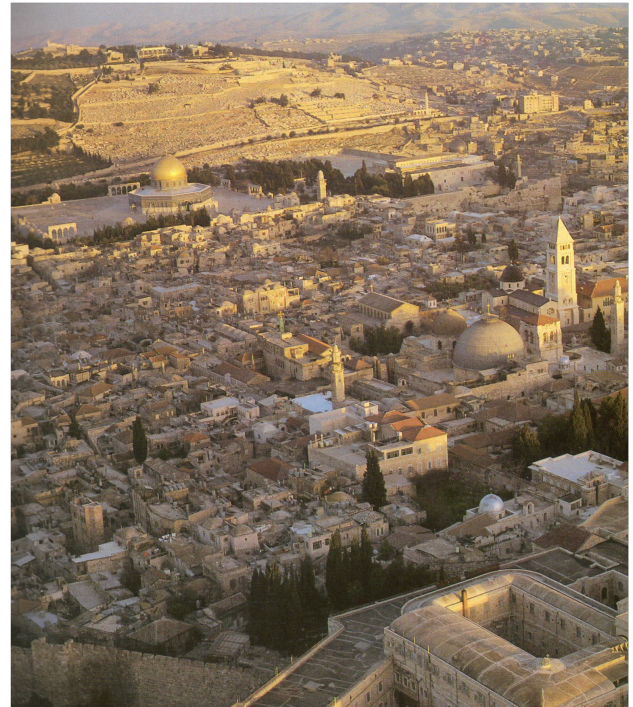


The Palestine of Jesus:
Letting the geography of the land
speak to us today
Fourth Presentation



Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives

1. Why did Herod build the **temple**? First, he was greatly interested in architecture and built much. Herod ruled, with Rome's assistance, from 37 – 4 BC. His mother was an ethnic Arab (a Nabatean from the Petra region), and his father was an Edomite. Though he was raised as a Jew, he lacked the social status of the powerful old families of Jerusalem. Josephus described him as only half-Jewish; he was always an outsider and fearful of his grip on the throne. What better way to 'prove' your credentials than to build something as dazzling and Jewish as this temple?
2. **Mount Zion:** Mount Zion is bordered on the west and south by the Hinnom Valley and on the east by the Tyropoeon Valley, the Valley of the Cheesemakers. The Valley of Hinnom is the lowest point of Jerusalem and the antithesis of the Temple: children were burned alive here in sacrifice in early times (2 Kings 23.10). In Greek, it was called 'Gehenna'. It became known as hell. If the Temple Mount was where God dwelt, this, the lowest point, was the gateway to the kingdom of death (Habakkuk 2.5), the underworld (Amos 9.2). The end of the valley was also the beginning of the desert, which was seen as the continuation of the primeval chaos and the home of demons.
3. **The Western Wall** (incorrectly called the Wailing Wall): The Temple Mount (now the Dome of the Rock) is behind it. Beyond that to the east is the Kidron Valley (whose stream, when flowing, flows into the Dead Sea) and the Mt. of Olives beyond. To the north of the Temple Mount was the Antonia Fortress. Some stones of Herod's temple measured approximately 12m; huge! So, it was a time to be proud of the temple – but it was stones. A Jew had to come to Jerusalem thrice annually to be seen as a good citizen. There could be no pilgrimage without walking. There were 12,000 synagogues in Jesus' day. The population was 250,000.
4. **Dome of the Rock:** Begun in 688 AD and finished in 691, it is the first significant sanctuary built by Islam and the only one to survive essentially intact. It commemorated Muhammad's Ascension into heaven after his night journey to Jerusalem. This site is also where Abraham intended to sacrifice Isaac. The rock is inside the Dome. This is the third holiest site for Muslims after Mecca and Medina.
5. **Mt. of Olives:** This is east of the City and rises about 100m above the city. David came this way in ancient times when he escaped Absalom (2 Sam 15.30-32). Jesus' familiarity with the

Reflection

- Reflect on these final earthly days of Jesus: In your 'mind's eye' journey with Jesus and see what they might say to you personally.
- Choose some aspect and focus on that. Perhaps think about the darkness and suffering in your life – how did you deal with that? What about the suffering of others today? How could you incorporate that as a prayer in your life?
- However, remember that there is also resurrection! Some do not call the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by that name, but the Church of the Resurrection.
- Do an imaginative walk with Jesus on your road to Emmaus. What does He wish to say to you?



17. **The Chapel of the Crucifixion:** You climb steps to reach this chapel, which is 4m above the entrance. It is level with the rocky outcrop on which Christ was crucified.

18. **The Stone of Anointing:** This commemorates Jesus' anointing before He was buried (John 19.38-40). It is directly inside the entrance and beneath the Chapel of Crucifixion in the background.

19. **Tomb of Christ:** This tomb has been described as 'a hideous kiosk' and dates from the 19th Century. The fire of 1808 destroyed the last of a series of replicas that replaced the tomb destroyed by Hakim, the caliph of Egypt, in 1009, when he systematically destroyed everything. The Church's rebuilding began following the Crusaders' capture of Jerusalem in 1099.

The Road to Emmaus: Only Luke mentions this story, and various sites have been suggested. Four possibilities –

- 1) Qubaibeh 15 km NNW of Jerusalem;
- 2) Al Quastal/Moza 12 kms from Jerusalem;
- 3) Abu-Gosh – 15 km west of Jerusalem;
- 4) Latroun (Nicopolis)– c.25 km from Jerusalem.

Two walked – one Cleopas; was the second his wife? In Jerome's Latin translation: 'Remain with us, Lord. for it is dark.' This is our situation. The same description as the Last Supper and St. Paul – their eyes were opened when He broke the bread. Not an ordinary meal. They were renewed and had a new energy. When they arrived back in Jerusalem, they were surprised – Jesus had already been. Again and again, we notice He precedes us. (Luke 24.13-35)

20. The Resurrection appearance just to the north of Bethsaida, where the Church of the Primacy of Peter is located. (John 21.1-23)

- area stemmed from the fact that when in Jerusalem, He stayed with friends in Bethany (Luke 10.38; Mark 11.11), 2 km in a direct line from the City. At pilgrimage times, the population of Jerusalem tripled, the cost of lodging within the City became exorbitant, and the poor had to make arrangements in the surrounding villages. Thus, each day, He walked over the hill to the City and returned at nightfall (Luke 21.37). The lie of the land permits only one route if the traveller wants to avoid climbing in and out of wadis: from Gethsemane straight up the hill to et-Tur, along the ridge to Bethphage, then along another ridge to Bethany. One evening, He sat up here and spoke to the disciples about the city's future (Mark 13.3), whose lack of faith had driven Him to tears (Luke. 19.37,41-44). At the bottom of the hill is the Garden of Gethsemane.

6. **Cemeteries:** The concentration of cemeteries (Christian, Jewish and Muslim) on the SW end of the Mt. of Olives and the other side of the Kidron Valley beneath the Temple walls is due to the belief that the Kidron is the valley of Jehoshaphat where humanity will assemble to be judged by God.

7. **Dominus Flevit:** This tear-shaped church commemorates Christ weeping over Jerusalem. (Luke 19.44) It was built in 1955. Jesus will enter Jerusalem by the Beautiful Gate, now bricked with stone. Romans in the Antonia Fortress would have seen Him coming, though the Herodians probably had already brought the news. The Pharisees ask Jesus to tell His disciples to keep quiet, which means He is not attacking the soldiers. The Pharisees are now happy; He cannot be the Messiah. The crowd wants Him to turn right when He enters the temple precinct and attack the Antonia Fortress. He goes left and overthrows the tables. Before this, Jesus had told two disciples: '... follow a man with a pitcher of water.' Over on Mt. Zion is where the Last Supper was held. (Luke 19.28-47)

8. **The Last Supper:** There are three traditional sites. One 'Upper Room' is even a lower room today! It is a tiny place because a bishop's tomb was built and takes up half the space. The Hall shown (The Coenaculum) is the traditional site from the time of the Crusades. For more than five centuries, Christians and Jews were denied access to it. (Luke 22.7-23)

9. **Gethsemane:** After the Supper, Jesus left Jerusalem and crossed the Kidron Valley. On his way up the valley, he would have seen the tombs in the bright moonlight.

Awareness of imminent death must have struck Him with great force, for He stopped to be alone for a moment because of a decision He had to make. His enemies would be coming from the City, but 10 minutes of fast walking would bring Him to the top of the Mount of Olives, with the open desert before Him. Escape would be easy. Only in prayer would He find the answer. (Luke 22.39-53)

10. **The Olive Orchard, Gethsemane:** These trees are hundreds of years old. 'Gethsemane' originates from the Hebrew expression 'Gat Shemen', meaning 'olive press' referring to these trees.

Church of All Nations: Next to the Garden of Gethsemane is the modern Church of All Nations, built between 1919 and 1924. Its name commemorates the contribution made by many nations to its construction. Initially, a 4th-century church was on this site, later transformed by the Crusaders into a basilica. It is also known today as the Basilica of Agony, referencing the evening Jesus spent there before His arrest. Here in the church is the rock on which Jesus is supposed to have prayed. The rock is surrounded by a crown of thorns in wrought iron.

11. **Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu:** This modern church dominates the eastern slope of Mt. Sion. It is the traditional site of the home of Caiaphas, though Murphy O'Connor thinks it would have been further up the hill as luxurious houses of the Herodian period have been found there. Beneath this Church are rock-cut structures, cellars, cisterns, and stables dating to the Herodian period (37 BC – 70 AD). There are three levels to the house: 1) Court area/Judgement area, 2) Waiting to hear the sentence, and 3) Prison for both humans and animals. The 'cock crowing' on the roof reminds us that Caiaphas tried Jesus, and Peter denied him three times, and 'he went out and wept bitterly' (Matthew 26.75). In Middle Eastern culture, it is shameful for a man to weep. (Luke 22.54-62)
12. Not allowed to sit as a Court after sunset. However, with Jesus, they met at 9 pm. Thus, the High Priest's presence was critical to justify the trial. Where did Jesus spend His last night? We do not know, but more than likely in the cells below, as He was taken to Pilate in the morning.
13. In prison, He was scourged and then collapsed. Then, He was given vinegar to arouse Him. They waited 20 minutes, put olive oil on the prisoner's skin, and began to get a confession from the prisoner. The disciples were also brought here when they were later imprisoned (Luke 22.63-65; 22.66-71).

14. **The Antonia Fortress:** Herod built this and named it in honour of his patron, Mark Antony. This was where Pilate judged Jesus. It was seized by the Jews in 66 AD and was the last place to fall to the Romans in 70 AD when Titus levelled both it and Jerusalem. (Luke 23.1-23)

The Crucifixion: outside the wall. Is this the site? The usual place of execution was in the Hinnom Valley, but the quarry was more convenient because it was just before the Sabbath. Was this the place? Murphy O'Connor thinks, very probably, yes. At the beginning of the 1st Century AD, the site was a quarry that was disused outside the city walls. Similar to those found elsewhere and dated to 1st BC and 1st century AD, tombs had been cut in the vertical west wall left by the quarrymen. These quarrymen had also cut around a bank of inferior cracked stone and left it jutting out from the east wall. This is all archaeology can tell us, but it is compatible with what we know from the Gospels: that Jesus was crucified on a rock eminence reminiscent of a skull and outside the city (John 19.17), and there was a grave nearby (John 19.41-42). Windblown earth and seeds watered by winter rains would have created a covering of green that John calls a 'garden'. The Jerusalem community also held liturgical celebrations at this site until 66 AD. The land was not built upon even when the area was brought within the city wall in AD 41 – 43. The site would have been closely scrutinised in the 4th century when Emperor Constantine decided to build a church there to commemorate the Resurrection, for substantial buildings had to be torn down. The Persians razed the Church to the ground in 614 AD, and it was rebuilt 15 years later and lasted until 1009.

15. **The Holy Sepulchre or Church of the Resurrection:** Notice –

1. The entrance
2. The place of crucifixion
3. Stone of the Uncion
4. The Tomb of Christ

16. **Entrance:** The Church is crowded on all sides by buildings. It is a noisy, busy place filled with pilgrims and tourists. What jars is the possessive jealousy of the six groups that care for the holy site: Latin Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Armenians, Syrians, Copts, and Ethiopians. These groups watch each other suspiciously for any infringement of their rights.