

The Story of the True Cross of Jesus & Adam's Skull



All Saints, North Street, York, and



Holy Trinity, Hildersham (Memorial Brass 1466 & Painting 1803)

The skull of Adam under Mount Calvary or Golgotha

ONE of the most interesting legends concerning the cross is that preserved in *Aurea Legenda* {*The Golden Legend*}; written by Jacobus de Voragine in 1275 and translated into English by William Caxton in 1483. You can now read the whole of the Golden Legend online at www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/goldenlegend/

The Story is to the effect that Adam, feeling the end of his life was near, entreated his son Seth to make a pilgrimage to the Garden of Eden and secure from the angel on guard at the entrance the *Oil of Mercy* which God had promised mankind. Seth did not know the way; but his father told him it was in an eastward direction, and the path would be easy to follow, for when Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of the Lord, upon the path which their feet had trod the grass had never grown.

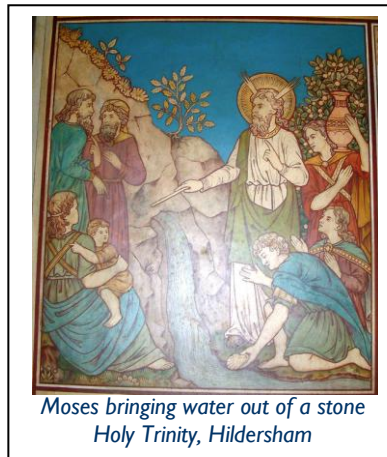
Seth, following the directions of his father, discovered the Garden of Eden without difficulty. The angel who guarded the gate permitted him to enter, and in the midst of the garden Seth beheld a great tree, the branches of which reached up to heaven. The tree was in the form of a cross, and stood on the brink of a precipice which led downward into the depths of hell. Among the roots of the tree he saw the body of his brother Cain, held prisoner by the entwining limbs.

The angel refused to give Seth the *Oil of Mercy*, but presented him instead with three seeds from the Tree of Life (some say the Tree of Knowledge). With these Seth returned to his father, who was so overjoyed that he did not desire to live longer. Three days later he died, and the three seeds were buried in his mouth, as the angel had instructed. The seeds became a sapling with three trunks in one, which absorbed into itself the blood of Adam, so that the life of Adam was in the tree.

Actual extract from the Life of Adam:

But all the days of Adam living here in earth amount to the sum of nine hundred and thirty years (930 years). And in the end of his life when he should die, it is said, but of none authority, that he sent Seth his son into Paradise for to fetch the oil of mercy, where he received certain grains of the fruit of the tree of mercy by an angel. And when he came again he found his father Adam yet alive and told him what he had done. And then Adam laughed first and then died. And then he laid the grains or kernels under his father's tongue and buried him in the vale of Hebron; and out of his mouth grew three trees of the three grains, of which trees the cross that our Lord suffered his passion on was made, by virtue of which he begat every mercy, and was brought out of darkness into very light of heaven. To which he bring us that liveth and reigneth God, world without end.

NOAH dug up this tree by the roots and took it with him into the Ark. After the waters subsided, he buried the skull of Adam under Mount Calvary, and planted the tree on the summit of Mount Lebanon.



MOSES beheld a visionary being in the midst of this tree (the burning bush) and from it cut the magical rod with which he was able to bring water out of a stone. But because he failed to call upon the Lord the second time he struck the rock, he was not permitted to carry the sacred staff into the Promised Land; so he planted it in the hills of Moab.

After much searching, **KING DAVID** discovered the tree; and his son, **SOLOMON**, tried to use it for a pillar in his Temple, but his carpenters could not cut it so that it would fit; it was always either too long or too short. At last, disgusted, they cast it aside and used it for a bridge to connect Jerusalem with the surrounding hills.

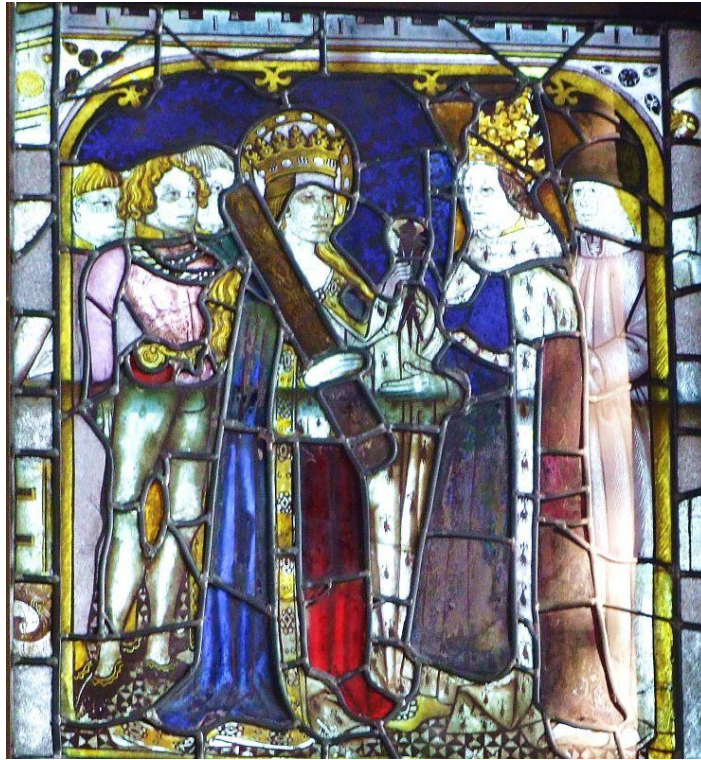
When the **QUEEN OF SHEBA** came to visit King Solomon she was expected to walk across this bridge. Instead, when she beheld the tree, she refused to put her foot upon it, but, after kneeling and praying, removed her sandals and forded the stream. This so impressed King Solomon that he ordered the log to be overlaid with golden plates and placed above the door of his Temple. There it remained until his covetous grandson stole the gold, and buried the tree so that the crime would not be discovered.

From the ground where the tree was buried there immediately bubbled forth a spring of water, which became known as Bethesda. To it the sick from all Syria came to be healed. The angel of the pool became the guardian of the tree, and it remained undisturbed for many years. Eventually the log floated to the surface and was used as a bridge again, this time between Calvary and Jerusalem; and over it **JESUS** passed to be crucified. There was no wood on Calvary; so the tree was cut into two parts to serve as the cross upon which the Son of Man was crucified. The cross was set up at the very spot where the skull of Adam had been buried.

After a vision, King **CONSTANTINE** sent his mother the Empress **HELENA** to the Holy Land to try and discover the True Cross on which Jesus had been crucified. When the cross was discovered by the Empress **HELENA**, under the temple of Venus, the wood was found to be of four different varieties contained in one tree (representing the elements), and thereafter the cross continued to heal all the sick who were permitted to touch it. Later Helena also found the nails from the cross. Constantine used one as a bit for his horse and placed two others on either side of his war helmet.



In total there are over 30 supposed holy relics, purporting to be the nails from the cross, dotted around the world. See Constantine & Helena's story below:



St Helena presenting a fragment of the True Cross and nails from the Crucifixion to her son, Constantine. The Glass was made by the workshop of Robert Power of Burton upon Trent in 1482. From the east window devoted to the Holy Cross at Holy Trinity, Tattersall church, Lincolnshire.

As Theodoret tells it in his Ecclesiastical History, chapter xvii,

The mother of the emperor, on learning the accomplishment of her desire, gave orders that a portion of the nails should be inserted in the royal helmet, in order that the head of her son might be preserved from the darts of his enemies. The other portion of the nails she ordered to be formed into the bridle of his horse, not only to ensure the safety of the emperor, but also to fulfil an ancient prophecy; for long before Zechariah, the prophet, had predicted that 'There shall be upon the bridles of the horses Holiness unto the Lord Almighty'.

St. Helena was the daughter of an innkeeper in England, and despite her lowly station, was married to Constantius Chlorus, a Roman general. They had one son, Constantine. After 22 years of marriage, her husband was named Caesar under Emperor Maximian, and immediately divorced Helena to marry Maximian's stepdaughter for political gain. Fourteen years later, Constantius died, his son was proclaimed Caesar, and 18 months later, Emperor. Constantine made up for the neglect his father paid to St. Helena, ordering all honor be paid to the mother of the sovereign. She converted to Christianity about the same time, when she was 63 years old, in the years 312-313.

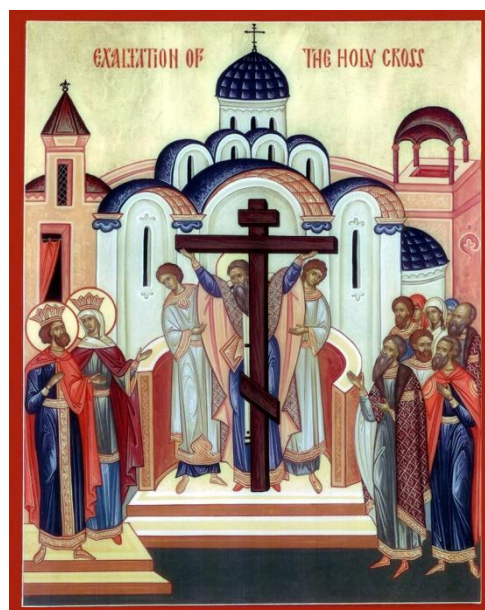
It was her son who issued the now famous "Edict of Milan", permitting Christianity in the Empire.

Constantine sent his mother Helena to Jerusalem to try to find the cross on which our Lord was crucified. When she arrived, she bade all the Jewish Rabbis of the whole land gather to meet her. Great was their fear. They suspected that she sought the wood of the cross, a secret which they had promised not to reveal even under torture, because it would mean the end of Jewish supremacy. When they met her, sure enough, she asked for the place of the crucifixion. When they would not tell, she ordered them all to be burned. Frightened, they delivered up a man named Judas (not Iscariot), saying that he would tell. She gave him his choice of telling or dying by starvation. At first he was obstinate, but six days of total abstinence from food brought him to terms, and on the seventh he promised. He was conducted to the place indicated, and in response to prayer there was a sort of earthquake, and a perfume filled the air which converted Judas. There

was a temple of Venus on the spot, which the queen had destroyed. Judas set to digging vigorously, and at the depth of twenty feet, found three crosses, which he brought to Helena.

The true cross was tested by its' causing a man to rise from the dead, or according to others, by healing a woman, or according to others, by finding the inscription of Pilate. After an exceedingly vigorous conversation between the devil and Judas, the latter was baptized and became Bishop Cyriacus. Then Helena set him hunting for the nails of the cross. He found them shining like gold and brought them to the queen, who departed, taking them and a portion of the wood of the cross. She brought the nails to Constantine, who put them on his bridle and helmet, or according to another account, two were used in this way, and one was thrown into the Adriatic Sea.

St. Helen went to Palestine where she found the True Cross. She built Churches in Bethlehem, Egypt, the Mount of Olives, and Mount Calvary, and died in Palestine during these activities. She was buried in a mausoleum attached to the basilicas of Sts. Marcellinus & Peter. Her remains are now located in the Vatican Museum. Although St. Constantine does not appear on the Roman calendar, he is recognized as a saint by the Catholic Church.



Relics of Constantine, and his mother, St. Helena.

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CHAPTER III: THE STORY OF CONSTANTINE AND HELENA

The Greatness of Constantine Provokes Attack

IN the year 312, the sixth year after Constantine had become emperor, the Roman Empire had increased on every hand, for Constantine was a mighty leader in war, a gracious and friendly lord in peace; he was a true king and ruler, a protector of all men. So mightily did he prosper that his enemies assembled great armies against him, and a confederation to overthrow him was made by the terrible Huns, the famous Goths, the brave Franks, and the warlike Huns. This powerful confederation sent against Constantine an overwhelming army of Huns, whose numbers seemed to be countless, and yet the Hunnish leaders feared, when they knew that the emperor himself led the small Roman host.



The Eve of the Battle

The night before the battle Constantine lay sadly in the midst of his army, watching the stars, and dreading the result of the next day's conflict; for his warriors were few compared with the Hunnish multitude, and even Roman discipline and devotion might not win the day against the mad fury of the barbarous Huns. At last, wearied out, the emperor slept, and a vision came to him in his sleep. He seemed to see, standing by him, a beautiful shining form, a man more glorious than the sons of men, who, as Constantine sprang up ready helmed for war, addressed him by name. The darkness of night fled before the heavenly light that shone from the angel, and the messenger said:



*"O Constantinus, the Ruler of Angels,
The Lord of all glory, the Master of heaven's hosts,
Claims from thee homage. Be not thou affrighted,
Though armies of aliens array them for battle,
Though terrible warriors threaten fierce conflict.
Look thou to the sky, to the throne of His glory;
There seest thou surely the symbol of conquest."
Helena.*

Vision of the Cross

Constantine looked up as the angel bade him, and saw, hovering in the air, a cross, splendid, glorious, adorned with gems and shining with heavenly light. On its wood letters were engraved, gleaming with unearthly radiance:

*"With this shalt thou conquer the foe in the conflict,
And with it shalt hurl back the host of the heathen."
Helena.*

Constantine is Cheered

Constantine read these words with awe and gladness, for indeed he knew not what deity had thus favoured him, but he would not reject the help of the Unknown God; so he bowed his head in reverence, and when he looked again the cross and the angel had disappeared, and around him as he woke was the greyness of the rising dawn. The emperor summoned to his tent two soldiers from the troops, and bade them make a cross of wood to bear before the army. This they did, greatly marvelling, and Constantine called a standard-bearer, to whom he gave charge to bear forward the Standard of the Cross where the danger was greatest and the battle most fierce.

The Morning of Battle

When the day broke, and the two armies could see each other, both hosts arrayed themselves for battle, in serried ranks of armed warriors, shouting their war-cries.

*"Loud sang the trumpets to stern-minded foemen:
The dewy-winged eagle watched them march onward,
The horny-billed raven rejoiced in the battle-play,
The sly wolf, the forest-thief, soon saw his heart's desire
As the fierce warriors rushed at each other.
Great was the shield-breaking, loud was the clamour,
Hard were the hand-blows, and dire was the downfall,
When first the heroes felt the keen arrow-shower.
Soon did the Roman host fall on the death-doomed Huns,*

*Thrust forth their deadly spears over the yellow shields,
Broke with their battle-glaives breasts of the foemen."
Helena.*

The Cross is Raised

Then, when the battle was at its height, and the Romans knew not whether they would conquer or die fighting to the last, the standard-bearer raised the Cross, the token of promised victory, before all the host, and sang the chant of triumph. Onward he marched, and the Roman host followed him, pressing on resistless as the surging waves. The Huns, bewildered by the strange rally, and dreading the mysterious sign of some mighty god, rolled back, at first slowly, and then more and more quickly, till sullen retreat became panic rout, and they broke and fled. Multitudes were cut down as they fled, other multitudes were swept away by the devouring Danube as they tried to cross its current; some, half dead, reached the other side, and saved their lives in fortresses, guarding the steep cliffs beyond the Danube. Few, very few they were who ever saw their native land again.

There was great rejoicing in the Roman army and in the Roman camp when Constantine returned in triumph with the wondrous Cross borne before him. He passed on to the city, and the people of Rome gazed with awe on the token of the Unknown God who had saved their city, but none would say who that God might be.

A Council Summoned

The emperor summoned a great council of all the wisest men in Rome, and when all were met he raised the Standard of the Cross in the midst and said:

*"Can any man tell me, by spells or by ancient lore,
Who is the gracious God, giver of victory,
Who came in His glory, with the Cross for His token,
Who rescued my people and gave me the victory,
Scattered my foemen and put the fierce Huns to flight,
Showed me in heaven His sign of deliverance,
The loveliest Cross of light, gleaming in glory?"
Helena.*

At first no man could give him any answer--perhaps none dared--till after a long silence the wisest of all arose and said he had heard that the Cross was the sign of Christ the King of Heaven, and that the knowledge of His way was only revealed to men in baptism. When strict search was made some Christians were found, who preached the way of life to Constantine, and rejoiced that they might tell before men of the life and death, the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ, who redeemed mankind from the bonds of evil; and then Constantine, being fully instructed and convinced, was baptized and became the first Christian emperor.

Constantine Desires to Find our Saviour's Cross

Constantine's heart, however, was too full of love for his new Lord to let him rest satisfied without some visible token of Christ's sojourn on earth. He longed to have, to keep for his own, one thing at least which Jesus had touched during His life, and his thoughts turned chiefly to that Cross which had been to himself both the sign of triumph and the guide to the way of life. Thus he again called together his Christian teachers, and inquired more closely where Christ had suffered.

"In Judæa, outside the walls of Jerusalem, He died on the Cross," they told him.

"Then there, near that city, so blest and so curst, we must seek His precious Cross," cried Constantine.

Summons his Mother Helena

Forthwith he summoned from Britain his mother, the British Princess Helena, and when she had been taught the truth, had been converted and baptized, he told her of his heart's desire, and begged her to journey to Jerusalem and seek the sacred Cross.

Helena herself, when she heard Constantine's words, was filled with wonder, and said: "*Dear son, thy words have greatly rejoiced my heart, for know that I, too, have seen a vision, and would gladly seek the Holy Cross, where it lies hidden from the eyes of men.*"

Helena's Vision



The Vision of St. Helena

*"Now will I tell thee the brightest of visions,
Dreamt at the midnight when men lay in slumber.
Hovering in heaven saw I a radiant Cross,
Gloriously gold-adorned, shining in splendour;
Starry gems shone on it at the four corners,
Flashed from the shoulder-span five gleaming jewels.
Angels surrounded it, guarding it gladly.
Yet in its loveliness sad was that Cross to see,
For 'neath the gold and gems fast blood flowed from it,
Till it was all defiled with the dark drops."
Dream of the Rood.*

In this dream of Helena's the Cross spoke to her, and told her of the sad fate which had made of that hapless tree the Cross on which the Redeemer of mankind had released the souls of men from evil, on which He had spread out His arms to embrace mankind, had bowed His head, weary with the strife, and had given up His soul. All creation wept that hour, for Christ was on the Cross.

*"Yet His friends came to him, left not His corpse alone,
Took down the Mighty King from His sharp sufferings—
Humbly I bowed myself down to the hands of men.
Sadly they laid Him down in His dark rock-hewn grave,
Sadly they sang for Him dirges for death-doomed ones,
Sadly they left Him there as His fair corpse grew cold.
We, the three Crosses, stood mournful in loneliness,
Till evil-thinking men felled us all three to ground,
Sank us deep into earth, sealed us from sight of man."
Dream of the Rood.*

She Undertakes the Quest

As Constantine had been guided by the heavenly vision of the True Cross, so now Helena would journey to the land of the Jews and find the reality of that Holy Cross. Her will and that of her son were one in this matter, so that before long the whole city resounded with the bustle and clamour of preparation, for Helena was to travel with the pomp and retinue befitting the mother of the Emperor of Rome.

*"There by the Wendel Sea stood the wave-horses.
Proudly the plunging ships sought out the ocean path.
Line followed after line of the tall brine-ploughs.
Forth went the water-steeds o'er the sea-serpent's road
Bright shields on the bulwarks oft broke the foaming surge,
Ne'er saw I lady lead such a fair following!"*
Helena.

She Comes to Judæa

Queen Helena had a prosperous voyage, and, after touching at the land of the Greeks, reached in due time the country of Judæa, and so, with good hope, came to Jerusalem. There, in the emperor's name, she summoned to an assembly all the oldest and wisest Jews, a congregation of a thousand venerable rabbis, learned in all the books of the Law and the Prophets, and proud that they were the Chosen People in a world of heathens, aliens from the True God. These she addressed at first with a blending of flattery and reproach--flattery for the Chosen People, reproach for their perversity of wickedness--and, finally, peremptorily demanded an answer to any question she might ask of them. The Jews withdrew and deliberated sadly whether they durst refuse the request of so mighty a person as the emperor's mother, and, deciding that they durst not, returned to the hall where Helena sat in splendour on her throne and announced their readiness to reply to all her questions. Helena, however, bade them first lessen their numbers. They chose five hundred to reply for them, and on these she poured such bitter reproaches that they at last exclaimed:

*"Lady, we learnt of yore laws of the Hebrew folk
Which all our fathers learnt from the true ark of God.
Lady, we know not now why thou thus blamest us;
How has the Jewish race done grievous wrong to thee?"*
Helena.

She Cross-questions the Rabbis

Helena only replied: *"Go ye away, and choose out from among these five hundred those whose wisdom is great enough to show them without delay the answer to all things I require"*; and again they left her presence. When they were alone, one of them, named Judas, said: "I know what this queen requires: she will demand to know from us where the Cross is concealed on which the Lord of the Christians was crucified; but if we tell this secret I know well that the Jews will cease to bear rule on the earth, and our holy scriptures will be forgotten. For my grandfather Zacchæus, as he lay dying, bade me confess the truth if ever man should inquire concerning the Holy Tree; and when I asked how our nation had failed to recognise the Holy and Just One, he told me that he had always withdrawn himself from the evil deeds of his generation, and their leaders had been blinded by their own unrighteousness, and had slain the Lord of Glory. And he ended:

*"Thus I and my father secretly held the Faith.
Now warn I thee, my son, speak not thou mockingly
Of the true Son of God reigning in glory:
For whom my Stephen died, and the Apostle Paul."*
Helena.

Now," said Judas, "since things are so, decide ye what we shall reveal, or what conceal, if this queen asks us."

One Appointed to Answer her

The other elders replied: "Do what seems to thee best, since thou alone knowest this. Never have we heard of these strange secrets. Do thou according to thy great wisdom."

While they still deliberated came the heralds with silver trumpets, which they blew, proclaiming aloud:

*"The mighty Queen calls you, O men, to the Council,
That she may hear from you of your decision.
Great is the need ye have of all your wisdom."
Helena.*

Slowly and reluctantly the Jewish rabbis returned to the council-chamber, and listened to Helena as she plied them with questions about the ancient prophecies and the death of Christ; but to all her inquiries they professed entire ignorance, until, in her wrath, the queen threatened them with death by fire. Then they led forward Judas, saying: "He can reveal the mysteries of Fate, for he is of noble race, the son of a prophet. He will tell thee truth, O Queen, as thy soul loveth." Thus Helena let the other Jews go in peace, and took Judas for a hostage.

She Threatens him

Now Helena greeted Judas and said:

*"Lo, thou perverse one, two things lie before thee,
Or death or life for thee: choose which thou wilt."
Helena.*

Judas replied to her, since he could not escape:

*"If the starved wanderer lost on the barren moors
Sees both a stone and bread, easily in his reach,
Which, O Queen, thinkest thou he will reject?"
Helena.*

Thereupon Helena said: "*If thou wouldst dwell in heaven with the angels, reveal to me where the True Cross lies hidden.*" Now Judas was very sad, for his choice lay between death and the revealing of the fateful secret, but he still tried to evade giving an answer, protesting that too long a time had passed for the secret to be known. Helena retorted that the Trojan War was a still more ancient story, and yet was still well known; but Judas replied that men are bound to remember the valiant deeds of nations; he himself had never even heard the story of which she spoke. This obstinacy angered the queen greatly, and she demanded to be taken at once to the hill of Calvary, that she might purify it, for the sake of Him who died there; but Judas only repeated:

*"I know not the place, nor aught of that field."
Helena.*

Queen Helena was yet more enraged by his stubborn denials, and determined to obtain by force an answer to her questions. Calling her servants, she bade them thrust Judas into a deep dry cistern, where he lay, starving, bound hand and foot, for seven nights and days. On the seventh day his stubborn spirit yielded, and Judas lifted up his voice and called aloud, saying:

*"Now I beseech you all by the great God of heaven
That you will lift me up out of this misery.
I will tell all I know of that True Holy Cross,
Now I no longer can hide it for heavy pain.
Hunger has daunted me through all these dreary days.*

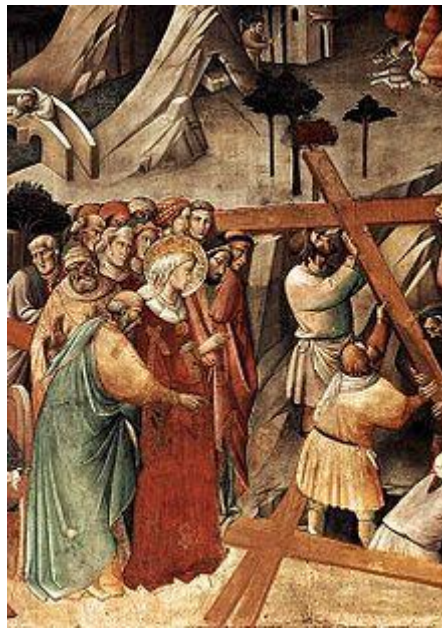
Foolish was I of yore; late I confess it."

Helena.

He Guides her to Calvary

The message was brought to Helena where she waited to hear tidings, and she bade her servants lift the weakened Judas from the dark pit; then they led him, half dead with hunger, out of the city to the hill of Calvary. There Judas prayed to the God whom he now feared and worshipped for a sign, some token to guide them in their search for the Holy Cross. As he prayed a sweet-smelling vapour, curling upwards like the incense-wreaths around the altar, rose to the skies from the summit of the hill. The sign was manifest to all, and Judas gave thanks to God for His great mercy; then, bidding the wondering soldiers help him, he began to dig. By this time all men knew what they sought, and each wished to uncover the holy relic, so that all dug with great zeal, until, under twenty feet of earth, they uncovered three crosses, so well preserved that they lay in the earth just as the Jews had hidden them.

Three Crosses Found



Judas and all rejoiced greatly at this marvel, and, reverently raising the three crosses, they bore them into the city, and laid them at the feet of Queen Helena, whose first rapture of joy was speedily turned to perplexity as she realised that she knew not which was that sacred Cross on which the King of Angels had suffered. **"For,"** she said, ***"two thieves were crucified with him."*** But even Judas could not clear her doubts.

*"Lo we have heard of this from all the holy books,
That there were with him two in His deep anguish.
They hung in death by Him; He was Himself the third.
Heaven was all darkened o'er at that dread moment.
Say, if thou rightly canst, which of these crosses
Is that blest Tree of Fate which bore the Heaven's King."*

Helena.

A Miracle to Reveal our Saviour's Cross

Judas, however, suggested that the crosses should be carried to the midst of the city, and that they should pray for another miracle to reveal the truth. This was done at dawn, and the triumphant band of Christians raised hymns of prayer and praise until the ninth hour; then came a mighty crowd bearing a young man lifeless on his bier. At Judas's command they laid down the bier, and he, praying to God, solemnly raised in turn each of the crosses and held it above the dead man's head. Lifeless still he lay as Judas raised the first two, but when he held above the corpse the third, the True Cross, the dead man arose instantly, body and

soul reunited, one in praising God, and the whole multitude broke out into shouts of thanksgiving to the Lord of Hosts, and the sacred relic was restored to the loving care of the queen.



The Nails Sought for

Nevertheless Helena's longing was still unsatisfied. She called Judas (whose new name in baptism was Cyriacus) and begged him to fulfil her desires, and to pray to God that she might find the nails which had pierced the Lord of Life, where they lay hidden from men in the ground of Calvary. Leading her out of the town, Cyriacus again prayed on Mount Calvary that God would send forth a token and reveal the secret. As he prayed there came from heaven a leaping flame, brighter than the sun, which touched the surface of the ground here and there, and kindled in each place a tiny star. When they dug at the spots where the stars shone they found each nail shining visibly and casting a radiance of its own in the dark earth. So Helena had obtained her heart's desire, and had now the True Cross and the Holy Nails.

Good News Brought to Constantine

Word of his mother's success was sent to the Emperor Constantine, and he was asked what should be done with these glorious relics. He bade Helena build in Jerusalem a glorious church, and make therein a beautiful shrine of silver, where the Holy Cross should be guarded for all generations by priests who should watch it day and night. This was done, but the nails were still Helena's possession, and she was at a loss how to preserve these holy relics, when the devout Cyriacus, now ordained Bishop of Jerusalem, went to her and said: "O lady and queen, take these precious nails for thy son the emperor. Make with them rings for his horse's bridle. Victory shall ever go with them; they shall be called Holy to God, and he shall be called blessed whom that horse bears." The advice pleased the queen, and she had wrought a glorious bridle, adorned with the Holy Nails, and sent it to her son. Constantine received it with all reverence, and ordained that April 24, the day of the miracle of revelation, should henceforth be kept in honour as "Holy Cross Day." Thus were the emperor's zeal and the royal mother's devotion rewarded, and Christendom was enriched by some of its most precious treasures, the True Cross and the Holy Nails.



Helmet of Constantine

The **Helmet of Constantine** was an item that was made from the relics gathered by [St. Helena](#). [Constantine](#)'s conversion to Christianity, which happened around AD 300, was one of great importance. During this time period it was believed that touching the body of the deceased or even something that came in contact with the person who had died, was said to have special powers.^[1] This belief started a huge obsession with finding these [relics](#) to protect temples, cities, and even people.

History

[Constantine](#) was one of these people who was, as they thought, protected because he had a relic in his possession. The helmet that he wore had a piece of the cross that Jesus was crucified on. After Constantine was made [Caesar](#), he issued the [Edict of Milan](#), sending his mother Helena to find the [True Cross](#) and to send back what she found. Helena found the cross and sent three nails that were used in the crucifixion of Jesus back to Rome and her son Constantine. These nails were considered relics and Constantine used them to stay safe.

The helmet that Constantine wore was no ordinary helmet. It was made with one of the [Holy Nails](#) that [Saint Helena](#) found at the crucifixion site. By making the helmet with one of the nails, it was supposed to protect him from any harm. Not only was it a sign of protection, but it was also said to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah.^[2] The prophecy located in the fourteenth chapter of [Zechariah](#) said that one would come who engraved "Holiness to the Lord" on both the bells of the horses and head piece of the man.^[2] At this time, the [Roman emperor](#) had the holiest relics known to man.^[2]

Studies

Constantine was very aware of this, and let the entire empire know that he was the owner of this holy helmet. The emperor had coins made with the image of him wearing his helmet on the front. On every [VLLP coin](#) that was made, Constantine was shown wearing his helmet. This was one way that Constantine moved the [Roman Empire](#) away from the [pagan religion](#) and towards [Christianity](#).^[3] The coins that were made after Constantine acquired his helmet showed that the nail was not the only thing that made his helmet religious. Constantine also had the monogram of Christ inscribed on the helmet.^[2] There were also a few religious symbols that were placed on the helmet. The [chi-rho](#) symbol was placed on the helmet, which usually represented the cross, but at times it was interpreted as Jesus Christ himself. Another one of these symbols was a labarum piercing a dragon, a serpent. This was significant because the serpent was represented as the devil. But it was also the symbol for any enemy that the Roman Empire had. Constantine's helmet stood for the strength that the [Roman Empire](#) had through military force, and God. The helmet was put on the coins to let everyone know of this.^[3] Constantine's helmet was mainly a crown that was fastened to the head by two clamps. The majority of the helmet was made out of iron and gold.^[2]

Constantine thought having the chi-roh symbol on the helmet would give him added protection to that of the relic that was already in the helmet.^[4] The crown that was made with the nail was placed around a full helmet when the Emperor went into battle, but could easily be taken off.^[4] It was called a helmet however he wore it though. This is because of the two clamps that held it in place. If these two clamps were not on the original crown it would not be called a helmet at all.^[4]

References

1. [^] [Joe Nickell](#), *Relics of Christ*
2. [^] [a b c d e](#) *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities.*
3. [^] [a b](#) [Constantine the Great coins](#)
4. [^] [a b c](#) [Andreas Alföldi](#), *The Helmet of Constantine With the Christian Monogram.*