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# Where Was Jesus Crucified?

*“When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left”  
(Luke 23:33a).*

A question that Christians often ask concerning Christ’s death is “Where was He crucified?” It is almost as if we think that seeing the actual spot—being able to touch the place where the cross stood and meditate for a few moments at that sacred location where our Savior died—would give us the comfort that our hearts need and the strength our walk with Him requires.

When a visitor goes to Jerusalem to see the historic city and observe the places where Christianity began, he is usually shown two locations where the crucifixion might possibly have taken place. He is shown the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which encloses a large rock and a depression that is similar to a tomb. It is claimed that the large rock was the place where Jesus died, and the tomb-like cave is supposedly the garden tomb where He was buried. The second site is Gordon’s Calvary, a site that was discovered by Charles George Gordon in the nineteenth century. Noticing that the rock formation beneath it resembled the bony features of a skull, he identified it as Calvary. He believed that its configuration perfectly matched the name of the place where Jesus was crucified. The case for the authenticity of each place has been argued in detail; however, whether or not either of the two is really the place where Jesus was crucified remains an open question.

The New Testament describes the place we call “Calvary” with three characteristics. A great lesson can be learned from each description.

*It was located outside the gate of the city, as a place of shame.* The writer of Hebrews said,

“Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach” (Hebrews 13:12, 13). In Old Testament times, no sin offering could be made within Israel’s camp. The goat that bore the guilt of Israel was taken outside the camp to be slain. This goat was a type, and our Lord was the antitype. He, as our true sin offering, was taken outside the city to be nailed upon a tree, where He became a curse for us (Galatians 3:13).

*It was near a road, so those crucified there were subjected to mocking* (Matthew 27:39). The people walking past the crosses cast scoffing accusations at Jesus. They were saying to Him, “Why do You not come down from the cross? You said that You would destroy the temple and build it back up in three days, but You cannot even save Yourself. If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross” (see Matthew 27:40). The chief priests, the elders, the soldiers, and both of the thieves being crucified with Jesus joined the passersby in uttering similar taunts. They said, “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him . . .” (Matthew 27:42, 43). Jesus did not answer them. He knew that He was fulfilling His Father’s will. He could easily have come down from the cross. He could have silenced every criticism tossed at Him, but He chose to stay on the cross to provide salvation for us.

J. W. McGarvey wrote of their scoffing:

They reminded Jesus of his words about destroying the temple, when they were committing that very act. They [spoke] of his building it again when Jesus was about to die that he might rise. They taunt[ed] him with saving others, yet being unable to save himself, which is the great truth of the atonement which the Lord was then making. They promised to believe if he [would] come down from the cross, yet his being lifted upon the cross was the very act which would convince them [John 8:28].<sup>1</sup>

*It was also near a garden.* John said, "Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid" (John 19:41). We look back through the tomb to the cross. The resurrection declares that the One who died on the cross was the Son of God. When Jesus rose from the dead, the issue of who He was became a settled and confirmed matter. The only way anyone can deny His deity is to deny that He rose from the dead. However, the New Testament gives irrevocable testimony that He rose.

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<sup>1</sup>J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton, *The Fourfold Gospel or A Harmony of the Four Gospels* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1914), 727–28.

One must discard the New Testament completely in order to deny the testimony of Christ's deity.

We may never know the exact spot where Jesus was crucified, but we can know some characteristics of that place through the descriptions given in the Scriptures. While God did not show us the actual site where His Son died, He did give us the assurance and integrity of His Word. Instead of relics, He gave us a divine record. Instead of a sacred spot, He gave us the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit's testimony is far greater and more meaningful than a physical place we can touch.

Jesus endured the shame at the place called "The Skull" so that He might be the perfect sin offering for us. He suffered the slander in order to be our true Savior. He was buried near the cross so that He might rise from the dead and confirm that He was the Son of God.

Eddie Cloer



*It is not when Jesus was born that matters; it is why He was born. It is not where He was crucified that is important; it is the divine nature of His death. We find in His atoning sacrifice the only place that we can receive salvation.*