

Charisma News Brief: Excavation Reveals Surprises at Ancient Jerusalem Church

Continued work on a two-year, \$11 million cooperative restoration project has revealed some fascinating details of centuries of patchwork building at one of Christianity's holiest sites.

Roman experts recently finished weeks of precarious archaeological work in one of the most sensitive parts of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, a church near where many Christians believe Jesus was crucified, buried and rose from the dead and one of the world's oldest standing churches.

Media reports confirm that archaeologists from the Department of Antiquities at the University of Rome excavated the area around the Holy Edicule, or the main tabernacle. Archaeologists reportedly work around the clock for seven days and seven nights—from June 20-27—exploring the area in front of the Edicule, which is built on the site of the cave where Jesus is believed to have been buried.

During the excavation, the Edicule was closed to the public but efforts were accelerated to minimize disruptions from visitors.

Excavation efforts revealed surprising information about the early Christian layout of the Edicule, which dates back to the 4th century. Under two white marble floor slabs, workers discovered a coin hoard that included coins minted until the time of Roman Emperor Valens, who ruled from 364 to 378 AD.

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Another interesting discovery included a fragment of wall cladding—the exterior of the wall—from the main Edicule that was covered in graffiti from the 18th century in languages including Greek, Armenian and Latin.

Inside the Chapel of the Angel tomb, a section shows an earlier marble floor from the Middle Ages. Part of the bottom of the burial chamber is similar to those found in the northern portion of the Rotunda.

Remains of the base of the balustrade of the 16th-century liturgical enclosure have also been uncovered. They had remain in use until some renovations took place in the 19th century.

It has been filled in and arranged to encourage travelers to visit it since the early Christian period. {eoa}

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Shawn A. Akers *is the online editor at Charisma Media.*