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*Chapter 10*

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ALL *JEWISH* BUILDINGS  
IN JERUSALEM  
DESTROYED IN 70 C.E.

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**L**ET US NOW RETURN to the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. There is a considerable amount of historical information that we need to recognize to understand how the region of the Temples finally became forgotten by not only the Roman secular world, but even the Christians, Muslims and Jews also forgot. We need to return once more to realize that the Haram esh-Sharif is NOT the site of the Temple.

The historical records clearly show the Haram esh-Sharif was the former site of Fort Antonia. It survived the Roman/Jewish War of 66–73 C.E. because that complex of buildings was *Roman* property, and Titus, the Roman general, saved the Fortress after the war to house the Tenth Legion quartered in the area of Jerusalem to guard and maintain the peace. On the other hand, all the buildings that made up *Jewish* Jerusalem were destroyed to the ground and

dismantled during and after the war. When those structures are catalogued, it becomes a sad list showing utter destruction.

It registers the great casualties of war besides the killing and maiming multitudes of human beings. The inventory of those magnificent buildings in Jerusalem, of which nothing remains today, is an awesome witness to the annihilation of the region by the Romans. An itemized account of destruction (besides the destruction of the Temple) included the complete ruin of the Palace of Herod that Josephus said was so elegant and grand that it was “baffling all description: indeed, in extravagance and equipment no building surpassed it.”<sup>198</sup>

What happened to that complex of buildings? The grounds of the palace had immense walls surrounding it 45 feet high. The interior areas with their living quarters were beautiful beyond compare. But, if you ask archaeologists today if they can find a trace of Herod’s Palace and its walls, they admit it has completely disappeared from the face of the earth. Not a stone has been left on another. True, scholars think they may have located a part of the podium on which the Palace was built, but there is nothing left “to recreate its original design.... None of this superstructure has survived. We know that they [the walls and buildings] sprawled over more than 4.5 acres stretching across the present Armenian compound.”<sup>199</sup> In spite of its large size and grandeur, there is absolutely nothing left of Herod’s Palace to give archaeologists today a hint even of its former outline.

There are other important buildings that were destroyed that elude the attention of the archaeologists. In Jerusalem in the time of Jesus was the large Hippodrome (the circus area for horse races). This sporting facility was at least as large in area as Herod’s Palace and located somewhere in the southern part of Jerusalem.<sup>200</sup> One would think it would be an easy task to find remains of this Hippodrome. But here too, there is not one stone from those buildings to be found. Not a trace of its foundational parameters are

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<sup>198</sup> *War* V.4,4 ¶177 Loeb edition

<sup>199</sup> Comments of Cornfeld, *The Jewish War*, p.344, n.182 [a].

<sup>200</sup> *Antiquities* XVII.10,2; *War* II.3,1.

visible today. The Hippodrome was leveled to the extent scholars are not even sure where it was located.

Another major building was the Xystus, constructed next to the Temple, with a roadway from the Temple to its enclosure. It was originally built to be a type of gymnasium, but it became a place for general public meetings where great crowds could assemble. Alfred Edersheim called this building “the immense Xystus ... surrounded by a covered colonnade.”<sup>201</sup> It was in the Xystus where the Sanhedrin (the Supreme Court of the Jews) assembled just before the Roman/Jewish War. But what happened to the stones that made up that “immense Xystus” which occupied an expanse surely equal to the present Knesset (the modern Parliament building of Israel located in west Jerusalem)? Like the stones that made up the Temple and its walls, the Xystus was so destroyed in the war that no archaeologist can identify a single stone comprising that majestic and significant building.

The same thing applies to the magnificent palace of Herod Agrippa the Second who occupied and refurbished the former palace of the Hasmonean kings situated just west and higher up the slope from the Xystus. That Hasmonean palace was almost as grand in its beauty as that of Herod the Great. But again, no archaeologist today can point to a single stone in Jerusalem that can confidently be identified as belonging to that impressive and grand palace.

There are other examples. At the beginning of the war, insurgents set fire to the House of Ananias (the High Priest).<sup>202</sup> This important building was the virtual headquarters of all religious matters in the country outside those administered by the Temple

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<sup>201</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*, p.29. Formerly, the Sanhedrin was housed in the Temple itself. While located within the Temple, half the chamber of the Sanhedrin (called the Chamber of Hewn Stones) was in the priest’s portion of the sacred enclosure, and half was in the Court of Israel. But in 30 C.E., the Sanhedrin moved from their quarters in the Temple near the Altar of Burnt Offering to a building in the eastern court of the Temple called the “Trading Place.” Then for some reason, the “Trading Place” proved to be unsatisfactory. The Sanhedrin then moved, immediately before the Roman/Jewish War, to the Xystus located just west of the Temple.

<sup>202</sup> *War II*.17.6.

and the Sanhedrin. It must have been a large and sumptuous building for the High Priests. But look in Jerusalem today, archaeologists cannot discover a single stone on top of another that made up that edifice.

There is more. One of the first public government buildings the revolutionaries burnt to the ground was the Archive Building where government records of taxation, contracts involving money and other registers of financial accountability were housed.<sup>203</sup> No remains of this building are found today. There were other government buildings in the same "City Hall" area that were demolished as well. In ruining them, Josephus said they "thus burnt down the nerves of the city."<sup>204</sup>

All the above-mentioned buildings were located in either the aristocratic southern part of the western hill that came to be called "Zion," or in the region of the Tyropoeon Valley between the original City of David and the "Upper City" situated on the western hill. For an up-to-date archaeological appraisal of what happened to all those buildings in the areas above, one can read the article by Hillel Geva in the November/December, 1997 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*. He is one of the chief archaeologists to excavate in this area of early Jerusalem. He said: "In short, both the literary and the archaeological evidence indicate that the city was totally destroyed in 70 C.E. Not a single building remained standing."<sup>205</sup>

What should be remembered in our present inquiry is the fact that all these buildings were immense in size and comparable to many grand edifices we witness in our own cities. And indeed, if cities today are destroyed by bombs, fire or other weapons of war, it is most always possible for investigators to discover some kind of foundational outlines of the former buildings. But with the Jerusalem of Herod and Jesus, the matter is far different, and this is precisely how Jesus prophesied that it would be. No foundation stones of any kind can be found.

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<sup>203</sup> *War* II.17,6.

<sup>204</sup> *War* II.17,6.

<sup>205</sup> Page 37, emphasis mine.

Regardless of these facts, however, the lower courses of the four walls surrounding the Haram esh-Sharif have continued to exist for the most part in perfect shape and position for centuries after the war was over. They are still intact and in splendid condition after 2000 years. Those lower courses of that rectangular enclosure were not dislodged in the slightest. Their continuance is in contrast to all other buildings and walls in Jerusalem. The walls of the Haram were left intact by Titus to be the ramparts that quartered the Tenth Legion. Those walls did so effectively until 289 C.E. when the Legion left for Ailat.

Clearly, Roman troops did not tear down or root up the monumental stones from the foundations of the walls surrounding the Haram esh-Sharif. They left them alone. After all, there were no precious items or Jewish gold deposited in Fort Antonia and no need to demolish structures belonging to Romans in order to discover hidden Jewish treasure. The structures associated with the Haram esh-Sharif did not represent buildings formerly under the command of Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. Those buildings were Roman from 6 C.E. onward. This is why the Haram esh-Sharif continues to exist in magnificent glory to this day.