

JERUSALEM SCENES

Bethany



The old road from Jerusalem to Jericho winds its way round the southern and eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives through Arab housing. On the southeastern slopes is the village of Eizariya, derived from the name Lazarus, and indicating that this is the site of the village of Bethany, famous as the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, where Jesus and the disciples were entertained. Here Jesus raised the four-days-dead Lazarus from his rock-cut tomb, the culmination of his miraculous acts and the one which caused the Jewish authorities to determine that he should die.

To the left of the main road a narrow lane winds up the mount. Here tourist buses disgorge their occupants to make their way up the lane where a complex of buildings marks the supposed site of this momentous event. Part of this complex of buildings is seen on the left of the picture. It consists of a modern Franciscan (Roman Catholic) church, and a mosque dating to the sixteenth century, both built over the remains of a Byzantine church. There is a mosque here because Lazarus is venerated by Muslims as well as Christians. At the side of the road a flight of twenty-four uneven stone steps descends below the mosque to an ancient rock-cut tomb, labelled as the tomb of Lazarus, though without any real claim to authenticity. The party of tourists on the picture are waiting for their turn to descend into the tomb. The distant church is a Greek Orthodox one; this other large branch of ancient apostate Christianity also likes to have its churches on the supposed sites of significant Bible events.—*Tony Benson*