The Upper Room

Commentary for November 1, 2026 — Where Was It?

Question: I was wondering if you have run across any historical indications as to where in Jerusalem was the **upper room** where Jesus kept His last Passover? City of David? Tyropoeon Valley (where the poor resided)? or the Upper City (Southwest hill)?

Answer: First, whenever you have a question like this, go to the Advanced Search on the ASK Website and type in (with quote marks) "Upper Room" and it will yield all (if any) references in the ASK articles dealing with that subject. From there you can go to the biblical references.[1]

My answers to your questions are complex and not conclusive.

The "Upper Room" in the Gospels

Both Mark 14:12–16 and Luke 22:7–13 speak about a man carrying **"a pitcher of water."** The two disciples were to follow him so they could meet the owner of the house for whom the man was carrying water. The key point to note in this passage is that it was highly unusual for a man to carry water pitchers — at any time. A man carrying **"a pitcher of water"** would be very easy for the disciples to pick out in a crowded public area.

Men did not carry water in pitchers (although they carried waterskins for their own drinking) in ancient Israel. Transporting water was woman's work. Remember when Abraham's servant Eleazar met Rebecca and began the arranged marriage for Isaac in Genesis 24:13–20? The women drew the water from the well.

Also note Exodus 2:15–17 where Moses helped the women at the well, one of which was his future wife, Zipporah. The women were getting the water from the well. Jesus met the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. She was there to draw and carry water (John 4:5–29). Nowhere in Scripture will you find men drawing and carrying water for domestic use except in the Mark and Luke passages.

The man carrying water led the two disciples to the owner of the house who, as Jesus' agents, told the owner to prepare the Passover arrangements in the large upper room that was a guest chamber.

Two Kinds of "Upper Room"?

That "upper room" was described as a **"guest chamber"** in Mark 14:**14** and Luke 22:**11** (Greek root noun ***kataluma***). This room was made available for groups to meet, celebrate, and lodge at during the Jewish feasts. Keep in mind that Jerusalem in the Second Temple

[1] I use the *King James Version* in this article.

period was a "convention town." Huge crowds required temporary housing during the annual feasts. Remember when there was no room in the **"inn"** for Joseph and Mary in Luke 2:7? The same Greek term ***kataluma*** is translated **"guest chamber"** in Mark 14:**14** and Luke 22:**11**.

There is also a reference to an **"upper room"** in Mark 14:**15** and Luke 22:**12**. Both verses use the Greek root noun ***anogeon*** that occur only in those two passages of the New Testament. This Greek word by itself means "upper room." This room is specifically described as a "large" (Greek, ***megas***) "upper room" in both verses. The room was furnished, set up, and prepared for the Passover by the two disciples.

In the *King James Version,* there is another instance of the English phrase **"upper room,"** but in this case a different Greek word altogether is used in Acts 1:13–15:

> **"And when they were come in, they went up into an UPPER ROOM, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.**
>
> **These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty) …"**
>
> • ***Acts 1:13–15 KJV***

The Greek word translated **"upper room"** is from the root noun ***huperoon***. The word also means the **"upper chamber"** of a structure with 2 or more stories. This term occurs later in Acts 9:37, 39 and 20:8.

The fact that Luke used two different Greek terms in Luke 22:12 and Acts 1:13 may show that dissimilar types of **"upper room"** were intended. That would mean the **"large upper room"** (or social room of an inn) of Mark 14:15 and Luke 22:12 was different from the **"upper room"** (or upper chamber) of Acts 1:13.

On the other hand, Luke may simply have used a different term to describe the same room; both where the Passover Supper was held and where the Pentecost room occurred. It cannot be determined clearly from the text.

Remember, in the evening of His resurrection Jesus appeared and spoke to His disciples about the Holy Spirit:

> **"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, 'Peace be unto you.'**
>
> **And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, 'Peace be unto you: as My Father has sent Me, even so send I you.'**
>
> **And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said unto them, 'RECEIVE YOU THE HOLY SPIRIT.'"**
>
> • ***John 20:19–22***

The context does not indicate whether there were just the 12 apostles in the room or more (the text does say **"the disciples"**), perhaps those present number as many as **"about a hundred and twenty"** that later gathered at the time of Acts 1:15.

John 20:24–25 says: **"Thomas, one of the twelve,"** was not with the **"other disciples."** (John never uses the word **"apostle"** in his Gospel, but he does use the designation **"the twelve."**) This may indicate there were disciples present other than the 12 apostles. Of course this would be reasonable.

Bottom line is that we cannot know if the "upper room" in the Gospels of Mark and Luke was the same room where **"the disciples were assembled"** in the Gospel of John. The evidence is not conclusive, though logically it would likely be the same room.

The "Upper Room" in Acts

Still later, after Jesus' ascension into heaven **"the apostles"** (Acts 1:2) traveled from the Mount of Olives into the city of Jerusalem to the "upper room":

> **"Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an** [the] **UPPER ROOM …"**
>
> • ***Acts 1:12–13***

First note that the **"upper room"** (remember, two Greek terms are used in Mark and Luke) was stated to be in Jerusalem, specifically within **"a sabbath day's journey."** This common rabbinical term is used only once in Scripture. This gives us a clue as to this room's location in Jerusalem.

A sabbath day's journey was about 2,000 cubits (about 3000 feet (depending on the length of a cubit). Josephus notes that the distance from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem was variously 5 stadia (1,000 yards, Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews 20.8.6* [20.169]) or 6 stadia (about 1,200 yards, Josephus, Wars of the Jews 5.2.3 [5.70]) depending on from where on the Mount of Olives one started. Therefore, from an indeterminate area at the Mount of Olives, 2,000 cubits would not have taken a traveler far from the Temple into Jerusalem.

Further, although the disciples and women were not wealthy, we know that the room they were in at Pentecost could hold about 120 people (Acts 1:16). If it was the same room as in the Gospels, then the house may have been in a wealthy area directly south of the Temple near where the chief priests lived. It is more likely, however, that the house was where the common people lived west of the Temple, in the Lower City. (It is doubtful the disciples would have stayed north of Fortress Antonia, itself north of the Temple.)

Given Dr. Martin's evidence about the location of the Temple, the location of the "upper room" would have been likely, on the western slope of the Tyropean Valley, west of the Temple.

Other indications tell us that this "upper room" of Pentecost was located near the Temple. We can know this because many people going to (or near) the Temple were attracted by the

sounds of rushing wind at the coming of the Holy Spirit with power in Acts chapter 2.

Peter's reference to David's Tomb also seems to indicate that the site of the Upper Room was close to that well-known location (Acts 2:29–36).

Putting all information together, the Upper Room of Acts was a large room in the city of Jerusalem, near to both the Temple and David's Tomb. This must be west of the correct site of the Temple (not west of the Haram esh-Sharif), immediately west of the City of David and the Gihon Springs.

Pentecost

All the events from Acts 1:13 through 2:41 occurred in proximity of that **"upper room."** Later, on the day of Pentecost it says:

> **"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place."**
>
> • ***Acts 2:1***

Were All These Events at the Same Room?

My best guess answers to your questions are these: While it is stated that the room in both Mark 14:15 and Luke 22:12 was large, remember that the room in Acts 1:13 held 120 disciples, meaning that it was also a large room. This is the primary reason I identify these as being the same room in all the relevant passages of Mark, Luke, John, and Acts. This is in accord with what most commentators have concluded.

The location was close to the Temple, likely in the poorer section of Jerusalem just west and perhaps a bit south of the Temple, itself over the Gihon Springs on top of Mount Zion (and **NOT** the location on the Haram esh-Sharif). Even poor areas have gathering rooms or halls for weddings, celebrations, meetings, etc. That would place it on the western slope of the Tyropean Valley facing east toward the back wall of the Temple enclosure.

Although Scripture does not always fill in details to our satisfaction, it is stunningly consistent in its information.

David Sielaff
david@askelm.com

See my four articles about the area near the Herodian Temple:

"King David's Tomb 1. What Is Inside?"

"King David's Tomb 2. Best Discoveries"

"King David's Tomb 3. House of David"

"King David's Tomb 4. Its Location"