

The Rocky Road to Jericho



In 1882, a certain Reverend WM Thomson made a huge effort to visit all the places Jesus went or talked about, and this round to Jericho was one of them. He writes:

“With noise and pomp such as Arabs only can affect we passed out at St. Stephen’s gate, wound our way down into the narrow vale of Jehoshaphat where once ran the little brook Cedron, over the south point of and by the miserable remains of the city of Mary and Lazarus, and then prepared ourselves to descend - for you remember that we must go ‘*down* to Jericho’. And sure enough, *down down* we did go, over slippery rocks for more than a mile, when the path became less precipitous. Still, however, the road follows the dry channel of a brook for several miles farther, as if descending into the very bowels of the earth. How admirably calculated for ‘robbers’! You are walled in by such perpendicular rocks as render escape impossible while you be crushed to death by huge rocks rolled down “from the above. The danger is still so great that strong guards were at short distances on the summits the whole of the way to the plain. After leaving the brook, which turns aside too far to the south,

ascended and descended naked hills for several miles, then gradually becoming more and more gloomy. Not a house nor a tree is to be seen and the only remains are those of a large khan said to have been the inn, to which the good Samaritan brought the wounded Jew. Not far from here in a narrow defile a traveller was attacked shot and robbed in 1820. As you approach the plain, the mountains wear a more doleful appearance, then become more cavern-like and frightful and the narrow passes less and less passable. At length the weary pilgrim reaches the plain by a long steep declivity, and doubtless expects to step immediately into the splendid city of Jericho. But alas no city appears and after full hour's ride he pitches his tent (if he have one) in a dry plain of sand sparsely sprinkled o'er with burnt up grass. If he has no tent, a shrivelled thorn bush is better than nothing; and if he cannot get that, let him do as we did - sit down under a burning sun and bear it as well as he can..."