

Calvary

Word family: Calvary

Synonyms: Golgotha, Place of the Skull

Related ideas: The cross, crucifixion of Christ, Jerusalem.

Definition: Calvary is the name of the place, outside of Jerusalem, where Jesus was crucified. The name Calvary means "The Skull". This is thought to refer to the shape and appearance of a hill.

Greek References: Κρανιον Kranion 2898 (Strong) is the name in Greek. In the language that was spoken by the Hebrews (Aramaic) the name was Golgotha, which transliterates into Greek as Γολγοθα Golgotha, 1115 (Strong) —related to the Old Testament Hebrew word gulgoleth (Strong Heb. 1538). In the Roman language (Latin), the name was *Calvarius* from which "Calvary" is derived. All three names, (Kranion, Golgotha, Calvarius) mean Skull. (See comment below).

Scripture:

Golgotha

- Mtt 27:33 “And when they were come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull...”
- Mrk 15:22 “And they brought him to the place called Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull...”
- Jhn 19:17 “And he, bearing his cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha...”

Calvary

- Lke 23:33 “And when they were come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the evil doers, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.”
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Comment: The word Calvary is found only in a single Bible verse (Lke 23:33) and in many translations of the Bible the word Calvary does not appear at all. Instead, those translations put The Skull. This is because the Greek word in that verse is Kranion which means Skull.

Unlike the name Golgotha, Calvary is not found in the Greek text. The name Calvary is derived from the Latin word for skull, Calvarius. The location known as "The Skull" is mentioned in all four Bible accounts of Jesus's crucifixion, using the Greek word Kranion. In three of those accounts the name is actually given as Golgotha and then it is translated into the Greek Kranion to explain the meaning of the name. The name Golgotha is the name in the Aramaic language as commonly spoken by the Hebrew population of Jerusalem in those days.

The Roman name for the place was Calvarius, which is Latin for Skull. However that word was not used by any of the Bible writers—it does not appear anywhere in the Greek New Testament. That does not mean, of course, that "Calvary" (derived from the Latin) is an illegitimate word. Many English words are derived or borrowed from Latin. Why not "Calvary"?

The word has its roots in the Latin Vulgate, an ancient Latin translation which has been a valuable reference source for English translators. The first written English translations of the Bible were in fact made from the Latin Vulgate rather than the original Hebrew and Greek languages. Wycliffe thus rendered Luke 23:33, "And `aftir that thei camen in to a place, that is clepid of Caluerie, there thei crucifieden hym, and the theues, oon on the riyt half, and `the tother on the left half."

So the word "Calvary" has a long English tradition. William Tyndale used it in his rendering of Luke 23:33, "And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary there they crucified him and the evyll doers one on ryght honde and the other on the lefte." The King James version kept the word "Calvary", and it remains in the modern New King James Version.

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