

JERUSALEM SCENES

Skull Hill



With acknowledgements to Brother Leen Ritmeyer © Ritmeyer Archaeological Design

Just north of the present city walls, near the Damascus Gate, is a bus station, just to the right of our picture. At the back of the bus station is a Muslim cemetery on a hill, the face of the hill being a sheer cliff face. If you look carefully at the centre of this cliff face it bears a passing resemblance to a skull, with a nose set between two eye sockets. In the nineteenth century, Protestants from Britain and the USA, disgusted by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, were keen to find a more seemly site for the crucifixion and resurrection, and they found it here. Although earlier visitors to Jerusalem suggested the identification, it was the British war hero and keen Bible student General Charles Gordon who first advanced arguments for the site in 1883 during an extended stay in Jerusalem, shortly before his famous death in war in the Sudan.

To the left of Skull Hill lies a garden, owned by the Garden Tomb Association, set up by British Protestants who purchased the site in 1894. Our picture is taken from the edge of this garden. The garden was purchased because within it is to be found a tomb, identified as being the tomb of Jesus. However, we are specifically told in John 19:41 that the tomb in which Jesus was laid was (appropriately) new, presumably prepared by Joseph of Arimathea for his own death. The Garden Tomb, as it is called, is typical of the time of the Old Testament kingdom of Judah, there being a large cemetery in this area of those times. It was therefore certainly not a new tomb. And it is unlikely that the adjacent hill looked anything like this 2,000 years ago. Nevertheless, this peaceful garden, and the stark hill adjacent to it, give a good idea of the scene of those momentous events which achieved so much for us in those far-off times, though it is best to conclude that God does not wish us to know the exact site because of man's misuse of such knowledge.—*T.B.*