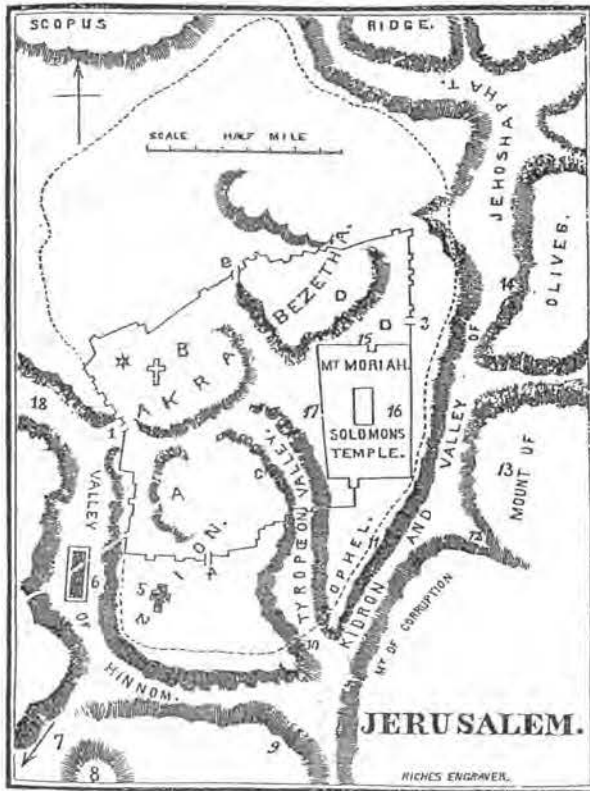
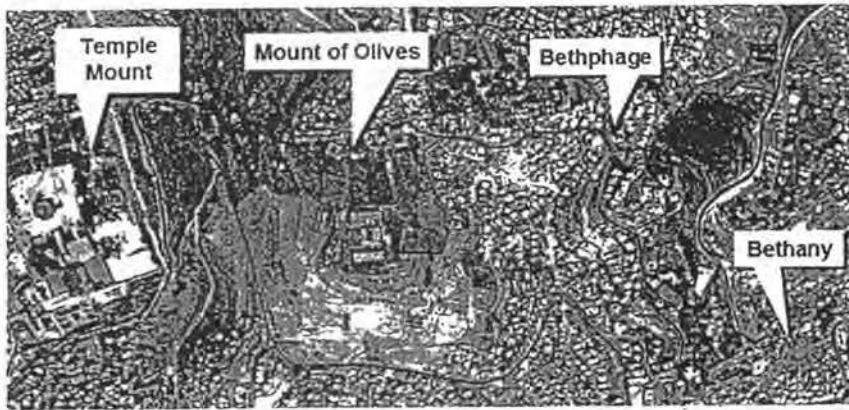


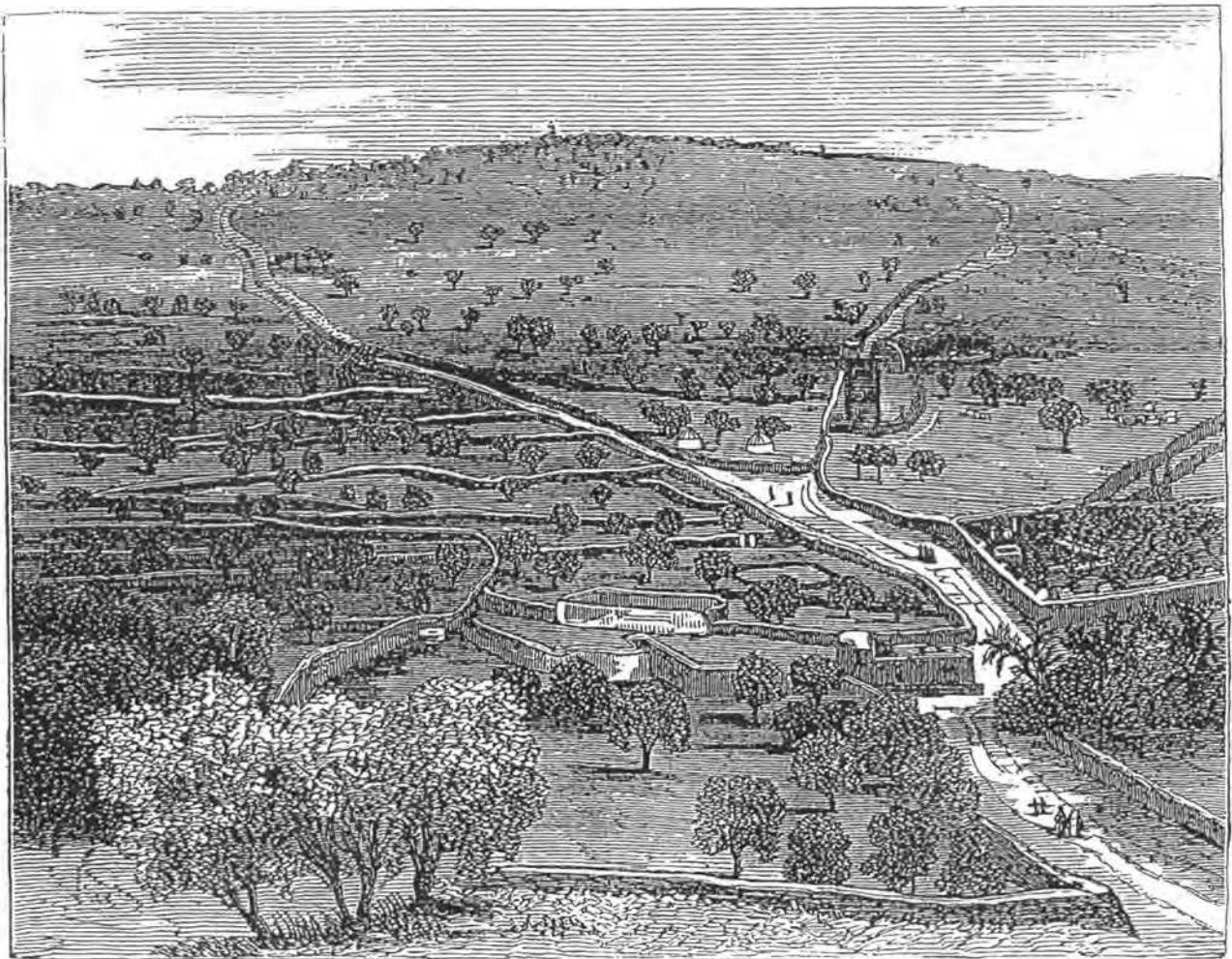
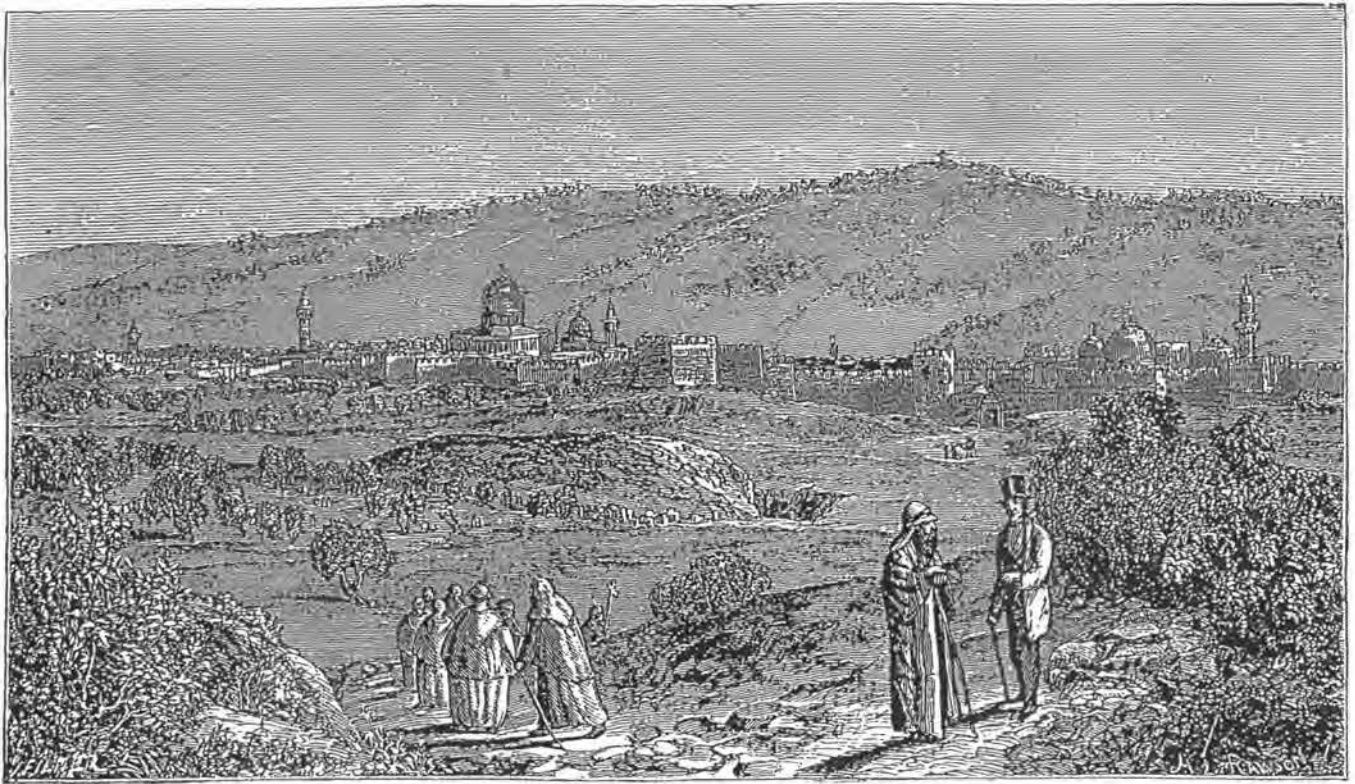
Mt. of Olives – The Scene of the Climax of World History



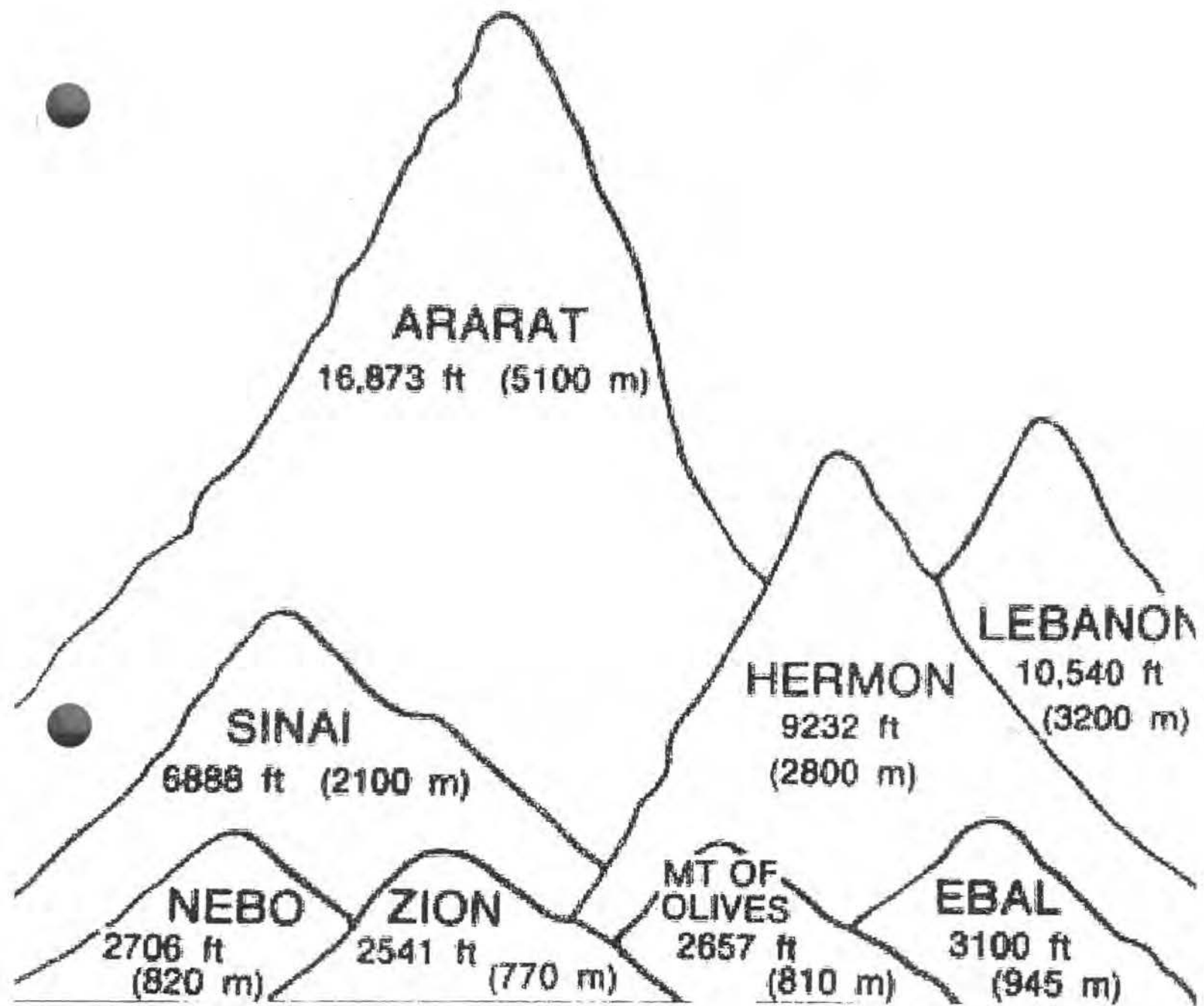
PLAN OF JERUSALEM AND ITS ENVIRONS.



MOUNT OLIVET.



The Mount of Olives. (From a photograph by the editor.)



Mt. of Olives – The Scene of the Climax of World History

1A. The Designations for Olivet:

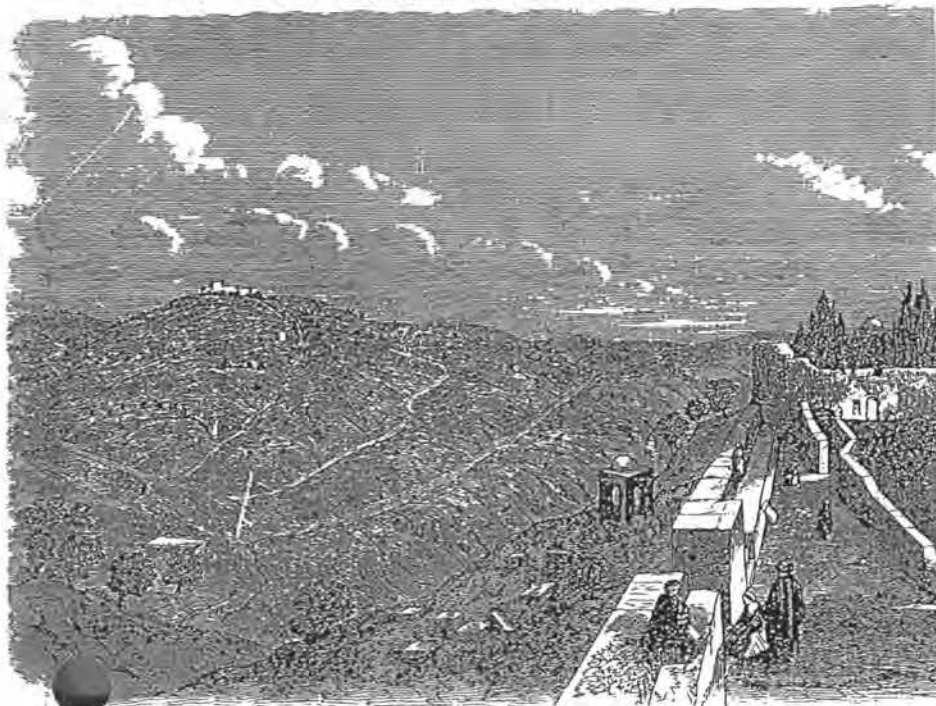
Olivet comes to us through the Vulgate *Olivetum*, "an oliveyard." Josephus frequently uses the expression "Mount of Olives" (e.g. *Ant*, VII, ix, 2; XX, viii, 6; *BJ*, V, ii, 3; xii, 2), but later Jewish writings give the name *har ha-mishhah*, "Mount of Oil"; this occurs in some MSS in 2 K 23:12, and the common reading, *har ha-mashhith*, "Mount of Corruption," m "destruction," may possibly be a deliberate alteration... In later ages the Mount was termed "the mountain of lights," because here there used to be kindled at one time the first beacon light to announce throughout Jewry the appearance of the new moon.

To the natives of Palestine today it is usually known as *Jebel et Tur* ("mountain of the elevation," or "tower"), or, less commonly, as *Jebel Tur ez zait* ("mountain of the elevation of oil"). The name *Jebel ez-zaitun* ("Mount of Olives") is also well known. Early Arab writers use the term *Tur Zait*, "Mount of Oil." (James Orr, Gen. Ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1960, 2186.)



Dein König kommt in niedern Hüllen
Sanftmütig, auf der Erden Hüllen,
Empfang ihn froh, Jerusalem!
Trag ihm entgegen Friedenszweige,
Bestreu mit Meien seine Steige,
So ist's dem Herren angenehm!

2A. The Topography of Olivet:



Viewing the mountain thus, two principal summits and two subsidiary spurs may be described. The N. summit is that known as *Karem es-Sayyad* (the vineyard of the hunter), and also as the *Viri Galilaei*; it reaches a height of 2723 feet above the Mediterranean, and is separated from the S. mass by a narrow neck of land traversed to-day by the new carriage road. As far back as 530 this hill is spoken of as Galilee, and in the *Acts of Pilate* (about 350) a mountain near Jerusalem called 'Galilee' is mentioned. It is said to have first received its name *Galilaia* because the Galilaeans attending the feasts used to encamp there, or as Saewulf (1102) says, it 'was called Galilee because the Apostles, who were called Galilaeans, frequently visited there.' The S. summit, of practically equal height, is the traditional Mount of the Ascension, and has for some years

been distinguished by a lofty tower erected by the Russians. Here, too, Constantine erected his Church of the Ascension in 316 on the site where now stands its successor (erected 1834-5) of the same name. Here also is the Church of the Creed and the Paternoster Church, the latter a

modern building on the site of one of that name destroyed long ago. Scattered over the summit is a modern Moslem village—*Kefr et-Tur*—which combines with the noisy conduct of its rapacious inhabitants in spoiling the quiet beauty and holy associations of this sacred spot.

A small spur running S. is sometimes known as the Hill of the Prophets, on account of the interesting old 'Tomb of the Prophets'—a sepulchre generally believed, until recently, to have been originally Jewish—which is situated there; and the other somewhat isolated spur to the S.E., on which stands the wretched, half-ruined village of *el-Azariyeh*, on the site of Bethany, should, for reasons given, be included in the Mount.

Along the W. slope facing the city lies the reputed Garden of Gethsemane (part, too, of the Mount, cf. Lk 22)...of the Latins and its Greek rival; and a little higher up the hill to the S. the great Russian Church of St. Magdalene. The greater part of the slopes of the S.W. part of the hill is filled with a vast number of graves, those from the valley bottom till a little above the Bethany road being Jewish, while higher up are some Christian cemeteries. The Jews have a strong sentiment about being buried on this spot, the slopes of the 'Valley of Jehoshaphat' being traditionally, with them and with the Moslems, the scene of the resurrection and final judgment. (James Hastings, Ed., *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917, 207).

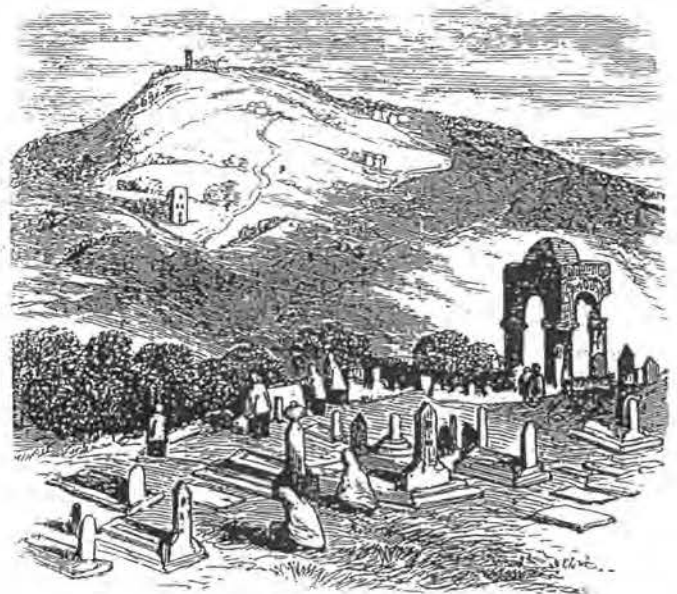
3A. The Savior and Olivet:

A.W.G. Masterman, in the article cited above, has a superb summary of the Savior's relationship to Olivet:

Although, with the single exception of Jn 8:1, all the incidents expressly connected with the Mount of Olives belong to the Passion week, there can be no doubt (Lk 21:37) that this quiet spot was one beloved and frequented by the Master. Here He withdrew from the city for rest and meditation (Jn 8:1) and for prayer (Mt 26:30 etc.). Once we read of His approach to the Mount from the Easter side 'unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives' (Mk 11:1; Mt 21:1; Lk 19:29). Over a part of the Mount He must have made His triumphal progress to the city (Mt. 21, Mk 11, Lk 19), and on this road He wept over Jerusalem (Lk 19:40-44). During the whole of that week 'in the daytime he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out and abode in the Mount that is called of Olives' (Lk 21:37)—the special locality on the Mount being Bethany (Mt 21:17, Mk 11:11). Crossing over from Bethany, Jesus illustrated His teaching by the sign of the withering of the barren fig-tree (Mt 21:18,19; Mk 11:12-14; 20-22), and on the slopes of this hill, with the doomed city spread out before them, Christ delivered to His disciples His wonderful eschatological discourse (Mt 24:3ff; Mk 13:3ff). Then here, in the Garden of Gethsemane, occurred the Agony, the Betrayal, and the Arrest (Mt 26:36-56; Mk 14:26-52; Lk 22:39-53; Jn 18:1-12). Lastly, on the Mount, not on the summit where tradition places it, but near Bethany, occurred the Ascension (Lk 24:50-52; Ac1:12).

To these incidents where the Mount of Olives is expressly mentioned may be added the scene in the house of Martha and Mary (Lk 10:38-42), the raising of Lazarus (Jn 11), and the feast at the house of Simon (Mt 26:6-13; Mk 14:3-9; Jn 12:1-19); for, as has been shown, Bethany was certainly a part of the Mount of Olives.

(*Ibid.*, 208).



THE MOUNT OF OLIVES



4A. The Ascent to Olivet:

1b. The paths to the Mt. of Olives:

It is worthwhile to reproduce here a pilgrim's account:



Leaving the garden, we commenced the ascent of the Mount of Olives. This mountain lies directly east of the city, from which it is separated by the deep valley of Jehoshaphat. Its height [sic] above this valley varies from five hundred to seven hundred feet. It is a little more than one hundred feet higher than Mount Zion, and near two hundred and fifty feet higher than the Temple area on Mount Moriah, so that it overlooks the whole of the city. The Arabs call it *Jebel et Tur*. The summit directly east of the city is the traditional place of the ascension of Christ. It slopes down beautifully toward the valley of Jehoshaphat on the west, and again toward Bethany on the east. Viewed from Zion, it has a most beautiful and graceful outline, and is one of the most commanding objects about Jerusalem. This hill, once

so beautifully covered with gardens and olive orchards, now presents the same desolate aspect that forms so prominent a characteristic of Jerusalem scenery. Of the palm trees of the valley, not a single one is left, and the two gigantic cedars that once stood near its summit have disappeared. Only a few scattering olive trees are seen upon its sides, and an occasional fig tree takes root in its scanty soil. Great boulders of variegated flint are scattered about in every direction, while here and there a little patch of ground, enclosed by a frail and tottering wall of stone, is sown to barley.

There are three paths leading from Jerusalem over Olivet. One is a foot-path, leading directly up the mountain side; another, and easier one, the common road for beasts of burden, leads around the southern brow of the mount; while still another but much less used, winds around the northern slope. As we ascended, I stopped on the way to gather some portions of a low, thorny bush, from which many suppose the mock crown of the Savior was made. The monks of Mar Saba manufacture and sell to pilgrims, crowns from a tree that bears a long, sharp thorn, which they believe to be the kind used on that occasion.

Just below where we are ascending, and near the base of the mount, the place is still pointed out where, in the days of the temple service, the red heifer was sacrificed and burnt, from the ashes of which the waters of purification were prepared (Num. xix.) By one of these paths too, probably the one upon the right, David ascended when he was forced to flee from the city under the rebellion of his son Absalom. This afflictive incident in the life of the renowned monarch is pathetically portrayed by the pen of inspiration. Absalom had managed his plans so adroitly, the court of Israel was completely taken by surprise. The reports of the wide-spread rebellion, like peal after peal of thunder, came rolling in from the surrounding tribes. The power and extent of the rebellion seems to have been greatly magnified, and the king and his servants made a hasty flight from Jerusalem. David and his associates passed over the brook Kidron, along this pathway they climbed the mount. "And David went up the ascent of Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered; and he went barefoot; and all the people that were with him covered every man his head, and they went up weeping as they went." (2 Sam. xv. 30.) The result we have seen in another place, and within our very sight now stands the pillar of Absalom, and all who pass by revile his name.

(D. A. Randall, *The Handwriting of God in Egypt, Sinai, and the Holy Land*, Norwich, CT: Whitney & Kingsley, 1867, 134-135.)

2b. The view from the Mt. of Olivet:

Having feasted your eyes on these, you turn and look eastward. What a scene opens to your wondering vision! There the hill country of Judea—the wilderness—lies before you in all its gloomy sterility; a mountainous region, broken into bluffs and crags, whose deep and yawning chasms form a fit hiding place for Bedawin robbers and beasts of prey. Here your eye wanders to the bleak looking mountain of Quarantanla, where the Savior, fresh from his baptism, endured his terrible temptation, and achieved his first great moral victory. Beyond this, you look down into the deep vale of the Jordan, fresh in beauty and fertility, with its long, snaky line of blue waters, around which cluster a thousand interesting associations. You follow its course along the dim distance, the width of the plain gradually expanding, until your eye catches a view of a portion of the waters of the Dead Sea, that wonderful monument, that entombs beneath its dark and leaden waves, the buried cities of the plain. Beyond all these rise up in dark and sullen grandeur the mysterious mountains of Moab, the region beyond the Jordan, on one of whose bold eminences the haughty Balak stood when he called Balaam:

"Come curse me Jacob—come defy Israel." Almost instinctively you search out the highest peak, and as your eye rests upon it, you exclaim: "There is Pisgah! On that sublime hight [sic] stood Moses when he took his survey of the Promised Land!" What remarkable sights are before us, and what wonderful visions of the past rise around us as we stand upon this lofty summit and enjoy this extensive prospect. Were there nothing more than this, a half hour on Olivet would well repay a long and weary pilgrimage.

But Olivet has associations and lessons of a deeper interest. The path up which we toiled has often been pressed by the feet of the Son of God; beneath the shade of its olives and vines he sat and taught his listening disciples; the garden beneath us was the scene of his agony. But more

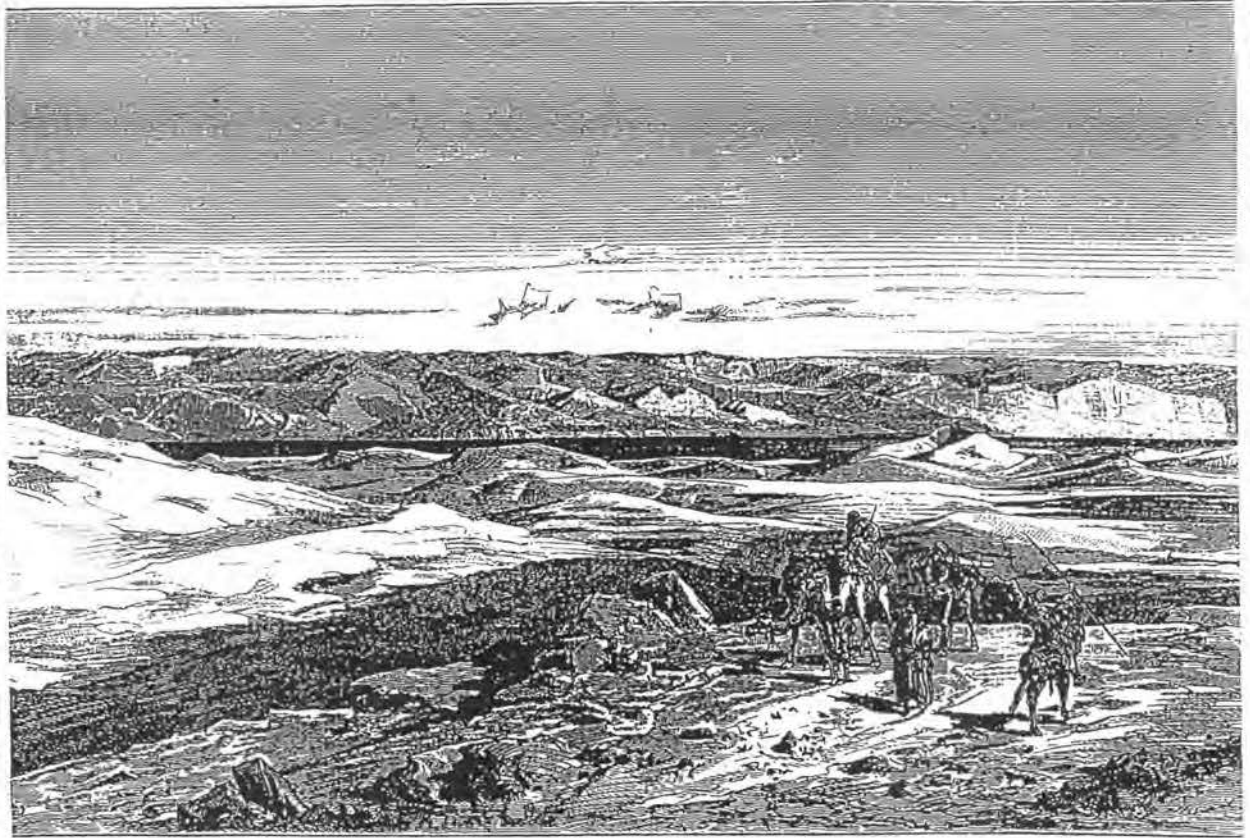
than this, it is the MOUNT OF ASCENSION! Forty days after his resurrection he led his disciples out as far as Bethany, and while he talked with them and blessed them, and a cloud received him up out of their sight. And while they stood astonished and awe struck, angels in white apparel stood by them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into Heaven? This same Jesus which is taken from you into Heaven shall, in like manner, return again from Heaven." O Olivet! stepping-stone from which the victorious Son of God went back to glory, lifting thy majestic form above all the mountains around Jerusalem, it was fit thou shouldst be honored above them all! From the garden at thy base, to the place of ascension upon thy summit, what a radiance of glory clusters about thee! Mount of Ascension, with thee is associated the hope of glory; thou givest us assurance of the life everlasting!

(*Ibid.*, 134-135.)

OLIVET

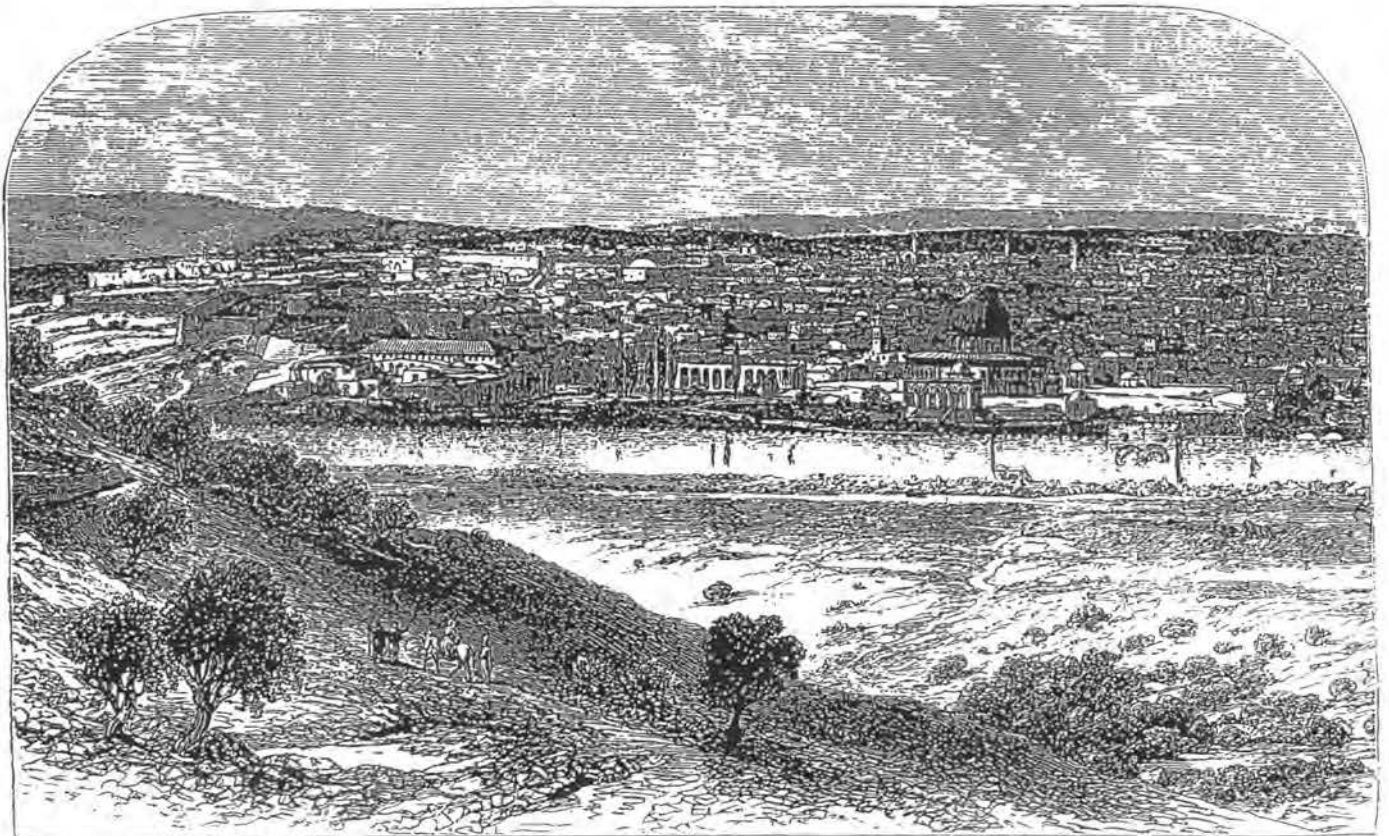


Map of the Mount of Olivet, with its connections. (From the Ordnance Survey.)



Das Tote Meer vom Ölberge aus.

Eastward View from the Mt. of Olives



JERUSALEM FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

Westward View from the Mt. of Olives

5A. The Theologian and Olivet:

Schaff, who has been quoted repeatedly in this manual, has, as a theologian and historian, a special gift of describing holy sites. His lengthy chapter on his visit to Olivet deserves careful reading. (The points of the outline were added by this writer.)

1b. The panorama:

There are "mountains round about Jerusalem." Like Rome, Jerusalem is built on hills and surrounded by hills. It is 2,500 feet above the Mediterranean, and 3,700 feet above the Dead Sea. From the east and from the west there is a steady ascent to it; hence the phrase "to go up to Jerusalem." It stands on the mountain ridge which runs from north to south and forms the backbone of Palestine. It is built upon Mount Zion in the southwest and the lower Mount Moriah in the east. These two hills are separated by the Tyropoeon or Cheesemongers' Valley (which is nearly filled up with rubbish). Both are surrounded by ravines, which unite with the Tyropoeon in the south, Zion by the valley of Hinnom, Moriah by the valley of the Kedron or Jehoshaphat. The best place from which to study the panorama for orientation is Mount Olivet, with the Bible in the right hand and Josephus in the left. There you see the holy city in her lonely melancholy grandeur, with her walls and towers, her churches, mosques, and dome-roofed houses. It is the saddest, and yet the most impressive view in the world.

(Philip Schaff, *Through Bible Lands: Notes of Travel in Egypt, the Desert, and Palestine*. New York: American Tract Society, 1878, 271.)

2b. The final night in Gethsemane:

When Jesus passed out of St. Stephen's Gate (the ancient Fish-gate) down the ravine, and crossed that black winter torrent called Kedron (*i.e.*, the Black Brook), which is formed by the winter rains, but is entirely dry in summer (even in April as far as my experience goes), it was far more than Caesar's crossing the Rubicon for the military conquest of the world: it was the passage which decided the moral and eternal redemption of the world. David, betrayed by Ahithophel, one of his body-guard, took the same course in his flight from his rebellious son Absalom—a remarkable parallel, the typical import of which Jesus himself pointed out. In the garden of Gethsemane (*i.e.*, Oil-press), at the foot of the Mount of Olives, he was overwhelmed with sorrow and anguish, and endured the mysterious agony with all the powers of darkness, in the stead and in behalf of a fallen race. Here he was betrayed by the Judas-kiss, which he anticipated and made meaningless. Here the heathen garrison and the Jewish temple guard combined under the lead of the traitor, against the one unarmed Jesus; and yet, made cowards by conscience and overawed by the superhuman majesty of Jesus, like the profane traffickers in the temple, they fell to the ground before his "I am He!" The same words which cheered his trembling disciples on the stormy lake and after the resurrection, are here words of terror to his enemies, and will be on the day of judgment.

(*Ibid.*, 273-274.)

3b. The description of the garden:

There is no evidence to prove, but no good reason to deny, the identity of the spot now shown as GETHSEMANE. Some think it is too near the city and the thoroughfare for a place of retirement in that dangerous and dismal night. We reach it by an easy walk through St. Stephen's Gate over the dry bed of the Kedron. It lies on the slope of Mount Olivet, and is in the possession of the Franciscans. It is a garden with seven or eight majestic olive-trees, which are perhaps the oldest and certainly the most venerable trees in the world, though of course not of the time of our Lord—for Titus cut down all the trees round the city during the siege. But they may have sprouted from the roots of the original trees. The garden is enclosed by a new wall, and kept in very good order. A kind old



Zur Kibitze, in der Höhe des Gethsemane. (Nach Gortler.) (Zu B. 14.)

Franciscan monk gave us olive leaves and flowers from this every-memorable spot. The Greek Gethsemane is a short distance north of the Latin, and marked by a rude chapel in the rock. The two traditions may be reconciled by supposing that the Gethsemane of the Greek Church was the interior part of the garden, to which the Savior retired for prayer.

(*Ibid.*)



4b. The place of the ascension:

Tradition fixes the Ascension on the middle summit, in full sight of Jerusalem, but in plain contradiction to the narrative of Luke, who locates it near Bethany, on the retired eastern slope of the mountain. No importance, of course, can be attached to the mark of the foot of the ascending Jesus, pointed out in the Mohammedan mosque, but the mosque is well worth ascending on account of the magnificent view it affords over the most historic of all the historic regions on earth. A short distance from it a Russian lady erected a fine dwellinghouse. A little south of it the French Princesse Latour d'Auvergne, a relative of Napoleon III, built, in 1868, a church in the style of a campo santo over the spot where Christ is said to have taught his disciples the Lord's Prayer; and caused this Prayer of prayers to be inscribed on thirty-one slabs in as many different languages, as a symbol of the unity and universality of Christian devotion. A monument in white marble perpetuates her memory. West of this church we visited the chapel commemorating the composition of the Apostles' Creed, according to a tradition not older than the fourth century, and long since disproved as untenable. This Creed of creeds is apostolic indeed in spirit and power, but not in form, and gradually grew up from the inner life of the ancient Church.

(*Ibid.*, 275-276.)

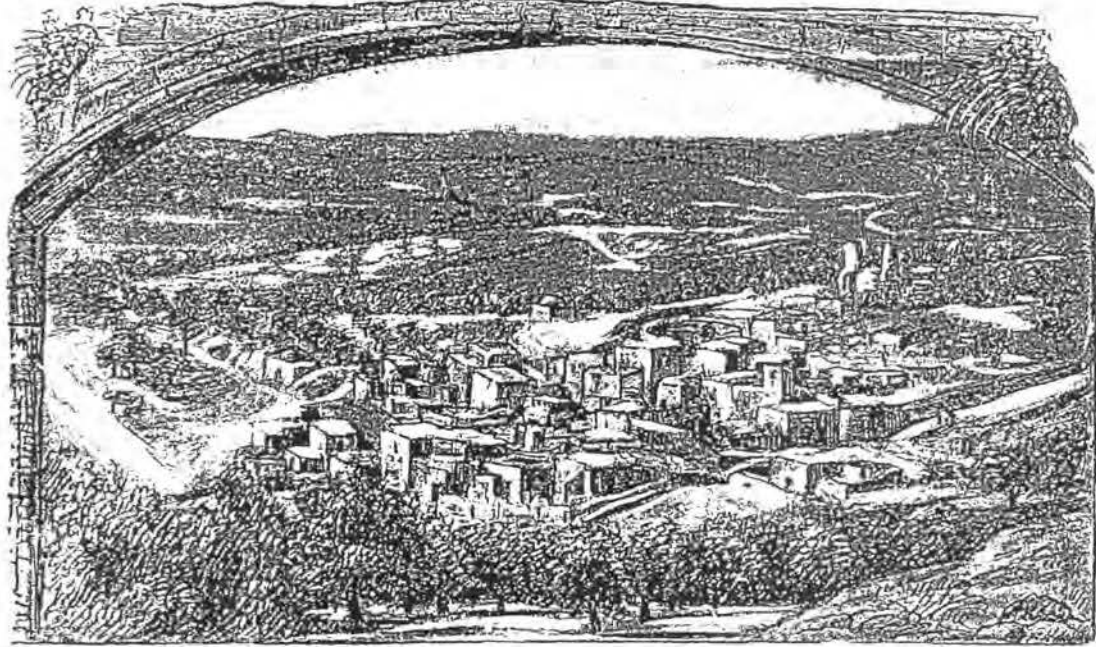


JESUS ASCENDS TO HEAVEN.

5b. The description of Bethany:

From the top of the Mount of Olives it is an easy descent to Bethany on its southeastern declivity. It can also be reached by the road to Jericho which leads round the mountain. It is only two miles from Jerusalem. It is now a miserable village of about forty hovels, inhabited by beggarly Mohammedans. They call it, in honor of Lazarus, "El-Azariyeh," and show the house of Martha and Mary, the house of Simon the leper, the tower of Lazarus, and his reputed sepulchre, a wretched cavern in the limestone rock, like a cellar, with about twenty-five steps, to which we descend by the dim light of a taper.

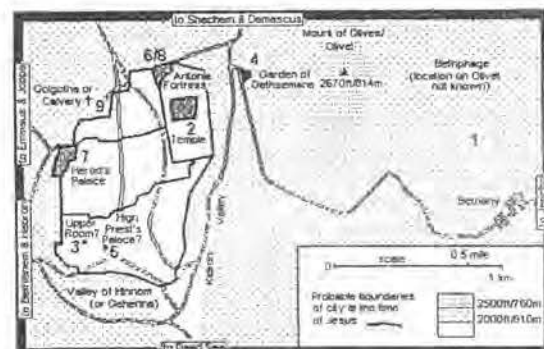
There is no probability of the genuineness of these particular localities; on the contrary, the grave of Lazarus was some distance from the village.



Bethany is pleasantly located, has good water, and is surrounded by cultivated spots and numerous fig, olive, almond, and carob trees. It was once a home of peace, inhabited by three children of peace and visited by the Prince of peace. It was the sacred spot of the friendship of Jesus. Here he revealed more of his *human* nature than elsewhere. Here he enjoyed the hospitality of Martha, the practical housekeeper, and allowed her contemplative sister Mary to sit at his feet and to perform, in the foreboding presentiment of his death, that touching service of devoted love for which she will be commemorated to the end of time. Here he wept tears of friendship over the grave of Lazarus "whom he loved." The eternal Son of God dissolved in tears! How far more natural, lovely, and attractive is weeping, sympathizing Saviour, than a cold, heartless stoic! How near these tears bring him to every child of sorrow and grief! But here also he revealed himself as the Resurrection and the Life, and wrought the greatest of miracles by the creative words, "Lazarus, come forth!" This act is a seal of his divinity and a pledge of our future resurrection. There is no escape from the plain, circumstantial narrative of John, one of the eyewitnesses. We must admit the truth, or resort to the disgraceful hypothesis of imposture, which explains nothing, but perverts the supernatural miracle into an unnatural monstrosity. Spinoza said to his friends, if he could believe the resurrection of Lazarus, he would dash to pieces his entire system of philosophy, and embrace without repugnance the common faith of Christians. This is sound reasoning. If Christ could raise the dead to life, he could easily perform the lesser miracles of healing, and must truly have been the eternal Son of God.

We left Bethany as we left other spots in Palestine, for ever consecrated to memory. It is a melancholy shadow of the past, but it may again become, at some future day, a delightful suburban retreat of domestic happiness and peace.

(*Ibid.*, 276-277.)



6A. The Mt. of Olives in Prophecy: Zech. 14:1-4

Behold, the day of the Lord is coming,
And your spoil will be divided in your midst.

2 For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem;
The city shall be taken, The houses rifled, And the women ravished.
Half of the city shall go into captivity,
But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

3 Then the Lord will go forth
And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle.

4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives,
Which faces Jerusalem on the east.
And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two,
From east to west, *Making* a very large valley;
Half of the mountain shall move toward the north
And half of it toward the south.

1b. The return of the Lord:

Dr. Unger shows have the above passage strongly argues for a literal, physical return of Christ at the end of the Tribulation. ***It is then that the Mount of Olives will witness the climax of world history***, as Christ descends with the holy angels and heavenly saints to establish a kingdom of peace and righteousness for a thousand years.

And his feet shall stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east. . . His feet are the Lord's feet, as verse 3 demonstrates. How can the Lord's (Jehovah's) feet stand on the Mount of Olives? Because they are the feet of His resurrected, glorified humanity, which ascended to heaven from the same locality, and because "*this same Jesus* who was taken up. . .into heaven shall so come *in like manner*" as the disciples witnessed Him "go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). The "so" and "in like manner" evidently also mean, in the light of Zechariah 14:4 that He ascended from Olivet personally and visibly in His glorified humanity and will so return to the same spot personally and visibly in His glorified humanity. . . .At his glorious advent Messiah's feet [once nail-pierced] **shall stand** on the Mount of Olives. The word **stand**, '*amedhu*, with "feet" as the subject and the preposition "on" (locative use of '*al*, denoting place) can only mean "touch" or "rest firmly on." Messiah's feet shall "come in contact with" or "rest on" the Mount of Olives. A person is commonly said to "stand," i.e., "be erect," not sitting or reclining. But here **the feet** are said to "stand" to emphasize the personal, bodily return of the Lord to the earth, for the feet standing can only mean they support the weight of the human body in question. The language is apparently designed to compel a literal rather than a mystical interpretation of the Lord's second coming.

(Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Commentary Zechariah*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963, 245-246 [emphasis in the original].)

2b. The reference to Olivet:

The Mount of Olives, as the place of the Lord's appearing in glory, is said to be **before Jerusalem on the east**. Although this is the only time **the Mount of Olives** is mentioned by this name in the Old Testament (cf. "the ascent of Olives" in II Samuel 15:30), this can scarcely be the reason for the topographical notation describing the location of the site. The mountain was so dominant and in such close proximity to the holy city that it was well known, being plainly visible to every eye. Why then, the

appended geographical description? The following reasons may be suggested. (1) *From this mountain the glory of God departed and will return to Jerusalem.* "The glory of the God of Israel" (Ezek. 11:22), also called "the glory of the Lord," left Jerusalem *by the east* previous to the Babylonian captivity and the beginning of "the times of the Gentiles" (Ezek. 11:23), and *from the east* the same glorious symbol of the divine Presence is seen to return. "And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. . ." (Ezek. 43:2), marking the termination of "the times of the Gentiles."

(2) Accordingly, *the idea prevailed in antiquity that from the east salvation would arise*, like the sun, dispensing its salutary light, "even the Sun of righteousness (Messiah) . . . with healing in its beams . . ." (Mal. 4:2). (3) Moreover Zechariah's prophecy doubtless echoes the Ezekiel passages where similar topographical notations occur. "And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain *which is on the east side of the city*" (Ezek. 11:23). "And, behold the glory . . . came from *the way of the east*" (Ezek. 43:2). "And the glory of the Lord came into the house [millennial temple] by the way of the gate *whose prospect is toward the east*" (Ezek. 43:4).

(*Ibid.*, 245-246 [emphasis in the original].)

3b. The river of life: **Zech. 14:8**

And in that day it shall be
That living waters shall flow from Jerusalem,
Half of them toward the eastern sea
And half of them toward the western sea;
In both summer and winter it shall occur.

This writer is taking the liberty to adapt some of the material from a chapter he wrote in a *Festschrift* for Dr. Charles Ryrie.

The River of Life in Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Zechariah 14:8:

Woven throughout Old Testament prophecy is a constant theme of spectacular physical and geographical changes to occur when Christ returns. Zechariah 14 describes many features of this upheaval, including a new river to flow from Jerusalem into the desert (Zech. 14:8).

The Prophet Ezekiel concludes his temple vision (chaps. 40-46) with the description of this same miraculous, life-giving stream issuing from the temple. The river is also mentioned by Joel (Joel 3:18), some 250 years before Ezekiel, and by Zechariah after the Babylonian exile.

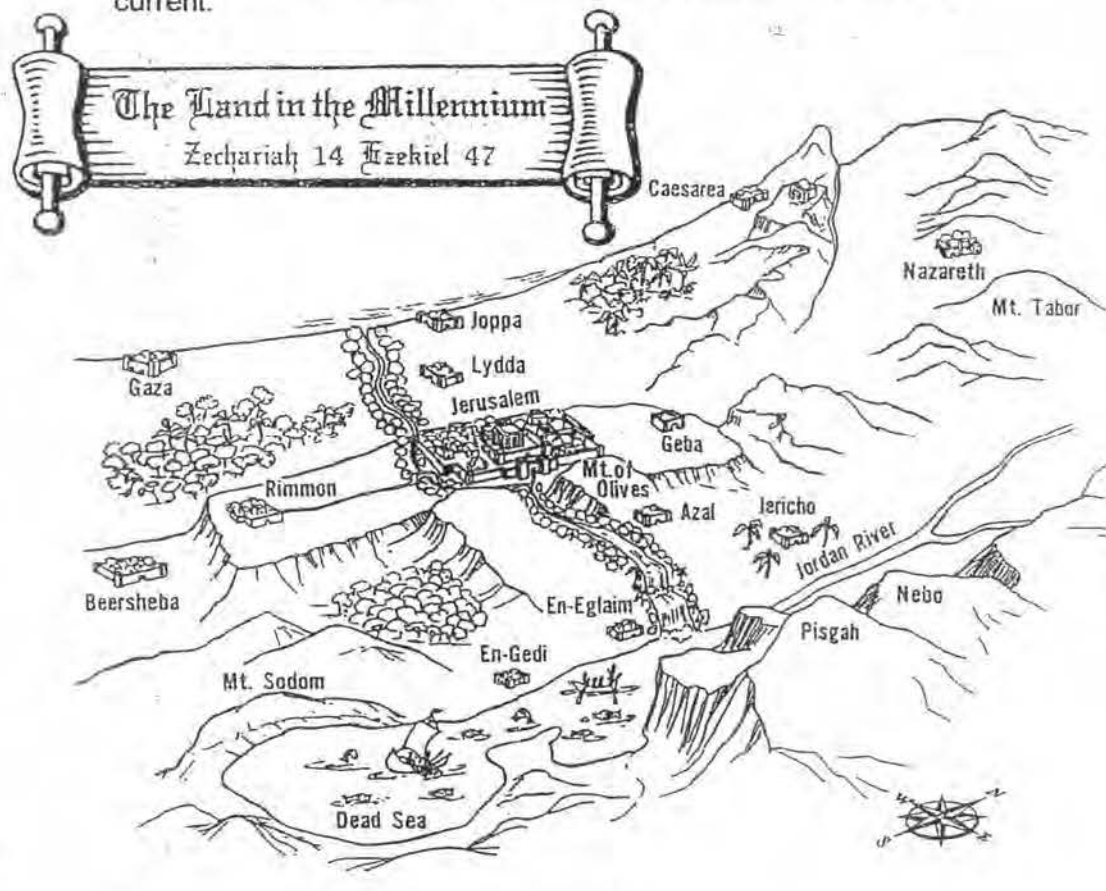
1c. The commencement of the River: Zech. 14:8; Ezek. 47:1-2

In Zechariah's prophecy, the river is said to originate in Jerusalem and to divide, one branch flowing into the Dead Sea, the other into the Mediterranean. In Ezekiel 47 only the river flowing eastward is described, as an angelic guide takes Ezekiel on a prophetic excursion along the river.

At the other eastern front of the temple Ezekiel sees a spring emerging (Ezek. 47:1-2). The waters begin at the immediate dwelling place of Christ who is the source of all spiritual and physical life. The miraculous waters "trickled forth" at first, and yet, without any tributaries, increased in depth and volume.

2c. The course of the River: Ezek. 47:3-5

The angel led Ezekiel along the riverbank, measuring the waters. After 1,750 feet (1,000 cubits) the waters were ankle-deep. In another 1,750 feet the waters had become knee-deep, then waist-deep at another 1,750 feet, until at another 1,750 feet the river was so deep that one could swim in it. In the distance from Jerusalem to the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives (about 1 ½ miles), the trickle became a spring, the spring a brook, the brook a stream, and the stream a raging river. To accent the dramatic size and depth of the river, Ezekiel refers to it in verse 9 as "rivers," literally "a double river," because of its raging current.



3c. The Changes Through the River: Ezekiel 47:6-12

The river continued to flow eastward, cascading into the Arabah (Ezek. 47:8), the desolate Jordan Valley rift extending from the Sea of Galilee southward to the Dead Sea and then to the Gulf of Aqabah. The river issued into the Dead Sea, healing its salty waters and rejuvenating the desert. The most inhospitable, arid, barren, desolate land on the face of the earth will become a fruitful land, lush with vegetation.

Along the banks of the supernatural yet literal river will grow "very many trees on the one side and on the other" (Ezek. 47:7). These marvelous trees shall be "for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof

for medicine" (v. 12). These trees will have an inexhaustible quantity of fruit all year long. The leaves of the tree will provide healing, apparently for those who were redeemed in the Tribulation and entered the Millennium in their physical bodies, and for their offspring.

The Dead Sea which will be healed is today a symbol of death and destruction. The stench of sulphur hanging in the air reminds one of the judgment of Genesis 19. Presently the Dead Sea can hardly sustain microorganisms, apart from some freshwater springs along its northwestern shores. As proof for the genuine healing, the sea will bring forth "a very great multitude of fish" (Ezek. 47:9). Fishermen will find the Dead Sea an ideal place for their trade, with an abundance of fish like those found in the Mediterranean Sea. Fishermen will spread their nets from En-Gedi ("fountain of a kid"), located on the middle of the western shore, to En-Eglaim ("spring of the two calves"), perhaps located along the northwestern shore near Qumran.

The swamps and marshes near the southern end of the Dead Sea "will not be healed; they shall be given to salt" (Ezek. 47:11). Though Ezekiel does not explain why the salt flats will remain, several explanations can be offered. Salt, essential for the preparation of food, will also be required for some of the memorial sacrifices offered in the temple (Ezek. 43:24; cf. Lev. 2:13). Further, the Dead Sea is an important source of minerals for Israel and possibly will be in the future. The Lord may also want to demonstrate to the rest of the world for 1,000 years how stagnant and lifeless the entire Dead Sea had been before the river of living water healed it.

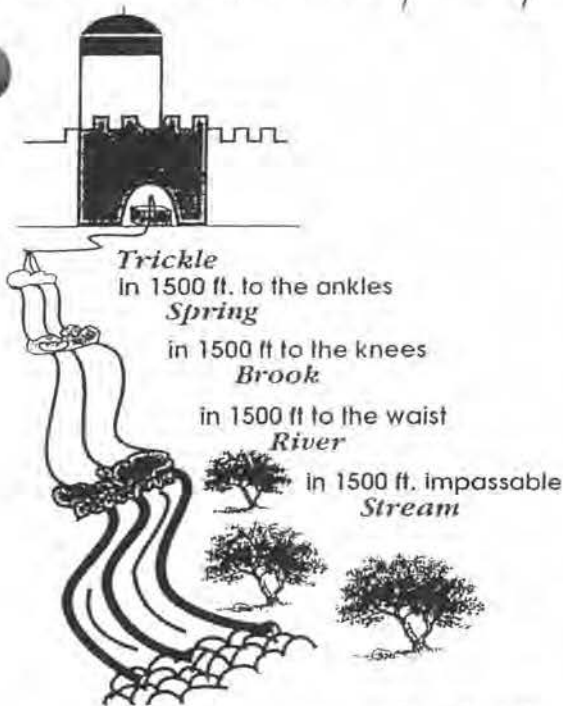
4c. The Controversy Over the River:

Unfortunately many commentators spiritualize the river and thus cannot agree on its interpretation. The early church fathers saw the river as a symbol of baptism. Some see it as the stream of church history. Many speak of the river as emblematic of spiritual life, with some saints only ankle-deep or knee-deep Christians. Others identify the river with the stream of the Gospel, denying any literal future aspect of the prophecy. Derek Kidner, in relating the river with the river of paradise in Genesis 2, speaks of it simply as "vitality that flows from holy ground" (*Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1967, 63), whatever that might mean.

Only the literal interpretation can do justice to magnificent prophetic passages such as Zechariah 14 and Ezekiel 47. It is demonstrably true in the interpretation of these and other passages that "*sane literal interpretation . . . cannot fail to lead to happy results in exegesis. Spiritualizing and mysticalizing interpretation, on the other hand . . . are bound to produce endless confusion*" (Merrill F. Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah's Glory*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975, 239).

If one denies the literalness of the river, where does one stop? The events of the Second Advent outlined by Zechariah and Ezekiel are interrelated. The rebellion of the nations at Armageddon is followed by the ravishing of Jerusalem, which in turn is followed by the return of the Lord, the removal of the mountains, the revelation of the river, the redemption of nature, and the reign of Christ. The Germans have a proverb: "Wer A sagt der muss auch B sagen." He who says A also must say B. An interpreter who sees the return of the Lord as a literal

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event should also subscribe to a literal fulfillment of its accompanying events.

If the river is not literal, why would Zechariah and Ezekiel list so many actual geographical places in the context? Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives, the Arabah, the Dead Sea, En-Gedi, En-Eglaim, and the salt flats are quite specific locations.

If the river were not literal, why would other passages of Scripture mention the river as well? Psalm 46:4 mentions a river which will make Jerusalem glad. Joel 3:18's millennial prediction envisions a fountain coming out of the temple and watering the valley of Shittim in which the Dead Sea is located. In fact, the millennial changes predicted by Zechariah and Ezekiel are simply a microcosm of the healing of the curse that will take place all over the world.

Apparently every desert on earth will become lush and green. Joel speaks of other rivers of Judah flowing with water (Joel 3:16). Isaiah writes of

waters breaking out in the wilderness, streams in the desert, and floods upon the dry ground (Isa. 43:19-20; 44:3). The wilderness will become a fruitful field (Isa. 32:15; 55:13). The changes described for the wilderness of Judea will be worldwide as deserts such as the Sahara, Gobi and Mojave will become lush forests. The redeemed will be there to witness the transformation as the Redeemer saves the groaning creation from the curse of sin (Rom. 8:22). At that time the carol "Joy to the World" will take on its fullest meaning. "No more let sin and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground. He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found." (Wesley and Elaine Willis and John and Janet Masters, eds. *Basic Theology Applied*, 1995, 287-290).