

Herod the Great's Unique Jerusalem

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Herod the Great was King of Judea, confirmed in power with the aid of Rome. He was a spectacular builder who created monumental architecture in his own country and beyond. He was regarded as a friend of Rome and a foreigner by his people, but he desired to impress his subjects and leave his mark on history. He built a cosmopolitan city in Jerusalem and developed and extended the Temple Mount. He replaced the Temple completely without losing a single day of sacrifice. The Temple Mount is today a testament to his ability.

Keywords: architecture, city-planning, Jerusalem Temple & Mount

Introduction

Herod the Great was King of Judea was a “client king” of the Romans. He considered himself a Jew but his subjects considered him a foreigner. He proved that he could blend both these aspects of his kingship. This article will show how he made Jerusalem a unique city in that he gave his people the extended Temple Mount, rebuilt the Temple to Yahweh, and enlarged the city. It will discuss his innovation as an architect, engineer, and builder with a pragmatic approach to solving difficulties.

He was a practical and thorough man, with a broad world view, outstanding organisational talent and improvisational ability (in the best sense of the term), able to adapt himself to his surroundings and to changing situations—a man who anticipated the future and had his two feet planted firmly on the ground. (Netzer, 2006, p. 306)



Figure 1. Temple Mount in the city of Jerusalem. Image from *The Accordance Bible Lands Photo Guide*.

Herod has a special place in the history of Jewish people. He left monuments in stone throughout the Holy Land and beyond but the greatest of his achievements was his unique contribution to the city of Jerusalem. Herod's dynamism drove him to create a cosmopolitan city that blended the architectural and engineering expertise of the Greco-Roman world with local knowledge and the skill of Jewish craftsmen to establish a matchless metropolis with the Temple of Yahweh at its centre—his unique Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was considered a special place touched by God and transformed by man. A city of spirit, memory, and promise perched on the top of the Judean Hills just 48 kilometres inland of the eastern-most shore of the Mediterranean. It had no strategic or military advantages and no river running nearby, yet God chose this place to be the centre of Jewish worship (Metzger & Coogan, 1993, pp. 349-356).¹ It became the heart of Jewish national, religious, and political life symbolizing God's presence among his people.

In continuity with the two articles that have preceded this one "Herodium, Herod's Innovative Masterpiece" (Bergin, 2017) and the "Innovative Genius of Herod at Caesarea Maritima" (Bergin, 2018), the same methodology has been applied to produce this document. It will look to Flavius Josephus for literary information about Herod the Great. Scholars and archaeologists around the world have found that his descriptions are reliable but numerically his estimation of the dimensions can be somewhat flawed (Burrell, 2014). The method employed here is to examine the writings of Josephus where possible and compare them with what archaeologists have uncovered in and around the city of Jerusalem to give an accurate picture of Herod's exceptional architectural achievements. Archaeological excavations have taken place in Jerusalem and its environs since the 19th century and continue to the present-day adding valuable information about Herod's irreplaceable city. The assessment of what Josephus recorded and what archaeologists have excavated will enable this article to reveal how unique Herod's Jerusalem really was.

Herod the Great

The background of Herod's rise to power is pertinent to this research to make it possible for us to appreciate what challenges he faced in rebuilding Jerusalem. In 63 B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) the Roman army invaded Judea and the once independent Jewish state surrendered to Rome. Herod's father, Antipater, who had supported the aggressors, began a long association with Rome. He encouraged a policy of befriending the aggressors and the Romans rewarded him with wealth and power (Levine, 1992, p. 161). In 47 B.C.E. Julius Caesar appointed Antipater procurator of Judea and Roman citizenship was conferred on him. Herod made his political debut in the same year when he was appointed Governor of Galilee ("Herod", 2003, p. 879). When his father was murdered in 42 B.C.E. he faced a problem that the Jerusalem elite tried to have him removed but were thwarted by the steadfast loyalty of Rome (Levine, 1992, p. 161). Herod might have continued to live a life as Civil Servant of the Romans but a young Hasmonean nobleman, Mathathias Antigonus, seized control of Jerusalem with the aid of the Parthians in 40 B.C.E. overthrowing Roman rule. Antigonus was proclaimed King of Judea. Herod was forced to flee Judea and in an audacious move, he sailed for Rome in December to convince the Senate that making him King of the Jews was the solution to all their problems. With the support of Mark Antony, Herod was appointed and crowned King of Judea. Rome needed a

¹ The History of Jerusalem begins with Abraham when God commanded him to take his son Isaac to Mount Moriah in order to offer him as a sacrifice (Gen 22:1-18), but God intervened and provided a sacrifice in the place of Isaac. Abraham called the place of sacrifice, "The Place Where God Will Be Seen" (Genesis 22:14). The Lord had already chosen this as the place where He would establish Himself. This is the mountain on which Jerusalem is built. It is mentioned 660 times in the Hebrew Bible. David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. Here it would find a permanent home in the Temple built by David's son Solomon.

strong person to run the affairs of Judea because it was an important trading crossroads in the ancient world.

On his return Herod confronted Antigonus, the Hasmonean usurper, whose anti-Roman policies had spread throughout the country. A bitter war between Herod's army and Jewish forces ensued, lasting two years. Roman support was intermittent as Roman commanders regularly accepted bribes from Antigonus to withhold such assistance (Netzer, 2006, p. 8). Following a special appeal to Mark Antony for help, Sossius, Governor of Syria, left for Jerusalem and after a siege of two months the city was overthrown against the wishes of the very people Herod aimed to rule. Antigonus was captured and sent to Rome for execution (JW 1.17.345-353; JA 14.468-481).

Herod had been installed by force, his power was secular, and it lacked the prestige and spiritual authority that his Hasmonean predecessors had as High Priests (Smallwood, 1981, p. 60). He married into the Hasmonean family to help legitimize his reign. The constitutional basis of the State changed, the Torah was replaced by Roman law, and the administration of the traditional laws passed directly to Herod. The Sanhedrin no longer had jurisdiction in matters pertaining to secular laws. It could remonstrate but it could not act legally.

Herod began rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and environs devastated by two years of war. Early in his reign he built the Antonia fortress² in the north-west of the Temple Mount replacing the destroyed Baris citadel of the Hasmonean Kings. The discussion about where the Baris was positioned needed not to concern us here (Ritmeyer, 2006). Herod needed a safe secure Palace-Fortress from where he could rule Judea safely.

The Antonia Fortress

Josephus describes the Antonia Fortress,

Now as to the tower of Antonia, it was situated at the corner of two cloisters of the court of the temple: of that on the west, and that on the north. It was erected upon a rock of fifty cubits in height: and was on a great precipice. It was the work of King Herod. Wherein he demonstrated his natural magnanimity. In the first place the rock itself was covered over with smooth pieces of stone, from its foundation; both for ornament; and that anyone who would either try to get up, or to go down it, might not be able to hold his feet upon it. Next to this, and before you come to the edifice itself of the tower, there was a wall, three cubits high; but within that wall all the space of the tower of Antonia itself was built upon, to the height of forty cubits. The inward parts had the largeness and form of a palace. It being parted into all kinds of rooms, and other conveniencies; such as courts, and places for bathing, and broad spaces for camps: insomuch that by having all conveniencies that cities wanted, it might seem to be composed of several cities; but by its magnificence it seemed a palace. And as the entire structure resembled that of a tower, it contained also four other distinct towers, at its four corners. Whereof the others were but fifty cubits high: whereas that which lay upon the southeast corner was seventy cubits high: that from thence the whole temple might be viewed. But on the corner, where it joined to the two cloisters of the temple, it had passages down to them both: through which the guards (for there always lay in this tower a Roman legion) went several ways among the cloisters, with their arms, on the Jewish festivals; in order to watch the people, that they might not there attempt to make any innovations. (JW 5.5.238-244)

The Antonia Fortress stood at the northwest corner of what is now the Herodian Temple Mount built on a rocky crag (Murphy O'Connor, 2004, p. 85). It had four towers, the fourth being the highest and the whole Temple area could be viewed from here (JW 5.5.242). It was a luxurious palace with regal apartments, gardens,

² In recent years there has been much discussion about the Antonia Fortress and whether it was a much larger installation on what has always been identified as the Herodian Temple Mount. The main scholars involved in this debate are Ernest Martin, George Wesley Buchanan, and Robert Cornuke supporting the hypothesis that the Temple Mount was the Antonia Fortress based on the recorded number of Roman soldiers stationed there and those who are sure that the Antonia Fortress is sited on the north-west corner of the Temple Mount, Jerome Murphy O'Connor, Leen Ritmeyer along with many others. For full details on where to find these arguments consult the bibliography at the end of this article.

and fountains (JW 5.5.241). It was a huge building by any standards approximately 45 metres by 120 metres.³ Some archaeological remains of this fortress-palace have been discovered but it was demolished at the time of the Jewish Revolt by the Romans in 70 Common Era (C.E.) (Ritmeyer, 2006, pp. 128-129).

King Herod built the Struthion (meaning sparrow pool) when the Antonia was constructed. The pool's foundations are on the rock scarp on which the Palace-Fortress is located. It measured 52 metres by 14 metres with a varying depth of four and a half metres to six metres at the southerly end of the pool (Gurevich, 2017, pp. 116-117). Josephus (JW 5.4.149-151) records a ditch/moat being dug "in order to hinder the foundations of the tower of Antonia from being joined to the hill" (Whiston, 1999, p. 852). This reservoir supplied water to the fortress and was fed from the upper aqueduct which will be discussed below (Ritmeyer, 2006, pp. 42-43). The pool offered protection from assault over the rock scarp by invaders! Later it was covered over by vaulted ceilings in the second century of the Common Era and became known as the Twin Pools.

The Jews valued cleanliness and hygiene in their religious observance, as well as in everyday life. Herod upgraded and extended Jerusalem's water management system (Amit & Gibson, 2014, pp. 25-26) to meet the increasing public demands of residents and to provide a significant increase in the reserves of water for pilgrims arriving in Jerusalem for the three main Jewish festivals (Exodus 23:14-17):

- *Pessah* (Passover), celebrating the exodus of the Jews from Egypt following the instructions in the Bible (Exodus 12:15-20).
- *Shavuot* (the Feast of Weeks) to celebrate the first fruits of the harvest which were to be brought to the Temple in Jerusalem in thanksgiving (Exodus 34:26).
- *Sukkot* (the Feast of Tabernacles, tents, and booths) described in the Bible (Lev 23:34) which commemorates the Israelites time in the wilderness.

The population of Jerusalem doubled during these festivals therefore the pressure for water was severe. The Temple needed large amounts of water for drinking and for the ritual cleaning, every day, after the killing of animals for sacrifice. Water was stored in great cisterns under the Temple Mount.

The rainfall in Israel was minimal at the time of Herod (as it is today) with rainy season from November to April each year and consequently water was precious. Rain was collected in reservoirs and cisterns for use throughout the year, but Jerusalem was a city that had no adjacent natural water spring. Josephus comments on the pools in Jerusalem at the time of the Jewish Revolt citing the Serpent's Pool (JW 5.3.108), Solomon's Pool, the Siloam Pool (JW 5.4.145), the Pool of Struthion (JW 5.11.467) later known as the Struthion Pool, and the Pool of Amygdalon (JW 6.11.468), possibly Hezekiah's Pool, which was built before Herod's reign. The metropolis of Jerusalem relied on water being carried into the city from Solomon's Pools in rock-quarried tunnels, on aqueducts to water pools/reservoirs to meet the city's demands.

It is widely accepted among scholars that the lower aqueduct of the two unearthed in the Jerusalem area was constructed during the Hasmonean era (Amit, 2019, pp. 150-152; Amit & Gibson, 2014, p. 1). Herod renovated this channel by re-plastering and strengthening it in places and it continued in use up to the Ottoman period (Amit & Gibson, 2014, p. 1). Recent excavations have revealed that Herod built the upper aqueduct to provide an efficient supply of water to feed his new palace in the upper city of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount (Amit & Gibson, 2014, p. 28). As with other Herodian water conduits (namely the aqueduct at Caesarea Maritima), the water in the aqueduct was moved along by a steady gradient from Solomon's Pools to Jerusalem.

³ ritmeyer.com/2018/02/05/the-antonia-fortress/ (accessed on 15.10.2010).



Figure 2. Solomon's Pools in the present day.⁴

The Upper Palace

Josephus pens a description of Herod's Palace thus,

The largeness also of the stones was wonderful; for they were not made of common small stones, nor of such large ones only as men could carry, but they were of white marble, cut out of the rock; each stone was twenty cubits in length, and ten in breadth, and five in depth. They were so exactly united to one another, that each tower looked like one entire rock of stone, so growing naturally, and afterward cut by the hand of the artificers into their present shape and corners; so little, or not at all, did their joints or connexion appear low as these towers were themselves on the north side of the wall, the king had a palace inwardly thereto adjoined, which exceeds all my ability to describe it; for it was so very curious as to want no cost nor skill in its construction, but was entirely walled about to the height of thirty cubits, and was adorned with towers at equal distances, and with large bed-chambers, that would contain beds for a hundred guests a-piece, in which the variety of the stones is not to be expressed; for a large quantity of those that were rare of that kind was collected together. Their roofs were also wonderful, both for the length of the beams, and the splendour of their ornaments. The number of the rooms was also very great, and the variety of the figures that were about them was prodigious; their furniture was complete, and the greatest part of the vessels that were put in them was of silver and gold. There were besides many porticoes, one beyond another, round about, and in each of those porticoes curious pillars; yet were all the courts that were exposed to the air everywhere green. There were, moreover, several groves of trees, and long walks through them, with deep canals, and cisterns, that in several parts were filled with brazen statues, through which the water ran out. There were withal many dove-courts of tame pigeons about the canals. (JW 5.4.174-181)

Archaeologists found the remains of Herod's Palace-Fortress built in the upper city near the Jaffa Gate. Two parallel walls running north to south have been excavated and form a containment area for soil and stones to shape an artificial podium for the construction of this Palace-Fortress. This type of artificial platform construction is recognized in many of Herod's building projects. This discovery indicates the size and dimensions of his palace. It is the only evidence available in current research for the existence of this magnificent Palace-Fortress (Reem, 2019, pp. 140-142). We must rely on the description of Josephus (JW 5.4.174-181) to imagine the beauty and luxury that the palace contained. A drainage system quarried on the bedrock was discovered that took run-off from under the centre of the palace to the Hinnon Valley (Reem, 2019,

⁴ <http://www.romanaqueducts.info/aquasite/jerusalem-pools/index.html> (accessed on 6.11.2019).

pp. 136-144). The Palace-Fortress was surrounded by a high wall with towers located at regular intervals including the three great towers of Phasaël, Hippicus, and Mariamme making the building and city secure: "...the city had been made safe by him by the palace in which he lived..." (JA 15.8.292).

Jerusalem was unique specifically because it was the ultimate pilgrimage destination for Jews from Israel and the Jewish diaspora. The provision of a stable water supply was crucial to the city therefore it is important for us to look at what Josephus has to say about the sources of water available to the public, specifically reservoirs and pools.

Reservoirs and Pools

The Pool of Siloam is described by Josephus (JW 140-145). It was used for drinking water and for ritual bathing. Each year over 150,000 pilgrims would come to visit the Temple and every person needed to perform a cleansing ritual before they could enter the religious citadel. The dimensions of the Siloam Pool were approximately 50 metres by 60 metres (Stern, Levinzon-Gilbo'a, & Aviram, 1993, pp. 746-747). Two separate phases have been excavated in the Siloam Pool and archaeologists claim these stages indicate that the pool was built in the early Second Temple Period and later upgraded by Herod with paved well-dressed stones (Reich & Shukron, 2019, pp. 73-83). Josephus says that the Pool of Siloam has "a fountain which has sweet water, in great plenty" (JW 140), which corresponds with archaeological discoveries indicating that the pool was supplied by the Gihon Spring (Gurevich, 2017, p. 112).⁵ Later in the time of Christ the pool would be the scene of one of the New Testament miracles (John 9:1-7).⁶

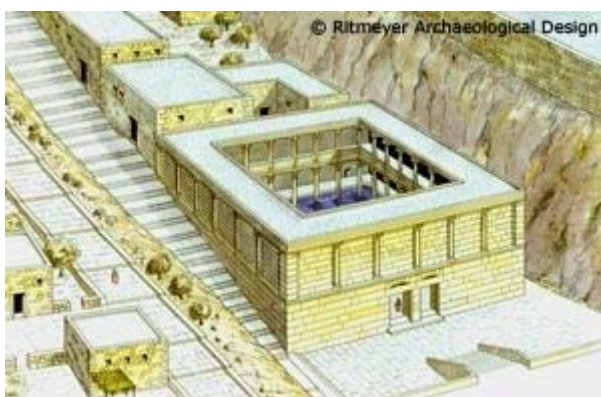


Figure 3. Drawing of the Siloam Pool (1995).⁷

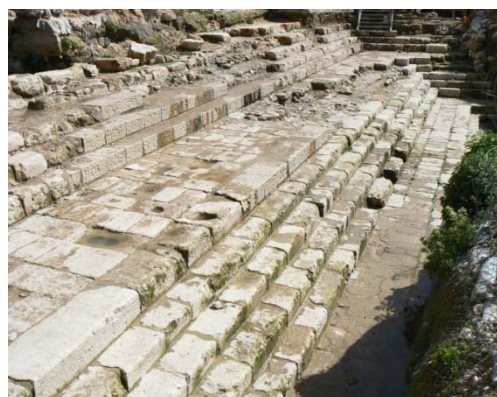


Figure 4. View of the Pool of Siloam today.⁸

The Pool of Bethesda, also known as Bethsaida, was located near the Sheep Gate, on the eastern side of the city near the Antonia Fortress, just north of the Temple Mount. The name Bethesda could mean "place of mercy" or "place of outpouring". The pool had five porches and according to the Bible there was a tradition that an angel moved the waters at certain times and healed the sick. It was here at the Pool of Bethesda that Jesus healed the

⁵ <http://www.bible.ca/arheology/bible-arheology-pool-of-siloam.htm> (accessed on 31.10.2019).

⁶ As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world". When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see (John 9:1-7).

⁷ blog.ritmeyer.com/index.php?s=scarp (accessed on 17.6.2010).

⁸ Image from *The Accordance Bible Lands Photo Guide*.

man who was lame for 38 years (John 5:1-12).⁹ Josephus does not refer to the Sheep Gate or to the Pool of Bethesda but archaeological discoveries have confirmed the Biblical account, that there were five porches and the fifth one divided the rectangular pool into two separate compartments. The pool was carved into the bedrock with walls constructed with large squared stones. It was divided into two sections. The northern area was a reservoir 53 by 40 metres and the second part a bathing pool, was 47 by 52 metres. Both pools were irregular in shape and archaeologists report that the methods of construction imply that it was a single pre-planned building (Gibson, 1999-2009, pp. 25-26). There was a wide flight of steps across the western side of the pool that followed a pattern of six steps with a small landing which was repeated descending into the second pool. The reason for this was so that invalids could be accommodated on the various landings. Water levels would have been at different heights depending on the time of year in Jerusalem. There was a sluice-gate in the dividing wall for regulating the level of water. This bathing pool has all the attributes of a *miqweh* (Gibson, 1999-2009, pp. 17-44).

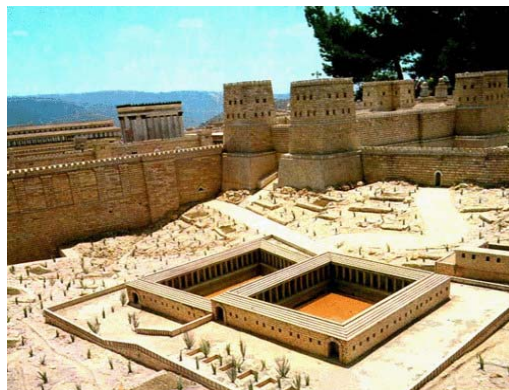


Figure 5. Model of the Pool of Bethesda.¹⁰

It might seem odd that Josephus does not mention all the water installations in Jerusalem but by the time he was writing in the first century C.E. some of these installations would have been part of the local environment and only became pertinent to his record if they represented a point of reference or an obstacle in the overrunning of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 C.E. The major point of interest for us is that archaeologists can confirm the pool's existence, giving us details of its size and construction and linking it directly to Herod the Great's major construction programme (Gibson, 1999-2009, pp. 17-44).¹¹

Birkat Isra'il also known as the Pool of Israel is recognized as a Herodian water installation which was located beside the northern wall of the Temple Mount. It was built when Herod the Great undertook the extension of the Temple platform (Von Wahlde, 2010, pp. 151-168; Ritmeyer, 2006, pp. 118-123). It was the

⁹ "Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been ill for 38 years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, 'Do you want to be made well?' The sick man answered him, 'Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.' Jesus said to him, 'Stand up, take your mat and walk.' At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk. Now that day was a sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been cured 'It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.' But he answered them, 'The man who made me well said to me, Take up your mat and walk'" (John 5:1-12).

¹⁰ http://www.google.ie/imgres?imgurl=http://vitajesu.files.wordpress.com/2009/11/pool_of_bethesda.jpg&imgrefurl=http://vitajesu.wordpress.com/2009/11/15/50/&usq=__v0zsF-k1UWsFXcSYRM3iQ0QWym8=&h=411&w=500&sz=106&hl=en&start=3&um=1&itbs=1&tbnid=Xp3HbljFpEVkcM:&tbnh=107&tbnw=130&prev=/images%3Fq%3DBethesda%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26tbs%3Disch:1 (accessed on 24.6.2010).

¹¹ www.academia.edu/22894959 (accessed on 31.10.2019).

largest pool ever built in Jerusalem, 110 metres by 38 metres and with a depth of 24 metres (Gurevich, 2017, p. 108). Built to provide an essential function it collected the run-off from the north wall of the Temple Mount (Gurevich, 2017, pp. 115-116). The integrity of the Temple platform would have been undermined by the constant ingress of water if it had not been channeled into a reservoir. It was a state-of-the art piece of engineering which included a structure within the pool that could control the level of the water with an innovative shaft that brought light to those working within the structure (Von Wahlde, 2010, pp. 165-166). There was an outlet point within the reservoir that could release water when required into the Kidron Valley. There was a dam wall on the eastern side which was 14 metres thick made up of blocks varying in size from approximately three and a half metres to five metres in length and between about one to three metres in height (Von Wahlde, 2010, p. 165). The base of the reservoir was covered to a depth of 43 centimetres in concrete coated with approximately six to seven centimetres of plaster. Josephus does not make any direct reference to Birkat Isra'il and indeed the first named reference to the pool is in the ninth century! (Von Wahlde, 2010, pp. 172-173)

Pilgrimage to Jerusalem created unique problems for Herod. How could he provide adequate services to facilitate the increasing numbers of pilgrims visiting the city each year? At a functional level the city would need to provide accommodation, food, water for drinking and ritual bathing.

Temple Mount

Herod planned to double the size of the Temple Mount and to provide a beautiful new temple that would be the envy of the world.

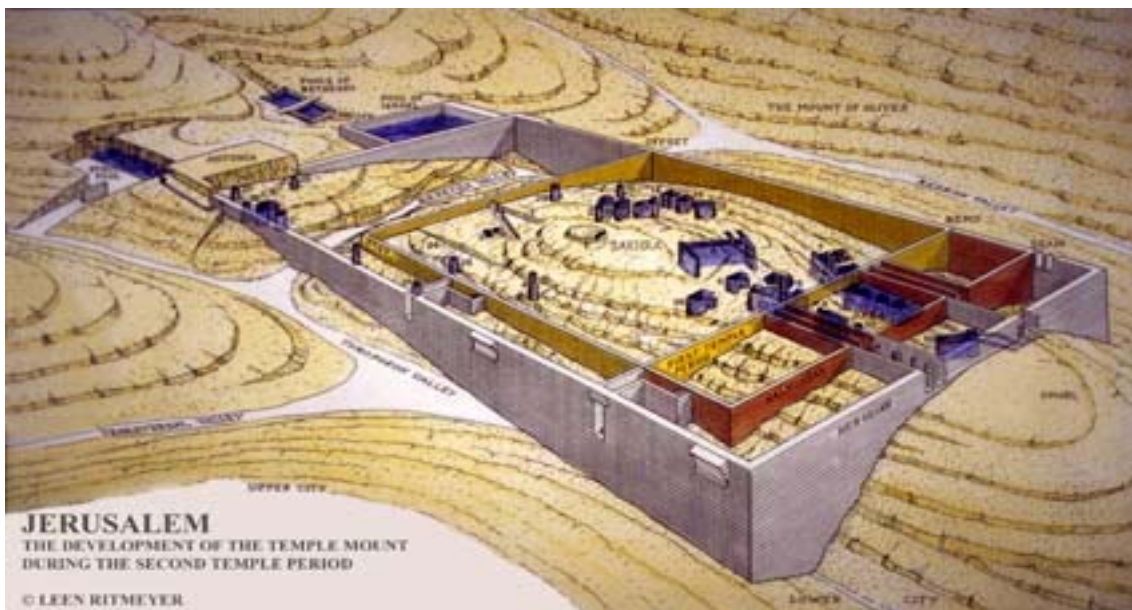


Figure 6. Drawing of the extension of the Temple Mount during the Second Temple Period.¹²

There were important questions to be considered before Herod could move forward with his plans to extend the Temple Mount and build a new Temple to the God of Israel.

¹² <http://blog.ritmeyer.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/04/devtm.jpg> (accessed on 8.6.2010).

- How would King Herod finance his scheme? He was an extremely wealthy king in his own right. He had inherited land, gold and silver from his father Antipater and with the kingship of Israel he controlled all the royal lands previously owned by the Hasmoneans (JA 15.1.5). Herod was an entrepreneur. He owned vast agricultural estates that brought in handsome profits. He earned royalties on half of the income from copper mines in Cyprus and he managed the other half for Caesar Augustus. These mines supplied copper throughout the Roman Empire providing a substantial annual income for the king. He imposed taxes within his kingdom, but he was a generous benefactor during times of famine and earthquake. He controlled valuable and lucrative trade routes imposing tariffs on goods in transit. He funded the entire Temple project from his private fortune (Welch, 1996-1997, pp. 74-83).

- Where would Herod find a suitably qualified workforce? Progressive agricultural technology had been introduced into Israel from Rome increasing productivity and providing a ready labour force for Herod's building projects (Ben-Dov, 1982, p. 82). Herod would have had easy access to Roman craftsmen, engineers, architects, and builders and he combined them with the talents of his accomplished Jewish builders, artisans, and innovators.

- What difficulties did Herod face in securing natural resources for this project (e.g., stone & wood) and their transportation? Herod always was a pragmatist and sourced his raw materials locally where possible. Stone could be quarried in the Jerusalem area and transported to the site. As Israel had no natural supply of suitable wood for large ancient construction projects—the most prized of which was cedar of Lebanon (*cedrus libani*) (Liphshitz & Bigger, 1991, p. 168)—it would have to be imported into Judea. This was not a problem for Herod as he had organized logistics in place to source wood from Turkey for building his port-city of Caesarea Maritima (Vortuba, 2007). The wood could be shipped from the Phoenician coast to Jaffa and then transported to Jerusalem (Liphshitz, 2013, p. 53).

- What permissions would Herod need to have sought to progress this project with political and religious leaders? There is no record of Herod receiving permission from Rome to build in Jerusalem but as he was considered a “client king” and would finance the programme himself, no clearance would have been required. But Herod needed the support of the people and their spiritual leaders for his Jerusalem Building Programme. He could not have embarked on such an ambitious project without their agreement. Josephus describes how Herod approached the people of Jerusalem and spoke to them to gain their support for his Temple Building Project:

I think I need not speak to you, my countrymen, about such other works as I have done since I came to the kingdom, although I may say they have been performed in such a manner as to bring more security to you than glory to myself; for I have neither been negligent in the most difficult times about what tended to ease your necessities, nor have the buildings I have made been so proper to preserve me as yourselves from injuries; and I imagine that, with God's assistance, I have advanced the nation of the Jews to a degree of happiness which they never had before; and for the particular edifices belonging to your own country, and your own cities, as also to those cities that we have lately acquired, which we have erected and greatly adorned, and thereby augmented the dignity of your nation, it seems to me a needless task to enumerate them to you, since you well know them yourselves; but as to that undertaking which I have a mind to set about at present, and which will be a work of the greatest piety and excellence that can possibly be undertaken by us, I will now declare it to you. Our fathers, indeed, when they were returned from Babylon, built this temple to God Almighty, yet does it want sixty cubits of its largeness in altitude; for so much did that first temple which Solomon built exceed this temple; nor let anyone condemn our fathers for their negligence or want of piety herein, for it was not their fault that the temple was no higher; for they were Cyrus, and Darius the son of Hystaspes, who determined the measures for its rebuilding; and it hath been by reason of the subjection of those fathers of ours to them and to their posterity, and after them to the Macedonians, that they

had not the opportunity to follow the original model of this pious edifice, nor could raise it to its ancient altitude; but since I am now, by God's will, your governor, and I have had peace a long time, and have gained great riches and large revenues, and, what is the principal thing of all, I am at amity with and well regarded by the Romans, who, if I may so say, are the rulers of the whole world, I will do my endeavour to correct that imperfection, which hath arisen from the necessity of our affairs, and the slavery we have been under formerly, and to make a thankful return, after the most pious manner, to God, for what blessings I have received from him, by giving me this kingdom, and that by rendering his temple as complete as I am able. (JA 15.11.381-389)

His speech must have been successful as no opposition was recorded (Ben-Dov, 1982, p. 76). He showed his goodwill by preparing all raw materials to be used in the construction of the Temple in advance (JA 15.11.390). Before this upgrading could be considered, those living in residential housing on the western and southern slopes of the Hasmonean Temple Mount would have to be moved. According to Jewish Law, it was impossible to take the land without the landowner's consent, not even by order of the king (1 Kings 21:1-29 refers) (Ben-Dov, 1982, p. 79). Herod must have come to settlements with the landowners in the area involving ample financial compensation because the remains of pre-existing residential houses have been identified by archaeologists (Ben-Dov, 1982, p. 79). Herod and his architects organized every detail in a comprehensive master plan to construct the Temple Mount around which would be built roads, public areas, and shops, to service pilgrims visiting the Temple. Accommodation for pilgrims was considered and archaeologists have found evidence that many thousands of people camped and cooked in areas outside the city walls (Gibson & Jacobson, 1994, pp. 150-160).

A stable water supply was essential for the Temple area for drinking, for the ritual purification of the priests, for cleansing the blood from slaughtered animals and other services. Cisterns were built within the Temple Mount (before Herod's extension). These were under the sole authority of the Temple hierarchy and not for normal public use. Since the building of the first Temple by King Solomon (2 Chronicles 3:1) provision had been made for a supply of water for the temple. Rainwater was diverted along channels from the Temple Mount esplanade to many cisterns underground along rock hewn conduits (Ritmeyer, 2006, pp. 221-231). Excavators from the 19th century attested to these in their reports. Archaeologists studying the drawings and reports point to commonalities with Hellenistic cisterns in the Near East (Gibson & Jacobson, 1994, pp. 150-160). The ancient letter of Aristeeas attests to the "wonderful indescribable cisterns" beneath the Temple Mount, "and each of them has countless pipes so the different streams converge together".¹³ King Herod added extra channels and cisterns under the Temple Mount and the water containment systems and drainage conduits were extended and upgraded.

¹³ Britannica.com (accessed on 1.11.2019).

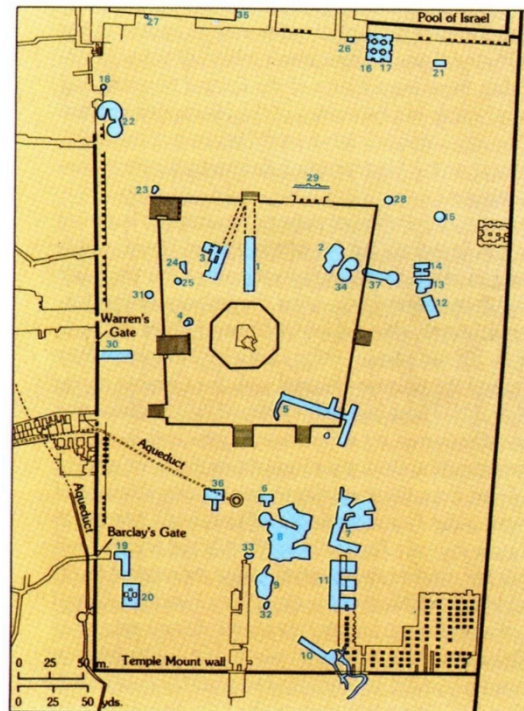


Figure 7. Cisterns on the Temple Mount.¹⁴

Extending the Temple platform required massive retaining walls to bear the weight of the structures above them (Shanks & Cole, 1992, p. 23). It was an exceptionally large enclosure by any standards in the ancient Near East (Mazar, 2000, p. 27). It was a huge technical challenge for Herod and his engineers to reshape and extend the Temple platform enclosing a huge area of 500 metres by 300 metres (the size of 24 soccer fields), in all 14 hectares. It was rectangular in shape with side walls of unequal length and it remains the same today except it is laid out now over two separated plazas. To the naked eye, the walls were like a skyscraper about the size of a 10-storey building approximately 30.5 metres high. The massive ashlar rocks were put in place with great precision, without the use of a bonding agent to keep them together and they have stood the test of time. Each course was recessed by two to three centimetres to ensure the stability of the wall and give the viewer a pleasing aesthetic view of the wall. The top of the walls were built with pilasters (half columns) in a similar way to the Herodian Tomb of the Patriarchs built in Hebron (Mazar, 2000, p. 28). The corners of the Temple Mount were built with extremely large ashlars laid in headers and stretchers (a zipper effect of alternate lengthwise and width-wise stones) providing particular strength to the corners of the enclosure (Mazar, 2000, pp. 31-32).

¹⁴ <http://www.romanaqueducts.info/aquasite/jerusalem/pools/index.html> (accessed on 6.11.2019).



Figure 8. The western wall of the Temple Mount (known as the Wailing Wall).¹⁵

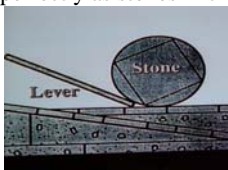
Preparations alone would take up to eight years while all the material needed to build the platform and the Temple were collected (Ben-Dov, 1982, p. 83). Herod was at heart a practical man and rarely imported expensive materials for his projects if raw materials could be sourced nearby. He used stone that was available near Jerusalem called *meleke*, hardened limestone laid down in strata. Stonemasons quarried, dressed, and transported the massive stones to the building site. Some of the massive blocks weighed 60, 70, or 80 tons. How they were moved is not clear.¹⁶ The stones were so perfectly fitted together that no mortar was required.

1,000 wagons and 10,000 men were assembled to undertake the work. Since only priests were permitted to enter the Holy of Holies, Herod had 1,000 priests specially trained as masons, carpenters, and artisans. They alone would work on the new sanctuary. Throughout the years of preparation and building, Herod paid his employees promptly and Josephus says, “if anyone worked for but one hour of the day, he at once received his pay” (JA 20.10.220).

To make up the level of the sloping hillside to the level of the projected plaza, Herod changed the topography of the area by filling in part of the Tyropoeon Valley and a nearby valley to the north (Mazar, 1978, p. 230). To create the southern wall, the upper slope of the Kidron valley was filled in and leveled (Ritmeyer, 2006, p. 20). Layers of huge arched vaults were constructed. Jewish ritual law demanded this mode of construction be undertaken on new ground to ensure no grave was included unintentionally in the construction

¹⁵ <http://images.google.com/images?gbv=2&ndsp=20&hl=en&q=archaeology+of+Herod+the+Great&start=40&sa=N> (accessed on 3.1.2009).

¹⁶ It has been suggested that the huge stones were quarried as cylinders and then rolled onto the site and carved afterwards to fit perfectly as stones in the wall. Image from DVD, *Herod the Great*, 2008.



(Ben-Dov, 1982, p. 91).¹⁷ The Temple Mount would form the basis for the Temple structures which were to follow.

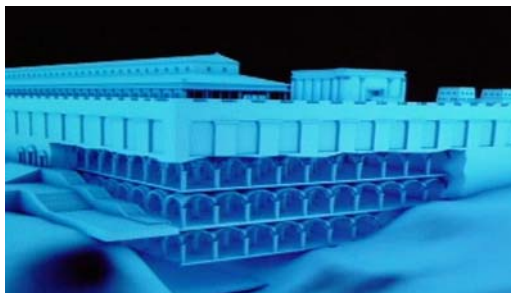


Figure 9. Computer drawing of the vaults under the Temple Mount.¹⁸

Each of the four corners contained a tower, to enable guards to monitor all the happenings on the Temple Mount and the build-up of crowds in the area (Ben-Dov, 1982, p. 77). Access to the Temple Mount would be a crucial factor in providing suitable entry points to the complex. Josephus provides us with information about the gates in the west (AJ 15.11.410) which are now recognized as Warren's Gate and Barclay's Gate (Ritmeyer, 2006, pp. 235-236). Normal entry and exit to the sacred precinct was through gates in the south wall recognized now as the Double Gate and Triple Gate (JA 15.11.411). Architectural artifacts discovered in the collapsed area of the gate lead archaeologists to say that the Triple Gate was the most magnificent (Mazar, 2000, pp. 50-56). The southern steps by which most Jews entered were specially designed of different widths to slow people's progress so that the pilgrim had time to prepare when walking up the steps, in preparation for entering the Temple Mount.



Figure 10. Different widths of steps.¹⁹



Figure 11. General view of steps.²⁰

Relying on Josephus, we know that porticos surrounded the Temple Mount. Three were double colonnades and details are given about their size, constituent elements, and their completed perfection (JW 5.5.190). Herod built a magnificent Royal Stoa on the southern aspect of the Temple Mount and Josephus says that "this cloister deserves to be mentioned better than any under the sun" (JA 15.11.412). It was constructed in the form of a basilica with four rows of columns running the length of the building, each row containing 40 columns with Corinthian capitals. The building measured 185 metres in length and the central hallway was much taller than

¹⁷ The Mishna is very explicit "Beneath both the Temple Mount and the Court of the Temple was a hallowed space for fear of any grave down in the depths" (Para. 3.3).

¹⁸ Image from DVD, *Herod the Great*, 2008.

¹⁹ <http://rickedwardsonline.com/?p=638> (accessed on 17.6.2010).

²⁰ <http://www.bibleplaces.com/southernmtm.htm> (accessed on 1.6.2010).

the side halls to provide natural lighting from windows set high up in the walls. The royal portico was open on the Temple side so the sacred environs could be overlooked. This building became the centre of public and commercial activities. There is nothing left of the building but from fragments that have been excavated and analyzed it is possible to get a visual idea of how the Royal Stoa was decorated (Mazar, 1978, p. 30). The fragmentary stone evidence includes column bases and drums, capitals of various kinds, architraves, friezes, cornices, and some ceiling decorations which are all carved in local limestone. The engraving is intricate and delicate with a huge variety of geometrical and floral motifs (Shimron & Peleg-Barkat, 2010, pp. 58-59). Josephus gives details about the wood carvings in the royal colonnade, “the roofs were adorned with deep sculptures in wood, representing many sorts of figures” (JA 15.11.416). Although none of the wood remains, his descriptions leave us in no doubt that the portico roof was supported by great wood beams and other wood elements were beautifully engraved. The Royal Stoa was itself a masterpiece of engineering and may well have been the scene for the driving out of the money lenders from the Temple (Matthew 21:12-13).²¹ There was a monumental staircase leading from the main street up to the Royal Stoa and this is now identified as Robinson’s Arch (Mazar, 2000, pp. 34-37).

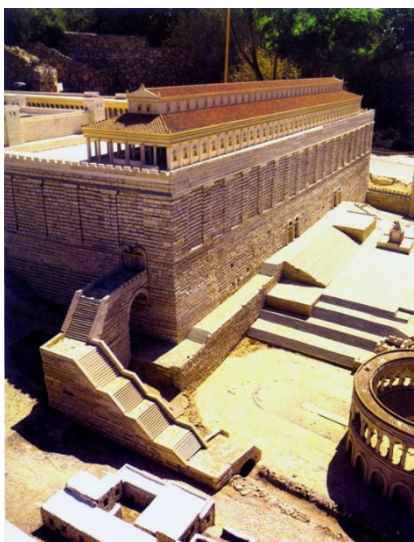


Figure 12. Model of Royal Stoa.²²



Figure 13. Remains of Robinson's Arch.²³

Long, broad shop-lined streets were constructed and paved at the foot of the mount and spacious plazas were placed at frequent intervals to ease the traffic congestion of thousands of people heading to the Temple (Ben-Dov, 1982, p. 79). The remains of shops and a paved street have been unearthed at the foot of Temple Mount on an 80-metre stretch of flagged road with vaulted niches (for stores and warehouses) quarried into the bedrock or built with stone blocks (Baruch & Reich, 2019, p. 88). Compelling evidence has been unearthed of the contents of the shops including stone vessels, weights, pottery, and coins (Mazar, 1978, pp. 230-231).

²¹ Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you are making it a den of robbers”.

²² <https://emp.byui.edu/SATTERFIELDDB/Jerusalem/Royal%20Stoa.htm> (accessed on 11.11.2019).

²³ Barbara Bergin photograph taken on visit to Jerusalem 3.5.2011.

The Temple in Jerusalem (JA 15.11.391-396)

Herod's Temple Mount complex was the most important building in the Holy Land; the culmination of all his building projects. It benefitted from the knowledge acquired at Masada—how to reinforce dangerous slopes and how to sculpt great slabs of rock. From Herodium, the Temple builders learned scale and how to build on different levels. The new Temple was to be built on the site of the existing one. Herod assured the people that the sacrificial rituals would continue throughout the project. The Temple was rebuilt in such a way that it never ceased offering sacrifice to the God of Israel for one single day.²⁴ The whole project would take 46 years to complete. Herod died before the completion of the entire project.

For the Jews, the Temple was the centre of their religion; the most sacred place on the face of the earth. Herod's Temple was magnificent and surpassed in architectural splendour and majesty anything that had ever been erected on the Temple Mount before. He devoted a considerable amount of time, attention, and effort to redesigning, renovating, and decorating the Temple itself while abiding by the religious instructions given in the Torah (Mazar, 1975, pp. 111-112). The Temple proper was built by the specially trained priests in just 18 months. Josephus described it thus,

Viewed from without, the Sanctuary had everything that could amaze either mind or eyes. Overlaid all round with stout plates of gold, the first rays of the sun reflected so fierce a blaze of fire that those who endeavoured to look at it were forced to turn away as if they had looked straight at the sun. To strangers as they approached, it seemed in the distance like a mountain covered with snow; for any part not covered with gold was dazzling white... (JW 5:6.5)²⁵

²⁴ Although there were three temples built (Solomon 950 B.C.E., Zerubbabel 515 B.C.E., Herod 20 B.C.E.), historians speak of only "two temple periods". "Temple periods" are determined by continuous offering of sacrifices. While in Babylon for 70 years, sacrifices ceased, but there had been continuous offering of sacrifices from the return to when Herod built the temple in 20 B.C. So there were two "Temple periods" but three different temple buildings.

First Temple Period: 950-586 B.C.E.	No. 1 Solomon 950 B.C.E. (first temple)
Babylonian Captivity	70 years sacrifices ceased
Second Temple Period: 515-70 C.E.	No. 2 Zerubbabel 515 B.C.E. (second temple)
	No. 3 Herod 20 B.C.E. (third temple)

<http://www.bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-jerusalem-temple-mount.htm> (accessed on 2.6.2010).

²⁵ Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish Wars*, from Pat Rogers "Bible Study CD".



Figure 14. Reconstruction of the Temple built by Herod the Great.²⁶

The Court of the Gentiles was the largest part of the Temple precincts and was open to all (including Herod). It was here that the people gathered to hear the rabbis and others speak and to deal with money changers (Rousseau & Arav, 1996, p. 282). Towards the north was the central core separated by a latticed stone wall (*soreg*) about one and a half metres high, with entry points at intervals.

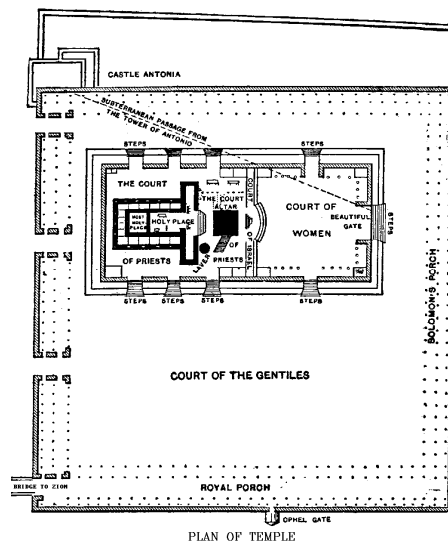


Figure 15. Floor plan of the Herodian Temple Mount.²⁷

²⁶ http://www.bible-archaeology.info/temple_of_jerusalem.htm (accessed on 14.1.2009).

²⁷ <http://www.templemount.org/missler/image21.gif> (accessed on 16.6.2010).

Carved stone slabs in Greek and Latin prohibited gentiles from entering the sacred internal court (Mazar, 1975, pp. 113-114).



Figure 16. Stone from Herod's Temple.²⁸



Figure 17. Tablet found by Charles Claremon-Ganneau.²⁹

Inside 14 steps led to a platform enclosed by a high rampart called the Court of the Women where all Jews were welcome, men, women, and children but women could go no further. Fifteen curved steps ascended from here to the Court of Israel entered through the exquisite Nicanor Gate. It had doors on both sides made of copper and plated with copper (not gold), like the other gates. This was consecrated ground. Only Jewish men were permitted to enter this area of the Temple and the Passover sacrifice had to be performed in shifts in order to accommodate the crowds of participants entering the narrow Court of Israel. Within the Court of the Priests was the altar of sacrifice and its ramp made of uncut stones, the bronze laver and bowl, and the place of slaughter. This area was accessible only to the Priests.

²⁸ Slabs bearing an inscription in Greek and Latin characters, as the one pictured above, a relic from Herod's Temple—warning Gentiles that death would be the penalty for breaking the rule, were placed in front of forbidden zones. *Museum Tschinili-Kirschk. Istanbul* (Interpretation: No foreigner is to go beyond the balustrade and the plaza of the temple zone and whoever is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his death which will follow).

http://www.biblehistory.com/gentile_court/TEMPLECOURTWarning_Inscription.htm (accessed on 17.6.2010).

²⁹ Greek tablet, attached to the Soreg, forbidding Gentiles to pass beyond that point found by Charles Claremont-Ganneau in 1870. *Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums*.

http://www.bible-history.com/gentile_court/TEMPLECOURTSoreg_Inscription.htm Accessed on 17.6.2010.

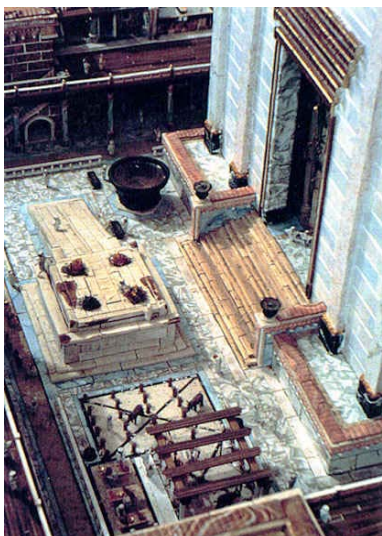


Figure 18. Stylized illustration of the Court of the Priests.³⁰ Figure 19. Illustration of Second Temple Sanctuary.³¹

The Herodian Temple retained the tripartite division and basic measurements prescribed for Solomon's Temple but on a much grander scale. It included the Holy of Holies (*debir*), a dark windowless room, entered only by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. It was protected by a huge curtain. The Sanctuary (*hecla*), the centre of priestly ritual, was decorated with gold plating. It contained a golden menorah (seven branched candle stand), a golden plated table for showbread (special bread sacrifices), the golden altar, and other precious vessels.

The third constituent part was the hall or vestibule (*ulam*) which stretched across the width of the building. With a facade that appeared like white marble, the Temple shone like a snowy mountain in the sun and precious gold adorned its entrance. Gold plated spikes protected the roof from birds (Netzer, 2006, pp. 150-152).

Word of Herod's special Temple attracted thousands of Jewish pilgrims to Jerusalem from all over the country and the diaspora. The Jewish reaction to the Temple whether they hated Herod or not was enormously positive. It is clear from the gospel stories that this Temple was central to the Jewish people and to the Jewish faith. Jews came to be present at great Jewish festivals particularly *Pessah*, *Shavuot*, and *Sukkot*. It was one of the greatest engineering feats in history and it would dominate Jerusalem from that day until this. No one coming into the Temple Complex could doubt either Herod's power or his piety.

Entertainment Facilities in Jerusalem

Herod is described as a "half-Jew" but this made him uniquely eligible to be a "client king" of Rome and bring together influences from around the Greco-Roman world. Herod built palaces, pools, the Temple, and the Temple Mount but he also constructed entertainment facilities in Jerusalem. Josephus tells us that,

For, in the first place, he appointed solemn games to be celebrated every fifth year, in honour of Cesar; and built a theatre at Jerusalem: as also a very great amphitheatre in the plain. Both of them were indeed costly works; but opposite to the Jewish customs. For we have had no such shews (??) delivered down to us as fit to be used or exhibited by us. Yet did he celebrate these games every five years, in the most solemn and splendid manner. He also made proclamations to the

³⁰ <http://www.bible-architecture.info/Jerusalem.htm> (accessed on 1.7.2010).

³¹ http://judaica-art.com/art-prints-on-canvas/-1-temple-services/the-second-temple-sanctuary/prod_108.html (accessed on 1.7.2010).

neighbouring countries and called men together out of every nation. The wrestlers also, and the rest of those that strove for the prizes in such games, were invited out of every land; both by the hopes of the rewards there to be bestowed; and by the glory of victory to be there gained. So the principal persons that were the most eminent in these sorts of exercises were gotten together. For there were very great rewards for victory proposed, not only to those that performed their exercises naked; but to those that played the musicians also, and were called Thymelici. And he spared no pains to induce all persons, the most famous for such exercises, to come to this contest for victory. He also proposed no small rewards to those who ran for the prizes in chariot races; when they were drawn by four, or three, or two pair of horses. He also imitated everything, though never so costly or magnificent in other nations: out of an ambition that he might give most public demonstration of his grandeur. Inscriptions also of the great actions of Caesar, and trophies of those nations which he had conquered in his wars, and all made of the purest gold and silver, encompassed the theatre itself. Nor was there any thing that could be subservient to his design; whether it were precious garments, or precious stones set in order, which was not also exposed to sight in these games. He had also made a great preparation of wild beasts, and of lions themselves in great abundance; and of such other beasts as were either of uncommon strength; or of such a sort as were rarely seen. These were prepared either to fight with one another; or that men who were condemned to death were to fight with them. (AJ 15.8.268-274)

We know then from Josephus that Herod built a theatre or a very large amphitheatre/hippodrome but so far archaeologists have not been able to find and excavate the remains of either of these establishments. Is it possible that they were combined into a multifunctional complex similar to that which has been discovered at Jericho? (Netzer, 2006, p. 135) The remains of a small theatre-like structure were discovered beneath Wilson's Arch. The external area of the building is 15 metres by 13 metres. There were two halls (*aditus maximi*) for access and egress from the building with steps leading to seating areas (*cavea*) but none of the original seating accommodation had been left in place (Lieberman, Solomon, & Uziel, 2019, pp. 173-183). It is not clear whether this auditorium was ever utilized as a working theatre. It is unlikely that this theatre-shaped structure represents the theatre to which Josephus refers as the remains have been dated to the second century C.E. and it was not a monumental structure! Some "theatre seats" were discovered in secondary use near Robinson's Arch, but could these belong to a theatre that has yet to be found as the archaeological excavations continue around Jerusalem? Perhaps the theatre was a wooden construction that has been obliterated from the landscape? (Patrich, 2002, pp. 231-239)

Conclusion

Herod faced an uphill struggle against the Jewish people who resented him deeply because he was an outsider but his architectural heritage in Jerusalem has endured, and much of the huge Temple Mount has survived. The Western Wall continues as the centre of Jewish worship and Orthodox Jews travel from all over the world to worship at their holiest site. This makes Jerusalem unique.

Relying on Josephus, archaeologists have unearthed the complex, innovatively designed, and planned Herodian city of Jerusalem. Herod faced many engineering challenges to his plans for the city, but he overcame them all. He created a city that blended the architectural trends of the Greco-Roman world with the work of distinctive Jewish craftsmanship to produce a unique city. He provided all the necessary ancillary facilities for the city including an exceptional water management system with drainage that still carries water away from the Temple Mount today. Herod was an innovative "builder king" who created a city that was unique and matchless.

Herod built two palaces and renovated Jerusalem after the war with Mathathias Antigonus, building a city that could service comfortably the thousands of pilgrims visiting the Temple three times a year. He provided paved roads, plazas, shops, public buildings including an administration centre (housed near Robinson's arch),

a theatre, amphitheatre, and/or multifunctional entertainment complex. Archaeologists can support much of what Josephus reports in the Jewish Antiquities and the Jewish War with their findings but the explicitly mentioned entertainment facilities (AJ 15.8.268-274) have not been located so far. Herod married together the old and the new, the Jewish and the Pagan and gave the world a city beyond comparison.

The Temple Mount alone secured Herod a place in history. The monumental stones are all that remain of the original in Jerusalem. To this day, it is the largest religious structure ever built by one man in history and is testament to his unique contribution to his people.

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