

JERUSALEM SCENES

Ancient steps to the Temple Mount



Within a year of taking the Old City of Jerusalem in June 1967, the Israelis began excavations in the area adjacent to the southeast corner of the Temple Mount.

Here they discovered the remains of an extensive staircase leading up to the Mount, the size of the stones and the quality of the workmanship indicating that it dated to the time of Herod's temple. As part of the process of converting the area into an archaeological park, this staircase has been reconstructed, and today the worn ancient steps are set amongst new limestone ones. Our picture shows one of the best preserved sections of the ancient steps, the light grey of the steps setting off the colourful yellow flowers of a shrub.

This staircase connected a large open square with a street that ran along the base of the southern wall of the Mount. The steps were in fact the way up to the main entrance to the Temple Mount in New Testament times, the Huldah Gates in the south wall. The steps alternate between broad and narrow, designed to encourage a dignified and unhurried ascent to the temple for worship. Those going up to worship went through the left of two gates (those coming away used the right gate) and continued their ascent through a tunnel to emerge within the Temple Mount. This was the normal way into the Temple Mount for worshippers and would therefore have been the one used by Jesus and the apostles when they went to the temple to worship. We can undoubtedly say, therefore, that in those far-off times Jesus trod these steps as he sought to be about his Father's business

(Lk. 2:49).—*Tony Benson*