

The Church of the Holy Wisdom

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By Joseph F. Dumond

November 16, 2018



News Letter 5854-033

The 2nd Year of the 4th Sabbatical Cycle

The 23rd year of the 120th Jubilee Cycle

The 8th day of the 9th month 5854 years after the creation of Adam

The 9th Month in the Second year of the Fourth Sabbatical Cycle

The 4th Sabbatical Cycle after the 119th Jubilee Cycle

The Sabbatical Cycle of Sword, Famines, and Pestilence

November 17, 2018

Shabbat Shalom to the Royal Family of Yehovah,

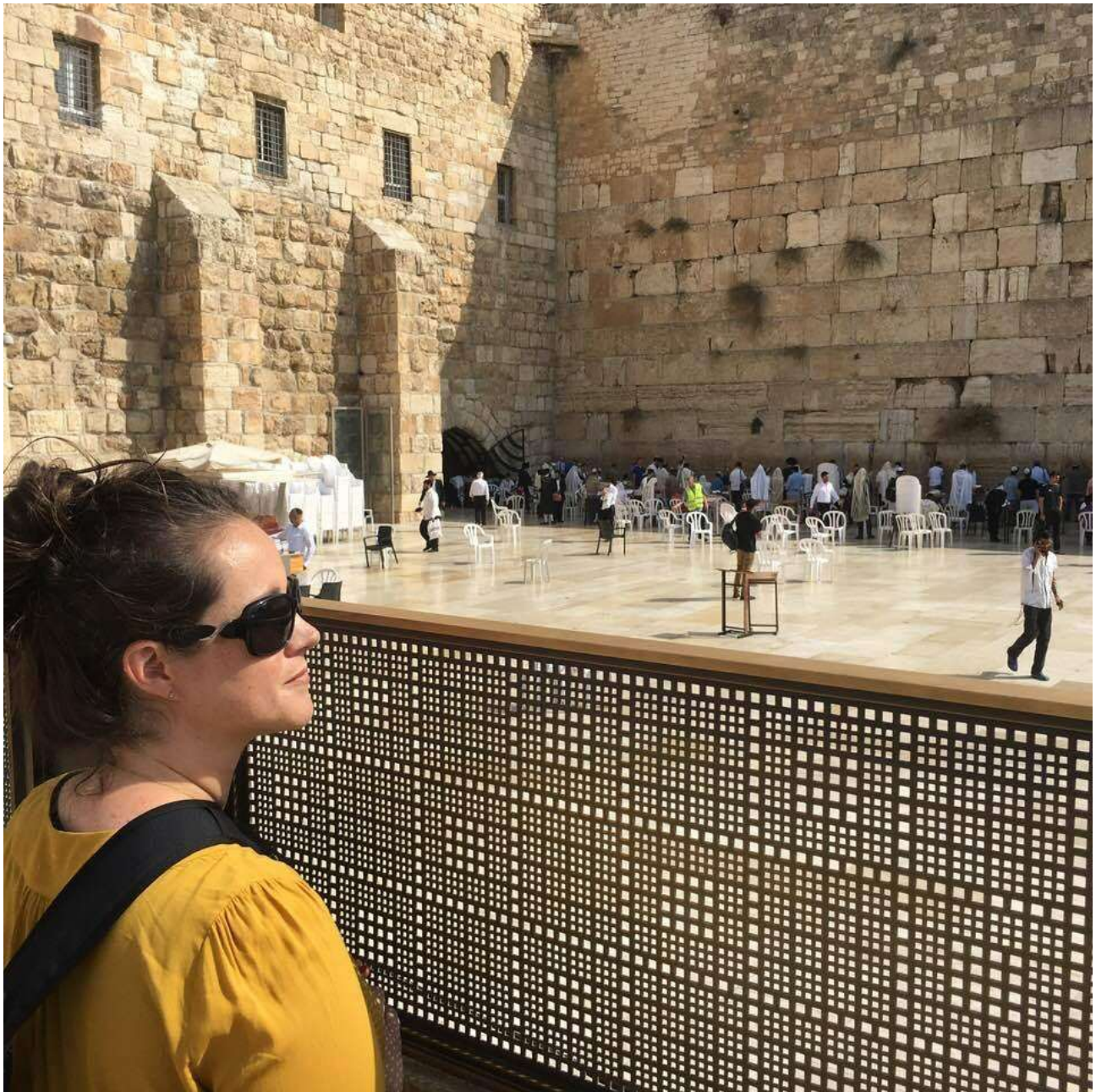
The History of the Dome of the Rock

In [News Letter 5854-029](#) I explained to you where Golgatha was and how you could figure it out the next time you go to Jerusalem. I also walked you through the history of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Garden Tomb so that you had the information at hand to make clear understandings of what you are looking at and at what it is not, even though the masses will say it is the actual place.

This year of 2018 I took my daughter Natalie and showed her all these sites. She got frustrated not knowing which one was real and which was bogus and why there were more than just one place for the same things.

When you come to Jerusalem and while you are there, you should also take the time to understand the history that is behind the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa Mosque. This week I want to walk you through that history and I hope I do it in such a way that you can understand it all.

Each year I spend about three days just walking around these historic monuments and explain that history to those with me. But I rarely if ever, do I get to explain all the details and the depths of history that are just astounding. Many of you have been to Jerusalem with various tours. Many of you will find a way to go at some point. This week I want to cover just one subject but will actually cover two. The one subject is exactly what was the Dome of the Rock and why is the Al Aqsa Mosque considered the Temple of Solomon. Once you are armed with the truth then the lies cannot keep you in the dark anymore.



Natalie was in awe of the Western Wall and thought it was the most Holy Place on Earth. She thought the same thing about the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.



Natalie and I have just entered the Temple Mount and I am about to explain to her the history of the Al Aqsa Mosque.



We next begin to explain why there are so many cisterns on the Temple Mount and who built them and why.



The Dome of the Rock. The Single most desired piece of real estate that everyone wants to see firsthand. Why has this captured our imaginations so much?



I showed Natalie the Dome of the Spirit and how it lines up with the Eastern Gate and why some people claim this is where the Temple used to be.



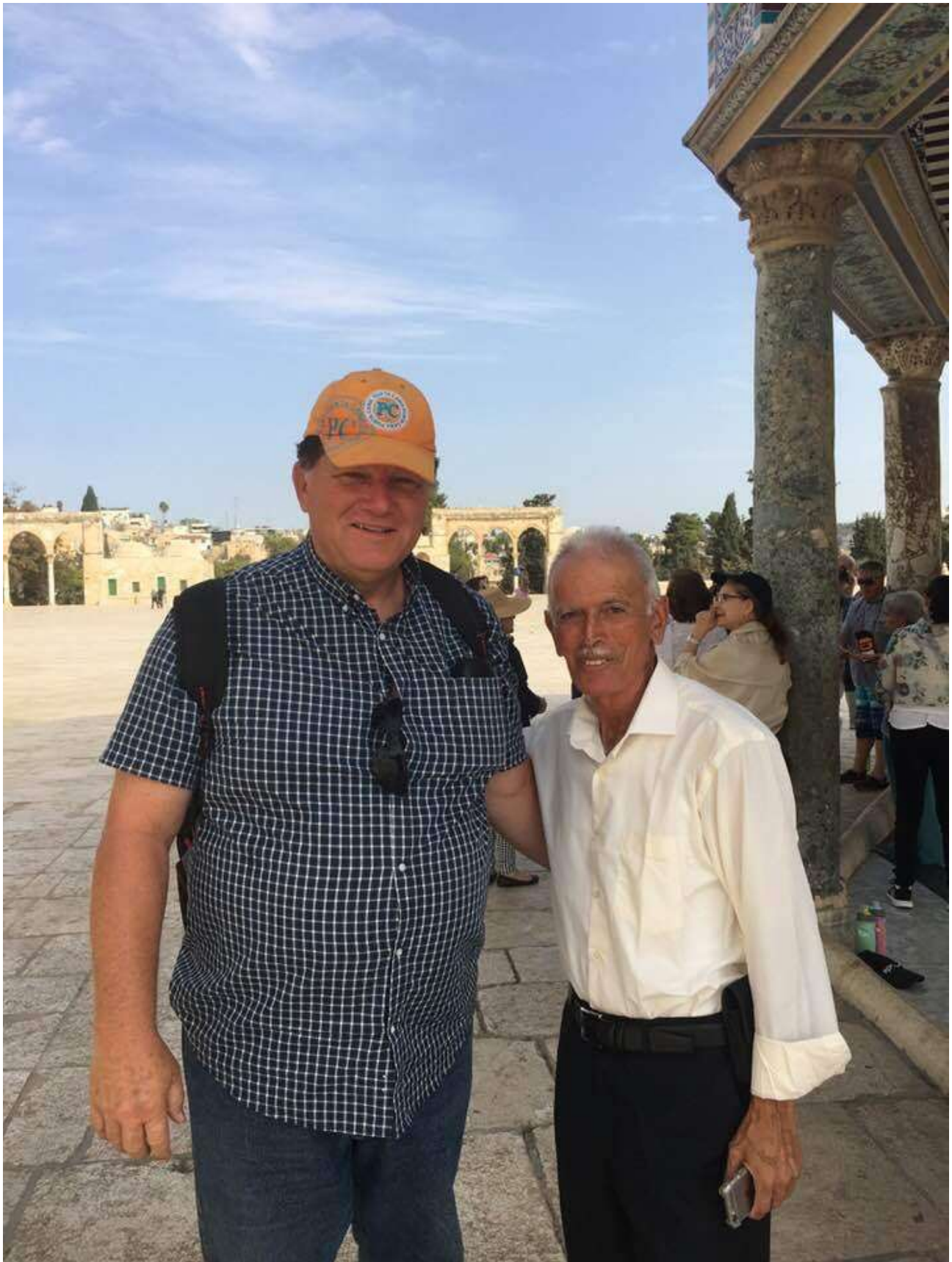
In these two pictures above and below I now explain to Natalie how some people claim this small area here was Fort Antonio and how they housed the Tenth Legion in this small area. She then laughs at the ridiculous thinking.



As we are about to exit we see this same group of Jewish worshippers that only walked around the perimeter bowing and backing out from the presence of the Dome of the Rock. I had the opportunity to explain why they do this and how they believe the Dome is where the Temple of Yehovah once stood. I also got to explain to her why the Jews have to have such heavy security and why they are not allowed to pray here. It helped her to understand the current realities that are here and affect the whole world.

I would like you all to imagine if you would the crowd in the very same place as these Jewish believers are and facing the same direction towards the Rock under the Dome upon which Yehshua was being tried that fateful Passover preparation day.





This is the Angel I met on the Temple Mount back in 2006 who explained to me about the Al Aqsa Mosque. This year he was explaining to me about the Rock inside the Dome of the Rock.

The History of the Haram esh-Sharif

The Temple Mount, “Mount of the House (of God, i.e. the Temple in Jerusalem)”), known to Muslims as the Haram esh-Sharif, al-ḥaram al-Šarʿf, “the Noble Sanctuary”, or al-ḥaram alQuds al-Šarʿf, “the Noble Sanctuary of Jerusalem”) and the Al Aqsa Compound is a hill located in the Old City of Jerusalem that for thousands of years has been venerated as a holy site, in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam alike.

The subject of our research today covers a lot of history. And we are literally jumping into the middle part of that history. We are going to restrict ourselves for the most part to just the Temple Mount and explain that to you. I have chosen to call it The Noble Mount in our title for a reason. I hope you understand that reason by the end of this article.

Herod began work on the reconstruction of the temple in 19 BC.

The reconstruction was equal to an entire rebuilding, still the Herodian Temple cannot be spoken of as a third Temple, for Herod even said himself, that it was only intended to be regarded as an enlarging and further beautifying of that of Zerubbabel's.

The work of rebuilding the Temple began in 19 BC which was the 18th year of King Herod's reign. There were 10,000 skilled laborers and according to Josephus (Ant. 15.11.2) the laity could not enter certain parts of the building, therefore 1000 Levites were specially trained as builders and masons, and carried out their work so efficiently and carefully that at no time was there any interruption in the sacrifices and other services.

While the main part of Herod's rebuilding was completed before his death in 1 BC, the work went on for more than 60 years after that. When Jesus visited the Temple at the first Passover of his ministry it was said that the place had by then been under construction for 46 years. The work was not entirely finished until 63 AD, only 7 years before the destruction of the entire Temple in 70 AD.

The following is a brief summary of the events around the Temple involving Rome.

Early Roman period

63 BCE: Roman Republic under Pompey the Great besieges and takes the city.[3] Pompey enters the temple but leaves treasure. Hyrcanus II is appointed High Priest and Antipater the Idumaeon is appointed governor.

57–55 BCE: Aulus Gabinius, proconsul of Syria, split the former Hasmonean Kingdom into five districts of legal and religious councils known as sanhedrin based at Jerusalem, Sepphoris (Galilee), Jericho, Amathus (Perea) and Gadara.[21][22]

54 BCE: Crassus loots the temple, confiscating all its gold, after failing to receive the required tribute (according to Josephus).

45 BCE: Antipater the Idumaeon is appointed Procurator of Judaea by Julius Caesar, after Julius Caesar is appointed dictator of the Roman Republic following Caesar's Civil War. 43 BCE: Antipater the Idumaeon is killed by poison, and is succeeded by his sons Phasael and Herod.

40 BCE: Antigonus, son of Hasmonean Aristobulus II and nephew of Hyrcanus II, offers money

to

the Parthian army to help him recapture the Hasmonean realm from the Romans. Jerusalem is captured by Barzapharnes, Pacorus I of Parthia and Roman deserter Quintus Labienus. Antigonus is placed as King of Judea. Hyracanus is mutilated, Phasael commits suicide, and Herod escapes to Rome.

40–37 BCE: The Roman senate appoints Herod “King of the Jews” and provides him with an army. Following Roman General Publius Ventidius Bassus’ defeat of the Parthians in Northern Syria, Herod and Roman General Gaius Sosius wrest Judea from Antigonus II Mattathias, culminating in the siege of the city.[23][24]

37–35 BCE: Herod the Great builds the Antonia Fortress, named after Mark Anthony, on the site of the earlier Hasmonean Baris.[25]

19 BCE: Herod expands the Temple Mount and rebuilds the Temple (Herod’s Temple), including the construction of the Western Wall.

15 BCE: Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, son-in-law of Emperor Augustus visits Jerusalem and offers a hecatomb in the temple.[26]

6 BCE: John the Baptist is born in Ein Kerem to Zechariah and Elizabeth.

5 BCE: Presentation of Jesus at the Temple, 40 days after his birth in Bethlehem (Biblical sources only).

6 BCE: End of Herodian governorate in Jerusalem.

Herod Archelaus deposed as the ethnarch of the Tetrarchy of Judea. Herodian Dynasty replaced in the newly created Iudaea province by Roman prefects and after 44 by procurators, beginning with Coponius (Herodians continued to rule elsewhere and Agrippa I and Agrippa II later served as Kings).

Senator Quirinius appointed Legate of the Roman province of Syria (to which Judea had been “added” according to Josephus[27] though Ben-Sasson claims it was a “satellite of Syria” and not “legally part of Syria”[28]) carries out a tax census of both Syria and Judea known as the Census of Quirinius.

Both events spark the failed revolt of Judas the Galilean and the founding of the Zealot movement, according to Josephus.

Jerusalem loses its place as the administrative capital to Caesarea Palaestina.[29]

7–26 CE: Brief period of peace, relatively free of revolt and bloodshed in Judea and Galilee.[30]

28–31 CE: Three and a half year Ministry of Jesus, during which according to the bible a number of key events took place in Jerusalem, including:

31 CE: Key events in the martyrdom of Jesus which according to the bible took place in Jerusalem.

Palm Sunday (Jesus enters Jerusalem as the Messiah, while riding on a donkey).

Last Supper.

The Passion and Crucifixion.

Resurrection of Jesus.

Ascension of Jesus.

31 CE: The first Christian martyr (Protomartyr) Saint Stephen stoned to death following Sanhedrin trial.

37–40 CE: “Crisis under Gaius Caligula” – a financial crisis throughout the empire results in the “first open break” between Jews and Romans even though problems were already evident during the Census of Quirinius in 6 AD and under Sejanus before 31 AD.[31]

45–46 CE: After a famine in Judea Paul and Barnabas provide support to the Jerusalem poor from Antioch.

50 CE: The Apostles thought to have held the Council of Jerusalem, the first Christian council. May mark the first formal schism between Christianity and Judaism at which it was agreed that Christians did not need to be circumcised

57 CE: Paul of Tarsus is arrested in Jerusalem after he is attacked by a mob in the Temple[32] and defends his actions before a sanhedrin.

64–68 CE: Nero persecutes Jews and Christians throughout the Roman Empire.

66 CE: James the Just, the brother of Jesus and first Bishop of Jerusalem, is killed in Jerusalem at the instigation of the high priest Ananus ben Ananus according to Eusebius of Caesarea.[33]

66–73 CE: First Jewish-Roman War, with the Judean rebellion led by Simon Bar Giora

70 CE: Siege of Jerusalem (70) Titus, eldest son of Emperor Vespasian, ends the major portion of Great Jewish Revolt and destroys Herod's Temple on Tisha B'Av. The Roman legion Legio X Fretensis is garrisoned in the city.

The Sanhedrin is relocated to Yavne. Pharisees become dominant, and their form of Judaism evolves into modern day Rabbinic Judaism (whereas Sadducees and Essenes are no longer recorded as groups in history—see Origins of Rabbinic Judaism).

The city's leading Christians relocate to Pella.

c. 90–96 CE: Jews and Christians heavily persecuted throughout the Roman Empire towards the end of the reign of Domitian.

115–17 CE: Jews revolt against the Romans throughout the empire, including Jerusalem, in the Kitos War.

117 CE: Saint Simeon of Jerusalem, second Bishop of Jerusalem, was crucified under Trajan by the proconsul Atticus in Jerusalem or the vicinity.[34] Late Roman period (Aelia Capitolina)

The Roman empire at its peak under Hadrian showing the location of the Roman legions deployed in 125 CE.

130: Emperor Hadrian visits the ruins of Jerusalem and decides to rebuild it as a city dedicated to Jupiter called Aelia Capitolina

131: An additional legion, Legio VI Ferrata, was stationed in the city to maintain order, as the Roman governor performed the foundation ceremony of Aelia Capitolina. Hadrian abolished circumcision (brit milah), which he viewed as mutilation.[35]

132–135: Bar Kokhba's revolt – Simon Bar Kokhba leads a revolt against the Roman Empire, controlling the city for three years. He is proclaimed as the Messiah by Rabbi Akiva. Hadrian sends Sextus Julius Severus to the region, who brutally crushes the revolt and retakes the city.

136: Hadrian formally reestablishes the city as Aelia Capitolina, and forbids Jewish and Christian presence in the city.

c. 136–140: A Temple to Jupiter is built on the Temple Mount and a temple to Venus is built on Calvary.

We have already spoken about this Temple of Venus which is now part of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Aelia Capitolina built under the emperor Hadrian on the site of Jerusalem, which was in ruins following the siege of 70 AD, leading in part to the Bar Kokhba revolt of 132–136 AD. Aelia Capitolina remained the official name of Jerusalem until 638 AD, when the Arabs conquered the city and kept the first part of it as (Iliyya?). Aelia came from Hadrian's nomen gentile, Aelius, while Capitolina meant that the new city was dedicated to Jupiter Capitolinus, to whom a temple was built on the site of the former Jewish temple, the Temple Mount. Hadrian forbids any Jews in the Jerusalem area.

Hold on one second. The Temple was utterly destroyed. Hadrian even made a coin showing how it was plowed under. The temple to Jupiter was built on the Temple Mount as it is called today. But it was not built on the Temple site. You will know more in a bit.

Note this coin that Hadrian minted. It shows himself plowing the actual Temple area. This could not be done if the Temple to Jupiter was there. What this shows you is that there are two different places.

138: Restrictions over Christian presence in the city are relaxed after Hadrian dies and Antoninus Pius becomes emperor.

195: Saint Narcissus of Jerusalem presides over a council held by the bishops of Palestine in Caesarea, and decrees that Easter is to be always kept on a Sunday, and not with the Jewish Passover. 251: Bishop Alexander of Jerusalem is killed during Roman Emperor Decius' persecution of Christians.

259: Jerusalem falls under the rule of Odaenathus as King of the Palmyrene Empire after the capture of

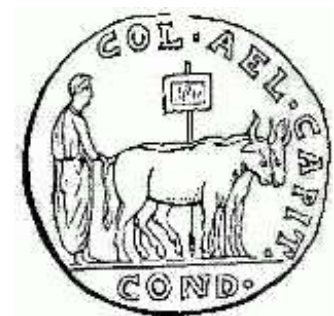
Emperor Valerian by Shapur I at the Battle of Edessa causes the Roman Empire to splinter.

272: Jerusalem becomes part of the Roman Empire again after Aurelian defeats the Palmyrene Empire at the Battle of Emesa (Homs).

303: Saint Procopius of Scythopolis is born in Jerusalem.

312: Macarius becomes the last Bishop of Aelia Capitolina.

313: Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre founded in Jerusalem after Constantine I issued the Edict of Milan, legalizing Christianity throughout the Roman Empire following his own conversion the previous year.





Picture of Helen finding the true cross which is the reason for building the Church of the Holy Selpuchre.

What Happened to the Temple After the Jewish/Roman War of 66 to 70 C.E.?

We have now given you the overall history of the Temple and its destructions and rebuilds. We need to zero in deeper on some of the details to see what actually has happened since the Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E.

Jesus had some important words to say about the future status of the Temple and its walls.

Standing outside the east Temple walls, Jesus told his disciples that not one stone of the Temple and its support buildings would be left on top the other. 20 And in Luke 19:43,44 Jesus expanded the scope of destruction even further. He said:

“For the days shall come upon thee [Jerusalem], that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. And shall lay thee [Jerusalem] even with the ground, and thy children within thee: and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation.”

Even the most liberal of scholars admit that these statements were recorded in these Synoptic Gospels within a generation or two after the Jewish/Roman War. Had the statements not been true, there were hosts of hostile people to the teachings of Christianity up to the middle of the second century and beyond who would have gladly stated that these prophetic utterances made by Jesus were an outright lie (if they were indeed a lie). But I have recorded in my book numerous eyewitnesses over the next 300 years that attest to the accuracy of what the Gospel writers stated about the prophecies of Jesus given above. Jerusalem and the Temple (with their walls) were leveled to the ground — to the extent that even their very foundation stones were uprooted and overturned. No stone remained on top another, just as Jesus said would happen.

And for prime evidence of this fact, we have eyewitness accounts of both Josephus and Titus (the Roman general who conducted the war against the Jews) who give the description of utter ruin and thorough destruction of Jerusalem. Josephus and Titus mentioned that if they had not been in Jerusalem during the war and personally seen the demolition that took place, they would not have believed that there was once a city in the area. 21 But they were eyewitnesses to its utter ruin. It is significant that Josephus used the exact words of Jesus’ prophecy to describe the uprooted condition of even the foundation stones that constituted Jewish Jerusalem. He said:

“It [Jerusalem] was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was nothing left to make those that came thither believe it [Jerusalem] had ever been inhabited.”22

No one should pass over this eyewitness account in a trivial manner. Not a foundation stone was in place from all the buildings in Jerusalem, including the stones of the Temple. It is significant that Jesus said the same thing as Josephus. Jesus said that Jerusalem was to be “laid even with the ground.” Josephus explained the reason why every stone was overturned in the city (including those that made up the very foundations). The Jews were accustomed to hide their gold and other valuables in the walls of their homes. The Temple itself was also the treasury of the Jewish nation. 23 When the fires consumed the whole of the Temple and City, the gold melted and descended into the cracks and crevices of the stone foundations. In order to recover this melted gold, the Tenth Legion had the Jewish captives uproot every stone of the Temple and the whole of the City. So much gold was discovered in this fashion that the price of the metal in the Roman Empire went down half of its pre-war value. 24 This action of looking for gold by overturning

the stones (including all foundation stones) left Jerusalem as a vast quarry of dislodged and uprooted stones in a state of unrecognized shambles.

130 C.E.

There was such an abundance of various stones dislodged from their foundations that the emperor Hadrian sixty years later was able to build an entirely new city (Aelia) to the northwest of the former city by reusing many of those ruined stones. The original southeast area of Jerusalem remained an open quarry until as late as the time of Eusebius. He lamented that stones of Jerusalem and the Temple were in his day still being used for homes, temples, theatres, etc. 25 What must be realized is the fact that Jewish Jerusalem and the Holy Temple were so dismantled and torn down that even the foundational stones of the buildings were uprooted and in complete ruin. These eyewitness descriptions are in contrast to one complex of buildings that almost completely escaped the destruction and continued to remain as functioning structures within the devastated area of Jerusalem. That complex of buildings was the Haram esh-Sharif that we still see standing to this day.

Only One Architectural Facility Survived the Jewish/Roman War in Jerusalem

The whole of the Jewish Temple and Jewish Jerusalem were leveled to the ground and not one stone even of their foundations remained on top one another — just as Jesus prophesied and Josephus and Titus attest. But one man-made construction did come through the war relatively unscathed. That single structure is still with us today. Since Titus determined to leave the Tenth Legion in Jerusalem to prevent any further revolutions, the Legion had to have military quarters in which to reside. At first, Titus thought of leaving three small fortresses in the Upper City as the forts to protect the Tenth Legion. But Josephus said that while Titus was away in Antioch, those “local fortresses” (as he called them) were demolished in the Roman quest for gold. 26 This western area as a place to house the Tenth Legion proved to be inappropriate and inadequate. Incidentally, archaeological surveys of the entire “Upper City” (as much as could be uncovered) have revealed that NO ROMAN TROOPS ever occupied the western part of Jerusalem after the Jewish/Roman War. 27

Titus, however, had another fortress in mind that was more than adequate to house the Tenth Legion. The answer regarding where the Tenth Legion had its geographical headquarters is provided to us by an eyewitness who should certainly have known the truth. Eleazer, the leader of the last remnant of Jews in Masada who finally committed suicide rather than fall into the hands of General Silva of the Tenth Legion (three years after the main war was over) said that the Temple then lay in ruins and the City of Jerusalem was utterly destroyed. Notice his comments:

“It [Jerusalem] is now demolished to the very foundations [even the foundational stones were all overturned], and hath nothing left but THAT MONUMENT of it preserved, I mean the CAMP OF THOSE [the Romans] that hath destroyed it [Jerusalem], WHICH [CAMP] STILL DWELLS UPON ITS RUINS: some unfortunate old men also lie upon the ashes of the Temple [then in total ruins – burnt to ashes], and a few women are there preserved alive by the enemy [for prostitution purposes], for our bitter shame and reproach.” 28



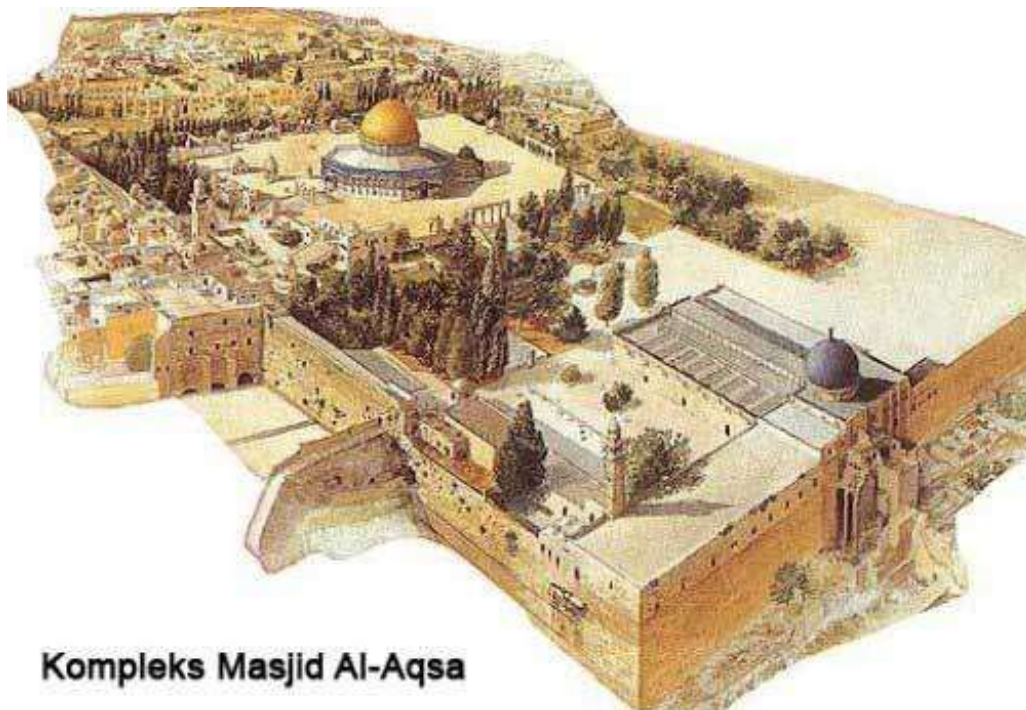
picture above you can see the stairs in the center where Paul was arrested. The Temple itself was over the Gihon Spring and at this time when Eliazar is speaking, it is utterly destroyed down to the very foundation stones. What is today the Temple Mount on the right-hand side of the picture is what was called Fort Antonio where the Tenth Legion stayed. The Praetorium where Yeshua was judged, is in the center with the red roof and this would be turned into the Temple of Jupiter in Hadrians time of 130 C.E.

289 CE The Romans leave

So, only one architectural edifice from the Jerusalem of Herod and Jesus survived the war. It was the former Roman camp that Titus (the Roman general) allowed to remain of all the buildings of former Jerusalem. And it is still in evidence today. That was Fort Antonia, the fortress built by Herod the Great that was much larger than the Temple in size. Josephus said it was as large as a city and could hold a full Legion of troops. 29 Titus thought at first to demolish this fortress, but on second thought he decided to put it to Roman use. He continued to use it as the Camp of the Romans in the Jerusalem area and it housed the Tenth Legion unto 289 C.E. Since its prodigious walls were still very much in place after the war (and there were 37 huge cisterns for an adequate water supply inside its walls), the Tenth Legion had a ready-built fortress to protect them. This is the obvious reason why Titus spared the Haram esh-Sharif and made it the permanent fortress of the Romans to house the Tenth Legion and all subsidiary inhabitants that normally accompanied a

Legion in a permanent fort in a foreign area. It was most natural to continue using Fort Antonia as a vital and protective fortress. Josephus said that Fort Antonia was built around a massive and prominent outcropping of rock that was a notable protective feature within its precincts. 30 That “rock” is still the centerpiece feature of the remains of Fort Antonia. Indeed, that “rock” is identified in later histories as important.

This descriptions of Josephus fits perfectly the present Haram esh-Sharif with its majestic Herodian and pre-Herodian walls and with the present Dome of the Rock now covering that significant outcropping of rock. It was a natural place for the Tenth Legion to make their headquarters. Fort Antonia was also called the Roman Praetorium and it was the place where Pilate sentenced Jesus to crucifixion. That central rock outcropping was a significant spot in the fortress, as Josephus stated, and even the apostle John singled it out for comment regarding the judgment of Jesus. John called it the lithostrothon [a rock, on which people could stand and be judged,]. 31 This “Rock” had a Hebrew name: “Gabbatha.”32 The Haram esh-Sharif built around this well-known “rock outcropping” was the only building with its four massive walls to survive the Jewish/Roman War. We can still see its stones in place in its lower courses (all 10,000 of them). Those Herodian walls of Fort Antonia (including where the Jewish Wailing Wall is located) have withstood the ravages of time for centuries. But eyewitness accounts attest that all the inner and outer walls of the Temple and the walls that surrounded Jerusalem were dismantled including their very foundations (not even those uprooted foundation stones were left in situ), the 10,000 stones of the Haram remained in their pristine positions. Those walls of Fort Antonia surrounding the famous “rock” in the center area were retained by Titus to protect the Roman Legion permanently encamped in the Jerusalem area. This was the “rock” in the Praetorium where Jesus stood when Pilate judged him.



Events in the Bar Kochba Revolt Can Now Be Explained Rationally

In the later Bar Kochba Revolt of the Jews from 132 to 135 C.E., there is no mention of any battles being fought in Jerusalem or anywhere near the city. This has amazed Jewish scholars. But now that we realize that the Haram esh-Sharif was Fort Antonia (the Praetorium where the Tenth Legion was headquartered), it can be seen that such a fortress was so impregnable that none of the Jewish revolutionaries dared attack the area. The Romans had one of the greatest forts of the east as their place of protection (and even slightly larger than the main Roman fortress in Rome itself). The Haram with its four massive walls defending it was an invincible fortress with plentiful supplies of food and copious water supplies. This fact allowed the Tenth Legion to stay in Fort Antonia [the Praetorium] until the Legion moved to Ailat in 289 C.E.

333 CE

The Bordeaux Pilgrim in 333 C.E. Describes the Haram esh-Sharif as the Praetorium

When the Bordeaux Pilgrim came to Jerusalem in 333 C.E., he first witnessed a “Temple” then standing with associated buildings. The Pilgrim spoke of these remains of this “Temple.” It had just been rebuilt by Jews in the time of Constantine. This “Temple” was later rebuilt in Julian’s time. This was on Jerusalem’s southeast ridge. The Pilgrim then climbed the southwest hill and entered the walled city of Jerusalem. He stood between the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the west part of the “Upper City” (then being built by the order of Constantine) and another facility to his east that had walls. The Pilgrim said the walls of this structure (located east of the Holy Sepulchre) reached downward into the bottom of the Tyropoeon Valley. He correctly identified it as the Praetorium. The Pilgrim was clearly describing the remains of the Haram esh-Sharif (which does indeed have its western and southwestern walls reaching downward into the Tyropoeon Valley).

We now arrive at a major point that needs emphasizing. The Bordeaux Pilgrim understood this particular edifice that was opposite (east of) the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as being the Roman Praetorium. The name was a common word used by the public for a Roman headquarters fortress of a general and his staff. Because of the association of the Praetorium with Jesus’ trial before Pilate, the records show that Constantine’s mother built a small church within the confines of this Praetorium and she called it the Church of St.Cyrus and St.John. ³³ This church was enlarged in later times (certainly by the time of Justinian) to be called The Church of the Holy Wisdom (Saint Sophia).

I would like to take a short deviation and look at how this small church got its name and it will also help us to date the time.

The Founding of the Church of St Cyrus and St John

The Diocletianic or Great Persecution was the last and most severe persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire.[1] In 303, the Emperors Diocletian, Maximian, Galerius, and Constantius issued a series of edicts rescinding Christians' legal rights and demanding that they comply with traditional religious practices. Later edicts targeted the clergy and demanded universal sacrifice, ordering all inhabitants to sacrifice to the gods. The persecution varied in intensity across the empire—weakest in Gaul and Britain, where only the first edict was applied, and strongest in the Eastern provinces. Persecutory laws were nullified by different emperors at different times, but Constantine and Licinius's Edict of Milan (313) has traditionally marked the end of the persecution.

Christians had always been subject to local discrimination in the empire, but early emperors were reluctant to issue general laws against the sect. It was not until the 250s, under the reigns of Decius and Valerian, that such laws were passed. Under this legislation, Christians were compelled to sacrifice to pagan gods or face imprisonment and execution. After Gallienus's accession in 260, these laws went into abeyance. Diocletian's assumption of power in 284 did not mark an immediate reversal of imperial inattention to Christianity, but it did herald a gradual shift in official attitudes toward religious minorities. In the first fifteen years of his rule, Diocletian purged the army of Christians, condemned Manicheans to death, and surrounded himself with public opponents of Christianity. Diocletian's preference for activist government, combined with his self-image as a restorer of past Roman glory, foreboded the most pervasive persecution in Roman history. In the winter of 302, Galerius urged Diocletian to begin a general persecution of the Christians. Diocletian was wary, and asked the oracle of Apollo for guidance. The oracle's reply was read as an endorsement of Galerius's position, and a general persecution was called on February 24, 303.

Persecutory policies varied in intensity across the empire. Where Galerius and Diocletian were avid persecutors, Constantius was unenthusiastic. Later persecutory edicts, including the calls for universal sacrifice, were not applied in his domain. His son, Constantine, on taking the imperial office in 306, restored Christians to full legal equality and returned property that had been confiscated during the persecution. In Italy in 306, the usurper Maxentius ousted Maximian's successor Severus, promising full religious toleration. Galerius ended the persecution in the East in 311, but it was resumed in Egypt, Palestine, and Asia Minor by his successor, Maximinus. Constantine and Licinius, Severus's successor, signed the Edict of Milan in 313, which offered a more comprehensive acceptance of Christianity than Galerius's edict had provided. Licinius ousted Maximinus in 313, bringing an end to persecution in the East.

The persecution failed to check the rise of the Church. By 324, Constantine was sole ruler of the empire, and Christianity had become his favored religion. Although the persecution resulted in death, torture, imprisonment, or dislocation for many Christians, the majority of the empire's Christians avoided punishment. The persecution did, however, cause many churches to split between those who had complied with imperial authority (the traditores), and those who had remained "pure". Certain schisms, like those of the Donatists in North Africa and the Meletians in Egypt, persisted long after the persecutions. The Donatists would not be reconciled to the Church until after 411. Some modern historians, such as G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, consider that, in the centuries that followed the persecutory era, Christians created a "cult of the martyrs", and

exaggerated its barbarity. Such Christian accounts began to be criticized during the Enlightenment, most notably by Edward Gibbon.



During the persecution of Diocletian three holy virgins, fifteen-year-old Theoctista (Theopista), Theodota (Theodora), thirteen years old, and Theodossia (Theodoxia), eleven years old, together with their mother Athanasia, were arrested at Canopus and brought to Alexandria. Cyrus and John, fearing lest these girls, on account of their youth, might, in the midst of torments, deny the Faith, resolved to go into the city to comfort them and encourage them in undergoing martyrdom. [4] This fact becoming known they also were arrested and after dire torments they were all beheaded on the 31st of January.[3]

Saints Cyrus and John (d. ca. 304 AD, or 311[1][2]) are venerated as martyrs.

It was shortly after this martyrdom that a certain church was named after these two men. That is the reason I have included this story this week.

The Founding of the Dome of the Rock

The Church of the Holy Wisdom Destroyed 614 CE

In the sixth century, during the time of Justinian, the Piacenza Pilgrim visited Jerusalem. He identified this Church of the Holy Wisdom with precision. He said it was at the site of the former Praetorium of Pilate. He also mentioned a significant architectural feature over which that Church had been built. It was an “oblong rock” on which the people (in the sixth century) believed that they could see the footprints of Jesus as indentions in the rock. That Church was built specifically and exclusively to be situated directly over that important “Rock.” The Church

did not survive long, however. The Persians in 614 C.E destroyed it. But Sophronius, the Archbishop of Jerusalem when the Muslims took over Jerusalem in 638 C.E., remembered the Church when he was a young man and he singled out the prominent Stone that was at that Christian spot. 34

Let me recap things right now for you so you understand.

31 CE. Yehshua was judged by Pilot at the praetorium. Yehshua was placed on the Pavement called Gabbatha.

John 18:28 Then they led Jesus away from Caiaphas into the Praetorium. By now it was early morning, and the Jews did not enter the Praetorium to avoid being defiled and unable to eat the Passover.

Mat 27:19 Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream."

John 19:13 So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha.

136 CE. Hadrian builds the temple of Jupiter which was at the Praetorium over the Pavement called Gabbatha. (He built the temple of Venus where he thought Jesus was buried which is now the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and he built the temple of Jupiter to again stamp out the memory of Jesus at the Pavement which is where Christians would come to on their pilgrimages up until this time.)

304 CE. Saints Cyrus and John are martyred and shortly thereafter Hadrian's temple is turned into the Church named after these two Saints.

325 Helena turned that church into the Church of the Holy Wisdom

I must now take another brief detour so that you do not miss what is taking place at this time with Constantine and his mother Helena concerning this Church of the Holy Wisdom otherwise known as the Church of Sophia. They took the name and created a new Church building in Constantinople. Between 324 and 330, Constantine built a new imperial capital at Byzantium on the Bosphoros, which would be named Constantinople for him. And it was here that he built many new churches one of them being the Church of Sophia also known as the Church of the Holy Wisdom which they took from the name of the little church that was on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. I have been to this Church in Constantinople which today is known as the Red Mosque.

I am sharing this so that you do not get the two churches by the same name confused. But the name of the one in Jerusalem was used on this new Church being built in the new city that Constantine was building at this time. It is also important to understand the new doctrine that was being brought into play via the naming of this Church, the Church of the Holy Wisdom.

The doctrine of the Virgin Mary and holy Wisdom

The dogma of the Virgin Mary as both the “mother of God” and the “bearer of God” is connected in the closest way with the dogma of the incarnation of the divine Logos. The theoretical formation of doctrine did not bring the veneration of the mother of God along in its train. Instead, the doctrine only reflected the unusually great role that this veneration already had taken on at an early date in the liturgy and in the church piety of orthodox faithful.

Justinian I
model of
and
Great (right,
model of the



(left, holding a
Hagia Sophia)
Constantine the
holding a
city of

Constantinople) presenting gifts to the Virgin Mary and Christ Child (centre), mosaic, 10th century; in Hagia Sophia, Istanbul. Dumbarton Oaks/Trustees for Harvard University, Washington, D.C.

The expansion of the veneration of the Virgin Mary as the bearer of God (Theotokos) and the formation of the corresponding dogma constitute one of the most-astonishing occurrences in the history of the early church. The New Testament offers only scanty points of departure for that development. Although she has a prominent place in the narratives of the Nativity and the Passion of Christ, Mary completely recedes behind the figure of Jesus, who stands in the centre of all four Gospels. From the Gospels themselves it can be recognized that Jesus' development into the preacher of the Kingdom of God took place in sharp opposition to his family, who were so little convinced of his mission that they held him to be insane (Mark 3:21); in a later passage Jesus refuses to recognize them (Mark 3:31). Accordingly, all the Gospels stress the fact that Jesus separated himself from his family. Even the Gospel According to John still preserved traces of Jesus' tense relationship with his mother. Mary appears twice without being called by name the mother of Jesus, and Jesus himself regularly withholds from her the designation of mother.

Nevertheless, with the conception of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, a tendency developed early in the church to grant to the mother of the Son of God a special place within the church. That development was sketched quite hesitantly in the New Testament. Only the Gospels of Matthew and Luke mention the virgin birth. On those scanty presuppositions the later veneration of the mother of God was developed. The view of the virgin birth entered into the Apostle's Creed and became one of the strongest religious impulses in the development of the dogma, liturgy, and ecclesiastical piety of the early church.

Veneration of the mother of God received its impetus when the Christian Church became the imperial church. Despite the lack of detail concerning Mary in the Gospels, cultic veneration of the divine virgin and mother found within the Christian Church a new possibility of expression in the worship of Mary as the virgin mother of God, in whom was achieved the mysterious union of the divine Logos with human nature. The spontaneous impulse of popular piety, which pushed in this direction, moved far in advance of the practice and doctrine of the church. In Egypt Mary was, at an early point, already worshipped under the title of Theotokos—an expression that Origen used in the 3rd century. The Council of Ephesus (431) raised that designation to a dogmatic standard. To the latter the second Council of Constantinople (553) added the title "eternal Virgin."

The doctrine of the heavenly Wisdom (Sophia) represents an Eastern Church particularity. In late Judaism, speculations about the heavenly Wisdom—a figure beside God that presents itself to humanity as mediator in the work of creation as well as mediator of the knowledge of God—abounded. In Roman Catholic doctrine, Mary, the mother of God, was identified with the figure of the divine Wisdom. That process of treating Mary and the heavenly Wisdom alike did not take place in the realm of Eastern Orthodoxy or of Oriental Orthodoxy. For all their veneration of the mother of God, those churches never forgot that the root of that veneration lay in the incarnation of the divine Logos that took place through her. Within Eastern Orthodox theology a specific doctrine of the heavenly Wisdom, Sophianism, may be found alongside the doctrine of the mother of God. The numerous great churches of Hagia Sophia, foremost among them the cathedral by that name in Constantinople (Istanbul), are consecrated to that figure of the heavenly Wisdom.

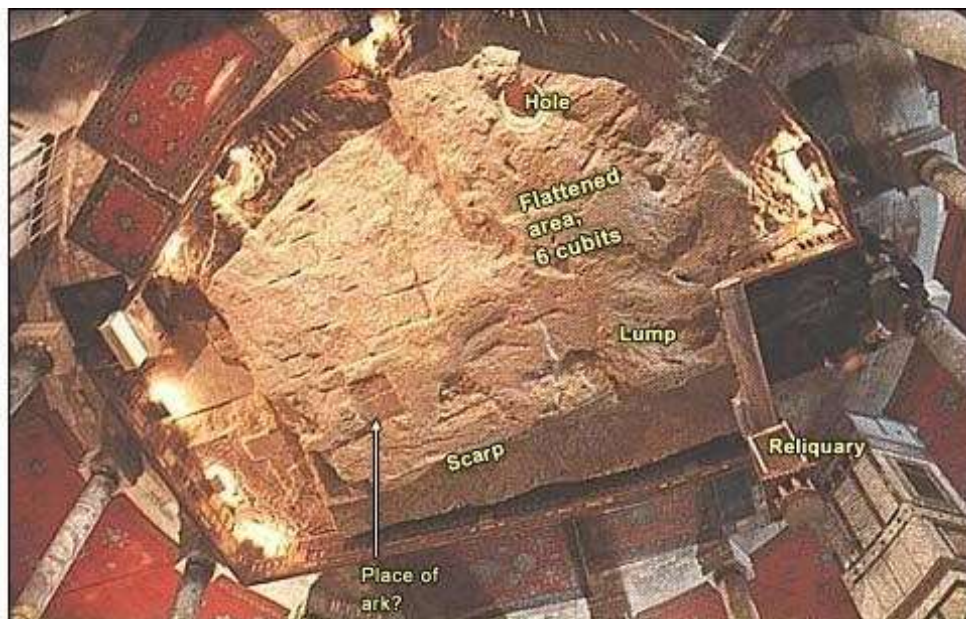
614 CE, between 304 and 614 CE the Church of St Cyrus and Saint John has its name changed to the Church of the Holy Wisdom. It is the same place, the same location each time. The building is renovated or torn down and rebuilt. But the Rock inside is the same rock each time.

692 CE Dome of the Rock built

Later when Omar the Second Caliph wanted to build a place to pray at the site where David prayed (over which the Temple of Solomon was built), Omar avoided showing any attention whatever to this “Rock” over which a later Caliph in 692 C.E. built the present Dome of the Rock.

And why was the “Oblong Rock” of the former Praetorium and the Church of the Holy Wisdom later honored by the Muslims? Because Jesus’ footprints were supposed to be on the “Rock.” This belief provided the prime religious significance for the later development of many Muslim folklore tales that began to be associated with the “Rock” and its holiness. It was the “footprints” of Jesus that started it all. In fact, by the time of Saladin the Kurdish commander of the Muslims who reconquered Jerusalem from the Christians in 1187 C.E., Saladin’s court recorder praised the Commander of the Faithful for rescuing the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock on which the outline of Jesus’ feet were supposed to have been indented. 35 But by this time, it was not only the “footprints” of Jesus that were indented in its surface. Many more “footprints” and “hands” had also appeared over the 400 years of Muslim power.





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The Sakhra (rock) in the Dome of the Rock

Photograph by Garo Nalbandian (info@garo-jerusalem.com)

Courtesy of the photographer





(Cave under the Rock of the Dome of the Rock. 1888. (See page 36.)

Cave under the Rock of the Dome of the Rock from a sketch made in 1888. There are many more sketches of Jerusalem at this time in [this book at this link](#).

1187 CE Saladin

Not only were Jesus' "footprints" thought to be indented on the "Rock." By the period of the Crusades, many other Muslim tales became attached to the "Rock." The Muslims by the time of Saladin thought that Muhammad's feet and hand were also indented in the "Rock." It did not stop there. The feet of Abraham, the hand of the Archangel Gabriel and even the "footprints" of God himself were also reckoned by later Muslims to be on the "Rock." The Muslims added these later beliefs to gain prestige for Muhammad to accompany the Christian legend that the "footprints" of Jesus were found on the "Rock" underneath the Dome of the Rock. Muslims invented these later stories to justify the existence of the shrine as then having some Muslim significance. Later Muslim scholars knew that these folktales were mere fables without any real historical foundation. 36

In spite of the folklore elements that later developed, this historical evidence shows that the "Rock" under the Dome of the Rock is a precise geographical indication that people (throughout the early Byzantine period and as late as the time of Saladin in 1187 C.E.) identified the Dome of the Rock with the site of the Praetorium [or, the central part of Fort Antonia]. It was the former site of the Church of the Holy Wisdom (which enshrined the revered "oblong rock") where Christians had long believed Pilate sentenced Jesus. The feet of Jesus were believed to have stood on that very rock that the New Testament identified as the lithostrothon (John 19:13). And let us recall, Josephus made a significant point out of the fact that such a notable "Rock" was also

located in the interior of Fort Antonia back in his day. These historical indications over the centuries show that the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock had been the main geographical feature of Fort Antonia in the time of Jesus. The historical documents are so clear on this matter that I am amazed this fact has not been recognized before the publishing of my recent book on the Temples. The Haram esh-Sharif is the site of Fort Antonia (the Praetorium of Pilate).

Dome of the Rock built in 692 CE

This means that the area of the Dome of the Rock is really an original Christian holy site (not a Jewish or Muslim one). Interestingly, when Omar made his covenant with Sophronius and the Christians at the time the Muslims conquered Jerusalem, Omar gave his solemn promise that he would not build any Muslim shrine or mosque over any former Christian holy place or any present one that then existed. ³⁷ This is one of the main points why Omar paid no religious attention to the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock. Omar kept his word and left that “Christian Rock/Shrine” alone. Only when later Muslim folklore stories began to develop in regard to its sanctification did the “Rock” start to become important to those in Islam. That is when Abd alMalik in 692 C.E. built the Dome of the Rock over that “Rock” which was the “oblong rock” of the Wisdom Church. It is ironic that Muslim authorities today often show the Dome of the Rock as the central symbol of Islam in many of their political displays. The shrine, however, was once a Christian Church that honored the kingship of Christ Jesus over the world (remember, Pilate acknowledged Jesus at his trial as the messianic King of the Jews).

The Scriptures Show that NO Stationary Rock Was Ever Associated with the Temples

There was a significant “Rock” around which Fort Antonia (the Praetorium) was built on which Jesus stood before Pilate. But note this! It is essential to realize that nowhere in the Holy Scriptures do we find the slightest hint that a “Rock” (such as that under the Dome of the Rock) was ever a part of the geographical features of any Temple from Solomon to Herod. No stationary “Rock” was ever associated with the Temple in Jerusalem. On the contrary, the most significant feature of the Temple in any biblical description was it being built over a “threshing floor” (II Samuel 24:16,18,24). All “threshing floors” (as even the English rendering states and the Hebrew demands) were “floors” (that is, they were leveled areas like normal floors made by man that were usually of dirt or smooth manufactured stone or timber). Threshing floors were not jagged and rugged natural outcroppings of rock). ³⁸ No one should think of the top part of a rugged outcropping of rock (like that under the Dome of the Rock) as a level floor.

There is another disqualification that the historical documents emphasize. It is clear that Solomon’s Holy of Holies and also the Altar of Burnt Offering that he built were not located over a permanent outcropping of rock. We are informed in the historical documents that the Temples and their courtyards were expanded and made progressively larger over the centuries by being located further north at each move. The fact is, the Holy of Holies was relocated further north each time the Temple platform was extended. ³⁹ While all ground features of the Temple courts remained static, yet buildings and Temple furniture on top of the expanded platform were moved progressively northward at each extension. Note that Solomon’s Temple was about 100 feet wide

from north to south with the Holy of Holies in the center of that width. But we are later informed that the Temple in Alexander the Great's day was 150 feet wide with the Holy of Holies evenly spaced between the north and south walls (Josephus, Contra Apion I.22). Even the Temple just before Herod's time was extended to be 300 feet wide with the Holy of Holies again evenly spaced between the north and south walls. We know this because Josephus, as an eyewitness, described Herod's Temple as a precise square of 600 feet on each side, and that Herod had doubled the size of the Temple by tearing down its north wall and extending the linear measurements a further 300 feet north (War V.5,1). This made the outer walls of Herod's Temple (in its final shape) to be a perfect square of 600 feet on each side. The Mishnah (a Jewish document of the start of the third century) gave a further square measurement of 500 cubits (750 feet) on each of the four sides. This measurement DOES NOT contradict the dimensions given in Josephus because the Mishnah is describing another feature of the Temple [the Levitical camp that surrounded the outer walls of the Temple and it was technically called "the Temple Mount"]. See my book for the interesting and informative details which show the consistency in the dimensions of Josephus and those of the Mishnah.

So, in the history of the Holy of Holies (including the Altar of Burnt Offering) this shows that they were at first located 50 feet north of the south wall in Solomon's time with the Holy of Holies in the center of that width. Later, in the time of Alexander the Great, the Sanctuary part of the Temple was then positioned 75 feet north from the south wall. Even later, the Sanctuary was again moved and was relocated 150 feet north of the south wall with the Holy of Holies evenly spaced between the north and south walls (Josephus, Contra Apion I.22). Finally, the Holy of Holies at Herod's time was moved even further north and spaced 300 feet north of the south wall and equidistant from the north and south walls of the Temple square. We know this because Josephus [and this matter deserves emphasis] described Herod's Temple as a precise square of 600 feet on each side with the Holy of Holies in its center (north to south). Herod doubled the size of the Temple platform by tearing down its north wall and repositioning it 300 feet further north (War V.5,1).

So, in the history of the Holy of Holies (and the Altar of Burnt Offering) this shows that they were positioned at different places within the platform of the Temple every time it was enlarged. Only the south wall from the time of Solomon to Herod remained static. This well-known fact precludes any stationary rock on a ridge as being the prime object for the placement of these holy parts of the Temple. This indicates that such a stationary "Rock" as that under the Dome of the Rock is disqualified as being any part of the Temples in Jerusalem. Besides, there is NOT A WORD in Scripture that any stationary "Rock" was an essential sanctified spot of the Temples in Jerusalem. See footnote 38.

Why Later People Selected the Haram esh-Sharif as the Place of Solomon's Temple

The reason why people in the period of the Crusades accepted the region of the Haram esh-Sharif as the Temple site was because Omar took a portable stone from the remains of two Jewish attempts to rebuild the Temples at the correct site over the Gihon Spring and brought that portable stone from those ruined Temples to his Al Aksa Mosque that he was beginning to construct. I

have already mentioned in brief these two attempts to rebuild the Temples by the Jews (the first attempt was from 312 C.E. to 325 C.E. in the time of Constantine and the second in the time of Julian the Apostate in 362 C.E.). Omar made that portable stone from this ruined Temple site into the qibla stone that pointed Muslim worshippers in his Al Aksa Mosque toward Mecca.

In the following century, by applying a Muslim belief called baraka, the later Muslims felt that a stone from one Temple (or holy site) could be dislodged and taken to another place and that the latter place would take on the same degree of holiness as the former spot. So, a portable stone was used by Omar that was found in the ruins of the former Jewish Temples built in the times of Constantine and Julian. That particular stone was consecrated as a stone to re-inaugurate “Solomon’s Temple.” When Omar placed that stone in the holiest place of the Al Aksa Mosque at the southern end of the Haram esh-Sharif, Muslims could then (and from their point of view, legitimately by applying the custom called baraka) identify the site as being “Solomon’s Temple.” Interestingly, when the Crusaders arrived in Jerusalem, Christians also began to call the Al Aksa Mosque by the name “Solomon’s Temple” (the Muslim designation) while they felt that Herod’s extension of the Temple was located at the Dome of the Rock (which they then called the Lord’s Temple). Yet the Christians knew of the tradition that Jesus’ footprints were indelibly on the Rock. How did they get in the Temple? They cleverly altered the actors of the tale and made it the Rock on which the priest placed Jesus at his infant dedication.

The Jewish Authorities Finally Accept the Haram esh-Sharif as the Temple Site

It was in this time of the Crusades (about 1165 C.E.), that a Jewish merchant by the name of Benjamin of Tudela made a visit to Jerusalem. He was not a historian or theologian. He simply reported in a chronicle of his journey what he saw and what he was told without criticism. He is noted for some absurd geographical identifications of former biblical spots. Be that as it may, when he heard the Christian and Muslim accounts that the Haram esh-Sharif was the location of the former Temples, the Jewish merchant accepted their explanation (for the first time by any Jewish person). Benjamin did so without expressing the slightest historical criticism to justify such identifications.

There was an overpowering reason for this. Benjamin of Tudela was enthralled over a supposed discovery of the tombs of the Kings of Judah (those of King David and Solomon and others). He was told that the tombs of the Judean kings were supposed to have been found on the southwest hill about 15 years before he arrived in Jerusalem. Benjamin did not see the “Tombs,” nor has anyone else since that time. But this hearsay “story” so impressed Benjamin (and later Jews after the time of the Crusades) that the Jewish authorities very quickly began to accept the southwest hill as being the original “Mount Zion” of the Holy Scriptures (and that Zion was not located on the southeast ridge). This false acceptance led them also to give credence that the Haram esh-Sharif area might possibly be the Temple Mount (after all, with this new “archaeological discovery” on the southwest hill — and they did not question its legitimacy — it meant to them that “Mount Zion” had now been found on the southwest hill and that it was no longer believed to be over the Gihon Spring in the Kidron Valley). This was counter to all Jewish belief before the Crusader period. Because of this, even the location of the Gihon Spring was changed to be in the

upper western extension of the Valley of Hinnom — at least 2000 feet west of where the spring actually was located.

This hearsay account recorded by Benjamin of Tudela concerning the so-called tombs of the Judean Kings (and that is all it was — pure hearsay without a tissue of provable evidence to back up the supposition) quickly spread far and wide. This hearsay tale of discovering David's Tomb finally won the day. Thankfully, not all Jews at first accepted the new site for their former "Mount Zion" on the southwest hill (or the Temple site at the Haram). Benjamin of Tudela was countered by the great Maimonides (though neither mentioned each other) who stated that the place of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem was still in complete ruins, 40 while the Haram eshSharif was then the most built-up region in Jerusalem and was nowhere in ruins. Indeed, the Haram was decorated and groomed as a prime holy site. Though Maimonides had no love for a physical Temple because it displayed an anthropomorphic belief in God (which he utterly repudiated), he knew that the Dome of the Rock and the lavishly built-up area around it was not the site of the Temple. This is because most of the Haram precincts were built up and paved over. They were not ruins.

This was also believed by the Jewish authority Rabbi David Kimchi who (just after the time of Maimonides) stated that the Jewish Temple was still in utter ruins and that no Christian or Muslim had ever built over the spot where the true Temples stood. This express dogmatism of Rabbi David Kimchi, one of the great biblical commentators of the Jews (otherwise known as the RADAQ) who lived from about 1160 to 1235 C.E., is of utmost value. Rabbi Kimchi said that as late as his time the region of the former Temples still remained in ruins and that NO GENTILES (whether Roman, Byzantine or Muslim) HAD YET BUILT ANY OF THEIR BUILDINGS OVER THE SITE OF THE TEMPLE (emphases mine). He said (and I quote him verbatim): "And [the Temple] is still in ruins, [in] that the Temple site WAS NEVER BUILT ON BY THE NATIONS." 41 These comments of Rabbi David Kimchi are first-class Jewish evidence in about 1235 C.E., and they show in no uncertain terms that the built-up area of the Haram esh-Sharif (long built over by the Christians and Muslims) WAS NOT the Temple site. The real Temple area was located over and around the Gihon Spring on the southeast ridge which was in Rabbi Kimchi's time outside the walls of Jerusalem and was a derelict area used for a dump.

So, Rabbi Kimchi around 1235 C.E. without doubt states that NO GENTILE BUILDINGS had ever been built on the site of the Temple — and this included the period of 600 years before him when the Muslims (and during the Crusader period, the Christians) had control over all areas of Jerusalem! In fact, Rabbi Kimchi said that the exclusive region for the Temple EVEN IN HIS DAY was "still in ruins." This historical observation by Kimchi is proof positive that many Jews were not being led over to Christian and Muslim beliefs about the Temple site in the Crusade period, because it is obvious that the Dome of the Rock had been built over the Church of the Holy Wisdom which only later (in 692 C.E.) became the Muslim Shrine of the Dome of the Rock. And, what the Muslims called Solomon's Temple (and so did the Christian Crusaders — that is, the Al Aksa Mosque) was also a Muslim building within the Haram esh-Sharif. David Kimchi, however, made the clear teaching that the original area of the Jewish Temples was in his time

(about 1235 C.E.) still unoccupied by any Christian or Muslim buildings from the past or at the present and that the site was in Kimchi's time in complete ruins.

This true observation of David Kimchi, however, did not prevail in Judaism. The Jewish authorities became so impressed by the so-called "discovery" of the Tombs of all the Judean Kings (especially that of King David) on the southwest hill (which was given to them from hearsay alone, and we know now to be in complete error), that they became convinced that the southwest hill was indeed the original "Zion." As a result, this made the Jewish people feel that the Haram esh-Sharif could probably be the site of their former Temples since the lower southeast ridge could no longer be reckoned as "Zion." This erroneous evaluation by the Jewish authorities of locating "Zion" on the southwest hill was a major geographical mistake. Indeed, archaeologists have proved that the so-called "Tomb of David" now located on the southwest hill is of Crusader origin and anyone should have known it was a fake.

This made little difference to those of that period. In the main, pure geographical nonsense then began to rule in Jerusalem. This was a period of religious "Dark Ages" that set in among all religious groups in Jerusalem and elsewhere. The Christians, Muslims and yes, even the Jewish authorities, lost all knowledge of where the former Temples were located when they erroneously accepted the "Upper City" as the site of Mount Zion. This profound error in locating "Mount Zion" on the southwest hill remained popular (and even sacrosanct and entrenched in the scholarly world) until 1875 to 1885 C.E. when the outstanding research of F.W. Birch in England demolished its credentials. Still, this false acceptance of the southwest hill as "Zion" by the Jewish authorities in Crusader times and their consequent recognition of the Haram as a contending site for the Temples were in stark contrast to what the earlier Jewish authorities believed before the Crusades.

The fact is, Jewish authorities up to the time of the Crusades knew that the Temples were built over the Gihon Spring on the southeast ridge and that the real "Tomb of David" was in that southeast area. Indeed, it was on the proper southeast ridge that the Jews started to rebuild the Temples in the time of Constantine and Julian. And later, when Omar finally let 70 families of Jews settle in Jerusalem in 638 C.E. (immediately after the conquest of Jerusalem by the Muslims), the Jews stated categorically that they wanted to live near the ruins of their Temple that they said were "in the south part of Jerusalem" (that is, further south from the Haram esh-Sharif where Omar prayed and wanted to build his Mosque).

The Geniza Records from Egypt Confirm the Temple Site on the Southeast Ridge

We have absolute evidence that the Jews in the seventh century knew the location of their former Temples (and their former "Western Wall" of the Holy of Holies from the Temples built in the time of Constantine and Julian). It was in the south from the Al Aksa Mosque and near the Siloam water system. The statement of fact is found in a fragment of a letter discovered in the Geniza library of Egypt now in Cambridge University in England. Notice what it states:

“Omar agreed that seventy households should come [to Jerusalem from Tiberias]. They agreed to



that. After that, he asked: ‘Where do you wish to live within the city?’ They replied: ‘In the southern section of the city, which is the market of the Jews.’ Their request was to enable them to be near the site of the Temple and its gates, as well as to the waters of Shiloah, which could be used for immersion. This was granted them [the 70 Jewish families] by the Emir of the Believers. So seventy households including women and children moved from Tiberias, and established settlements in buildings whose foundations had stood for many generations.” 42 (emphasis mine)

The Pool of Shiloah looking South East taken about 1900



The Pool of Shiloah looking South North Westt taken about 1901 The Pool of Shiloah looking South East taken about 1920

And this is what the same opening looks like today in 2018. Picture taken looking towards the north.



This southern area was very much south of the southern wall of the Haram (where Omar had his Al Aksa Mosque) because Professor Benjamin Mazar (when I was working with him at the archaeological excavations along the southern wall of the Haram) discovered two palatial Umayyad buildings close to the southern wall of the Haram that occupied a great deal of space south of that southern Haram wall. Those 70 families certainly had their settlement further south

than the ruins of these Muslim government buildings. Also, when the Karaite Jews a century later settled in Jerusalem, they also went to this same southern area as well as adjacently across the Kidron into the Silwan area.

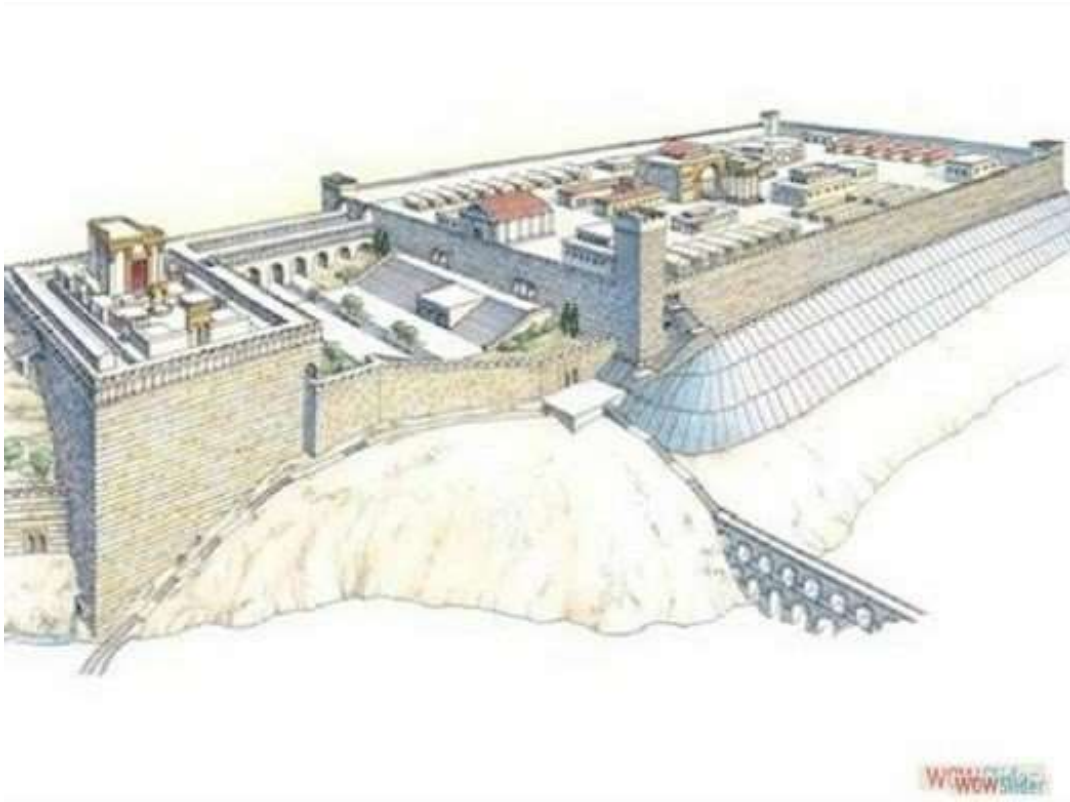
To these Jews in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, this is where the ruins of their Temples and the real “Tomb of David” were located — over and around the Gihon Spring. They even had a synagogue in a cave that led to underground passages in the area. And they were right. Indeed, the Jewish authorities did not abandon the area around the Gihon Spring and its tributary waters of the Shiloah channel until the major earthquake of 1033 C.E. that destroyed the early Eudocian Wall constructed in the Byzantine period. That destruction by the earthquake made the southeastern region around the Gihon Spring to be outside the walls of Jerusalem. The whole southeast quadrant became unprotected. This opened the region to attacks by the Seljuk Turks and other enemies.

And then something happened that was quite remarkable and ritualistically devastating. In that period, the waters of the Gihon Spring turned bitter and even septic (between 1033 C.E. and 1077 C.E.). The interpretation placed upon this event was as if God himself had turned the former “waters of salvation” into a corrupt liquid inside the precincts of God’s own House. The Jewish authorities were well aware of the account in Numbers 5:11-31 that showed bitter waters were associated with the adulterous woman in Temple symbolism. With this final ritualistic setback to their religious customs, the Jerusalem Academy abandoned Jerusalem and moved to Damascus. To the Jewish authorities by 1077 C.E., there was nothing of contemporary holiness left to the former Temple area over the Gihon Spring. Jerusalem was later taken over by the Christian Crusaders in 1099 C.E. and no Jew was able to step inside Jerusalem for the first 50 years of the Crusades.

How Josephus Described the Actual Temple that He Saw

There is another important observation that needs to be made. Josephus described the Temple as being a square (a precise square of one stadium length on each side — about 600 feet).⁴³ The Mishnah shows that there was another square measurement around the actual Temple square that measured 500 cubits or 750 feet (Middoth II.1). This was a different measurement. It gives the dimensions of an imaginary camp area around the Temple that was known in the first century as the “Camp of the Levites,” or in simple terms “the Temple Mount.” The actual square of the Temple had two colonnade roadways from the northwest corner of the Temple porticos to the southwestern corner of Fort Antonia.⁴⁴ These roadways were a stadium in length. Combining the square lengths of the Temple square with the two roadways that led to Fort Antonia, the length was six stades of 600 feet each.

The walls around the Temple were prodigious in height according to Josephus. The southeastern



corner of the outer Temple walls was located directly over the very bottom of the Kidron Valley (the bedrock center) and extended upwards 300 cubits or 450 feet where it reached the four-square platform on which the actual Temple stood and where its various courts were located. The northeastern corner was also located within the depths of the Kidron though not quite as high as the southeastern corner. This made the four Temple walls to be a 600 square feet TOWER (all sides were equidistant) like a 40 story skyscraper in Chicago that extended upward with its southeast section of the wall within the river bottom (its deepest part) of the Kidron. Barnabas described the Temple (15 years after its destruction) as a TOWER, 46 and the Book of Enoch and the Shepherd of Hermas give numerous references that the Temple was indeed shaped as a TOWER (see my Web Page references). The above description is that of Josephus, an eyewitness to the Temple and its actual dimensions.

Let us now take those four square walls of the Temple (each 600 feet in length) and transport them to center over the Dome of the Rock some 1000 feet north of the Gihon Spring. The TOWER would indeed fit well into the enclosure known as the Haram esh-Sharif. But its southeast corner would NOT be located in the bottom of the Kidron Valley as Josephus said it was (it would be up on the level area of the Haram), nor would its northeast corner be precipitous and over the Kidron Valley as Josephus also reiterated. Indeed, if the Temple stood over the Dome of the Rock, the Temple platform on top of a 40-story skyscraper would have been higher than the top summit of the Mount of Olives. In no way was this the proper scenario. If, however, one will return the Temple and its dimensions (as Josephus gave them) to the Gihon Spring site, everything fits perfectly. What this shows is the fact that the walls around the Haram esh-Sharif are NOT those of the former Temple. They are those of Fort Antonia (which are not a square of 600 feet, but of much larger — over double the size of the Temple). Even the walls of the Haram are not precisely rectangular. They are trapezium in shape. It also makes perfect sense that Titus would have wanted the Tenth Legion to be housed in this remaining fortress that survived the war that formerly overshadowed the Temple on its north side.

What happened to the stones of the Temple? All of the Temple and its walls were torn down to their foundations just as Jesus prophesied they would be. As a result of this fact, let us not get the two different buildings (Fort Antonia and the Temple) mixed up as all scholars and religious leaders have done since the time of the Crusades. It is time to get back to this truth of the Bible. The Haram esh-Sharif is NOT the site of the Temples. People in Jerusalem are now fighting over the wrong areas. All should read my book “[The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot](#)” where the historical evidence shows (without doubt) that the real place of the former Temples was over the Gihon Spring on the southeast ridge.

The Western (Wailing) Wall of the Jews

This abridgment of my book on the Temples needs a concluding comment regarding the Western (or Wailing) Wall where the Jewish people now congregate as their holiest of places in Judaism. On my Web Page <http://www.askelm.com> on the Internet (where I have an abundance of historical information from early and even modern Jewish scholars), I show that the Jewish people paid no attention whatever to the present Western (Wailing) Wall until they finally took over the site from the Muslims (about 1570 C.E.) who in turn had renovated it from being a Christian holy

place where Christian women would discard soiled undergarments. The Wailing Wall as a Jewish holy place is a modern invention that was selected for Jewish worship (without the slightest historical precedent) by one of the greatest mystics of the Kabbalistic age. His name was Isaac Luria (called “the Lion”) who in his many geographical mistakes (as I show in my research writings) selected the Western Wall as a holy place for the Jews to assemble. Rabbi Luria only sanctified and initiated this Western Wall in the last part of the sixteenth century – only 430 years ago.

In actual fact, the Jewish people today at their Wailing Wall are NOT praying at a wall of their former Temples. They are sanctifying the western wall of Fort Antonia that was built by King Herod but taken over by the Romans as their prime fortress in Jerusalem in 6 C.E. at the end of the earlier Herodian dynasty. The shrine on the other side of the Wailing Wall in the time of Jesus was NOT the Temple built by Herod. As a part of the Roman Praetorium, it necessarily possessed a Temple dedicated to the Roman Emperor and the Gods of Rome (or similar accepted divinities of the Roman pantheon) that all encampments of the Romans had near their center section. It is sad to see but the symbolic “heart and soul” of modern Judaism (as Jews are persistently calling it today) is the site of a former Roman Temple dedicated to Jupiter. The place was once holy to the very people who destroyed the real Temple in 70 C.E. This is occurring while the true site of their Temples lies forlorn and languishing in utter ruin and degradation in the Ophel part of the southeastern ridge. How ironic!



The Wall Nehemia restored for the Temple after being excavated in 1978-1982 before it was turned into the Tourist center today and before the more recent excavations.

Ernest L. Martin Ph. D, December 2000

1 The original Mount Zion was cut down. The southeast ridge was once much higher in elevation than it is today (or even in the time of Josephus). Josephus said the high area was chiseled down to bedrock in the period of Simon the Hasmonian about 140 years before the birth of Jesus (Antiquities XIII 6,7). It took the Jews three years working day and night to demolish the original Mount Zion (the City of David). What was once an elevated citadel and city then became known, ironically, as “the Lower City.” Because the Jewish people lowered the original Mount Zion on the southeast ridge, it became common after the time of Simon the Hasmonean to call the higher southwestern hill the new “Mount Zion.” This was a mistake that was not rectified until the decade of 1875 to 1885 C.E. mainly by the research of F.W. Birch.

Use the browser BACK button to return to the place in the article where you were reading after viewing an endnote.

2 In this article I use the scholarly C.E. (which means “Common Era”) and B.C.E. (“Before Common Era”) in order not to perpetuate the erroneous “A.D. and B.C. system” devised by Dionysius Exiguus which the world is accustomed to using. The latter does not accurately provide the proper year in which Jesus was born.

3 Early Jewish authorities never accepted the Haram esh-Sharif as the site of the Temples until Benjamin of Tudela (a Jewish merchant of the twelfth century who was not a trained historian or theologian). Other Jewish notables in this period disputed this Christian/Muslim identification.

Benjamin did not argue the point, but accepted it wholesale. This was a major mistake. It took scholars 800 years to rectify the error that prevailed as certain in all academic and theological circles of the three Abrahamic faiths.

4 Aristeas, translation by Eusebius, chapter 38.

5 Tacitus, History, Bk.5, para.12.

6 II Samuel 5:9.

7 I Kings 11:27.

8 Aristeas lines 100 to 104 as translated by Eusebius, Proof of the Gospel, chapter 38 (GrandRapids:Baker, 1982).

9 In II Samuel 6:17 it states that David pitched a “tabernacle” (tent) for the Ark. Solomon wastaken to this same “tabernacle” (tent) to be crowned (I Kings 1:38,39) which the account shows was at the Gihon Spring. Both I Chronicles 15:1 and I Chronicles 16:1 mention this special “tent” for the Ark. This particular “tent” at the Gihon Spring (where David and Israel offered sacrifices and other Temple duties — I Kings 3:15) must not be confused with the “Tabernacle” constructed in the days of Moses which was then located at Gibeon (I Chronicles 16:39; I Kings

3:4). In a certain sense, the “Temple” for Israel for the last 27 years of David’s rule, and the first 11 years of Solomon’s rule was where the Ark of the Covenant was located at the Gihon Spring. All the references in the Psalms to waters coming forth from the throne of God refer in type to those exclusively from the Gihon Spring. This shows how significant it was to David and Solomon to have “spring waters” at the site of the Temple in Jerusalem. So, Solomon built his Temple on the Ophel mound situated just above the Gihon Spring. There is no doubt of this fact!

10 I Kings 1:38,39.

11 Kerithoth 5b.

12 II Chronicles 23:10,11 shows Joash was crowned in the Temple.

13 II Chronicles 32:3,4.

14 Psalm 36:7-9; 46:3,5; 65:4,9; 93:1-5. It should be noted that all of these Psalms by David or his associates were penned by the King before the Temple was built by Solomon. They all referred to the temporary Temple (called a “tent” or “tabernacle”) located at the Gihon Spring in which David placed the Ark of the Covenant. Solomon simply built his Temple on top of the Ophel mound above the Gihon Spring.

15 See the following references to “spring waters” issuing forth from future Temples that are yetto be built: Ezekiel 47:1ff; Zechariah 14:8; Joel 3:16-18; Isaiah 30:19-26 and especially verses 19 and 25. The apostle John also spoke in the Book of Revelation about those who were thirsty that they could drink from the fountain (spring) of water that issued from the New Jerusalem that would come down from heaven to earth (Revelation 21:2-6; 22:1,17). It is a consistent

theme that spring waters were always associated with the Temples on earth as well as those abodes of God that originate in heaven. On the other hand, waters from cisterns were reckoned symbolically to be far inferior to natural spring waters, simply because cistern waters could be contaminated by vermin and other unclean things falling into the cisterns and rotting in the waters. Cistern waters also were stagnant and this fact alone rendered them far less holy. See Jeremiah 2:13 where cistern water is contrasted in disfavor with the pure “fountain of living waters” (spring water).

16 The EnRogel water source about half a mile south of the Gihon Spring is a well, not a spring.

17 War V.4,1. The “crescent shape” can easily be seen on a map. It looked like a theatre style configuration and the horns of the crescent were directed toward the spur ridge that was a part of the southern Mount of Olives.

18 Hecateus of Abdera, see Josephus Contra Apion I.22.

19 Ezekiel 37:26 & 28; also Ezekiel 48:10,15,21 (the Catholic New American Version correctly translates the Hebrew word as “center”); also see Zechariah 2:4,5; 8:3,8. These verses in context show that the biblical peoples knew that the Temple itself was positioned in the center of Jerusalem (in the center of “the crescent-shaped” City of Jerusalem) that was confined at that period solely in the southeast ridge.

20 Matthew 24:1,2; Mark 13:1,2; Luke 21:5,6.

21 War VI.1,1; VII.1,1.

22 War VII.1,1.

23 War VI.5,2.

24 War VI.6,1.

25 Eusebius, Proof of the Gospel, Book VIII, chapter 3 (sect.405).

26 War Introduction I.11 ¶29, Loeb edition.

27 See the reports of the archaeologists Hillel Geva and Hanan Eschel in an extensive article in the

November/December, 1997 issue of Biblical Archaeology Review which shows NO ROMAN ARMY resided in any part of the “Upper City” where most scholars have thought the Tenth Legion was housed. Also see the excellent research by the archaeologist Doron Bar in the Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly for January/June, 1998 where the same position is taken. There is simply no evidence that the Tenth Legion was housed in the Jerusalem area in any part of the “Upper City.” 28 War VII.8,7.

29 Compare the main description of the largeness of Fort Antonia (it was a vast area) given by Josephus in War V.5,8 with his illustration of all normal Roman military camps being like a city in War III.5,2.

30 War V.5,8.

31 The Gospel of John 19:13, translated “pavement” in most translations.

32 It meant an important “high place.”

33 See the “Life of Constantine,” recorded in Wilkinson’s *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*, p.204.

34 See Sophronius, *Antacroeontica* by Wilkinson in *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*, p.91.

35 See Brill’s *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (first five volume edition) in the article “Saladin.”

36 See the critique by the Muslim scholar Ibn Taymiyya who wrote in 1328 C.E. (his English translation can be found in Peters’ *Jerusalem*, Princeton. NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995, p.377).

37 See the account by the first Christian Arab historian by the name of Said b. al-Bitrik (whose Greek name was Eutychius) cited by D.Baldi, *Enchiridion Locorum Sanctorum*, pp.447,448 and further cited in the excellent book by Prof. F.E.Peters, *Jerusalem*, Princeton. NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995, pp.189,190.

38 True, the later Jews tell us that Solomon made a “foundation stone” that a few modern scholars have guessed may be the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock. It is called the Even Shetiyyah. But Jewish sources tell us this was a manufactured slab of stone (like a pavement stone) made in the days of Samuel and David that could fit snugly into the twenty cubit’s square floor of the Holy of Holies. Its smooth top was elevated three fingers above the level floor

(See *Sanhedrin* 26b; *Yoma* 53b). In no way could that Even Shetiyyah be considered a natural outcropping of rock that was almost twice as large as the Holy of Holies of Solomon (as is the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock). Neither could it be the “pierced stone” of the Bordeaux Pilgrim.

39 The largest size of the Temple was that Sanctuary in the time of Herod. Josephus said Herod doubled the size of the previous Temple and that its outer walls were a perfect square of 600 feet on each side (*War* V.5,2; VI.2,9 with VI.5,4 and *Antiquities* XV.9,3). Josephus said that the Temple was a square tower that had its southeastern corner in the depths of the Kidron Valley and from the valley floor to the top of the tower (on which was a platform on which the Temple itself was built) was 450 feet in elevation – or as high as a 40 to 45 story building in Chicago. The Mishnah, however, shows another measurement of a perfect square also around the Temple of 750 feet on each side (*Middoth* 2:1 Danby translation). This is not a contradiction of Josephus. The Mishnah is simply recording another squared area called “the Temple Mount” or “the Camp of the Levites” which was an unwalled imaginary limit around the actual physical walls of the Temple in which Levitical duties could be officially performed. This Camp of the Levites had

“gates” into it like the Camp of the Levites did in the time of Moses while Israel was in the Wilderness, but these “gates” were mere designated entrances (not physical gates like those in the walls of cities). So, this 40 to 45 story high tower was the Temple of Herod and it is precisely described by Josephus. The Haram esh-Sharif (Fort Antonia), however, is a trapezium with its corners not at the same angles of measurement. The Haram is measured: East wall at 1556 feet; North wall at 1041 feet; West wall at 1596 feet and the South wall at 929 feet in length. In no way can the two structures be compared as being identical because the Haram is vastly larger than was the Temple just as Josephus stated. In reality, the Temple and the Haram are two different buildings.

40 See Mishneh Torah, sect.8, “Temple Service.”

41 Commentary on Isaiah 64:10 and quoted by Prof. Kaufman in Biblical Archaeology Review, March/April, 2000, p.61 – the letters in capitals are my emphasis.

42 Reuven Hammer, The Jerusalem Anthology, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1995, p.148.

43 See War V.5,2 with War VI,5,4 and Antiquities XV.9,3.

44 War II.15,6.

45 Antiquities VIII.3,9.

46 Barnabas 16:4-8.

The Message from the Dome of the Rock

There is a key message found within two inscriptions in Arabic inscribed on the first cornice supported by large columns that encircle the interior region of the Dome of the Rock. One inscription is found on the outside area of the cornice and the other on the inside area. Both writings provide the real secret to the meaning of the significance behind the Dome of the Rock. Once that secret is known, a whole new understanding of early Islam in its relation to Christianity comes on the scene that greatly enhances our comprehension of the theological history of the period. It reveals religious attitudes that existed between early Muslims, Jews and Christians.

There is a linguistic key that has great relevance in knowing why the Dome of the Rock was constructed and it provides the true meaning for its existence. Once this is realized, it will help divert Muslim attention away from their present attitude of reverent holiness toward the Dome and it will redirect their attention to the Al Aqsa Mosque located to the south, and it will further emphasize the importance of Mecca in the eyes of all Muslims. This new information will also aid Christians to know that the Dome of the Rock was actually built by Abd al-Malik in 692 A.D. as a rebuilt Christian Church that once stood in its place. The Rock that sanctified the shrine was first an important Christian holy place and NOT an early Jewish sacred spot (nor was it the site of the former Temples).

The first inscription on the outside is meant for all Muslims and the inner inscription is written for Christians ALONE. Jews are not even considered in the context of the inner (or even the outer) inscription. The analysis of these two inscriptions shows that Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock to satisfy Christian religious matters and it shows that the Dome of the Rock HAD

NOTHING TO DO WITH JEWISH MATTERS WHATEVER! The historical evidence shows conclusively that no Jewish person was ever interested in any religious or national manner to the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock until the time of the First Crusade. The area was NEVER considered a sacred spot of Jews until the time of Benjamin of Tudela in the twelfth century (check other articles on the ASK Web Page on the Internet for proof of this). The site of the Dome of the Rock was ONLY of Christian significance BEFORE the time of Omar and Abd al-Malik. It only became important to Muslims in the eighth century to the eleventh, and only important to Jews in the twelfth century.

In actual fact, Omar (the Second Caliph and the first Muslim leader to enter Jerusalem) and Abd al-Malik about 50 years later actually honored the real site of the Jewish Temple that were shown to them on the southeast ridge and over the Gihon Spring (that is the very thing that Omar came to Jerusalem to accomplish) but these early Muslim leaders did NOT show the same type of reverence to the Rock now under the Dome of the Rock. The Dome was built by Muslims to wean Christians from the site, NOT to make it a more sanctified spot in Islam nor did the building of the Dome of the Rock have anything to do with Jewish religious matters or aspirations. Indeed, the “rock” underneath the Dome of the Rock was specifically and significantly of Christian importance and that the Jews up to the time of the Crusades showed no interest whatever in this former Christian spot that Abd al-Malik rebuilt as a Christian type of building (with its characteristic Byzantine dome) in order to wean Christians (who comprised at least 90% of the population of Jerusalem in the seventh century) from New Testament teachings and to win them over to the doctrines then being taught by Islam in and through the Koran.

Now for a question: What was happening at the time the Dome was built that inspired this display of theological symbolism in the erection of certain buildings in Jerusalem and also in Mecca? The answer has relevance in knowing prophecy for us today.

One of the most volatile geopolitical hot spots on earth today revolves around the national or religious possession of this natural outcropping of an oblong rock located in the City of Jerusalem. That spot is the Rock that is presently situated under the building now known as the Dome of the Rock. The building itself is without doubt the most beautiful piece of architecture in the City of Jerusalem and it represents the centerpiece of religious importance in the Holy City for both Muslims and Jews. But strange as it may seem, history shows that Christians also have a stake in its symbolic relevance. Little do Christians know, but that “Rock” was at first considered by both Muslims and Jews (in the early days of Islam) as being a Christian holy place and NOT one that Muslims or Jews thought as having high religious value. That’s right! The spot is actually of Christian importance. The real story behind the significance of the site of the Dome of the Rock will cause Muslims and Jews to reevaluate its meaning in relation to their own belief systems that they have erroneously accepted over the centuries since the beginning of Islam.

The proper identity of the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock will truly be a revelation to all modern religious groups when they discover the truth of its biblical relevance. They will be amazed when they realize that the area was NOT the site of the former Temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel and Herod. It was a “Rock” purely of Christian importance and it was formerly recognized by Christians until the seventh century (and even historically until the time of the Crusades) as a most prominent Christian site that was singled out in the Gospel of John as a “Rock” that dealt directly with the mission of Christ Jesus to this earth. The early Christians, Jews and Muslims knew this. The reason the Dome was built by Abd al-Malik in 692 A.D. was to direct Christians away from that “Rock” and to orient them toward the newly constructed Al Aqsa Mosque (which they reckoned to be the re-christened Muslim Temple of Solomon) that was located near the south wall of the Haram esh-Sharif. This in turn was intended to further lead Christians directly toward the City of Mecca where Allah (the Arabic for “God”) now had symbolic residence.

To understand why the Dome of the Rock was built by Abd al-Malik, we first have to understand how Muslims looked (and still look) upon the significance of their central shrine in Mecca that is shaped as a cube (as was the Holy of Holies in Solomon’s Temple). That holy building of the Muslims contains the black meteorite stone that the ancient Arabs used to worship in their pagan days but which Muhammad placed in the southeast corner of his building called the Ka’aba toward which all Muslims must pray five times a day (and, if possible, visit on pilgrimage at least once). Wherever Muslims find themselves in the world, they must direct their prayers toward the Ka’aba in Mecca. When they go on their pilgrimage, they gather at the southeast angle of the cube-style sanctuary. Though the ground level design is a perfect square, the building is angled so that the corner where the meteorite stone is located is just south of east (at about 100 degrees in direction). The required circumambulation (walking or trotting around) the building begins opposite this stone with the people at first facing north toward the region of the heavens to which all biblical peoples believed God dwelt in His heavenly abode (Psalm 75:6). The Muslim ritual at the Ka’aba has profound astronomical (that is, astrological) significance and it is designed to mimic the motions of the inner and outer planets within our solar system. The Temple at Jerusalem had a similar astronomical basis but with an entirely different liturgical motif. There was in both sanctuaries deep symbolism involved and what was ritualistically accomplished was of religious value.

What did Muslim pilgrims perform at the Ka’aba in Mecca? In the monumental work by Sir Richard Francis Burton in the last century (who was the first Christian or European to clandestinely enter the sacred area of Mecca and describe it in detail), we are informed of the liturgical factors that Muslims were expected to perform when they made their pilgrimage to Mecca. They were to assemble at the southeast corner of the Ka’aba and face northward. Each person’s left shoulder was always to be toward the building housing the meteorite stone (idol) as they circle the structure in a counterclockwise fashion (this is the same manner the Jews entered the Temple and exited it). They are required to circle the building seven times (the first three with a slow pace “like walking in sand” and the last four with a faster pace). This represents the movements of the heavenly bodies. The three outer planets as viewed from the earth (Saturn, Jupiter and Mars) move slowly in the heavens relative to the fixed stars, while the inner celestial

bodies (Sun, Mercury, Venus and Moon) appear to move faster. In early astrological view, the earth was believed to be the center of the universe with Saturn being the furthest planet away from earth, with Jupiter nearer and Mars nearer still. Then came the Sun, Mercury, Venus and the nearest of all was the Moon. Thus, the first circuit of the Ka'aba was in honor of Saturn, the second Jupiter and on through to the seventh, the Moon. The last circuit symbolically confirmed the pilgrims as being true Muslims and their astronomical symbol became the Moon (the Moon was singled out in the seventh circuit of the Ka'aba). At the end of the seventh circling (and after having recited certain prescribed prayers at various points in their seven circlings), the Muslim pilgrims found themselves back at the place they started opposite the black stone and again facing north to where God was actually thought to have His residence in heaven. There was much mimicking by early Muslims of the Temple rituals performed in Jerusalem by the Jews as demanded in the Scriptures and in Jewish tradition. Muhammad kept the same themes in his ritualistic interpretations. This is important to know in viewing the architectural design of the Dome of the Rock and the ritual focus intended by Abd al-Malik.

The “Rock” at the Dome of the Rock Was of Christian Value, NOT Jewish or Muslim

The “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock is the most conspicuous natural feature within the whole of the Haram esh-Sharif. For anyone to build a magnificent shrine over it shows that the “Rock” must have had great significance. And it did. The first Christian pilgrim that has left us a record of his journey to Jerusalem was the Bordeaux Pilgrim who in 333 A.D. mentioned that the most significant building east of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (then being built) was the Roman Praetorium where Pilate sentenced Jesus. This structure had its walls centered directly within the Tyropoeon Valley. This was NOT the site of the Temple in the eyes of the Bordeaux Pilgrim. He had already described the Temple site (and several other buildings around it) a few paragraphs before. But only later (after concluding his account of the Temple and its associated buildings) did the Bordeaux Pilgrim mention the imposing structure to the east of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with its walls within the valley which he called the Praetorium where Pilate judged Jesus (see John Wilkinson’s excellent translation of the Bordeaux Pilgrim in his book *Egeria’s Travels*, p.158). Clearly, the Pilgrim was describing the Haram esh-Sharif as being the Praetorium. He was looking mainly toward the southwest angle of the Haram and northward toward the spot where the “Wailing Wall” of the Jews is presently located. The Pilgrim said this “walled area” contained the residence of Pilate. It was the Roman Praetorium that also went by the name of “Fort Antonia.” In Roman usage, the Praetorium was the headquarters of a military unit and could refer to the whole camp or to the commander’s tent. There was associated with the military fort a prominent “Rock” The apostle John was well aware of its significance in Christian history. Within this walled enclosure of the Praetorium was the “Rock” called in John’s Gospel (John 19:13) “the Pavement-Stone” (in Greek, lithostrotos and in Hebrew Gabbatha).

This particular “Rock” within the Praetorium area had a “Pavement” or flagstones around it. The “Rock” was associated with the Praetorium and was part of Fort Antonia, the permanent Roman Camp that was located in Jerusalem in the time of Pilate and Jesus. And what did Josephus say (he was the Jewish historian of the first century and an eyewitness to the early Praetorium of the Romans called Fort Antonia)? He stated that the central feature of Fort Antonia was a major rock. He said: “The tower of Antonia...was built upon [around] a rock fifty cubits high and on all sides

precipitous...the rock was covered from its base upwards with smooth flagstones” (Jewish War, V.v,8 para.238). Before construction of the fortress, the “Rock” was 50 cubits high (75 feet), but Herod later built a platform around it (when it became the north/south center of the walled fortress) and this made it not as high and it became accessible for judicial purposes. That “Rock” around which Fort Antonia was built (and mentioned by Josephus) was the chief geographical feature of the site. It was near this “Rock” that Pilate had his residence at the time of Jesus’ trial. Later Christians believed that some indentions in that “Rock” must have come from the footprints of Jesus as he stood before Pilate and God supposedly allowed his feet to sink into the “Rock.” Though these indentions were not the actual footprints of Jesus (a great deal of Christian folklore became associated with the “Rock”), early Christians came to believe they were the literal outlines of Jesus’ feet. It is easy to explain how this conclusion came to be associated with the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock.

The so-called footprints came into vogue when later Christians noticed in the New Testament that a “Judgment Seat” was placed by Pilate on the “Rock” (called in Greek a bematos). That word comes from the root word bema that literally means footprint, or by common usage a footstool where a king or a ruler in judgment would place his feet when he sat on a throne in order to sentence people in any official judicial event. Indeed, even the throne of God was reckoned in the Bible as a spot where God placed His feet below the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple when He sat or stood to make His divine judgments (Psalms 99:5; 132:7; Lamentations 2:1). Each military governor of the Romans carried his official bema or bematos with him in order to make his judgments on behalf of the emperor, and Julius Caesar carried one with him everywhere he went in order to render official judgments (see “Praetorium,” Hasting’s Bible Dictionary). Later Christians simply confused the literal meaning of bema [footprint] and the indentions they saw in the natural outcropping of rock became “Jesus’ footprints.” Though this was error, the reckoning became an indelible identifying mark associated with the “Rock” where Pilate made his judgment against Jesus. This “Rock” (called “the Pavement” by the apostle John) was well known in the time of Constantine. The records show that Helena, the mother of Constantine, ordered that a small Christian Church with the name “St.Cyrus and St.John” be built over that “Rock” (see Life of Constantine in Wilkinson’s Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades, p. 204). This small church was later enlarged probably in the fifth century to become a major church in Jerusalem called “The Church of the Holy Wisdom.” This church is described very well (and accurately) in a sixth century work written by the Piacenza Pilgrim. He said (with words in brackets mine):

“We also prayed at the Praetorium, where the Lord’s case was heard: what is there now is the basilica of Saint Sophia [the Holy Wisdom Church], which is in front [north] of the Temple of Solomon [located] below the street [east and downslope] which runs down to the spring of Siloam outside of Solomon’s porch [the eastern wall of Solomon’s Temple]. In this basilica is the seat where Pilate sat to hear the Lord’s case, and there is also the oblong stone [I emphasize this point about the “oblong stone” to help identify the spot] which used to be in the center of the Praetorium [the Praetorium tent was moveable]. The accused person whose case was being heard was made to mount this stone so that everyone could hear and see him. The Lord mounted it when he was heard by Pilate, and his footprints [*italicized for emphasis*] are still on it. He had a well-shaped foot, small and delicate.”

This Church of the Holy Wisdom (which the Pilgrim had just described) was built over “the oblong stone” which the people thought had the footprints of Jesus embedded in it. Just as Josephus stated that the “Rock” was the most prominent part of Fort Antonia

[the Praetorium area], so this “oblong stone” was the central feature of the Church of the Holy Wisdom (that was destroyed by the Persians and Jewish soldiers in 614 A.D.). This is the same “Rock” that is now under the Dome of the Rock in the Haram esh-Sharif. The fact that later Christians thought the footprints of Jesus were embedded in this “Rock,” is a key for identification. There are historical references both Christian and Muslim that attest that the “Rock” over which the Dome of the Rock now stands was the same “Rock or Stone” that had the footprints of Jesus inlaid as foot-like depressions sunk into the “Rock.” Indeed, even as late as the period of the Crusades we read that the court recorder of Saladin (the Muslim who reconquered Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187 A.D.) made mention that Jesus’ footprints had been embedded in the “Rock” underneath the Dome of the Rock (see article “Saladin” in Brill’s First Encyclopaedia of Islam). There are several other Muslim references to these footprints of Jesus in the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock that I have present in a more extended context in my new book “The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot.” In fact, in the book I will show in a future article that those footprints of Jesus were sawed away from the “Rock” and placed in a location within the Haram esh-Sharif about 200 yards north of the Dome of the Rock. This later fact is a most interesting and important aspect of the story.

In short, there can be no doubt of the identification. The “Rock” of the Dome of the Rock (which is clearly oblong in shape) and the “oblong stone” within the Church of the Holy Wisdom were one and the same “Rock/Stone.” Sophronius, the Archbishop of Jerusalem in the time of Omar when the Muslims first conquered Jerusalem, called the Church of the Holy Wisdom (when it was yet standing before its destruction in 614 A.D.) as “the House and the Stone” (Sophronius, *Antacroeontica* as translated by John Wilkinson in *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*, p.91). This fact shows that Sophronius saw great significance in the “Rock/ Stone.” That “Rock” that later became the spot for the Dome of the Rock to Sophronius was the very stone called “the Pavement” mentioned in John 19:13 (rendered in Greek as the *Lithostrotos*, and in Hebrew *Gabbatha*).

Why the Dome of the Rock Was Built by Abd al-Malik in 692 A.D.

During the first hundred years of Muslim rule in Jerusalem (since more than 90% of the population was Christian) was one of conciliation and ecumenism between Muslims and Christians and between Muslims and Jews. This does not mean that the Muslims wanted to embrace some of the teachings of Christianity. The Muslims abhorred what they believed to be outright idolatry among Christians with their statues, pictures and pagan practices within the Christian community, but they still thought in this early period that they could wean Christians away from their religious beliefs unto the new Islam that God had now revealed to the world by Muhammad. This was the central reason why Abd al-Malik first devised and designed the building called the Dome of the Rock to be built over the Christian spot where once the Church of the Holy Wisdom had stood. His attempt was ecumenical in its spiritual intent, but still to show the superiority of Islam over what Abd al-Malik believed to be a decadent type of Christianity.

The fact is, the Dome of the Rock was built exclusively to vie with (and to appeal to) Christians in Jerusalem to accept the new truth of Islam which was (in the Muslim view) a major advance in proper religious interpretation that the “Peoples of the Book” (the Christians and Jews) ought to have enough sense to accept. And though Jews were also accounted as being “People of the Book,” the construction of the Dome of the Rock was NOT intended in any manner to influence Jews. After all, Jews would NOT have reckoned as important a “Rock” that was exclusively a Christian religious site because it was identified with “the Pavement” recorded in the Gospel of John (John 19:13). In a word, Abd al-Malik and the early Muslims felt they could effectively (in an intellectual and philosophical way) convince Christians that Islam was correct by constructing the Dome of the Rock and to include within it a message from Islam that would glorify Muslim theology.

So, Abd al-Malik set out in 692 A.D. to woo the Christians to Islam. What he did was to rebuild in the exact spot and in the precise form “The Church of the Holy Wisdom” that had been destroyed by the Persians and Jews in 614 A.D. (and he desired it to have as much architectural grandeur as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre). He then built what looked like a grand Byzantine “Church” directly over the very “Rock” that Christians believed contained the footprints of Jesus. Abd al-Malik did not design the Dome of the Rock as a Muslim type of building. He wanted it to appear as a rebuilt Church of the Holy Wisdom (the reason for this I will explain in my new book on the Temples). The Muslim Caliph designed the building to be like a “Church,” but one that contained the new and advanced teaching of Islam. Within this new (or renewed) “Church,” Abd al-Malik placed two inscriptions in Arabic. One was to Muslims in general (the outer inscription), and the other was exclusively for Christians (the inner inscription next to the “Rock” itself). That inner inscription specifically mentions Jesus and the supposed errors of some Christian doctrines. Abd al-Malik was appealing exclusively to Christians by emphasizing this Christian holy spot through Muslim eyes, NOT to Jews who did not yet accept Jesus as the Messiah as did Muslims and Christians. And in attempting to wean the Christians from their former beliefs unto the new Islam, Abd al-Malik used every architectural artifice and symbolic nuance he knew in a brilliant maneuver to woo the Christians of Jerusalem to accept Islam in a non-offensive way. He did so with a deliberate and steadfast allegiance to Muhammad that made Islam the dominant religion for all mankind, including those who then accepted Christianity.

One must carefully notice every architectural device used by Abd al-Malik to see what his intentions were and they must be minutely observed with utmost precision to the dotting of an “I” to the crossing of a “T.” Every detail of the architecture that the Caliph designed was meant to systematically lead Christians (NOT Jews, in this case) to the advanced teachings of Islam as he believed them to be. And what a master he was in his endeavor! Though he built the Dome of the Rock as a facsimile of the Church of the Holy Wisdom (there was NOT the slightest intention on the part of Abd al-Malik to give heed to ANY JEWISH PERSON OR EDIFICE WHATEVER in the architectural design of the Dome of the Rock), he changed the entrance to the octagonal building from its original design with its entrance on the west. Abd al-Malik deliberately altered the entrance to Dome of the Rock to be from the south. This is most UN-Muslim! The ideal for those north of Mecca is (like the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem) to enter from the north and pray toward the qibla (the direction to Mecca) in the south. Not so the Dome of the Rock! Abd alMalik

designed it to be entered from the south with one's back to Mecca (at the start of the liturgical theme)! Why do we know this? Because the two inscriptions in Arabic (containing vital information from cardinal verses in the Koran and also a religious commentary by Abd al-Malik himself as the successor of Muhammad) are a direct appeal to Muslims in general (the outer inscription) and then to Christians exclusively (the inner inscription that is written closer to the "Rock"). A significant feature of the inner inscription is the fact that it can only be read with one's back to the "Rock." This was intended to give a negative emotional reaction to the reader of the inscription that the architecture was designed to evoke. The inner inscription was not designed to be read by Jews who did not believe in Jesus in the first place (like the Muslims and Christians). The writings on the cornice were to give definite and decisive positive and negative psychological impressions through liturgical and ritualistic themes that Abd al-Malik designed into the architecture. Again (and it is important to note) the Caliph did NOT address any Jews nor did he show the slightest interest in Jewish matters or religious beliefs when he designed the Dome of the Rock. He built the Dome of the Rock to appeal strictly to Christians, NOT Jews! [To read what the two inscriptions state in English, read the excellent translations with outstanding pictures and explanatory text in Professor Oleg Grabar's book titled *The Shape of the Holy*.]

A Historical Review of What Happened Surrounding the Site of the "Rock."

In 638 A.D., when Omar (the Second Caliph) went to Jerusalem, he asked Sophronius the archbishop to show him where King David had prayed before the building of the Temple. Omar said he wished to pray in the same spot. Sophronius showed him, first, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which Omar rejected. Then Sophronius took the Caliph to the traditional Zion on the southwest hill. Omar rejected that spot too. Then, when Omar stated that he wished to build a shrine at the place where David prayed, Sophronius then took him to the place over and near the Gihon Spring where the Jews had attempted to rebuild the Temple in the time of Constantine (as permitted in the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D. and with construction continuing to 325 A.D.) and also in the time of Julian the Apostate (362 A.D.). At that former Temple site over the Gihon Spring, Omar was impressed. He dug through the filth and found a stone that he removed and took it through the South Gate of the Haram esh-Sharif. There he placed it near the qibla [the site toward which Muslim pray as they bow toward Mecca] on the elevated platform directly abutting the southern wall. He called the place the Al Aqsa (and a Mosque was soon built there). But one of Omar's generals named Ka'ab (a recent convert from Judaism who had extensive Christian indoctrination) found the place of the "Rock" where the former Church of the Holy Wisdom once stood. He told Omar that it would be better to place the qibla NORTH of this "Rock" and NOT down at the southern end of the Haram. Omar rejected this suggestion of Ka'ab and chided the general for making such a suggestion. That would have given much prestige to that "Rock" in the north, and Omar steadfastly refused. He turned his back on that "Rock" where the Christian church once stood, and went back south to the qibla of the Al Aqsa area. The truth is, Omar (in his role as the Second Caliph and the divine successor of Muhammad in Muslim theology) totally rejected that northern "Rock." And later, Abd al-Malik wanted to show a further rejection by building the Dome over that northern "Rock" some fifty years afterwards.

Let me explain how this rejection is designed into the Dome. The original entrance designed by Abd al-Malik was from the southernmost octant of the octagonal design. Once a person entered the

Dome, he was directed to read the start of the first inscription that was located at the top of the cornice on the far right side of the southern octant. Since Arabic (like Hebrew) is written from right to left, the first inscription contained no message for Christians and it was meant for Muslims in general. To read the whole inscription one must start with one's back to Mecca (this is important to note), but then circle around the whole of the Dome clockwise (just the opposite from what Muslims do in circling the Ka'aba at Mecca) until one comes to the exact spot where one commenced his reading (when one returns to this southern point the person can conveniently turn his back to the "Rock" and pray directly toward Mecca in the south). The design of the outer message is to circle the "Rock" in the wrong direction (which gives a negative impression to any early Muslim, Jew or Christian). But the complete encirclement requires one to return to the south once again and the person is forced to face Mecca when one leaves the Dome with one's back to the "Rock" as Omar insisted one must do (and Abd al-Malik designed this symbolic stance – with one's back to the "Rock" – into the liturgy associated with the architecture of the Dome of the Rock).

The inner inscription is different. One must go further into the Dome to the other side of the same cornice and look upward at the same southern octant, but to its far-left side if one is facing the "Rock" (indeed, one must look at its far left side only when facing the "Rock" itself, but inside the inner area of the Dome one must look southerly and also upwards at the start of the inscription which will be seen on one's upper right side – this requires a person to have his back to the "Rock" and looking toward Mecca). To read the inner inscription one must crane the neck upward to see the start of the inscription that is circling and facing the "Rock." One then begins to read the inscription in Arabic devoted strictly to Christians (NOT to Jews) because the whole emphasis of the message is about the importance of Jesus in Muslim theology. One must read this inscription which completely encircles the Dome (like the outer one in the opposite direction), but one must do so in a counterclockwise manner as one does at Mecca (a positive sign) but this time with one's back to the "Rock" (another positive sign from a Muslim point of view, and a negative one as Christians would view it).

Now note this important point. All the time a Christian is reading the teaching from Abd al-Malik in the inner inscription, he has to do so with his back deliberately turned away from the "Rock" and with his head craned upward in the most uncomfortable position that one can imagine. The whole anatomical awkwardness forced upon the human observer is a deliberate attempt to show disdain for the symbolic meaning that Christians had placed on the "Rock." The original symbolism for Christians was different. The Christian entered the Domed Church from the west and looked eastward toward the Mount of Olives. Once the circuit of the "Rock" was made, the Christian could again look through the "Rock" eastward toward Olivet in symbolic anticipation for the Second Advent (Christ is to come back from the east – as the sun in its circuit of the earth).

However, Abd al-Malik designed the Dome of the Rock to be entered from the southern octant. But even if a Christian entered from the south (as designed by Abd al-Malik), though his circuit around the "Rock" would be all negative to Christianity because his or her back would always be away from the "Rock" (while reading the inner inscription), the Christian upon completing the circuit could simply refuse to face Mecca when his circuit ended in the south. He could then turn directly northward and pray through the "Rock" (which symbolized the rule of Christ in his or her

life) and direct his ultimate attention to the north quarter of the sky where all people knew God the Father had His residence. If Abd al-Malik saw a Christian do this after the circuit deposited the person in the south, then Abd al-Malik knew that the person would never be a Muslim and the Christian would be accepted as a “Person of the Book” (the Holy Scriptures) but inferior to Muslims. Thus, the person would then pay the poll tax to the Muslims and carry on with his own beliefs.

Still, when one completed the circuit by reading either the outer or the inner inscription in order to exit the Dome of the Rock as intended by Abd al-Malik, the person is forced to face directly toward Mecca. But there is one other thing. The person is also facing directly toward the Al Aqsa Mosque established by Omar the Second Caliph, and directly through the former site of the Holy of Holies of Solomon’s Temple (because the Muslims knew then where Solomon’s Temple was formerly located over the Gihon Spring). The prayer of the Muslim would transverse Solomon’s Temple and focus onward to the Ka’aba in Mecca. Every device imaginable was used by Abd al-Malik in his building of the Dome of the Rock to direct people (both Muslims and Christians) AWAY FROM any significance of the “Rock” (just as Omar had demanded when he was first in Jerusalem). This is because it was well known in the seventh century that the “Rock” was actually a Christian holy spot.

What is most important for us of modern times to realize is the fact that the site of the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock is purely and simply a Christian holy place (before the time of Omar and Abd al-Malik), and it did not become a Muslim holy site until many folklore traditions about the “Night Journey” of Muhammad began to be associated with the “Rock” from the eighth century on to the time of the Crusades. I explain in my book “The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot” how the many Muslim mythic accounts (which were outright fables and lies that even Muslim historians admit to be so) erroneously got attached to the “Rock” under the Dome of the Rock. As for the Jews, NO JEW showed any interest whatever in the “Rock” and the Dome of the Rock until the time of the First Crusade. This is a fact! For more information see further articles on this subject on our ASK Web Site.

So, the Dome of the Rock was built over a prime Christian holy place (where the Church of the Holy Wisdom was once situated). Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock with the intended purpose of getting Christians to forget the “Rock” on which Jesus was judged at the time of Pilate. Abd al-Malik wanted Christians to abandon the Christian significance to the “Rock” by having them turn their “backs” on it and he wanted Christians to convert to Islam and then to focus on the Ka’aba stone where Muslims supposed Abraham erected at Mecca in Arabia for the true worship of God. My book “The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot” provides more details to this important historical fact.

Conclusion

31 CE. Yehshua was judged by Pilot at the praetorium. Yehshua was placed on the Pavement called Gabbatha.

John 18:28 Then they led Jesus away from Caiaphas into the Praetorium. By now it was early morning, and the Jews did not enter the Praetorium to avoid being defiled and unable to eat the Passover.

Mat 27:19 Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.”

John 19:13 So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha.

136 CE. Hadrian builds the temple of Jupiter which was at the Praetorium over the Pavement called Gabbatha. (He built the temple of Venus where he thought Jesus was buried which is now the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and he built the temple of Jupiter to again stamp out the memory of Jesus at the Pavement which is where Christians would come to on their pilgrimages up until this time.)

304 CE. Saints Cyrus and John are martyred and shortly thereafter Hadrian’s temple is turned into the Church named after these two Saints.

325 Helena turned that church into the Church of the Holy Wisdom

692 Abd al-Malik in 692 C.E. built the Dome of the Rock over that “Rock” which was the “oblong rock” of the Wisdom Church.

Indeed, even today when we look at this picture looking North from the Siloam Pool, taken around 1900 CE, we can see that there were no buildings over this area of the City of David. It is nothing but a heap of ruins. The main and only structure is the Sharim al-Sharif at the very top of the picture. We will soon look at the history of the City of David and all that it reveals. Right now we have covered those places that claim to be historical places from the Bible and have shown you that they are not telling you the truth.

