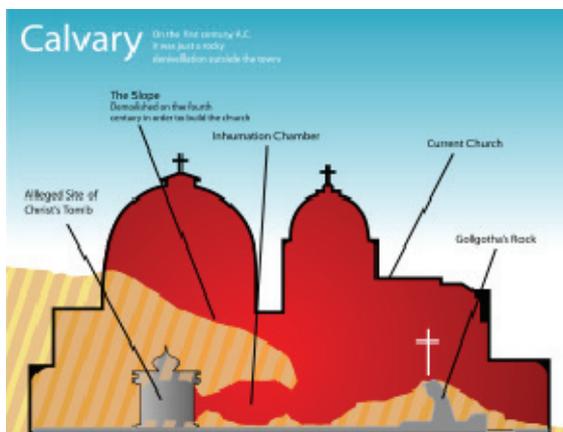


**The Church of the Holy Sepulchre** (Latin: Sanctum Sepulchrum), also called the Church of the Resurrection (Greek: Ναός της Αναστάσεως, Naos tis Anastaseos; Arabic: كنيسة القيامة, Kanīsat al-Qiyāma; Armenian: Սուրբ Հարություն, Surp Harutyun) by Eastern Christians, is a Christian church within the walled Old City of Jerusalem.

The site is venerated by most Christians as Golgotha,<sup>[1]</sup> (the Hill of Calvary), where the New Testament says that Jesus was crucified,<sup>[2]</sup> and is said to also contain the place where Jesus was buried (the sepulchre). The church has been an important pilgrimage destination since at least the 4th century, as the purported site of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Today it also serves as the headquarters of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, while control of the building is shared between several Christian churches and secular entities in complicated arrangements essentially unchanged for centuries.

## History

### Construction



A diagram of the church and the historical site, based on a German documentary.

In the early second century, the site of the present Church had been a temple of Aphrodite; several ancient writers alternatively describe it as a temple to Venus, the Roman equivalent to Aphrodite. Eusebius claims, in his *Life of Constantine*<sup>[3]</sup>, that the site of the Church had originally been a Christian place of veneration, but that Hadrian had deliberately covered these Christian sites with earth, and built his own temple on top, due to his alleged hatred for Christianity<sup>[4]</sup> (the authenticity/inaccuracy of this claim is discussed below). Although Eusebius does not say as much, the temple of Aphrodite was probably built as part of Hadrian's reconstruction of Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina in 135, following the destruction of the Jewish Revolt of 70 and Bar Kokhba's revolt of 132–135.

Emperor Constantine I ordered in about 325/326 that the temple be demolished and the soil - which had provided a flat surface for the temple - be removed, instructing Macarius of Jerusalem, the local Bishop, to build a church on the site. The Pilgrim of Bordeaux reports in 333: There, at present, by the command of the Emperor Constantine, has been built a basilica, that is to say, a church of wondrous beauty<sup>[5]</sup>. Constantine directed his mother, Helena, to build churches upon sites which commemorated the life of Jesus Christ; she was present in 326 at the construction of the church on the site, and involved herself in the excavations and construction.

During the excavation of the earth, Helena is alleged to have rediscovered of the True Cross, and a tomb, which according to Eusebius exhibited a clear and visible proof that it was the tomb of Jesus, was also discovered<sup>[6][7]</sup>; several scholars have criticised Eusebius' account for an uncritical use of sources, and for being thoroughly dishonest<sup>[8][9]</sup>, with Edward Gibbon, for example, pointing out that Eusebius' own chapter headings<sup>[10]</sup> claims that fictions are lawful and fitting for him to use<sup>[11]</sup>. Socrates Scholasticus (born c. 380), in his *Ecclesiastical History*, gives a full description of the discovery<sup>[12]</sup> (that was repeated later by Sozomen and by Theodoret) which emphasizes the role played in the excavations and construction by Helena; just as the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (also founded

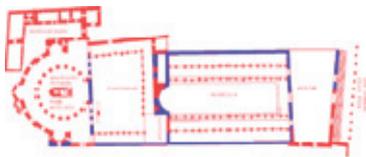
by Constantine and Helena) commemorated the birth of Jesus, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre would commemorate his death and resurrection.

Constantine's church was built as two connected churches over the two different holy sites, including a great basilica (the Martyrium visited by the nun Egeria in the 380s), an enclosed colonnaded atrium (the Triportico) with the traditional site of Golgotha in one corner, and a rotunda, called the Anastasis ("Resurrection"), which contained the remains of a rock-cut room that Helena and Macarius had identified as the burial site of Jesus. The rockface at the west end of the building was cut away, although it is unclear how much remained in Constantine's time, as archaeological investigation has revealed that the temple of Aphrodite reached far into the current rotunda area<sup>[13]</sup>, and the temple enclosure would therefore have reached even further to the west.

According to Christian tradition, Constantine arranged for the rockface to be removed from around the tomb, without harming it, in order to isolate the tomb; in the centre of the rotunda is a small building called the Kouvouklion (Κουβούκλιον; Modern Greek for small compartment) or Aedicule<sup>[14]</sup> (from Latin: aediculum, small building), which supposedly encloses this tomb, although it is not currently possible to verify the claim, as the alleged remains are completely enveloped by a marble sheath. The discovery of the kokhim tombs just beyond the west end of the Church, and more recent archaeological investigation of the rotunda floor, suggest that a narrow spur of at least ten yards length would have had to jut out from the rock face if the contents of the Aedicule were once inside. The dome of the rotunda was completed by the end of the 4th century.

Each year, the Eastern Orthodox Church celebrates the anniversary of the consecration of the Church of the Resurrection (Holy Sepulchre) on September 13 (for those churches which follow the traditional Julian Calendar, September 13 currently falls on September 26 of the modern Gregorian Calendar).

### Damage and destruction



Floor plan of the site in the 4th Century

This building was damaged by fire in 614 when the Persians under Khosrau II invaded Jerusalem and captured the Cross. In 630, Emperor Heraclius marched triumphantly into Jerusalem and restored the True Cross to the rebuilt Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Under the Muslims it remained a Christian church. The early Muslim rulers protected the city's Christian sites, prohibiting their destruction and their use as living quarters. In 966 the doors and roof were burnt during a riot.

On October 18, 1009, under Fatimid caliph Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, orders for the complete destruction of the Church were carried out. It is believed that Al-Hakim "was aggrieved by the scale of the Easter pilgrimage to Jerusalem, which was caused specially by the annual miracle of the Holy Fire within the Sepulchre. The measures against the church were part of a more general campaign against Christian places of worship in Palestine and Egypt, which involved a great deal of other damage: Adhemar of Chabannes recorded that the church of St George at Lydda 'with many other churches of the saints' had been attacked, and the 'basilica of the Lord's Sepulchre destroyed down to the ground'. ...The Christian writer Yahya ibn Sa'id reported that everything was razed 'except those parts which were impossible to destroy or would have been too difficult to carry away'.<sup>[15]</sup> The Church's foundations were hacked down to bedrock. The Edicule and the east and west walls and the roof of the cut-rock tomb it encased were destroyed or damaged (contemporary accounts vary), but the north and south walls were likely protected by rubble from further damage. The "mighty pillars resisted destruction up to the height of the gallery pavement, and are now effectively the only remnant of the fourth-century buildings."<sup>[16]</sup> Some minor repairs were done to the section believed to be the tomb of Jesus almost immediately after 1009, but a true attempt at restoration would have to wait for decades.<sup>[17]</sup>

European reaction was of shock and dismay, with far-reaching and intense consequences. For example, Clunian monk Raoul Glaber blamed the Jews, with the result that Jews were expelled from Limoges and other French towns. Ultimately, this destruction provided an impetus to the later Crusades.<sup>[18]</sup>

## Reconstruction



 Floor plan of the present church

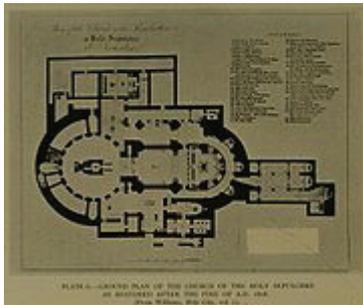
In wide ranging negotiations between the Fatimids and the Byzantine Empire in 1027-8 an agreement was reached whereby the new Caliph Ali az-Zahir (Al-Hakim's son) allowed the Emperor Constantine VIII to finance the rebuilding and redecoration of the Church (thereby acknowledging his patronage over it).<sup>[19]</sup> As a concession, the mosque in Constantinople was re-opened and sermons were to be pronounced in az-Zahir's name.<sup>[20]</sup> Muslim sources say a by-product of the agreement was the recanting of Islam by many Christians who had been forced to convert under Al-Hakim's persecutions.<sup>[21]</sup> In addition the Byzantines, while releasing 5,000 Muslim prisoners, made demands for the restoration of other churches destroyed by Al-Hakim and the re-establishment of a Patriarch in Jerusalem.<sup>[22]</sup> Contemporary sources credit the emperor with spending vast sums in an effort to restore the Church of the Holy Sepulchre after this agreement was made.<sup>[23]</sup> The rebuilding project continued under stringent conditions imposed by the caliphate, and was completed in 1048 by Constantine IX Monomachos and Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople.<sup>[24]</sup> Despite the Byzantines spending vast sums on the project, "a total replacement was far beyond available resources. The new construction was concentrated on the rotunda and its surrounding buildings: the great basilica remained in ruins."<sup>[25]</sup> The rebuilt church site consisted of "a court open to the sky, with five small chapels attached to it."<sup>[26]</sup> The chapels were "to the east of the court of resurrection, where the wall of the great church had been. They commemorated scenes from the passion, such as the location of the prison of Christ and of his flagellation, and presumably were so placed because of the difficulties for free movement among shrines in the streets of the city. The dedication of these chapels indicates the importance of the pilgrims' devotion to the suffering of Christ. They have been described as 'a sort of Via Dolorosa in miniature'... since little or no rebuilding took place on the site of the great basilica. Western pilgrims to Jerusalem during the eleventh century found much of the sacred site in ruins."<sup>[27]</sup> Control of Jerusalem, and thereby the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, continued to change hands several times between the Fatimids and the Seljuk Turks (loyal to the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad) until the arrival of the Crusaders in 1099.<sup>[28]</sup>

## Crusader and later periods

Many historians still maintain that the main concern of Pope Urban II, when calling for the First Crusade, was the threat to Constantinople from the Turkish invasion of Asia Minor in response to the appeal of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos.<sup>[citation needed]</sup> Still, historians agree that the fate of Jerusalem and thereby the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was of concern if not the immediate goal of papal policy in 1095. The idea of taking Jerusalem gained more focus as the Crusade was underway. The rebuilt church site was taken from the Fatimids (who had recently taken it from the Abbasids) by the knights of the First Crusade on 15 July 1099.<sup>[29]</sup>

The First Crusade was envisioned as an armed pilgrimage, and no crusader could consider his journey complete unless he had prayed as a pilgrim at the Holy Sepulchre. Crusader Prince Godfrey of Bouillon, who became the first crusader monarch of Jerusalem, decided not to use the title "king" during his lifetime, and declared himself *Advocatus Sancti Sepulchri* (Protector (or Defender) of the Holy Sepulchre). By the crusader period, a cistern under the former basilica was rumoured to have

been the location that Helena had found the True Cross, and began to be venerated as such; although the cistern later became the Chapel of the Invention of the Cross, there is no evidence for the rumour prior to the 11th century, and modern archaeological investigation has now dated the cistern to the 11th century repairs by Monomachos<sup>[13]</sup>.



The church, after its 1808 restoration.

The chronicler William of Tyre reports on the renovation of the Church in the mid-12th century. The crusaders investigated the eastern ruins on the site, occasionally excavating through the rubble, and while attempting to reach the cistern, they discovered part of the original ground level of Hadrian's temple enclosure; they decided to transform this space into a chapel dedicated to Helena (the Chapel of Saint Helena), widening their original excavation tunnel into a proper staircase. The crusaders began to refurbish the church in a Romanesque style and added a bell tower. These renovations unified the small chapels on the site and were completed during the reign of Queen Melisende in 1149, placing all the Holy places under one roof for the first time. The church became the seat of the first Latin Patriarchs, and was also the site of the kingdom's scriptorium. The church was lost to Saladin, along with the rest of the city, in 1187, although the treaty established after the Third Crusade allowed for Christian pilgrims to visit the site. Emperor Frederick II regained the city and the church by treaty in the 13th century, while he himself was under a ban of excommunication, leading to the curious result of the holiest church in Christianity being laid under interdict. Both city and church were captured by the Khwarezmians in 1244.

The Franciscan friars renovated it further in 1555, as it had been neglected despite increased numbers of pilgrims. The Franciscans rebuilt the Aedicule, extending the structure to create an ante-chamber<sup>[30]</sup>. A fire severely damaged the structure again in 1808, causing the dome of the Rotunda to collapse and smashing the Edicule's exterior decoration. The Rotunda and the Edicule's exterior were rebuilt in 1809–1810 by architect Komminos of Mytilene in the then current Ottoman Baroque style. The fire did not reach the interior of the Aedicule, and the marble decoration of the Tomb dates mainly to the 1555 restoration, although the interior of the ante-chamber, now known as the Chapel of the Angel, was partly re-built to a square ground-plan, in place of the previously semi-circular western end. The cladding of red marble applied to the Aedicule by Komminos has deteriorated badly and is detaching from the underlying structure; since 1947 it has been held in place with an exterior scaffolding of iron girders installed by the British Mandate. No plans have been agreed upon for its renovation.

The current dome dates from 1870, although it was restored during 1994–1997, as part of extensive modern renovations to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which have been ongoing since 1959. During 1973–1978 restoration works and excavations inside the building, and under the nearby Muristan, it was found that the area was originally a quarry, from which white Meleke limestone was struck<sup>[31]</sup>. To the east of the Chapel of St. Helena, the excavators discovered a void containing a second century drawing of a roman ship<sup>[32]</sup>, two low walls which supported the platform of Hadrian's 2nd century temple, and a higher 4th century wall built to support Constantine's basilica<sup>[33][34]</sup>, the Armenian authorities have recently converted this archaeological space into the Chapel of Saint Vartan, and created an artificial walkway over the quarry on the north of the chapel, so that the new Chapel could be accessed (by permission) from the Chapel of St. Helena.

**Status quo**

After the renovation of 1555, control of the church oscillated between the Franciscans and the Orthodox, depending on which community could obtain a favorable firman from the Sublime Porte at a particular time, often through outright bribery, and violent clashes were not uncommon. In 1767, weary of the squabbling, the Porte issued a firman that divided the church among the claimants. This was confirmed in 1852 with another firman that made the arrangement permanent, establishing a status quo of territorial division among the communities.

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

Establishment of the status quo did not halt the violence, which continues to break out every so often even in modern times. On a hot summer day in 2002, the Coptic monk who is stationed on the roof to express Coptic claims to the Ethiopian territory there moved his chair from its agreed spot into the shade. This was interpreted as a hostile move by the Ethiopians, and eleven were hospitalized after the resulting fracas.<sup>[35]</sup>

In another incident in 2004 during Orthodox celebrations of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, a door to the Franciscan chapel was left open. This was taken as a sign of disrespect by the Orthodox and a fistfight broke out. Some people were arrested, but no one was seriously injured.<sup>[36]</sup>

On Palm Sunday, in April 2008, a brawl broke out due to a Greek monk being ejected from the building by a rival faction. Police were called to the scene but were also attacked by the enraged brawlers.<sup>[37]</sup> A clash erupted between Armenian and Greek monks on Sunday 9 November 2008, during celebrations for the Feast of the Holy Cross.<sup>[38][39]</sup>

Under the status quo, no part of what is designated as common territory may be so much as rearranged without consent from all communities. This often leads to the neglect of badly needed repairs when the communities cannot come to an agreement among themselves about the final shape of a project. Just such a disagreement has delayed the renovation of the edicule, where the need is now dire, but also where any change in the structure might result in a change to the status quo disagreeable to one or more of the communities.

A less grave sign of this state of affairs is located on a window ledge over the church's entrance. Someone placed a wooden ladder there sometime before 1852, when the status quo defined both the doors and the window ledges as common ground. The ladder remains there to this day, in almost exactly the same position. It can be seen to occupy the ledge in century-old photographs and engravings.

None of the communities controls the main entrance. In 1192, Saladin assigned responsibility for it to two neighboring Muslim families. The Joudeh were entrusted with the key, and the Nusseibeh, who had been the custodians of the church since the days of Caliph Omar in 637, retained the position of keeping the door. This arrangement has persisted into modern times. Twice each day, a Joudeh family member brings the key to the door, which is locked and unlocked by a Nusseibeh.

### **Modern arrangement of the church**

The entrance to the church is through a single door in the south transept. This narrow way of access to such a large structure has proven to be hazardous at times. For example, when a fire broke out in 1840, dozens of pilgrims were trampled to death. In 1999 the communities agreed to install a new exit door in the church, but there was never any report of this door being completed.

- Just inside the entrance is The Stone of Anointing, also known as the The Stone of Unction, which tradition claims to be the spot where Jesus' body was prepared for burial by Joseph of Arimathea. However, this tradition is only attested since the crusader era, and the present stone was only added in the 1810 reconstruction<sup>[30]</sup>. The wall behind the stone was a

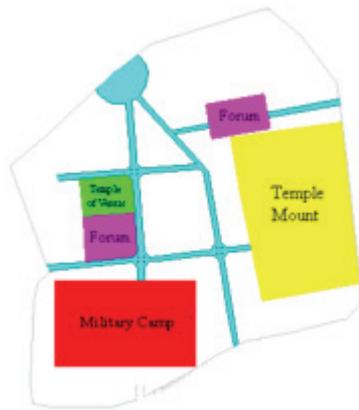
temporary addition to support the arch above it, which had been weakened after the damage in the 1808 fire; the wall blocks the view of the rotunda, sits on top of the graves of four 12th century kings, and is no longer structurally necessary. There is a difference of opinion as to whether it is the 13th Station of the Cross, which others identify as the lowering of Jesus from the cross and locate between the 11th and 12th station up on Calvary. The lamps that hang over the stone are contributed by Armenians, Copts, Greeks and Latins.

- To the left, or west, is The Rotunda of the Anastasis beneath the larger of the church's two domes, in the center of which is The Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre itself. The Edicule has two rooms. The first one holds The Angel's Stone, a fragment of the stone believed to have sealed the tomb after Jesus' burial. The second one is the tomb itself. Under the status quo the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Armenian Apostolic Churches all have rights to the interior of the tomb, and all three communities celebrate the Divine Liturgy or Holy Mass there daily. It is also used for other ceremonies on special occasions, such as the Holy Saturday ceremony of the Holy Fire celebrated by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem. To its rear, within a chapel constructed of iron latticework upon a stone base semicircular in plan, lies the altar used by the Coptic Orthodox.
- Beyond that to the rear of the Rotunda is a very rough hewn chapel, containing an opening to a rock-cut chamber, from which several kokh-tombs radiate. Although this space was discovered comparatively recently, and contains no identifying marks, many Christians believe it to be to be the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea in which the Syriac Orthodox celebrate their Liturgy on Sundays. To the right of the sepulchre on the southeastern side of the Rotunda is the Chapel of the Apparition which is reserved for Roman Catholic use.
- In the north-east side of the complex there is The Prison of Christ, alleged by the Franciscans to be where Jesus was held. The Greek Orthodox allege that the real place that Jesus was held was the similarly-named Prison of Christ, within their Monastery of the Praetorium, located near the Church of Ecce Homo, at the first station on the Via Dolorosa. The Armenians regard a recess in the Monastery of the Flagellation, a building near the second station on the Via Dolorosa, as the Prison of Christ. A cistern among the ruins near the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu is also alleged to have been the Prison of Christ.
- On the east side opposite the Rotunda is the Crusader structure housing the main altar of the Church, today the Greek Orthodox catholicon. The second, smaller dome sits directly over the center of the transept crossing of the choir where the compass, an omphalos once thought to be the center of the world (associated to the site of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection), is situated. East of this is a large iconostasis demarcating the Greek Orthodox sanctuary before which is set the Patriarchal throne and a throne for visiting episcopal celebrants.
- On the south side of the altar via the ambulatory is a stairway climbing to Calvary (Golgotha), traditionally regarded as the site of Jesus' crucifixion and the most lavishly decorated part of the church. The main altar there belongs to the Greek Orthodox, which contains The Rock of Calvary (12th Station of the Cross). The rock can be seen under glass on both sides of the altar, and beneath the altar there is a hole said to be the place where the cross was raised. The Roman Catholics (Franciscans) have an altar to the side, The Chapel of the Nailing of the Cross (11th Station of the Cross). On the left of the altar, towards the Eastern Orthodox chapel, there is a statue of Mary, believed to be working wonders (the 13th Station of the Cross, where Jesus' body was removed from the cross and given to his family).
- Beneath the Calvary and the two chapels there, on the main floor, there is The Chapel of Adam. According to tradition, Jesus was crucified over the place where Adam's skull was buried. The Rock of Calvary is seen cracked through a window on the altar wall, the crack traditionally being said to be caused by the earthquake that occurred when Jesus died on the cross, and being said by more critical scholars to be the result of quarrying against a natural flaw in the rock<sup>[40]</sup>.

- From The Chapel of Adam, a door leads to The Treasure Room, underneath the Roman Catholic Chapel on the Calvary, holding holy relics and the True Cross. The room is usually closed, and opened on special occasions.
- Further to the east in the ambulatory are three chapels (from south to north): Greek Chapel of the Derision, Armenian Chapel of Division of Robes and Greek Chapel of St. Longinus.
- Between the first two chapels are stairs descending to The Chapel of St. Helena, belonging to the Armenians. From there, another set of 42 stairs leads down to the Roman Catholic Chapel of the Invention of the Holy Cross, believed to be the place where the True Cross was found.
- On the north side of the Chapel of St. Helena is an ornate wrought iron door, beyond which a raised artificial platform affords views of the Quarry, and which leads to the Chapel of St. Vartan. The latter Chapel contains archaeological remains from Hadrian's temple and Constantine's basilica. These areas are usually closed.

### Challenges to Authenticity

### Relationship to the Temple of Aphrodite



Jerusalem after being rebuilt by Hadrian. Two main east-west roads were built rather than the typical one, due to the awkward location of the Temple Mount, blocking the central east-west route

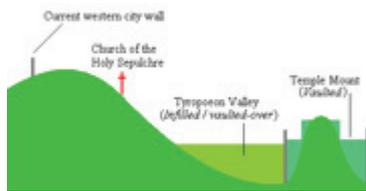
As noted above, the site had been a temple of Aphrodite prior to Constantine's aedifice being built, a detail that Christian tradition puts down to Hadrian deliberately siting the temple over Jesus' tomb (while taking care to avoid destroying it) as a slight against Christianity. However, Hadrian's temple had actually been located there simply because it was the junction of the main north-south road (which is now the Suq Khan-ez-Zeit, etc.) with one of the two main east-west roads (which is now the Via Dolorosa), and directly adjacent to the forum (which is now the location of the (smaller) Muristan); the forum itself had been placed, as is traditional in Roman towns, at the junction of the main north-south road with the (other) main east-west road (which is now El-Bazar/David Street). The temple and forum together took up the entire space between the two main east-west roads (a few above-ground remains of the east end of the temple precinct still survive in the Russian Mission in Exile).

From the archaeological excavations in the 1970s, it is clear that construction took over most of the site of the earlier temple enclosure, and that the Triportico and Rotunda roughly overlapped with the temple building itself; the excavations indicate that the temple extended at least as far back as the Aedicule, and the temple enclosure would have reached back slightly further<sup>[13]</sup>. Virgilio Canio Corbo, a Franciscan priest and archaeologist, who was present at the excavations, estimated from the archaeological evidence that the western retaining wall, of the temple itself, would have passed extremely close to the east side of the supposed tomb<sup>[13]</sup>; if the wall had been any further west any tomb would have been crushed under the weight of the wall (which would be immediately above it), if it had not already been destroyed when foundations for the wall were made.

Other archaeologists have criticised Corbo's reconstructions. Dan Bahat, the former official City Archaeologist of Jerusalem, regards them as unsatisfactory, as there is no known Temple of Aphrodite matching Corbo's design, and no archaeological evidence for Corbo's suggestion that the Temple Building was on a platform raised high enough to avoid including anything sited where the Aedicule is now<sup>[41]</sup>; indeed Bahat notes that many temples to Aphrodite have a rotunda-like design, and argues that there is no archaeological reason to assume that the present rotunda wasn't based on a rotunda in the temple previously on the site<sup>[41]</sup>.

### Relationship of the site to the city

The Bible describes Jesus' tomb as being outside the city wall<sup>[42]</sup>, but the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is in the heart of Hadrian's city, well within the Old City walls. Christian tradition has responded to this issue by claiming that the city had been much narrower in Jesus' time, with the site then having been outside the walls; since Herod Agrippa (41–44) is recorded by history as extending the city to the north (beyond the present northern walls), the required repositioning of the western wall is traditionally attributed to him as well.



If the western city wall was originally to the east of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, then the western hill, on which it is sited, would have been advantageous to an enemy

However, a wall would imply the existence of a defensive ditch outside it, so an earlier wall couldn't be immediately adjacent to site of the tomb, which combined with the presence of the Temple Mount would make the city inside the wall quite thin; essentially for the traditional site to have been outside the wall, the city would have had to be limited to the lower parts of the Tyropoeon Valley, rather than including the defensively advantageous western hill. Since these geographic considerations imply that not including the hill within the walls would be willfully making the city prone to attack from it, some scholars, including the late 19th century surveyors of the Palestine Exploration Fund, consider it unlikely that a wall would ever have been built which would cut the hill off from the city in the valley<sup>[43]</sup>; archaeological evidence for the existence of an earlier city wall in such a location has never been found.

Although, in 2007, Dan Bahat stated that Six graves from the first century were found on the area of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. That means, this place [was] outside of the city, without any doubt, ....<sup>[44]</sup>, the dating of the tombs is based on the fact that they are in the kokh style, which was common in first century; however, the kokh style of tomb was also common in the first to third centuries BC<sup>[45]</sup>.

The likelihood of a first century tomb being built to the west of the city is questionable, as according to the late first century Rabbinic leader, Akiba ben Joseph, quoted in the Mishnah, tombs should not be built to the west of the city, as the wind in Jerusalem generally blows from the west, and would blow the smell of the corpses and their impurity over the city, and the Temple Mount<sup>[46]</sup>. Additionally, the Aedicule would be quite close to the city even the west wall of the city had been to its east; yet Akiba remarks that Jewish law insists that tombs should not be built within 50 cubits of a city<sup>[46]</sup>. The archaeological record indicates that the instructions reported by Akiba, for choosing a burial location, were rigidly adhered to; almost all of the tombs from classical Jerusalem are to the east of the city, on the Mount of Olives, except for a few located over a kilometre to the west, and those in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre<sup>[47]</sup>

### Other possible sites

Although the identification of the Aedicule as the site of Jesus' tomb is not a tenet of faith for any major Christian denomination, many Catholic and Orthodox Christians hold fast to this traditional location. However, due to the many issues the site raises, several scholars have rejected its validity.

Additionally many Protestants have often opposed the traditional location simply because it has previously received support from Catholics.<sup>[48]</sup>

After time spent in Palestine in 1882–83, Charles George Gordon (General Gordon) found a location outside the old city walls, which he suggested to have been the real location of Golgotha. Although the Church of the Holy Sepulchre has its tomb just a few yards away from its Golgotha, there is no particular reason to regard this close juxtaposition as a necessity; however, Gordon followed this principle, concluding that his site for Golgotha must also be the approximate location for Jesus' burial, and therefore identified a nearby tomb, now called the Garden Tomb, as the location for the event. Pottery and archaeological findings in the area have subsequently been dated to the seventh century BC, so in the opinion of archaeologists the Garden Tomb site would have been abandoned by the first century<sup>[49]</sup>. Despite the archaeological discoveries, the Garden Tomb has become a popular place of pilgrimage among Protestants. Mormon leaders have been more hesitant to formally commit to the identification even though many Mormons regard the Garden Tomb as the correct location of Jesus' tomb.

Currently, no other potential site for the tomb has received much attention or academic support.