

## The Crucifixion of Jesus

***“So they took Jesus, 17 and carrying the cross by himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew[a] is called Golgotha. 18 There they crucified him and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. 19 Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, “Jesus of Nazareth,[b] the King of the Jews.” (john 19:16-19)***

On this day we will be ascending to the Temple Mount, in Old City Jerusalem. This will be my favorite day on the trip by far! The Temple Mount, also known as “al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf, al-Aqsa Mosque” compound, or simply “al-Aqsa Mosque”, and sometimes as Jerusalem's sacred esplanade, is a hill in the Old City of Jerusalem that has been venerated as a holy site in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam for thousands of years.

This place has quite the history! The name of the site is disputed, primarily between Muslims and Jews, in the context of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some Arab-Muslim commentators and some scholars attempt to deny Jewish connection with the Temple Mount.

To the Jews and Christians, the Temple Mount had a mystique because it was above what were believed to be the ruins of the Temple of Solomon. After the destruction of the temple in 70 CE the area became desolate. In 638, Muslim forces captured Jerusalem, toward which Muhammad had originally directed his followers to pray. According to the Quran, Muhammad made a magical night journey from Mecca to “al-masjid al-aqsa” (the farthest mosque). Later writings said he traveled from there to heaven. Not discovering the farthest mosque, which they believed had been in Jerusalem, Muslim rulers built a small prayer hall at the top the southern end of the Temple Mount, which Muslims call “al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf” (the Noble Sanctuary), near where Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers. Builders oriented the mihrab in the southern wall in the direction of Mecca, toward which Muslims were then praying. The mosque was built directly on the spot where the temple of Solomon was located.

Al-Aqsa Mosque has been rebuilt and enlarged many times. Christian Crusaders repurposed it as a palace, adding a rose window to an area used as a chapel. Today, Al-Aqsa Mosque, its original southern wall and Crusader window intact, encloses more than an acre, accommodating 4000 worshippers.

Within the Old City Jerusalem we will also see St. Anne’s Church and the Pools of Bethesda where the healing at the pool took place. We will end the day walking the Via Dolorosa, the traditional path that Jesus walked from the Antonia Fortress to the church of the Holy Sepulcher, where it is believed the location of Jesus grave site.

The evening will be spent at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer within the Old City. The church was built in 1889. There, we will visit the Bishop Charlie Azar and the church leaders about their mission to the area and the people of Jerusalem.

I really hope this little article can excite some of you into the desire to go to the Holy Land sometime in your life. I will indeed be encouraging another excursion like this one again in the future. Thank You for the time that allows me to be in this spiritual center of the world!

AMEN

Pastor Tony Scheer