

Archaeologists Reportedly Uncover Site Where Trial of Jesus Took Place

January 5, 2015, Monday @ 19:10 in Society » ARCHAEOLOGY | Views: 52



According to the Gospel of John, the trial took place near a gate and on a bumpy stone pavement. Photo: Wikimedia

the Ottoman era. The museum now offers tours to the prison, referred to as the Kishle.

"For two years we excavated this by hand. We dismantled the prison cells but preserved the English, Arabic and Hebrew graffiti that the prisoners had carved," said **Amit Re'em**, the **Jerusalem** district archeologist from the **Antiquities Authority**, as quoted by the **Jerusalem Post**.

The exact site, where the **trial of Jesus** took place, remains unknown, leaving room for heated debate on the issue. The controversy stems from differing interpretations of the four New Testament Gospels, according to Fox News.

"For those Christians who care about accuracy in regards to historical facts, this is very forceful," said Yisca Harani, an expert on Christianity and pilgrimage to the Holy Land. "For others, however, those who come for the general mental exercise of being in **Jerusalem**, they don't care as long as [their journey] ends in Golgotha — the site of the Crucifixion."

Today, many Christian pilgrims to **Jerusalem** walk the Stations of the Cross, or **Via Dolorosa**, taking them from where it is believed Roman procurator Pontius **Pilate** held the **trial** and sentenced **Jesus** to death, to where **Jesus** was eventually crucified and buried.

Harani said that since pilgrims started making their way to **Jerusalem** centuries ago, the route of the **Via Dolorosa** has changed several times, depending on who ruled the city at the time and what they deemed important.

The debate over the site of the **trial** continues among Christian spiritual leaders, historians and archaeologists. Questions about the location stem from various interpretations of the Gospels, which describe how **Jesus** of Nazareth was brought before **Pilate** in the "praetorium," a Latin term for a general's tent within a Roman encampment.

Some say **Pilate's** praetorium would have been in the military barracks, others say the Roman general would probably have been a guest in the **palace** built by Herod.

There are two dominant theories. According to one, **Jesus** was tried at a military encampment. This makes the Antonia Fortress, located near the Temple Mount, a likely site. According to the other, the **trial** took place at the **Herod's palace**, which many believe was located where the museum now stands.

According to the **Gospel of John**, the **trial** took place near a gate and on a bumpy stone pavement. Such a description matches archeological findings near the Kishle.

"There is, of course, no inscription stating it happened here, but everything — archaeological, historical and gospel accounts — all falls into place and makes sense," said Shimon Gibson, an archaeology professor at the University of North Carolina, as quoted by the Washington Post.

Archaeologists in **Jerusalem** have reportedly uncovered the remains of the **palace** of **Herod** the Great, believed to be a place where the **trial** of **Jesus** took place, the Washington Post reports.

The **Tower of David Museum**, located in **Jerusalem's** Old City, began excavations over a decade ago in the adjacent building, which was used as a prison in



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The Rev. David Pileggi, minister of Christ Church, an Anglican congregation whose complex includes a guesthouse and heritage center near the museum, said the discovery inside the prison confirmed "what everyone expected all along, that the **trial** took place near the Tower of David."

So, now that it is open to the public, could the prison become a new holy site for Christian pilgrims or even change the path of the **Via Dolorosa**?

"I don't think that will happen anytime soon," Pileggi said. "What makes a place holy is the fact that people have gone there for hundreds of years, prayed, cried and even celebrated there, so I don't think there will be changes to the route anytime soon. But the prison does give us a clearer explanation of **Jerusalem's** history."

In the **Tower of David Museum**, named for the medieval citadel in which it sits, director Eilat Lieber hopes the prison will eventually become a standard attraction for Christians. Museum officials have already started working with tour guides versed in Christian history, who can explain the significance of the remaining rugged walls and carefully carved tunnels underneath.

Tags: Jerusalem, palace, Herod, trial, Jesus, Tower of David Museum, Amit Re'em, Antiquities Authority, Via Dolorosa, Pilate, Gospel of John, Kishle

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