
Chapter 12

RUINS OF THE TEMPLE IN SOUTHEASTERN JERUSALEM

FROM THE FOURTH CENTURY to today, as I have shown in the past chapters, there were *eleven* different spots in Jerusalem that authorities selected as the location of the Temple (especially the Altar and the Holy of Holies). That's right! As many as *eleven locations* have been sanctified or accepted over the centuries. But only *ONE* is correct! That proper site was shown by Palestinian Jews in the time of Omar (in 638 C.E.) as being in the *southern* area of Jerusalem near the Gihon Spring. It was at the time the city dump. There were, however, some few ruins at the area during the period from 325 to 638 C.E. when Omar, the Second Caliph, took over Jerusalem. What were those ruins in the *southeastern* region and who were the parties responsible for building them?

Understand that from the destruction of Herod's Temple in 70 C.E. until the Edict of Milan in 313 C.E. (an edict of emancipation by Constantine and Licinius, the two emperors of Rome), we have

some thirty eyewitness reports (as given previously) that not a single stone of the inner Temple buildings or the external walls surrounding the Temple courts was left standing. The eyewitness evidence is universal that the "Temple Mount" was left derelict of any permanent buildings from the time of Hadrian (135 C.E.) to the Edict of Milan (313 C.E.). True, there are indications of huts or tents being on the site, and in 303 C.E. we have Eusebius giving eyewitness evidence that the Temple Mount was then a Roman farm being plowed by oxen, but clearly it was destitute of any activities to rebuild any part of the Temple or associated buildings.

All of this changed, and changed drastically, with the eyewitness account of the Bordeaux Pilgrim given in 333 C.E. He spoke of what looked to him like a Temple and altar, a House of Hezekiah, a pinnacle of the Temple and other adjacent structures that only indicated recent building activity that Jewish authorities had undertaken. Indeed, there was a great deal of building activity on the Temple Mount from 313 C.E. until the Nicean Council held by Constantine in 325 C.E. How did those *new* buildings come into existence within those 12 years? But before we can understand how a *new* Temple and other buildings came to be started on the Temple Mount in the early fourth century, we must realize that *before* the Edict of Milan in 313 C.E., the Temple Mount was vacant of any former buildings from the time of Herod.

The Temple Mount Had Been Absent of Buildings

The Temple site from the time of Hadrian (135 C.E.) to Constantine (313 C.E.) was destitute of any normal buildings or structures. But in 333 C.E. the Bordeaux Pilgrim saw what he called a "Temple" and several other buildings located directly over and around the true Temple Mount. Some fresh construction had been done by the Jews. Remember what Eusebius said as an eyewitness about the complete destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. This Christian historian was born in Palestine and wrote in the late third and the beginning of the fourth century. He was the foremost historian of the Christian community and curator of the Library of Caesarea, adjacent to Jerusalem. Eusebius' fullest description of the former Jerusalem and Temple is found in Book

VIII, Chapter 3, sections 405 and 406 which he wrote in 303 C.E. Note these quotes from Eusebius out of the many he records.

“The hill called Sion and Jerusalem, the buildings there, that is to say, the Temple, the Holy of Holies, the Altar, and whatever else was there dedicated to the glory of God, **have been utterly removed or shaken [down]**, in fulfillment of the Word.”²⁵⁸

“Their ancient holy place, at any rate, and their Temple are to this day as much destroyed as Sodom.”²⁵⁹

The Temple buildings were all leveled without a stone remaining on top another, and the area was like “Sodom” in its utter destruction. Nothing was left standing. Indeed, there was no remnant of a “Western Wall” of the Holy of Holies left intact for Jewish authorities to anoint and to pray around. After the Jewish war with Hadrian in 132 to 135 C.E., the emperor in revenge against the Jews turned the area of the Temple into the city dump of his new City of Aelia. Recall what Jerome (who lived in Bethlehem in the late fourth and early fifth centuries) recorded in his *Commentary* on Isaiah 64:11. Jerome first quoted the verse, then commented.

“Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, **is burned up with fire**; and all our pleasant things **are laid waste**”: and the Temple which earned reverence throughout the world **has become the refuse dump** of the new city whose founder [Hadrian] called it Aelia [that is, Hadrian called his new city Aelia Capitolina].”²⁶⁰

Hadrian converted the former Temple site into the city dump to humiliate the Jews. It remained in that condition until some Romans about a hundred and fifty years later saw the potential of the site for farming. They cleared the remaining ruined stones from the region and turned the area into a Roman farm. There was nothing left of the Temple when Eusebius described the site. To Eusebius, the former Sanctuary had become “like Sodom.” But this bucolic condition was soon to end. The political position of Jews

²⁵⁸ Sect. 405.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Bk. V, Ch.23, sect.250.

²⁶⁰ Quoted with notes and commentary by Prof. Moshe Gil in *A History of Palestine 634–1099*, p.67, n.70.

improved and the Jews were given permission (or so *they* thought was permission) to rebuild the Temple and the corollary buildings that supported the divine house. A major concession was given to the Jews in the year 313 C.E.

In 313 C.E. a major historical event took place that was interpreted by Jewish authorities as consent from the emperors of Rome to rebuild their Temple and adjacent buildings in the spot over and around the Gihon Spring. This historical event was prompted by the Edict of Milan by Constantine and Licinius in 313 C.E. Let us notice what happened.

The Importance of the Edict of Milan

Later Jewish historians looked on the Edict of Milan of 313 C.E. as having disastrous consequences for Jewish people in the succeeding centuries, and this is a correct evaluation. The first twelve years after Constantine and Licinius signed the Edict, the Jewish people in Palestine were under the sole authority of Licinius in a *de facto* sense. During this time great strides were made by Jewish authorities for Jewish people to return to Jerusalem and to build several buildings. From the Edict of Milan to 325 C.E., the Jews built many buildings on or near the Temple Mount. Many Jews flocked to Jerusalem, and began to construct many buildings. As Professor Mazar stated: there was “*an orgy of building unmatched in the history of the country.*” The new Jewish settlers in Jerusalem were most interested in showing a major Jewish influence in the holy city. They concentrated their building enterprises at or near the former site of the Temple,²⁶¹ and in the Upper City

²⁶¹ In Jerusalem after the Edict in 313 C.E., Jews who returned to Jerusalem prospered until the Council of Nicea in 325 C.E. That is when Constantine had his falling out with Jewish authorities. We are told in a tenth century work by Euty chius (Ibn Batriq), patriarch of Alexandria, that Constantine again forbade the Jews from living in Jerusalem or even to stay within the city as Emperor Hadrian had done (Euty chius, *Annales* I, 446 PG 3, c.1012). But we have clear evidence that Helena, the mother of Constantine, brought Jews to Jerusalem to council her on the whereabouts of Christ’s tomb and all parties cooperated with one another in that quest (Paulinus of Nola, Letter 31.5). There was not much outward persecution of the Jewish population by Constantine. Indeed, as Norman F. Cantor records: “It is possible that Helena, the mother of Constantine I

on the southwest hill. They were especially active in that part of Jerusalem located over and near the Gihon Spring. This is the region where the Temples were located.

The fact is, Jews took advantage of the wording of the Edict of Milan, at first interpreted by all as ecumenical and in favor of all religious sects, that Jews as well as other religions were to be reckoned on an equal level with Christians. Though the Edict itself was primarily intended for Christians, its ecumenical ambiguity gave others in the Empire the appearance of equal *de jure* rights of inclusion. It was interpreted as being particularly beneficial to the Jews in Jerusalem where Licinius had prime control. The eastern emperor was not as favorably inclined to Christian belief as Constantine. In the later part of his reign, Licinius progressively disfavored Christians while giving more patronage and benefits to pagans and Jews.

Jewish people reaped many favors during that brief period of twelve years in which Licinius was in command in Jerusalem and the East. Let us first take a look at the Edit of Milan. I will give an edited portion that shows the favorable conditions that Jews would — and did — interpret as giving them authority to purchase lands, construct buildings and reside once again in Jerusalem after being banned from living there for almost 200 years.

Look closely at the wording of the Edict of Milan. Though at points ambiguous as far as Jews are concerned, it is easy to see the enthusiasm, at first, Jewish people had at its promulgation. I emphasize parts in the Edict of Milan that Jews would have noted as applying to them in a special sense:

... was herself Jewish. She came from among the teeming urban masses in Asia Minor, where she had been a serving maid at a tavern" (*The Sacred Chain*, p.155). Cyril, the Archbishop of Jerusalem shows, that from around 340 to 360 C.E. Jewish people regularly encountered Christians within the City of Jerusalem. Cyril gave twenty-three lectures inside the newly built Church of the Holy Sepulchre instructing top Christians in Jerusalem how to discuss the principles of Christianity with "Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles" (Cyril, *Procatechesis*, 10). Throughout the lectures Cyril takes it for granted there were Jews in Jerusalem who could be engaged in dialogue by Christians, see Lecture XIII,37; XV,15).

“Already a long time ago, being anxious that freedom of worship ought not to be denied, but that *EVERYONE* should be given liberty in his mind and inclination to concern himself with divine matters, each according to his own preference, we bade the Christians to observe the faith of their own sect and worship. But since many and various conditions seemed to be clearly added in that rescript, in which liberty was conceded to the same persons, it may have happened that some were shortly afterwards inhibited from such observance.

When both I, Constantine Augustus, and I, Licinius Augustus, met under happy circumstances at Milan, and discussed all matters that concerned the public good and welfare, we believed that this thing, among others, which we saw would be beneficial to many people, should be regulated first of all so that reverence for the divinity was reserved, namely, to give both the Christians *AND ALL MEN* free choice to follow the religion which each one would, so that *WHATEVER DIVINITY THERE EXISTS* in the heavenly seat, might be appeased and propitious to us and to all those who are placed under our authority. Therefore, we believed that this policy was to be adopted on a salutary and most just basis, so that we decided that no one should be denied the opportunity of devoting himself either to the cult of the Christians *OR TO WHATEVER RELIGION HE HIMSELF FELT MOST SUITABLE FOR HIMSELF*, so that the highest Divinity, whose religion we obey with free minds, can exhibit to us in all things His customary favor and benevolence.... Your Excellency understands that, for the sake of peace in our time, free and open liberty of religion or cult has been similarly granted *TO OTHERS ALSO, in order that every individual may have UNRESTRAINED OPPORTUNITY TO PURSUE WHAT WORSHIP HE CHOOSES*. We have done this that it may not appear that we have in any way diminished any cult *OR ANY RELIGION*....

But that an outline of this decree of our kindness may come to the knowledge of all, it will be your duty to publish everywhere these ordinances, set out in an edict of yours, and to bring them to the knowledge *OF ALL*, in order that the decreeing of this our *kindness MAY NOT POSSIBLY ESCAPE THE NOTICE OF ANYONE*.²⁶²

It will also be profitable to record a portion of the Decree by Maximinus Daia in his response to the Edict of Milan in 313 C.E.:

²⁶² Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, X, v,2–14.

“The Emperor Caesar Gaius Valerius Maximinus Germanicus, Sarmaticus, Pius Felix Invictus Augustus.... Last year we addressed letters to the governors of all the provinces and laid down the law that if *ANYONE* wished to follow such custom or the same observance of worship, he should persist unimpeded in his purpose, and *THAT HE SHOULD NOT BE HINDERED OR PREVENTED* by anyone and that they should have ample opportunity to do, without any fear and suspicion, as they please. But even now it could not escape our notice that some of the judges wrongly interpreted our orders, and were instrumental in that our people had doubts concerning our commands, and caused them to go rather hesitantly to those religious observances which were pleasing to them. In order, therefore, that for the future all suspicion and uncertainty arising from their fear should be removed, we have decreed that this ordinance be published, so that it may be manifest to all that those who wish to follow this sect and worship are permitted, by virtue of this our bounty, as each of them wishes or finds it to his liking, to join the worship which they choose to make their religious observance. Permission has also been given *THAT THEY BUILD THE LORD'S HOUSES.*”²⁶³

Note in this latter decree that permission was given to build “The Lord’s Houses.” In Christian circles, this was an indication that new churches could once again be constructed. It was common in some Christian societies to call churches “Lord’s Houses.” But to Jews such permission meant only one thing. To the Jewish way of looking at things, there could only ONE “Lord’s House” — and that “House of the Lord” was the Temple. Jewish authorities could well have thought that this allowance in interpreting the Edict of Milan leaned heavily in the direction that they (in the ecumenical spirit of the times) might make a successful bid to rebuild the Holy Temple of God. Indeed, this is precisely what they did while Licinius ruled in the east. So, from 313 to 324 C.E. Jewish authorities were busy building a new Temple (with corollary structures) and also built seven synagogues to accommodate the influx of Jews returning to Jerusalem.

Of course, Licinius was succeeded by Constantine in 324 C.E. How were the Jews to interpret the wishes of Constantine now that

²⁶³ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, IX, x, 7–11.

he was sole emperor? At first, everything appeared to remain just fine. This is because at the exultation Constantine displayed at the defeat of Licinius in the east, the emperor composed a prayer to God that became a type of decree. In it Constantine stated without equivocation that he was giving permission to build “the House of God” (the Temple) in Jerusalem. Let us note that prayer (and decree) Eusebius recorded in his *Life of Constantine*.

Constantine Allowed the Rebuilding of the Temple

When Emperor Constantine became sole ruler of the Roman Empire by defeating Licinius in 324 C.E., he issued a decree to God’s “eastern nations” [all eastern nations in the Empire *including the Jews*] which contained his prayer to God for “**the restoration of thy most holy dwelling place**” [the House of God or the Temple] which “profane and impious men have defiled by the contamination of violence.”²⁶⁴ And, so no one could misinterpret, Constantine in the next section of his prayer contrasted the irrelevance of non-Christian temples to the spiritual Temple of the heart (using the apostle Paul’s analogy of the Christian *ekklesia* as the “Temple of God”). He wished to restore, Constantine said, that spiritual Temple through Christianity that is “according to nature” or “as our own natural possession.” This was the glorious edifice of God’s truth because each Christian was reckoned by God as being a Temple of God. In spite of this, and in contrast, he said:

“With regard to those [eastern nations *including the Jews*] who will hold themselves aloof from us, **let them have, if they please, their temples of lies**: we have the glorious edifice of thy truth which thou [God] has given us as our own natural possession.”²⁶⁵

The Jewish authorities took this prayer/decreed literally. To them it signified a definite permission (albeit given by Constantine with reluctance and disdain) to “have, if they please, their Temple.” The Jewish nation rejoiced exceedingly because they — as well as the civil and military authorities of the imperial government in the east — interpreted this as permission for not only pagan temples to be

²⁶⁴ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, II.55.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, II.56.

built or re-built, but that the Jews, as an “eastern people,” could rebuild their Temple at Jerusalem.

The Jews Were Not Able to Finish their Temple

Within a year, however, the efforts by Jewish authorities for the previous twelve years to build the Temple and the concomitant structures necessary for the Temple to function properly, came to an end. Constantine called for all Christian bishops to assemble in Nicea across the Bosphorus from the new city of Constantinople that he intended to build. At that conference, the Christian authorities had serious talks with Constantine about the Jews and the new Temple they were constructing. They expressed deep concern and displeasure about Constantine’s allowance to Jews to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. The majority of the bishops must have been violently opposed, because they were able to convince Constantine to rescind permission for the Jews to continue the Temple reconstruction.

With advice from his Christian bishops, Constantine developed a hostile attitude towards anything Jewish, and this included his decree of a year earlier that the Temple of God could be rebuilt in Jerusalem. Thus, at the Council of Nicaea he reversed his showing any ecumenical spirit to the Jews. From 325 C.E. onwards, Constantine said: “Let us have nothing to do with the detestable Jewish crowd.”²⁶⁴

And what happened? When the Jews in Jerusalem got the first decree of Constantine in 324 C.E. that the Temple of God could be rebuilt, they tried immediately to put the finishing touches on its reconstruction. They had already completed several buildings in the area of the Temple Mount (as I will soon show). But by late 325 C.E., Constantine’s mind had changed radically.

He ordered a termination to all building activities on the Temple. But, instead of simply commanding Jewish authorities to cease construction, he went beyond such civil actions and resorted to a brutal inhumane act. To humiliate the Jews (and this is the only main reason that he invoked the command), and end their undertaking, he was told by his ecclesiastical advisors that Old Testa-

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*,

ment laws forbade anyone disfigured in the flesh in any manner from entering the Holy Temple or have anything to do with it. So Constantine ordered all Jews working on the Temple (most were priests) to have their ears cut off. And this is what was performed on the Jewish men. This heinous disfigurement of the Jewish builders effectively put a stop to that attempt to rebuild the Temple in 325 C.E. The account is recorded in the writings of John Chrysostom.²⁶⁷ The narrative makes sense in every way and there is no reason for denying its veracity.

We will soon observe this left some completed houses, a palace, and an almost finished Temple on the Temple Mount. These were NOT remnants from the Temple of Herod, completely destroyed some 255 years before. There was not a scrap of Herod's Temple left intact after 70 C.E. But now on the Temple Mount were several completed buildings and an almost finished Temple in full view of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. What happened to these buildings has not been clearly recorded in history. We do know that Helena, the mother of Constantine (according to Muslim historical records who claimed to receive them from earlier Christian and Jewish sources), ordered the area returned to be the city dump as Jerome reported had occurred in the time of Hadrian almost 200 years before.²⁶⁸

The return of the Temple Mount to a city dump would have caused any Jewish buildings recently constructed not to be maintained and some may well have been torn down by order of Roman authorities. However, seven years after Constantine ordered the Jews to stop construction, we have the eyewitness report of a Christian pilgrim (the Bordeaux Pilgrim). He viewed the area in 333 C.E. and reported a Sanctuary standing on the Temple Mount where Solomon built his Temple, along with other buildings the Jewish authorities recently constructed (as we now know), over the

²⁶⁷ John Chrysostom, *Against Judaizing*, Disc.V. 10; VI.2.

²⁶⁸ Moshe Gil in his extensive work of research *A History of Palestine 634-1099*, p.65, approvingly (by his parentheses) states: "According to Muslim tradition (and there is no reason to doubt it), the Byzantines turned the Temple Mount into Jerusalem's refuse dump from the time of Helena, the mother of Constantine."

twelve years from the Edict of Milan in 313 C.E. to Constantine's order to cease work in 325 C.E. The Bordeaux Pilgrim provides us with an interesting and informative view of the Temple Mount in 333 C.E.²⁶⁹ Many of the buildings were still standing, but the consequent neglect of maintaining the structures quickly saw them fall to ruin and dilapidation.

Cyril, the Archbishop of Jerusalem, wrote about 20 years after Constantine stopped the Jews from completing the Temple. In his sermons, Cyril referred to this new Temple under construction by

²⁶⁹ The following excerpts are from the excellent translation by John Wilkinson in *Egeria's Travels*, pp. 155–7. The exact quote of the Bordeaux Pilgrim shows a number of buildings still standing on the Temple Mount, including the almost finished Temple. He stated:

“In Jerusalem beside the Temple are two large pools, one to the right and the other to the left, [the two pools were] built by Solomon.... There is also a vault there where Solomon used to torture demons, and the corner of a very lofty tower, which was where the Lord climbed and said to the Tempter, ‘Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.’ ... Below the pinnacle of this tower are very many chambers where Solomon had his palace.... And in the Sanctuary itself, where the Temple stood which Solomon built, there is marble in front of the altar which has on it the blood of Zachariah – you would think it had only been shed today.... Two statues of Hadrian are there, and, not far from them a pierced stone [a cave in a stone outcropping] which the Jews come and anoint each year. They mourn and rend their garments, and then depart. There too is the house of Hezekiah, king of Judah [a new house just built by the Jews for the Messiah whom they soon expected, as I will later explain].”

Note that the Bordeaux Pilgrim said the Sanctuary he saw was constructed where Solomon erected his Temple. And though he thought (or was told) that the tower near the Sanctuary was the pinnacle where Jesus was taken by Satan, it must be remembered that eyewitness accounts before the Pilgrim report no such tower (or any buildings whatever) on the Temple Mount. Pilgrim accounts are usually non-critical and assume that what they were told by guides was true. Sometimes they were not informed properly. For example, the Bordeaux Pilgrim was told that a single palm tree in the Kedron Valley was the very one from which the people obtained branches to adore Jesus during his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. (Although Josephus states that all trees within a radius of ten miles of Jerusalem were destroyed in 70 C.E., and it is well known that Palestinian palm trees only live to about 100 years old, and never more than 150 years.) Still, the Pilgrim accurately reported what he was told and those accounts might be true or stray wide from reality. For certain, however, all the buildings the Pilgrim saw on the Temple Mount near the Gihon Spring were recently built.

the Jews in a way that showed the structure *had only recently fallen into disrepair*. He mentioned the state of this new Temple while speaking at the Holy Sepulchre Church. He said: “The Temple of the Jews opposite to us *is fallen*.”²⁷⁰ Cyril is not speaking of a Temple that had *fallen* almost 300 years before, because his wording shows he meant the Temple *is fallen*, as though in the process of *falling* at the time Cyril spoke.

In another sermon a short time later, Cyril was teaching that an Antichrist will come to the Jews in Jerusalem and he will build from scratch the Temple of Solomon. The Antichrist would do this, according to Cyril,

“at the time when there shall not be left one stone upon another in the Temple of the Jews, according to the doom pronounced by our Savior; for when, either *decay of time* [in the future], or *demolition ensuing on pretense of new buildings* [he spoke of the *demolition* of the existing buildings], or from any other causes, *shall have overthrown all the stones* [stones still standing from the attempt to rebuild the Temple in Constantine’s time]. I mean not merely of the outer circuit, but of the inner shrine also, where the Cherubim were.”²⁷¹

Note the italicized words in Cyril’s quote. He was stating simply that the stones of the Temple that people could then witness standing on top of one another, would by *decay of time* or by their *demolition* be toppled once again so Jesus’ prophecy could remain valid.

What remarkable statements for Cyril to make. The Archbishop was stating that in his time (some 20 years after Constantine), it was possible to witness stones of the new Temple, begun with the Edict of Milan in 313 C.E., *still in place* at the Temple site. Cyril thought the Antichrist would cause a *demolition* of the stones of the Temple then in evidence. Though the Temple of which Cyril was speaking was in a ruined state, these remnants were *NOT* the remains of the Temple of Herod.²⁷² These were stones from the

²⁷⁰ *Catechetical Lectures*, X.11.

²⁷¹ Cyril, *ibid.*, XV.15.

²⁷² I have given numerous references from eyewitnesses up to 303 C.E., that the former Temple of Herod totally and completely vanished from the earth.

attempt to rebuild the Temple in the time of Constantine. This is important to note because this historical event has not been recognized by scholars of modern times to my knowledge. Most historians naturally assumed Cyril was speaking about the ruins of the Temple of Herod. In no way was this the case.

The structural remains on the Temple Mount that Cyril referred to were those recently constructed in the period of 12 years from the Edict of Milan in 313 to 325 C.E. when Constantine thwarted the Jewish attempt to rebuild the Temple. But it was not only these Temple ruins that Cyril was concerned about. This is because the Jews constructed a number of other new buildings in the area of the Temple from the Edict of Milan to Constantine, 325 C.E., and then to the time of Cyril, in 344 C.E. and beyond. Indeed, the Bordeaux Pilgrim stated that in 333 C.E. he saw on the Upper Hill in Jerusalem: "Seven synagogues were there, but only one is left — the rest have been 'ploughed and sown.'"²⁷³ This reference shows there were extensive remains of recently constructed Jewish buildings in Jerusalem.

The period of twelve years' tranquility for the Jewish people (313 to 325 C.E.) gave ample opportunity for them to initiate building programs in consequence of their return to Jerusalem. They concentrated on many building sites around the area of the Gihon Spring where the Temple of Herod formerly had been built. They also built their seven synagogues in the Upper City.

Another Attempt to Rebuild the Temple

The Emperor Constantine and his mother Helena in 325 C.E. put a stop to the first attempt of the Jews to rebuild the Temple on the Temple Mount. But 37 years later, in 362 to 363 C.E., Emperor Julian, nephew of Constantine who became known as "the Apostate," gave the Jews clear permission to rebuild the Temple. Jewish authorities responded with vigor and commenced the endeavor. In their favor, they still had some ruins of the former buildings in place on the Temple Mount. In many cases they could reuse some

²⁷³ Translation of the Bordeaux Pilgrim by Wilkinson in *Egeria's Travels*, p.158.

stones and other artifacts already in the area to fashion a new Temple with its subsidiary buildings.

While Constantine's sons and immediate successors were Christian in belief (and Julian himself was reared in a Christian atmosphere), when Julian the Apostate assumed the emperorship, he immediately began to promote the early religions of Rome. He wanted to re-establish what Christian rulers were trying to suppress and abolish. This was manifested by his antipathy toward the Christian clergy and their teachings. Because the Jews were not Christians, this prompted Julian to look on the Jewish people with favor. One reason was because the Jews, though they did not participate in the pagan religions that dominated Rome, were nonetheless respected by early Hellenistic believers as a legitimate religion, and were accorded tolerance.

Julian wanted to restore this earlier favorable relationship that Rome had with the Jews within the previous 150 years. Indeed, he went even farther. In 361 C.E. he devised a plan to aid the Jews in finishing the Temple begun in the reign of Constantine. Some remnants of that building enterprise were still in place on the Temple Mount (though in a disheveled state). When Julian gave the order that the Temple could once again be constructed, the Jews responded with alacrity. Thinking the time of the Messiah might be near, they immediately began the work of preparation for restoring the Temple that lay in ruins.

The Jews surveyed the area of the former Temple Mount built in the time of Constantine. They found they were able to use some remains of those edifices erected in the twelve years from the Edict of Milan (313 C.E.) to the Nicean Council (325 C.E.). Socrates, the Christian historian in the early fifth century who had access to official Roman records, mentioned the Jewish rebuilding of the Temple in the time of Julian and how Julian provided imperial funds to help accomplish the task.²⁷⁴ Rufinus, also in the early fifth century, recorded that the Jews began their building activities thinking that Messiah was arriving or already had arrived.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴ Socrates, *History* III.20.

²⁷⁵ Avi-Yonah, *ibid.*, p.194.

Socrates mentioned that the Jewish workers quickly obtained lime and cement and that they began to destroy the old foundations. The records show that that foundation stones from the rebuilding in the time of Constantine were in place. Some of the ruins are even detailed. Philostorgius related that around the Temple Mount in the time of Julian there were ruined colonnades, and that in one of the remaining porticos the Jews at the time of the rebuilding established a provisional synagogue for workers who labored in Jerusalem.²⁷⁶

The Christian historian Sozomen went farther in his description of the Temple Mount in Julian's time. He said the Jews found the

“ruins of the former building [the Temple built in the time of Constantine], they dug up the ground and cleared away its foundation [of the recent Temple]; it is said that the following day when they were about to lay the first foundation [of their new Temple], a great earthquake occurred, and by the violent agitation of the earth, stones were thrown up from the depths, by which those of the Jews who were engaged in the work were wounded, as likewise those who were merely looking on. *The houses and public porticos near the site of the Temple* [the Jews found buildings and colonnades already located on the Temple Mount — also built in the time of Constantine], in which they [the Jews] had diverted themselves, were suddenly thrown down.”²⁷⁷

Theodoret stated that the Jewish builders of the new Temple slept “at night in an adjacent building.”²⁷⁸

We have further records from Jewish writings of the numerous letters and other documents found in the Cairo Geniza. They also show there remained portions of the former Temple constructed in the time of Constantine/Julian. The Jewish scholar Reuven Hammer in his *The Jerusalem Anthology*, quotes the central and prime document that tells of seventy Jewish families from Tiberias wanting to settle in the *southern* area of Jerusalem in the first year of Omar (638 C.E.). The document states:

²⁷⁶ Philostorgius, VII.9a.

²⁷⁷ Sozomen, *History* V.22.

²⁷⁸ Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* III.15.

“Omar decreed 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 water of Shiloah**, which could be used for immersion. This was granted them 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 many generations.*”²⁷⁹

Note that the historical document shows that as late as the Islamic conquest there were still observable remains of buildings that were in the region for many generations. These were remnants of the partially built Temples begun in the time of Constantine (313 to 325 C.E.), added to and refurbished in the time of Emperor Julian in 362 and 363 C.E. These ruined buildings were located on the former Temple Mount from the time of Herod and Jesus. Note that this area was *south* of the Haram, near the Gihon Spring and the Siloam pool. We will see that among those ruins, the Jews gathered every year around a portion of the “Western Wall” of the Holy of Holies of the Temple that remained after the time of Julian’s death.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁹ Hammer, *Jerusalem Anthology*, p.148.

²⁸⁰ In no way could these building activities by Jewish authorities be on or around the “Rock” of the Dome of the Rock. During this time Helena, Constantine’s mother, designated that place in the Praetorium as the site to build the new “St. Cyrus and St. John Church” over the “Pavement” (the “Rock” on which Jesus stood before Pilate). See “Life of Constantine” in Wilkinson’s *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*, p.204. Construction started some 30 years after Helena’s visit to Jerusalem. This church was enlarged probably in the fifth century as a major church called “The Church of the Holy Wisdom.” Jewish attempts to build two Temples (in the time of Constantine and Julian) were NOT within the area of the Praetorium where the Dome of the Rock was later built. The Jews were interested in the southeastern ridge as the site of the original “Mount Zion” and the “Ophel” (where the Temples once stood) and not in northeast Jerusalem of the Baris that Herod made into Fort Antonia. Jerome tells us that the Praetorium had by 385 C.E. become the headquarters once again for the Roman (Byzantine) executive in charge of Jerusalem (Letter 108).

The Remains of the Temple in the Time of Julian

The historical accounts show there were several edifices constructed on the Temple Mount from the Edict of Milan in 313 C.E. up to Julian the Apostate. Only a minority of these structures survived the time of Julian, and a portion of the “Western Wall” of the Holy of Holies remained. But with the death of Julian, the Jews fell out of favor with Roman authorities once again and most of the new buildings on the Temple Mount were destroyed or collapsed over time. The restriction of Hadrian that Jews could no longer visit Jerusalem was also reinstated (it had also been revived by Constantine for a short period). This meant Jews were not allowed to have free access to their Temple site or the City of Jerusalem as they had for most of the previous forty years.²⁸¹ This was not strictly enforced because we are told by Jerome that after Julian, Jews were permitted to visit the Temple site once a year on the Ninth of Ab in order to mourn the destruction of the Temple.²⁸² Jerome in his *Commentary on Zephaniah* described how the Jews bribed Roman soldiers to give them permission to mourn at the site of the Temple.²⁸³ Jerome said many people came lamenting over the fall of the Temple (even feeble women and elderly men). They made their hair disheveled and tore their garments while blowing

²⁸¹ Some twenty years after Julian’s death, we have the Christian theologian, Gregory of Nyssa stating:

“Up to the time of the manifestation of Christ the royal palaces in Jerusalem were in all their splendor: there was their far-famed Temple, ... [but now] **no traces even of their Temple can be recognized**, and their splendid city **has been left in ruins**, so that there remains to the Jews nothing of the ancient [Herodian] institutions; while by the command of those who rule over them the very ground of Jerusalem which they so venerated is forbidden to them” (*The Great Catechism*, ch.XVIII).

There is more in the fifth century. In 416 C.E., Theodoret went to Jerusalem. He looked at the southeast area where the former Jerusalem was situated near the Gihon Spring (where all the Temples were located). ‘With my own eyes,’ he writes, ‘**I have seen that desolation**. The prediction [of Christ] rang in my ears when I saw the fulfillment before my eyes and I lauded and worshipped the truth’” (*Graec. Affect. Cur.* 1090).

²⁸² Jerome, *Commentary on Zephaniah* 1:15 and Avi-Yonah, *ibid.*, p.223 for details).

²⁸³ Jerome, *Commentary on Zephaniah* 1:15.

the *shofar*. The Roman soldiers allowed this because it was profitable to them to let the Jewish mourners enter the area of the Temple Mount and to stay even longer at the site if more money were paid to the soldiers.

Though the Jews were allowed to visit the site of the former Temples over the Gihon Spring, Christian authorities added insult by placing a statue of Hadrian and one of Jupiter at the site. Jerome stated:

“The statue of Hadrian and the idol of Jupiter *have been placed* where once there was the Temple and worship of God.”²⁸⁴

As stated before, the “idol of Jupiter” could well have been Hadrian himself dressed in the outward form of Jupiter. It was common practice in the time of the Empire for emperors to adorn themselves like the gods of Rome.²⁸⁵ And note this, it is remarkable that Jerome said that “the statue of Hadrian and the idol of Jupiter *have been placed* ...” This, when taken literally, seems to show that the two statues of Hadrian and Jupiter [Hadrian dressed as Jupiter] *had only recently* been placed (in the time of Jerome) in the region of the former Temple of God. But there is more.

For some reason, the statue assigned to Jupiter was then removed from the area of the Temple and only the statue of Hadrian remained in what Jerome thought was the Holy of Holies. Jerome said that in this later period there was:

²⁸⁴ Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*, in CCL, 73, ed. M. Adrian, p.33.

²⁸⁵ Josephus said the statue of Augustus at Caesarea was fashioned like an image to Jupiter (War I.21,7). Indeed, there were numerous references to men who had statues in the guise of Hercules. A comment by Gibbon ought to suffice to show how common this was.

“Commodus eagerly embraced the glorious resemblance, and styled himself (as we still read on his medals) the Roman Hercules. The club and the lion’s hide were placed by the side of the throne, amongst the ensigns of sovereignty; and statues were erected, in which Commodus was represented in the character, and with the attributes, of the god, whose valor and dexterity he endeavored to emulate in the daily course of his ferocious amusements” (*Decline and Fall*, vol.I, p.107).

“an equestrian statue of Hadrian, which stands in the place of the Holy of Holies [the inner sanctum of the Temple of God] *to this very day.*”²⁸⁶

Consider how this affected Jewish people who visited the site on the Day of Atonement. When they assembled near the Holy of Holies,” the Jews looked at the statue of Hadrian every time they convened their yearly worship at *that* “Western Wall” once part of the Holy of Holies.

²⁸⁶ Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, Sources chretiennes 259, ed. E. Bonnard, p282.