deceased person would be etched on the side of the box for identification purposes; although, as Crossan and Reed (2001:31) point out, these were not used for individual burials exclusively, but would habitually hold the skeletons of more than one person. In some instances, a number of generations would be put in the same ossuary.

During Roman times, the ossuary (or bone box) became a prominent and popular feature, observes Longman (2013:699), and came into regular use. But they were out of use, almost entirely, after AD 70 (Crossan & Reed 2001:31), which makes them extremely helpful and relevant to the archaeological period in question for this research. Literally, thousands of ossuaries dating to the first century have been found scattered throughout Jerusalem, and they have been recovered from the many cave-tombs uncovered there.

According to Evans (2007:120), only about one quarter of those ossuaries that have been catalogued actually bear inscriptions. This is understandable, given the approximated low literacy levels at the time. Researchers also factor in here that the less affluent could hardly afford to buy their own ossuaries, and they could much less meet

the cost of having the boxes inscribed (Shanks & Witherington 2003:62). Ossuaries were also regularly decorated with the most beautiful of icons, mostly in geometric shapes, that featured common Jewish motifs like plants, flowers, and traditional rosette petals.



Figure 9: Ossuaries with engraved rosettes, dating to the first century (www.bibleinterp.com) [Accessed: 30 September 2014].

The use of ossuaries helped to reduced space greatly, which was (and remained) at a premium in a populous city like Jerusalem. Furthermore, New Testament ‘descriptions of burials include the treatment of the body with spices and incense for purification and odorific purposes (Luke 23:56; John 19:40), the wrapping of the body in clothes, and the placement of a special face cloth (John 11:44),’ observe Freedman, Myers and Beck (2000:205). Linen that was typically cut into strips would be used, although there is some archaeological evidence of single garments also being used to wrap up decomposing bodies (Kaiser 2005:1688).

Tombs would often have a large round rolling stone placed across the entrance to keep would-be grave robbers and scavenging anima out, by acting as a deterrent (Walker 2006:180). Because the rolling stone was sunk into position, with the ground outside the tomb being dug specifically in such a way, the stone could not easily be removed, at least not by a single individual, says Walker (2006:180). In other words, there would be something of an inclined track for the rolling stone to be sunk into. This track would be strategically positioned and typically run across the entrance of the tomb (cf. Mt 27:60).

### 4.3 THE BURIAL OF JESUS

The burial of Jesus denotes the burial of His body after the crucifixion, as is documented and detailed in the New Testament. The canonical gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, all narrate the familiar and enduring events. While there are some noticeable differences between the synoptic accounts and that of John's Gospel, the first (or dated earliest), Mark, and the last, John, read thus:

<sup>42</sup> It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached,  
<sup>43</sup> Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. <sup>44</sup> Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. <sup>45</sup> When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. <sup>46</sup> So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of the rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. <sup>47</sup> Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

- Mark 15:42–47 (NIV)

<sup>38</sup> Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. <sup>39</sup> He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. <sup>40</sup> Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. <sup>41</sup> At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no-one had ever been laid. <sup>42</sup> Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation; and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

- John 19:38–42 (NIV)

From a hermeneutical perspective, the apparent differences here (for example, there is no Friday anointing in the synoptic narratives)—as with many of the other Johannine dissimilarities and omissions—should not be considered or used as evidence against historicity (Kaiser 2005:1761). In the case of the burial account, John's version seems to be more a 'fusion' of the others, suggest scholars, such as Upchurch, Nowell and Witherup (2011:2223). Thus, from what has already been ascertained in the examination of Israelite burial origins, traditions, customs, and practices in the Old Testament, and the continuity thereof in the New Testament—and any created textual tensions aside—a number of archaeological observations can and should be made in relation to the texts at this juncture.

Firstly, the remains of an executed criminal, as Jesus—who was tried and convicted of high treason (cf. Lk 23:2–3; Jn 19:12) —should have been either left on the cross (which

was already strategically placed outside the city walls), or He should have been ‘thrown’ (Jr 26:23) into a common public burial ground for superficial burial, along with other designated criminals, paupers, and social outcasts. Moreover, as Evans (2012:130) accurately observes, Roman crucifixion would not permit burial, whether it be requested, or not.

Occasionally, corpses were left hanging on Roman crosses to rot, for days, adds Walker (2006:179). The more likely and expected transpiration of events, therefore, would be for the bodies mentioned in the gospel accounts to have been left hanging on the crosses of crucifixion, indefinitely; well exposed to the elements and passing scavenging birds, as non-burial was indeed a real part of the horror of crucifixion, and further this acted as a deterrent (Evans 2012:13) to other would-be criminals. Or, as Walker (2006:179) has it, the gospel account would have been an ‘anathema within the Jewish context.’ Thus, the circumstances surrounding Jesus’ death, and His subsequent burial, are to be considered as rather unusual.

Secondly, there is textual evidence suggestive of embalming. Archaeologically, it has been ascertained and evidenced that embalming was not typically practise by the Israelites (Longman 2013:699). However, linen clothes and spices do conform to Jewish customs, as they relate to the mollification of the stench of putrefaction. It is, therefore, commonly accepted that the spices in the account of Jesus’ burial were used as an ‘act of devotion and love’ (Kaiser 2005:1662). ‘The spices,’ as MacArthur (1997:1625) observes, were ‘most likely laid on the entire length of the strips of linen, which were then wound around Jesus’ body.’ More spices were laid under the body and perhaps packed around it. The sticky resin would have helped the cloth adhere to the deceased’s body.

Thirdly, the tomb was, in keeping with the burial practices of the time, shut and closed with a large stone (Mk 15:46; cf. 16:4), sealed and secured (Mt 27:65–66). A seal was intended to act as a sort of ‘security device,’ says Kaiser (2005:1616), and it was probably in the form of a cord that was attached to the stone and tomb, and affixed with a Roman seal (Kaiser 2005:1616) in order to easily detect any untoward tampering with the tomb itself.

#### 4.4 THE LOCATION OF THE BURIAL SITE OF JESUS

‘The exact whereabouts of the tomb of Jesus is the greatest mystery,’ says Gibson (2009:127). Biblically, however, a number of clear textual observations can and should be made in relation to the physical location of the tomb allotted for the burial of Jesus.

Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, it can be established that the tomb of Jesus was located near Golgotha (Jn 19:42), and it was ‘cut out of the rock’ (Mk 15:46) (or ‘hewn’—NKJV). From the description given in the later resurrection narrative (Jn 20:1–10), when the disciples peered into the tomb only to see the linen cloths lying there (Jn 19:5), and from what we know about first-century tomb architecture—a rectangular rock-hewn chamber—it is clear that Jesus’ body must have been laid on the bench opposite the tomb opening (cf. Mk 15:47). This indicates that His body may not yet have been placed in its final resting place (Walker 2006:179) when it was put into the tomb.

The Gospel of Matthew has it that the tomb belonged to a person by the name of Joseph, who was from the Judean town of Arimathea (Mt 27:60); while both Luke (23:56) and John (19:39,40) specifically add that this was a previously unused tomb. Joseph, as a member of the Sanhedrin (Mk 15:43; Lk 23:50), the supreme religious council in Jerusalem at the time, would have been ‘rich’ (Mt 27:57), and a rather influential person. Undoubtedly, his tomb was also built or purchased to serve as a family tomb (MacArthur 1997:1565). Such private family tombs would have characteristically been located within ‘a garden’ (Jn 19:41) setting.

The tomb in a garden near Jerusalem (Jn 19:41–42) must have necessarily been close by, because the Sabbath rest was set to begin at sunset on the day of crucifixion (cf. Mk 15:42) wherein, according to the Torah, all forms of labour would legally have had to cease. According to synoptic chronology, it was also a Passover, and so, Jesus’ body would probably have been quickly interred at this point.

Yet, the location of the garden tomb would have had to have been outside the city walls, near a rock face, in a quarry, close to ‘the place called the Skull’ (Lk 23:33) or ‘Golgotha’ (Mt 27:33; Mk 15:22), where Jesus was said to have been crucified. Walker (2006:184) admits that it is ‘unclear how the place got its macabre name.’ Be that as it may, the execution site of Golgotha must have been an easily ‘identifiable topographical landmark close to Jerusalem,’ suggests Gibson (2009:118).



The Gospel according to John (19:41) provides a little more specificity: 'At the place where Jesus was crucified [i.e. Golgotha], there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid.'

#### 4.5 THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE BURIAL SITE(S) OF JESUS

This study concerns itself primarily with the subsisting material remnant, as it currently exists in relation to the events described, biblically, above. So, where is this place, and can it still be located and visited today? For most Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem, that becomes a crucial question (Walker 2006:184). At present, there are three main historical contending burial sites, in as much as it concerns Christian pilgrims. The historical development of these sites will now be dealt with, individually, and filtered, according to their age in tradition. The three locations most closely associated with the historical person of Jesus, in pilgrimage imagination, and possessing popular and reasonable claims to being the actual burial site of Jesus, are:

- The Holy Sepulchre;
- The Garden Tomb;
- The Talpiot Tomb.

How did these places originate? The history of each of these sites will be surveyed chronologically and separately.

##### 4.5.1 The Church of the Holy Sepulchre

'Today, the traditional tomb is pointed out close to Calvary at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre within the Old City of Jerusalem,' says Gibson (2009:127), who asks, and adds: 'Is this the tomb of Jesus? Thousands upon thousands of Christian pilgrims flock to this place, while visiting the Holy Land, lining up to get a brief glimpse of the hallowed spot.' This has probably been so ever since the mother of the Emperor Constantine, Queen Helena, arrived in the Holy Land, so as to mark and venerate the sites of Jesus' life and the events as they had been recounted in the Bible (Perrone 2012:4). She is widely and traditionally credited with having first marked the present spot as the original site of Golgotha, early during her pilgrimage in AD 325/326.

As was proposed in an earlier chapter (2) of this study (an historical overview of Christian pilgrimage), the earliest evidence of Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land actually comes to light in Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Broshi 1977:37)). But prior to the advent of active Christian pilgrimage, the present site was clearly not being venerated as such. In fact, a massive pagan temple, dedicated to the goddess Venus, had been constructed directly over the site (Nickell 2007:81) by the Roman emperor, Hadrian, specifically in order to dissuade Christian reverence for the place (Patterson 2004:49).

He built a huge platform directly over the quarry, the garden, and the surrounding tombs in an effort to cover up both Calvary and the tomb of Christ Jesus. The platform and Temple of Venus were later torn down by Queen Helena. Early Christians had an abhorrence to pagan worship (Nickell 2007:81); and yet the site remained well etched in their collective cultic memory—albeit through oral tradition and some literary records, ‘in order to pre-empt any dilution or loss of the oral tradition’ (Baldwin 2007:143). Quite conceivably, as Murphy-O’Connor (2007:50) theorises, the memory of the site may even have been reinforced, because of the resentment that was being exhibited towards Hadrian by Christians for having destroyed the site and erecting a pagan shrine thereupon.

The actual Christian history of the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, before the reconstruction efforts of Queen Helena, is, admittedly, difficult to untangle. Following the Jewish revolt in AD 70, and the later Bar Kokhba revolt of AD 132–135, the city of Jerusalem was subjected to massive destruction, several times over. It lay in ruins, and very few of the magnificent monumental buildings and projects that had been constructed by King Herod the Great, and had so characterised his reign, remained intact. As a result of the ‘destruction in the city in the intervening centuries, and particularly in the first and second centuries A.D., the evidence is not as plentiful, as we could have hoped for,’ laments Mare (1987:140). But, more positively, Baldwin (2007:144) suggests that because the crucifixion site was actually a burial ground and would have been some distance away from any human habitation; it may not have been as affected by all the destruction as the rest of the city would have been. Consequently, the collective memories that the early Christians would have held of these locations, remained intact (Baldwin 2007:144).

Uncovering a tomb that had been buried for almost 300 years was a work entrusted to the then local bishop of Jerusalem, Macarius. He worked under the direct oversight and supervision of the Queen Helena herself. Traditionalists are convinced that Helena was successful in her attempts to find the precise location where the cross of Jesus had once stood, as well as in locating His actual burial spot in Jerusalem, notes Knight (2011:112). The sites had simply been covered over, according to Patterson (2004:49). In the process, an entire surrounding hill had to be cut into, moved away, and compacted (Baldwin 2007:145). Because of the massive upheaval, in the end, it was probably only the graffiti left that identified the tomb as the tomb of Christ, speculates Murphy-O'Connor (2007:50).

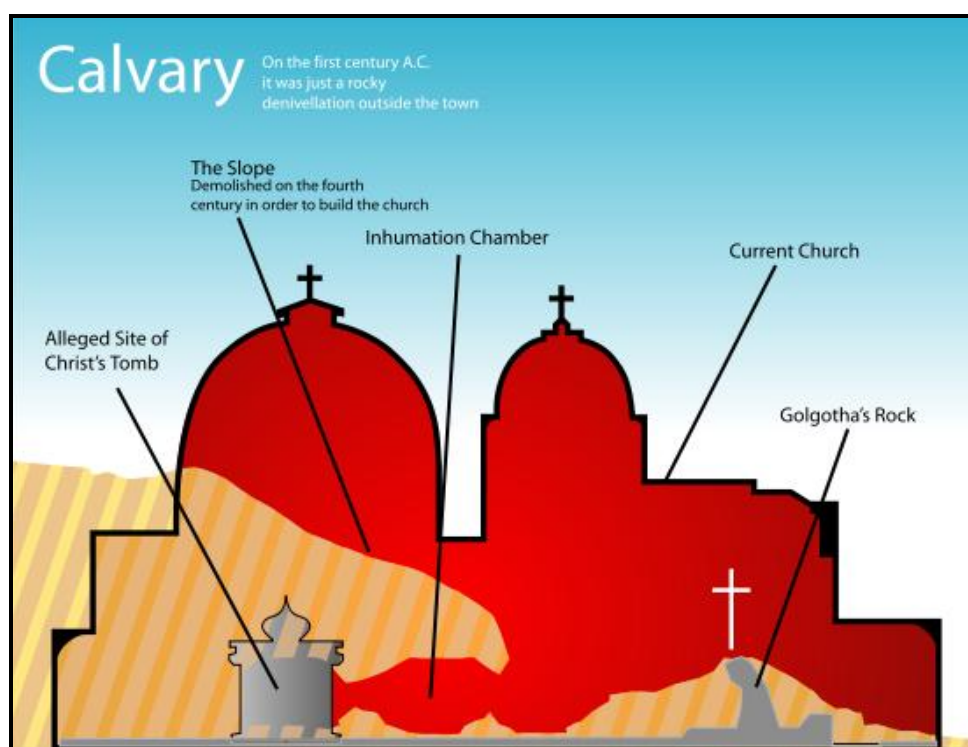


Figure 10: The Church of the Holy Sepulchre drawn over the traditional site of Calvary and the Tomb of Jesus (<http://en.wikipedia.org>) [Accessed: 09 October 2014].

A large basilica was subsequently erected over the spot, and it became a perpetual place of holy Christian worship, veneration and pilgrimage. History records the constant and consistent ebb and flow of pilgrims to the site over the ensuing centuries. The Crusaders would go on to modify and restore the church, sometime after AD 1114 (Murphy-O'Connor 2007:50), and that, into its present form.

The church one sees nowadays, is therefore, understandably, multifaceted, complex, and quite different from what the average pilgrim, who, having read the biblical account(s) might be expecting: a first-century rock-hewn tomb, half-sealed with a large millstone, dug into a barren Jerusalem hill. And yet, the building, as it presently stands, is arguably the most important and holy place in all of Christendom (Baldwin 2007:142).

Today, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, at face-value, appears to be a dark, eerie place set deep within the Christian quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. The church itself is rather easily identified over the skyline, being prominently marked by two large grey domes—the smaller one is set over the supposed Golgotha; and the bigger dome is set over the supposed tomb of Jesus. The layout and interior design of the building is, on the other hand, quite perplexing (Walker 2006:192), testifying to it having stood so many centuries.

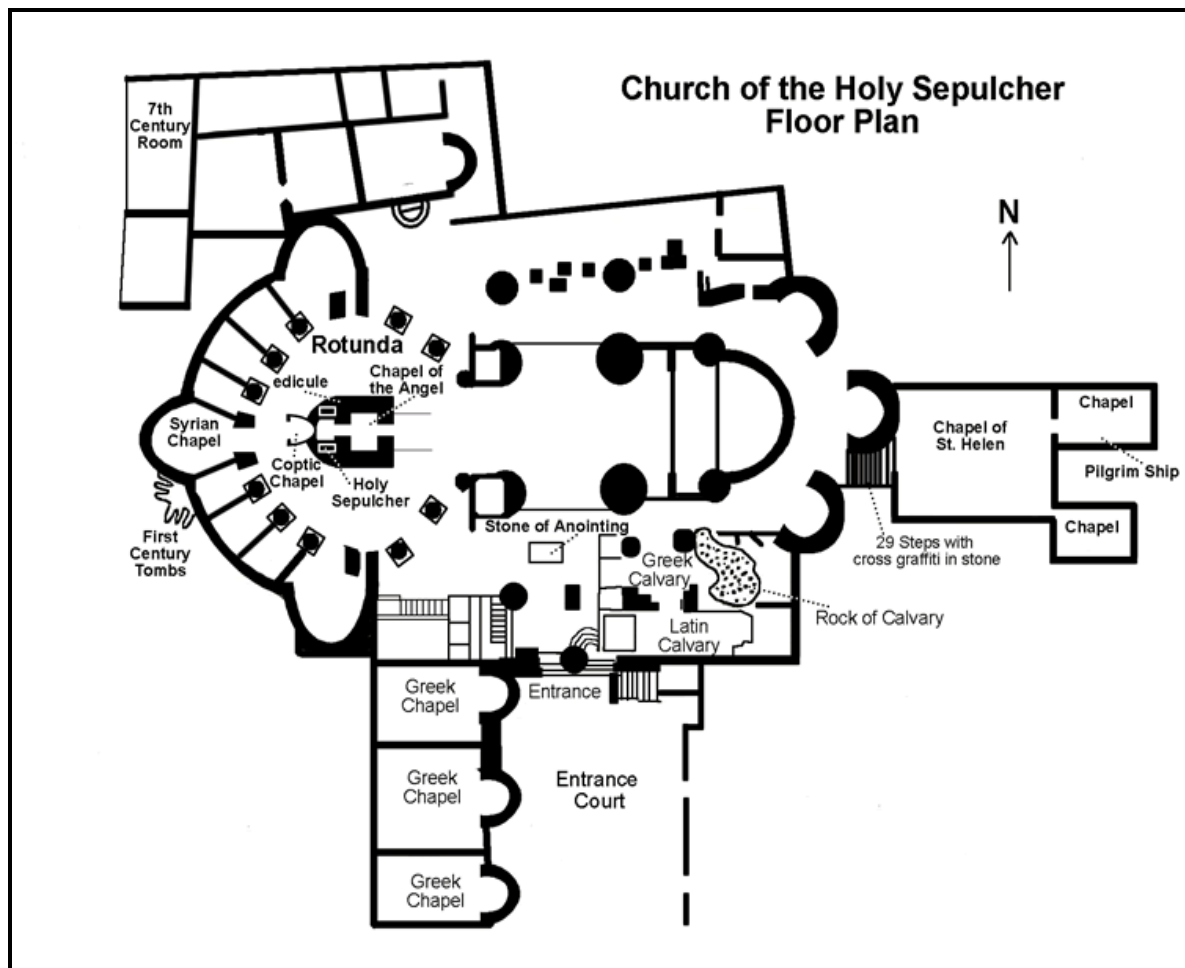


Figure 11: The floor plan of the modern Church of the Holy Sepulchre (www.generationword.com) [Accessed: 10 October 2014].

In its present form, the church dates back to the twelfth century (Patterson 2004:49), when Constantine's courtyard developed into the Crusader's church (Walker 2006:193). The Tomb of Christ, which is now the focal point, is surrounded by the Rotunda known as the *Anastasis* ('resurrection') (Patterson 2004:49). As it stands, the actual tomb or Edicule is described as a Muscovite cupola (Baldwin 2007:162), which dates back to the year 1810. The structure is divided into two chambers—the first is a gathering place for mourners, brining into remembrance the angel's annunciation of the resurrection (Mk 16:6); the second has a elevated marble slab bench, which marks the place where Jesus' body was said to have been laid to rest (Baldwin 2007:164–165). This is traditionally believed to have formed and been a part of the original tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (Berrett and Ogden 1996:35). The church is currently home to Catholic (Latin Rite), Greek and Armenian Orthodox Christian denominations, who maintain and operate matters daily in an ecumenical, collegial sort of way.

The joint restoration project that was begun in 1960, clarifies Patterson (1994:50–51), 'also included extensive archaeological work designed to authenticate the history of one of the most complex and fascinating buildings in the world.' Annually, well over 4 million visitors (Israel Ministry of Tourism, 2014) visit this holy place steeped in history, or, a 'living history book,' as Walker (2006:192) has it. The majority of these millions of visitors are indeed Christian pilgrims, who come believing this to be the actual place where Jesus died, was buried and rose again, making the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as extremely significant, sacred, and spiritual for the Christian faithful.

#### **4.5.2 The Garden Tomb**

Early in the twentieth century, pilgrims came up with the prospect of an unorthodox and alternative burial location for Jesus, at the 'Garden Tomb,' just north of the city (Gibson (2009: ix).

Situated on a rocky escarpment, slightly north of the Old City of Jerusalem, the Garden Tomb is considered the second oldest, and the second most popular (after the Church of the Holy Sepulchre) Christian pilgrimage location; since it relates, historically, to the burial site of Jesus. The Garden Tomb is a rock-hewn tomb that was discovered when a peasant was busy clearing a plot of land in 1867 (Gibson 2009:150). It was almost immediately scrutinised by the antiquarian, Conrad Schick, but he did not draw any inferences or conclusions as to interpretation at the time (Gibson 2009:150).



Figure 12: The Garden Tomb ([www.generationword.com](http://www.generationword.com)) [Accessed: 19 October 2014].

However, it was the British Major-General Charles George Gordon, who, while on sabbatical in the area in 1883, first popularised the location by identifying the rocky knoll above the so-called ‘Grotto of Jeremiah’, as an viable alternative site for Calvary (Simmermacher 2012:183), and the tomb located nearby, as the burial site of Jesus. The cliff had the uncanny appearance of a skull; and the outcrop forthwith became known as ‘Gordon’s Calvary.’

The claims made by Gordon were said to have made a ‘big impression,’ observes Simmermacher (2012:183), and while Gordon was not a biblical scholar (Gibson 2009:150), he went on to present several lectures and publish writings in support of his views (Knight 2011:139). Gordon based his arguments for legitimacy largely on location, antiquity, and physical appearance. A point of criticism has however been the mystical manner in which Gordon endeavoured to connect the site of the crucifixion and burial with the Temple Mount and the Pool of Siloam, as Holden and Geisler (2013:316) note. They (2013:316) elaborate by pointing out that Gordon put a skeleton with its head at the Skull Mount, its backside down on the Temple Mount, and its feet on the Pool of Siloam. This is how he established confirmation, but the entire proposal is faulty, speculative, and not at all feasible.





Figure 13: Gordon's Calvary (Photo: Author, 2010).

Given that this was the post-Reformation era, there was naturally a lot of theological motivation and religious punditry for proposing a viable alternative burial site. Protestants had, for some years prior to the discovery of this tomb, already been searching for a 'new' Calvary and Tomb—one that lay beyond the confines of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It was simply inconceivable for Protestant and Reformed denominations to be sending their pilgrims to a ritualistic, and in many ways theologically unacceptable, iconographic, and 'Catholic' place, such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. 'To the Protestants and the evangelical mind, there had to be another site—quiet, serene, and simple—where Jesus died for our sins, and burst the bonds of the grave,' affirms Knight (2011:138). The Garden Tomb would go on to become that exact place.

It was also anticipated that the tomb, just off to the left of the 'skull' of Gordon's Calvary, would go on to challenge the authenticity and stand against the very legitimacy of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Could the traditions and evidence being presented in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre then be wrong? The discovery and popularisation of the Garden Tomb came at a time when British military expeditions in the Middle East essentially helped to revive interest in the Holy Land (Baldwin 2007:233). Not only did this uncovered tomb fit the location markers as given in the gospel accounts, but it further actually bore a resemblance to the description given in its physical appearance. Restoration work was quickly undertaken, with stones and bricks being inserted very soon after discovery (Walker 2006:186).

Inside the tomb, there is a burial chamber, which also fits the biblical narrative: rock-hewn, space inside for mourners, loculi and burial benches on which corpses could be laid. The external rock face has a base channel running parallel to it, which would act and allow for a large round rolling stone to run in and cover the oblong aperture that forms the tomb's small entrance (Baldwin 2007:234).

But along with the discovery (and later ongoing investigations), there have also come many archaeological objections against the authenticity of the tomb; inasmuch as it is connected to the burial of Christ Jesus (these will be examined, in detail, in the subsequent Chapter 5). Despite the almost immediate emerging theological rejection by the Catholic and Orthodox churches, and more than a few archaeological objections, the Anglican Church elected to throw its weight behind the locality, and went forward in support of the identification of the tomb, as the actual burial and resurrection place of Jesus. Although the Anglican Church would later go on to rescind its initial endorsement of authenticity, the idea had caught on, and many believed (and still do) that this could actually be the very spot. 'Sometimes feelings are just as important as facts, when it comes to deciding on the authenticity of sacred sites in the Holy Land,' maintains Knight (2011:138).

For Christian pilgrims, the Garden Tomb with its beautifully tended garden is a tranquil holy place, lending itself for peaceful and quiet meditation. It well 'conforms to the expectations of simple piety; and it is outside the walled city,' remarks Murphy-O'Connor (2007:161). Moreover, he (2007:161) suggests that it is far easier to pray at the Garden Tomb than in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, wherein, perhaps, lies the site's extreme popularity and renown, according to popular Christian notion.



The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in contrast, has been rebuilt at least three times, while the Garden Tomb site has remained largely unchanged,' reports Lidman (2010). The site, offering guided tours, is presently administered by The Garden Tomb (Jerusalem) Association, a Christian non-denominational charity trust based outside of England. Approximately 250,000 visitors are hosted by the Garden Tomb annually (Lidman 2010).

#### **4.5.3 The Talpiot Tomb**

A tomb in a cave in the Jerusalem suburb of Talpiot, a identified as being that of Jesus, has recently received a lot of press attention, notes Gibson (2009:128). While it has become the most recent archaeological find said to relate to the burial of Jesus, it is certainly the least popular in Christian pilgrimage circles when it comes to the three main contending burial sites.

The rock-hewn tomb was discovered back in 1980 outside the Old City of Jerusalem, in the present-day East Talpiot neighbourhood. At the time of discovery, inspecting archaeologists never thought much of the discovery or location, beyond noting that it had housed a number of ossuaries, some with Jewish names on them that dated to the first century AD, including one inscribed: 'Jesus son of Joseph and Mary' (Hoffmeier 2008a:164). Because these were rather common names for the archaeological period in question, despite their seemingly obvious biblical connotations, the site was not given much attention, and its finds were secured and catalogued away by the Israel Antiquities Authority.

This all changed rather abruptly in 2007/2008 when a controversial film was produced by the famed Hollywood director, James Cameron, who was working with Simcha Jacobvici, a Canadian documentary film maker. In the documentary film, the extraordinary claim was made that the Talpiot Tomb was in fact, none other than the lost tomb of Jesus. Originally, the tomb was discovered when construction workers accidentally exposed the entrance, while laying the foundations for a new building complex. It was excavated and studied within a couple of days so that construction work could continue. An apartment block was erected at the site in 1982, and the tomb was sealed, largely due to safety concerns.



Figure 14: An image of the chevron-adorned entrance to the Talpiot Tomb, unearthed in 1980 (<http://en.wikipedia.org>) [Accessed: 11 November 2014].

It remained so until Jacobvici and his crew opened the tomb to begin filming the documentary, somewhat sensationally entitled, 'The Lost Tomb of Jesus,' in 2005. Because he had not obtained the necessary permits and permission, the tomb was re-sealed by the Israel Antiquities Authority. It has remained so, and the tomb is not open to the public.

In this case, it would appear as if the artefacts found in the tomb, which is rock-hewn from limestone and has within it 'a roughly rectangular central chamber with standing pit and four *kokhim* or burial recesses' (Gibson 2009:82), are of even greater interest than the physical tomb. Twelve ossuaries were recovered from the tomb (Gibson 2009:82). The epigraphic details (five of the ten ossuaries were incised) have been the source of immense interest, controversy and scholarly disputation.

Each of the ossuaries unearthed contained human skeletal remains. But the ossuaries that stand out are the ones thought by some to be inscribed to include, 'Jesus son of Joseph,' as well as various other names of members associated with the known family of the biblical Jesus. But, as Hoffmeier (2008b:165) quite correctly maintains: 'The reading of the names of the ossuaries has not altogether been confirmed.'



Figure 15: The sealed Talpiot Tomb (<http://en.wikipedia.org>) [Accessed: 12 November 2014].

Certainly from a pilgrimage perspective, the Talpiot Tomb is not on any of the regular or popular tourist, travel, and pilgrimage itineraries—being sealed, and as unadorned as it is. The site is, however, included within this study because of the archaeological interpretation(s) of the location, material remnant, and the artefacts discovered therein; as well as the resultant claims being made by certain scholars that can and necessarily will challenge and impact directly upon some of the preconceived notions held by Christian pilgrims.

Could this be, as is postulated by some academics—albeit admittedly, a small minority—the actual burial site of Jesus Christ? And if this is so, what are the implications thereof for the more popular and accepted sites, namely, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Garden Tomb? In the next chapter (Chapter 5), while testing the hypotheses of this study, a clear answer to these and other lingering questions and tensions, created by traditional Christian pilgrimage notions, should emerge.

Then, in conclusion, there is also the not-so-small matter of mass appeal and the modern interactive experience created by ever-ready information technology within the so-called 'Internet Age.' Here, the Talpiot Tomb stands out over and above the other more traditional contending sites in that the archaeological discovery, being contemporaneous, has been debated, explored, contested, and well-advanced globally over the media, such as blogs, forums, websites and other social media channels like Facebook and Twitter. The imagination of multitudes has been captivated in this way. Modern-day Christian pilgrims often use the Internet and other travel guides and companions, in order to prepare themselves for the spiritual journeys they wish to undertake. It is in this virtual visitation that the claims made by the Talpiot Tomb, are best made known.

#### 4.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the historical background, the development and the importance of the material remnant, as they relate to the currently recognised and proposed burial site(s) of Jesus Christ, have been unpacked. Because the events surrounding His death, burial, and subsequent resurrection are so central and vitally important to the faith and established belief system of Christians, it is natural that many adherents would want to know just where these said events transpired, and if possible, locate the exact site of His life events, including the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. 'Indeed, we can imagine,' says Walker (2006:184), 'that the same question has been uppermost in many visitors' minds throughout the last two millennia: Where is the authentic Golgotha?'

In the next chapter—which begins the third and final part of the study—the researcher will seek to satisfy, as far as is possible, the answer to that baffling and complex question, while wholly considering the subject from a biblical archaeological position. Which of the three contending candidate sites (as discussed above) historically relating to the burial of Jesus Christ is the most likely correct site? In doing so, the hypothesis of the study will too be tested: whether or not biblical archaeological findings and results are able to critically impact upon traditionally held pilgrimage notions. Archaeologist John McRay (1991:206) is quite correct, when he asserts that 'until recently there was no substantial archaeological evidence to support the claims' made by the burial of site(s) of Jesus; 'but now we are in a better position to evaluate' these sites, and the evidence presented to us by each of these.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE TOMB OF JESUS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

‘Today, Christian pilgrims are much more demanding and discerning; and they require “scientific” verification for explanations given by tourist guides in respect of the “traditional” gospel sites. However, this does not mean they always get what they want,’ states Gibson (2009: ix). It is at this very intersection—between pilgrimage imagination and actual historicity—that biblical archaeology is capable of playing a pivotal, informative and determining role.

Having already examined, traced and established the historical background, development and the importance of the material remnants as they currently relate to the burial of Christ Jesus, as well as determined the significance of these holy places in the minds of Christian pilgrims, this penultimate chapter will seek to highlight the impact that biblical archaeological findings and results have on these pilgrimage sites. In this chapter, the academic discipline of biblical archaeology will be utilised fully as an independent academic research tool; for it is archaeology and archaeological results that will be used to enumerate and adjudicate the material remains as held sacred by Christian pilgrims.

With the focus falling directly on the tomb of Jesus, the necessary, relevant, and subsisting artefactual, as well as the textual evidence, will be assessed and appraised, specifically, from a biblical archaeological perspective. The research done should serve to highlight the impact that biblical archaeological findings and results have on these sacred pilgrimage sites, as well as the established pilgrimage notions held.

Can any of the three currently contending candidate sites, historically relating to the burial of Christ Jesus, actually still be considered an accurate location for this biblical event? Could there be any inherent tensions or contradictions created by a rigorous archaeological exploration and examination of the physical material remnants in question? These are, indeed, challenging questions, and searching for a satisfactory answer requires detailed biblical archaeological research.

Before critically and objectively seeking to answer the above questions, a general overview of the currently existent answer(s) or rejoinder(s), typically apologetically offered in response to such an enquiry—should they be asked by a regular Christian pilgrim at any of the given holy burial sites—ought to be provided.

## **5.2 THE TOMB OF JESUS WITHIN ECCLESIASTICAL TRADITION**

‘Have the ecclesiastical authorities and visiting pilgrims been misled? Are they worshipping at the wrong location?’ asks Gibson (2009:128). This is an excellent question, and one that strikes at the core of the issue. Before biblical archaeology speaks to (either for or against) ecclesiastical traditions, and, to the Christian pilgrimage notions, as they relate to the holy places associated with the burial of Christ Jesus, it is important to first understand just what is being proffered at these sites. With the historical background and relevance of the material remnants in focus, already having been set-out and determined (in Chapter 4), this becomes a matter of importance and a possible point of contention.

### **5.2.1 Ecclesiastical Tradition at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre**

Because this is the traditional tomb (Gibson 2009:127) of Jesus, coming to this holy place—considered by many Christians to be the most important site in Christendom (Baldwin 2007:142)—stirs up the emotions of those seeking to deepen the relationship they have with their God through the act of sacred pilgrimage. Going on a journey to a sacred place for a spiritual reason, and worshipping in a place that has such a long tradition and rich history, can be a particularly moving, evocative and poignant spiritual experience. Moreover, seeing and experiencing ‘Calvary’ and the ‘Tomb,’ both housed under the same roof in this age-old venerable basilica, tends to affirm and solidify the faith of many a visiting pilgrim. The church of the Holy Sepulchre has, as a consequence, been fully designed and decorated to that end.

As mentioned in the chapter of this study covering the historical development of the burial sites of Jesus (Chapter 4), the church is administered and maintained by several denominations. The Catholic (Latin Rite), Greek, and Armenian Orthodox Churches each hold daily services in the church; and they remain the primary and historical custodians of the Sepulchre Church. Other denominations that hold lesser functions within the church at present are the Coptic, Syrian, and Ethiopian Orthodox churches.

Over and above housing the so-called rock of Golgotha or Calvary, and the Tomb or Holy Sepulchre, according to ecclesiastical tradition, the church also has various chapels (Chapel of Adam, Chapel of the Crowning of Thorns, Chapel of St Helen, Chapel of St Vartan, Chapel of St Mary Magdalene, Chapel of St Longinus, Chapel of the Finding of the Cross, Chapel of the Division of the Robe, Chapel of the Angel); the Stone of the Anointing or Uncion (where the preparation of the body of Jesus for burial by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus is commemorated; cf. Jn 19:39–40); the last five stations along the *Via Dolorosa* (the 'Way of the Cross' or 'Way of Sorrows'); as well as the Prison of Christ.

The tomb of the Holy Sepulchre is an awe-inspiring place, and pilgrims and visitors alike are usually leave having been captivated and mystified by what Baldwin (2007:142) calls a 'quite extraordinary church complex.' But simultaneously, it is and can appear to be a chaotic and dark, ritualistic and a rather cramped place. 'One hopes for peace,' anticipates Murphy-O'Connor (2007:49), 'but the ear is assailed by a cacophony of warring chants. One desires holiness, only to encounter a jealous possessiveness.'

Depending on whom one asks, when inquiring directly on matters of authenticity, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is usually considered to be either: (a) The exact place; (b) close to the place; or (c) not the place at all. Differences in opinion on that scale tend to fluctuate and are usually dependent on the theological tradition or the ecclesiastical position of the participant being asked. For example, Catholic and Orthodox adherents, within their theological tradition and ecclesiastical position, would generically tend to argue for authenticity here; whereas those belonging to the Reformed and Protestant denominations, would tend to be either neutral or biased against this supposed authenticity. Obviously, the above observations are rather broad, and a generalisation of a narrative consisting of infinite variables; but it can be formulated and accepted if we are to follow along in the pre-existent doctrinal teachings and belief systems of the two separate, yet main streams of Christian thought.

This is what Bartholomew and Llewelyn (2004: xv) correctly call: 'a theology of pilgrimage.' Suffice it to say, Reformed and Protestant denominations have no historical or permanent presence within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; and they are furthermore apt to look elsewhere when as it comes to the location of the burial site(s) of Jesus.



It is thus a safe assumption that for the pious and devout Catholic and/or Orthodox believer, it would be almost inconceivable not to believe that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is either the actual site or is very close to the place of the crucifixion and the burial site of Christ Jesus. This is a common, historical, accepted, and traditionally held notion within Christian pilgrimage. And when challenged on matters of authenticity, a standard ecclesiastical response, as Simmermacher (2012:181), a Catholic author, writes, would be something along the lines of: 'That doesn't matter because pilgrims are making a journey of faith, not fact.' Herein lies the extraordinary ability of biblical archaeological findings and results to impact critically upon, and even challenge, if need be, some of the existent and traditionally held pilgrimage notions.

Conversely, Reformed and Protestant believers observe what seems to be 'a distasteful and garish use of decorations, the territorialism of the various orders of priests and monks who maintain the church, and the hubbub of the throngs of pilgrims who visit the massive church' (Hoffmeier 2008b:160). This has prompted some to look elsewhere for the tomb (Hoffmeier 2008b:160), and to even reject as authentic the burial tomb at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

### **5.2.2 Ecclesiastical Tradition at the Garden Tomb**

The Garden Tomb grew out of the above theological conundrum. Visitors and tourists are often pleasantly surprised when confronted by this alternate burial site. It offers, as Hoffmeier (2008b:160), an Evangelical Protestant, writes, a 'lovely' and 'quiet' garden setting that makes the location an 'oasis of tranquillity' within an otherwise 'bustling and troubled city.' Every Sunday Protestant services are held here. With a natural beauty, in a contemplative setting, coupled with the unique cranium-shaped rock face outcrop, which no doubt, recalls the words of Matthew's Gospel: 'They went out to a place called Golgotha (which means the "Place of the Skull")' (Mt 27:33), the site is believed by many pilgrims to be the actual garden and sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea in which the body of Jesus was laid. Ecclesiastical tradition at the site is suggestive and tends to propagate this very notion.

This idyllic, peaceful, leafy-green garden, stands in stark contrast to the overcrowded, dark, and gloomy Church of the Holy Sepulchre. 'Although interdenominational, it is much favoured by Protestant and Evangelical groups, who understandably may not be able to face up to the pomp and circumstance of the setting and demeanour of the older



denominations who lay claim to the Holy Sepulchre,' exclaims Baldwin (2007:234). That a 'new' and alternative Calvary and tomb have been found at this site is a particularly sentimental theme within the popular pilgrimage imagination.

But have the site, its ecclesiastical traditions, and the pilgrimage notions contained therein, been able to justifiably challenge the legitimacy, and, as a consequence, the claims of authenticity made by supporters of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre? Again, this is a somewhat loaded and subjective question; and the answer is very much dependent on whom one asks. Catholic and Orthodox adherents would, in all likelihood, object to and reject the identification of the newer Garden Tomb location, as the valid place for the crucifixion and the burial of Christ Jesus. Reformed and Protestant followers, on the other hand, would not be as quick to dismiss the matter of authenticity. Again, this becomes another ideal setting for testing the hypothesis of this study: that biblical archaeological findings and results are able to critically impact on traditionally held pilgrimage notions.

### **5.2.3 Ecclesiastical Tradition at the Talpiot Tomb**

Because the Talpiot Tomb is the most recent of the three popular locations that are generally now most-closely associated with the burial of Jesus, there is little to no ecclesiastical tradition or support held in relation to the place. What there is, however, is a lot of critical ecclesiastical response to the candidacy and the sensational claims made by the purveyors and popularisers of the tomb. And that response has been largely negative, and one of almost outright rejection. Discovered in 1980, and first popularised in a 2005 documentary film by Simcha Jacobovici and James Cameron, the claims that were made within the documentary have been met with 'considerable scepticism by biblical scholars' (Hoffmeier 2008b:160) and ecclesiastical authorities, alike. The sealed tomb has remained closed and is not open to the general public. It is thus, not a popular pilgrimage site, and there is further no substantial evidence that the tomb was ever venerated or frequented historically by Christian pilgrims.

But does that mean that the site has no right to legitimacy and authenticity, or is without reasonable claims to that end? Certainly not. Despite some rather self-evident factual inaccuracies with the documentary itself, and the apparent disagreements in interpretation, the claims made with regard to authenticity, are indeed, at the very least, worthy of further objective archaeological exploration. Being a contemporaneous

discovery, however, one should really expect open, varying and analytical academic debate and examination here.

### 5.3 BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE TOMB OF JESUS

‘The location of the tomb in which Jesus was buried has been and remains a controversial topic in archaeological studies,’ says McRay (1991:206). Moreover, one needs to be aware that these identified locations, while each possessing reasonable and thematic claims to being the burial site of Jesus, have already come under intense interdisciplinary (including archaeological) scrutiny. Even so, Biblical Archaeology, by its very nature, perpetually seems to present new evidence that often requires deeper examination, re-interpretation, and a newer verdict. And, as an autonomous archaeological discipline (Dever 2001:62), Biblical Archaeology has certainly revolutionised the way in which the Bible and its historicity is scrutinised.

The problem, however, facing any biblical archaeologist who is seeking to test and determine the claims made in relation to Christian holy place within the Holy Land, is well rationalised by Walker (2006:15):

[...] the Holy Land has been massively affected by Christians of the early Byzantine period. The landscape was altered dramatically in their day. This was the generation in which gospel sites, previously buried or disguised or forgotten, were first marked with churches. In terms of archaeology we cannot get back to the time of Jesus without first passing back through the time of the Byzantines. Those who want to follow ‘in the steps of Jesus’ find that—whether they like it or not—others have got there before them.

This apparent problem has already been breached, in part, by first looking at pilgrimage (Chapter 2) and Biblical Archaeology (Chapter 3) through an historical overview.

To further assist and inform the research being undertaken, it would also be advantageous to narrow the archaeological focus down, by setting out some rather elementary yet constructive criteria. Holden and Geisler (2013:317) suggest here that in order for a (any) site to be considered the historical biblical location for the burial of Jesus, ‘certain factors are to be present.’ These factors are sonorously observable and properly established when read in dialogue with the biblical texts. By using the suggestions of Holden and Geisler (2013:317), which are essentially exegetical factors, as a guide, the end result should be a much-desired combination of archaeological findings with the biblical text.

This is done, admittedly, while attempting to transverse almost 2 000 years of history and taking into account the many momentous geographical, topographical, and architectural changes that have come about over time. For a (any) place, therefore, to fit the biblical description(s) given in the case of the burial site of Jesus, Holden and Geisler (2013:317) have surmised and set out the following ostensible conditions:

1. The burial site was said to be located near the place of crucifixion (Golgotha, considered by some researchers to be an isolated knoll resembling a skull);
2. It was thought to have been set in a garden;
3. It is proposed as being outside the city walls of Jerusalem (as they existed when Jesus was crucified, i.e. AD 30);
4. It was hewn out of a stone quarry;
5. A tomb that was thought to have belong to a rich man (thus, possibly near to a rural property owned by a man who is named as Joseph from Arimathea);
6. The tomb is noted to have had a rolling stone;
7. It had an outer and an inner chamber;
8. And it was described as an unused (or 'new') tomb, and therefore, it was quite probably hewn sometime in the first century AD.

### **5.3.1 Exegetical Observations**

The existence of the above conditions or factors, no matter how superficial, debated, or suspicious as they may be, subsist, and are present, and well-established, textually. Contained within the biblical narrative, they will further almost naturally tend to influence and, to some degree, be considered in and during the study and the search for the actual location of the burial site of Jesus. The Bible is, after all, a legitimate text (Holden & Geisler 2013:183), being a preserved ancient source document, and historically attested. And, it is so that archaeological and textual evidence can and should work together to help reconstruct (Matthews 2007:60) and interpret biblical events and locations.

These conditions or factors, however, are not without nuance. The above set-out descriptions come entirely from a combined reading of the canonical gospels of Matthew

(27:57–61), Mark (15:42–47), Luke (23:50–56) and John (19:38–42). While the burial of Jesus is amongst the earliest of gospel traditions (Wright 2009:22), there are significant differences in the accounts, particularly in the details of the events as they transpired.

Over and above the hermeneutical observations that have already been made in the previous Chapter, 4 (4.3 ‘The burial of Jesus’ and 4.4 ‘The location of the burial site of Jesus’), it is worth noting here that Matthew’s Gospel mentions only the most basic of characteristics of the tomb and its location: that it was ‘new’ and ‘hewn’ (NKJV) out of rock. The text further makes mention of the rolling of ‘a big stone in front of the entrance’ (Mt 27:60). Lucan tradition is equally ambiguous and at points, vague about both the architecture and the geography of the tomb.

Taking into account the synoptic problem, or the literary relationship that exists between Matthean, Lucan, and Markian traditions—the latter being the shortest and probably the first to be written—it is quite conceivable that the former two evangelists recount the latter in this matter. The historical impact of Mark’s narration, however, should not be lost. John, on the other hand, differs somewhat from the synoptics, and on the subject of the burial of Jesus, additionally notes that the burial site of Jesus was in ‘a garden’ (Jn 19:41) and ‘nearby’ (Jn 19:42) to the place of crucifixion. It has been suggested by some scholars (Upchurch, Nowell & Witherup, 2011: 2223) that the Johannine version is quite plausibly a ‘fusion’ of the other traditions. There is, however, precious little scholarly accord about source conclusions (Crossan & Reed 2001:9). This research, consequently, does not implicitly presuppose or prescribe an exegesis; but rather, it acknowledges the complexity of biblical hermeneutics, while simultaneously affirming the need for a critical approach when it comes to these ancient texts.

As a final exegetical observation here, it is worth noting too that the reading and understanding of the biblical texts can be blurred by a certain familiarity with them, particularly when read through a Christian lens (King & Stager 2001:4). For the Christian pilgrim, especially, the Bible is, generally, considered to be a document of faith, a source of inspiration, and the inerrancy thereof is often simply assumed. It can, therefore, sometimes be difficult or even seem conflicting to appropriate or critically interpret the text, and finally accept the exercise of historical and literary criticism. This is due, in large part, to what King & Stager (2001:3) call our ‘biblical heritage.’

Integrating textual exegesis and archaeology, while taking into account the various methods of interpreting texts and artefacts (Dever 2001:77), and even objections, could produce a desired synthesis of insights and resultant data. While the biblical texts, in the case of the burial of Jesus, do provide us with many beneficial pointers, the data derived from them can, in fact, also become rather useful information when appreciated and read in dialogue with archaeological research. This information should be utilised and thoroughly examined whenever archaeological observations are made, and conclusions are drawn.

### **5.3.2 Archaeological Observations**

Archaeology, as a discipline, has proven to be extremely effectual and extraordinarily judicious when it comes to calculating, analysing, and interpreting the data obtained from the literary and preserved material remnants in question. If done constructively, and by using sound methodology, archaeology has the ongoing potential to provide, what Owen (1997:2183) terms, 'extrabiblical information.' For the Christian pilgrim, accessing this information becomes hugely advantageous, when it comes to reflecting on and even seeking to determine, as in this case, which, if any, of the three main candidate sites associated with the burial of Christ Jesus could be considered an accurate and feasible location for this particular recorded biblical event.

But if one is to move beyond the questions that surround mere authenticity, archaeological research and the resultant data also have the credible ability to limit and even confront any would-be overzealous or naïve interpretation, as well as any other inconsistencies that sometimes can be associated with Christian pilgrimage notions and imagination. These would include the ever-possible potential for over-spiritualisation and/or the mythologisation of the discoveries made in regard to the preserved material remnants that have traditionally come to be identified with the biblical events and locations. The optimistic correlation of artefacts and archaeological discoveries, with the biblical text, is always highly problematic; but biblical archaeology has surely learnt from past mistakes, and the field is now all but liberated of what Dever (2001:58) calls 'amateurish fieldwork,' and of those theological underpinnings that plagued much of the research conducted at the onset. Instead, critical judgments and objective, meticulous methodologies inhibit over-compensation in interpretation and forces an honest reconstruction of the purported biblical events and locations.

The practice of pilgrimage (as we have already seen) has an internal weakness, in that it is deeply rooted in Christian historical biblical associations, and access to the Divine is perpetually sought through contact with 'spaces' or 'places' that are considered sacred. Then, there is the propensity of pilgrims to attach too much spiritual value and emotional feelings to those same said places that are deemed holy or sacred. Finally, an inclination to lean towards a literalist reading of the Bible and the events and locations recorded therein, is another serious issue that has historically been inherent to and plagued both the discipline of Biblical Archaeology as well as the practice of Christian pilgrimage.

A solid archaeological perspective, however, should mitigate these and like errors, while allowing for an objective and critical investigation of the archaeological, historical, and literary material relating to the burial site(s) of Jesus, by independently assessing their historicity, development, and reliability.

#### 5.4 A BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE BURIAL SITE(S) OF JESUS

The focus in this study is on the archaeological data retrieved from the sites that have been associated with the burial of Jesus: the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Garden Tomb, and the Talpiot Tomb. The comparative results, between the emergent archaeological data, as correlated and compared to the inferred biblical and historical record, should determine and test the potential extent to which biblical archaeological findings impact on these sites, and in the final application phase of analysis, the notions that those Christian pilgrims hold who visit them.

##### 5.4.1 The Church of the Holy Sepulchre—Archaeological Evidence

According to a tradition, beginning in the fourth century AD, the burial tomb of Jesus is located under the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Rousseau & Arav 1995:112). Traditionalists are adamant that the Church marks the very site at which Jesus was crucified and buried (Knight 2011:111). But how does the oldest and certainly most popular (at least, by way of Christian pilgrimage) and traditional of burial sites associated with the burial of Jesus at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre measure up archaeologically?

There are a number of substantial arguments that are normally put forward to justify and claim the archaeological authenticity in relation to this location being the actual burial site of Jesus. In its favour, argues McRay (1991:216), the site offers both long tradition and location as evidence that the tomb of Jesus is enclosed there. While the church is currently located within the Christian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, and is therefore well within the modern city walls, excavations done at this site seem to indicate that during the days of Jesus, this position was indeed outside the city walls (McRay 1991:214).

The burial site would, necessarily, have had to be outside the city of Jerusalem, both due to religious sensitivities and Jewish ritual laws that prohibited the dead from staying within the city overnight (Kaiser 2005:1688)—as well as the rather obvious hygiene concerns that would have existed as a result of inaction in terms of burial. Cartography, topography, and reconstructed maps and models of the first-century AD Jerusalem all appear to indicate that the city's fortification walls did not extend beyond this location at the time. The actual western wall of the city, in Jesus' day, has also been uncovered, and is often evidenced in support of this conclusion.

Johannine tradition (Jn 19:41) has it that the tomb used for Jesus was situated in a garden near the place of crucifixion. Evidence of a garden has been discovered at this site, according to Holden and Geisler (2013:318), although this suggestion is somewhat debatable in conclusion. It is, archaeologically, rather difficult to fully determine the presence or absence of low-impact upper level structures, like gardens. There is, however, further textual attestation (in Jn 20:15), where Jesus, in the Resurrection narrative, is mistaken for a 'gardener' at the same location as that where the tomb was located. For the garden to have had a dedicated gardener, it must have been elaborate and identifiable as such at the time of Jesus' burial. Murphy-O'Connor (2007:49) offers a simpler proposal by suggesting that earth and seed, blown in by the wind and watered by winter rains, could have created a green covering in the quarry that would have easily given this place the appearance of a garden.

Inside the Sepulchre Church, there is a rocky outcrop, which, according to tradition, still marks the place of crucifixion. Two chapels, a Latin and Greek rite, have been built level with the rock eminence. A hole beneath the Greek altar, allows for pilgrims to touch and venerate the rock, historically and traditionally associated with Calvary.

Murphy-O'Connor (2007:49) postulates that the site was indeed a disused limestone quarry (McRay 1991:213) at the beginning of the first century AD. It has been determined, archaeologically, that the quarry appears to have been active from the Iron Age II period, until about the time of the exile (586 BC) (Rousseau & Arav 1995:112). Into this quarry the tomb would have been hewn.

Moving beyond the topographical-archaeological markers and examining the tomb itself is a little more difficult. This is because, what we have, in view today, is 'a large grimy, inelegant edifice, blighted by ugly steel girders on the outside, on which haphazardly burn many devotional candles' (Baldwin 2007:159). The outer marble construction was undertaken in 1810 (Murphy-O'Connor 2007:56), and therefore does not reflect the original in any way.

Historically, it is recorded that the original rock-hewn tomb had been completely and utterly destroyed by the Roman emperor, Hadrian (Nickell 2007:81), in the second century AD, and desecrated again, many times over, in the successive centuries. So what is left preserved and venerated as the tomb of Christ Jesus in the Sepulchre Church today, is obviously nothing in appearance, when compared with the tomb, as it has was initially described in the biblical narratives.

But if one is to take and work on what we already know of graves, tombs, and burial practices of the first century, and compare that with some of the other first-century tombs that have also been discovered, excavated, and preserved in the Syrian Chapel within the precincts of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, then one can begin to reconstruct evidence *in situ*. The Kokhim graves there are what Murphy-O'Connor (2007:58) calls, 'typical of the C1 BC and the C1 AD.' He (2007:58) adds that their 'relationship to the tomb of Christ is best explained by postulating a catacomb.' So, essentially, by combining this comparative archaeological evidence, with uninterrupted tradition (Patterson 2004:61), there certainly emerge some logical and steady general arguments in favour of the authenticity of this holy place.

However, while the oldest and most traditional of burial sites associated with the burial of Jesus, housed within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, has many historical points of support, there is, quite noticeably, no tomb to observe (Holden & Geisler 2013:317) at this location. This is and remains probably the greatest argument against and obstacle to determining the actual authenticity here.



Today, visually, the tomb dug in the rock cannot be seen. Neither can the condition and type of tomb be ascertained. There is also no rolling stone. The marble visible, both in the exteriors and on the burial benches as slabs is not native to the Near East; and therefore, it must have been brought in from elsewhere. The adorations and ornamentations, too, are alien. So, the type and condition of the original tomb simply cannot be ascertained with any complete degree of certainty. Time has not been kind to the place either. Baldwin (2007:142) laments, while affirming that the building has 'suffered the extravagances of human attention throughout its existence, from savage desecration, lavish restoration, piecemeal preservation, to over-zealous protection and over-adoration.'

So, the question then is: 'Is this the place where Jesus Christ died and was buried?' Veteran and well-respected biblical archaeologist, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (2007:49) asks, and answers: 'Yes, very probably.' Simmermacher (2012:181) suggests that the archaeological, literary, and historical evidence is convincing enough to persuade even the most serious of scholars that this is indeed the location of Calvary and the Tomb.

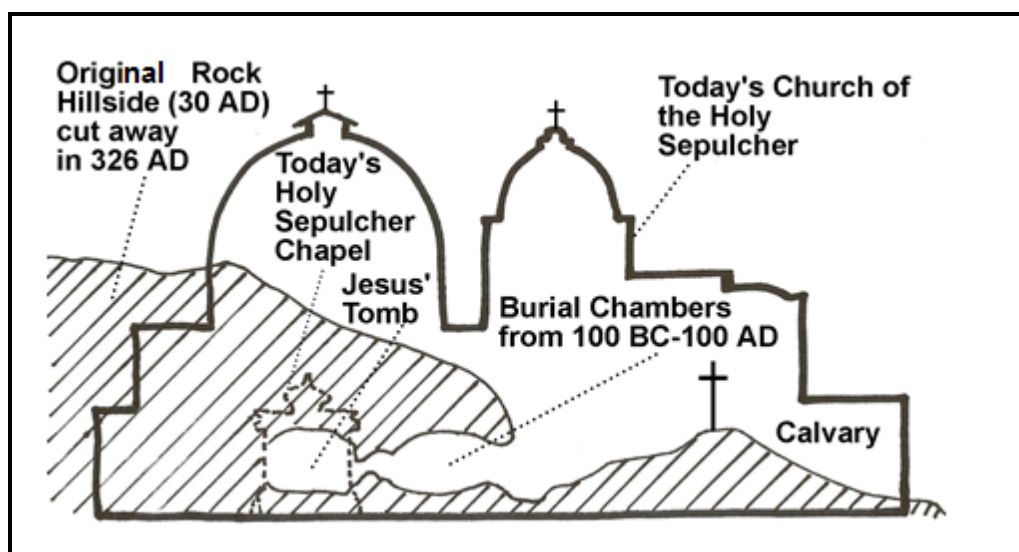


Figure 16: Today's Church of the Holy Sepulchre set over two sites: Calvary and the tomb of Jesus ([www.generationword.com](http://www.generationword.com)) [Accessed: 31 December 2014].

While some alternatives have been proposed for the location of the Jesus tomb, none of these proposals are backed up as strongly, either by archaeology, literature or history, according to Gibson (2009:128). The biblical archaeological evidence here, therefore, at the very least, does seem to show that the site is somewhat compatible with the data sourced from within the biblical narratives (Murphy-O'Connor 2007:49).

One could, perhaps, even go so far as to reason that there are more arguments in support of this view, than there are against it. But in the absence of any empirical evidence, one cannot prove that this site, which has been mostly considered authentic since the time Queen Helena marked and venerated it during her pilgrimage of AD 325/326, is in fact the original and authentic place for either the crucifixion or the grave of Jesus. Clearly, further archaeological research needs to be done to clarify this location (Rousseau & Arav 1995:117). If that is ever going to be possible is, at least in the present, highly unlikely, given the tense ecclesiastical and political atmosphere that currently characterises the site.

#### **5.4.2 The Garden Tomb—Archaeological Evidence**

Gibson (2009:128) says that in ‘the nineteenth century, a more solid argument was made for an alternative Golgotha at a rocky promontory to the north of the city and an ancient burial cave was identified at the spot.’ These events transpired when General Charles Gordon, who was looking for the tomb of Jesus beyond the confines of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, found the so-called Garden Tomb, just north of the Damascus Gate in 1883 (Hoffmeier 2008b:160). The site has since become extremely popular amongst Christian pilgrims, especially those of the Protestant and Reformed ecclesiastical traditions, many of whom believe and would argue for the authenticity and legitimacy of the burial site as being that of Jesus (Rousseau & Arav 1995:104). It is a view that can potentially challenge the traditions held in relation to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Knight 2011:138).

The Garden Tomb, in locality, meets, albeit in a rather limited capacity, some of the textual conditions or exegetical criteria that are associated with and derived from a comparative reading of the biblical records. McRay (1991:206) further affirms that this site has been long held by some Protestants and Reformed Christians to be the actual burial place of Jesus. And, there are several positive arguments, to that end.

Firstly, with regard to location, the Garden Tomb has, according Walker (2006:185), a rather clear advantage, since it was outside the walls of the city in Jesus’ day. This is, indeed, a very important archaeological consideration, whenever the search is on for the burial site of Jesus. There is an ancient tomb at this location, which is set within a garden setting, near a cliff face, that with little stretch of the imagination, very much looks like a skull (Walker 2006:185), having holey depressions for both eyes and a mouth.

An ancient winepress and three cisterns have been uncovered at the site, and these are further mentioned and offered as archaeological evidence for the existence of an old garden at this location.

This is a peaceful and tranquil venue; and it is consequently not hard to see why this holy place is visually favoured and adored by so many visiting Christian pilgrims. With a hill resembling Golgotha, and arguably the location of the crucifixion close by (Holden & Geisler 2013:315), credence is certainly given to the notion that this may indeed be the actual tomb and burial site of Jesus.

As for the tomb itself, on initial inspection, in structure, layout and physical appearance, it appears to well match the descriptions given in the gospel narratives. It has both an outer and an inner chamber. The tomb also models and squares up with what is known about prevailing New Testament descriptions of burials and burial practices; and, again, at face-value, it purportedly conforms to being Jewish, and it dates back to the Herodian period. While biblical scholar and archaeologist, James Hoffmeier (2008b:160), clearly enjoys the site 'because of its quiet contemplative setting,' as an academic, he has 'long rejected this serene garden tomb as being the tomb of Jesus.' The problem is that the array of the arguments that are put forward in defence of authenticity, do not deal sufficiently with the existing archaeological evidence (McRay 1991:206).

So the first and foremost archaeological objection against the authenticity of this burial site has to do with the tomb itself. While the dating of tombs is always difficult; this one, on closer archaeological inspection, dates back to around 800–600 BC, having configurations that are typical of the late Old Testament period (Murphy-O'Connor 2007:161). It was, therefore, neither newly hewn, nor had it been previously unused by the time of Jesus, as the biblical text seems to suggest (cf. Jn 19:41). This information, as a result, is not at all consistent with the biblical record.

Furthermore, there was no record of a rolling stone having been found at the location, and the base channel running parallel to the rock-face is deemed by some archaeological interpretations not to be one in which a rolling-stone could suitably run. It is interpreted, instead, as structurally being more like a water trough, that runs all the way across the front of the tomb (Holden & Geisler 2013:317). Historically, even the staunch Crusaders are attested to have used the site as a stable (Murphy-O'Connor 2007:161).

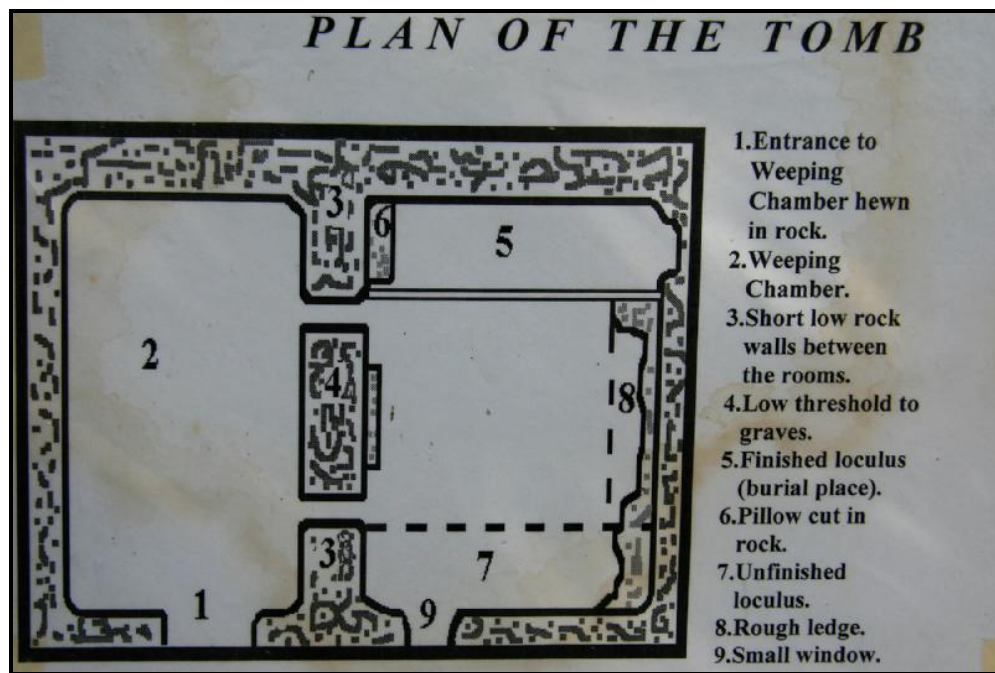


Figure 17: Plan of the Garden Tomb ([www.holylandphotos.com](http://www.holylandphotos.com)) [Accessed: 01 January 2015].

Then there is also the significant matter of the spiritual and mystic way in which Charles Gordon, who is credited with originally identifying the location, attempted to connect it with the Temple Mount and the Pool of Siloam. This has been another strong point of criticism (Holden & Geisler 2013:316), and a further argument that has been frequently put forth to argue against its authenticity. Couple that with all of the above, as well as an obvious lack of traditional evidence, and there begin to emerge some critical problems and convincing arguments that could be transposed and easily used against the authenticity of this tomb. To be archaeologically diagnostic, one really needs to move beyond simple piety here. While the tomb may look like the better location for a potential burial site of Christ Jesus, the archaeological arguments, indicators and data in this case, really do seem to outweigh the arguments that are put forward in defence of its authenticity.

The biblical archaeological findings and the consistent interpretation thereof, in relation to the Garden Tomb, suggest that while there may have been a garden at this location, and it was verifiably situated outside the city walls during the first century AD, it cannot be ascertained, with any degree of certainty, whether or not this was indeed the crucifixion site and the grave of Jesus. The tomb does have an outer and inner chamber, but the typology of the tomb is completely wrong, having no typical features of a first-century tomb (Rousseau & Arav 1995:107).

Critically, again, there is no rolling stone, and the groove running at the foot of the rock-face and tomb, is not designed to hold such a stone. Finally, from a purely archaeological viewpoint, the tomb was not new; nor was it hewn at the time of Jesus.

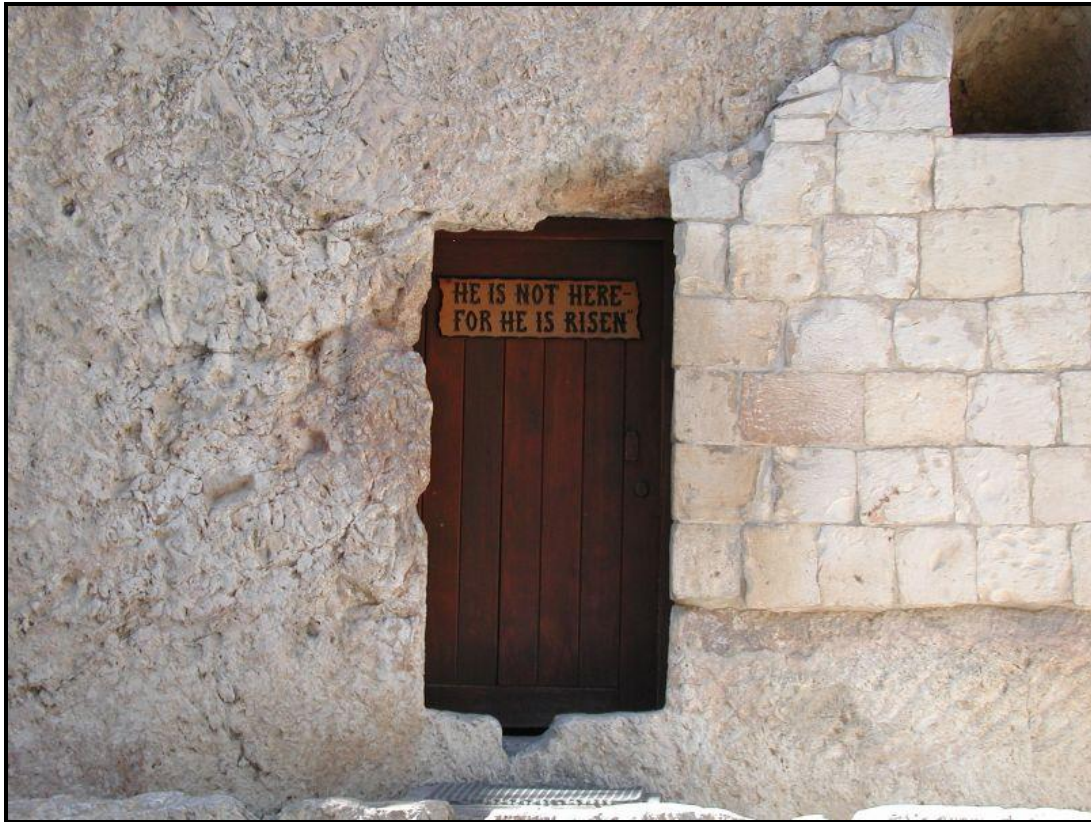


Figure 18: The modern door at the Garden Tomb: 'He is not here—for He is risen' ([www.holylandphotos.com](http://www.holylandphotos.com)) [Accessed: 02 January 2015].

The last point, above, is the very significant. Holden and Geisler (2013:317) recognise that the Garden Tomb belongs to the First Temple period, and that it formed part of a quarry containing eighth-century BC tombs. McRay (1991:206) is equally sagacious when he states that Gordon's Tomb 'does not meet the criteria of a careful reading of Scripture and archaeological evidence.' Tellingly, and in the face of all of the careful archaeological evidence, even those who currently run and administer the site, are inclined to emphasise, that for the Christian pilgrim, it is the 'Resurrection of Jesus' and not the exact location of His burial, that is the more important issue here. 'The overall conclusion,' then, state Rousseau and Arav (1995:109), 'is that there is no evidence that the Garden Tomb was that of Joseph of Arimathea, in which Jesus was temporarily buried.'

### 5.4.3 The Talpiot Tomb—Archaeological Evidence

The Talpiot Tomb is now in a courtyard of an apartment complex on Dov Gruner Street, East Talpiot, Jerusalem. The burial site was sensationally first made known to the wider public in a documentary that was aired on the Discovery Channel in 2007. Although much was made of, particularly, the ossuaries that had been excavated from within the tomb (the epigraphical interpretation of the names incised on some of them, their statistical analysis and DNA), this study concerns itself primarily with the tomb and the archaeological data retrievable from it. With the pre-set parameters, the somewhat controversial interpretation of the Talpiot Tomb, as being the family tomb of Jesus (Gibson 2009:175), will be evaluated. The site holds no ecclesiastical authority or sanction; and it is currently of no significant pilgrimage appeal.

The haste with which the exploratory excavation was undertaken when the tomb was first discovered in 1980 has arguably resulted in some poor evidence and sloppy record-keeping, and hence, much confusion, which has opened the door for deeper scholarly disagreement. The cave had also ‘evidently been forced open, entered, and ransacked at some point before the modern era by tomb robbers,’ notes Gibson (2009:182). Looking archaeologically and systematically, so as to determine or test authenticity, is always going to be hard—this is an old story with a new spin. At best, it should be noted that:

(a) This is a tomb rock-hewn from limestone (Gibson 2009:176), and;

(b) It was a typical first-century Jewish family tomb.

The site in substance and locality is highly problematic. Both distance and location in relation to the city walls of Jerusalem in Jesus’ day necessitates such a rendering. It is an entirely improbable setting for the tomb of Jesus.

To circumvent this, it is sometimes suggested by the proponents of the Talpiot Tomb (and the resultant hypothesis) that the burial site was, in fact, a secondary tomb for Jesus and His family (Habermas 2008:156–157). However, as Habermas (2008:157) also confirms, no evidence from the New Testament, Jewish burial practices, or other ancient reports supports such a view.



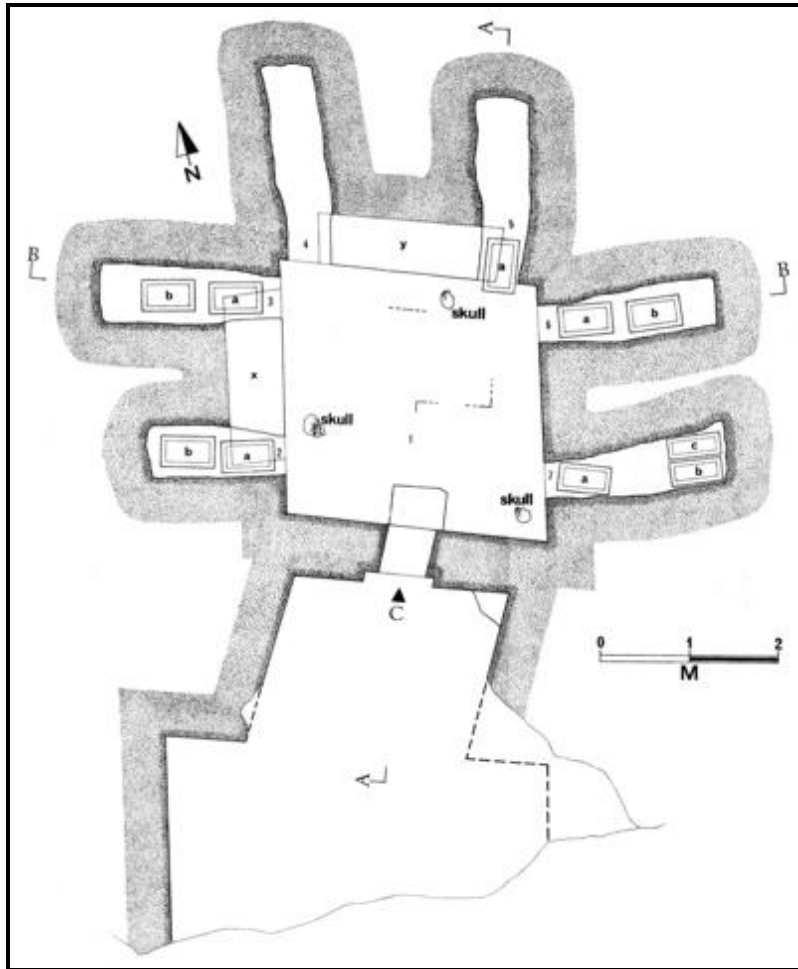


Figure 19: Plan of the Talpiot Tomb (Gibson 2009:178).

There is further no indication that this tomb, secondary or not, was ever visited or venerated by Christian pilgrims. Hoffmeier (2008b:164) thus emphasises that: ‘Given the fact that early Christians identified so many sites as holy pilgrimage locations and marked them with churches or *martyriums*, it is surprising that this tomb missed their notice altogether!’

So, with absolutely no traditional attestation, and in the absence of any supportive archaeological evidence, the authenticity of this site is quite questionable. There is not much to commend this tomb as the family tomb of Jesus (Gibson 2009:176). The only possible affirmative biblical archaeological findings, evidence, and the positive interpretation thereof is that this was a rock-hewn tomb that was fashioned in the first century AD. On the other hand, there is a lot that cannot be established with regard to this tomb, resulting in many negative conclusions. No evidence exists to demonstrate that there was a quarry or garden setting there either.

While the location was outside the city walls of Jerusalem, as they existed when Jesus was crucified, it is neither in distance nor location precise. There is no evidence of the existence or use of a rolling stone or even a base channel for such a stone. And the typology of the tomb is completely wrong, without any clearly discernible separate inner or outer chambers. The identification of the tomb as that of Jesus, therefore, cannot alone be based on any serious archaeological or historical considerations.

A final word of clarification should perhaps be offered here on the issue of bias or prejudice. As it was a pre-stated goal within this paper, objectivity, as far as is possible, is and remains key. It is so that those who call into question the authenticity of the Talpiot Tomb are frequently criticised, accused of being religiously biased, and even have run the risk of facing litigation for their opposing views. Then there is also the significant matter of an ever-growing body of conspiracy theories that relate to the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth, which in turn, has led to a lot of pseudo-scientific archaeological work. Seeking and making sensational claims in an attempt to deliberately undermine the Bible, is of as little help, as is trying to *prove* the Bible through archaeology.

Habermas (2008:152) is right when he emphasises that no effort should be made to argue that the Talpiot hypothesis is wrong, simply because it does not agree with the New Testament, or with traditional Christian beliefs. He (2008:152) notes that while this approach 'has appeared occasionally in the recent dialogue' it is not the correct tactic for researchers who wish to evaluate the claims that have been made in relation to the site. Notwithstanding the conclusion made here, however, still stands: there is no credible archaeological or historical evidence to suggest that the tomb at this location is in any way related to the burial of Christ Jesus.

## 5.5 SUMMARY OF THE BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS: THE BURIAL SITE(S) OF JESUS

This chapter began by asking the question: Can any of the three currently contending candidate sites, historically relating to the burial of Christ Jesus, actually be considered an accurate location for this biblical event? Having examined and evaluated each of the burial sites separately and independently, some coherent archaeological findings have emerged.



Firstly, the biblical archaeological findings and the results have not been entirely conclusive. This is unavoidable, since archaeology—as stated at the onset—is neither a precise nor an exact science, and the formulated results remain open and subject to interpretation. Strong inferences, however, can usually be drawn by synthesising all the relevant and the subsisting data. Varying opinions in the interpretation phase (Hoffmeier 2008a:2593) are almost inevitable and somewhat unavoidable.

Secondly, Christians have historically tended to look to and cite archaeology as proof for particular biblical events and locations (Hoffmeier 2008a:2592; Holden & Geisler 2013:181). The discipline, admittedly, does offer and is able to, on occasion, provide confirmation (or none) for the biblical record (Hoffmeier 2008a:2593). But this is not its primary purpose. Archaeology is best utilised, together with the textual evidence, in order to help appropriately reconstruct (Matthews 2007:60) and interpret biblically recorded events and locations.

When looking, archaeologically, at the three popular locations most closely associated with the burial of Jesus, as has been done in the research here, none of them completely satisfies the textual description(s), as given biblically, in the case of the burial site of Jesus.

### **5.5.1 The Church of the Holy Sepulchre**

In the case of the tomb at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (or what little remains of it), the material remnants cannot sufficiently be evaluated so as to ascertain or fully reconstruct authenticity, at least not with any degree of certainty. Complete archaeological evidential argumentation for authenticity is simply not possible, despite a seeming abundance of traditional and historical support for the location. In other words, archaeologically speaking, there is very little evidence that can be used and said to argue for this site being (or being close to) the authentic burial site of Jesus.

While there are, admittedly, some archaeological counterpoints and valid arguments based on other proxies and theories; Murphy-O'Connor (2007:49) for example, suggests that archaeology shows that the site is compatible with the topographical data supplied by the gospels. However, the archaeology itself yields an incomplete portrait and one that cannot be used with certainty in or for verification here.

With the tomb having been demolished numerous times throughout its long history, and the heavily decorated and restored Edicule presented to pilgrims today, being but an ornate reconstruction of whatever originally existed at this location, very little else can be expected. Thus, the historicity and reliability of the locus and the material remnants, for the purpose of this study, must be deemed, from an archaeological point of view, to be inconclusive.

### **5.5.2 The Garden Tomb**

The Garden Tomb, which is the second-oldest and the second-most popular Christian pilgrimage location, historically and traditionally relating to the burial of Jesus, also does not fare well under archaeological scrutiny. Despite being considered the burial site of Jesus by some Reformed and Protestant denominations (Rousseau & Arav 1995:104), the current available archaeological evidence does not fully support or justify such a view. An archaeological survey of the material remnants leans heavily against actual authenticity. As a consequence, because of the interpretive results that have been made, and in the absence of any further information or evidence to the contrary, the Garden Tomb should not to be considered to be the actual burial site of Jesus. It is, indeed, a beautiful and meaningful Christian pilgrimage location, and acts as such within popular pilgrimage notion and imagination. But the anecdotal evidence, presented in and through Christian piety, witness, and pilgrimage is not serious enough to challenge the empirical archaeological evidence here.

### **5.5.3 The Talpiot Tomb**

There was always, at best, only the remotest of possibilities that the last and least-known and venerated of the material sites associated with the burial of Christ Jesus would be found to be the actual location for the biblical event. Besides there being no ecclesiastical sanction or endorsement of the Talpiot Tomb, not much tourism or Christian pilgrimage is taking place at the location either. Then, there is also the archaeological evidence, which, when interpreted purposefully and objectively, skewers the very notion that this could be the tomb of Jesus.

In evaluating this site, the emergent archaeological data make it quite clear that there is little to no archaeological support for any claims of authenticity. This contemporaneous site, as a result, does not hold up well in an archaeological reading of the sensational

suggestion that this could be the burial site of Jesus. There is a distinct lack of any real foundation to that idea; and the site is thus disqualified, and is, as such, dismissed.

## 5.6 BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS VERSUS PILGRIMAGE IMAGINATION

The comparative biblical archaeological findings, as they have been set out above, are determinative, and have the potential to impact upon and challenge the imagination and notions of those Christian pilgrims who visit the sites that have been evaluated archaeologically. With scripture, tradition, and archaeological reasoning having guided and informed the study up until this point, the research has, as a consequence, been solid: it falls into place, is reasonable, and makes sense.

These elements, therefore, are the ones that should combine and serve to help the visitor better appreciate and understand the visible remains they encounter, holistically, and specifically, in and during Christian pilgrimage. But, as Murphy-O'Connor (2007:161) warns: 'The prudence of reason has little chance against the certitude of piety,' especially in the Holy Land.

Each of the burial sites in question offers, on some level or form, religious interest or an attraction for visitors. They are and remain very important archaeological locations. The quandary, however, then becomes somewhat obvious: the historical Jesus could only have been entombed at one material place. Whether or not it was at one of the locations evaluated in this study is, archeologically speaking, uncertain; and the very real possibility also exists that not one of the three sites might actually be the location of His tomb. Taking the existent evidence into consideration, it means that in all probability, a large proportion of the visiting pilgrims, who may, at some point, think that they are venerating, worshipping and praying at the right place, are actually doing these spiritual acts at the wrong place. Does this matter?

Some pilgrimage scholars might argue, not really. Simmermacher (2012:181), for example, in responding to this very question, says that it is irrelevant because pilgrimage is reliant on faith and not fact. Walker (2006:187), in similar vein, writes: 'the precise authenticity of the tomb is not the most critical point. For them [the Christian pilgrims] the event of Jesus' resurrection is more important than its precise location; or, as some have said, his Person is more significant than the Place.' In another book, he (2004:83) states that 'the person of Christ outstrips the priority of place.'

However, by embarking on Christian pilgrimage, many pilgrims assent to and become convinced, that they are going to be interacting, and, in some instances, be in actual physical contact with the places where Christ Jesus Himself has been. In the pilgrimage imagination, this is considered to be a 'blessing of proximity' (Cragg 2004:2). Pilgrimage, in essence and imaginative form, is evocative, and deliberately so. It is in part, a faithful reproduction, a journey of faith translated and experienced on a physical or material level. The ambience created and the setting of the holy place is certainly one contributing factor, as is the perpetual appeal to the sacred. So can the archaeological evidence that is offered, either for or against the authenticity of a place, be enough then to convince, sway, or even constrain the imagination of the pious mind? This is a seriously neglected area of research.

Because pilgrims are thought of as travelling and undertaking journeys of 'faith,' very few are essentially contemplating or thinking about their voyages from a biblical archaeological perspective. While biblical archaeological findings are largely lauded by the Christian faithful, specifically for contributing to an increase of the understanding of the Bible and biblical times, they are seldom considered prerequisites, dependent or even necessary for belief. The outcome and results of biblical archaeological findings, however, should have the potential to impact and necessarily challenge some of the preconceived pilgrimage expectations and notions in relation to a place. That is to say, in this instance, for the material remnants venerated, considered, or held to be the burial locus of Jesus, it is only factually possible that one authentic or credible location for that said specific event (His burial) exists. Any other potential location must necessarily therefore be reduced to a mere representation. Again, this becomes the very intersection at which pilgrimage imagination and archaeological evidence meet, and where conclusions have to be made.

Seemingly, there are also numerous dubious self-serving biases at work here, especially where and when there is very little empirical support to be found for the claim being made in relation to the locality in focus. The sites are, admittedly, theologically and ecclesiastically competing locations. And in every instance, the material remnants have taken on some ecclesiastical, religious, philosophical and/or sacred meaning and expression of their own. Knight (2011:22) is correct when he states that not all authorities are in full agree about the precise location of every single holy place.

One therefore needs to be cognisant of this, and realise that despite any constructed meaning and expression, and no matter how hard that it be defended, theologically, archaeological evidence ultimately has a determinative impact when it comes to evaluating the material locus. Biblical Archaeology makes a seminal contribution here; but eventually it ends up presenting ‘a powerful connection between past history and present faith’ (Freund 2009: back cover), between biblical archaeological findings and the pilgrimage imagination.

## 5.7 BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS

The positive and proper identification of holy sites within the Holy Land is a detailed and complicated process. Asking critical questions as to whether these pilgrimage locations, and in this case, the burial site(s) of Jesus, are indeed authentic and verifiably identifiable as such, or not, with any degree of certainty, is not a simple or singular process.

The tool used in this chapter to study and intentionally substantiate or refute the traditional claims being made by the three main contending candidate burial sites, has been Biblical Archaeology. There have been many bridges to cross here, so as to properly explore and interpret the applicable material evidence. Far too easily the material remnants in focus become subject to ecclesiastical, theological, and philosophical biases and thought. This, in turn, touches on and strongly influences the notions of the Christian pilgrims who piously set out to visit these holy locations. These forces can readily cloud and assail any rational judgments.

But, as has been maintained before, logically, it is that there can only be one actual location for any given biblical event: a specific event usually occurred at a specific place. The subsisting archaeological data, and the resultant evidence, with the consensual and equitable interpretation thereof, are largely determinative, when it comes to evaluating the (any) material remnants that are considered to be the potential location of any given biblical event. In the instance of the burial of Jesus, therefore, of the three sites traditionally associated with that scriptural event, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Garden Tomb, and the Talpiot Tomb, there is no definitive archaeological evidence that can be used in support of the respective claims for authenticity.

The archaeological findings made in this study have, at least, proven to be inconclusive to that end. McRay (1991:214) sums matters up succinctly here: 'Absolute proof of the location of Jesus' tomb remains beyond our reach...'

## 5.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the impact that biblical archaeological findings and results can have on pilgrimage sites, and in this instance, those relating to the burial of Jesus, have been set out and sufficiently highlighted. The resultant archaeological evidence produced has the potential to significantly challenge some already held Christian-pilgrimage notions, especially when brought to bear against ecclesiastical claims and pious pilgrimage imagination in regard to the present popular locations professing to be the burial site(s) and tomb(s) of Jesus.

Clearly therefore, the research has shown that biblical archaeological findings and results are, and should be, able to make a significant impact on Christian pilgrimage to these known and accepted sacred sites. Having appreciated and appraised the historical, literary, and textual evidence from a biblical archaeological perspective, an answer to the question was sought: can any of the three currently contending candidate sites, historically relating to the burial of Christ Jesus, actually be considered an accurate location for this purported biblical event?

The conclusions reached here were not able to clarify the exact location of the tomb of Jesus; but conversely, they were persuasive and significant enough to challenge some of the competing claims being made by those who advocate the authenticity of one site over the other. The overall archaeological conclusion is that there is no substantial evidence to suggest that any of the historical locations, mark the actual burial site of Jesus. Holden and Geisler (2013:318) are also correct, when they assert that when it comes to the location of the tomb of Jesus: 'We will never know for certain!'

What that ultimately then means for the millions of Christian faithful travelling as pilgrims to the Holy Land in search of the places where the historical Jesus lived and died, is the subject matter of the next chapter. In this concluding chapter, the results, the impact, and the implications of the biblical archaeological findings will be discussed, as they affect the present and future practice and significance of pilgrimage.

# CHAPTER SIX

## CONCLUSION

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The argument in this dissertation has served to assess and highlight the potential impact of biblical archaeological findings can have on Christian pilgrimage. The case in point has been the currently purported sites associated with the burial of Jesus. Because of the tremendous historical, ecclesiastical, and scriptural significance of the biblical event itself, and its lingering centrality within collective Christian-pilgrimage imagination, the grave of Jesus has been the ideal case study from which to gain a more comprehensive view as to whether or not biblical archaeological findings are indeed able to critically impact traditionally held pilgrimage notions, or not. To that end, it has been imperative to determine the degree to which pilgrimage accounts, expectations, and experiences weigh and compare with the data that is physically presented in and through biblical archaeology.

It has been contended here that without biblical archaeological inputs, pilgrims would not possibly be able to look at these and similar places as objectively as necessary. Throughout this thesis, the intention has been to demonstrate and argue the importance of biblical archaeology and its capacity to independently enumerate and adjudicate material remains; and, in this case, of those held most sacred by faithful Christian pilgrims. So, when compared with and evaluated against ecclesiastical claims and some of the preconceived pilgrimage notions, it was determined, archaeologically, that there is no real or substantial empirical evidence to suggest that any of the proposed historical locations for the burial of Jesus, were in fact, the actual site of His burial. What does that then, in turn, mean for the many Christian pilgrims who undertake and travel to the Holy Land with the expressed intention of visiting those said places historically considered, in popular pilgrimage notion, to be the realistic location(s) for the burial of Jesus?

In this concluding chapter, the answer to that challenge will be addressed. Whether or not the intended outcome in research was reached, will also, necessarily, be considered. This will, however, be done by first examining and incorporating the various discussions

and results derived from the respective chapters contained within this study. The chapter will then end with the application of the research, as well as by making some necessary recommendations with regard to the future practice and significance of pilgrimage.

## 6.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

The purpose of the study required that the discussion begin with a historical overview of Christian pilgrimage. In doing so, the various elements that have led to and culminated in the development of Christian holy places in the Holy Land, with the resultant notions contained therein, were surveyed in Chapter Two.

From the evidence presented, it became clear that the following established notions are inherent and generally common to Christian pilgrims, being both historical and traditional in nature. The identified physical places, then and now, associated with events in the life of the historical Jesus, as recorded biblically, have themselves become deeply intertwined within Christian religious ideology and thought; and they have, in many instances, taken on sacred meanings and considerable holy significance.

These places thus attest, at least in Christian pilgrimage notion, theologically, to God's incarnational salvific action having taken place on earth, and they are revered as such. So from the overview, it quickly became apparent that these very notions exist and are often believed, regardless of whether or not these said places are genuinely authentic locations, and independently verifiably, or not. That seems to be one overarching general pilgrimage experience.

At the outset, the dualism presented creates, even for the casual observer, an indubitable point of tension. It was noted that while some historical holy places frequented by Christian pilgrims do offer a high probability of being, at least, geographically correct, and thus corresponding well to the biblical record, others simply do not. However, objectively determining the potential authenticity of any such places often necessarily incorporates other academic disciplines, of which Biblical Archaeology is, indeed, an important one.

Because Biblical Archaeology allows for the critical investigation of the material remnants and the evaluation of the literary record relating to Christian holy places, it also informs the required socio-historical context, which is essential to a better understanding of past events and places. Attention, therefore, shifted to this independent field of



enquiry, in Chapter 3. It was imperative that the discipline is fully understood, first, and its ability to independently and objectively investigate and interpret distant past material remnants and literary evidences analogous to the biblical record be ascertained. This was necessary in order to achieve the goal of the study, which was to draw on biblical archaeology to survey the extent to which its findings impact on the common and collectively held notions within Christian pilgrimage circles—and that with specific reference to the known burial sites of Christ Jesus.

This course was undertaken and accomplished by first tracing the historical development of Biblical Archaeology. Thereafter, its position and legitimacy within Biblical Studies was established. Included was a discussion of the complex and knotty relationship that can sometimes exist between archaeological and textual studies, particularly in dialogue and the results, which were outlined and examined. Many self-serving biases appear and are seemingly influential, and the paramount importance of keeping and maintaining objectivity as far as possible in the research, was settled. The frequent association and distinction between ‘Biblical’ and ‘Christian’ Archaeology was also explored in this chapter.

Chapter 4 narrowed the field of enquiry down further, from overview, in both pilgrimage and biblical archaeological respects, to the material remnants presently subsisting and specifically relating to the burial of Jesus. While the biblical archaeological propositions made in the previous chapter were extended, the three main historical sites relating to Jesus’ burial, in as much as Christian pilgrims are concerned, were particularised in this chapter. Before evaluating or drawing any conclusions with regard to the legitimacy and standing of any of these traditionally identified sites, it was important to bridge any cultural, historical, and literary gaps that could have existed by first studying biblical burial practices.

Thereafter, the biblical textual description with regard to the burial of Jesus was systematised. From the biblical record, it was evidenced that textual references and indicators do exist with regard to the possible location of such a tomb, in Jerusalem, during the first century. Within Christian pilgrimage notion, the location of this important holy place (as was established previously) is of great consequence.

So, just how the three sites that are commonly associated with the burial of Jesus in Christian pilgrimage circles originated and developed historically, was delved into. Those

three popularly recognised locations, that were examined, are: the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Garden Tomb, and the Talpiot Tomb. The history of each was surveyed chronologically and arranged, according to age in discovery. The research further led us to conclude, that these are, in fact, at times, competing sites. They hold competing claims: claims that are sometimes motivated by rival ecclesiastical traditions and opposing theological thought.

So then, which, if any, of these three candidate sites historically and traditionally thought to relate to the burial of Jesus, is, or could be, the authentic Golgotha—for reasonably there can be only one authentic burial location? Seeking the answer to that question would prove to become pivotal in the research. Necessarily, it means that pilgrimage notions in relation to these three possible locations associated with the burial of Jesus would potentially be impacted significantly and challenged by the biblical archaeological findings and outcomes made in relation to those same said places.

Chapter Five, therefore, became the chapter in which the hypothesis of this study was substantially tested. It systematically emerged that biblical archaeological findings potentially do impact on traditionally held pilgrimage notions, and even critically so. After having appreciated all the relevant subsisting artefactual and textual evidence in relation to each of the three sites identified, individually, it was concluded, archaeologically, that none of the locations actually fully corresponds with the biblical data: at least not from a biblical archaeological perspective. Both the strengths and weaknesses for each of the candidate sites were evaluated, and detailed to that end. The biblical archaeological findings versus the pilgrimage imagination were explored and the findings of the research undertaken drew Chapter 5 to a close.

Clearly, the desired outcome in research had been achieved: biblical archaeological findings have the potential to significantly challenge and impact on Christian pilgrimage notions. But, again, what does this outcome then mean for the many Christian pilgrims who dutifully travel to the Holy Land under the impression, and even believing, that they are actually going to be visiting the very burial site of Jesus?

### 6.3 CONCLUSION OF THE RESEARCH

The pertinent question as to whether or not ecclesiastical authorities themselves, and visiting pilgrims, are being misled, simply because they could be worshipping at the wrong location (Gibson 2009:128), begs an answer. The research undertaken here

would seem to indicate that we simply cannot know for certain. Conversely, it would be wrong for pilgrims to be led to believe that they are, in fact, worshipping at the correct location, when this cannot be ascertained with certitude.

Countless pilgrims go to the Holy Land on pilgrimage believing that they will be following in the footsteps of Jesus: to ‘go’ and ‘see.’ The reality is that Jesus’ feet never trod where Christian pilgrim’s feet tread today. He most certainly never saw the sights that they do, because places, over time, evolve; and in many instances, they are irrevocably changed, and therefore cannot be expected to look or remain the same. But what one is able to do, particularly through Biblical Archaeology, and in particular, by research such as this, is for moderns to be better able to understand and engage with those places that are considered sacred to their faith.

In many instances, the material remnants have been uncovered and restored. Sometimes, they are tactfully restored to simulate the original setting. This is why Biblical Archaeology, as a discipline, ‘never stops’ (Murphy-O’Conner 2008: preface). It continues to produce new information that has the potential to be critically important (Murphy-O’Conner 2008: preface) to our understanding of the Bible, and the places and events recorded therein. This information, perceptibly, will have a critical impact, by either corroborating these said events and places, or questioning, and even, quite possibility, rejecting them in totality. And, that is exactly what has resulted from the research that has been undertaken here.

For Christians on pilgrimage to the Holy Land to be told that the site at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Garden Tomb, or the Talpiot Tomb, is the actual burial location of Jesus, is erroneous. The very notion is wrong. Ultimately, when searching for authenticity—as Christian pilgrims on pilgrimage to the Holy Land inevitably and innately do—then any given ‘biblical’ location, identified—either through traditional, historical or religious association—should be considered, either: (a) The exact place; (b) close to the place; or (c) not the place at all.

The direct implication then, of these findings, is that for pilgrims to be told that they are visiting the actual burial site of Jesus, based on the current archaeological evidence and models available, and the research undertaken here, is highly problematic.

We simply cannot know for certain where Jesus was buried. Consequently, Christian pilgrimage that is undertaken to any location, contending to be seen as the burial site of Jesus, necessarily needs to be re-evaluated and properly defined.

#### 6.4 THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS TO PILGRIMAGE

What can then be said further of the capacity and contribution of biblical archaeological findings in relation to Christian pilgrimage, and more specifically, to the debate surrounding the material remnants both historically and currently relating to the burial of Christ Jesus?

The hypothesis of this study has been that biblical archaeological findings and results are able to critically impact upon traditionally held pilgrimage notions, with specific reference to the locus of the burial site of Jesus. Many Christians, particularly those holding to Catholic and Orthodox ecclesiastical teachings and traditions, are already of the opinion that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in the Christian Quarter of the Old City in Jerusalem, is the probable place at which Jesus Christ was crucified and buried. The site, as a physical entity (Walker 1992:92), continues to act as a spiritual magnet, attracting millions on millions of Christian pilgrims from around the globe every year. The mere fact that Jesus is traditionally perceived to have been physically crucified, buried and resurrected there, has given credence to the idea that the place has a 'unique specialness in God's sight and for the Christian church' (Walker 1992:94).

But then, within other ecclesiastical persuasions, the debate is more open; and there is the Garden Tomb, also historically identified and arguably held by some other Christian pilgrims to be the place of Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection. However, with no clear or determinative archaeological evidence emerging in support of these and any similar claims of authenticity, biblical archaeological findings, as a consequence, do impact upon and challenge these and similar notions. Those who advocate the authenticity of one site over the other, on theological grounds alone, will find insufficient archaeological support for their contention and subsequently adopted position. However, if one is to move beyond the issue of determination, or the testing of authenticity, where archaeology, in this research, has proven to be somewhat inconclusive, then there are still other positive contributions that biblical archaeological findings and results can and should have on Christian pilgrimage. These are worth noting.

### **6.4.1 Biblical Archaeological Education**

The biblical archaeological findings made in relation to the burial sites of Jesus, have the ability to teach and enable further learning about burial and burial practices during the time of Jesus. Christian pilgrims who visit these locations can be educated, based on the archaeological findings, on this important aspect of life in biblical times. The ability to see or to demonstrate what a tomb, at the time would have looked like, is a unique and exciting perspective provided by ongoing archaeological research, and the ensuing tomb architecture. So too, do the many artefactual discoveries, that are made in tombs, for they speak of context, and have tremendous importance and bearing in our understanding of life back in biblical times. Scholars who have been trained in Biblical Archaeology could provide valuable insights and their expertise to visiting pilgrim groups, thus bringing this (and other) important feature(s) of ancient society, back to life for the modern pilgrim.

### **6.4.2 Historical Contribution**

The historical development of Christian holy sites is well traced by means of archaeological research. These burial sites are arguably of the best material evidence available for observing the development of Christian holy sites based on textual (biblical) conditions. The Christian pilgrim's knowledge of the development of Christian holy sites can be greatly advanced by the archaeological study of the material remnants in focus. Moreover, for the coming pilgrim, such a site would instinctively not only be seen as a historical place of veneration and worship, but also as an aid to help better understand, discover and connect with the event, within its historical-geographical setting.

### **6.4.3 Scientific and Research Potential of Biblical Archaeology**

Although ongoing archaeological research at the burial sites relating to the burial of Jesus is not presently freely possible, given the many religious tensions and political sensitivities that are currently at play, the potential for further scientific research surely exists. Who knows what the future holds? There are, furthermore, always new and exciting archaeological discoveries waiting to be unearthed. Coupled with ongoing scientific developments within the field, and constant technological advances, including non-invasive techniques, the future research possibilities seem tremendous.

#### **6.4.4 An Apologetic Contribution**

There is always the temptation to read more into these sites than that which is factually verifiable. As mentioned previously, resultant archaeological data are able to limit and confront some of the inconsistencies that are occasionally associated with Christian pilgrimage notions and imagination. These include, overzealous or naïve interpretations, as well as the possibility of over-spiritualising the material remnants in question, by linking or even forcing a connection between the location and the biblical event said to have been recorded and marked by the holy place. Biblical Archaeology presents empirical evidence that offers well-balanced and persuasive evidence, which is well able to refute or restrain any distortions created through extreme maximalist or minimalist approaches.

#### **6.4.5 Impassioning Biblical Archaeology**

A real passion for Biblical Archaeology is created by visiting archaeological sites in the Holy Land. These sites have been occupied for thousands of years; and intrigue is created both for those who read about these places and the event that historically occurred there, as well as for those who get to visit these sites. Archaeology is able to illuminate the past, and create with it, a fascination and passion for this specialised and rather unique field of study.

### **6.5 JOURNEYING ON:<sup>5</sup> RECOMMENDATIONS**

The future of this research holds a number of opportunities. Because Biblical Archaeology is, in one sense, open-ended, with new discoveries being made on a regular basis, that occasionally go on to challenge previous discoveries, or potentially provide newer insights and appreciations, it is 'theoretically almost limitless in its potential' (Dever 2005:74). Then there is, also, always the prospect of re-interpretation of existent evidence. 'Clearly, there remains much to be discovered,' states Cline (2009:132), 'and much to be excited about in the field of biblical archaeology.'

For now, this research has been able to add to the existent literature by clearly highlighting, amongst other issues, the contemporary relevance and usefulness of biblical archaeology. Pilgrims coming from, say, the South African context, embarking on

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<sup>5</sup> The phrase 'Journeying On' was taken from the concluding reflections by Bartholomew (2004:201).

acts of pilgrimage to the Holy Land, making journeys of faith, while seeking the Divine by coming into contact with those places considered sacred to their faith, have the right to know whether or not these perceived holy places are indeed authentic locations, or not.

More and more pilgrims are beginning to ask such significant questions (Gibson 2007: ix). And even if such a biblical site no longer exists in its original form, at the very least, an encounter with accurate proximity to the recorded event or location should subsist, in order for the visiting pilgrim to derive the much-sought-after and desired 'blessing of proximity' (Cragg 2004:2), albeit through a somewhat re-created situation. For Christians, this becomes even more important, considering that the Christian faith has long stood as a religion that is based on facts.

Biblical Archaeology, as has been demonstrated in this research, using the case of the burial sites of Jesus, is well able to test and challenge the accuracy of the biblical and literary record, and ancient pilgrimage accounts, in relation to any physical locations. But it is also, furthermore, able to demonstrably deem and reject those places that are physically inauthentic, for having no material connection or required biblical context. Pilgrims should, therefore, as a future practice, be able to successfully disengage, historically and theologically, from such a place. Therein lies the real impact that biblical archaeological results can and should have upon the notions that are traditionally held by Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land.

It is therefore, recommended that those who are to engage in contemporary pilgrimage to the Holy Land should re-evaluate their approach, as well as any preconceived or traditionally held notions, particularly with regard to actual authenticity. A real need exists for ongoing dialogue, between the indispensable elements of current biblical archaeological research and Christian pilgrimage traditions; and they can be articulated and evaluated still further.

As a future direction, the requirement for deeper theological reflection is self-evident. From an interdisciplinary theological academic position, it would be interesting to see whether or not the theoretical research undertaken here, and the conceptual conclusions derived herein, are of any practical theological consequence or influential in the mind of the Christian pilgrim, should the necessary recommendations made, be applied.

Further research can also be undertaken, within Biblical Archaeology that would stimulate the discussion and facilitate understanding between biblical archaeological research and religious traditions. In doing so, the research would be able to evaluate and compare the latest biblical archaeological research and the prevailing models, with other inherited religious traditions and notions (still) held in relation to the biblically recorded events, places, or artefacts. Or, alternatively, research that traces the origins and development of objects and places, sacred and analogous to early and contemporary faith, through a biblical archaeological appreciation, could also be formulated.



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