

THE GEOGRAPHY LESSON

[SEE SKETCH MAP, LESSON XI.]

The traditional site of Joseph's tomb, in which the body of Jesus was laid, is inside the present walls of Jerusalem. Here stands the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, first built by Constantine, the Roman emperor, about 300 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. The traveler is shown not only the site of the sepulchre and the rock of the crucifixion, with the cleft made by the earthquake, but also the three holes, five feet apart, in which the three crosses are said to have been inserted. One objection to this site is that it is inside the walls, while the place of execution, both with Romans and Jews, was without the city, and John (ch. 19 : 20) says that Jesus was crucified "high to the city."

It is not certain that the walls in Jesus' time were in the same place as now, and the site in question may then have been outside the city.

The other site which is proposed for Joseph's tomb, and which is favored by many scholars, is outside the north wall, near the Damascus Gate (compare on Calvary, last lesson). Mr. C. G. Trumbull, in *A Pilgrimage to Jerusalem*, says of this site, "There are strong reasons for holding to the rock-hewn tomb in which we sat that day, as the actual place of Jesus' burial. There were the doorway and a place where a great stone could be rolled to. There was an opening in the rock-cut wall above the place where the body lay, through which one could stoop and look in."

THE LESSON APPLIED

1. It is very easy to misinterpret the facts of life. Mary Magdalene sees that the tomb of Jesus is empty, and she immediately jumps to the conclusion that the body of the Saviour has been stolen away. The truth was far different from that, and far more comforting and glorious. How often people have made Mary's mistake of jumping to false conclusions about the facts of life. The Hebrews used to take the view that when a man was visited with suffering it was a sure sign that he had fallen under the divine displeasure, and that he was being punished. The teaching of the book of Job and the later teaching of Jesus show how wrong such an interpretation of the facts may be. We are deceived by some one whom we regarded as a friend, and the temptation is to take the view that all friendship is a delusion and a snare. Let us learn to look below the surface. Let us learn to interpret the facts of life strong in the belief that God is our Father, that he is all-just and all-loving.

2. One of the strongest arguments for the reality of the resurrection of Jesus is the evident fact that it came as such a surprise to the apostles. In spite of all that Christ has said about it, they were not looking forward to it. It seemed to them as if the death of their master had put an end to all their hope. They were as men who had dreamed in the night that they were kings, and had awakened

in the morning to find it all a dream. And then Peter and John saw the empty tomb, and they understood what it meant. They saw the scripture in a new light. Their dead Lord was alive for evermore.

3. A woman was the first actually to see the risen Lord. Is there any significance in that fact? There is at least this much to be said about it, that she deserved to see him first, for she was the first one at the tomb on the resurrection morning. Doubtless the apostles were afraid to be seen near the tomb, for the authorities had set a guard of Roman soldiers there. It would have required some courage for the apostles to show themselves. It might have laid them open to considerable suspicion in the eyes of the authorities. But what the men hesitated to do, a woman did. It is probable that she felt the same fear as the apostles, but her love and loyalty got the better of her fear. The highest courage is not the kind that faces danger with no appreciation of that danger, but the kind that knows the danger, and yet triumphs over it. Surely the love and heroism of Mary deserved to be rewarded, and they were rewarded when she was the first to see the risen Lord.

4. Mary made a mistake when she thought that the empty tomb meant that the body of Jesus had been stolen away. She made another mistake when she was surprised by