

The Chapels

1. Adam's Chapel

Under the northern side of Golgotha, there is a small shrine which today, is called "Adam's Chapel", while in the past it was known as the "Place of the skull" or the "holy skull" or the "Chapel of Melchizedek or of the Holy Forerunner". According to tradition, in this place Adam's skull and bones were laid, which were cleansed from the original sin with the blood of Christ at the crucifixion. Thus the first Adam is connected to the second one, an event symbolized conjecturally in the scene of the crucifixion depicting a small cave at the base of the Cross with Adams bones.

In the back and behind the Holy Altar over the rock there is a small alcove formed where a fissure which starts at the base of the Cross at Golgotha ends. The Chapel bore an impressive mosaic decor which was destroyed in the fire of 1808, after which it was replaced with murals. In the same fire, the so called "The tomb of Melchizedek" was also completely destroyed. In the past, near the entrance of the Chapel there were the tombs of Baldwin of Flanders and of Gottfried de Bouillon, which were pillaged during the Islamic recapture of Jerusalem in 1244. At present in this place is saved the tomb of an English Crusader.

2. The Chapel of the Crown of Thorns

North-east of Adam's Chapel there is "a holy archway" which runs along the vault of the Catholicon. In this archway there are three chapels, the first one, named "The Crown of Thorns" which belongs exclusively to the Orthodox. In the vault and below the Holy Altar there is a part of the granite pillar which was originally at the Praetorium and it was transferred by the Christians to this place when the area passed under

Muslim rule and where it is guarded to day.

According to the gospels, while Christ was at the Praetorium, the Roman soldiers dressed Him in a red robe. "and having woven a crown of thorns they placed it on His head" {Matt. 27: 28-31, Mark 15: 16-20, John 19: 2-3}.

So, in remembrance to this event, in a special container there is a crown made of the hardest thorns in Palestine. This container was placed to the right of the Holy Altar, being similar to the corresponding one at Golgotha and bears the ungrammatical inscription:

"AND HAVING WOVEN CROWNS OF THORN THEY PLACED IT ON HIS HEAD AND PUT A REED IN HIS RIGHT HAND".

3. The Chapel of the discovery of the Holy Cross

After the chapel of the Crown of Thorns, the pilgrim comes to a gate which leads to the basement of the church. The first twenty nine steps down a staircase lead to a square chapel dedicated to St. Helen, which has a cupola and an ornate mosaic floor. In the past this chapel belonged to the Ethiopians, who, because of financial difficulties, were forced to sell it to the Armenians, who possess it to this day and perform services on a small altar which is located on the eastern side. Near it and to the north there is an equivalent altar dedicated to St. Gregory Photistis (the Enlightener) the most important saint of the Armenian Church. In the southern side of the chapel, there is an opening to the cave of discovery from which, according to tradition, St. Helen supervised the work of the discovery of the Holy Cross and today it is called "the Seat of St. Helen".

From the southern side of St. Helen Chapel, a second staircase with thirteen steps ends at the cave where they discovered the Holy Cross, the nails and the crosses of the two robbers. The whole place is divided in two places of different heights, to the south where according to tradition, Christ's as well as

the crosses of the robbers were discovered and to the north where the nails were found.

On the eastern side of the floor of the south cave there is a reddish-white engraved plaque which has been placed to indicate the spot of the discovery of the Holy Cross: J{ESUS} C{HRIST} WINS A ΩI . As the inscription testifies, this plaque was installed there during the great restoration of the Church of 1810 by the Greek orthodox to whom this holy place belongs. Later, this jurisdiction was contested by the Latin and until now it remains unresolved. In contrast, the small altar in the north cave, where a bronze statue of St. Helen with the holy cross was erected, belongs to the Latin.

4. The chapel of “Diemerisando” {Divided}

North to the place of discovery, there is the chapel of “Diemerisando”(of the Divided) which belongs to the Armenians. Its name derives from the narratives in the gospels, according which the Roman soldiers after having crucified Christ “divided his garments” {Mark 27: 35}. However, because Christ’s tunic was without seam, and woven from top to bottom, it was impossible to divide it, so they decided to cast lots. Thus, the Old Testament prophesy was fulfilled, “they parted {divided} my garments among them, and for my clothing {raiment} they cast lots” {Psalm 22: 18 and John 19: 24}.

In the vault of the chapel a Holy Altar is provided and icons were mounted, which depict the division of Christ’s garments.

5. The chapel of St. Logginus

In the third vault of the holy archway, there is a chapel dedicated to Logginus, the Centurion which belongs exclusively to the Orthodox. In this place there is a Holy Altar and behind it there is an icon depicting St. Logginus raising his hand to the Crucified, confessing “Truly He is the Son of God”

{Matt. 27: 54}.

6. The chapel of the Klapes (Pillory Boards)

To the north-west of the chapel of St. Logginus, there is “the chapel of the Klapes” which belongs to the Greek orthodox. Klapes is a (hinged double) board with two holes used as an instrument of torture. The erection of the chapel is due to a very ancient tradition, according which Christ’s torturers before the Crucifixion, immobilized His feet in the holes of the klapes.

The board of klapes was earlier in the council room, but the Christians transported it to this chapel after the capture of Jerusalem by the Ottoman. The board was placed under a small Holy Altar and is protected with a railing. In the rear wall of the chapel, an icon was mounted depicting the event.

The Prison of Christ

On the left and behind the chapel of Klapon, there is a small three room flat with a low ceiling, the Prison of Christ. This place owes its name to a tradition according which Christ and the criminals were kept in this prison before they were led to the cross. A second tradition however, mentions that in this place the Theotokos had fainted when she beheld her only son on the cross. So the prophesy of elder Symeon was fulfilled: “And a sword will pierce through your own soul” (Luke 2: 35)

7. The Chapel of the Latin and the pillar of the whipping

To the west and after the seven arches, there is the chapel of the Latin. According to Franciscan tradition, Christ revealed Himself to the Theotokos in this place, immediately after His Resurrection. That’s why it is called “the Chapel of the Appearance”.

This holy place relates with a later tradition, according to which, immediately after the discovery of the three crosses by St. Helen, a dead man was raised when he was taken to the tomb and in this way the life giving Cross of Christ was recognized.

This chapel has three small altars, in the right one they keep a part of the pillar on which they tied and whipped the Lord {Matt. 27: 26, and Mark 15: 15}. From this event the names "the pillar of whipping" and "the column of beating" were derived. In the past, the pillar was kept under the care of the Armenians at their monastery in Holy Sion, however at present it belongs to the Franciscan Order.

8. The chapel of "Do not touch Me" or of Mary Magdalene

To the south of the chapel of the Latin and to the north of the holy Edicule there is a round marble slab, which according to Latin tradition, is the slab upon which Christ revealed Himself to Mary Magdalene after His Resurrection and told her: "Do not touch me" {John 20: 17} This shrine belongs to the Latin and it is called "Do not touch me" after Christ's utterance, but also "the chapel of Mary Magdalene". In this place there is a small altar on which a relief depicts the event.

The Place where the Holy Women stood during the Crucifixion

To the west of the deposition Christ and towards the holy Edicule there is a marble Ciborium which belongs to the Armenians. This place is associated with the martyric death of the Theanthropos (Godman) and it is believed that is where the Holy Women and John stood during the Crucifixion, in fact according to the gospel of Saint Luke "it is there where all His acquaintances and the Women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance and saw these things."

The Tomb of Joseph of Arimathea

West to the Holy Edicule, behind the chapel of the Copts, there is a dark place, in the middle of which rises a small tomb. In this place close to the Holy Sepulchre, Joseph from Arimathea was buried. This is the only place of the Holy Sepulchre, which belongs to the Abyssinian religious community.