

Pastor's Pound

April 2009

Movie director James Cameron claims that, at long last, the *real* tomb of Jesus was found. It's also the tomb, says Cameron, of Jesus' *wife* Mary Magdalene and their *children*. Two or three years ago he made a television documentary about this shocking discovery.

It is at least the third place purported to be the "real" tomb, the other two being the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, over which a church was built in the fourth century, and Gordon's Calvary, named for its nineteenth-century discoverer.

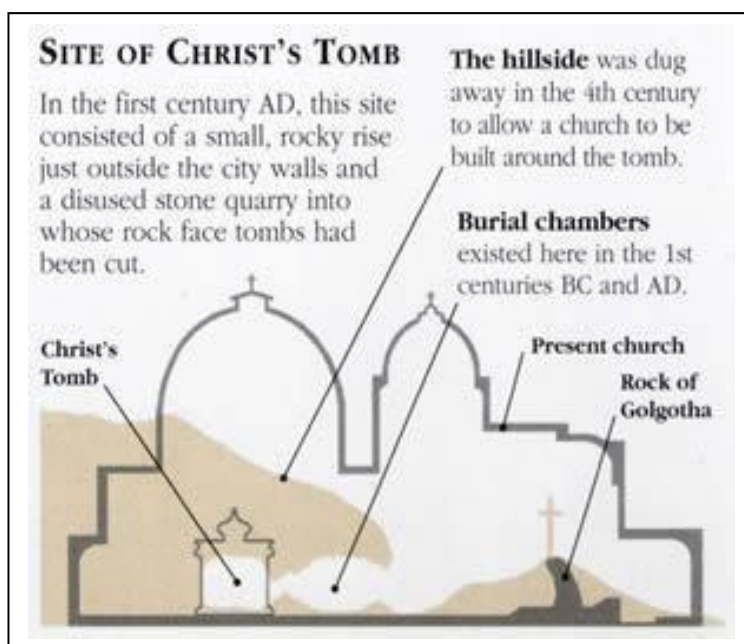
If I were a betting person, I'd put my money on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre:

- It is outside the city wall of first-century Jerusalem (John 19:20).
- It is (or, rather, it *was*—see the drawing below) at the foot of a hill (John 19:41, 42).
- Most telling, it was covered over with a Roman temple in a vain attempt by the emperor Hadrian to obliterate it following the razing of Jerusalem in AD 135. One hundred years after Jesus' death and resurrection—only about one lifetime removed from the death of the apostle John—there is strong evidence that Christians could point to the location of our Lord's tomb.

Further evidence appears in the town of Madaba, Jordan, where a mosaic-tile map of Jerusalem covers the floor of a sixth-century church and features the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, thus indicating that the tomb was a destination for pilgrims even then. (I have the Madaba map as the desktop photo on the computer in my study; please stop in and have a look at it.)

Of course, there is no way of knowing whether the tomb venerated in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is actually the tomb where Jesus was laid. But you know what? It doesn't matter. James Cameron and other ostensible "debunkers" can make all the claims they want to, and it won't make a bit of difference—because the grave is not the end of the story! It wasn't the end for Jesus and, glory to God, neither is it the end for those who know him in his risen presence.

I invite you to join us in witnessing to our resurrection faith this Holy Week and beyond. Be part of the crowd who shouted their hosannas on Palm Sunday as Christ entered his beloved Jerusalem; gather around the table on Maundy Thursday when our Lord instituted the meal that he shares eternally with his people; go the way of the cross on Good Friday; and add your glad affirmation on Easter morning to the testimony of Mary Magdalene and all Christians through the centuries: "I have seen the Lord!" (John 20:18)



Pastor Curtis N. Hurley