

A Lenten Journey
in Jerusalem

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INTRODUCTION

Jerusalem—the name itself evokes a cascade of images. The city stands as a timeless testament to the rich tapestry of human history, faith, and culture. Every corner of the old city seems to tell a story. It is a place that has captured the hearts and minds of people for centuries. With a history spanning nearly four thousand years, Jerusalem is a living museum, where layers of civilizations have left their indelible marks.

In a way, Jerusalem is two cities. There is the Old City, cloistered within ancient walls that date back centuries. The Old City is surrounded by a vibrant modern city filled with restaurants, shops, museums, government offices, and sprawling residential areas. The Old City is divided into four colorfully crowded quarters: the Muslim Quarter, the Christian Quarter, the Jewish Quarter, and the Armenian Quarter. Its ancient walls, cobble streets, and archaeological sites bear witness to the rise and fall of empires, from the Canaanites and the Israelites to the Romans, Byzantines, Crusaders, Ottomans, and modern-day Israel. Each civilization has made its own contributions to the city's narrative, creating a unique blend of architectural styles, art, and cultural influences.

Jerusalem is a sacred city for Muslims, Jews, and Christians. The Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock stand as iconic symbols of Islamic heritage, while the Western Wall draws Jewish visitors from around the world. Christians find their spiritual epicenter in the *Via Dolorosa*, the garden of Geth-

semane, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Garden Tomb. The daily sounds of the Islamic call to prayer, the Jewish shofar, and a variety of Christian church bells create a symphony of religious diversity.

Beyond its religious significance, Jerusalem is a microcosm of cultural diversity, where various traditions intertwine and coexist. The city's markets, known as *souks*, are bustling hubs of trade where aromas of spices, flavors of Middle Eastern cuisine, and vibrant textiles blend to create an immersive sensory experience. The mixture of spoken languages and the array of traditional garments worn by the inhabitants serve as a reminder of the city's mosaic of cultures.

The gates of Jerusalem form an integral part of the city's collective heritage and identity. They are not merely physical structures but symbolic markers of Jerusalem's historical narrative. The gates of any ancient city were important as a means of providing access to the city while maintaining security. The Bible speaks of the gates of the city of Jerusalem, and many other cities, several times. City gates are where people finalized business deals (see Genesis 23) and arranged marriages (see Ruth 4). Rulers often addressed their subjects from the gates of the city (see 2 Samuel 18).

The walls around Jerusalem—and its gates—have been torn down, built up, and relocated several times. In AD 70, they were destroyed by the Romans, then partially rebuilt, only to be toppled again by an earthquake in 1033. The walls, as they are today, were constructed in the 1500s. To enter the Old

City, one must pass through one of the eight historic gates (more on each individual gate will be said later). Collectively, Jerusalem's gates form an intricate architectural narrative that weaves together the stories of numerous civilizations and religious traditions. Through painstaking excavations and scholarly analysis, these sites have been able to offer students of history, religion, tradition, sociology, anthropology, and archaeology windows into the past, enabling us to comprehend the city's multifaceted history.

A Month in Jerusalem

I have had the privilege of visiting Jerusalem on several occasions as either a member or a leader of a tour. Touring with a professional guide is the best way to gain an overview and initial understanding of the wonders of Israel. However, after a handful of trips, I developed a growing desire not just to visit but to *be* in Jerusalem for a more extended period of time. As a result, I arranged to rent an apartment in Jerusalem for a month with my wife, Jill. Our goal was to walk the streets, talk with those who live there, explore areas not included on tours, and reflect on the wonders of the city of which the psalmist said: "Beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth, like the heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King. God is in her citadels; he has shown himself to be her fortress" (Psalm 48:2–3). Many cities throughout the world have rich histories, architecture, natural beauty, and enduring appeal—but for me and for many, none of them is like Jerusalem.

A month is not very long, yet it was long enough for us to experience the Holy City in ways generally not available to those passing through on buses and staying in hotels. My appreciation for the people and for the sacred history of Jerusalem was deepened and my personal spiritual journey enriched by this month spent in the city of the Bible.

Israel's airport is named for David Ben-Gurion, who was the first prime minister and the principal founder of the modern State of Israel. He delivered the proclamation of the Israeli Declaration of Independence on May 14, 1948. He is revered in present-day Israel as the father of the nation.

The story of the formal establishment of the State of Israel is one of myriad twists and turns through two world wars and many internal struggles with the Arabic population and the British provincial government. In 1947, a United Nations resolution called for the partition of Palestine into two separate states, one Arabic and one Jewish, with the city of Jerusalem as a separate entity to be governed by a special international counsel. This resolution was immediately rejected by the Arabs. Nonetheless, the Jewish residents of Palestine, with strong international support, seized the moment to declare their independence and establish the State of Israel, with David Ben-Gurion as their leader. Though the tensions and strife that first accompanied the UN partition plan still exist, Israel celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary as a nation in May of 2023.

Just three short months after our stay in Israel, the entire nation was turned upside down and inside out. On October 7, 2023, a

group known as Hamas launched an attack on Israel from the Gaza Strip, resulting in more than 1,200 deaths and nearly 250 hostages. It was Israel's deadliest day since its independence in 1948. Months of war, destruction, and suffering for innocent civilians followed in the wake of that initial attack.

This ongoing conflict underscores the crying need for peace and reconciliation in our world. It calls to mind the words of Jesus in Matthew 5: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (v. 9).

May the season of Lent inspire a new commitment on the part of Christians worldwide to embrace in fresh ways the message of the gospel, which is centered on a radical form of love that includes loving enemies and forgiving seventy times seven. Only then can hearts be transformed and relationships healed.

When we arrived for our month-long stay in Israel, we decided to spend the first few days in the coastal city of Jaffa. Called Joppa in our biblical stories, it is the place from which Jonah set sail while running from God, and the town of Simon the Tanner, on whose rooftop Peter saw a vision and heard the voice directing him to take the gospel to the gentiles.

After a couple of days in Jaffa and nearby Tel Aviv, we headed to find our apartment in Jerusalem, ideally located in an area known as David's Village. The apartment was modest and well worn, but it had all we needed. Best of all, it was within sight of the Old City.

A Lenten Journey through Jerusalem

The phrase “we cannot contain God’s blessings” stayed with me throughout our time in Jerusalem. At nearly every turn, I was confronted with a symbol of God’s blessings. We walked the ramparts above the old city, reverently made our way along the *Via Dolorosa*, sat quietly at the Garden Tomb, visited the Upper Room, and prayed among the olive trees in Gethsemane. Each place bore witness to the love of God and particularly to the suffering and sacrifice of Christ.

Drawing on our time in Jerusalem, this book provides an outline for your own journey through the season of Lent using the holy sites of the city as landmarks to chart a course from Jesus’s entry into the city, to the upper room, to Gethsemane, to Golgotha, and to the tomb.

Lent is a period of six weeks leading up to Easter that is meant to symbolically replicate the forty days Jesus spent fasting and praying in the wilderness before beginning his public ministry. It is a time for Christians to spiritually prepare ourselves to fully embrace the significance of Easter and its message of hope and redemption. The Lenten season begins with Ash Wednesday and concludes on Holy Saturday. The name “Ash Wednesday” comes from the practice of placing ashes on the foreheads of believers in the shape of a cross as a sign of repentance, humility, and mortality. The ashes are typically made by burning palm fronds from the previous year’s Palm Sunday celebrations. The practice of using ashes as a symbol of repen-

tance dates to ancient times, when people used sackcloth and ashes as signs of mourning and penance.

Lent is a time of reflection, repentance, and renewal. It is a time for believers to examine our lives, seek forgiveness, and renew our commitment to our faith. Lent is an opportunity to pause; an invitation to listen; a request to reflect; a summons to prepare; an appeal to repent; a call to commit; a time to reevaluate; a pathway to a deeper life; a plea to come closer to God. Lent encourages us to deepen our relationship with God, examine our lives, and align ourselves with the central themes of the faith, including repentance, forgiveness, and the hope of new life in Christ. It is a season of letting go and letting ourselves break through to a deeper level of commitment in our spiritual lives. In a way, this can only happen as we empty ourselves so we can be made full and whole again. Lent can be a journey that helps us identify those attachments in life that tether us to this world, rather than the next.

How to Use This Study

Take your time through this book. Traditional Lent studies usually reserve Palm Sunday and Holy week for meditating on Jesus's final week in Jerusalem, but this study will spend its entirety in that final week, beginning with the First Sunday in Lent. Lenten considerations are placed alongside personal reflections, geographical-historical information about modern-day Israel, and anecdotes from the author's month in Jerusalem. Spend time with these writings and make your own personal connections to a faith that began in the ancient world and still speaks to all of us today, if we let it.

Read the scriptures. Focus on the events described. Reflect on your own journey. Listen for the Lord to speak.

Each week follows a simple structure.

On **Sunday**, read the abbreviated scripture, short reflection, and prayer.


On **Monday**, read the week's scripture in full and meditate on it.

On **Tuesday**, **Wednesday**, and **Thursday**, engage with the author's teaching, reflection, and application of the scriptural story.

On **Friday**, ponder a hymn or hymns related to the week's themes.

On **Saturday**, journey with the author through both ancient and modern-day Jerusalem.

A visit to Jerusalem must be more than a sightseeing trip; it should be a pilgrimage that brings one closer to God—and the season of Lent should be the same. It is important not to rush our way toward Easter but to make the intentional, deliberate journey that Jesus made. In so doing, we will not only gain an added appreciation for the Savior but will also be better prepared to celebrate the glories of Easter. To genuinely appreciate the mountaintop, we must first walk through the valley.



First Sunday in Lent

**FACING JERUSALEM:
THE CALL TO
DISCIPLESHIP**

Scripture

Luke 9:18–36, 43–48, 51–62

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

—*Luke 9:51*

Reflection

In Luke 9 we find a dramatic turning point in the life of Jesus. Most of his early life has been spent north of Jerusalem, in the region of Galilee, in and around the town of Capernaum. But now the Lord senses that the time has arrived for him to fulfill his mission on earth and do the will of the Father. From this point, he will head south to take his message to the heart of Jerusalem.

Jesus is aware of what will happen when he gets to Jerusalem: he will be confronted by the religious leaders. Within days, the masses that welcomed him heartily into the city will have turned against him. Before the week is up, he will find himself on the cross, being crucified. His decision to go to Jerusalem marks the beginning of the end.

Prayer

Lord, as we begin this Lenten journey, may we hear and heed your call to count the cost. We will need your grace to deny ourselves and take up the cross. Make us willing. Guide our steps and guard our hearts. We pray in the name of the one who “resolutely set out for Jerusalem.” Amen.

MONDAY

Read Luke 9:18–36, 43–48, 51–62.

Verses 18–36

Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, “Who do the crowds say I am?”

They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.”

“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Peter answered, “God’s Messiah.”

Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”

Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”

About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)

While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

Verses 43–48

And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it. An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. Then he said to them, "Whoever welcomes

this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest.”

Verses 51–62

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” But Jesus turned and rebuked them. Then he and his disciples went to another village. As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”

Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

He said to another man, “Follow me.”

But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.”

Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

TUESDAY

Reflection

Throughout Luke 9, Jesus gives his attention to two primary concerns. First, he is preparing himself to head toward Jerusalem and the cross. Second, he wishes to prepare his followers for what is about to take place.

He begins by asking, “Who have the crowds been saying I am?”

After their replies, he asks the more salient question: “Who do *you* say I am?”

To which Peter responds, “You are the Christ we have been waiting for—the very Son of God.”

Now assured that the disciples recognize him, Jesus follows with a curious admonition and a sober prediction. He strictly warns and commands them to keep their knowledge of his identity to themselves, saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life” (Luke 9:22). Then the Lord turns his attention to the call to discipleship, saying, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it” (vv. 23–24).

It seems that, up to this time, the Twelve have been followers of Jesus, but perhaps they have not yet become fully dedicated disciples. Thus, Jesus confronts them with the cost of discipleship—deny yourself, take up your cross, and then—follow me. Jesus is calling them to make a deeper commitment.

For Additional Meditation

Colossians 3:1–17

Matthew 10:16–42

These scriptures explore what a deeper commitment to Jesus might look like. Consider how closely aligned your life today is with the kind of life these scriptures describe.

WEDNESDAY

Reflection

After Jesus calls his disciples to a deeper commitment, he withdraws to continue preparing himself for what he knows is about to happen. He takes Peter, James, and John up a mountain to pray. There, he is transfigured and joined by Moses and Elijah (representing the Law and the Prophets), who appear in glory and speak of what he is about to accomplish in Jerusalem. All of this fanfare is accompanied by the voice of the Father declaring, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him” (Luke 9:35).

Following the transfiguration, we see Jesus’s resolve—his sheer determination—to obey God’s will regardless of the cost. He intently sets his face to go to Jerusalem. From a human standpoint, he has nothing to gain and everything to lose. Yet Jesus will not be dissuaded. He understands that this was the will of the Father and also his destiny.

He knows exactly what he is doing and why he is doing it. This knowledge is implicit in the language of the text. Luke does not say that Jesus charts his path toward Jerusalem because he has run out of things to do in Capernaum, or because the Galileans will not listen to what he has to say, or because he thinks he might have better opportunities in Jerusalem. No, instead Luke declares that “the time [was approaching] for him to be taken up to heaven” and that, therefore, “Jesus resolutely set

out for Jerusalem” (9:51). When we do something “resolutely,” we aren’t doing it because it is convenient or fun. The same is true for Jesus. He sets out resolutely in obedience to the plan of the Father. Paul tells us that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself (see 2 Corinthians 5:19). Once Jesus has determined to follow this course, he will allow nothing to stand in his way.

Some time ago, I read of a sermon that used a recurring phrase to describe the Lord’s commitment to the will of the Father. The phrase was, *He kept on walking*. That certainly describes Jesus as he turns his face toward Jerusalem. Even though the adoring crowds that greet him on Palm Sunday will turn against him in just a few days, he keeps on walking. When he is confronted with betrayal by one of the Twelve, he keeps on walking. Even in the face of scourging and execution, he keeps on walking.

This is the essence of a life of faith—to keep on walking, seeking God’s will above all else. What a contrast this is to the present culture in which we live. The world tells us to play it safe; weigh the pros and cons; keep our options open; do what makes *you* happy; stick to your plan! Jesus, on the other hand, teaches his disciples: “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33).

THURSDAY

Reflection

Lent calls us to set our sights on Christ and his kingdom, forsaking all else for the sake of the gospel. We must be willing to take up the cross. To illustrate the commitment the Lord seeks, Luke records three encounters that take place as Jesus and the Twelve head toward Jerusalem.

The **first would-be disciple** came to Jesus saying, “I will follow you wherever you go” (Luke 9:57). In response, Jesus told him, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (v. 58). The Lord seeks to let this individual know something of the cost involved. Following Jesus is not a walk on the red carpet or a flower-strewn pathway. Jesus is really asking, “Do you still want to follow me, even if it means forsaking your worldly comfort and earthly sense of security?”

There is a cost to following Jesus. Today, we too often magnify the blessings of being a Christ follower while minimizing the cost. The Lenten season is a megaphone through which we hear the word of the Lord reminding us of the commitment needed to follow Jesus.

On another occasion, Jesus told his disciples,

I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on

your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. . . . Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

(Matthew 10:16–18, 21–22)

Christian discipleship is not for the faint of heart.

Neither is it for those with a dual allegiance, as seen in the second encounter. **Would-be disciple number two** enters the scene and, at first, does not say a word to Jesus. Instead, Jesus calls to him, saying, “Follow me” (Luke 9:59). When Jesus said that to his first disciples, they dropped their nets and came running. However, this individual hesitates, saying, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father” (v. 59). In response, Jesus replied, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God” (v. 60).

That sounds harsh at first. However, Jesus is not addressing the planning of a funeral service but divided loyalties. It is possible that the man’s father was not actually dead or dying but simply growing older. Thus, the request was in essence, *Let me fulfill my obligation to my father for the next few years. Then, after he’s gone, when it is more convenient for me, I’ll be free to follow you.*

Devotion to others is important, but it must come second to our commitment to following Jesus. In the language of the

Old Testament, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3).

Later in the Gospel of Luke we find these words of Jesus: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple” (14:26). Viewing this verse in a positive light, it is saying, *Put God first and let others find their rightful place in your life.*

The third would-be follower said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family” (9:61). But Jesus said to him, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God” (v. 62).

The message here is clear: Don’t look back. To look back is to invite regrets, foster nostalgia, and live in retrospect. There is a reason the windshield of an automobile is so much larger than the rearview mirror. Even though one needs to look back occasionally, it is more important to have a wide, clear view facing forward to safely navigate the twists and turns of the road.

Looking back leads us to second-guess and wonder, *Did I make the right decision? What if I’d done this? What if I hadn’t done that?* To look back is to hold on to a memory rather than claim a promise. It is to deny the possibility that what will be is just as important as, if not more important than, what has been.

I grew up in a small farming community in western Ohio. However, we did not live *on* a farm. We lived in town, where my father ran the newspaper. Therefore, even though I am

from a rural area, I've never plowed a field. Nonetheless, it is my understanding that the only way to plow a straight furrow is to pick a point in the distance and proceed directly toward it, keeping your eyes fixed on that spot. If you look to the left, you'll veer to the left. If you look to the right, you'll veer to the right. If you select a point in front of you and keep your eyes focused on it, you will plow a straight line every time. Just so, as we follow Jesus, we are to fix our eyes on him.

In the book of Hebrews, we find this admonition:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart
(Hebrews 12:1–3)

Similarly, Paul put it this way: “Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13–14).

When Jesus resolved to go to Jerusalem, he determined not to allow anything to stand in his way. In doing so, he laid down

FRIDAY

Ponder the words of these old familiar hymns as you continue to think on what you've studied and learned this week.

Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus (#327, refrain)

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace*

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus (#468)

*I have decided to follow Jesus
I have decided to follow Jesus
I have decided to follow Jesus
No turning back, no turning back*

*The world behind me, the cross before me
The world behind me, the cross before me
The world behind me, the cross before me
No turning back, no turning back.*

*Though none go with me, still I will follow
Though none go with me, still I will follow
Though none go with me, still I will follow
No turning back, no turning back.*

Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken (#471)

*Jesus, I my cross have taken
All to leave and follow thee
Destitute, despised, forsaken
Thou from hence my all shall be*

*Perish every fond ambition
All I've sought, and hoped and known
Yet how rich is my condition
God and heaven are still my own!*

SATURDAY IN JERUSALEM

Because our residence was so close, we used the Jaffa Gate regularly during our month-long stay in Jerusalem. It was our primary entrance into the Old City, giving us the opportunity to become familiar and get acquainted with the various businesses and a few of the vendors whose stalls lined the narrow passageway. Little by little, we began to feel less like visitors.

The Jaffa Gate

The Jaffa Gate, located at the center of the western edge of the Old City, near the site of Herod's palace, is perhaps one of the most heavily traveled entrances into the Old City. It was constructed in 1538, during the Ottoman occupation. The Ottomans defeated the Mamelukes in 1517 and took over the city. In 1520, Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent decided to use the city as a base for his rule over the area. This decision led to the rebuilding of the walls in 1536–41. Those walls still stand today. Their circumference is about two and a half miles. These walls separate the Old City from the sprawling modern city that is scattered across the surrounding hills. As we passed through the Jaffa Gate, we entered a previous time—hundreds and even thousands of years earlier.

The German Kaiser Wilhelm II visited Jerusalem in 1898. He was dead set on riding his horse into the city, but a local prophecy foretold that Jerusalem would be seized by a ruler

on a white horse entering through the Jaffa Gate. Rather than allow such an incendiary scene, the authorities made a breach in the wall just by the official gate, through which the Kaiser might enter.

During World War I, the Battle of Jerusalem in December 1917 resulted in the city falling to British forces led by General Edmund Allenby. This victory was the end of the nearly four-hundred-year Ottoman rule over Jerusalem. A few days after the British gained control, General Allenby arranged for his official entrance into the city—a carefully choreographed occasion, rich in imagery and designed with surprising nuance and sensitivity. Rather than enter on horseback, General Allenby dismounted at the Jaffa Gate and walked into the Old City. Allenby was aware of the great symbolism associated with his entrance into the city. Daniel 12:12 predicts blessings for Jerusalem after 1,335 days. Interestingly, the year 1917 in the Islamic calendar was the year 1335. Allenby also recalled Jesus entering the Holy City riding on a donkey. He did not wish to replicate this action or style himself as a modern Messiah. Thus, he conducted himself with conspicuous humility by dismounting and walking through the Jaffa Gate. He understood the symbolism. He had come not as a conqueror nor as a savior but as a liberator.

Herod's Gate

Known in Arabic as *Bab al-Zahra*—“Flower Gate”—Herod's Gate is another of the main entrances to Jerusalem's Old City. It is in the northeastern part of the city, adjacent to the Mus-

lim Quarter. The gate derives its name from Herod the Great, the Roman-appointed king of Judea in the first century BC. Although Herod's Gate was not directly commissioned *by* the king for whom it is named, the name pays homage to his influential reign. Herod was known for his ambitious building projects throughout the region, including the expansion and beautification of Jerusalem. While he is most renowned for the construction of the second temple, his impact on the city's architecture extends beyond religious structures.

The naming of Herod's Gate underscores his broader influence on the urban landscape of Jerusalem. The gate itself features an imposing stone facade, adorned with intricate details and decorative elements. It consists of a central arch flanked by two smaller arches that were once used for pedestrian access. The overall design reflects a harmonious blend of Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic architectural influences.

The Eastern Gate

The Eastern Gate, also known as the Golden Gate or the Gate of Mercy, holds immense historic and religious significance in the Old City. Although the gate's exact origins are disputed, most scholars trace it back to the time of the second Jewish temple in the sixth century BC. Located on the eastern wall, it has witnessed numerous events throughout the centuries, making it a revered and iconic structure. The gate has undergone several reconstructions due to damage from various conflicts, including the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in

70 AD and the subsequent Byzantine, Arab, and Crusader occupations.

In addition to its historical legacy, the Eastern Gate holds religious significance for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In Judaism, it is believed to be the gate through which the Messiah will enter Jerusalem during the messianic era. Thus, according to Jewish tradition, the gate was sealed by the Ottoman sultan Suleiman the Magnificent in the sixteenth century to prevent the Messiah's entry and to discourage Jewish aspirations for rebuilding the temple.

For Christians, the Eastern Gate is associated with Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. This is perhaps the gate through which Jesus entered Jerusalem during the events leading up to his crucifixion. As a result, the gate serves as a pilgrimage site for Christians who seek to retrace the footsteps of Jesus.

The gate's architecture reflects the diverse cultural influences that have shaped Jerusalem throughout history. From its Byzantine-style pillars to Islamic-style domes, the gate embodies the city's multicultural heritage and serves as a testament to the coexistence of different traditions.

The Eastern Gate also represents the resilience and endurance of the people of Jerusalem. Despite the gate's historical conflicts and various periods of closure, it has remained a symbol of hope, peace, and faith. Its rich history, religious significance, and cultural symbolism make it an integral part of Jerusalem's heritage.