



Good day Worthy Knights,

In this part 70, The Garden of Gethsemane

(Wikipedia)

Gethsemane

Gethsemane was a garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem where, according to the four Gospels of the New Testament, Jesus underwent the agony in the garden and was arrested the night before his crucifixion. It is a place of great resonance in Christianity. There are several small olive groves in church property, all adjacent to each other and identified with biblical Gethsemane.

Etymology

Gethsemane appears in the Greek original of the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark as Γεθσημανή (Gethsēmané). The name is derived from the Aramaic ܩܬܫܡܢܐ (Gaṯ-šmānê), meaning "oil press". Matthew (26:36) and Mark (14:32) call it χωρίον (chōrion), meaning a place or estate. The Gospel of John says Jesus entered a garden (κήπος kêpos) with his disciples.

Location

According to the New Testament it was a place at or near the western foot of the Mount of Olives, that Jesus and his disciples customarily visited, which allowed Judas to find him on the night of his arrest.

William McClure Thomson, author of *The Land and the Book*, first published in 1880, wrote: "When I first came to Jerusalem, and for many years afterward, this plot of ground was open to all whenever they chose to come and meditate beneath its very old olive trees.

The Latins, however, have within the last few years succeeded in gaining sole possession, and have built a high wall around it. The Greeks have invented another site a little to the north of it.

My own impression is that both are wrong. The position is too near the city, and so close to what must have always been the great thoroughfare eastward, that our Lord would scarcely have selected it for retirement on that dangerous and dismal night. I am inclined to place the garden in the secluded vale several hundred yards to the north-east of the present Gethsemane."

All of the foregoing is based on long-held tradition and the conflating of the synoptic accounts of Mark (14:31) and Matthew (26:36) with the John account (18:1). Mark and Matthew record that Jesus went to "a place called the oil press (Gethsemane)" and John states he went to a garden near the Kidron Valley.

Modern scholarship acknowledges that the exact location of Gethsemane is unknown.

History

The Garden of Gethsemane became a focal site for early Christian pilgrims. It was visited in 333 by the anonymous "Pilgrim of Bordeaux", whose *Itinerarium Burdigalense* is the earliest description left by a Christian traveller in the Holy Land. In his *Onomasticon*, Eusebius of Caesarea notes the site of Gethsemane located "at the foot of the Mount of Olives", and he adds that "the faithful were accustomed to go there to pray".

Eight ancient olive trees growing in the Latin site of the garden may be 900 years old.

In 1681 Croatian knights of the Holy Order of Jerusalem, Paul, Antun and James bought the Gethsemane Garden and donated it to the Franciscan community, which owns it to this day. A three-dimensional plate on the right side next to the entrance to the garden describes the aforementioned gift to the community.

Olive trees

A study conducted by the National Research Council of Italy in 2012 found that several olive trees in the garden are amongst the oldest known to mankind. Dates of 1092, 1166 and 1198 AD were obtained by carbon dating from older parts of the trunks of three trees. DNA tests show that the trees were originally planted from the same parent plant.

This could indicate an attempt to keep the lineage of an older individual intact. Then again, the three trees tested could have been sprouts reviving from the older roots. "The results of tests on trees in the Garden of Gethsemane have not settled the question of whether the gnarled trees are the very same which sheltered Jesus because olive trees can grow back from roots after being cut down", researchers said.

However, Mauro Bernabei (NRC of Italy) writes: "All the tree trunks are hollow inside so that the central, older wood is missing ... In the end, only three from a total of eight olive trees could be successfully dated. The dated ancient olive trees do, however, not allow any hypothesis to be made with regard to the age of the remaining five giant olive trees." Wendy Babcox (associate Professor University of South Florida) said that the roots of the oldest trees are possibly much older and then points out the traditional claim that the trees are two thousand years old.

