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The Tomb Of Christ



Synopsis

The Tomb of Christ stands in the ancient Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the heart of the Old City of Jerusalem, strapped together by steel girders put there by the British in 1947 to prevent it from collapsing. In 1986 Martin Biddle undertook the recording of the tomb before urgently-needed restoration. This book uses the results of that investigation to make an exploration of the site, its appearance, and the destructions and rebuilding of the tomb throughout its 2000-year history. Throughout its history, the tomb has been drawn, painted, engraved, photographed, shown in mosaics, modeled in wood, stone, glass and precious metals and copied full-size in churches throughout Europe. This study brings together this evidence and the archaeological recording in three dimensions, including photogrammetric survey to reveal the form and appearance of the tomb through its successive changes.

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Customer Reviews

This meticulous study sets out to define what it is that we know about the tomb of Jesus and Edicule, the little house that has covered the tomb since the early fourth century. Oxford archaeologist Biddle proceeds backward from the present, and the reader will quickly sense that this survey of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was conducted without restrictions, using traditional methods of architectural archaeology and the most recent techniques of photogrammetry. Over 100 figures, including 30 color and 42 black-and-white illustrations, make this painstaking analysis easy to follow. Lengthy footnotes for each of the eight chapters and epilog, as well as a long bibliography and helpful index, make this a work sure to remain in reference use. Libraries staying current on

archaeological investigations and those seeking to offer the best about this site of popular interest are encouraged to include this in their collection. ALeroy Hommerding, Citrus Cty. Lib. Syst., Inverness, FL Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

BIDDLE is Astor Senior Research Fellow in Medieval Archaeology, Hertford College, Oxford, and the Director and Secretary of Winchester Excavations, which he co-founded in 1962. He has written and edited a number of books, including, with Frank Barlow, Winchester

It was a helpful book and went into more detail than the PBS video episode "Secrets of the Dead: Tomb of Christ" and thus, was a real help in my research paper.

A beautiful book.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is a wonderful place. Yes, different denominations fight to retain their spaces within it, except when it comes to paying for repairs, and a Muslim holds the key as a sort of referee, but you couldn't make it up. Those evangelicals who prefer the spurious garden tomb want an escapist Christ as opposed to one who lived in the real, sinful world. There is lots of evidence from manuscripts as to the authenticity of this place and they are faithfully reproduced in this book. I've been there three times and it's a place that works on me, even when I had to be up at 4am to go to a mass in the chapel over Golgotha because it was the only time we could get an altar. The emperor Constantine commissioned this church to be built in 326 CE. At first, there were two churches: one on the site of Jesus's crucifixion, the other on his tomb. The two were joined together hence its odd shape. The church has been rebuilt in several places. It has been the climax for Christian pilgrimages for 16 centuries. How do we know the site is genuine? Hardly any serious scholars doubt that this site is genuine. There was a flourishing Christian community in Jerusalem from 33 CE (the time of Jesus's death) until the time when a Roman temple was built on the site. It is thought that the Romans wanted to stop Christians praying here. They built a temple to their god Venus. This would keep Christians away. In fact, it served as a marker. According to Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, Constantine's builders demolished the temple and built the church. Real or not, it is estimated that tens of millions of pilgrims have been here. A legend states that Helena, Constantine's mother, found part of Jesus's cross. Eusebius mentions this in 396. The church needs

rebuilding. It is shared by Roman Catholics, Greek, Armenian, Coptic, Syrian and Ethiopian Orthodox Christians who can't agree on who should pay for which bit to be rebuilt. A fire in 1808 caused the aedicule roof to collapse. An earthquake in 1927 resulted only in minimal repairs. (Previously there had been a fire May 614, again in 935) On 18 October 1009, Fatimid caliph Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah ordered the complete destruction of the church as part of a more general campaign against Christian places of worship in Palestine and Egypt. The damage was extensive, with few parts of the early church remaining.) It remains to be seen how much longer this building can stand. The building is vulnerable, then again so is the God-man who was buried here. When God entrusts himself into our hands, there is risk. Holy place it may be but 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. The more holiness, the close proximity of the devil. To get into the tomb, you have to queue. It is so busy that it opens daily at 4 am until 6.30 pm and there is always a queue. Inside, the tomb is covered with a marble slab. In the past, pilgrims bit pieces of stone away for souvenirs and there would be nothing left at that rate. This tomb was the centre of the world in maps in the Middle Ages. (THE GARDEN TOMB Some Christians believe this was Jesus's tomb because the site is outside the city walls. The gospels say that Jesus was killed outside the walls; the Holy Sepulchre is inside the walls (but only after the walls were rebuilt to enlarge the city at a time later than Jesus). The rock cliff looks like a skull. The gospels state that Jesus was killed at a place called Golgotha (which means 'place of a skull'). However, pictures of the tomb in the 17th Century show that the rock looked different, so the skull is new. The skull-like features are probably the result of cisterns being excavated out of the rock and later breaking away. Furthermore, there is no early tradition about this site. General Gordon of Khartoum discovered this site and wrote to Queen Victoria about it in 1883. She said she preferred to believe the Holy Sepulchre was genuine, because of the evidence of our cousin Helena (i.e. the 4th Century Queen Mother.)) The Holy Fire (the 'Holy Light') for Orthodox Christians happens as a supposed miracle here every year on Holy Saturday, though in 1238, Pope Gregory IX denounced the Holy Fire as a fraud and forbade Franciscans from participating in the ceremony. While the Patriarch is inside the chapel kneeling in front of the stone, there is darkness but far from silence outside. A loud mumbling, and a tense atmosphere follows. When the Patriarch comes out with the two candles lit

and shining brightly in the darkness, a roar of jubilee resounds in the Church. The Russian hegumen Daniil, was present in 1106 CE and said that traditional beliefs "that the Holy Ghost descends upon the Holy Sepulchre in the form of a dove" and "that it is lightning from heaven which kindles the lamps above the Sepulchre of the Lord" are untrue, "but the Divine grace comes down unseen from heaven, and lights the lamps of the Sepulchre of our Lord." (Historian Eusebius wrote in his Vita Constantini (c. 328) about Easter 162 - when the church wardens were about to fill the lamps to make them ready to celebrate the resurrection of Christ, they suddenly noticed that there was no more oil left to pour in the lamps. Upon this, Bishop Narcissus of Jerusalem ordered the candles to be filled with water. He then told the wardens to ignite them. In front of the eyes of all present every single lamp burned as if filled with pure oil. A bit reminiscent of the Jewish Hannukah legend about the lamps in the temple.) Thousands of pilgrims gather in Jerusalem to partake and witness this annual miracle. This book has far better photos than you would get with your camera as you queue for ages and then get jostled by the crowd so much that you are outside it before you have time to take it all in, let alone take decent photos. There are also copious diagrams showing the development of the building. Extensive footnotes and a detailed bibliography confirm that the author knows his stuff. Very interesting, though ultimately, He is not here. He is risen and goes before you.

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