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Candida Moss



# Oops! Jesus' Last Steps Are in the Wrong Place

The discovery of the site where he was sentenced to die confirms that pilgrims are off course in Jerusalem.



Archeologists may have uncovered the site of the trial of Jesus. While excavating the floors underneath an abandoned building next to the Tower of David museum in Jerusalem, archeologists came across the foundation walls and sewage system that lay beneath Herod the Great's Jerusalem palace.



According to scholars, this is most likely the place that Jesus was sentenced to die. In the Gospels, Jesus was brought before Pontius Pilate in a "praetorium," a Latin term for the general's tent in a military encampment. Modern historians locate this praetorium in Herod's Palace and now, for the first time, the palace is accessible to public view.

The unveiling of this site marks a fine confluence of archeology and biblical text; it is a wonderful opportunity for people to visit an important Christian site. The only problem is that for hundreds of years tourists have already been visiting the site of the trial of Jesus, in a completely different part of Jerusalem. The Via Dolorosa or "Way of Sorrows," the road that Jesus is believed to have travelled as he carried his cross from his trial to his crucifixion, is currently at the top of must-see lists of religious attractions for visitors to the city. Each year more than a million Christian pilgrims visit Jerusalem hoping to retrace the steps of the Savior.

The Via Dolorosa ends at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and is marked by nine stations of the cross. The first of these commemorates Jesus's

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sentencing before Pilate, and is found at the Antonia Fortress, the traditional location for the trial. But the route of the Via Dolorosa, like so many religious sites in Israel, doesn't have a particularly strong historical pedigree—it was established only in the 18th century

If Jesus wasn't tried at the Antonia Fortress then the Via Dolorosa has been wildly mis-mapped. To paraphrase Indiana Jones, they're walking in the wrong place.

This may come as unwelcome news to those in the tourist industry but to archeologists the only surprising thing is that the discovery is making news now.

In her 2012 book *The Archeology of the Holy Land from the Destruction of Solomon's temple to the Muslim Conquest*, Professor Jodi Magness of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, writes, "The *praetorium* – the palace of the Roman governor in Jerusalem – was Herod's palace, not the Antonia fortress. Therefore, Jesus was sentenced to death and took up the cross not in the area to the north of the Temple Mount, but on the western side of the city. This means that the route walked by Jesus is different from the one walked by modern pilgrims (the Via Dolorosa)." Magness told me that this wasn't even her original observation and that "there is nothing new in this story."

Indeed, the remains of Herod's Palace beside the Tower of David were first discovered in 2001. So why is this find making news now? The answer seems to be that this is the first time that tourists will have access to the site and archeologists will be able to profit from Christian interest. The archeological find, some fifteen years in the making, has made headlines only now that the museum has started to offer public tours. The director of the Tower of David Museum, Eliat Lieber, expressed the hope that the prison would eventually become a standard attraction for Christian tourists. History has become news, and now it's open for business.

Whatever the reason, the news of the discovery publicizes the fact that historical accuracy of the pilgrimage route was always on shaky ground. As it currently stands, the Via Dolorosa follows the account given in the Gospel of John. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the final stop on the Via Dolorosa, is believed by Christians to be built on the site of Jesus's crucifixion and burial, a place known as Golgotha.

The original site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was identified in a moment of inspiration by Helena, mother to the Roman emperor Constantine, on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the fourth century. But there is a problem with its location. The Bible clearly specifies that Jesus was executed outside the city walls; the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is inside the walls. Even in the medieval era this disparity made Christians uncomfortable. As a result, Protestant Biblical archeologists identified a second site, known today as the Garden Tomb, as the actual place of Jesus's death and burial. The historical accuracy of this second site is also hotly contested, but it remains a popular pilgrimage site for Protestants to this day.

Even if we could settle on a location, just the idea that Jesus was buried close to

Golgotha is up for debate. It is based on a detail found only in the Gospel of John. None of the other, *much earlier* gospels have Jesus buried so close by. Matthew, Mark and Luke all agree that Jesus was buried in the family tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and it's highly unlikely that prominent members of Jewish society had family tombs next to places of crucifixion. Even if we could match the Bible stories with the archeology we couldn't be sure that we had the right story.

As Mark Goodacre, Professor of New Testament at Duke University, told the *Daily Beast*, "The Gospel writers have little interest in the precise location of Jesus' trials. Writing a generation or more after the events they are describing, and at some geographical distance, it is unlikely that they provide us with the kinds of clues that we would like to see. So while this discovery is exciting, we should be cautious about over-stating its importance for studying the historical Jesus." Tradition has the beginning of the Via Dolorosa wrong, and probably the end too; it's safe to say that the stuff in between probably doesn't pan out either. In short, we don't know the route that Jesus walked or the location of Jesus' tomb.

Somewhat ironically, pilgrimage routes tend to change with political regimes and shifting religious trends, rather than with new archeological discoveries. So the religious tourist industry can sleep easy: they'll cash in no matter the truth



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**FIGHT!** 01.14.15



David  
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## Jeb Is a Joke in Romneyland

Not everyone thinks Jeb Bush is a strong presidential candidate, Republican donors say Mitt Romney is certain that 'a Bush can't beat a Clinton.'

When Jeb Bush jumped out early in announcing that he was putting together a presidential campaign, he was quickly anointed as the automatic front-runner. Donors were said to dash to their checkbooks to be the first to shower him with super PAC loot. Political operatives were polishing up their résumés in the hopes of being gifted with campaign jobs. The overstuffed GOP field was going to winnow in a hurry as would-be contenders decided the next two years would be better spent angling for Cabinet positions in an eventual Bush administration.

But if the rest of the GOP saw an 800-pound gorilla, one man who did not was

Mitt Romney. According to a number of close Romney associates and people who have spoken to him over the last several months, Romney does not see a towering figure in the field but a deeply flawed candidate who would struggle in a race against Hillary Clinton.

In the summer and fall of last year, back when Bush or Romney candidacies seemed like far-fetched ideas, and the former Massachusetts governor was basking in his role as a major get on the GOP fundraising circuit, he would muse aloud about the makeup of the 2016 field. In private conversations, Romney would repeat what he had said publicly—that he wasn't going to run for president. But privately, according to several Republican donors who had the conversation with him, Romney said he would only get in if at the end of the primary process, the party somehow did not settle on a nominee. But he knew that this was unlikely. "Someone is going to catch fire," he told one donor.

And even though Jeb was not a candidate, Romney made clear that it would be foolish for the Republicans to run another Bush.

"A Bush can't beat a Clinton," another donor quotes the 2012 nominee as saying.

As the primary season heats up, this analysis has been echoed by others, who say that a Clinton-Bush matchup would boil down to a race between the peaceful, prosperous 1990s and the 2000s with its War on Terror and Great Recession—a comparison that the GOP wants to avoid.

But people inside Romney world see other flaws as well. They point out that Bush has not run a competitive race since 1998, when he was elected Florida governor, a lifetime ago in politics. They see someone who has problematic positions on education and immigration, probably the two most crucial issues to the Republican base. They see someone who does not seem to have the stomach for a nasty nationwide battle for the nomination, and a 2016 rollout that has been shaky at best, with its awkward cellphone videos and avoidance of the public and the press.

"They have not done a lot to flush out the details of his candidacy," said Tom Rath, a senior adviser to Romney in both his 2008 and 2012 campaigns, speaking of Bush. "His time as governor was quite a while ago. A substantial number of Republicans have never heard him deliver a speech. Mitt is a proven commodity."

This commodity, Rath pointed out, proved its value in the 2014 midterms, when Romney became one of the Republican Party's most sought-after surrogates, stumping for winning candidates from Alaska to Florida.

"He worked hard for lots of people, from Senate candidates to sheriff candidates. Rank and file Republicans remember that kind of thing."

Romney associates point to polls that show him running close to Clinton in a general election, and easily besting Bush in a primary.

"And it's not name-recognition," said one Romney ally. "Jeb's name ID among Republicans is 100 percent. Republicans just prefer Romney."

Romney allies say that the former governor does not have animosity toward Bush, but that as a former businessman, Methodical Mitt wouldn't attempt a campaign if he did not think he had a good shot at the nomination, let alone the presidency.

“I don’t blame him. He came very close. He should have won last time. And he probably figures that whoever the Republican nominee is is going to be the next president,” said Ken Abramowitz, a GOP donor. “After eight years of President Obama, I don’t think the public is going to want another Democrat.”

Center-right Republicans now say that they are bracing for what should be an unprecedented campaign season. While in years past the business-backed GOP establishment has often coalesced around a single candidate while a battle royale ensues among the crop of grassroots conservatives battling over their share of the vote, this year it is the moderates who are bracing for internecine war. A Republican could conceivably win the nomination in 2016 by eking out a small percentage of the vote in a multi-candidate field.

“I have been telling everybody that we should all coalesce around one candidate,” said Fred Zeidman, a major GOP donor who backed Romney in 2012. “The only problem is they all think that they should be that candidate.”

In time, Republicans know they will have to decide among them, and in conversation many sound like they are weighing the pros and cons of each.

“I think that [Bush] is a solid candidate. He may not be as conservative as others but I feel he can work with folks across the aisle to get things accomplished,” said Glenn McCall, a Republican committeeman from South Carolina.

And as for Romney, “He campaigned really well the last cycle. And a lot of what he warned us about has come true over the last two or three years.”

And if Romney insiders think that Bush is a flawed candidate, there are certainly many Republicans who feel the same way about Romney. Losing twice and coming back to win is unprecedented in presidential politics, and even though Romney has basked in a glow of good feeling over the past two years, he still lost to an incumbent president that many Republicans thought was very beatable.

“Mitt has shown his colors,” said one major fundraiser to Romney’s 2012 effort. “And as a campaigner he is totally shit.”



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Markus Schreiber/AP

**NOT JUST CHARLIE** 01.11.15



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## Extremism Is Our Untreatable Cancer

It all started back in November 1979. We couldn't do much about extremism then, and it seems we can do even less now.

By early November 1979, America was exhausted. The ever-shrinking president, Jimmy Carter, had been attacked by a rabbit while running and that July had taken to the television to tell us the country was suffering from a breakdown, that a malaise had seized the land.

Interest rates looked like major league batting averages. Long lines formed at gas stations because Saudi Arabia and OPEC decided to yank the chain of "The Great Satan" by slowing oil production and exports. A meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear facility had threatened to turn half of Pennsylvania into a green night light.

Then, on Nov. 4, 1979, the forebears of the three murderers killed last week in Paris by police gathered in a mob outside the American embassy in Tehran, stormed the building, captured nearly all inside and held 42 citizens of the United States hostage for 444 days.

Both ABC News' *Nightline with Ted Koppel* and our modern age of terror were born. A lot has happened between then and now: In October 1983, 220 Marines were killed in Beirut by suicide bombers claiming to represent some outfit they called Islamic Jihad, with more Marines dying that day than had been killed in the first week of the Tet Offensive in February 1968. Embassies in Africa were attacked over the next decade. In October 2000, the USS Cole was blown up while at port in Yemen, killing 17 U.S. sailors. Through all of it, threaded between each attack, was the whispered name of Osama bin Laden. Then came September 11.

Now we have the latest assault on civilization: Paris, where the casualty list is filled with the innocent who, once again, died simply because they went to work. Cartoonists, writers, police officers, shoppers, caught and killed by three men driven insane by their own inadequacies.

“These guys were barking mad,” former Sen. Bob Kerrey said the other day. “But whenever something like this happens we always hear and read about the roots of youth disenfranchisement in the Middle East and there is a lot of that, too much of it. Too much unemployment and hopelessness. No doubt about it.

“But guess what: There is a lot of youth disenfranchisement in Latin America and right here in the United States and they’re not walking around killing people in the name of their religion.”

Bob Kerrey served two terms in the United States Senate. He was a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee and, later, the 9/11 Commission.

“The fact is that Muslim leaders are going to have to face up to the violence that is smearing and staining their religion,” Kerrey was saying. “In too many parts of the world, religious leaders are standing in pulpits on Friday night suggesting that violence is OK.

“And what they’ve done and what they continue to do give rise and reason to a whole new army. It’s not like it used to be in ‘the old world’ as we once knew it. They don’t wear uniforms in their army anymore. The war is all up there in their head, and it’s going to take a long time for us to combat that.

“I don’t know if the Muslim leadership can face it but that’s the reality of their task. They have to address the cancer within, publicly and loudly.”

Over the past few days, the streets of Paris and many other cities around the world have been filled with people standing in outrage over the slaughter that occurred in the offices of the French magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. That is where the now-dead Kouachi brothers walked in with the nonchalance of mailmen and opened fire on the staff because of cartoons that had appeared in the magazine’s pages. The thought of turning the page or not buying the book was apparently too much for their diseased minds to grasp.

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ideology.

So today the phrases “Je suis Charlie” and “I am Charlie” ring the globe. Yet it has somewhat of a hollow echo because in some quarters, especially in America, the threat to speech, no matter how offensive and the cartoons in question were clearly on the border of outrageous, is bold and quite present. Former New York City Police Commissioner Ray Kelly was recently booed from the stage and prevented from speaking at Brown University, where he was going to talk about policing and protecting our largest city; “Je suis Ray Kelly?”

This war on terror that now engulfs the world, this clash of cultures and civilizations, this riot of religious zealotry that has claimed far too many while unfairly maligning too many of its members, has been a weight we’ve carried and conducted for decades. Drones and SEAL Team Six and all the battalions of stable nations combined can only combat it to a draw. No military weapon in the arsenal is capable of killing a disease, a warped ideology wrapped and camouflaged within a religion hijacked and used by stone-cold, mentally ill killers who arrive with gun, bomb, and suicide vest proclaiming a false cause.

For more from Mike Barnicle, visit [mikebarnicle.com](http://mikebarnicle.com).



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**VEILED THREATS** 01.14.15



Jamie Dettmer

## The Widow of a Paris Terrorist and Other Real Wives of Islamic State

The high-profile spouses of ISIS killers often have surprising backgrounds from bikini-wearing sun worshipers to guitar-toting band members.

ISTANBUL—On the CCTV footage released by Turkish police, the widow of one of the Islamic fanatics responsible for last week's terror rampage in Paris comes across as prim, even drab, as she goes through passport control at the airport here.

Hayat Boumeddiene's tightly drawn white headscarf and hooded coat is a cultural world away from the scanty bikini she was wearing in a photograph that showed her on a beach fondly clutching future assassin Amedy Coulibaly. The holiday snap was taken before 2009, when she started to cover herself up with scarves and veils.

The transfer is startling from sun-worshiper and eager holidaymaker to the buttoned-up moll of an Islamic assassin. The 26-year-old looks giddily in love cuddling Coulibaly—a display of public affection hardly in keeping with the puritanical strictures of Salafi jihadis.

Her now-dead partner also used to pursue a lifestyle that clashed with the teachings of Islamic militants. Neither were paragons of religious rectitude.

French police arrested Coulibaly on a string of theft and drug offenses before he embarked on the path of jihad and ended up gunning down four Jews at a kosher supermarket in Paris last week. In the caliphate of the self-styled Islamic State, where, according to Turkish authorities, Boumeddiene has found sanctuary and to whom Coulibaly apparently aligned himself, theft and drug use incur far worse punishments than those meted out by the unenlightened West—including flogging, amputation, and execution.

From sun-worshipper and eager holidaymaker to the buttoned-up moll of an Islamic assassin.

But then Boumeddiene and Coulibaly aren't unique in having exited rowdy alternative lifestyles totally at variance with Islamic puritanism, embracing instead the simplicity of jihad.

Although Coulibaly, it seems, observed the conservative demands a little less than his consort. During a 2010 interview with police investigators, Boumeddiene admitted Coulibaly "wasn't really religious" and liked to "have fun."

Some Westerners do indeed appear to have been devout before traveling to Syria or aligning themselves with jihadis—although how knowledgeable the really young ones or the obviously

disturbed are about their religion remains questionable. Some of the frantic devotion has the ring of hollow religiosity, ritual without content, more cult-like than anything else.

Even so, Melanie Smith, a researcher with the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization, has argued that many of the estimated 200 or so Western girls and women who have gone to Syria to join the militants "tend to be extremely pious and have been IS fan-girls for the duration of the Syrian conflict."

Aqsa Mahmood, a 20-year-old who was raised in a well-heeled Glasgow suburb and attended an exclusive Scottish girls' school, fits into that profile. She led an orderly life as a teenager—wasn't involved with boys, drugs or petty crimes. She seemed normal in most ways until she was lured and groomed online. And, according to her parents, she became more "concerned and upset" by reports of the Syrian conflict. "Aqsa, like many young people in our community, was naturally angry and frustrated at the loss of innocent life in the Middle East," the parents said at a press conference last summer after their daughter ran off to Syria to become a jihadi bride.

Other recruits to the jihadist cause, though, appear to have had a more "secular" glide path, swapping what they see as the rootlessness and chaos of their lives for the false clarity and fake simplicity offered by al Qaeda or the Islamic State (also widely known as ISIS).

That appears to be more the explanation for the recruitment of Britain's Sally Jones—an even more unlikely Salafi candidate than the bikini-wearing Boumeddiene. Jones was 45 years old when recruited and wasn't even born into a Muslim or a minority immigrant family.

Now calling herself Sakinah Hussain or Umm Hussain al-Britani, Jones, a

mom-of-two from the rural county of Kent in southeast England, sneaked into Syria in late 2013 after an online romance with Junaid Hussain, a young hacker-turned-militant from the English city of Birmingham. She is thought to be living in the town of Raqqa, the de facto capital in northern Syria of the Islamic State. In online exchanges with potential Western recruits, she claims to be enjoying the strict Sharia law of the caliphate, from whence she tweets blood-chilling threats.

Her most vicious micro-missive was in the wake of the mass decapitations of 50 Syrian soldiers, in which she declared: “You Christians all need beheading with a nice blunt knife and stuck on the railings at Raqqa... Come here I’ll do it for you!” She posts photos of herself posing with an AK-47 assault rifle and dressed in black niqab, which covers all of the face and body except the eyes. She and Hussain—he’s 25 years her junior—are now married.

But back in the 1990s she was a member of a smalltime girl punk rock band called Krunch and was then wielding a guitar rather than an automatic rifle. She was in and out of relationships and dead-end jobs. One video clip shows her wearing a low-cut top and tight leather mini-skirt. Neighbors in the town of Chatham have described her to British tabloids as a “nightmare”—an aggressive, anarchic woman who dabbled in witchcraft and drugs and threatened to put spells on them.

A purposeless, ungrounded life stands out with Boumeddiene, too. Born in the Paris suburb of Villiers-sur-Marne, she grew up in a rundown part of the town. Her mother was devout and died when Hayat was 6. Her father was unable to cope after his wife’s death and Hayat and some of her six siblings had to be taken into foster care. Her father visited her rarely and then appears to have broken with her after remarrying, although recently they are said to have reconciled. In care, she had to be moved frequently between foster homes because she proved troublesome and violent. She met Coulibaly in Juvisy-sur-Orge, southeast of Paris, while working as a cashier, a job she later lost because of her insistence on wearing the niqab.

One neighbor told French media that Coulibaly was the driving force in their partnership: “She left here with that man. He did everything and then it all came down on her. He was the mastermind.”

Maybe so, maybe not. The real masterminds seem to be their jihadi mentors, who knew how to channel the purposelessness and direct the anger. Of her religion, she told detectives in 2010, “It’s something which calms me down. I’ve had a difficult life and this religion has answered all my questions.”



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