

DD 18 – Jesus' Last Days: Burial in Ancient Israel

Modern American customs around death:

- Death in hospital or home
- Taken to funeral home where body is prepared by strangers
 - Washing
 - (Embalmed)
 - Dressed in formal clothes for viewing
- Placed in elaborate wooden/metal casket
- Viewing the body/Visiting with the grieving family (a few hours)-- at funeral home or church building
- Buried above or below ground in vault or cremated (with ashes buried or scattered.)
- Interment usu. takes place 3 days to months afterward.
- Headstone ASAP. Flowers on grave.

Ancient Jewish customs

- Death at home
- Body prepared at home by family (no synagogue)
 - Washing
 - Spices
 - Simple shroud
- No casket; Placed in family tomb underground (cave, carved, or hole in ground)
- One year later, bones placed in a stone ossuary. Known as “Second Burial”
- Burial takes place within 24 hours, working around the sabbath.
 - In Jewish thought: Between death and burial, soul is in limbo between earth and heaven.
 - Not in body, but not in Heaven.
 - hovers around the body, in a state of disorientation at its sudden expulsion from the body that was its home for a lifetime.
 - Once body is buried, soul can return to heaven
 - Heavenward journey can't begin until body is interred.

- Simplicity is paramount;
- no cremation – burning was a disgrace – you'll need your body in life to come.
 - The burning of the body so that even the bones were consumed was considered a disgrace (Amos ii. 1); and was inflicted as a punishment (Josh. vii. 25)
- To be denied burial was most humiliating
 - it meant "to become food for beasts of prey" (Deut. xxviii. 26; I Kings xiii. 22, xiv. 11, xxi. 24; II Kings ix. 34-37; Jer. vii. 33; viii. 1, 2; ix. 21 [22]; xiv. 16; Ezek. xxix. 5; Ps. lxxix. 2, 3).

Many Cemeteries on Mount of Olives



Large Cemetery = Necropolis = City of the Dead

Jewish Cemetery – Largest on Mount of Olives

Today:

- Stones instead of flowers
 - Practical:
 - Flowers aren't around
 - Stones last longer
 - In a rocky desert, shallow graves, created by covering the dead with rocks, was the norm. Perhaps this is a continuation of that practice – it's a sign of love and affection for the dead by "protecting the body" symbolically with stones.
 - Historical:
 - God commanded Joshua to create a memorial of stones
 - Spiritual:
 - prevent souls from leaving their burial spots?
 - might have prevented evil spirits and demons from entering burial sites and taking possession of human souls?
- Candles inside
- Burial below ground; no cremation
- "Tomb" above ground
- Some graves date back to before Jesus – it has been a place of cemeteries for 1000s of years.

Why so many graves on Mount of Olives?

- Cemeteries could not be inside Jerusalem boundary (for ritual purity)
- When the Messiah comes the resurrection of the dead will begin there – Zechariah 14:4 – *On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives, which lies before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley; so that half of the Mount shall withdraw northwards, and the other half southwards.*

John 5:28-29—“Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”

- ⁵⁰*Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.* ⁵¹*At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split.* ⁵²*The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.* ⁵³*After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many.* Matthew 27:50
- Jewish legend: devout deceased Jews will burrow underground to get to the Mount of Olives in the last days. Those already buried on Mount of Olives are spared the journey.
- The Kidron Valley, a/k/a the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2, 12), where the final judgment will take place.

Jesus and Graves

- Every time Jesus entered Jerusalem it would have been via the Mount of Olives.
 - The bringer of life passed through “death” on the way to the Temple
- You can see Temple Mount from the Cemeteries on the Mount of Olives. And Jesus could see the tombs on the Mount of Olives from the Teaching Steps of the Temple. Thus:

Matt 23:27 ‘Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth. ²⁸*So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.* ²⁹*‘Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous,* ³⁰*and you say, “If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we*

would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.”

- Tombs, esp cave tombs, were white-washed (painted/mark) to signal to people that a dead person was inside (ritually unclean).
- From Teaching Steps Jesus could also see the huge tombs o the rich at the foot of the Mount.



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*Muslim Cemetery outside Golden Gate
Muslims are buried within 24 hours, like Jews are*



Christian Cemetery

What the Raising of Lazarus Tells us About Death and Burial

John 11 Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

17 When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, 19and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. 20When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. 21Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.’ 23Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’ 24Martha said to him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’ 25Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’ 27She said to him, ‘Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.’

28 When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, ‘The Teacher is here and is calling for you.’ 29And when she heard

it, she got up quickly and went to him. 30Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’ 33When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. 34He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ 35Jesus began to weep. 36So the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’ 37But some of them said, ‘Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?’

38 Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39Jesus said, ‘Take away the stone.’ Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, ‘Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.’ 40Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?’ 41So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, ‘Father, I thank you for having heard me. 42I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.’ 43When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ 44The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’

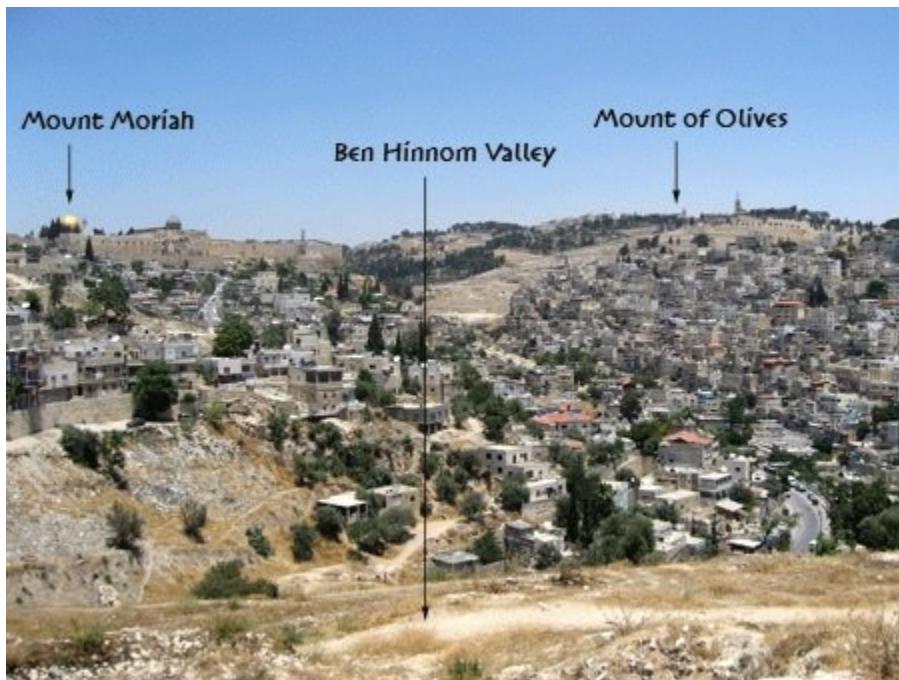
- Cave – soft limestone left many natural caves.
 - Easier to adapt nature than dig a new hole
 - Caves were often large enough for many burials. Family tombs.
- Rolling Stones



- Stench – Lazarus may not have been covered in spices. Caves, however, are cooler than outside temperatures.
- three days is truly dead. = Soul lingers three days; four is *Beyond* death.

- Cloth – In Israel Jewish dead are normally laid to rest in a cloth smock and shroud, without a coffin.

Gehenna – not Hades, not Sheol, not Hell... Very close to Temple



Matthew 5:22: "...whoever shall say, 'You fool', shall be guilty enough to go into Gehenna."

Matthew 5:29: "...it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into Gehenna."

Matthew 5:30: "...better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into Gehenna."

Matthew 10:28: "...rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul [Greek: ψυχή] and body in Gehenna."

Matthew 18:9: "It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than with two eyes to be thrown into the Gehenna...."

Matthew 23:15: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you... make one proselyte...twice as much a child of Gehenna as yourselves."

Matthew 23:33, to the Pharisees: "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of Gehenna?"

- Gehenna, a/k/a the valley of the son of Hinnom.
- Associated with fire and burning flesh
- Place of Pagan child sacrifice to god Molech
 - Jeremiah 7:31 "And they go on building the high place of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire--which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind."
 - Molech (Jeremiah 32:35) or Topeth. 2 Kings 23:10.
- May have also been the valley where blood and offal from the Temple sacrifices was left to rot. Flies, maggots, stench of death, etc.

Where was Judas Buried Akeldama – “field of Blood” a/k/a the Potter’s field



Acts 1:18-19 – This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

- Valley
- SW of Old City
- Where Judas hanged himself and/or fell in a field...

*Matt 27: Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, ‘It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money.’ After conferring together, they used them to buy the potter’s field as a place to bury foreigners. For this reason that field has been called the **Field of Blood** [me –Money] to this day. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah, ‘And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one on whom a price had been set, on whom some of the people of Israel had set a price, and they gave them for the **potter’s field**, as the Lord commanded me.’*

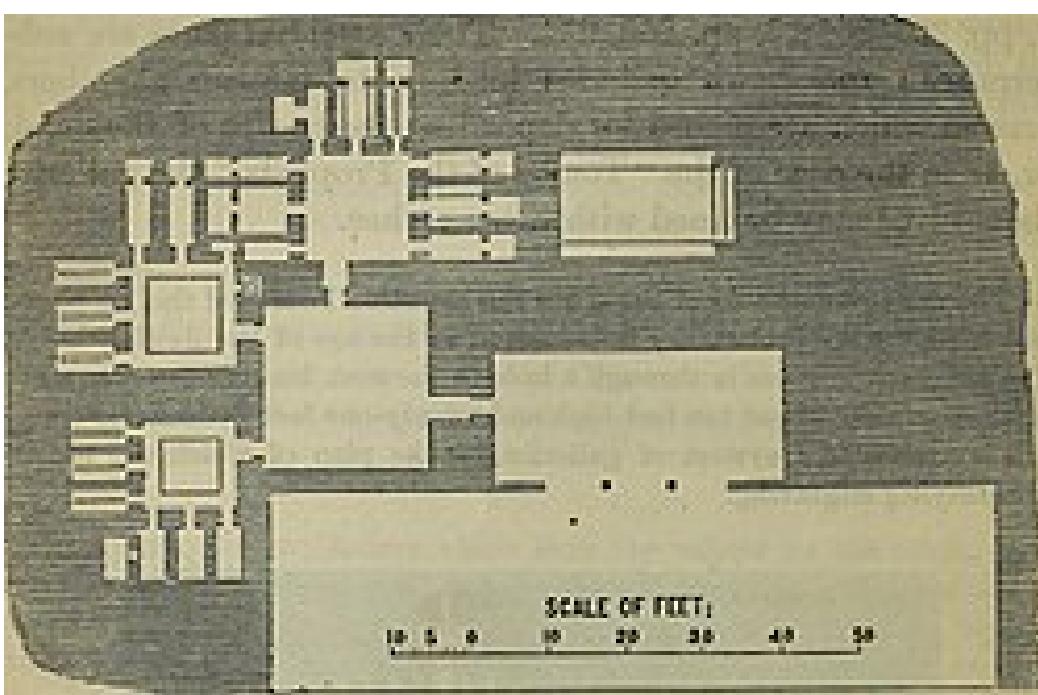
The Sarcophagus of Herod the “Great”



Sarc = flesh + Phag = eat Flesh eating box



Tomb of the Kings



Absalom's Tomb/Monument

