



Pilate granted the corpse to Joseph who bought a shroud, took Jesus down from the cross, wrapped him in the shroud and laid him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb. Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of Joseph were watching and took note of where he was laid. When the sabbath was over, Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices with which to go and anoint him. And very early in the morning on the first day of the week they went to the tomb, just as the sun was rising. They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' But when they looked they could see that the stone, which was very big, had already been rolled back. On entering the tomb they saw a young man in a white robe seated on the right-hand side, and they were struck with amazement. But he said to them, 'There is no need for alarm. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: he has risen, he is not here.'

(Mark 15:45—16:6)

For my last broadcast from Jerusalem, I've chosen the place which Christians first think of when you say the word Jerusalem, the place where Jesus was crucified, buried and raised to a new life by the power of God.

It's now called the church of the Holy Sepulchre. Once it was outside the city walls — because that's where they executed criminals — but now it's tightly wedged inside a Jerusalem which over the years has extended further and further beyond its original walls. .

The various Christian communities who have staked out a claim here, each jealously guarding their little corner of the church — the western Christians represented by the Franciscan fathers in their characteristic brown habits, the ' Greek Orthodox "with their flowing beards and flower-pot hats, the black-cowled Armenians and the turbaned . Syrians, and the exotic negroid Abyssinians camped out on the roof — all these bear witness, by their very presence, to how sacred this spot has always been to Christians of every denomination.

It doesn't make life easy, this living in each other's pocket and breathing down each other's neck, and it tends to scandalize the newly arrived pilgrim. I remember Vividly my first visit here, when I found the Greeks in their choir, and the Latins at the Sepulchre itself, and the Copts behind it, all holding a service at the same time, and at one point they were all singing and trying to shout each other down with the same words, Kyrie Eleison; and I thought, 'Lord have mercy!'

But on reflection I personally wouldn't have it otherwise. There's a great richness in this welter- of rites and customs and traditions, all jostling with each other, and this would be sadly impoverished if they tidied it all up in the name of law and order. I would certainly miss the constant stream of disorganized Greek pilgrims whom I now see in front of me, here at the foot of Calvary, where they venerate with great devotion the stone on which Jesus is said to have been anointed and prepared for burial. They know all about preparing people for burial - fathers and husbands and sons of theirs - these bent old Greek women.

What I find most moving about this building is the fact that-it houses both Calvary and the Tomb. We haven't got two churches, one for Christ's death and one for his resurrection, only one. And this is a precious insight which Christians haven't always appreciated deeply enough, that these two events really are one. We mustn't think of the death of Jesus as if we could explain everything in terms of bloody sacrifices, and as if the resurrection was added afterwards as a kind of unexpected bonus. More important still, we mustn't talk about the resurrection of Jesus as if it somehow neutralized or reversed his death. Jesus never recovers from his death. His resurrection is nothing other than that death seen with the eyes of God. Jesus died into that mystery that we 'call God, in such a way that his presence and his influence are no longer limited to the streets of Jerusalem . or the lanes of Galilee. He lives on, and he is present, and he exercises his influence, wherever God is, which is everywhere.

I remember coming back to England from my first visit here, and a friend of mine asked me, 'How was it?' 'Great,' I said. 'It's a wonderful thing to walk and touch and feel and see the country of Jesus.' He said, 'Did you discover that he's not there?' The remark hasn't stopped me coming back here, many times, particularly to this place which reminds me of his death and resurrection. But it reminds me too - and I think we need reminding - that this isn't where I'm supposed to look for him. He is risen, and he stares at me out of the eyes of all those whom he called his 'Body', which is all men, especially those who, like him, are in need.

BBC archive 1973. transcript from HJ Richards – The First Easter, What really happened.