

44 Bethany

Names (also known as)

al-Eizariya (Arabic (ةيزري عالا), meaning "Place of Lazarus"), site of the reputed Tomb of Lazarus, located about 1.5 miles (2.4 km) to the east of Jerusalem on the south-eastern slope of the Mount of Olives.

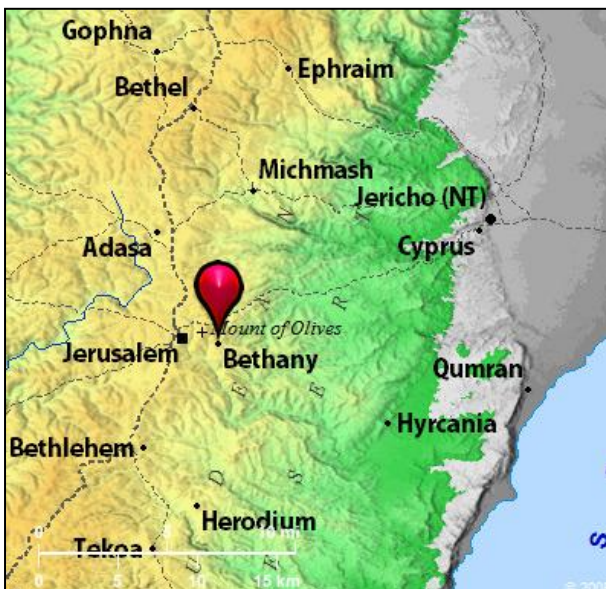
Etymology

Strong’s G963 - of Chaldee origin; “date house”. Thayer and Smith = “house of dates” or, “house of misery”. Easton and Fausset both say “house of dates”.

Possibly derived from Hebrew בֵּית-תְּאֵנָה (*beit-te'enh*) meaning "house of figs". It derived its name from the palm trees which grew there.

Some have disputed the relationship to ‘date palms’ but the context of the graphic enacted parable* contained in Mark 10:46 to 11:23 in which Christ deliberately includes Gentiles into everything he does, is very strong inferential support. One Biblical symbol for the nations is the palm tree and it appears 3 times in the context – Jericho (called “city of palm trees”), Bethany and the branches strewed in the way – palm trees (John 12:13).

Location/Description



Bethany is a village on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, about two miles (3 km) from Jerusalem, near the normal road to Jericho.

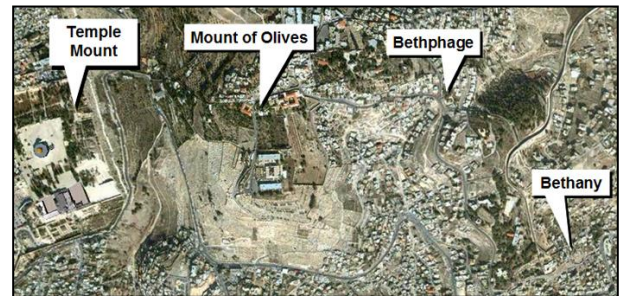
Scriptural references

New Testament

Matt. 21:17; 26:6; Mark 11:1,11,12; 14:3; Luke 19:29; 24:50; John 11:1,18; 12:1

Famous characters

Lazarus, Mary, Martha, Jesus

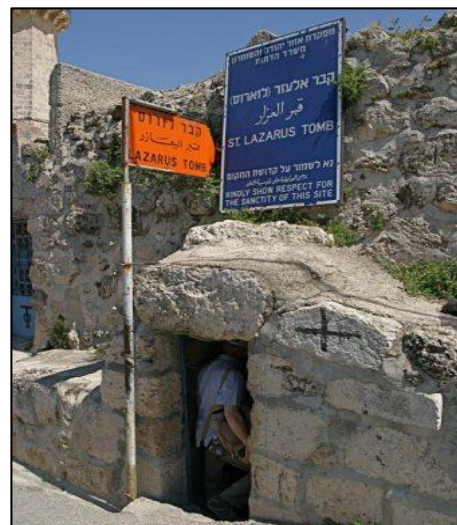


Brief history

The little village of Bethany, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives about 3km from Jerusalem, was a favourite place of rest and refuge for Jesus. Here he knew the intimacy and friendship of his friends Martha, Mary and Lazarus. And here, in the cemetery just below the village, he raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11).

Bethany also has the distinction of being the very last place where the feet of Christ touched the ground, for he departed from here to join his Father in heaven (Luke 24:50-51), and to this spot he will return – Zech. 14:4.

The present Arab village, on the south-eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, is called Al-Azariyeh, an Arabic version of Lazarus. The original village was probably higher up the hill to the west of the tomb of Lazarus.



The tomb in al-Eizariya has been identified as possibly the tomb of the gospel account since at least the 4th century AD.

Today’s pilgrims enter from the street down a flight of 24 well-worn and uneven steps to a vestibule. Three more steps lead to the burial chamber, little more than 2 metres long. Tradition says Jesus stood in the vestibule to call Lazarus from the grave.

Since 2005 Bethany, in the West Bank, has been cut off from Jerusalem by Israel’s separation wall. The wall actually cuts across the main street, making a serious impact on the lives of residents and on the town’s economy.

What used to be a 10-minute drive from the Mount of Olives to Bethany now requires a lengthy detour, so the Tomb of Lazarus has become isolated from the normal pilgrim and tourist route.

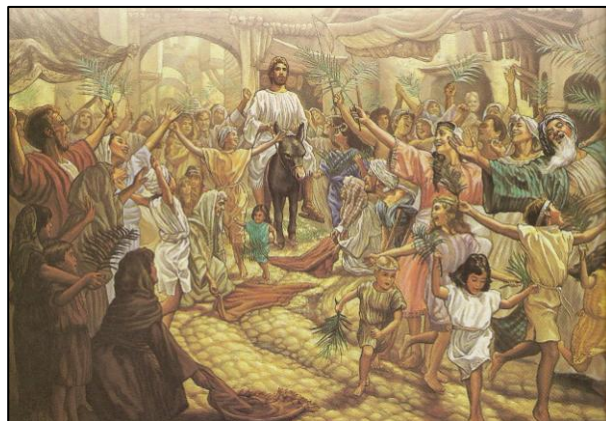
***The enacted parable of Bethphage and Bethany**

Having cured blind Bartimaeus (“the son of the polluted” - as Jews regarded Gentiles) in Jericho (“the city of palm trees” – a symbol for the nations – Ex. 15:27; Rev. 7:9), Christ arrives at the Mount of Olives (the first of 3 trees to feature in Mark 11:1). He arrives first at Bethphage (“the house of figs” – the fig tree being the symbol for Israel) and from there sends two disciples to Bethany (“the house of date palms”) to collect an ass and the foal of the ass (although Mark only mentions the unbroken colt representing the Gentiles – Gen. 49:11). This is perfectly consistent with the Divine method – to the Jew first (Bethphage), and then to the Gentile (Bethany). Both Jew and Gentile are joined in the olive tree (Rom. 11:16-17) and will be seen together in the Kingdom – Zech. 4:3.

Every phrase of Mark 11 is pregnant with meaning in the context of the temporary falling aside of Israel so that the Gentiles might be called (Rom. 11:11-25). Such phrases as – “and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him” speak eloquently of the response of the Gentiles to the preaching of the Gospel. Gentiles, unbroken by law, and not subject to any control (like the colt), were in fact “tied” (bound under sin – Rom. 11:32), and were outside the house (“by a door without”) and needed to be loosed and brought to Christ.

Accordingly, in the enacted parable, Christ bypasses the ass of Israel and chooses the unbroken colt of the Gentiles. He always knew this from the prophecy of Jacob – Gen. 49:11.

On the 10th of Abib, Christ rode the colt into Jerusalem to fulfill Zech. 9:9 on the way to the cross (in 5 days), thus ensuring the ultimate fulfillment of Zech. 9:10 when he will “speak peace unto the nations.”



It is no wonder that the branches spread in the way were palm branches (John 12:13), and that on inspection of the temple and its perverse traditions he departs unimpressed to stay the night in Bethany (by interpretation the house of the nations).

The cursing of the fig tree on the 11th Abib and its drying up by the next day; the cleansing of ‘the court of the Gentiles’ of the paraphernalia of Jewish ritual and the robbery involved; the pausing of the Mosaic system; the declaration of God’s house as “a house of prayer for all nations”; and the constitution of the new covenant (the Abrahamic) with the response to Peter – “have faith in God”, all have their place in this beautiful enacted parable that revolves around Bethany.

The final element is a reference to Zech. 14 in Mark 11:23 - **“That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.”**

The mountain in view is the Mount of Olives and it will be cast into the Dead Sea when Christ again returns to Bethany (Acts 1:11).

Sources:

Thayer; Wikipedia; seeingtheholylan.net
* “A light to the Gentiles” study series

(Compilers – Ron Leadbetter/Jim Cowie)