

PALM SUNDAY PROCESSION MAP

This is a bird's eye view of Jerusalem. Here are the boundaries of the city in Jesus' day, with the temple platform and the temple (shown in blue). Due East of the temple is the Mount of Olives, higher than the Temple Mount and named for the olive groves that were planted on its hillside. Between the Mount of Olives and the Temple is a small, but deep, valley called the "Kidron Valley."

As you look east, pilgrims – those gathering in Jerusalem for the festivals and coming from across the Jordan and from the northern area of Galilee – they would come down the Jordan Valley and arrive at Jericho. From there they would turn west and head up into the hills, going up to Jerusalem. They would travel through the Judean Wilderness, walking up Wadi Qilt. They would begin to chant the fifteen Songs of Ascent, Psalms 120-134, building a great anticipation of seeing Jerusalem and the celebration that was to happen there.

As they came over the saddle between Mount Scopus and the Mount of Olives, they would get their first glimpse of Jerusalem. Then they would find their place to camp for the next week. Those coming from Galilee were known to camp on the terraced hillside of the Mount of Olives, even earning this location the name the "Little Galilee" because of the amount of Galilean Pilgrims who chose that location.

On the eastern side of the Mount of Olives – about two miles from Jerusalem – is the village of Bethany, home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Jesus would stay with them every night this week until Thursday. Between Bethany and the top of the Mount of Olives is a small village named Bethphage. On Sunday morning Jesus sent his disciples from Bethany to Bethphage to get a donkey. He got on the donkey, but did not travel straight to Jerusalem. He went to where the road intersected the main pilgrim road. Then he launched a parade, riding through "Little Gallilee" to the praise of all those who knew him from Galilee. They had heard him teach. They had experienced his miracles. Some he had healed were undoubtedly among the crowd.

This was orchestrated by Jesus. While the leaders in Jerusalem had put out his arrest warrant and announced their intention to execute him, Jesus did not stay away, or hide, or come subtly into Jerusalem. He created a parade. He threw down the gauntlet. He announced "game on!" The pilgrim crowd shouted his praise and chanted "hosanna." This was the day the Lord had made and the spiritual leaders of Jerusalem were going to have to deal with it this week. They would have to deal with him: The Messiah.