

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre

A Timeline

Topography Modern Jerusalem is so large and built up that it is difficult to imagine what it looked like in the days when Constantine built the first memorial on the site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In order to reconstruct the way the city appeared, we need to briefly survey its history.

Jerusalem is comprised of two primary hills - Mount Zion (777m) to the west and Mount Moriah (743m) to the northeast. A shallow valley runs between them that Josephus called *Tyoropoen*. To the south is the deep Hinnom Valley and to the east is the Kidron Valley. The steepness of the valleys and the ruggedness of the terrain made both hills easily defensible and natural strongholds. The only water is a spring just outside the hills.

The present landmark called Mount Zion is *not* the same as the biblical Mount Zion. It is the lower part of Mount Moriah, known today as simply the Eastern Hill (2 Sam 5:7). Likewise, the eastern hill was not associated with Moriah until long after the time of the United Monarchy (2 Chr 3:1).

When the Samuel chronicler describes David taking Jerusalem, it is describing the taking of part of this Eastern Hill. This is a lower arm of Moriah which is broader and easier to defend. It was clear that the Jebusites who held it considered it an impregnable site. (2 Sam 5:1-13) David was able to enter the site through the Jebusite well, which provided access to the spring. Later, Hezekiah would build a tunnel to protect access to this water and prevent conquest by the same means.

Solomon constructed the first temple on the upper levels of Mount Moriah. According to 2 Samuel, David had purchased from the Jebusites and set it aside for this purpose. (2 Sam 24:24-25) Neither Solomon nor David occupied the Western Hill, which is today known as Mount Zion or the northern hills known as Bezetha and Acra.

Solomon's temple was 24.4m long,



Illustration 1: Topographic map of Jerusalem with the outline of Agrippa's walls

9.1m wide and 13.7m high. Although built of stone, it was roofed with wood beams and covered in cedar paneling. Outside of the temple, there was a vestibule or atrium which extended an additional 9.1m. There were also side chambers all around the structure, which meant that the entire complex was probably around 20m wide and at least 50m long.

The text further explains that Solomon laid foundation walls in three courses of stone that are progressively narrower. The first course was 3.2m; the second was 2.75m; and the third was 2.3m. The way these courses of stone are described indicates that they probably supported some kind of platform for the temple complex, which makes sense since the space required for all the structures would have exceeded the natural dimensions of Mount Moriah.

Walls

During the First Temple Period (960-600 BCE), the city gradually expanded across the Tyropoeon to the Western Hill and by Josephus' time (c. 75 CE), the Western Hill became known as Mount Zion.

Slowly, the Tyropoeon was filled in with debris and construction. John Hyrcanus partially filled in the valley so he could establish a road there and when Herod expanded the temple platform, he covered a large portion of what was left of the valley with his retaining wall - what is now the Western Wall. Arched walkways (Wilson's Arch and Robinson's Arch were among them) spanned the Tyropoeon Road and joined Moriah with the Western Hill.

Today, the Tyropoeon is all but leveled out. The plaza used by Jews visiting the Wailing Wall rests on top of the debris filling the Tyropoeon.

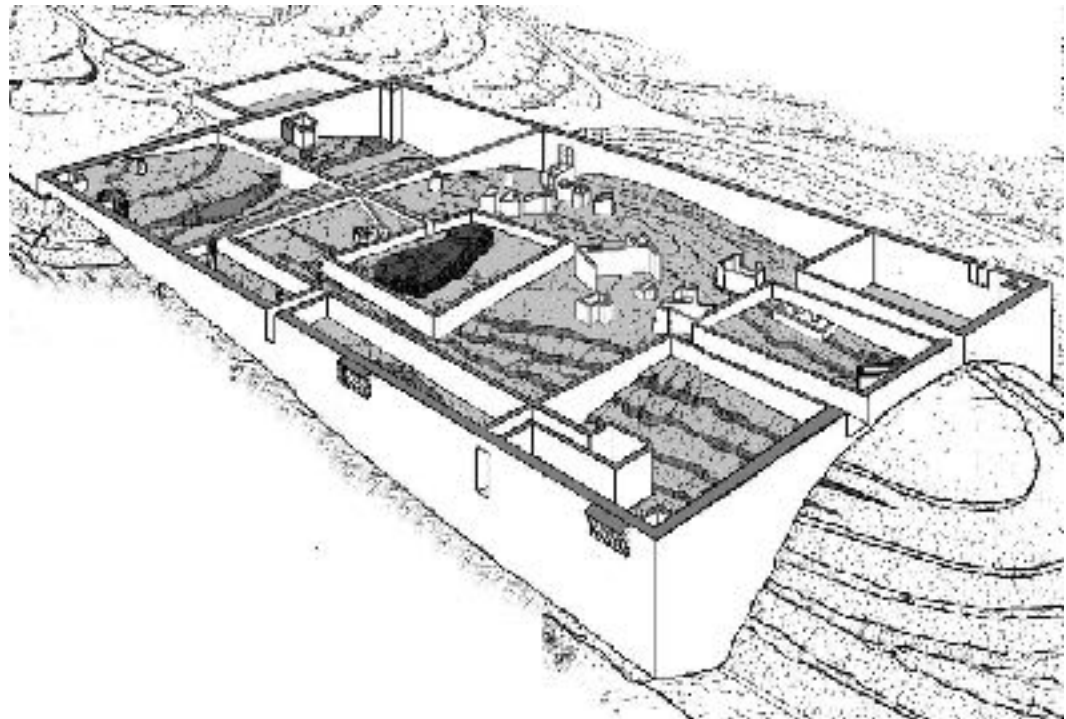


Illustration 2: Herod's Temple Platform showing the natural topography of Moriah beneath.

The massive Temple Platform was part of Herod's larger project to update and secure Jerusalem. This included the construction of new city walls. The original walls, built by Solomon and improved during the rule of the House of David (920-600 BCE), had been destroyed when the Babylonians took the city.

After the return of the Jewish exiles under Ezra and Nehemiah, the walls had been built and rebuilt over the course of about five centuries. No one is completely sure of their state before the Hasmonean Period, but there must have been some walls.

The Hasmonean kings did considerable work on the walls, but it was Herod the Great who extended the walls to include the Western Hill and what had been suburban areas to the south. The Temple Mound formed most of the eastern wall. Sometime after 40 CE, his grandson Herod Agrippa started work on a third wall that encompassed all of the northern hills.

The diagram to the left shows the development Jerusalem's walls. The red pentagon shows the site of the current Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is *outside* Herod the Great's Second Wall, as the gospel of John records (John 19:20, Hebrews 13:12)

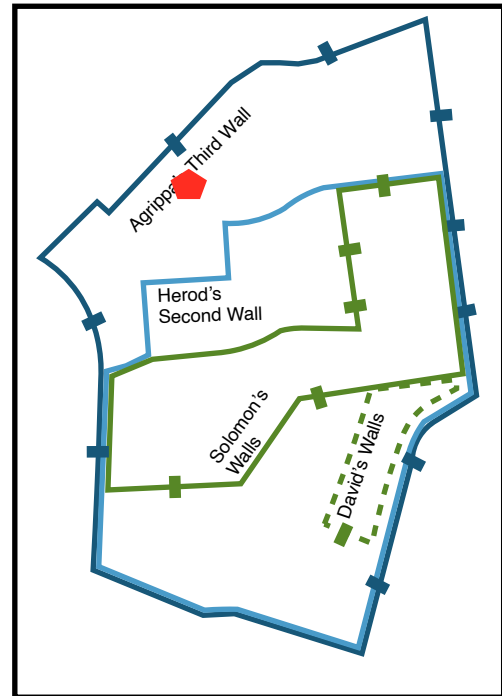


Illustration 3: The Walls of Jerusalem from David to Agrippa

70 CE

According to Flavius Josephus, a rebellion sprang up among the Jews in 68 CE over taxation. The emperor Vespasian commissioned his son Titus to deal with the rebellion. Vespasian appointed his friend Tiberius Alexander, a Jew from Egypt, to command the forces of three legions that were supplemented with another two cohorts - around 15,000 legionaries¹.

The Roman legions surrounded and besieged Jerusalem and after seven months, the walls were breached. The Roman troops dismantled the city walls and put the entire place to the torch. The inhabitants were enslaved and the insurrectionist leaders were executed. The city was completely depopulated.

Vespasian permitted Jews across the empire to continue their faith as long as they redirected their half shekel (2 denarii) temple tax to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome. This insulting tax, known as the *Fiscus Iudaicus*, remained in place well into the third century. It amounted to a truly substantial amount of money being contributed to a false god, and the Jews resented it greatly even though most did pay it.

¹ Legio V Macedonica under Sextus Cerealis, Legio X Fratensis under Larcus Lepidus, Legio XV Apollinaris under Titus Frigius, and two cohorts from Legio XVIII under Eternius Fronto

130 CE

Early in his reign, the emperor Hadrian made a tour of his eastern holdings. In his travels, he encountered Jerusalem. He must have been struck by the enormous temple platform which remained standing. At 150,000 m², the space was enormous in comparison to the Capitoline Hill, Rome's primary temple platform. This had been expanded under Domitianus in 95 CE, but it was only 3,000 m² - one-fiftieth of Herod's temple platform in Jerusalem.

Hadrian ordered the construction of a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus on Herod's temple platform. This was probably an intentionally slight to the Jews who were forced to support this religion through Vespasian's *Fiscus Iudaicus*. Since the repairs to the *Area Capitolina* had been completed some forty years previous, the Jews were now paying to construct an abomination in their most holy place. It prompted the Bar Kochba rebellion, which was but inevitably crushed without mercy.

For their affront, the Jews were banned from Hadrian's new city. Aspiring to divinity himself, Hadrian named the city for himself and the temple he was constructing. He called the new city *Colonia Aelia Capitolina* - a monument to the destruction of the Jews.

The new city was completely remade as a center for trade and worship. If Hadrian followed the typical first century formula, he relocated three hundred loyal citizen families to populate his new city. Some of them would have been members of the legions that had crushed the rebellion.

Due to the topography of the area and the enormous temple platform, the planners had to abandon the symmetry of their usual city planning. A typical Roman *colonia* would have a north-south main road - a *cardo* - and an east-west roads called *decumanus*.

A pair of *cardines* (singular *cardo*) were laid north to south, crowned with ceremonial gates. The northern gate (*porta dextra*) is still extant, beneath the Damascus Gate in modern Jerusalem. The *cardo maximus*, the primary road, ran south to the southwestern hill where Legio X Fratensis constructed a semi-permanent fortress.

The *cardo secundus* began at the gate but then branched east, running down the Tyropoion and terminating south of the military fortress and out another gate (the *porta sinistra*) which has not survived to the present day to a nymphaion at the. The Eastern Hill appears to have been depopulated entirely, since it was not within the city gates.

The city also had two *decumani*. For the *decumanus maximus*, the Roman engineers began at the Phasael, a massive tower constructed by Herod the Great and strengthened by Herod Agrippa (41 CE). There, they would have constructed the *porta praetoria*, the main gate of the city (today's Joppa Gate).

The *decumanus maximus* ran to the temple platform, but just to the north of it was the *decumanus secundus*. This road did not have a western gate, but it would have terminated on the eastern side of the city at a *porta decumana*.

The portions of these roads that have been excavated show that laying them was quite a feat of engineering. The *cardo maximus* was 25' across with 5' colonnaded walkways on either side. Large portions of limestone hills were cut away to provide even grades. The Roman engineers then cut shops into the living stone along the roads.

Although Hadrian commissioned gates for the city, he did not construct walls. Aelia Capitolina was left completely unprotected as another insult to the Jewish people. The Roman colony had nothing to fear from the Jews who they had destroyed in successive generations.

Near the *tetrastylon* (the intersection of the *cardo maximus* and the *decumanus maximus*), Hadrian commissioned a temple to Venus. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, the engineers had to fill in and level out a cave in order to construct



Illustration 4: The layout of Hadrian's Aelia Capitolina showing the later, Constantinian walls.

the temple. Eusebius reports that Constantine believed this cave to be the tomb of Jesus. Whether or not Hadrian was aware of the significance of the site can only be speculated upon, but Eusebius seems to have been without doubt. He refuses to refer to Hadrian by name, simply crediting the act to “impious men who... brought a quantity of earth from a distance with much labor, and covered the entire spot.” They did this because “they supposed that their object could not otherwise be fully attained, than by thus burying the sacred cave beneath these foul pollutions.”

This was not the only temple to Venus constructed by Hadrian. The Temple to Venus and Roma he commissioned and designed in 137 CE in Rome still stands, and it gives us an idea of what Hadrian’s temple in Jerusalem might have looked like. (*Historia Augusta: Vita Hadrianus*, Chapter 19)



Illustration 5: The Ruins of Hadrian’s Temple to Venus and Roma in Rome, Italy.

The Temple in Rome stands on an artificially elevated platform called a *crepidoma*. The Romans would level an irregular hill with fill and then dress it with marble steps called *stereobate*. The top level, the platform of the temple was called a *stylobate*. The crepidoma in Rome is nearly 30m high.

This is probably what Eusebius is referring to in Jerusalem. The builders would have filled in the limestone cave and leveled the ground in order to build a crepidoma for the new temple.

Writing in the fifth century, Jerome noted that Hadrian’s temple to Venus stood for 180 years, but more than likely he never saw it. He also describes a statue of Jupiter in the temple, but this is highly unlikely since Jupiter’s temple stood less than a third of a mile away.

326 CE

This is where Eusebius takes up the tale nearly two centuries later. Apparently, Aelia Capitolina had remained a pagan city between the time of its construction and Constantine’s ascension to the purple. After settling affairs with his rivals, Constantine openly declared his support of the Christian faith.

According to Eusebius, Constantine had Hadrian's temple to Venus destroyed, the crepidoma discarded and the cave excavated. It seems pretty clear that Constantine was acting with a certain amount of knowledge. He had spent his youth touring the east as a hostage of the emperor Diocletian and it is likely that he visited Aelia Capitolina with him. In previous years, Constantine had overseen the stabilization of the Christian Church through the Council of Nicaea, and in 326 CE, he set about reasserting Christian control of various holy sites. Constantine had the cave excavated and ordered the governors of the eastern provinces to finance the construction of an elaborate "house of prayer" (οἶκον εὐκτήριον) of ample magnificence on the site.

The first church of the sepulchre as Eusebius describes it is very different from the present, medieval building. For one thing, it was not one but two buildings. The first was a basilica, probably modeled after the Basilica of Maxentius and Constantine that was completed in 312 AD. This became known as the Martyrium.

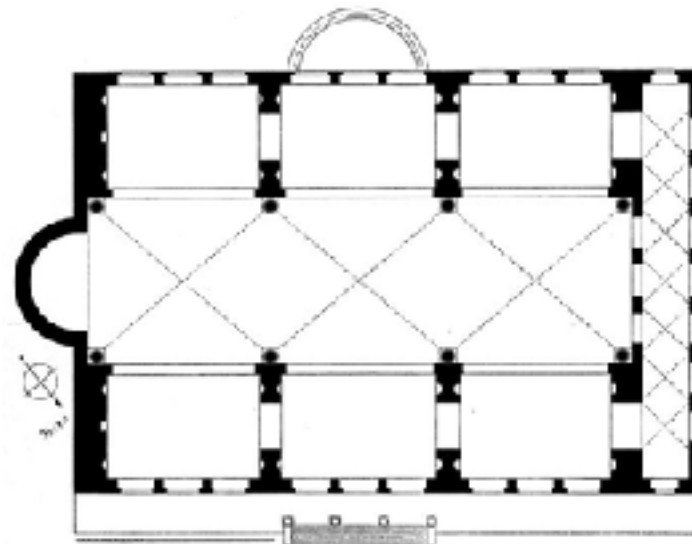


Illustration 6: Floor Plan of the Basilica of Constantine and Maxentius in Rome, Italy

West of the new basilica was a small building which contained what was left of the tomb of Jesus. Constantine's engineers cut away the cave to open up access, then they enclosed the tomb in a small building called the Aedicule. Above it rose a large rotunda, mounted on twelve columns to represent the twelve apostles. Between the two buildings was a large, colonnaded courtyard. Eusebius describes it as "open to the sky." At the southeastern corner of the courtyard was Golgotha, apparently in situ and unadorned.

This was Constantine's "new Jerusalem" according to Eusebius. Apparently the city was all but abandoned when Constantine began his rebuilding. The new city would be built to rival the "old city" by which he seems to mean the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus which still sat atop Herod's temple platform.

Standing at the crossroads of the *cardo* and *decumanus*, this new basilica and its rotunda monument became the center of the city. This was again Jerusalem. Gone were the pagan trappings and the empty spaces. This was to be a Christian empire's most sacred place.

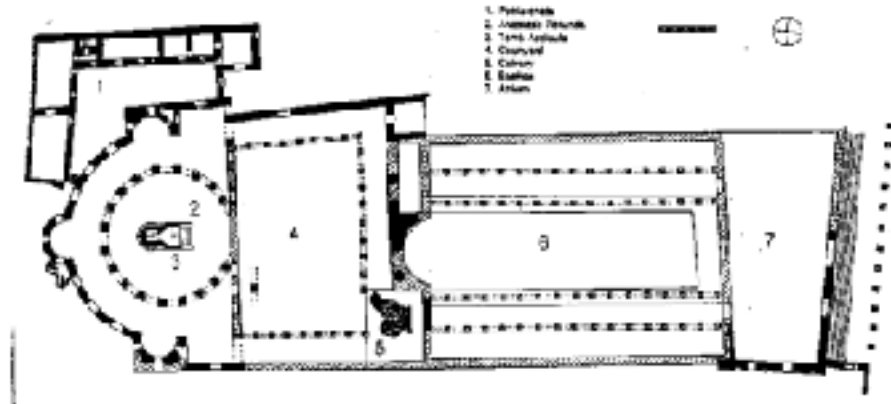


Illustration 7: Probable floor plan of the Rotunda and Basilica Constantine built at the site of the resurrection of Jesus.

At the end of his section on the construction of the basilica, Eusebius even calls it a new temple, and he does this intentionally. Inside the old Jewish temple had been the rock where Abraham offered Isaac. Inside this new Christian temple would be the rock upon which Jesus was raised from the dead. The old temple had been turned into a pagan temple. This new site would be just that - *new*. Both paganism and Judaism were discarded.

333 CE

No one knows when the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus fell into disuse, but there is a tantalizing clue in the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*. The anonymous author is known today simply as the Bordeaux Pilgrim. In 333 CE, this person journeyed to Jerusalem and there observed a site he thinks is the temple of Solomon but is probably the temple to Jupiter Capitolinus.

Nearby this “temple” was “a perforated stone [*lapis pertusus*], to which the Jews come every year and anoint it, bewail themselves with groans, rend their garments, and so depart.” This may also be the earliest Christian reference to the practices Jews now perform at the wailing wall.

Most importantly, the Bordeaux Pilgrim provides us with a brief description of Constantine’s basilica and rotunda. “On the left hand [the south] is the little hill of Golgotha where the Lord was crucified. About a stone’s throw from thence is a *crypta* wherein His body was laid, and rose again on the third day. There, at present, by the command of *Iussu Constantini*, has been built a basilica, that is to say, a *dominicum* of wondrous beauty...”

Written in Latin, the *Itinerarium* not only confirms Eusebius’ story but also gives us a hint of the nature of the buildings. In particular, the pilgrim uses the term *dominicum*, which derives from *dominus* or “lord”. He also distinguishes the basilica from the crypt and from Golgotha. His use of the word *crypta* is difficult to

interpret, since it could mean either a building like the Aedicule or simply the grotto or cave. Since Eusebius gives us no hint that the tomb was encased, it is probably safe to assume that the Pilgrim means the cave was still intact under the rotunda.

What is perhaps more interesting than what the pilgrim says is what he does not say. He notes no observances at the basilica, which would appear to be in alignment with Constantine's desire to build a "house of prayer". This is not a formal temple but rather a space for the people of faith to gather for remembrance when they choose. Of course, that might be reading into things and certainly the next person we will look at does observe quite elaborate observances at the site.

384 CE

A generation later, a female pilgrim named Egeria made her way to what she calls "The Church of the Resurrection". She writes that upon leaving Egypt, "I arrived at the borders of Palestine; and thence in the name of Christ our God, again making my stations through Palestine, I returned to Ælia – that is, Jerusalem."

Egeria finds a much more liturgical place of worship, and she goes to great lengths to explain how the worship is observed. The worship is a daily routine, consisting of a pre-dawn, midday and evening observance which is composed of the singing of hymns and the recitation of the *Kyrie Eleison*. The basilica was employed only on Easter and special days. Interestingly, the eucharist was given on Saturday. The Sunday worship consisted of hymns, sermons, readings and a brief time at the rotunda. Egeria is the first to refer to the basilica as the *Martyrium* and the rotunda as the *Anastasis*.

Absent from Egeria's account is any reference to the Aedicule, which may indicate that Constantine did not construct a building over the site of the resurrection. The stone may have been free standing within the rotunda, which seems to be a reasonable suggestion.

Interestingly, she notes that the worship is led in Greek but it is interpreted in both Syriac and Latin. She is at pains to inform her readers that on the high days such as Easter, people travel from all over the region to worship to the church. There is a clear procession through holy sites during the Passion Week. Although there is a tremendous amount of observance and reading in the worship Egeria observed, there is no trace of a liturgical structure. The worship consists almost entirely of prayer, hymns and antiphony around and inside the Anastasis.

Egeria is the first to note the presence of a True Cross relic, although she simply calls it "the cross." She notes that on Good Friday a silver-gilt basket is brought to the bishop. He opens it to reveal a small piece of wood which the community apparently revered as part of the cross upon which Christ was crucified.

439 CE

During the reign of Theodosius II, a philosopher named Socrates Scholasticus undertook an expansion of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Scholasticus provides a very different story of the establishment of the basilica. According to him, it was not Constantine but his mother Helena who found the site.

Scholasticus maintained that Christians venerated the site even when there was a pagan temple there. In his telling, Helena has the temple torn down and the site cleared, and under the rubble she finds three crosses. By touching the crosses to a sick woman, the bishop of Jerusalem is able to determine which is the true cross. Helena then orders a church built, which she calls *New Jerusalem* and the cross placed in a silver container there. He makes no mention of the details of the church building.

What is going on in Scholasticus' story? It is fairly obvious that the story has been conflated because pilgrims like Egeria reported the presence of the True Cross at the church. Relying on Eusebius and reports like those of Egeria, Scholasticus has developed a reason for the presence of such a relic when Eusebius fails to mention it.

Notice also that Helena is the hero of Scholasticus' story, not Constantine. Scholasticus had a very good reason for this. While he was composing his history, Theodosius II's wife Aelia Eudokia was on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. She returned in 438 CE.

In 443 CE, Eudokia was banished from the court for adultery and she journeyed to Jerusalem. She lived there for the rest of her life, composing poetry and working to improve the situation. The parallels between Eudokia and Helena were probably the impetus behind Scholasticus' revisions to the history of the church.

Scholasticus also justifies the presence of the relic of the True Cross in Egeria's story. Doubtless, Eudokia would have reported the same relic in a silver box that Egeria had, so Scholasticus invents a plausible explanation.

Eudokia is also credited with the rebuilding of the city's fortifications. The city had been growing significantly, thanks no doubt to the popularity of the Anastasis and its True Cross as well as its economically significant location.

614 CE

In the 5th century CE, the western portion of the Roman Empire faltered and collapsed. Although various kings would offer nominal allegiance to the emperors in the east and for a brief period portions would be reconquered, the western Empire essentially ceased to exist. The center of the Roman Empire shifted entirely to Constantinople and the east. Historians refer to this phase of the Roman Empire as the Byzantine Period, although the Romans of the day never made a distinction.

The primary threat to the empire was the Sassanid rulers of Persia. In 300 CE, the Romans and Persians had agreed to a border at the Tigris River, but in 502



Illustration 8: "The Finding of the True Cross" by Agnolo Gaddi, 1380

CE hostilities broke out between the two empires. The two fought a running border war for the next century. Around 600 CE, the Byzantine Emperor Maurice and the Sassanid Shah Khusrau II agreed to a peace so they two could deal with problems elsewhere². But in 602 CE, Maurice was killed in a coup by one of his generals Phocas.

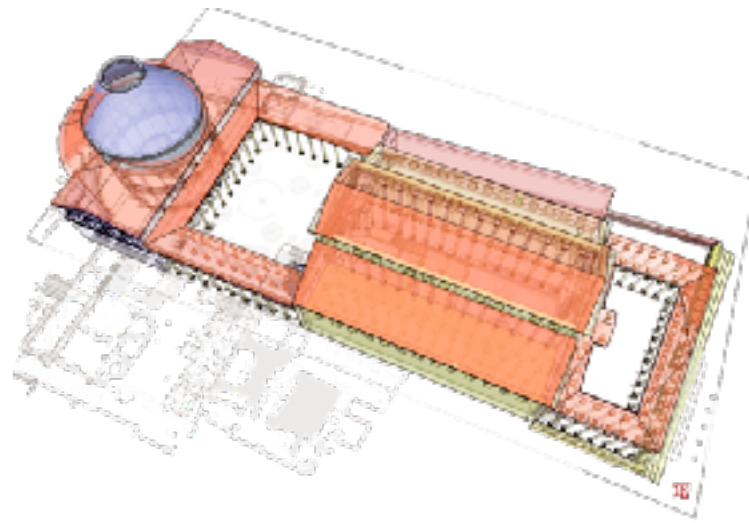


Illustration 9: An artist's rendering of what the original *Anastasis* and *Martyrium* might have looked like

In response, Khusrau launched a multi-pronged attack on Byzantine territories. He took most of Syria and Egypt, including Jerusalem. The Jews, long a persecuted minority in the empire, joined with the Sassanids, and they helped overthrow Roman power in Palestine and Syria.

Jerusalem itself fell to the combined Persian and Jewish forces in 614 CE. Khusrau appointed Nehemiah b. Hushiel as the Jewish ruler of Jerusalem. Initially, the situation in Jerusalem was stable, but Nehemiah set about planning to rebuild the temple and this enflamed the Christian majority there. That year, a group of Christians rioted. They killed Nehemiah and his "council of the righteous," dragging their bodies through the streets.

Retribution was swift. The Jews fled to Caesarea, and joined by the Persians they besieged the city and took it back from the Christians. According to Antiochus Strategos, an eye witness, the Jews killed 57,000 Christians in three days. Another 35,000 were captured, including the patriarch of the city.

The Jews claimed that the relic of the True Cross was actually the Staff of Aaron. They tortured Christian clerics until they revealed the location of the relic, which they took from its hiding place and sent to Khusrau.

Khusrau was mortified by the sack of Jerusalem. He had intended to occupy the city but not to bring the destruction the Jews had brought. He abandoned his Jewish allies to the Christians, who swept through Judea in 622 CE.

² This is not as amazing as it might first sound. Maurice was Khusrau's father-in-law.

(Just as a note, Muhammed was ruling in Mecca at this time and was allied with the Romans during this war. It was during the time of the Jewish occupation of Jerusalem that he supposedly had his night flight to *al-Aqsa*, “the far sanctuary,” which is clearly Jerusalem.)

The cross remained in Khusrau’s possession until 628 when the emperor Heraclius laid siege to Khusrau’s capital. Khusrau’s son and successor surrendered the relic to Heraclius in exchange for support to his own son as king. Heraclius returned the cross to the church in 630 CE.

The recapture of the True Cross became a vital element of medieval history, being told and retold for the next six hundred years and appearing in *The Golden Legend* in 1260, probably the most popular work of its age.

Heraclius undertook the reconstruction of the basilica and rotunda, which had been damaged during the battles and riots. He also rebuilt the city walls of Eudokia. Although evidence is scant, it seems that he rebuilt the basilica and rotunda as they were before without any additional construction.

637 CE

Less than a decade after Heraclius returned the True Cross to Jerusalem, Muhammed was dead and with him the alliance between the Muslims and the Romans. Muslim armies under the command of Abu Ubaidah were at the gates of the city. Suphronius, the patriarch of Jerusalem, surrendered the city to the Fatimid caliph Umar Ibn Al Khattab after a six month siege. In the 10th century, Euty chius of Alexandria recorded that the transition was peaceful and that Umar offered the Christians limited freedom of religion under the *al-Dhimma*, which appears to be supported by the more contemporary account of *al-Waqidi*.

In one of the ironies which history is replete with, the *Dhimma* imposed on the Christians practically the same conditions the Christians had imposed on the Jews. Before Muslim law, they were both *Ahl al-Kitab* or “people of the book”.

From every indication, the Caliph was favorably inclined to both the Christians and Jews of Jerusalem. He protected their holy sites and worked to guarantee that they could live peacefully under his rule. According to the Muslim chronicler *al-Waqidi*’s *Futuh al-sham*, Suphronius even invited Umar to offer his noon prayers at the Anastasis. Umar declined, fearing that if he offered prayers at the site the Muslims would convert it to a mosque. Instead, he crossed the street and prayed in an open space.³

691 CE

When the Umayyads took over the rule of the Muslim world, they also took over Jerusalem. The fifth Caliph, Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan commissioned engineers to construct a dome (qubba) over the rock that sits on the top of Mount Moriah. This rock had been part of the temple structure and most likely part of Hadrian’s temple to Jupiter.

The dome is unique in Muslim architecture and bears a striking resemblance to the Constantinian Anastasis rotunda. In fact, the 10th century geographer *al-Mugaddasi* argued that the Dome of the Rock was constructed because Muslims

³ In 1193, this space was made into the Mosque of Omar by Saladin.

believed the Anastasis to be more beautiful than any Muslim structure in Jerusalem.⁴

For whatever reason, these two domes dominated the Jerusalem landscape. The city itself was depopulated. Although estimates are wild and inconsistent, there were probably fewer than 10,000 people in the town when Abd al-Malik began construction of the Dome of the Rock. There are at least some who argue that this construction might have been part of an effort to move the center of Muslim *haji* to Jerusalem. At the time, the Qabba in Mecca was in the hands of rebels and there was fierce fighting going on.



Illustration 10: The current Mosque of Omar (1139).

1009 CE

From every indication, the site remained virtually unchanged under Muslim rule for another 350 years. It was a site of Christian pilgrimage, protected by the Muslim rulers of the region. Of course, cut off from the greater body of Christians, the buildings suffered. When a plague devastated the Muslim population, the Patriarch of Jerusalem Thomas I made some much needed repairs to the roof of the Martyrium.⁵ Other than this, no work was done to the church.

Then, in 996 a new caliph came to power. He was named Abu 'Ali Mansur Tariq al-Hakim and was born in Egypt. He elevated the Egyptian Muslims to new heights and ruled well from an internal perspective. But to later Christian chroniclers like William of Tyre, he was simply "The Mad Caliph."

In 1009, for reasons that no one seems to be clear on, al-Hakim ordered the complete destruction of both the basilica and rotunda. He raged against the Christians as no Muslim leader had before. Some historians claim that his mother was a Christian and he attempted to eradicate the faith as a sort of retribution, but no one really knows.

Under al-Hakim, the Martyrium was reduced to rubble and the Anastasis rotunda was torn down. The north and south pillars of the rotunda were preserved only because the rubble of rotunda covered them completely. Two contemporary

⁴ Rina Avner, "The Dome of the Rock: Architecture and Architectural Iconography". *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Cultures of the Islamic World*, vol. 27. (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2010)

⁵ Some sources indicate that Thomas was aided by Charlemagne, the King of the Franks.

historians, Yahya of Antioch and Adémar de Chappanes, record that the destruction was complete.

Yahya, a Christian doctor who was apparently present, wrote: “They seized all the furnishings they found in the church and completely destroyed it, leaving only those things whose destruction would have been too difficult. They also destroyed Calvary and the church of St. Constantine and all that was located within its confines, and they tried to destroy the sacred remains.”

Almost immediately Christians began to creep back on the site and make some minor repairs, but the site remained completely destroyed until after al-Hakim disappeared in 1021.

1048 CE

Eager to appease the enraged Christians, al-Hakim’s son, the young Ali az-Zahir, entered negotiations with the Byzantines in 1027 and the following year granted them permission to rebuild the site. It was another seventeen years before the emperor Constantine IX Monomachos and his Constantinople patriarch Nicephorus could launch a rebuilding campaign that lasted for five years (1043-1048).

Despite the enormous amounts of money Constantine IX poured into the project, the Byzantines were only able to clear the rubble from the site of the courtyard and rebuilt the Anastasis. They did not attempt to rebuild the basilica. Instead, they constructed small chapels that stood south and west of the courtyard. These chapels served as a sort of Holy Land in miniature because travel to numerous other sites in the city were limited by the Muslims.



Illustration 11: Pieces of the original columns of the basilica, found beneath the floor of the present buildings in the 20th century.

1099 CE

In 1095, the Byzantine emperor Alexios I Comnenus sent a letter to Robert of Flanders and Urban II, the bishop of Rome, requesting a military force to help expel the Seljuk Turks from former Byzantine lands. When Urban II received the letter, he launched what became the First Crusade - an armed pilgrimage which had Jerusalem as its objective.

From 1096 to 1101, the *ferengi* (a Greek word meaning “able to pay” and a play on the word *Franks*, this was how the Byzantines referred to all western Europeans) marched across the landscape and against all odds expelled the Muslims from Jerusalem in 1099.

In point of fact, The Crusaders were able to take Jerusalem because the Muslim world was in turmoil. The city was not even in the hands of the Turks who Alexios had asked the Crusaders to help him defeat. It was held by the Fatimids, who had taken it from the Turks only shortly before. So contested was the rivalry among the three Muslim groups that the Fatimids even offered to help the

Crusaders defeat their rivals. The Crusaders refused, taking the city from their potential allies in a bloody, terrible siege.

Upon entering the city, Godfrey of Bouillon rushed to the site of the church and swore off any claim to ruling the city. Instead, he declared himself *Advocatus Sancti Sepulchri* - Defender of the Holy Sepulchre. William of Tyre records that Godfrey refused to wear a crown of gold in the city where Christ had worn a crown of thorns. The crown went instead to Baldwin of Boulogne.

Their pilgrimage over, the Crusaders set up a Kingdom of Jerusalem. They expelled the Byzantine clergy and appointed their own Latin clergy in the church. The Church was revered above all other holy sites, and the kings of Jerusalem were buried there.

The Crusaders found a cistern from the Monomachus project (1043-1048), and confused it with the site of Helena's supposed finding of the cross. They constructed a chapel there, unknowingly building it on the site of the ancient basilica. They also found the foundations of the temple to Venus and there constructed an underground chapel to Helena.

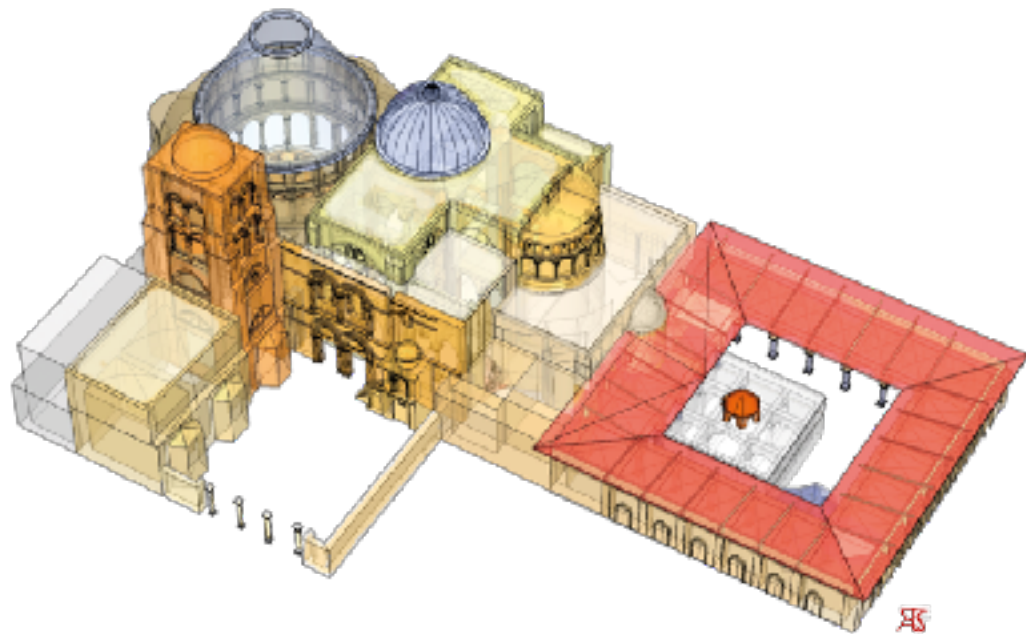


Illustration 12: The Crusader 12th century improvements on the structure, including the bell tower.

For the next fifty years, the crusaders renovated the buildings. A new Romanesque church consolidated the Anastasis and the smaller chapels for the first time, crowning them with a bell tower. The work was completed during the reign of Melisende in 1049 (reigned 1031-1053), and it is more or less this edifice that stands today.

The Eudokian walls which had protected the city since the 5th century were badly damaged in an earthquake in 1133, so the Crusaders repaired them and

reinforced them. Work was completed in 1177, but the walls were really not the primary defense of the city. That was the Tower of David, a citadel near what is today Jaffa Gate.

1187 CE In 1175, the Abbasid caliph appointed the general Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb as the first Sultan of Egypt, establishing what history knows as the Ayyubid dynasty. Known to us as simply Saladin, the new Sultan launched sweeping attacks on the Crusader states.

By 1187, only Jerusalem remained of the Crusader strongholds in Palestine. Just as the Crusaders had taken advantage of divisions among the Muslims when they conquered Jerusalem nearly a century before, Saladin took advantage of the warring Crusaders. In October, the city surrendered to him and Saladin released most of the Christian inhabitants. He then relocated Jews from all over Palestine, allowing them to return to the city they had been banned from since the Crusader victory.

In response to the loss of Jerusalem, a Third Crusade was launched. Led by Richard I of England, the Crusaders managed to turn the tide against Saladin. Richard I knew that holding Jerusalem was pointless, so in 1192 he and Saladin negotiated a treaty that opened the city and other sites in Ayyubid-held territory to unarmed pilgrimage.

Saladin's attack had once again destroyed the walls, and the city was left unprotected for the next 350 years - until the time of Suleiman the Magnificent.

1229 CE In 1229, the German emperor Frederick II led the Sixth Crusade to Jerusalem. He persuaded the Ayyubid Sultan Al-Kamil to allow him to be crowned "King of Jerusalem" as part of a peace treaty, and for a brief moment, Frederick might have actually believed he ruled the city.

The reality was that Al-Kamil did not take his treaty with Frederick seriously. Not only that, but Frederick had been excommunicated by the pope so the Latin Patriarch did not even attend the crowning. As soon as Frederick was gone, Al-Kamil simply disregarded all of the stipulations of the treaty and returned to life as it had been before his arrival.

Al-Kamil's family would have to tend to its own issues. His successor As-Salih Ayyub, fearing the soldiers of his own Kurdish relatives, turned for protection to a special slave army known as the Mamluks. The Mamluks overthrew the Ayyubids in 1250, and they took control of Jerusalem as part of their territory. They controlled the city until 1517.

1244 CE Saladin knew the Christian pilgrims were good for business and the treaty ensured increased traffic of both pilgrims and merchants. The uneasy peace between the Europeans and the Muslims continued until 1244 when a Turkish group known as the Khwarezm sacked the city on their way to Egypt where they served as mercenaries for the Ayyubid sultanate.

The Ayyubid sultan, Malek-Adel, wrote a letter to Pope Innocent IV, apologizing for the damage to the church from the sack. He promised that the church would

be protected, and then he placed the keys of the church in the custody of two Muslim families - the Nuseibeh and Judeh. These families maintain custody of the keys even today. Fidentius of Padua noted that during his tenure as Custodian, they charged 80 francs to open the door at one point. That is equivalent to \$12,500 today, so that claim is a little hard to accept as accurate. (The entrance fee was abolished in 1831.)

1342 CE Little is known of the state of the city, but it appears that it was reduced to the status of a village after this latest malay. It was left unwallled and deserted. Although the Khwarezm sack prompted the calling of the Seventh Crusade, the city remained out of reach of most Europeans and journeys there were fraught with danger.

The exception to this were the Order of Francis or the Franciscans Minor. First coming to Jerusalem in 1230, they had established themselves on Mount Zion near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. From their base in the Cenacle (a proposed site of the Upper Room), they provided direction and assistance to pilgrims. They also held a position within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, quite literally bribing the Muslim overlords to remain in place.

In 1342, Pope Clement VI issued the Bull *Gratiam agimus*, appointing the head of the Franciscans as Custodian of the Holy Land and *ex officio* Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. Clement commanded that the Franciscans, “may reside continuously in the church known as the Sepulchre and celebrate there Solemn Sung Masses and the Divine Office in the manner of the several friars of this Order who are already present in this place.”

The city was depopulated and unprotected, essentially an empty space with two major religious sites - one for the Christians and one for the Muslims.

1453 CE Although nothing of significance happened in Jerusalem in 1453, this was the year that Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks. The Orthodox Church, estranged from the Roman Church since 1065, lost one of its most sacred sites. Without the city as a focus, they turned their attentions to Jerusalem.

Two of the Orthodox patriarchates (Jerusalem and Antioch) claimed the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as their basilica, and they began to compete with the Franciscans over the rule of the building. The rivalry intensified almost annually, and custody of the church became a major piece of the stalemate between them.

1520 CE In 1520, a young, intelligent and ambitious man named Suleiman became the Sultan of the Ottoman Turks. His father Mehmet II had united much of the Muslim world under Ottoman rule, including Jerusalem. Suleiman took the opportunity to restore Jerusalem’s significance.

Suleiman envisioned Jerusalem as a place of peace for Muslims, Jews and Christians. He opened the gates of his newly walled city to all forms of Christians. When the French king Louis XV sent a request that all the churches that had been converted to mosques be returned to the Christians, Suleiman very diplomatically stated that Sharia law forbid this while assuring Louis that all existing Christian sites would be respected.



Illustration 13: View of the Anastasis rotunda from the south. You can see the minaret of the Mosque of Umar to the right and the Crusader bell tower between the rotunda and the minaret.

1536 CE

During the 15th century, the balance of European power was upset by both the Hundred Years' War between France and England and the fall of the Byzantine Empire. After the Ottoman Turks defeated the Egyptian Mamluks in 1517, the Ottoman Turks were ensconced as the leaders of the Muslim world. The French monarchy began to make overtures to the Ottomans in the hope of strengthening their position.

In 1536-1538, Suleiman had Jerusalem's city walls rebuilt, more or less on the line of Eudekia's walls. Suleiman's motivation is a matter of some consideration. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 had spelled the end of the walled city. Why build walls around a city that essentially existed of a handful of holy sites, especially after centuries of neglect?

The answer probably lies in the renewed interest in Jerusalem from the French and other European powers. Jerusalem's status as a pilgrimage site for Christians as well as Muslims and Jews could provide a lucrative trade. As construction progressed, Suleiman made sure his engineers included the major Christian holy sites, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre⁶.

Suleiman rightly expected that this rebuilding project would result in an increase in pilgrimages, but he did not anticipate that some of the penitent would remain in the city. He could not have foreseen that the European nation-states would take an interest as well. The Europeans negotiated treaties and alliances with the various factions within Suleiman's territory, creating a patchwork of international relations.

⁶ Suleiman took measures to ensure *all* represented faiths' monuments were inside the wall, so when he found out that the walls did not encompass Mount Zion, he executed the builders. He might have been tolerant of religions, but he was not tolerant of mistakes.

1555 CE After negotiations with the Orthodox clergy, the Franciscans undertook some desperately needed renovations on the church. They rebuilt the Aedicule which, if it was the primary structure, was nearly 1,000 years old; and they added an ante-chamber.

For the next two centuries, the Franciscans and Orthodox fought to obtain a favorable *firman* from the Ottoman rulers. As if this were not enough, the various factions of the Orthodox Church also squabbled over their roles in the church. Each had the upper hand at different times, but the conflicts were often violent.

1767 CE As their empire aged, the Ottoman Turks became notoriously poor managers of Christian affairs, and their handling of affairs at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was not an exception. In 1757, the Orthodox factions launched a surprise move and claimed a number of vital parts of the church. This weakened the Franciscans' ability to oppose the moves of their Orthodox rivals. Frustrated by the Christian infighting, the Turks issued a *firman* that divided the church among the various claimants in 1767.

1808 CE A fire hit the Anastasis, causing the rotunda to collapse and damaging the exterior of the Aedicule. The factions agreed to have the church repaired and the rotunda rebuilt. The financial responsibility was borne by the Greek Orthodox. In the process of rebuilding, they walled off the Catholicon - the main worship space under the rotunda. This wall remains in place.

1853 CE Tensions inside the church spilled over in the wake of the changes made during the reconstruction. Napoleon III of France demanded that the Turks return the church to its pre-1757 status quo. In response, Czar Nicholas I of Russia threatened to invade the Ottoman Empire.

To defuse the situation Sultan Abdülmecid I issued a definitive *firman*. "The actual status quo will be maintained and the Jerusalem shrines, whether owned in common or exclusively by the Greek, Latin, and Armenian communities, will all remain forever in their present state." This was enshrined in international law through the Treaty of Berlin in 1878.⁷ The European powers recognized the Orthodox primacy in the church, much to the chagrin of the Franciscans.

It is hard to understand today just how impoverished Jerusalem was under the Ottoman Turks. At the time of the 1853 firman, the city was home to less than 20,000 people. In his 1867 book *Innocence Abroad*, Mark Twain estimated the population at around 14,000 while the official 1851 census gave a much larger number of 25,000.⁸ The entire city, including the Muslim holy places, sat in disarray and disuse.

When the Ottoman Empire fell in 1918 at the end of World War I, the administration of the Status Quo became a British responsibility. The problem was that the Status Quo was not really a set of rules but a compilation of

⁷ This treaty ended the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. The treaty had far-reaching implications including the creation of several Eastern European nations such as Serbia and Romania. The enshrinement of the Status Quo was simply one of the conditions required by Russia to bring the war to an end.

⁸ Today, the population of metropolitan Jerusalem is well over one million people, with accommodations for nearly as many pilgrims.

traditions and legal opinions stretching over 500 years. The British were unable to manage the complicated interactions, and in 1920 created an Antiquities Department to deal with it.

1933 CE An earthquake hit Jerusalem in 1927 that did significant structural damage to the 800 year old church. In 1935, the architect William Harvey published a report on the failing buildings that should have excited action to preserve the buildings. It did not. The factions began discussing possible renovations, but the complexities of the Status Quo made it all but impossible. It would take until 1958 for the groups to decide on a course of action.

1940 CE The Franciscans contracted the architect Antonio Barluzzi to design a new, magnificent temple. His resulting design, published in 1940 was sweeping, contemporary and enormous. This would have required tearing down nearly a third of the Christian quarter and would have given the Latins a greater control of the sacred site. It would have also required the demolition of nearly a third of the Christian Quarter.

Barluzzi was an Italian when being Italian meant being a Mussolini fascist, and Europe was at war. Part of the treaty Mussolini and Hitler signed to bring German forces into the African Theater included provisions for the enactment of Barluzzi's plan. Had Rommel's Afrika Korps succeeded in taking Egypt, then Jerusalem probably would have fallen to the Axis Powers. In the hands of the Italians, the Status Quo would have certainly been abandoned and the new church built. Of course, the war went badly for Italy, and by the end, it was clear Jerusalem would pass to Jordanian control, so the Franciscans abandoned the project.

1980 CE The renovations begin in 1958 based on Harvey's 1935 survey took until 1980 to complete the work. The intervening years were some of the busiest in the Church's history. The independence of Israel and the subsequent 1967 claim of Jerusalem opened the city up to massive western tourism at a time when transportation became both cheaper and faster.

By the time the renovations were done, there were already as many more repairs to be done. Unfortunately, one of the driving personalities that got the work done, Patriarch Benediktos died that year, and without his involvement no agreements could be reached on the remaining necessary repairs. The factions could not even agree on a process of taking down the scaffolding around the rotunda until 1997 - seventeen years after the repairs had been made.

To provide an example of the difficulties. In 2007, the Roman and Greek factions agreed to do work on the bathrooms. Unfortunately, the Coptic church refused to agree to the plan. Since the sewer lines run under their allocated space, no work could be done.

2018 CE The Aedicule, which had been rebuilt after the 1810 fire but badly damaged in the 1927 earthquake, was not part of the 1958-1980 renovations. In 1947, over the protests of the factions, the British had placed a scaffolding and a series of steel bands around the structure. Without them, the small building would have crumbled.

Repairs were finally done under the leadership of Antonia Moropoulou, of the National Technical University of Athens. Moropoulou is an expert in non-destructive preservation of ancient buildings. The techniques they used to restore the building were not available until very recently. Together with her colleagues Kyriakos Lampropoulos and Manolis Korres, Moropoulou published an extensive ground radar survey of the site, which was used in the careful renovations.

Over the course of four years, Moropoulou's teams were able to carefully preserve the building *in situ* without any demolition. She discovered that some of the building materials dating to before Hakim's destruction in 1009, The rebuilt Aedicule was re-opened in 2018. This was the first time in almost a century that the building could be seen as it was constructed in 1810.

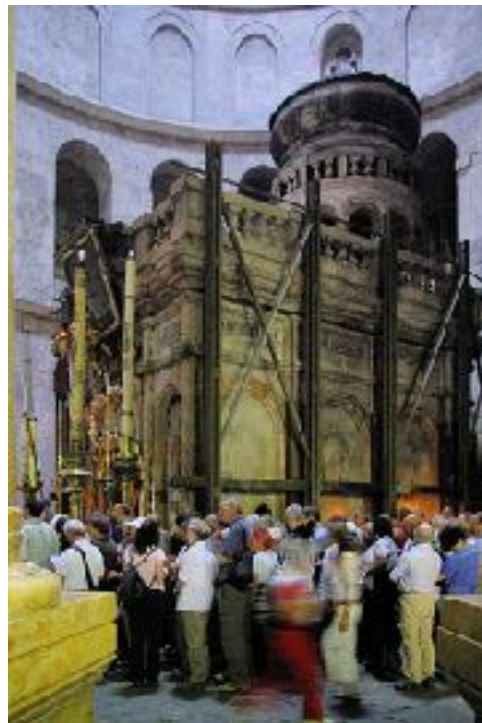


Illustration 14: The Aedicule before repairs (left) and after (right). The teams removed all of the exterior marble, injected structural grout in the existing building stone, restored the marble and replaced it.

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