

Easter at the Garden Tomb

While Easter service for Catholics and some Christians take place at the Holy Sepulcher Church in Jerusalem, services for Protestants are held at the Garden Tomb, the place revered by many as the site where Jesus died and rose from the dead.

The layout of the Garden Tomb allows visitors to sit and pray quietly while viewing what is believed to be Skull Hill, Golgotha, and the tomb where Jesus was reportedly buried. Easter sunrise services are held in English, French and Scandinavian languages.

Tour guides at the Garden Tomb do not claim the site to be the definitive location of the resurrection, but they point out the possibility of it being the garden of Joseph of Arimathea, the man who offered his tomb for Jesus' burial.

On one side the garden faces a hill that is identified possibly as Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified. The jagged rocks of the hill look like a skull, but years of erosion have mitigated the image.

But the focus here is not to prove whether it is the actual site of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus; the goal is to provide an experience that allows Christians to reflect on what Jesus did for them 2,000 years ago.

"The place is not particularly a shrine to us," Richard Meryon, CEO of the Garden Tomb, told Travelujah. "It is the person who is important to us here, not the place. We open the Bible and talk through the gospel accounts and the good news of the weekend that changed the world."

Celebrating Easter as the "sun comes up in a place that looks like the place where the resurrection took place, to do that in Jerusalem in front of an empty tomb is a phenomenal experience," Meryon said. He said the power of the

resurrection is not limited geographically.

The Garden Tomb (Jerusalem) Association, a charitable trust based in the United Kingdom, manages the site, which was purchased in 1894.

Easter services: An English-speaking service will be held at the Garden Tomb on Good Friday from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m., and the garden will remain open for private prayers until 5: 50 p.m. On Saturday the Garden Tomb will host a service in Arabic at 4 p.m. And on April 4, Easter sunrise services for English speakers will be held at 6:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m.; both led by Richard Meryon, with a message by Andrew Jack. A Scandinavian-speaking service will be held at 11 a.m. and a French-speaking service will be held at 12:30 p.m., which is the last service of the day.

Nicole Jansezian writes for , a Christian social network focused on travel to the Holy Land. Travelujah is a vibrant online community offering high quality Christian content, user and expert blogs, travel tours and planning services for people interested in connecting with or traveling to the Holy Land.