

THE TEMPLE MOUNT AND FORT ANTONIA

by Ernest Martin

We all remember the proverb that a picture is worth a thousand words. This is so true. When we are able to view a site that we have been reading or hearing about, the historical and architectural information associated with the area becomes much more meaningful and the subject better understood. That is certainly the case with the Temple built by Herod the Great that existed in the time of Christ Jesus along with the adjacent fortress that dominated the landscape known as Fort Antonia.

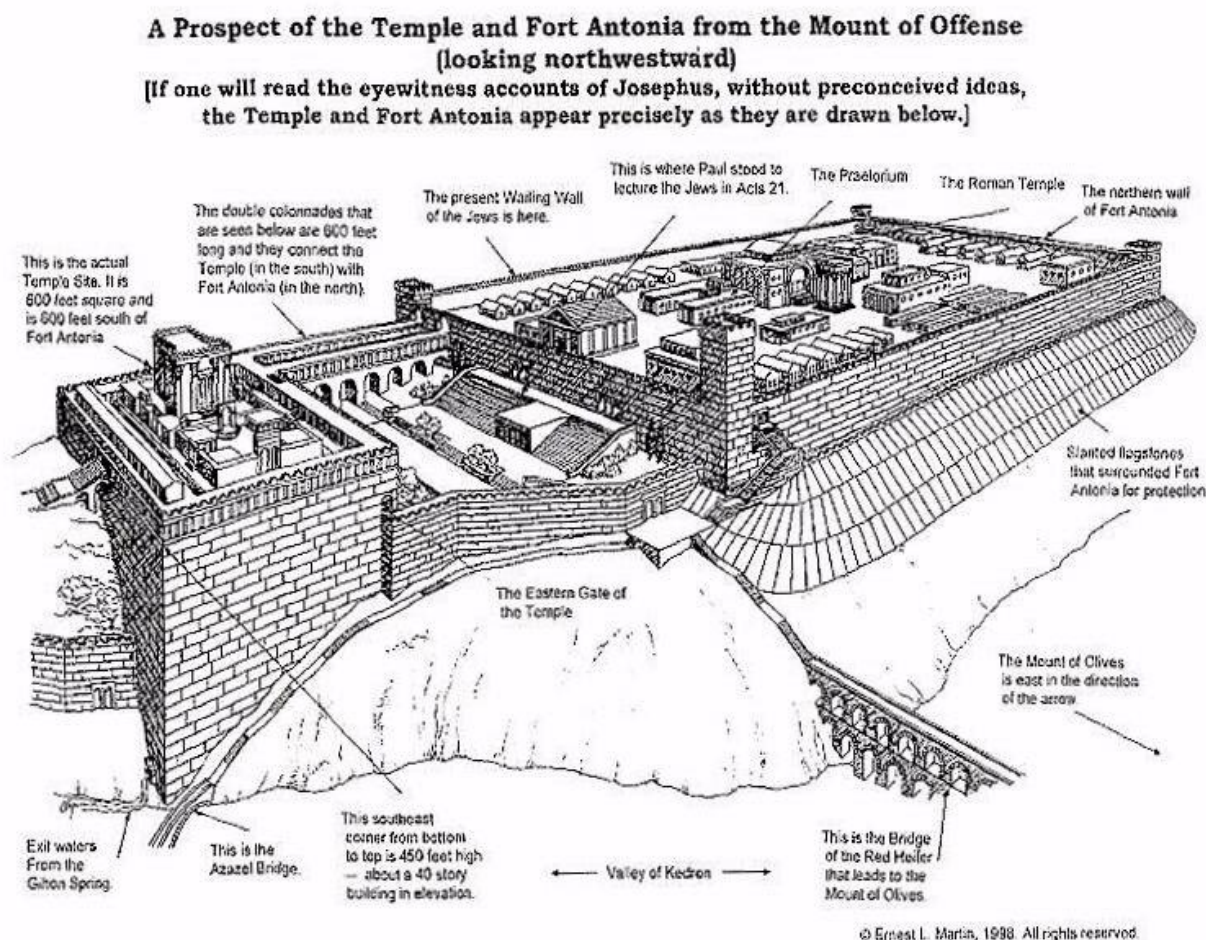
The truth is, no one in modern history (nor for the past 1900 years) has actually witnessed the complex of buildings that comprised the Holy Sanctuary and the fort that was built to protect it. This is one of the reasons why I have wanted to present to all of you on the ASK mailing list the first general view of what the Temple and Fort Antonia looked like to the inhabitants of Jerusalem during the time of Jesus.

Once we recognize the actual situation of the two structures that I show in the illustrations, and once you realize their dimensions, many points of teaching that we observe in the New Testament will make much better sense to us. In a word, a true perspective of those two buildings that occupied the greater part of northeastern Jerusalem (west of the Mount of Olives and the Mount of Offense) will provide a panoramic view that will show the sheer beauty and majesty of the Mother City of the Jews in the early part of the first century. Without doubt, it was a splendid and awesome display of architectural grandeur at its best. My new book "The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot" will present the full and interesting details.

What you are about to see in the illustrations at the conclusion of this Report is the description of the Temple and Fort Antonia as presented by Josephus, the Jewish historian. He was an eyewitness to the City of Jerusalem before the Romans destroyed it in A.D. 70. I have had our artist draw both a horizontal aspect as though you would view the buildings from above (in outline form as an architect would draw the edifices), and also to show a vertical aspect that gives a three dimensional effect as seen from the east side of the buildings.

The squared or rectangular stones that comprise both structures are very large but they are not drawn to exact scale. They represent an artist's impression given with my directions in accord with the descriptions recorded by Josephus. If you will read Josephus yourself, you will find that our illustrations simply depict the eyewitness accounts of Josephus as he stated them in his literature.

The vertical sight will be that from the top of the southern part of the Mount of Olives known as the Mount of Offense which was directly east of the old city of David formerly located south of the Gihon Spring. This is the best place to view ancient Jerusalem. My new book will illustrate these points clearly.



A Panoramic View of Ancient Jerusalem

Let me start by mentioning a scene that usually occupies the attention of each person who visits Jerusalem for the first time (or who returns year after year to see the archaeological remains of the Jerusalem of Herod and Jesus). That particular scene is observed from the Mount of Olives just in front of the Seven Arches Hotel. This is where people can obtain the best over-all view of the ancient and modern City of Jerusalem. Before I present you with some details concerning this inspiring and unforgettable prospect, let me relate a little about myself for some of you who only recently have come on the A.S.K. mailing list through the Internet. This will allow you to understand my deep interest and my personal involvement with the City of Jerusalem over the past four decades.

My first visit to Jerusalem was in the year 1961. Since then I have returned to the city over thirty times from areas in Europe or America where I have lived. Though

I am an American, I have professionally taught college in England where I lived for fourteen years (from 1958 to 1972). In Jerusalem, I worked personally on a daily basis with Professor Benjamin Mazar in the archaeological excavations at the western and southern walls of the Haram esh-Sharif. My working association with Professor Mazar on that site lasted for two months each summer during the years 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972 and 1973.

Over that period of five summers, I was the academic supervisor for 450 college students from around the world who were digging at that archaeological excavation directed by Professor Mazar. *Time* magazine in its Education Section for September 3, 1973 featured my academic program for granting college credits for students who worked under my superintendence at Professor Mazar's archaeological excavation sponsored by the Israel Exploration Society and Hebrew University. Besides this particular professional association at the excavation, I have personally guided more than 800 people around all areas of Israel explaining its biblical and secular history.

Though I am not an archaeologist by profession (my M.A. is in Theology and my Ph.D. is in Education), I have written several books and other major studies on the history and geography of Jerusalem especially in the periods of Jesus, the Roman Empire and Byzantium. I mention these brief biographical points to show that I have had considerable opportunity to study and to know the history of ancient Jerusalem.

With this in mind, let's return to the top of the Mount of Olives to be reminded of the splendid panoramic perspective depicting the remnants of ancient Jerusalem as well as witnessing the vibrant and bustling modern City of Jerusalem. For the 450 college students and the 800 persons I have guided in their visits to Jerusalem, I have always taken them to this spot on the Mount of Olives in order for them to visualize, as a beginning lesson, what ancient Jerusalem was really like.

Observing Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives

The view is spectacular. There is no scene from other areas of Jerusalem that can replicate the grandeur of the ancient archaeological remains of the city. What dominates the scene, as one looks westward, is a rectangular body of walls with gigantic stones perfectly aligned with one another in their lower courses. These four walls present to the observer a feeling of majesty and awe at what the ancients were capable of accomplishing by their architectural achievements.

These walls surround the area presently known as the Haram esh-Sharif (the Noble Enclosure). The stones of the lower courses in those walls are in their pristine positions. They are still placed neatly on top of another without any major displacement from their original alignments. These lower stones are clearly

Herodian in origin, and in some places in the eastern portion of the wall they are pre-Herodian. There are certainly more than 10,000 of these stones still in place as they were in the time of Herod and Jesus.

No archaeological authority has been able to count all the stones of the four walls surrounding the Haram esh-Sharif because many of the stones are still hidden from view. But at the holy site at the Western Wall (often called the "Wailing Wall") there are seven courses presently visible within that 197 feet length of the wall in the north/south exposure. That section contains about 450 Herodian stones.

There are, however, eight more courses of Herodian stones underneath the soil down to the ground level that existed in the time of Herod and Jesus. Even below that former ground level, there are a further nine courses of foundation stones. If that whole section of the "Wailing Wall" could be exposed, one could no doubt count around 1250 Herodian stones (probably more) of various sizes.

Most stones are about three to four feet high and three feet to twelve feet long, but there are varying lengths up to 40 feet (with the larger stones weighing about 70 tons). One stone has been found in the Western Wall that has the prodigious weight of 400 tons (Meir Ben-Dov, Mordechai Naor, Zeev Aner, "*The Western Wall*," pp.61, 215). If one could extend by extrapolating the number of stones making up the four walls surrounding the Haram, there has to be over 10,000 Herodian and pre-Herodian stones still very much in place as they were some 2000 years ago. All of these stones in those four walls survived the Roman/Jewish War of A.D.70-73.

The grand centerpiece within the whole enclosure is the Muslim shrine called the Dome of the Rock. It is centrally located in a north/south dimension within the rectangular area of the Haram. To the south of the Dome and abutting to the southern wall is another large building called the Al Aqsa Mosque with its smaller dome. And though from the Mount of Olives modern Jerusalem can be seen in the background (and its contemporary skyline of buildings is interesting), the whole area is overshadowed and dominated by the Haram esh-Sharif with those ancient walls that impressively highlight the scene.

This is the view that modern viewers are accustomed to see. But let us now go back over 1900 years and imagine viewing Jerusalem from this same spot. It is from this vantagepoint that Titus (the Roman General) looked on the ruins of Jerusalem after the Roman/Jewish War in A.D.70. The description of what Titus saw is very instructive. We should read his appraisal in the accounts preserved by Josephus because Josephus and Titus were both eyewitnesses. Notice not only what Titus observed, but also what he *left out* of the narrative (*War VII.1,1*). This omission will become of prime importance in our inquiry regarding the true location of the Temple. Titus commanded that only a part of a wall and three forts

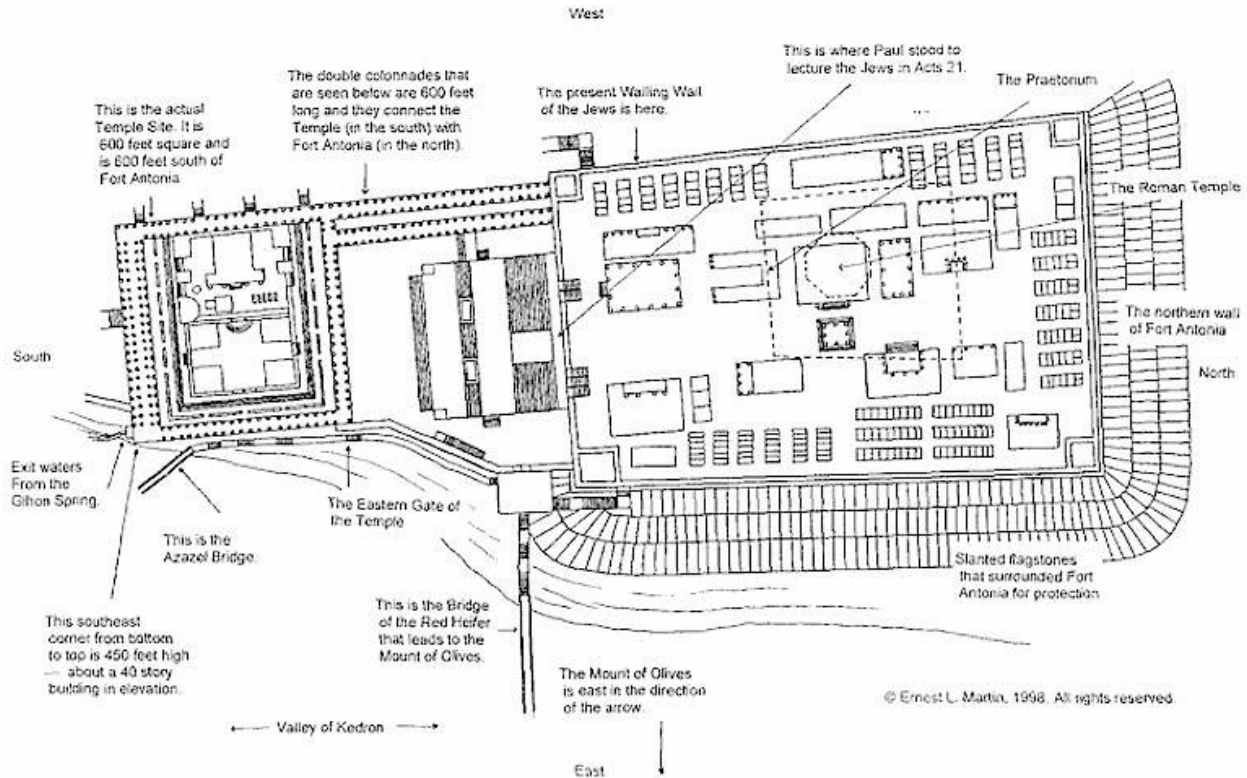
were to remain of what was once the glorious City of Jerusalem. Notice what is stated in *War VII.1,1*.

"Now as soon as the army had no more people to slay or to plunder, because there remained none to be the objects of their fury (for they would not have spared any, had there remained any other work to be done), *Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and Temple*, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminence; that is, Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne; and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side. This wall was spared, in order to afford a camp for such as were to lie in garrison [in the Upper City], as were the towers [the three forts] also spared, in order to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was, and how well fortified, which the Roman valor had subdued; but *for all the rest of the wall* [surrounding Jerusalem], *it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it* [Jerusalem] *had ever been inhabited*. This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were for innovations; a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind" (Whiston trans., italics, bracketed words mine).

This eyewitness account about the total ruin of Jerusalem has given visitors to Jerusalem a major problem in relation to what we witness of ancient Jerusalem today. The fact is, Titus gave orders that the Temple was to be demolished. The only man-made structures to be left in Jerusalem was to be a portion of the western wall and the three fortresses located in the Upper City. This was Titus' intention at first. But within a short time, even that portion of the western wall and the three fortresses in the west were so thoroughly destroyed that not a trace of them remained (unless the so-called "Tower of David" near the present day Jaffa Gate as scholars guess is a part of the foundation of Hippicus or Phasaelus). At the conclusion of the war, the Tenth Legion left Jerusalem a mass of ruins. Stones from those ruins were finally used in the following century to build a new city called Aelia. But by late A.D.70, there was nothing left standing of the Temple or the buildings of Jerusalem. Josephus stated:

"And truly, the very view itself was a melancholy thing; for those places which were adorned with trees and pleasant gardens, were now become desolate country every way, and its trees were all cut down. Nor could any foreigner that had formerly seen Judaea and the most beautiful suburbs of the city, and now saw it as a desert, but lament and mourn sadly at so great a change. *For the war had laid all signs of beauty quite waste*. Nor had anyone who had known the place before, had come on a sudden to it now, would he have known it again. But though he [a foreigner] were at the city itself, yet would he have inquired for it" (*War VI.1,1*).

**A Birdseye View (looking downward) on the Temple and Fort Antonia
[The dotted line in Fort Antonia represents the platform of the Dome of the Rock, and the Dome itself is shown with its octagonal shape.]**



What the Modern Visitor Observes

These descriptions by Josephus are what he and Titus saw from the Mount of Olives. But this is NOT what we observe today. We see something remaining from the period of Herod and Jesus that is quite different. Directly to the west, we view an awe-inspiring architectural relic of the past that is splendidly positioned directly in front of us. It dominates the whole western prospect of this panoramic view. That ancient structure is the Haram esh-Sharif. Its rectangular walls are so large in dimension that the Haram effectively obscures much of the view of the present old city of Jerusalem. And certainly, without the slightest doubt, the Haram (in its lower courses of stones that make up its walls) is a building that survived the Roman/Jewish War. Indeed, it is an outstanding example of the early architectural grandeur that once graced the Jerusalem of Herod and Jesus that has withstood two thousand years of weathering, earthquakes, wars and natural deterioration.

What is strange, and almost inexplicable at first, is the fact that Josephus mentioned the utter ruin of the Temple and all the City of Jerusalem, but he gave no reference whatever to the Haram esh-Sharif or that Titus had commanded that

those walls should remain intact. And through the centuries, up to our modern period, there are over 10,000 stones still in their original positions making up the four walls of the Haram. As a matter of fact, in Titus' time there were probably another 5,000 stones that were left on the upper courses of the four walls that have been dislodged and fallen to the ground over the centuries since the first century. What must be recognized is the fact that Titus deliberately left the rectangular shaped Haram esh-Sharif practically in the state he found it when he first got to Jerusalem with his legions. Strangely, Titus must have ordered that those four walls be retained for all future ages to see.

Without doubt, the Haram esh-Sharif with its gigantic walls was a survivor of the war. But how could Josephus have failed to account for the retention of such a spacious and magnificent building that was clearly in existence in pre-war Jerusalem? The continued existence of those extensive remains of the Haram esh-Sharif seem (at first glance) to nullify the appraisal of Josephus and Titus. Remember, they said that nothing of Jerusalem was left. "*It [Jerusalem] was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it [Jerusalem] had ever been inhabited.*"

What is even more strange is the modern belief that the Haram esh-Sharif must be reckoned as the site of the Temple Mount. If present scholarly opinion is correct, this means that Titus and the Roman legions did not destroy the outer walls of the Temple in its middle and lower courses. The Romans left over 10,000 stones in place around the Haram. This modern belief of scholars and religious authorities (whether Jewish, Muslim or Christian) that the retention of those 10,000 stones around the Haram represents the remnants of the walls of the Temple make the above descriptions of their demolition by Josephus and Titus as being outlandish exaggerations. And true enough, this is precisely how most modern scholars, theologians, religious leaders and archaeologists view the matter.

Professor Williamson, who translated Josephus, said this was the case. He remarked that the thorough desolation that Titus was supposed to have seen in front of him was: "An exaggeration. A great deal of the southern part of the Temple enclosure was spared. The whole of the south wall of its successor, the present wall round the Haram esh-Sharif, the southern section of the west wall (the 'Wailing Wall', where the fall of Jerusalem is still lamented) and a short stretch of the east wall running up from the southeast corner are Herodian to a considerable height" (*The Jewish War*, p.454, note 2). We will see abundant evidence in my new book that Josephus was not exaggerating. This is because that enclosure known as the Haram esh-Sharif was NOT the Temple Mount, nor was the structure then officially reckoned as a part of the municipality of Jerusalem.

Our modern scholars and religious authorities consistently state that we cannot believe Josephus literally in his accounts concerning the important descriptions that he provides. We will discover, however, that it is the modern scholars and the religious leaders who are wrong and not Josephus. Josephus, the historian/priest, knew what he was talking about. Jerusalem and the Temple were totally destroyed and not a stone of them was left in place. The truth is, the Haram esh-Sharif was *NOT* the Temple Mount.

Josephus Was Not Exaggerating

It is time for us to realize that it is the modern scholars who are wrong, *not* the eyewitness accounts of Josephus and Titus. Jerusalem and the Temple were indeed destroyed to the bedrock just as they relate. Regarding this, there are other sections of Josephus' accounts to show that he was not exaggerating. Josephus was keen on telling his readers that *all the walls* around Jerusalem *were leveled to the ground*. Note his observation: "Now the Romans set fire to the extreme parts of the city [the suburbs] and burnt them down, and *entirely demolished its*[Jerusalem's] *walls*" (*War VI.9,4.*).

This reference shows that all the walls, even those enclosing the outskirts of Jerusalem, were finally leveled to the ground. To reinforce the matter, Josephus said elsewhere: "When he [Titus] *entirely demolished the rest of the city, and overthrew its walls*, he left these towers [the three towers mentioned above] as a monument of his good fortune, which had proved [the destructive power of] his auxiliaries, and enabled him to take what could not otherwise have been taken by him" (*War VI.9,1*).

These two accounts by Josephus, along with the previous observations given above, confirm that there was a literal destruction of all the walls surrounding Jerusalem (except the small section of the wall in the western part of the Upper City that was afterward destroyed because not a trace of it has been mentioned of its retention by later eyewitnesses or found by modern archaeologists). Indeed, after A.D.70 there is not a word by any historical record that even speaks of those three fortresses in the Upper City having a continuance that Titus at first thought to leave as standing monuments showing the power of Rome over the Jews.

But again, these descriptions of Josephus and Titus of total ruin seem to be at variance with what we witness today. Let's face it. From the Mount of Olives we behold the four walls of the Haram still erect in all their glory, and they are prominently displayed with a majesty that dominates the whole of present-day Jerusalem. The lower courses of those walls clearly have 10,000+Herodian and pre-Herodian stones on top of one another. As a matter of fact, those rectangular walls are even functioning ramparts of Jerusalem today. They have been in constant use throughout the intervening centuries to protect the buildings that were built in the interior of that enclosure called the Haram esh-Sharif.

Again I say, if those rectangular walls are those which formerly surrounded the Temple Mount (as we are confidently informed by all authorities today), why did Josephus and Titus *leave out* of their eyewitness accounts any mention about this retention of this magnificent Haram structure? They spoke of the utter ruin and desolation of Jerusalem and of the Temple, not the survival of any buildings that the Jewish authorities once controlled. Be this as it may, Josephus and Titus were certainly aware that the walls of the Haram survived the war. Why did Josephus and Titus not refer to those walls of the Haram that remained standing in their time? My new book will explain the reason why, and very clearly.

A Quandary for Modern Christians

These facts present a major problem for Christians. If those rectangular walls of the Haram are indeed the same walls (in their lower courses) that formerly embraced the Temple Mount, why are these stones (more than 10,000 in number) yet so firmly on top of one another? The continued existence of those gigantic and majestic walls would show that Titus did not destroy the walls of the Temple, if those walls did surround the Temple. Why is this a difficulty for Christian belief? The reason is plain.

Christians are aware of four prophecies given by Jesus in the New Testament that there would *not be one stone left upon another* either of the Temple and its walls or even of the City of Jerusalem and its walls (Matthew 24:1,2; Mark 13:1,2; Luke 19:43,44; 21:5,6.). But strange as it may appear, the walls surrounding the Haram esh-Sharif still remain in their glory with their 10,000+ Herodian and pre-Herodian stones solidly in place in their lower courses. If those stones are those of the Temple, the prophecies of Jesus can be seriously doubted as having any historical value or merit in any analysis by intelligent and unbiased observers.

Indeed, the majority of Christian visitors to Jerusalem who first view those huge stones surrounding the rectangular area of the Haram (and who know the prophecies of Jesus) are normally perplexed and often shocked at what they see. And they ought to be. The surprise at what they observe has been the case with numerous people that I have guided around Jerusalem and Israel. They have asked for an explanation concerning this apparent failure of the prophecies of Jesus. Why do those gigantic walls still exist? If those walls represent the stones around the Temple, then the prophecies of Christ are invalid.

The usual explanation, however, to justify the credibility to Jesus' prophecies is to say that Jesus could only have been speaking about the inner Temple and its buildings, NOT the outer Temple and its walls that surrounded it. This is the customary and the conciliatory answer that most scholars provide (and it is the explanation that I formerly gave my students or associates). The truth is, however, this explanation will not hold water when one looks at what Jesus prophesied. One should carefully observe the prophecies of Jesus in the

Synoptic Gospels. They plainly state that one stone would not rest on another of the Temple, its buildings, and his prophecies also embraced its outer walls. The Greek word Jesus used in his prophetic context to describe the Temple and its buildings was *heiron* (this means the entire Temple including its exterior buildings and walls). Notice what Vincent says about the meaning of *heiron*.

"The word *temple* (*heiron*, lit., *sacred place*) signifies the whole compass of the sacred enclosure, with its porticos, courts, and other subordinate buildings; and should be carefully distinguished from the other word, *naos*, also rendered *temple*, which means the temple itself — the "Holy Place" and the "Holy of Holies." When we read, for instance, of Christ teaching in the *temple* (*heiron*) we must refer it to one of the temple-porches [outer colonnades]. So it is from the *heiron*, the court of the Gentiles, that Christ expels the money-changers and cattle-merchants" (Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol. I., p.50).

The exterior buildings of the Temple including its walls were always reckoned within the meaning of the word *heiron* that Jesus used in his prophecies concerning the total destruction of the Temple. There were several outer divisions of the Temple that were distinguished from the Inner Temple, and these outer appurtenances were accounted to be cardinal features of the Sanctuary. As an example, note the New Testament account stating that Satan took Jesus to the "pinnacle of the Temple" (Matthew 4:5). The pinnacle section was the southeastern corner of the outer wall that surrounded the whole of the Temple complex. The wording in the New Testament shows that this southeastern angle belonged to the Temple — it was a pinnacle [a wing] "of the Temple." That area was very much a part of the sacred edifice to which Jesus referred when he prophesied that not one stone would remain on another.

There is an important geographical factor that proves this point. When Jesus made his prophecy that no stone would be left on one another, Matthew said that Jesus and his disciples had just departed from the outer precincts of the Temple. This means that all of them were at the time viewing the exterior sections of the Temple (the *heiron*) when he gave his prophecy (Matthew 24:1). The Gospel of Mark goes even further and makes it clear that the outside walls of the Temple were very much in the mind of Jesus when he said they would be uprooted from their very foundations. "And as he [Jesus] went out of the Temple [note that Jesus and the disciples were standing *outside the Temple walls* and looking back toward the Temple enclosure], one of his disciples saith unto him, 'Master, see what buildings are here!' And Jesus answering said unto him, 'Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down'" (Matthew 24:1). Without the slightest doubt, when Jesus in his prophecy spoke about the destruction of the Temple, he was certainly including in his prophecy the stones of the outer walls that enclosed the Temple as well as the buildings of the inner Temple.

The Whole City of Jerusalem Also to be Destroyed

Jesus went even further than simply prophesying about the destruction of the Temple and its walls. He also included within his prophetic predictions the stones that made up the whole City of Jerusalem (with every building and house that comprised the metropolis — including the walls that embraced its urban area). According to Jesus in Luke 19:43,44, every structure of Jewish Jerusalem would be leveled to the ground —to the very bedrock. "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 even with the ground*, and thy children within thee; and *they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another.*"

So, in the prophecies of Jesus, not only the stones that made up the Temple and its walls were to be torn down, but he also included within that scope of destruction even the stones that comprised the totality of the City of Jerusalem. We are left with no ambiguity concerning this matter. The prophecies about the Temple and the City of Jerusalem either happened exactly as Jesus predicted or those prophecies must be reckoned as false and unreliable. There can be no middle ground on the issue. If one is honest with the plain meaning of the texts of the Gospels, Jesus taught that *nothing would be left* of the Temple, *nothing left* of the whole City of Jerusalem, and *nothing left* of the walls of the Temple and the City.

Josephus and Titus Agree With Jesus

Was Jesus correct in his prophecies? Was Jerusalem with its Temple and walls leveled to the ground? What is remarkable is the fact that the eyewitness accounts given by Josephus and Titus agree precisely with what Jesus prophesied. Note what these two men observed. "It [Jerusalem with its walls] was so *thoroughly laid even with the ground* by those that *dug it up to the foundation*, that there was *left nothing* to make those that came thither believe it [Jerusalem] had ever been inhabited" (*War VII.1,1*).

All the land surrounding the city of Jerusalem was a desolate wasteland. Note Josephus' account.

"They had cut down all the trees, that were in the country that adjoined to the city, and that for ninety stadia round about [for nearly ten miles], as I have already related. And truly, the very view itself was a melancholy thing. Those places that were before adorned with trees and pleasant gardens were now become a desolate country in every way, and its trees were all cut down. Nor could any foreigner that had formerly seen Judaea and the most beautiful suburbs of the city, and now saw it as a desert, but lament and mourn sadly at so great a change. For the war had laid all signs of beauty quite waste. Nor, if any one that

had known the place before, and had come on a sudden to it now, would he have known it again. But though he were at the city itself, yet would he have inquired for it notwithstanding" (*War* VI.1,1, following the Whiston translation).

After A.D. 70, people would have seen utter desolation in all directions. Every stone of every building and wall in Jerusalem was dislodged from its original position and thrown down to the ground. Josephus provides reasonable accounts of later events after the war was over to show how this complete destruction was accomplished. Much of the destruction came after the war had ceased.

For six months after the war, Josephus tells us that the Tenth Legion "dug up" the ruins of the houses, buildings and walls looking for plunder. They systematically excavated beneath the foundations of the ruined buildings and houses (they had many of the Jewish captives do the work for them). They also had the whole area turned upside down looking for gold and other precious metals that became molten when the fires were raging. This caused the precious metals to melt and flow into the lower crevices of the stones. Even the foundation stones contained melted gold from the great fires that devoured Jerusalem. This plundering of every former building or wall in the municipality of Jerusalem resulted in the troops overturning (or having the remaining Jewish captives overturn for them) *every stone* within the city. We will soon see that this activity resulted in every stone of Jewish Jerusalem being displaced.

This continual digging up of the city occurred over a period of several months after the war. Indeed, after an absence of about four months, Titus returned to Jerusalem from Antioch and once again viewed the ruined city. Josephus records what Titus saw.

"As he came to Jerusalem in his progress [in returning from Antioch to Egypt], and compared the melancholy condition he saw it then in, with the ancient glory of the city [compared] with the greatness of its present ruins (as well as its ancient splendor). He could not but pity the destruction of the city.... Yet there was no small quantity of the riches that had been in that city still found among the ruins, a great deal of which the Romans dug up; but the greatest part was discovered by those who were captives [Jewish captives were forced by the Roman troops to dig up the stones of their own city looking for gold], and so they [the Romans] carried it away; I mean the gold and the silver, and the rest of that most precious furniture which the Jews had, and which the owners had treasured up under ground against the uncertainties of war."

Three Years After the War

We now come to the final appraisal of the complete desolation of Jerusalem. Note what Eleazar, the final Jewish commander at Masada, related three years after the war was finished at Jerusalem. He gives an eyewitness account of how

the Romans preserved Fort Antonia (the Haram) among the ruins. What Eleazar said to the 960 Jewish people (who were to commit suicide rather than fall into the hands of General Silva who was on the verge of capturing the Fortress of Masada) is very important in regard to our present inquiry. This final Jewish commander lamented over the sad state of affairs that everyone could witness at this twilight period of the conflict after the main war with the Romans was over.

Jerusalem was to Eleazar a disastrous spectacle of utter ruin. There was only *one thing that remained* of the former Jerusalem that Eleazar could single out as still standing. This was the Camp of the Romans that Titus permitted to remain as a monument of humiliation over the Mother City of the Jews. Eleazar acknowledged that this military encampment had been in Jerusalem *before* the war, and that Titus let it continue *after* the war. The retention of this single Camp of the Romans, according to Eleazar, was a symbol of the victory that Rome had achieved over the Jewish people. His words are recorded in *War VII.8,7*. Several words and phrases need emphasizing, and I hope I have done so:

"And where is now that great city [Jerusalem], the metropolis of the Jewish nation, which was fortified by so many walls round about, which had so many fortresses and large towers to defend it, which could hardly contain the instruments prepared for the war, and which had so many ten thousands of men to fight for it? Where is this city that was believed to have God himself inhabiting therein? ***it is now demolished to the very foundations, and hath nothing left but THAT MONUMENT of it preserved, I mean THE CAMP OF THOSE*** [the Romans]***that hath destroyed it, WHICH STILL DWELLS UPON ITS RUINS;*** some unfortunate old men also lie *ashes upon the of the Temple* [the Temple was then in total ruins — all of it had been burnt to ashes], and a few women are there preserved alive by the enemy, for our bitter shame and reproach."

What Eleazar said must be reckoned as an eyewitness account of the state of Jerusalem in the year A.D. 73. This narrative is of utmost importance to our question at hand. This is because Eleazar admitted that the City of Jerusalem and all its Jewish fortresses had indeed been demolished "to the very foundations." There was nothing left of the City or the Temple. This is precisely what Jesus prophesied would happen.

Eleazar even enforced this. He mentioned the "wholesale destruction" of the city. He said that God had "abandoned His most holy city to be burnt and razed to the ground" (*War VII.8,6* Loeb). And then, a short time later, Eleazar concluded his eyewitness account by stating: "I cannot but wish that we had all died before we had seen that holy city *demolished* by the hands of our enemies, or *the foundations of our Holy Temple dug up*, after so profane a manner" (*War VII.8,7*).

Yes, even the very foundation stones that comprised the Temple complex (including its walls) had been uprooted and demolished. They were then "*dug up*" and not even the lower courses of base stones were left in place. According to Eleazar, the only thing left in the Jerusalem area was a single Roman Camp that still hovered triumphantly over the ruins of the City and the Temple. He said that Jewish Jerusalem "hath nothing left." The only thing continuing to exist was the "monument" (a single monument) preserved by Titus. And what was that "monument"? Eleazar said it was "*the camp of those that destroyed it [Jerusalem], which still dwells upon its ruins.*"

What could this Camp of the Romans have been? This is quite easy to discover when one reads the accounts of the war as recorded by Josephus. The main military establishment in Jerusalem prior to the war was Fort Antonia located to the north of the Temple (which is now the Haram esh-Sharif). In my new book "The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot," I will give an abundance of information to show that the Haram was considered Roman property even before the war. Because Antonia was the property of Rome, they had no reason to destroy those buildings that already belonged to the Romans. That is why Titus left Fort Antonia (the Haram esh-Sharif) and its walls in tact (as we see them today).

The Temple Mount at Jerusalem

*A Summary
of Ernest L. Martin's Book
"The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot"*

*By
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Josephus gives a different perspective of the Temple than what is accepted by most historians today. This may be due to the Jews' distrust of Josephus for having capitulated to the Romans during the onslaught of Jerusalem. In reality, he was trying to save his people from the destruction and terror that would inevitably befall them with their continued resistance. Unfortunately, Josephus' capitulation to the Romans caused many within the Jewish community to view him as a traitor, and thus many within Jewish academia have dismissed him as a historian.

However, Josephus was fully aware of the cardinal features of the Temple Mount: It was built directly over the subterranean Spring of Gihon, and there were caves within its subsurface. These features were also witnessed by Aristeas of Egypt

three hundred years before Josephus and confirmed by the Roman historian Tacitus (115 AD), who quoted eyewitnesses that were in Jerusalem before 70 AD.

Josephus informs us that Mount Zion, the City of David, was the first citadel protecting the Temple Mount from the south. Later, John Hyrcanus (Maccabees) built a palace north of the Temple Mount called Baris. Hasmonaean princes used this palace, and later, Herod the Great made it into a citadel. He renamed it Fort Antonia, in honor of Marcus Anthony. With great effort, Herod built Fort Antonia into a large enclosed area for the Romans to garrison an entire Legion along with their auxiliary personnel.

Josephus Understood the Symbolism of the Gihon Spring

Gihon Spring was the only natural spring of pure water within five miles of Jerusalem in any direction. Pure water was an indispensable requirement for the essential rituals of the Temple. Because of this spring of pure water, the Temple was a microcosm of the Garden of Eden. (One of the rivers that flowed through the Garden of Eden was the river Gihon.) The water of Gihon was symbolic of the Water of Life. Ophel and the Gihon Spring are synonymous.

The Gihon Spring was about a quarter mile south from today's Dome of the Rock. There are no caves or spring in the vicinity of today's Dome of the Rock. This information is crucial in determining the correct location of the Temple Mount.

Josephus was fully aware of the symbolism involving the Gihon Spring and the Throne or the Holy of Holies of Almighty God, which the learned men of Judaism have ignored.

The Location of Mount Zion, Ophel, and Fort Antonia

Josephus understood that the original site of Mount Zion (it was actually a mound) was located on the southern third of the southeast ridge. This was where David had built his city, and it became known as the "Lower City" of Jerusalem. The limits of David and Solomon's Jerusalem were between Kidron Valley to the east and Tyropoeon Valley to the west, with both valleys merging at the south end of the southeast ridge. The Tyropoeon Valley was gradually populated as Jerusalem grew toward the west during the time of King Uzziah. In the latter part of the second century BC, the Maccabees extensively populated this valley, and it became known as the "Upper City."

The Hinnim Valley was to the immediate west at the south end of the western hill adjoining the Kidron and Tyropoeon Valleys at the foot of the southeast ridge. On the southern third of this ridge there were two mounds: Zion and "Ophel" (literally "humped mound"). From south to north, the two mounds together were about 400 yards in length. The distance from the top of Mount Zion to the top of Mount Ophel was over 200 yards. This ridge continued to ascend northward from

Mount Ophel to where an outcrop of rock was protruding, which, today, is called the Dome of the Rock. The Dome of the Rock is located over 600 yards north from the top of Mount Zion and 400 yards from the top of Mount Ophel.

The Temple Mount was built on Mount Ophel over the subterranean Gihon Spring of which below were numerous subsurface caves. From this mount, the Water of Life for the Temple services was immediately available. It was renowned for its purity (sweet water) over that of any other spring in the entire region.

Writing of this, Josephus states, “Now on the north side of the Temple was built a citadel (Fort Antonia), whose walls were square and strong and of extraordinary firmness. The kings of the Hasmonaean dynasty, who were also high priests before the time of Herod, called it the Tower.” Josephus further informs us “Fort Antonia dominated the Temple.” This fortress guarded the security of the Temple, the city of Jerusalem and the fortress itself.

From the north, it was impossible for one to see the Temple because Fort Antonia obscured the view. The hill on which the Tower of Antonia stood was the highest of the three mounds (Zion, Ophel, and Fort Antonia) on the north end of the southeast ridge.

During the Hasmonaean dynasty, the tower of Baris was expanded to become Fort Antonia. It adjoined the new city Bezetha and further obscured the Temple Mount from the north of Jerusalem. An aqueduct coming from Bethlehem supplied Fort Antonia with water that was stored in 37 cisterns for the Tenth Legion and their support personnel, which numbered approximately 10,000 men.

No Rock Outcropping Associated with the Temple

There is no reference in Scripture or any secular historical source that describes a natural outcropping of rock located at the highest point of the ridge or hill that was associated with the Temple Mount. This includes the sites of the Temple floor, the Holy of Holies and the Altar of Burnt Offering.

The Altar of Burnt Offering was formally used as a threshing floor. It is clear that the threshing floor was a level area on top of Mount Ophel, not an irregular formation of rock on top of a ridge.

Solomon built the east wall of the Temple that reached upwards from the base on the east side of the hill. The foundation was built below the Kidron Valley floor, and the visible wall began from the bottom of the valley and extended upwards for three hundred cubits (450 feet). The top of the hill and an artificial embankment that Solomon had built along the Kidron Valley was completely filled in with rubble and large rocks known as millo. The millo filled this embankment until it reached the top of Mount Ophel, 300 cubits -- about 40 to

45 stories -- above the Kidron Valley floor, further extending the Temple platform to the east. As viewed from the Mount of Olives on the east, the temple area looked like a modern skyscraper with a huge platform 150 by 450 feet.

Solomon built no walls on the north, west, and south sides. However, in the course of time this hilltop area was enlarged, filling in some of those areas and enclosing the hill from its base at the floor of the Kidron Valley in the east and the Tyropoeon Valley in the west. Its southern and northern sides extended westward over the ridge between the Kidron and Tyropoeon valleys. The final foundation of the Temple was shaped like a cube, and the area on top of the Temple Mount was a perfect square platform.

Solomon built his palace and judgment hall just south of the Temple. This was the area of Mount Zion and the city of David, around which Jerusalem evolved. In the second century BC, Mount Zion was leveled during the time of Simon the Hasmonaean, just south of Mount Ophel. After that time the Temple Mount was not obscured from the south by the higher elevation of Mount Zion.

The Gihon Spring

The Temple Mount had a natural spring with an unlimited supply of water coming from underneath the Holy of Holies. Scriptural references require a water source to be associated with the Temple and its function. The Gihon Spring is referred to numerous times in the book of Psalms and by the prophets.

During the time of David and Solomon, Gihon Spring supplied the Siloam Pool and fed the Kidron Valley. Toward the end of the eighth century BC, King Hezekiah built a tunnel to supply underground water from the Gihon Spring to western Jerusalem (II Chron. 32:30). Hezekiah built this tunnel because he was expecting a siege against Jerusalem by Sennacherib, the king of Assyria.

Before 70 AD, the Jews often used the word "Siloam" to describe the whole system of the Gihon Spring -- Siloam Pool, Hezekiah's underground tunnel and the channels into the Kidron Valley. (Christians did not use the name "Gihon" but continued to use "Siloam" to describe this water network even into modern times.)

It is most significant that the pure water of Gihon Spring under the Temple Mount ran near the seat of the Holy of Holies, symbolic of the seat of Almighty God's throne. John's description of God's throne in Revelation shows a river of water coming out from beneath the throne: "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1).

Destruction of the Temple Foretold

Micah prophesied the destruction of the Temple (Mic.3:10-12): “Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor justice, and pervert all iniquity. They build up Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for a bribe, and the priests thereof teach for pay, and the prophets thereof divine for money. Yet will they lean upon the Lord, saying is not the Lord among us? No harm can come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the Temple as the bare hills.”

Jesus confirmed this prophecy as the writers of the gospels agree: Matthew 24:1-2 and Mark 13:1-2: “And Jesus went out, and departed from the Temple; and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the Temple. And Jesus said unto them. ‘See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’”

Luke 19:43-44: “For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall build an embankment about thee, and surround thee and close you in on every side. And shall level thee 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 their visitation.”

Luke 21:5-6: “And some spoke of the Temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, He said, ‘As for these things which ye behold, the days will come in that which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.’”

Fort Antonia’s walls were 40 cubits (60 feet) high. Inside these walls, the buildings and grounds were built on a level platform. At the four corners of the walls were towers. Three of these towers were 50 cubits (75 feet) high, and the southwest tower was 70 cubits (105 feet) high. This higher tower overlooked the entire Temple court to the south of Fort Antonia.

Josephus wrote that all of Fort Antonia was built over and around a rock outcrop at the summit of the ridge. Today, a mosque stands over this rock formation known as the Dome of the Rock. Completed by Abdul el-Malik in 691 AD, the mosque covers the remainder of this protruding rock but occupies only a very small fraction of the entire surface area of the 36-acre artificial platform that the Romans built.

Fort Antonia and the Roman Legion

A Roman Legion had 5,000 infantry troops and with them 5,000 support personnel. There were 833 military personal per acre within Fort Antonia.

The Roman garrison was the dominant feature of Jerusalem, a continuous reminder to the Jews of Rome's supremacy. Further, being four and one-half times greater in area than the Temple Mount, Fort Antonia was intimidating and therefore a successful tool of psychological warfare to secure Jewish conformity to Roman authority.

The crowds that assembled at the Temple during the Holy Days were overseen by 2,000 Roman troops. In order to prevent disorder and riots among the Jews, they were stationed on a 45-foot wide walkway built atop the four colonnades that surrounded the Temple grounds. During the Jewish festivals, there were three rotations of guards, totaling 6,000 soldiers, each day.

Josephus' Description of the Colonnades

The colonnades between the Temple and Fort Antonia were extended around the outer edge of the entire Temple Mount platform. These colonnades were roofed with the roadway 30 cubits (45 feet) wide. The colonnade roadway was the vantage point from which the Roman troops were able to guard the entrances and exits to and from the Temple as well as keep a watchful eye on the inside area of the court (with the exception of the inside of the Temple). In addition, the colonnade roadway gave them nearly instant access to the Temple area from Fort Antonia. The double colonnade-bridge that connected the Temple with Fort Antonia was one stade (600 feet). Josephus described two colonnades as military roadways that were an integral part of the Temple. These two colonnades led from the south (west corner) wall of Fort Antonia to the gate on the north (west corner) wall of the Temple Mount. Called the Tadi Gate, this north wall was not used by the general public but only by the Roman Legion.

The Romans were very astute in military engineering, and constructed their fortifications with this advantage. They understood well that the key to controlling Jerusalem was to manage and control the Temple Mount. Fort Antonia's protection was its dominant position over the Temple Mount.