

Archaeologists Make Stunning Discovery at Jesus' Crucifixion Site

For nearly 2,000 years, Christians have believed the Gospel accounts of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now, archaeological evidence uncovered beneath one of Christianity's holiest sites appears to line up with a remarkably specific detail recorded in Scripture.

According to a new segment by the TODAY Show, researchers working beneath the floor of Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre have discovered evidence that olive trees and grapevines grew in the area roughly 2,000 years ago.

Why does that matter?

Because the Gospel of John tells us there was a garden at the place where Jesus was crucified.

"Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been buried" (John 19:41, MEV).

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre stands at the location traditionally revered by Christians as the site of Christ's crucifixion, burial and resurrection. At its heart is the Edicule, a small shrine constructed around what is believed to be the tomb of Jesus.

During restoration work on the historic church floor, archaeologists were given an extraordinary opportunity to investigate what had remained hidden underneath.

Soil samples revealed evidence of a cultivated area containing olives and grapes. When the reporter asked whether the vegetation dated back 2,000 years to the time of Christ, an

archaeologist responded that it dated to approximately that period.

In other words, archaeology provides evidence that this area looked much more like the landscape John described than the massive church standing there today might suggest.



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A tomb. A garden. Jerusalem. And a location Christians have associated with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus for generations.

That does not mean archaeologists have scientifically proven that this particular tomb belonged to Jesus, nor can archaeology prove the supernatural reality of the resurrection. But what researchers can investigate are the physical details surrounding the biblical account. And here, another one of those details appears to fit.

The excavations have revealed much more than ancient vegetation. Archaeologists have encountered layers representing centuries of Jerusalem's history, including crosses associated with pilgrims and artifacts dating back to the Roman period.

One archaeologist described looking beneath the church as essentially turning the pages of a history book.

Yet perhaps the most fascinating "page" is the one that takes researchers back to the world described in John's Gospel.

Scripture does not suddenly become true because archaeology uncovers something beneath Jerusalem. The truth of the gospel has never rested upon whether scientists could find ancient grapevines.

But discoveries like this remind us that Christianity is rooted in history.

Jesus did not enter a mythical world disconnected from real places and real people. He walked the roads of Jerusalem. He was crucified under Roman authority. His body was placed in a tomb.

And that three days later, the tomb was empty.

The ancient evidence beneath the Church of the Holy Sepulchre has now been sealed beneath the restored floor once again. Researchers may not have another opportunity to investigate it for decades.

But what they have already found is worth paying attention to.

Two thousand years after John wrote of a garden beside the place where Christ was crucified, archaeologists are finding evidence that a garden was there.

Sometimes, the stones beneath Jerusalem have quite a story to tell.

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