

JERUSALEM SCENES

Aceldama



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Last month we showed a view of the Hinnom Valley west of the Old City of Jerusalem; this month we show the Hinnom further down, where it joins the Kidron to follow a rugged, winding course down to the Dead Sea. Scattered on the slopes of the combined valley are various Arab houses, but Hinnom itself is here a narrow ravine, mostly free of houses.

At the centre of our picture is the walled Greek Orthodox Monastery of St. Onuphrius. In this area is the traditional site of Aceldama, meaning 'The Field of Blood', the name given to the place where Judas Iscariot met his dreadful end and which afterwards became a burying place for strangers (Mt. 27:5-8; Acts 1:18,19). One can readily imagine him hanging himself on some tree growing out of these precipitous crags and being killed on the rocks below when the rope broke, an explanation which seems to be required to harmonise both the above passages.

The identification of this place with Aceldama lacks authenticity, however, being an invention of later times than the first century, and the area has interest for the Bible student in a different direction today. At the time of Christ this was an exclusive burial area for the family of the high priest Annas (Lk. 3:2; Jno. 18:13). The most elaborate of the tombs found here is situated some way to the left of the monastery compound, where two erect cypresses can be seen on the picture, and here, it is believed, following Josephus, the wicked Annas was buried.—*Tony Benson*