
Chapter 11

EVERY STONE UPROOTED FROM THE TEMPLE

MANY CITIES of the Mediterranean world that existed in the first century have remnant examples of their former greatness that we today can observe and admire (like Rome and Athens). However, the only monument of first century Jerusalem that remains in its full outline form is the Haram esh-Sharif. Even the western wall and three fortresses in the Upper City that Titus wanted to leave standing so posterity could later see what a great and powerful city Jerusalem had been, were leveled to the ground within four months of the war's end.

The only remnants to be seen of any buildings in the Jerusalem area that pre-date the 70 C.E. period are those walls surrounding the Haram. Those stones are still solidly in place. I will show from a great deal of documentary evidence, however, that those walls of the Haram esh-Sharif do not belong to the Temple that existed in the time of Herod and Jesus. They were the remains of Fort Antonia.

Though we have historical records that Jerusalem was once a bustling and vibrant city with wondrous buildings to behold, and a Temple that words could hardly describe for its grandeur and beauty, none of those structures or their ruins are to be seen. So uprooted and laid even to the ground were those buildings that a person soon after 70 C.E. arriving on the scene would hardly have believed there once had been a city in the area. The stones that comprised the buildings, and the Temple, and the walls that surrounded them are nowhere to be found today. This is precisely what Jesus said would be the case in his prophecies about the Temple and Jerusalem.

The predictions of Jesus have been fulfilled precisely. The fact is, none of the stones of the City of Jerusalem and the Temple from their glory before 70 C.E. is any longer on site for archaeologists to discover. All have been taken away and used in other buildings or construction programs. This has resulted in the total obliteration of the former City of Jerusalem.

Central to the whole issue are the prophecies of Jesus particularly in the Gospel of Luke. He prophesied that not one stone would be left on one another, either of the City of Jerusalem and its walls, or also of the Temple and its walls.²⁰⁶

Why are these two prophecies of Luke cardinal to our inquiry? Because many scholars feel Luke recorded these two predictions of Jesus somewhere between 63 and 70 C.E., while others feel the composition was shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem.²⁰⁷ Be that as it may, whether before or after the destruction of the Tem-

²⁰⁶ Jesus said:

“For the days shall come upon thee, that thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. And shall lay thee [Jerusalem] even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation” (Luke 19:43–44).

“As some spake of the Temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he [Jesus] said; ‘As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down’” (Luke 21:5–6).

²⁰⁷ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th ed.), article “Luke, Gospel of.”

ple and the whole City, many people would have been alive to witness to the truth of the prophecies. I believe the prophecies were accurate and uttered before the events. Even in the Slavonic version of Josephus we have Josephus supposedly stating that Jesus was crucified “because he prophesied the **destruction of the city** and the **devastation of the temple.**”²⁰⁸

Even the prophecy in the Book of Revelation about Two Witnesses building another Temple (*naos*) is pertinent. This book was in circulation among Christians by the last decade of the first century. The prophecy speaks of the Temple as no longer in existence, and that a new Temple would be built by authority of Two Witnesses. These two priests were to take measuring rods to mark out dimensions of a new Holy Place and Holy of Holies because the former divisions of the Temple had been destroyed (Revelation 11:1–12). They were also ordered to leave something out. They were told not to build the former barriers that surrounded the Temple courts so that Gentiles could continue to trample those holy areas along with the precincts that once comprised Jerusalem. The author said those barriers had been “cast out” (verse 2) as though their stones had been thrown down and tossed away. The Two Witnesses were not to rebuild them. This Book of Revelation speaks about rebuilding an Inner Temple, but not the outer courts.

Even if Luke wrote after the year of 70 C.E. (as some critical scholars feel), this still provides powerful eyewitness accounts written by the evangelist. Let’s face it. No one in his right mind would record the prophecies of Jesus about the total and absolute obliteration of the City of Jerusalem and Temple if thousands of stones making up the walls of the City and the Temple areas were still in place contrary to what Jesus stated.

Note this point carefully. If the Haram esh-Sharif were indeed the remnants of the walls around the Temple (and the 10,000 stones that make up those walls today were there in the time of Jesus and also after 70 C.E.), then Luke would have been considered an outright falsifier of the facts to state that every one of those stones was to be uprooted and leveled to the ground. Even critical

²⁰⁸ *The Jewish War*, Loeb edition, vol.III, p.657.

scholars must admit that Luke would not likely record prophecies of Jesus after 70 C.E. were they not true for everyone to witness in the time of writing or at the time he published his Gospel. The fact is, the walls around the Haram esh-Sharif were not the walls of the Temple, nor did people after 6 C.E. consider those ramparts to be a part of "Jewish Jerusalem."

These prophecies of Jesus given in Luke's account also apply to the similar predictions of Jesus recorded in Matthew and Mark. Because these two Gospel accounts along with Luke were literary productions written within a decade or two of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 C.E., we must consider their statements to be eyewitness accounts. But if these descriptions in the Gospels were untrue (with walls and buildings still in evidence) how can we of modern times account for the widespread growth of Christianity after 70 C.E., a result of the supposed accuracy in the Gospel accounts?²⁰⁹

These early first century Gospel accounts must be reckoned as documents recording truthful events. Central to the whole issue is that the very foundation of Christian teaching centers on the presentation of "truth" as a primary principle. And indeed, thousands upon thousands of people in the very region of Jerusalem and Palestine came to accept the basic truths of the teachings and prophecies of Jesus by the end of the first century. Were the stones of the Temple walls still in place (as we presently observe with the walls of the Haram), people could have dismissed the predictions of Jesus as worthless.

We will see additional reasons why the Haram was NOT the site of the Temple, but was actually the locale of Fort Antonia. There was no doubt to the early Christians concerning this matter. Those early Palestinian Christians could witness that the prophecies of Jesus were clearly accurate. The evidences for this are so profound and extensive, that one wonders why modern people

²⁰⁹ Eusebius, the fourth century Christian historian, records there was a community of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem until the time Aelia was constructed in the second century, and that Gentile bishops continued to flourish in the Jerusalem area continuously until Eusebius' own time.

might doubt the reliability of those predictions made by Jesus. Christian records from eyewitnesses consistently inform us that the prophecies of Jesus had been fulfilled precisely.

Eyewitnesses Confirm the Gospel Prophecies

People of later times could observe the truth that what Luke and the other Gospel writers wrote was in fact true. Even early Jewish records retain eyewitness accounts of the ruination and destruction of the Temple in all its official precincts. (In the quotes that follow, emphases and words in brackets are mine.)

“Once as Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai was coming forth from Jerusalem [at the very end of the war], Rabbi Joshua followed after him and **beheld the Temple in ruins**. ‘Woe unto us!’ Rabbi Joshua cried, ‘that this, the place where the iniquities of Israel were atoned for, is laid waste’.”²¹⁰

There is little ambiguity in this Jewish description of the desolation of the Temple with all its sacred facilities at the very end of the war.

There were other corroborative accounts. There was the testimony of Barnabas who wrote as an eyewitness on the condition of Jerusalem and the Temple within 15 years of their destruction. Speaking about the Temple, Barnabas stated:

“Through their war [the Jewish war with the Romans] it [the Temple] **has been destroyed by the enemy** [the Romans].... And again it was made manifest how the Temple and the people of Israel should be given up to their enemies. For the scripture saith, ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days that the Lord shall deliver up the sheep of his pasture, and their fold and their tower [the Temple] **shall he give up to destruction**’; and *it happened according to that which the Lord had spoken*.”²¹¹

²¹⁰ Aboth de Rabbi Nathan, ed. Salomon Schechter, Vienna 1887, version A (=ARNA ch.4:5, p.21. [Judah Goldin: *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, in Yale Judaica Series, vol. X (New Haven 1955), p.34]).

²¹¹ Barnabas 16:4–5. Note that this account in Barnabas describes the Temple (both its Inner and Outer buildings and its walls) as being a “tower.” This is a true description. We will later see that Josephus shows that the Temple and its outer walls as being a perfect square in shape and that it was towering upwards

This is a very important reference by Barnabas. It tells us the Temple was destroyed precisely as Jesus predicted, and the prime feature of that prediction was that not one stone would be left on top of another of either the Temple or its outer walls.

There is also the book Ezra IV, written in Hebrew not more than thirty years after the destruction of the Temple. The author claimed to witness the complete ruin of the holy sanctuary. He wrote about a widow that just lost her son (a son of her old age) who died on his wedding night under the wedding canopy itself. To the author, this was like Israel who just suffered at seeing the Temple's ruin:

“Thou foolish woman, why dost thou weep? Seest thou not the mourning of Zion, our Mother? **For thou seest how our sanctuary is laid waste. Our altar thrown down, our Temple destroyed.**”²¹²

While Barnabas and the book Ezra IV attest to the destruction of the Temple (and Jewish records describe the Temple as a heap of stones in the sixty years that followed the war), there still remained within that melancholy scene of desolation the four walls of the Haram esh-Sharif with its 10,000 stones splendidly in place in the lower courses. The walls around the Haram were NOT laid even with the ground when Titus demolished Jewish Jerusalem. This is because, as we have seen, the Haram was NOT a part of the Temple or even part of the municipality of Jerusalem.

There were Jewish accounts in the Talmudic period about events in Jerusalem and the Roman province of Palestine. Some are collected by Nathan Ausubel in *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore*. Note how the Jewish people viewed the situation in the six decades following the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem.

“Desolate lay Zion, in ruins moldered Jerusalem; **the Temple was but a heap of stones. Where once stood the Sanctuary now grew weeds and jackals howled in the Temple court,** where once David the Psalmist and his vast choir of Levites plucked the

from the very bottom of the Kedron Valley to equal the height of a modern 45 story building. The Temple was indeed a “tower” just as Barnabas, an eyewitness, stated that it was.

²¹² R.H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigraphica*, vol. II, pp.604-5.

harp strings and raised their voices in songs of praise to the Eternal. Sixty years had passed since Titus the Roman sacked the Temple and led the Jewish captives in triumph to Rome. There were now few [Jewish people] alive who could remember the beauty of the Temple.”²¹³

Other Eyewitness Accounts

In the middle of the second century, we have further accounts about the utter desolation of the Temple. Look at the statement of Justin Martyr (a Samaritan Christian from Palestine) speaking to Trypho the Jew in a cordial type of debate or discussion. They were reviewing the state of affairs then extant concerning the City of Jerusalem and the Temple. Justin reminded Trypho of a prophecy in the Scriptures that Trypho agreed had been fulfilled. Justin said:

“The city of Thy holiness **has become desolate**. Zion **has become as a wilderness**, Jerusalem a curse; the house [the Temple], our holiness, and the glory which our fathers blessed, **has been burned with fire**; and all the glorious nations [the nations once adhering to Judaism, e.g. Edomites, Iturians, etc.] have fallen along with it [with the Temple]. And in addition to these [misfortunes], O Lord, Thou hast refrained Thyself, and art silent, and hast humbled us very much.”²¹⁴

There was nothing left of original Jerusalem or the Temple when Justin Martyr and Trypho were debating. This was the case although much construction was going on in the area with the building of Aelia. Hadrian the emperor had decreed that a new Gentile city named Aelia should be built in the northwest section of old Jerusalem. The original Jerusalem, however, south of the former Upper City and all of the area of the Lower City, remained in complete ruins. Justin and Trypho were not speaking about the Haram in Jerusalem nor about the buildings of the new City of Aelia. They were concerned with Jewish Jerusalem as it existed before 70 C.E., which was then in thorough ruins and desolation.

²¹³ Nathan Ausubel, *A Treasury of Jewish Folklore* (Crown Publishers: NY, 1978), pp.233–4.

²¹⁴ Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapter 25.

So destroyed was the site of the former Temple and the Mount of the Temple,²¹⁵ that Jerome in the late fourth century said that Hadrian had turned the site into the city dump for his new city called Aelia. Note what Jerome recorded in his Commentary on Isaiah 64:11 where he first quoted the verse, then gave his comments.

“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].”²¹⁶

Hadrian converted the site of the former Temple into the dump for the City of Aelia to humiliate the Jews with whom he just completed a war. This area for the city dump remained in the region of the former Temple for several decades because as time went on parts of the former Temple area were used for other things. Whatever the case, there was nothing left of the former Temple itself, and its primary area became the city dump of Aelia.

Examine this action by Hadrian if the Haram was the location of the Temples. For Hadrian to make the Haram the city dump would have been the height of stupidity. While Aelia had no walls, unlike most classical cities, the Haram had four strong walls to protect, what? Ash, refuse and dung heaps of the city? This makes no sense.

Further, the main water supply for Aelia was in the center of the Haram. Having the walls of the Haram protect the water reservoirs makes sense, but to put the city dump on top of the main water supply for the city is ludicrous to consider.

The four walled region of the Haram, however, was perfect for the Camp of the Tenth Legion. This is what Herod designed the area to be, and Hadrian would have done the same thing. Indeed,

²¹⁵ Early Jewish records in the Mishnah stated was a 750 feet square area, which would equal about 13 and a quarter acres. Middoth II.1.

²¹⁶ Quoted with notes and commentary by Prof. Moshe Gil in *A History of Palestine 634–1099*, p.67, n.70.

the Haram esh-Sharif was not a part of Jewish Jerusalem in the time of Herod and Jesus.

Desolation of Jewish Jerusalem Was Thorough

We have more information about the condition of the former Jewish Jerusalem. About 180 C.E. the Greek geographer named Pausanius made a remark about Jerusalem (with which he was apparently well acquainted, he even knew where the monuments of Helen of Abiadene were located in the area). Pausanius spoke about: "The City of Jerusalem, a city that the Roman king **destroyed to its foundations.**"²¹⁷

There is even more detailed evidence. About 40 years later we have information about Jerusalem from an author who claimed to have expert knowledge of Jewish affairs in Jerusalem within the first century. He called himself "Clement." The author claimed to be the Clement mentioned in the New Testament who the apostle Paul referred to in Philippians 4:3. Though the narrative has information that makes around 220 C.E. a more plausible time of writing (as most modern scholars believe), the author of the Clementine Homilies had interesting knowledge about Jewish affairs in Palestine in this period. His account deserves our attention. In his time there were no stones still in place in the walls of the ruined Temple (though we know the Haram had its lower stones in place even as "Clement" wrote). The author stated:

"Accordingly, therefore, [Jesus] prophesying concerning the Temple, said: 'See ye these buildings? Verily I say to you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another which shall not be taken away; and this generation shall not pass until the destruction begin. For they shall come, and shall sit here, and shall besiege it, and shall slay your children here.' And in like manner He spoke in plain words the things that were straightway to happen, **which we can now see with our eyes**, in order that the accomplishment might be among those to whom the word was spoken. For the Prophet of truth utters the word of proof in order to the faith of His hearers."²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Pausanius, *Guide to Greece*, Book VIII.16.

²¹⁸ *Clementine Homilies*, Homily III, chapter XV.

The narrative by this author (who lived a little over a hundred years after the destruction of Jerusalem) is from a person well acquainted with Jewish and Palestinian affairs. He said in clear terms there was in his time not one stone left on top of another of the Temple. Note that he explicitly stated “we can now see with the eyes” these very predictions of Jesus fully accomplished. This “Clement” was certainly not referring to the 10,000 stones then comprising the walls of the Haram esh-Sharif which were then (as today) very much in place in their lower courses.

“Clement” knew what he was talking about. He was quoted favorably by Origen, who lived shortly after this “Clement.”²¹⁹ This is significant because Origen had been to Aelia (the new name for Jerusalem) and was in charge of the Caesarean library on the coast of Palestine. Had this “Clement” been describing conditions of the former Temple that were not true, Origen would have corrected him or not cited him as a reliable witness.

The truth is, at the beginning of the third century no stones remained in place of the Temple or its walls from the former Jerusalem. There was another person who lived near “Clement’s” time who said the same thing. That person was Hippolytus who wrote about 225 C.E.

“Come, then, O blessed Isaiah; arise, tell us clearly what thou didst prophesy with respect to the mighty Babylon. For thou didst speak also of Jerusalem, and thy word is accomplished. For thou didst speak boldly and openly: Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate as overthrown by many strangers. The daughter of Sion shall be left as a cottage [a ramshackle building] in a vineyard and as a lodge [a temporary structure] in a garden of cucumbers [a patch of land suitable for farming], as a besieged city. What then? *Are not these things come to pass? Are not the things announced by thee fulfilled?* Is not their country, Judea, desolate? Is not the holy place [the Temple itself] **burned with fire? Are not their walls cast down?** Are not their cities destroyed? Their land, do not strangers devour it? Do not the Romans rule the country?”²²⁰

²¹⁹ *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, article “Origen.”

²²⁰ Hippolytus, *Works*, Part II.30 Ante-Nicene Fathers, brackets and emphasis

Note carefully what Hippolytus stated. As far as former Jerusalem and the Temple were concerned, NONE OF THEIR WALLS were standing in 225 C.E. Even Aelia had no walls around it at the time. Of course, the Haram esh-Sharif had its 10,000 stones making up its solid walls, but those walls and buildings were not even considered by Hippolytus. He knew the Haram was the Roman fort that guarded the ruins of former Jerusalem and the new City of Aelia. It was here where the Tenth Legion had its headquarters and camp, as Hippolytus said: “Do not the Romans rule the country?”

Eusebius of Caesarea Was a Valuable Witness

As for eyewitness accounts, we now come to one of the most important observers. That is Eusebius, who was curator of the library at Caesarea. He also got much of his historical information from the library at Aelia — the former Jerusalem. Eusebius is known in the scholarly Christian world as the “Father of Christian History.” He was meticulous in research and in his writings, and in our present inquiry concerning the state of Jerusalem and the Temple, he is a valuable witness with first rate credentials. The reason for this is that Eusebius gives eyewitness testimony as to what was occurring in Aelia (that is, Jerusalem) when he wrote one of his major historical works titled *Demonstratio Evangelica (Proof of the Gospel)*. Eusebius composed this extensive and highly significant work of history and theology over the span of a few years up to about 302 C.E.²²¹

Eusebius is a proper witness to the state of Jerusalem and the

are mine.

²²¹ Throughout the ten books of his *Proof of the Gospel*, Eusebius speaks of a profound peace happening among the Christian community within the Roman Empire, and that there were then many sumptuous church buildings located in various areas of the world (Bk.I, Ch.9, sect.32; Bk.VIII, Ch.3, sect.407; Bk IX, Ch.17, sect.457–8). But in 303 C.E., Diocletian commenced his catastrophic wars of destruction upon Christians and their church buildings. This document called the *Proof of the Gospel* had to have been written before that disaster. Eusebius wrote this work during the last part of the last decade of the third century. The work has many details about Jerusalem and Christian affairs not found in his celebrated *Ecclesiastical History* that he wrote later during the first 25 years of the fourth century.

Temple area in his own lifetime, but he also refers to events before he was born. There were many records both at Aelia and at Caesarea, and Eusebius states that he consulted them all. His witness is most trustworthy. One reason is that he was born within 70 miles of Jerusalem and went to the area several times to study its geographical and biblical affairs. He spent much time at the library in Aelia.²²² It could be said with confidence that the Library at Aelia and the Library at Caesarea on the coast were sister libraries. The libraries housed the main historical documents and biblical manuscripts associated with the development of the Christian community in Jerusalem and Palestine.

Eusebius was also a top scholar who found himself in the very center of the earliest literature of Christianity. This is one main reason why the great textual scholar Origen earlier went to Aelia and to Caesarea in the first part of the third century, to do documentary research into literary texts of the biblical revelation. Eusebius followed in the footsteps of Origen with the wonderful opportunities he had to study the history of Christianity in the very heart its origins. I will show in a later chapter that the Library of Aelia was located in a city of Christians on the summit of the Mount of Olives. It was not actually in the Roman city of Aelia.

Jerusalem as Shown by Eusebius' Accounts

Let us look at the narratives of Eusebius concerning the state of the former Jerusalem and the Temple as he saw them in his day. He also recorded historical accounts in his references that show the circumstances in the hundred to two hundred years before his time. In the *Proof of the Gospel*, at various intervals he often referred to

²²² Eusebius said:

“Prominent at that period [early third century] were a number of learned churchmen, who penned to each other letters still surviving, and of easy access, as they have been preserved to our own time in the Library established at Aelia [Jerusalem] by the man who then presided over the church there, Alexander — the Library from which I myself have been able to bring together the materials for the work now at hand” (*Ecclesiastical History*, VI.20,1).

Eusebius would have been very knowledgeable of all affairs in Jerusalem and for the historical periods before him. His witness is invaluable.

the ruined state of Jerusalem and the Temple. What I will do in this book is present these eyewitness reports of Eusebius. It will be a revealing and rewarding exercise in historical study.

Eusebius' fullest description of the former Jerusalem and Temple is found in Book VIII, Chapter 3, sections 405 and 406. (Christians spelled "Zion" as "Sion.") Note what Eusebius records:

"The hill called Zion 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.*"²²³

Utter desolation has possessed the land [of Sion]. Their once famous Mount Sion instead of being as it once was, the center of study and education based on the divine prophecies, which the children of the Hebrews of old, their godly prophets, priests and national teachers loved to interpret, is a Roman farm like the rest of the country. Yea, with my own eyes I have seen the bulls plowing there [the whole area was plowed], and the sacred site sown with seed. And Jerusalem itself is become but a storehouse of its fruit of old days now destroyed, or better, as the Hebrew [of the Old Testament] has it, a stonequarry. So Aquila [an early second century translator of the Hebrew scriptures into Greek] says: 'Therefore for your sake the land of Sion shall be ploughed, and Jerusalem shall be a quarry of stone,' for being inhabited of men of foreign race it is even now like a quarry. All the inhabitants of the city choose stores from its ruins as they will [without restraint] for private as well as public buildings. And it is sad for the eyes to see stones from the Temple itself, and from its ancient sanctuary and holy place, used for the building of idol temples, and of theatres for the populace. These things are open for the eyes to see."²²⁴

The area of the Temple Mount according to the Jewish Mishnah was about 13 and a quarter acres, while Josephus said the Temple walls surrounding the Temple buildings enclosed just over 8 acres. [In contrast, the area of the Haram esh-Sharif is about 36 acres — a very different spot.] Jerome reported that Hadrian formerly turned much of the region of the actual Temple Mount into the city dump for Aelia, but by the time of Eusebius portions of it were being

²²³ Sect. 405.

²²⁴ Sect. 406.

farmed by Gentiles. Eusebius' eyewitness account shows the site of the Temple and the City of David was then a Roman farm plowed by cattle. This was a fact for all to observe. The mention of this shows the widespread understanding both among Jews and Gentiles of the prophecy uttered by Micah the Prophet. The prophet predicted:

“Therefore shall Sion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps [ruined rubble], and the mountain of the house [the Temple] as the high places of the forest [the Temple would become treeless or barren land].”²²⁵

What Eusebius did was quote the Greek Version (with a reference to Aquila) that gave a slightly different rendering from the original Hebrew. For example, the Hebrew word translated “heaps” (ruined rubble), Aquila translated as a quarry of stone. So denuded was the area of Sion and Jerusalem to become, according to Micah, that the region would resemble a site suitable for plowing with cattle.²²⁶

²²⁵ Micah 3:12.

²²⁶ The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. was so severe and thorough that the prophetic description by Micah 3:12 (that Sion and Jerusalem would be suitable only for plowing as a field), became a proverb among Jews and Gentiles from the second century onward to describe the condition of the ruined city. Indeed, there are Roman coins minted in the time of Hadrian that attest to the fact that even in the early second century, Jerusalem was so devastated that the city could be plowed with a team of cattle. One Roman coin issued by Hadrian (about 130 C.E.) shows his image on one side with the inscription “Imperator Caesar Trianus Hadrianus.” On the other side the emperor is shown plowing on the site of the city with a pair of cattle, and the inscription in Latin is “the colony of Aelia Capitolina has been founded.” In the background is one of the standards of the Tenth Legion carried in the procession. See Dan Bahat, *The Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*, p.61. Another Roman coin shows Hadrian with his image on one side and on the reverse Hadrian is seen plowing a furrow on the ruined city of Jerusalem (*ibid.*). It is known that the designation of a “furrow” (Latin: *pomerium*) on a monument or coin was often a symbol of the founding of a new city (Bahat, *ibid.*, p.60). It is not clear if this was meant in these coins concerning Jerusalem. It could mean that Hadrian was aware of the prophecy of Micah about Jerusalem being plowed where there was once a city, that he issued the coins to humiliate the Jews, that their capital city had been utterly destroyed and now only fit for the plow. Or, it could be the coins were merely designating the beginning of the new city of Aelia in place of Jerusalem. Dates are not given on the coins, so it is impossible to ascertain what the proper interpretation might be.

Indeed, for just over 200 years after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, Eusebius noticed in his day that stones were still being taken from the old site of Jerusalem to use in buildings in the City of Aelia. These remnant stones of the Temple and city were being taken and used in construction (or re-used from buildings in Aelia formerly built from Temple stones).

But what was the site of the Temple like in the time of Eusebius? The Temple Mount had become a Roman farm, planted with seed. This shows the region at that time was so barren of its former buildings (and bereft of the larger stones that made up the Temple and its walls) that cattle could easily plow the area for the planting of crops. The Temple region was nothing more than a patch of earth that could be plowed, planted and harvested.

This agrees precisely with a well-known Jewish and Arabic traditional story of two Gentile brothers who farmed the Temple Mount when it was an agricultural site. Though the narrative is folklore and fictional, it provides insight concerning the opinions of Jews and Arabs some 300 years ago who recognized that the Temple site was once farmed. (And, indeed, this is precisely what happened to the area for a period of 178 years between the time of Hadrian and the early years of Eusebius.) During this time eyewitness records keep referring to the prophecies that only a farm cottage, a temporary hut, or perhaps a tent, would occupy the region while its basic characteristic would be that of a farm. In about the year 225 C.E., Hippolytus said the prophecy of Isaiah 1:8 was very much fulfilled in regard to the Jerusalem and Temple site in his day. He said: "The daughter of Sion shall be left as a cottage [a ramshackle building] in a vineyard, and as a lodge [a temporary structure] in a garden of cucumbers [a patch of land suitable for farming]."²²⁷ The story of the Two Brothers fits into this period of time in a remarkable way. Three centuries ago the account was

Whatever the case, the coins are still excellent evidence that in the time of Hadrian, the original Jerusalem was in such a ruined state that cattle could plow the land where once there was the Jewish Temple and a thriving metropolitan area. Even though the Haram esh-Sharif remained with its walls, the areas of the Temple and the main city of Jerusalem were then being plowed.

²²⁷ Hippolytus, *Works*, II.30 Ante-Nicene Fathers (bracketed parts are mine).

known both in Muslim (Arabic) and in Jewish circles and this shows its wide acceptance. The story is as follows:

“The place where our glorious Temple was built had long been a field [a farm] owned by two brothers. One of them had a wife and children while the other had no wife or children. Yet they dwelt in a single house, wholehearted, at ease and rejoicing in the portion of land they had inherited from their father; and they plowed the field by the sweat of their brows. During one wheat harvest they bound up shocks in the field and beat out the ears and made two equal piles of the grain they had reaped, one pile for each of them; and they left them there in the field. That night the brother who had neither wife nor children lay on his bed and thought to himself: ‘I am all by myself and depending on nobody who is dependent on me for his daily bread. But my brother has a wife and children, so why should my portion be like his?’ So he rose in the middle of the night and stole like a thief and took sheaves from his own pile and placed them on his brother’s pile.

And his brother said to his wife: ‘It is not fair to divide the wheat in the field into two portions, half to me and half to my brother. My lot and fate is so much better than his, since God has given me a wife and children while he goes alone and has no pleasure or song or delights in anything but the grain he gathers in the field. Come with me, wife, and we will secretly add to his portion from our own.’ And they did so.

Next morning both men were astonished to see that their piles were equal as they had been at first. But they said nothing that day. Instead they went and did the same thing on the second night and the third and the fourth, and every morning they found that the heaps were equal. Then each of them made up his mind to investigate. When each went to do his deed at night, one brother met the other carrying the sheaves. Then they understood what they had been doing, and they embraced and kissed one another. And they gave thanks to God who had given each of them a brother who engaged in good deeds and went his just and upright way. That was the place that the Lord desired, the spot where the Two Brothers had thought and done the good deed. This is why it was blessed by the men of the earth, and the children of Israel chose it for building a House for the Lord.”²²⁸

²²⁸ The story is given in *Mimekor Yisrael*, Classical Jewish Folktales, collected by Micha Joseph Bin Gorion (Indiana University Press, 1990), pp.272–3.

The story is so quaint and touching the emotions that it could not have had its origin in pre-Solomonic times (that is, describing the first condition of Mount Moriah), else we would have several references to it in the abundant literature preserved by the Jews or Christians to the time of Constantine. But since the story was found both in Arabic and Jewish circles some 300 years ago, it would fit into the 170 year period from Hadrian to Diocletian. There are several eyewitness accounts that the area of the Holy Temple became a Roman farm in this period before Constantine.

And what a farm the Temple Mount had become! If the farm was located within the four walls of the Haram esh-Sharif, the owners could say they had the most protected and secure farm in the entire Roman Empire because the walls of the Haram surrounded it. If this were the case, surely there would be some reference to this unusual circumstance — a farm surrounded by four gigantic walls to protect it from invaders.

On the other hand, if the Haram was the encampment of the Tenth Legion, the circumstances become understandable. While the site of the former Temples did become a farm area (with many stones in its confines), that Roman farm was NOT in the region of the Haram esh-Sharif. The region of the Haram was unsuitable for a simple Roman farm, but it had many advantages for protecting important buildings or (as we know) armed forces of the Empire.

Jerusalem Became a Quarry of Stones

For the Temple Mount to become a farm, the thousands of ruined stones had to be carted away. This was done from the time of the building of the City of Aelia (130 C.E.) to the early years of Constantine (313 C.E.). This was the period when the region of Jerusalem became a quarry for stones. Most of the quarrying was done in the earliest period, just after the initial destruction of the City and Temple. Indeed, it was the great number of stones that led Emperor Hadrian in 130 C.E. to command they be used to build his brand new City of Aelia. When Aelia was being constructed in earnest, they had a treasure-trove of hewn-cut rectangular stones piled in heaps ready for re-use in the new buildings. This can be demonstrated because Eusebius cited the translation of Aquila to

support the fact that the Hebrew word translated “heaps” (which we read in the King James Version of Micah 3:12) was rendered by Aquila as a “quarry of stone.” This is a most important historical reference.

Why is Aquila’s translation significant? Because he was an eyewitness, and composed his version in the area of Palestine in the early part of the second century C.E. This makes Aquila a valuable witness to the condition of Jerusalem in this early period, and his translation is really a commentary on what Jerusalem was like in his time. He knew Jerusalem had become a “heap of stones,” used as a “quarry” to garner stones for building the City of Aelia and other surrounding cities. Even Eusebius, 150 years later, was observing some quarrying still being done. By the time of Eusebius, however, most of the quarrying had concluded because Sion (the Temple site itself) was then free of stones. It had been turned into a Roman farm and cattle were plowing its former courts. The Temple site was then fields of open land. But already in Hadrian’s time the area of the Temple and the main City of Jerusalem was even then being plowed.

Is it not interesting that during this entire period of building the City of Aelia and other regions nearby with stones from the Jerusalem “quarry,” no one touched the wonderful and gigantic stones still to be seen in the lower courses surrounding the Haram esh-Sharif? Why were those gigantic stones of the Haram off-limits to the people building Aelia? Why did they not use them? Surely some of those stones in the lower courses of the Haram would have been of great value in constructing other buildings in the new City of Aelia, especially for government edifices. But what do we find? The stones of the Haram were left untouched in their lower courses. Why would the people have avoided dismantling those colossal stones of the Haram? The answer is simple. It is because these stones were part of Fort Antonia, the Roman fort that housed the Tenth Legion unto 289 C.E.

References to Total Destruction in Eusebius

As far as Jewish Jerusalem and the Temple were concerned, there was not one stone left on another after Titus and the Tenth

Legion, using captive Jews, dismantled every vestige of the former Jerusalem and the Temple with all buildings and outer walls. Let us now read eyewitness accounts that will assure any reasonable person that not only were Jewish Jerusalem and the Temple utterly destroyed, but even the foundation stones of those buildings and walls were completely uprooted.

It will be instructive for us to record the numerous references Eusebius provided to show the thorough desolation and ruin of the City of Jerusalem and the Temple in his *Proof of the Gospel*. I will give a rundown of these essential references from the commencement of his book to its conclusion. There was no doubt in Eusebius' mind (who was, again, an eyewitness) that there was nothing left of any part of Jewish Jerusalem, the former Temple (or its outer walls). So devastated were those areas that Eusebius said when Christian pilgrims came to the area they avoided going into the former City of Jerusalem. There was nothing important for them to view there. They went instead to the Mount of Olives.

In the time of Eusebius (before Constantine), Christians went only to the top of the Mount of Olives to rendezvous around a cave in order to learn about the ruin of old Jerusalem they could see to the west. They found no reason whatever to enter that desolate region located west and south of the Kedron Valley or to enter the City of Aelia located farther west and north.²²⁹ Christians also did

²²⁹ Eusebius said:

“Believers in Christ all congregate from all parts of the world, not as of old time because of the glory of Jerusalem, nor that they may worship in the ancient Temple at Jerusalem, but that rest there [on Olivet] that they may learn about the city being taken and devastated as the prophets foretold, and that they may worship at the Mount of Olives opposite to the city, whither the glory of the Lord migrated when it left the former city. ... to the cave that is shown there.” (*Proof of the Gospel*, Bk.VI, Ch.18, section 288).

Christians were coming from all over the Roman and Parthian worlds to assemble at a cave on the Mount of Olives. These early Christians showed no interest in any other site in the area of the City of Aelia or in the region of the Haram esh-Sharif. Only the Mount of Olives was of concern to them. Indeed, Christians lived only on the Mount of Olives until the time of Constantine. My book *Secrets of Golgotha* explains why early Christians showed interest only in Olivet.

not visit the Haram esh-Sharif. Though Eusebius and the Christian pilgrims were well aware of the Haram, they showed not the slightest interest in it. They knew the Haram had nothing to do with the Temple or its walls. This was because Eusebius consistently said the Temple and its walls were utterly destroyed.

Let us notice the many references Eusebius gave throughout his book *Proof of the Gospel*. He spoke only about the old areas of Jerusalem where the real Mount Zion was located and where the former Temple had its existence. He did not elaborate about the Aelia because in the time of Eusebius it was a bustling Roman city full of secular and heathen activities that did not interest Christian pilgrims. His references are to the condition of the original Zion and the actual Temple of Herod. The first statement from his *Prologue* is most instructive (all emphases in the following quotes will be mine). As far as Eusebius was concerned, the Temple site was then in extreme desolation.

“[I will explain] how their royal metropolis would be burned with fire, **their venerable and holy altar undergo the flames and extreme desolation**, their city be inhabited no longer by its old possessors but by races of other stock.”²³⁰

“And to this day it is forbidden for the children of the Hebrews outside the boundaries of their ruined mother city to sacrifice according to the law, to build a Temple or an altar, to anoint kings or priests, to celebrate the Mosaic gatherings and feasts, to be cleansed from pollution, to be loosed from offences, to bear gifts to God, or to propitiate Him according to the legal requirements.”²³¹

“The Romans besieged Jerusalem, and destroyed it and the Temple there.”²³²

“Jerusalem was besieged, the holy place [the Temple] and the altar by it and the worship conducted according to Mosaic ordinances **were destroyed**.”²³³

“[They] were exiled from their mother city, which **was destroyed**,

²³⁰ *Proof of the Gospel*, Bk.I, Ch.1, sect.6.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, Bk.I, Ch.6, sect.17.

²³² *Ibid.*, sect.18.

²³³ *Ibid.*, sect.18d.

where alone it was allowed to celebrate the Mosaic worship.”²³⁴

“The divine oracles foretold that the Advent of Christ and the call of the Gentiles would be accompanied by the total collapse and ruin of the whole Jewish race, and prophesied good fortune only for a scanty few easy to number, while their City with the Temple would be captured, and all its holy things taken away — *prophecies which have all been exactly fulfilled.*”²³⁵

“Sion ... has been left as a tent in a vineyard [as a portable structure in a country vineyard], as a hut in a garden of cucumbers [a ramshackle hut in a farming area], or as **anything that is more desolate than these**. And strangers devour the land before their eyes, now exacting tax and tribute, and now appropriating for themselves the land that belonged of old to the Jews. Yea, **and the beauteous Temple of their mother city was laid low** [it no longer stands] **being cast down** by alien peoples, and their cities were burned with fire, and Jerusalem became truly a besieged city.”²³⁶

“And then because **total destruction overtook them** ... when they were besieged by the Romans.”²³⁷

“Their ancient holy place, at any rate, and their Temple are to this day as much destroyed as Sodom.”²³⁸

The last comment deserves special attention. To Eusebius, the Temple was so destroyed that no remnant of it was standing in his day. This was a melancholy judgment by Eusebius. To be like “Sodom,” meant to be “thoroughly demolished.” Trying to discover the ruins of the Temple would be like searching for Sodom that disappeared from the surface of the earth. Using the word “Sodom” denotes a superlative destruction of the Temple in the eyes of Eusebius.

On the other hand, if one looked at the walls surrounding the present Haram esh-Sharif (plainly evident in the days of Eusebius), no one would imagine the stones in its lower courses were destroyed like Sodom. That is because the Haram esh-Sharif with its

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, Bk.I, Ch.7, sect.28.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, Bk.II, Ch.1, sect.44.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, Bk.II., Ch.3, sect.64.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, Bk.III, Ch.2, sect.99.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, Bk. V, Ch.23, sect.250.

outer walls was not a part of the former Temple, and Eusebius knew it. There is more.

“If you behold Jerusalem of old, the famous city of the Jewish race, her glory and her fruitfulness, despoiled now of her holy citizens and pious men. For after the coming of Christ she became as the prophet truly says without fruit or water **and quite deserted.**”²³⁹

“**Mount Sion was burned and left utterly desolate**, and the Mount of the House of God [the Temple] became as a grove of the wood [with natural trees springing up and nothing manmade left]. *If our own observation has any value*, we [Eusebius said] have seen in our own time Sion once so famous ploughed with yokes of oxen by the Romans and **utterly devastated**, and Jerusalem as the oracle says, deserted like a lodge [like a deserted temporary house].”²⁴⁰

“[This desertion occurred] through the siege that attacked Jerusalem after our Savior’s advent, **for the Temple was burned with fire not long after, and was reduced to extreme desolation** and the city was encircled by the chariots and camps of the enemy. ... *we see with our own eyes the fulfillment of the holy oracles.*”

Let me pause to comment. With his own eyes Eusebius said he witnessed this desolate condition of the Temple site, which was a Roman farm without any municipal buildings on the site. It was not only in ruin, but he assessed it as being extremely desolate. He did not say the Temple was subjected to “partial desolation” (as one expected were he speaking of the Haram esh-Sharif with its changes over the centuries), but Eusebius said the real Temple (with its buildings and walls) was subjected to “extreme desolation.” Or, as Eusebius asserted earlier, it was like Sodom, utterly destroyed.

This is precisely what Jesus said would happen to that sacred Sanctuary. Again, Eusebius was not referring to the four walls surrounding the Haram esh-Sharif with the 10,000 stones in place as in Jesus’ time, and still evident in Eusebius’ day. Indeed, they are still in their lower courses in pristine grandeur today. In no way could it be said the walls of the Haram underwent extreme desolation and resemble Sodom, like Eusebius as an eyewitness said the

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, Bk.VI, Ch.7, sect.265.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Bk.VI, Ch.13, sect 273.

Temple and walls underwent.

“[Eusebius said that had the nation repented] the stately beauty of their very Temple would not have become sand and thorns.”²⁴¹

“Sands and thorns!” This description does not bring to mind a pleasant scene. These eyewitness appraisals do not in any manner describe those enormous walls (or the interior) of the Haram. In Eusebius’ next reference the very opposite was the case in regard to the Temple.

“The evidence of what we can even now see. ... the siege of Jerusalem, and the total destruction of their ancient Temple, and the settling of foreign races on their land.”²⁴²

Referring to a particular prophecy, Eusebius said:

“The Roman rulers are meant, who governed the nation [of Judaea] from that time, and **who destroyed the city of Jerusalem itself, and its ancient venerable Temple.** For they [Jerusalem and the Temple] were cut off by them as by a flood, and were at once involved in destruction until the war was concluded, *so that the prophecy was fulfilled and they [Jerusalem and the Temple] suffered utter desolation.*”²⁴³

“The hill called Sion and Jerusalem, the buildings there, the Temple, the Holy of Holies, the Altar, and whatever else there was dedicated to the glory of God, **[has] been utterly removed or shaken [down], in fulfillment of the Word.**”²⁴⁴

Before the time of Eusebius, all of Jewish Jerusalem was destroyed, including the former three fortresses known as Phasael, Hippicus and Mariamne in that part of Sion called the “Upper City.” They, and all other buildings in Jewish Jerusalem had been “utterly removed or shaken down.” The historian is not finished with his description of the ruin of the Temple and Jerusalem.

“**[The Temple]** after its burning by the Babylonians, it was not burned again till in the time of Titus and Vespasian, the Roman emperors, **it was utterly destroyed by fire.**”²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Bk.VII, Ch.1, sect.327.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, Bk.VII., Ch.1, sect.327d.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, Bk.VIII, Ch.2, sect.399.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Bk.VIII, Ch.3, sect.405.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Bk.VIII, Ch.4, sect.411.

Again note the Temple was NOT simply “ruined,” it was “utterly destroyed.”

“The lamentation and wailing was predicted for the Jews, and **the burning of the Temple and its utter desolation, can also be seen even now [by eyewitnesses] to have occurred according to the prediction [of Jesus].**”²⁴⁶

Remember, the prophecy of Jesus stated that not one stone would be left on top another of the Inner or Outer Temple or of its walls that surrounded it. And Eusebius said his prophecy was an accurate description of the present state of affairs. Or, as Eusebius stated to the end of *The Proof of the Gospel*:

“From that day to this, God turned their feasts into mourning, despoiled them of their famous mother city, **and destroyed the Holy Temple therein** when Titus and Vespasian were emperors of Rome.”²⁴⁷

This ends Eusebius’ comments about the total destruction of the City of Jerusalem and the Temple in *The Proof of the Gospel*, but this does not end Eusebius’ historical evaluation of the Temple’s ruin. He made some equally cogent remarks about thirty-five years later at the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. In the presence of many assembled bishops who were then in Jerusalem for the celebration, he said:

“The entire Jewish people were scattered by an unseen power [the angelic power in charge of the Romans], their royal seat was utterly removed, **and their very Temple with its holy things, were leveled with the ground....** Respecting the Temple of those wicked men, our Savior said: ‘Your house is left unto you desolate:’ and, ‘*There shall not be left one stone upon another in this place, that shall not be thrown down*’.”²⁴⁸

This reference is further evidence that Christians in the fourth century were NOT pointing to the Haram esh-Sharif with its stones in place and saying that Christ’s prophecy (“there shall not be left one stone upon another in this place”) was obviously fulfilled. The

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Bk.VIII, Ch.4, sect.412.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Bk.X, Ch.6, sect.486–7.

²⁴⁸ *The Oration of Eusebius*, Ch.XVII, sect.8.

state of the Haram would have proved just the opposite. Yet, Eusebius states with dogmatism that the prophecy was completely fulfilled. This is because he and the assembled bishops at Jerusalem knew the Haram esh-Sharif was not the remains of the walls of the former Temple.

Also, in a sermon that he gave at the same dedication in Jerusalem, Eusebius stated to the assembled bishops.

“[The Romans] burned the truly divine sanctuary of God with fire, and profaned to the ground the Tabernacle of His name. Then they buried the miserable one [the Temple] with heaps of earth, that destroyed every hope of deliverance.”²⁴⁹

The whole area of the Temple had become nothing but “heaps of earth.” Not a stone of the Temple’s interior or exterior walls was to be seen above ground. Eusebius (an eyewitness to the state of the Temple site from the last part of the third to the first part of the fourth century) said to the assembled bishops at the Jerusalem conference that all remnants of the former Temple were “buried underground.” He said this to bishops then in Jerusalem who were witnessing for themselves that Eusebius’ comments were accurate. Eusebius also stated in his *“Life of Constantine the Great”* that the former City of Jerusalem that had existed in the time of Jesus “had experienced the last extremity of desolation.”²⁵⁰

While rebuilding activities started again in the time of Constantine, all that could be seen at the Temple site and the area of the Temple Mount were “heaps of earth.”

These statements by Eusebius are eyewitness accounts written or stated before assembled bishops of the Church then meeting

²⁴⁹ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Bk. X.4,58. New research shows this sermon of Eusebius was delivered at the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in the year 336 C.E. It was formerly thought the sermon was given in Tyre in 316 C.E. Whatever the case, the statement by Eusebius in front of many dignitaries who were very familiar with Jerusalem in their time is most important. It shows that all were aware nothing was left standing of the Temple or its “Tabernacle” walls (that is, its outward walls) that surrounded the courts of the Temple. All of the buildings of the Temple and its walls had been thrown to the ground and the area buried under “heaps of earth.”

²⁵⁰ See *“Life of Constantine,”* section “Jerusalem Assembly.”

together in Jerusalem. This makes him and his evaluation to be important witnesses because he was also born in Palestine and he had lived in the area of Jerusalem (not more than 70 miles away). As a professional historian, Eusebius was very familiar with former events associated with Jerusalem and the Jewish people because of his ardent interest and studies into those subjects. Remember, Eusebius was not only an historian but a librarian and extremely concerned with the history of Jerusalem, the Temple and the predictions of Jesus. His numerous statements about the complete ruin of the Temple and its walls (that he claimed to see with his own eyes and in the presence of many bishops assembled in Jerusalem) affirm there was nothing left in his day of Jewish Jerusalem or the Temple of Herod. They were "destroyed" and "in ruins." The Temple was like "Sodom," and "heaps of earth."

The accounts of Eusebius and others cited earlier make certain that the Haram esh-Sharif could not in any way qualify as the Temple remains that Eusebius and his contemporaries knew. The entire Temple and its outer walls by Eusebius' time was ruined like Sodom. To make the area productive for grain and vegetables, it had to be cultivated with cattle pulling plows. Parts of it were also sandy and had thorns. It is best described at the beginning of the fourth century as a Roman farm where the area was sown with seed for the growing of cucumbers and grain. And recall there are Roman coins as early as the second century showing the area of Jerusalem being plowed as Eusebius said.²⁵¹

As a matter of fact, sixty years after the death of Eusebius, we have the words of Gregory of Nyssa on the utter ruin of Jerusalem and the Temple:

"Where then are those palaces? where is the Temple? where are the walls? where are the defenses of the towers? where is the power of the Israelites? were not they scattered in different quarters over almost the whole world? and in their overthrow the palaces also were brought to ruin."²⁵²

But wait a minute! Without doubt, Titus allowed the more than

²⁵¹ Bahat, *Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*, pp.60–61.

²⁵² Gregory of Nyssa, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, s.2, vol. 5 (29), p.804.

10,000 stones of the four walls of the Haram to remain in their original glory in their lower courses. This means emperor Trajan also left them there. This also means Hadrian also left them there. Even Constantine left them there. And in the time of Gregory of Nyssa 10,000 stones of the walls of the Haram esh-Sharif were there in all their glory (even to our modern times).

When Gregory said: “where is the Temple? where are the walls? where are the defenses of the towers?” he was NOT talking about the majestic structure called the Haram esh-Sharif with colossal walls standing in their lower courses! Yes, the walls of the Haram were there in Gregory’s time for all to see. But, Gregory did not think for a moment the walls of the Haram had anything to do with the Temple and its walls, or with the walls of Jewish Jerusalem, or with the Jewish fortresses of Phasaël, Hippicus and Mariamne, completely destroyed by Titus in 70–73 C.E. All of this clearly shows that Gregory knew the Haram was not a part of Jewish Jerusalem.

According to Gregory, everything of former Jerusalem disappeared from the surface of the earth. All its towers were destroyed. This included the “local towers” (the fortresses) of Phasaël, Hippicus and Mariamne. Even they were nowhere to be found. Not a vestige of the original palaces or walls could be seen.

There is a further testimony of Gregory. He said:

“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 institutions; while by the command of those who rule over them the very ground of Jerusalem which they so venerated is forbidden to them.”²⁵³

This is an interesting statement by Gregory of Nyssa, given near the end of the fourth century, that “no traces of their Temple can be recognized.” Of course, he meant the Temple of Herod that Jesus said would be destroyed.²⁵⁴ Indeed, from the other quotes I have

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.940.

²⁵⁴ There is a negative account that has great bearing on the issue of the walls

given above of eyewitnesses from the time of Barnabas (c. 85 C.E.) to this observation of Gregory, one must admit they were accurate in their appraisals and observations. On the other hand, while these eyewitnesses attested to the utter ruin of the Temple and its walls, the lower courses of walls around the Haram were nevertheless standing in awesome grandeur (throughout that whole period of time and basically as we observe them today). But in the fourth century, as far as Herod's Temple was concerned: **"no traces of their Temple can be recognized."** It is no wonder that archaeologists today cannot find even the foundational outline of the former Temple and its walls. Those stones were hauled away for use in other buildings, and **not a trace of the Holy Temple of Herod could be recognized in the late fourth century.**

There is more even 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 Jesus] rang in my ears when I saw the fulfillment before my eyes and I lauded and worshipped the truth."²⁵⁵

These accounts show (and there are numerous others I have not given) that the prophecy of Jesus is reliable and accurate. If Jesus was correct in his prophecies, then the Harem esh-Sharif with its

of the Harem esh-Sharif supposedly being the remains of the Temple of Herod. If indeed, the 10,000 stones of the Haram were those left from the Temple of Herod, why is it that Julian the Apostate in the middle of the fourth century (an advocate for the return of the Roman Empire to Hellenism, and a prominent opponent of Jesus and His doctrines) said not one word about the so-called FAILURE of the prophecies of Jesus so evident to the emperor had the walls of the Haram been the walls of the Temple. Julian gave permission for Jewish authorities to rebuild the Temple (which they attempted in 362 C.E.) and he felt no compunction whatever to call attention to the remaining 10,000 stones of the Haram as a witness against Jesus because he and the Jewish elders were well aware the Haram was NOT the ruins of the Temple of Herod. As I will show, Christians in the middle of the fourth century knew the Haram was the *Praetorium* where Jesus was taken before Pilate. They knew the Haram to be the ruin of Fort Antonia.

²⁵⁵ Theodoret, *Graec. Affect. Car. 1090*, see further *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, s.2, Prolegomena vol. 3 (27), p.3.

four walls and 10,000 stones still intact (occupying a huge area that the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California or four Coliseums in Rome could comfortably fit within²⁵⁶) cannot be the walls and stones of the Temple that the eyewitnesses describe as thoroughly ruined and devastated beyond recognition.

In citing the above accounts about the condition of the Temple and complete ruin of the former city of Jewish Jerusalem, all of us are well aware that the Haram esh-Sharif continues to exist in all its glory. This retention of the Haram (since most consider it to be the Temple site) has caused problems for people who respect the prophecies of Jesus.

Haram esh-Sharif Conspicuous for Its Walls

The permanence of the walls around the Haram provoked two major explanations that modern scholars and theologians use to validate the reliability of the predictions of Jesus. The first explanation is the usual one given by conservative scholars. They state that the prophecies of Jesus did not refer to the outer walls of the Temple (like those surrounding the Haram), but only to the inner walls and other buildings that made up the interior Temple. They state this answer despite the fact that Jesus and his apostles were viewing the outer walls of the Temple directly in front of them when Jesus made his predictions.²⁵⁷ Some have other explanations. If people are not fond of the conservative account, there is also a solution provided by “liberal” theologians.

Liberal theologians normally do not take Jesus’ prophecies in a literal sense even though they accept the validity of his predictions in a general way. Usual liberal exegesis centers around the rationale that Josephus and Jesus consistently used “exaggerations” in their teachings. Though Jesus may actually have said every stone comprising the interior and exterior Temple structures would be destroyed (and all Jewish Jerusalem leveled to the ground), these

²⁵⁶ Dr. David Jacobson in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, July/August 1990, p.44 states that “the precinct to the goddess Athena on the Acropolis of Athens — including the famous Parthenon — occupies barely a fifth of the area [of the Haram in Jerusalem].”

²⁵⁷ Mark 13:1–2.

were statements that liberal Christian scholars believed to be hyperboles or “Semitic exaggerations” without empirical justification for being historically true. Some scholars who use a combination of the “conservative” definition and the “liberal,” in an attempt to satisfy both modern camps.

Up to 1997 (before I understood the Haram esh-Sharif was Fort Antonia), I accepted the common explanation given by conservative Christian scholars for the retention of the 10,000 stones in the walls around the Haram (which are thought to be the external walls of the Temple). If that evaluation was true, then the only solution to justify the prophecies was that Jesus was speaking solely about the interior Temple and interior stones that made up the walls within the boundaries of the Haram, but not the walls that encompassed the Haram. This method allowed theologians to exclude the exterior walls from the predictions of Jesus.

The truth is, however, these inventions of eliminating the outer walls of the Temple to justify Jesus’ predictions (or that he was using Semitic exaggeration) will not hold when all biblical evidence is surveyed. It is a conspicuous and striking circumstance that these so-called modern solutions provided by experts are never found in interpretations of early scholars, theologians and travelers who visited Jerusalem from 85 C.E. (the time of Barnabas) to the start of the sixth century. Within the 500 years after the ruin of Herod’s Temple, there is not the slightest hint from any scholar, historian or eyewitness, that they used either modern explanation to justify Jesus’ prophecy for the continued existence of the 10,000 stones making up the four walls of the Haram. There is no reference to any of our modern interpretations. The fact is, all the ancients knew that all the walls of the former Temple of Herod were thoroughly destroyed, just as Jesus predicted.

Yet, all people today who respect the prophecies of Jesus about the overthrow of the Temple and complete destruction of the City of Jerusalem, are forced to give the modern conservative or the liberal interpretation (and some give both) about those predictions. Israeli guides use either view or both. Christian guides do the same thing. Archaeologists, historians or even theologians feel it necessary to engage in the same maneuver. Even preachers, pastors of

churches, evangelists, priests, cardinals and Popes feel obliged to repeat the same modern interpretations. Rabbis or Muslim Imams, who might respect the prophecies of Jesus, nevertheless say the same thing. All rely on these modern explanations to demonstrate why the 10,000 stones are still in the four walls of the Haram esh-Sharif. All are wrong — because they accept those four walls as once surrounding the Temple of God in Jerusalem.

Yes, all modern commentators of all religious persuasions adopt these explanations to justify the retention of those colossal stones around the Haram. But recall that none of the eyewitness accounts of early scholars and theologians (from 85 C.E. to the early sixth century), ever used these normal explanations that conservative and liberal scholars presently advocate. That's right. There is not the slightest hint that early scholars felt the need to explain the 10,000 set stones around the Haram to make Jesus' prophecies reliable.

Why did they not explain the fact of the continued walls around the Haram esh-Sharif? The truth is, they did not feel it necessary because all of them knew the Haram esh-Sharif WAS NOT the building associated with the Temple of God at Jerusalem. They knew it was the Roman Fort Antonia, the home of the Tenth Legion. As for the original Temple site, it was over and near the Gihon Spring and remained *desolate* of normal buildings until the time of the Edict of Milan in 313 C.E. In the next chapters I will explain these matters in detail.