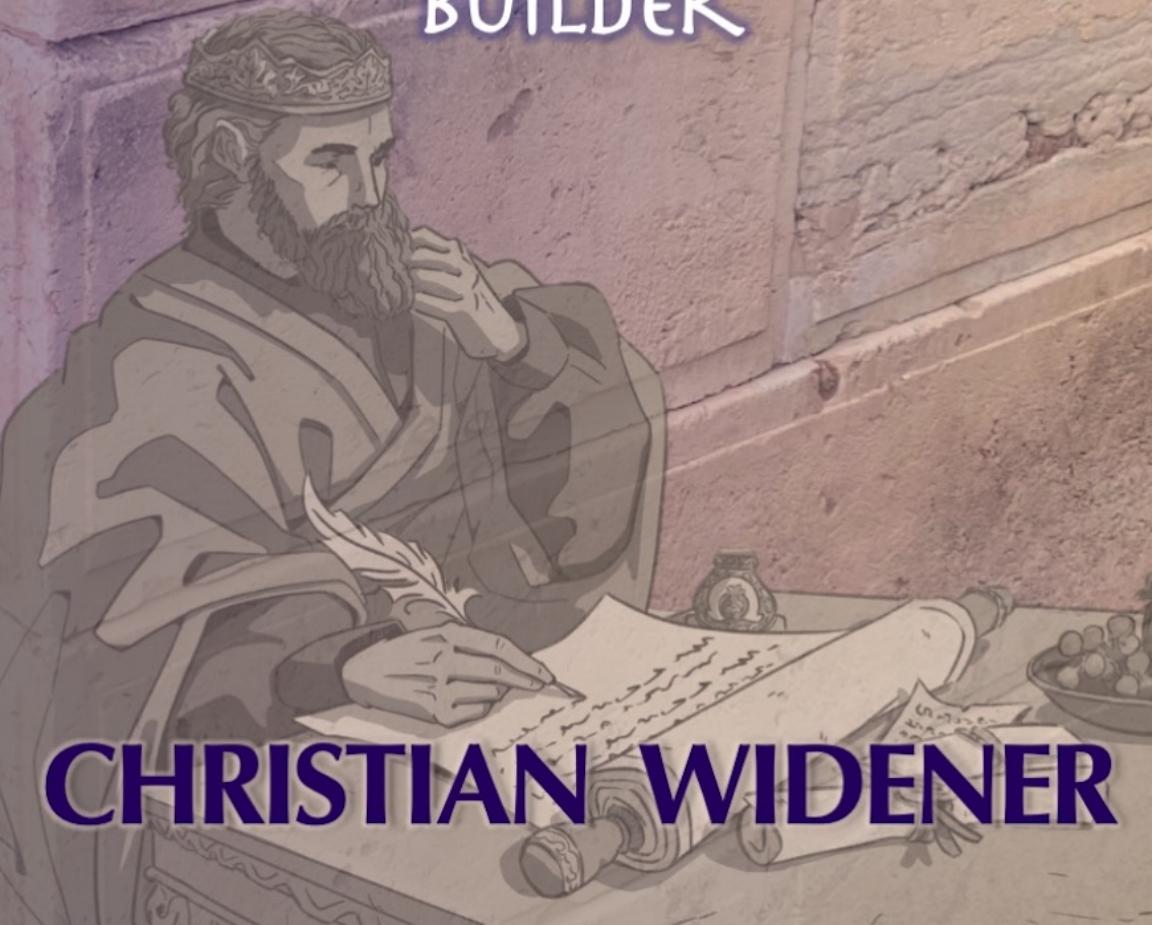


FROM THE AUTHOR OF *THE TEMPLE REVEALED*

FINDING SOLOMON

REDISCOVERING THE WORKS
OF ISRAEL'S GREATEST
BUILDER

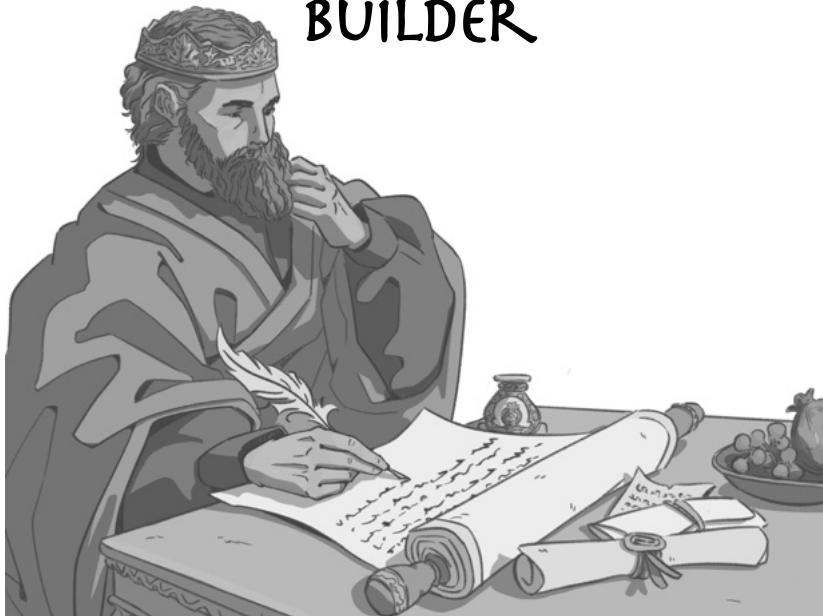


CHRISTIAN WIDENER

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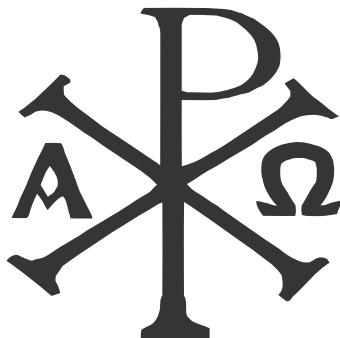
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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the one who is greater than Solomon, who established Solomon's kingdom and gave him unsurpassed wisdom, the one who is Himself the Word of God, who became flesh and walked among us, and who will soon come again to establish His kingdom on the earth—my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



SOLI DEO GLORIA

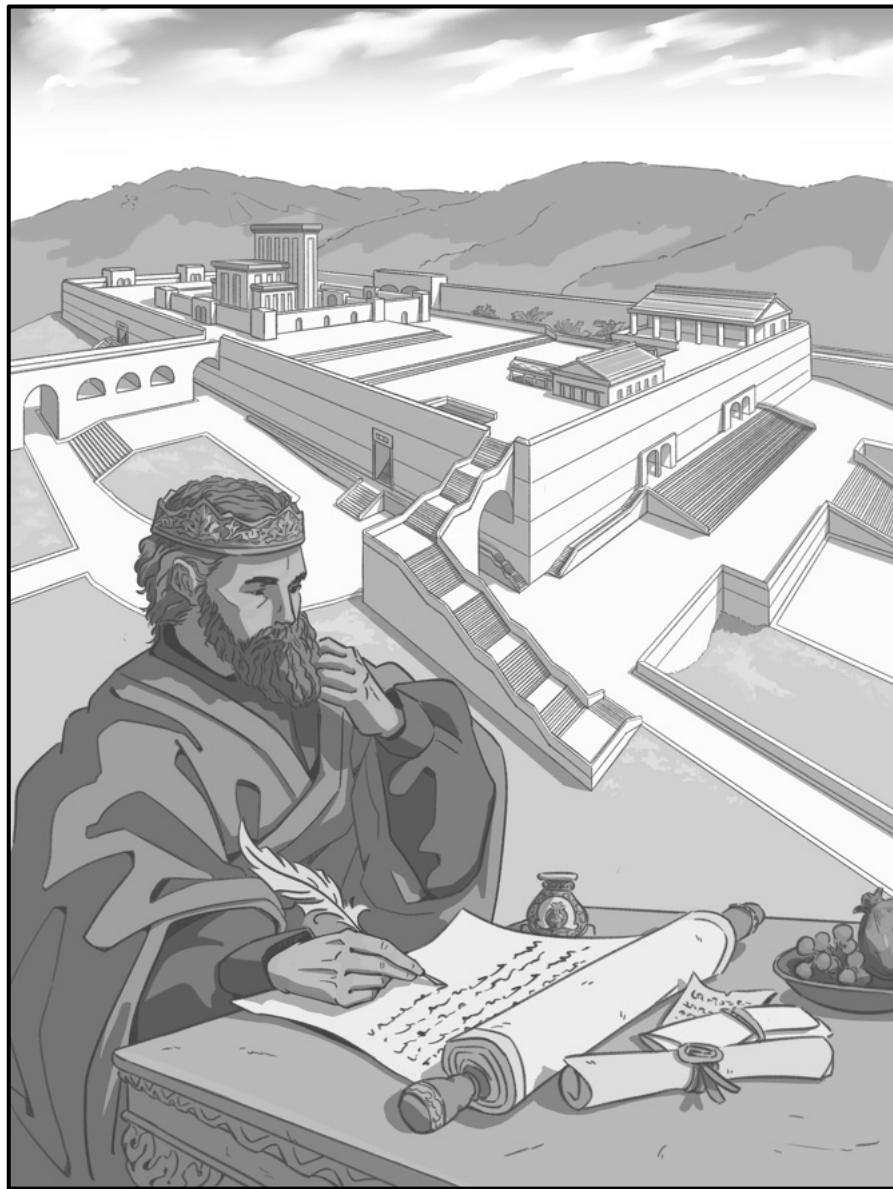
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King Solomon in the 24th Year of His Reign by Elena Widener

Introduction

GROWING UP as a young man, I spent a lot of time reading the words of King Solomon in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. The verses I found there both stirred and convicted me. They shaped me. They taught me to see beyond the natural, to think further ahead than my next need or want. And as I've grown older, they've helped me to better understand the complexities and struggles of life, my successes and failures, and the people around me. Solomon was a man who really lived. He lived life right up to the hilt. And he paid the price for it, too. Tolls that I have often been able to avoid paying because of his sage warnings and the grace of God in my life. However, I still need Solomon's wisdom today. His advice hits everyone right between the eyes, young or old, male or female, because the words spoken through him so long ago were inspired by God.

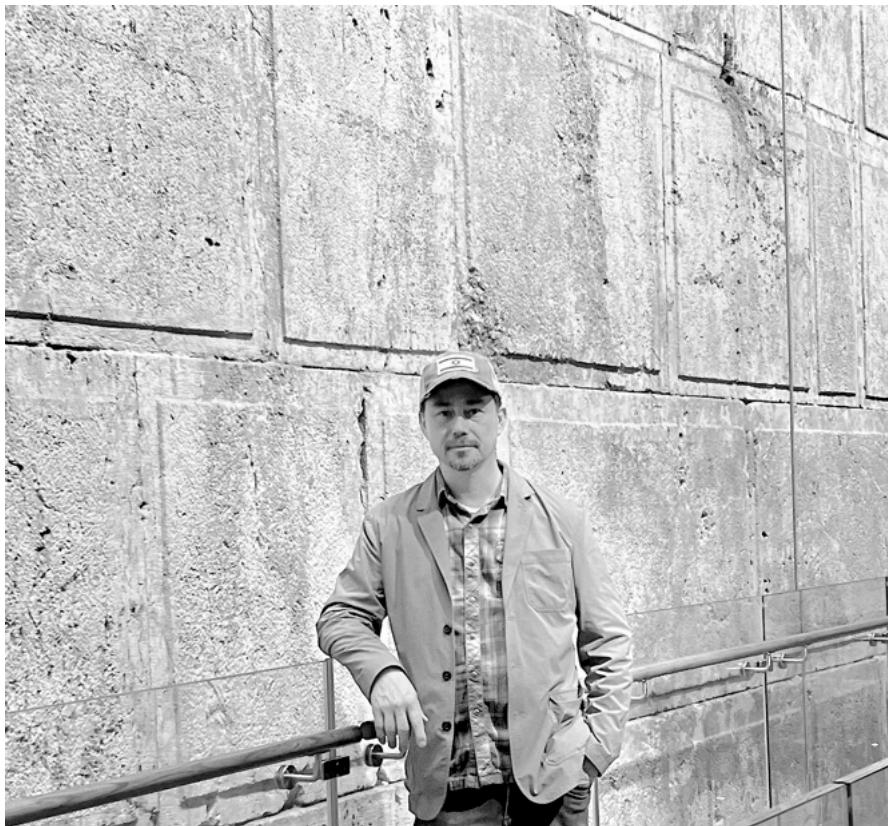
Wisdom's Call

Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? At the highest point along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; beside the gate leading into the city, at the entrance, she cries aloud: "To you, O people, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind. You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, set your hearts on it. Listen, for I have trustworthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right. My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness. All the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse. To the discerning all of them are right; they are upright to those who have found knowledge. Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her. – Proverbs 8:1-11

Now, why am I mentioning this? Because I love Solomon. He did a lot of wrong things, but God has used him powerfully to teach anyone willing to listen about the mind and heart of God and how to choose the better path, the wiser road. And because the Bible states that Solomon was also a remarkable builder, I started looking for all the awesome things it says he built, expecting the evidence to be out there. But when I learned that, according to most archaeologists, there isn't much to see in Israel anymore, I knew there must be some mistake. Now, that idea may have started as a personal belief, based on faith in the Bible, but what it generated was a hypothesis that could be investigated and tested. And as a researcher with a PhD in mechanical engineering, I know there is a big difference between objective data that anyone can observe, measure, report, and agree on, and the subsequent subjective interpretations of that same data, which can be, and often are, vehemently debated. My research was based on a basic premise. Modern archaeology must have made a major mistake by

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failing to recognize the monumental works of King Solomon, who, according to the Bible, was the greatest king of ancient Israel and a prolific builder.



The author is standing in front of the giant, finely carved ashlars that can be seen in the Temple Mount's Western Wall tunnels. Even though they perfectly match what the Bible describes, archaeologists and historians alike will unanimously declare that they were built by Herod the Great, not King Solomon...

The core revelations you are going to learn here began to emerge as I was doing the research for my first book, *THE TEMPLE REVEALED: The True Location of the Jewish Temple Hidden in Plain Sight*. The megalithic bordered stones of the Temple Mount

particularly struck me. They haunted me. They pleaded with me in the back of my mind and wouldn't let go. "Look closer! Think! Who could have done this?" And it led me to wonder, "Wasn't it obviously Solomon? Is it possible that modern archaeology has gone astray and made a tragic mistake by instead attributing the Temple Mount to Herod the Great?" But this was such a big topic, I knew I'd have to save it for a future book. Over the next five years, I made multiple trips to Israel, accumulated piles of research reports to review, and started looking for answers to the question of what happened to all the things the Bible says Solomon built. The assertion was that if modern archaeology had lost Solomon, it wasn't because there was no evidence to be found, but rather it must be that the evidence had been misidentified. And with that simple premise, a brave and reckless search began. Why brave and reckless? Because unanimous consent is not easily overturned, for it does not give way willingly or gently. But that's what I set out to do. I went on a personal journey to discover if modern scholars could be so astoundingly wrong on this issue. *This wouldn't be the first time the experts were wrong...*

It was an uncompromising confidence in the truth of the Bible that compelled me to ask: Why are scholars so sure that almost nothing of what visibly remains in Israel was built by Solomon? Because one of the perplexing challenges for biblical archaeology today is that it cannot point out the tremendous amount of work the Bible says King Solomon did throughout his empire, which spanned most of what is called the Near East or the Levant, including all of Israel and parts of modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and even Saudi Arabia. This book presents the unbelievable evidence I found to support those early convictions, and it further strengthens the case I originally made for the temple location. But it also challenges many of the accepted interpretations of the archaeological remains that are found today in Israel and its

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surroundings, including the common belief that Herod the Great built the Temple Mount. By the end of this book, it will be clear that Herod is the proverbial “emperor that has no clothes.” When fully evaluated, the evidence presented here should lead you to one inexorable conclusion: King Solomon truly existed, and most of his work isn’t lost, as the unanimous consensus confidently proclaims—it was mislabeled. It is literally strewn all over Israel, nowhere more prominently than in Jerusalem. It’s understandable if you immediately consider that challenging to believe. However, if you’d like to hear the evidence before passing judgment, then I encourage you to suspend your disbelief until you do—especially if you trust, as I do, that the Bible gives a true and accurate account of the events it records.

Unfortunately, many archaeologists and historians do not trust the Bible as a reliable and infallible reference for interpreting the past. Most will still quote it, but its testimony is often not accepted at face value unless it is proven by additional confirming evidence. Passages are interpreted loosely according to their own private reasoning. The Bible is often treated as merely another historical source, similar to Josephus, that must be understood within the context of prior discoveries and interpreted dispassionately and without religious bias. That may not sound too bad, but it means the Bible may even be treated as legend or myth and not as God’s true, authoritative, and infallible word. It becomes subject to the biases and flawed reasoning of men and women leaning on their own understanding. And once a scholarly consensus has been achieved, then any further discoveries, even Scripture itself, must be understood in the light of what has already been decided to be true. It becomes a veil that everything must be interpreted through, and even ardent, Bible-believing archaeologists can begin to adjust their understanding of God’s Word to conform to it if they want to be taken seriously in the archaeological world.

If one believes the biblical accounts, King Solomon's work must be out there and in a big way. But beginning in the nineteenth century, the impressive works of Israel's greatest builder, Solomon, were increasingly believed to have been built by others. Today, they are no longer pointed out to visitors to Israel and Jerusalem. Furthermore, if you were to ask a guide today whether a structure you are observing in Jerusalem could possibly date back to Solomon's time, they would likely respond with a good-natured laugh and confidently assert that it was built by someone else, such as the Hasmoneans, Herod, Hadrian, the Byzantines, or possibly the Umayyads. Yes, there are here and there a few stones that have been linked to Solomon, but no fantastic structures to admire and dream about. Nothing to look at and wonder what it would be like to see them in their former glory. No mourning for what was lost, like the older Israelites did when they laid the foundation of the Second Temple and remembered the former glory of Solomon's.

But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy.
– Ezra 3:12

¹ By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. ² There on the poplars we hung our harps, ³ for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" ⁴ How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land? ⁵ If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. ⁶ May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy. – Psalm 137:1-6

The Bible makes some amazing claims regarding the works and reign of King Solomon, but a lack of physical proof to confirm the

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biblical record creates some problems. First, one might then call into question the reliability of the Bible in the first place, which many people do. But for someone who takes the Bible as God's true word, this should be entirely unacceptable. As it says in Romans 3:4, God will be shown to be true and every man a liar. Second, one might just dismiss the lack of evidence as something that happens over time, like so many other things lost to the ages. The problem with that idea is that Israel is one of the most archaeologically excavated and explored areas in the world. One cannot simply assume that while countless remains of every era of Israel have been uncovered, going back to the time before Abraham, Solomon's works just haven't been discovered yet. Furthermore, stonework doesn't just disintegrate and vanish. Abundant remains have been found from long before the Israelites even set foot in the Promised Land. So, here we are to search for one of the lost sheep of Israel—a prized ram that over the past century and a half was misplaced. The reason that finding Solomon matters is because that knowledge is like a lost inheritance. It's a biblical birthright that should have been given to us but was instead misplaced or stolen. It's a legacy for the Jewish people that further cements their place in the land. And it's a reminder that God's Word will always triumph over man's word.

Thus, it all boils down to one of two possibilities. Namely, either the Bible greatly exaggerated the works of Solomon (as many secular archaeologists have claimed), or the evidence of Solomon's reign has been found many times over but has been misidentified as the work of others. To be fair, though, sorting everything out isn't easy. There have been so many different building events and destructions within Jerusalem that it creates a kind of chaos in the interpretation of the archaeological findings. Over its nearly four-thousand-year history, there have been two dozen major sieges, two dreadful destructions, and multiple eras of control,

devastation, and rebuilding that have in many cases significantly altered Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Each of these events created the opportunity to cast doubt on biblically based interpretations of the remains by creating the possibility to assign the evidence for a biblical event to a later historical one and consequently “losing” the data that supported the biblical record. Certainly, we should find evidence of other historical events as well, and that is important, too. But if an archaeologist comes away from a biblical site with an understanding counter to what the Bible says, a mistake has been made. They were either in the wrong spot and need to keep looking, or they interpreted the Bible or the findings improperly. It’s that simple. The evidence doesn’t just disappear. It might be scant, but it can’t be perfectly erased. Thus, I hope this work will initiate a serious reevaluation of the archaeology of the Near East—which has managed to almost completely exclude the works of Solomon from its reckoning—with a renewed commitment to use the Bible as an infallible guide.

But the truth is that our great guide was the Bible, and as an archaeologist I cannot imagine a greater thrill than working with the Bible in one hand and the spade in the other. This was the true secret of our discoveries of the Solomonic period.¹ – Yigael Yadin

Dr. Yadin was right; the Bible is our great guide, and it is indispensable to archaeological discovery in the Holy Land. Scholars may say that using it brings a bias to interpreting the evidence, but not using it will invariably doom them to misinterpreting the data based on their own limited and biased imaginations. Sure, someone can make mistakes of interpretation while using the Bible as well, but they are correctable by others

¹ Yigael Yadin, *Hazor: The Rediscovery of a Great Citadel of the Bible*, Random House (1975): 187.

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looking at the same things. Without doubt, the biggest danger and the largest errors will come from ignoring or overlooking the testimony of the Bible, not in following it as a guide. And perhaps the most significant mistake that has been made so far in biblical archaeology is losing Solomon. But if the weight of biblical testimony was truly placed above human speculation in the archaeological world, and if there had been a willingness to reevaluate the debates of the past regarding Solomonic origins, the wider works of Solomon would have already been made known. But ever since such pronouncements by archaeologists like Yigael Yadin in the 1970s, more secular archaeological voices have tried to cast doubt on the veracity of even the few finds that have been attributed to Solomon to date.

And even when the Bible is used as a reference today, it is rarely taken fully at its word, at least regarding Solomon. As far back as the mid-1800s, even Bible-believing scholars began to doubt traditional Solomonic attributions in the Holy Land because the findings didn't match their already settled notions of where, when, and how classical architecture developed through history. To admit that many of the megalithic structures present in Jerusalem and the Holy Land were built by Solomon, a Jew, many centuries before the Greeks were thought to have birthed such impressive architectural styles would have been difficult for some to accept. In that age of "enlightenment" and "higher criticism," their understanding and interpretation of the accounts in the Bible were subordinated to human wisdom and were subject to the prejudices of the day. At the same time, there were some early explorers that hastily applied the scriptures to support their own tenuous theories. This led to some cases of mistaken identity, as scholars jumped to conclusions with insufficient evidence. Of course, that propensity is common to all men and all fields of study. That flaw cannot be solely attributed to biblical scholars. It is something that

everyone who loves the truth must take steps to guard against. But this truth bears repeating—**there can be no proper interpretation of archaeological finds in the lands of the Bible, in the time of the Bible, without the Bible.**

The problem is that those early assessments that removed Solomon are now so calcified they stand as an accepted reality whose divergence from the biblical narrative is no longer even questioned. It has become a permanent blind spot, even for the sincerest Bible-loving archaeologist. The common understanding of the archaeological world today has almost entirely overlooked Solomon, the greatest builder of ancient Israel. That should not be possible. Therefore, the motivation for this work is to reawaken a right understanding of the biblical testimony about Solomon by contending for the truth and demolishing the arguments that have kept his work hidden, which is something God's people are commanded to do.

Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people. – Jude 3

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. – 2 Corinthians 10:5

Biblical archaeology is one of the cornerstones of Christian apologetics. Left undefended, our understanding of the history of the world and the events recorded in the Bible will become increasingly secular. Unchecked, the stories of the Bible will be reduced to mythology, not history. And if the stories of the Bible are just stories, then so is the Gospel. In many areas of biblical

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archaeology, that defense has been underway for over a century, but in the case of Solomon, a vigorous defense has been crippled by a failure to recognize the surviving remnants of his constructions. And so, we will embark on a journey to show that the accounts given of Solomon in the Old Testament and Jesus' affirmation of Solomon's greatness in the New Testament are reliable. In the following pages, I hope you are prepared to reevaluate many of the things that the archaeological world today believes are true. Thank you for coming on this adventure. I'm excited that you're about to rediscover the amazing work of King Solomon...

Chapter One

Who Was King Solomon of the Bible?

SOLOMON is one of the more intriguing and controversial figures of the Old Testament. He was undoubtedly the greatest king ever to reign in Jerusalem, to date, and he was greater than any of the other kings of the ancient world that ruled during his lifetime. Solomon was also the son of a great king, David. His father not only slew the giant Goliath but also turned over to his son a great country that was at peace, having gained mastery over all its enemies after nearly four decades of war. Everything we know with certainty about Solomon is found in the Bible. Solomon wrote the books of Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, most of Proverbs, and two of the Psalms. In addition, there are about 250 references to Solomon recorded in the rest of the Old Testament (most of them are in *1 Kings* and *1 & 2 Chronicles*), and there are another ten in the New Testament. Together, they provide a lot of information that can be used to guide our search for him. In this chapter we will review the biblical testimony about Solomon, including his political influence, his reach in trade and commerce, his work on the Temple, and the extent of his building program.

His Early Life

To begin with, in 2 Samuel we read that Solomon was born in Jerusalem, the City of David, which had been conquered from the Jebusites. We also learn that Solomon was the second son of Bathsheba. She was the beautiful woman that David committed adultery with and afterwards had her husband, Uriah the Hittite, killed to cover it up. Uriah was a friend of David's, one of his Mighty Men, and a close confidant. The sin and betrayal of that event should have meant that nothing good could ever come from his later marriage to Bathsheba, but it didn't. David repented, and God forgave him. There were consequences, though, and David and Bathsheba's first son died as an infant. But to show his full forgiveness, God immediately blessed them with a second son, Solomon. So, from the very beginning, we see an amazing example of the grace and forgiveness of God in the life of Solomon.

Giving Solomon life and making him a prince would truly have been enough, but God then later chose Solomon to be David's successor, the next king of Israel, even though he wasn't David's eldest son. And God chose Solomon even though he wasn't a blameless man either. He fathered a son named Rehoboam with an Ammonite woman named Namaah the year before he became king, which probably displeased the Lord and his father, David.² God didn't withhold his blessing from Solomon, though. He chose Solomon as the one who would build a house for his name. David had longed to build a temple for the Lord, but he wasn't allowed to because of the blood on his hands. *More consequences.* Then God gave Solomon a final gift that would forever set the course of his life. One night, in a dream, God appeared to Solomon and told

² Solomon ruled for 40 years (*2 Chronicles 9:30*), but Rehoboam was 41 years old when he became king and was the son of an Ammonite woman (*1 Kings 14:21*) who may have been Solomon's first foreign wife in disobedience to the commandment (*Deuteronomy 7:1-4*).

him that he could ask God for anything he wished. Name any one thing, and it would be his. *Wow! What would you ask for?* But in a selfless move, which some of his later actions would depart from, he asked God for wisdom.

⁶ Solomon answered, “You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day. ⁷ Now, Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. ⁸ Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. ⁹ So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?” – 1 Kings 3:6-9

This answer from Solomon greatly pleased the Lord. Therefore, God granted him the wisdom that he had asked for—and not just a little but overflowing and beyond measure. And he gave Solomon all the other things that he could have asked for but didn’t. *Amazing. Wouldn’t we all like to get in on that deal?*

¹¹ So God said to him, “Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, ¹² I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. ¹³ Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. ¹⁴ And if you walk in obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.” – 1 Kings 3:11-14

The strong hand of the Lord was at work in the early days of Solomon's life, despite the sin that preceded his birth. This portion of Solomon's story alone is worthy of much more time than I can devote to it in this book. But I know a lot of readers will be able to identify with the good news that this kind of grace shows. Do you think you've messed up too badly to be redeemed by God, and that now nothing good can come out of your past mistakes? Think again. With repentance comes full forgiveness—and not just a little but overflowing. Hallelujah!

Solomon's Wisdom

The Bible tells us that Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived or ever would live on the face of the earth. That is incredibly high praise, but it is marred by the wanton lifestyle that Solomon lived during the middle and much of the latter years of his life. I'm sure that many people can identify with getting caught up in their careers and success and forgetting about God for a long portion of their lives. But most people's exploits and foibles aren't recorded in the most read book in human history! And it begs the question, if he was so wise, why did he make so many mistakes?

Well, there is an old saying that experience makes the best teacher, and Solomon had a lot of experience to draw on. That "proverb" doesn't come from Solomon, but there are two books with proverbs that Solomon wrote to give wisdom and insight for everyday life, no matter what age you are living in. And knowing that Solomon proved out many of the warnings that he later wrote about because of those mistakes, it only increases their validity when you think about it. I have read them time and time again, but I never come back empty-handed. Whenever I give a few minutes of my time to reading the book of Proverbs or Ecclesiastes, God teaches me something I really needed through the wisdom of the

words he led Solomon to record almost 3000 years ago. In fact, wisdom is to be prized more than riches or anything else this world has to offer.

³ By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; ⁴ through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures. – Proverbs 24:3-4

¹⁰ Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, ¹¹ for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her. – Proverbs 8:10-11

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. – Proverbs 9:10

I have taken these words to heart since I was a young man. They have been a lighthouse in my life, always bringing me back to God's Word—always guiding me back to solid ground. Out on the oceans of life, being tossed around by the waves, it's easy to get lost and lose our direction. Without a light to guide us, we can be dashed on the rocks or left to drift aimlessly. In the New Testament, we find a similar analogy used by James to direct us all to seek wisdom, not from the world, but directly from God.

⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. ⁶ But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

⁷ That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

⁸ Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.
– James 1:5-8

In these verses, we read the admonition to believe God and not doubt, but it has a double meaning. The first is the obvious one that comes directly from the context. When you ask God for wisdom, you should believe and not doubt that he really will give it to you. This is such an important takeaway for all of us. Ask God for wisdom and believe that He cares enough about you to give it to you. *However, based on my experience, I would say that acquiring wisdom is a lifetime endeavor, and you shouldn't expect to receive it all at once. To that point, I've been asking God regularly for wisdom for most of my life, and to whatever degree people sense wisdom in me today, it has been the gift of God in answer to those prayers.*

There is another sense of meaning to that verse, though, which must not be missed. Everyone who wants to be wise must accept and believe that God's Word is true. If you are doubting what God has said, then you can't acquire true wisdom, because you waver back and forth between trusting God and not trusting him and his Word. That's what it means to be double-minded, i.e., trying to please God and man by attempting to blend God's wisdom and the world's wisdom. God's word must be treated as supreme. That is the only way to navigate back to solid ground. You must trust God's Word as a lighthouse.

The Proverbs of Solomon

The thing Solomon is most known for and the accomplishment that is most easily supported is that he had a lot of wise and helpful sayings to share—his proverbs. We don't have all 3000 of the proverbs that he reportedly wrote. But depending on how you count them, we have over one-third of them preserved in the scriptures. Although we only seem to have a few of his songs, some of them have been preserved in Psalms and the Song of Solomon. And while we can't know for sure when Solomon composed the

bulk of his proverbs, it's easy to presume that he had an early period of productivity, in which he composed Song of Songs and many of the proverbs. This would have been during the early years of his reign and leading up to his completion of the temple and even his own palace. After that, however, when he began building pagan temples for his wives and he was led more and more astray, we could assume that his writing fell into a period of silence. Finally, based on his concluding remarks in Ecclesiastes, I would say that the last few years of life he spent in a more repentant and reflective posture, which probably produced the whole of the book of Ecclesiastes and many additional proverbs.

The range and depth of Solomon's writings are staggering. Many of the things Solomon wrote were obvious and yet incredibly profound and timeless. Some are so simple and straightforward they are almost comedic.

If clouds are full of water, they pour rain on the earth. Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where it falls, there it will lie. – Ecclesiastes 11:3

You almost want to say, "Well, thanks, Captain Obvious!" But then you have to ask, why would someone so smart say something so insipid? What is the principle that he is alluding to? Well, he doesn't say; it's up to the reader to figure it out. *Hmm. Does anyone have the answer key for this one...?* I don't have an answer key, but I'll give you my take and explain why I think it's genius. In certain respects, it is the earliest statement of Occam's Razor, which is often expressed as, "the simplest explanation is usually the right one." The idea is attributed to William of Ockham, a Franciscan friar who lived from 1287 to 1347. But if you think about the above statements, they are an exemplar form of Occam's Razor,

written about two thousand years beforehand. In fact, I would argue that as a friar, he likely borrowed and restated the principle from Solomon.

But sometimes Solomon did give the interpretation of a simple saying, instead of just leaving us to guess its meaning. Or more specifically, at times he gave a simple saying followed by an analogy of how it could be applied. But those analogies are not meant to be the full extent of application. We are challenged to use them to imagine other ways that the proverb could be expanded to situations besides the given example, without violating the fundamental principle of the proverb. As in Proverbs 26:20, where a quarrel stirred by gossip is just one example of the general principle that a fire needs fuel to continue to burn.

Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down.
– Proverbs 26:20

Or how about this one? I can't tell you how many times this simple proverb has helped me calm a situation down and avoid making an even bigger mess.

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
– Proverbs 15:1

Here are a few more about recognizing the sovereignty of God and the fact that we can't control all the variables that we encounter in our lives. It reminds me of the serenity prayer credited to Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971): "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things

I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” That idea can easily be found by meditating on the meaning of the following proverbs.

To humans belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the proper answer of the tongue. – Proverbs 16:1

In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps. – Proverbs 16:9

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord. – Proverbs 16:33

For some, these verses are abhorrent because they suggest that we are not in control of our own lives. They declare that the words of our mouth and the path of our feet can be fully directed and manipulated by God. We can't even trust the random chance of the cast lot (i.e., the roll of the dice). God is in control of all of it! Here's where some wisdom comes in, though. Does that mean that God is directly and forcefully controlling every detail and variable in the smallest increment so that we no longer have any free will? No. It means that God reserves the right to intervene, and he often does. But he also often doesn't. Hmm. I'm confused. Welcome to the club! Only God is God. Why do we expect to understand fully everything he does and how he does it? For as far as the heavens are above the earth, so his thoughts are higher than our thoughts (*Isaiah 55:9*). Solomon is just laying out some principles to give us a heads up. This is not about absolutism. It's about understanding a few things concerning God's sovereignty in our world as we go about our daily lives.

Solomon gives us a lot of simple practical advice. He paints many memorable word pictures that will hopefully plant themselves in our minds and steer us away from the cautioned fate or lead us to

the desired destination. For instance, here's what Solomon said about the value of hard work and the dangers of laziness.

³⁰ I went past the field of a sluggard, past the vineyard of someone who has no sense; ³¹ thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. ³² I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: a little sleep, ³³ a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—³⁴ and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man. – Proverbs 24:30-34

Or how about this well-known idea? “Sometimes too much of a good thing is a bad thing.” Today, lots of people know that saying, but Solomon said it first. It’s amazing how such a simple word picture can convey volumes of wisdom and endless applications, using one simple statement. No wonder people from all over the ancient world traveled to visit with and learn from Solomon!

If you find honey, eat just enough—too much of it, and you will vomit. – Proverbs 25:16

Here are a few more proverbs for us “intellectuals” to help keep us humble and avoid becoming wise in our own estimation and overly proud, because that makes us become foolish. A similar idea can be found in the writings of the New Testament by Paul, in his letter to the Romans. As a Pharisee, Paul would have been exceptionally familiar with Solomon’s proverbs. It’s even likely that he had them all memorized. Wow, what a feat!

Do you see a person wise in their own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for them. – Proverbs 26:12

A sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven people who answer discreetly. – Proverbs 26:16

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. – Romans 12:3

At the end of Solomon's life, here is what he wrote as the conclusion of the matter: fear God and keep his commandments. We would be wise to heed his counsel...

⁹ Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. ¹⁰ The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails—given by one shepherd. ¹² Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them.

Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.

¹³ Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. ¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. – Ecclesiastes 12:9-14

Solomon's Political Connections

Equipped with an unprecedented outpouring of God's wisdom, the story of Solomon's reign as king begins with his connections to Egypt. 1 Kings 3:1 tells us that Solomon immediately made an

alliance with Egypt, married Pharoah's daughter, and brought her to the City of David. This move secured his southern border and established a valuable trading partner. It also broke God's command to not marry foreign women, again. *Oops.* Well, it's another example of how God is truly gracious and doesn't call us out for every mistake we make. However, it did continue a pattern of marrying foreign women, which plagued Solomon for the rest of his life and ultimately cost him a lot. *Again, more consequences.* However, the issue of foreign wives aside, the relationship with Egypt became both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, there was a productive trade relationship. We read that Solomon imported both horses and chariots from Egypt in 1 Kings 10:29. And his new Egyptian bride was even given the city of Gezer as a wedding gift.

They imported a chariot from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty. They also exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and of the Arameans. – 1 Kings 10:29

Pharaoh king of Egypt had attacked and captured Gezer. He had set it on fire. He killed its Canaanite inhabitants and then gave it as a wedding gift to his daughter, Solomon's wife. – 1 Kings 9:16

As an interesting aside, there are some solid reasons to identify the pharaoh of 1 Kings 9:16 as Pharaoh Siamun, who reigned from 986 to 967 BC during the 21st dynasty.³ He would have had plenty of time to develop a respectful relationship with David and later to want to seek peace with his son through marriage. There is also evidence that Siamun battled with the Canaanite people, as shown in a partially preserved triumphal scene in Tanis. The scene depicts him conquering someone holding a double-bladed axe, which is a

³ K.A. Kitchen. *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, Eerdmans Publishing (2003): 108-112.

weapon found in the ancient Mediterranean associated with Minoans, who were later found to have ties with the Phoenicians and hence conceivably to the land of Canaan. Since the scene is only partially preserved, it isn't irrefutable proof, but it provides a basis for the idea that Siamun was the pharaoh who conquered Gezer as a wedding gift for his daughter.⁴

However, we also learn, based on 1 Kings 11:14-22, that the same pharaoh inadvertently aided one of Solomon's enemies by sheltering Hadad the Edomite, who was a survivor of the raids of his father, David. Hadad became a favorite of the pharaoh, but when Hadad heard that David had died, he soon asked permission to leave Pharaoh's care. And he probably didn't announce to him that his purpose was to begin a quest for vengeance against Solomon, since Solomon was married to Pharaoh's daughter. From Egyptian accounts, though, we know that Siamun died a few years later and was succeeded by Psusennes II, who reigned from 967 to 943 BC. It says nothing in the Bible of the death of one pharaoh or the ascension of another during Solomon's reign, but we know that the relationship continued in a positive direction because Solomon continued to trade with Egypt. However, we are told of another pharaoh (the third one) who rose to power in 1 Kings 11:40. In the later years of Solomon's reign, he was told by God that the throne would be torn from the hands of his son because of Solomon's sins with foreign women and their idols and that Jeroboam would be king over Israel. Solomon attempted to kill Jeroboam to prevent this, but he was sheltered by Shishak in

⁴ There are other possibilities, of course, because not everyone agrees that the Egyptian chronology that is generally accepted today is correct. However, using the currently accepted dating conventions, Siamun is a logical choice. Remember, it's not a question of whether Solomon really had a relationship with a pharaoh and married his daughter, its simply determining which pharaoh it was. And the purpose would be to help properly set the Egyptian chronology (so that it is correct), not to try and prove that the Bible is true, because we already know that it is.

Egypt. We can reason from the timing of his reign and the similarity of the name that Shishak is the Hebrew version of the name Shoshenq I, who ruled from 943 to 922 BC, following Psusennes II. After the death of Solomon, in the wake of a newly divided monarchy because ten tribes broke away to follow Jeroboam, Shishak became an enemy of Judah (*2 Chronicles 12*). *Still more consequences.*



Statue of Thutmose III rededicated to Psusennes II

But speaking of pharaohs and Psusennes II, he appropriated the statue of a much earlier pharaoh, Thutmose III (c. 1479 to 1425 BC), which was found at Karnak.⁵ The question is why. And here's where it gets even more interesting. Thutmose III is a good candidate for the surviving son of the pharaoh who died trying to stop the Exodus. You know, the pharaoh who told Moses, "No, I won't let your people go!" The mummified remains of his older brother, Thutmose II, have also been found, and they reveal that he was the firstborn son who sat on his father's throne and died in the tenth plague. He died a young man with the remains of a

⁵ Aidan Dodson. "The transition between the 21st and 22nd Dynasties revisited." *The Libyan Period in Egypt* (2009): 103-112. Statue (CG 42192) rededicated to Pasebkhanut II (Psusennes II)

scabrous disease still showing on his skin.⁶ This would be consistent with someone who had just recovered from a plague of boils but later died when the Lord struck down all the firstborn sons.

At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. – Exodus 12:29

Therefore, the pharaoh of the Exodus was Thutmose I, who refused to let God's people go and lost his firstborn son. He was a warrior king who matches the description of the pharaoh who led his army out to recapture the Israelites. For many years it was believed that the mummy of Thutmose I had been found, too. But it was disqualified by a detailed analysis in 2010 by Dr. Zahi Hawass.⁷ So Thutmose I's body remains missing; however, isn't that what we should expect? They probably never found the body of the pharaoh who died along with his entire army at the Red Sea.

The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived. – Exodus 14:28

Finally, that would mean that Ahmose I, as the founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty, was the new pharaoh who arose in Egypt that did not know Joseph and who began the enslavement and

⁶ G. Maspero. *History of Egypt, Chaldea, Syria, Babylonia, and Assyria*, vol. IV, London: The Grolier Society (1906): 345.

⁷ M.E. Habicht, A.S. Bouwman, and F.J. Röhli. Identifications of Ancient Egyptian Royal Mummies from the 18th Dynasty Reconsidered, *Yearbook of Physical Anthropology* 59 (2016): 216-31, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ajpa.22909> ; Zahi Hawass et al. Ancestry and pathology in King Tutankhamun's family. *JAMA* 303 (2010): 638–647.

subjugation of the Jewish people. This also further explains the mystery of the name Moses, which, as we read in the Bible, means “drawn from the water,” but it was also a variation of the royal name of the pharaoh Ahmose I, who had a daughter named Ahmose-Meritamun. She had no children, which aligns with the idea that she was the daughter of the pharaoh who rescued Moses from the water. That she would give an adopted son a name that was both related to the conditions she found him in (drawn from the water) and that was also a derivative of the royal name of her father is a good assumption. This may be why Psusennes II used a statue from Thutmose III for himself. He was on good terms with Solomon and possibly wanted to recognize the shared historic connection with the Jewish people. That’s a lot to consider, but it’s an example of the kinds of revelations that can be made when the right biblical connections are made with ancient history.

As with all associations between the secular Egyptian chronologies and the biblical accounts, there have been scholarly objections to the connection between Shishak and Shoshenq I.⁸ If the objections are valid and the dating of Shoshenq I is truly off by a century, then it exposes a serious error in Egyptian chronology. In this case, it would move the identification of the pharaoh who gave his daughter to Solomon to Psusennes I, the only pharaoh found to have had a silver anthropoid coffin. 1 Kings 10:27 tells us that Solomon “made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones.” So, the idea that a pharaoh who traded heavily with Solomon could have been the only one to have had a silver coffin is certainly appealing. This could make Shishak a reference to Shoshenq A, the father of Orsokon the Elder and the grandfather of Shoshenq I. My point here is not to solve this riddle definitively, but to affirm that even

⁸ Ed. Peter James, van der Veen, Peter G. *Solomon and Shishak, Current Perspectives from Archaeology, Epigraphy, History, and Chronology*. Proceedings of the the Third BICANE Colloquium, Cambridge, March 26-27, 2011, BAR International Series, 2015.

in the face of solid critical objections, there will always be an answer to the chronology that will ultimately support the biblical accounts, because they are true. Either that, or the objections are spurious and deserve the same lack of consideration that is given to other scholarly works that attempt to distort the real history of the Near East because of a decidedly anti-biblical bias.



Silver anthropoid coffin of Psusennes I, Cairo Museum

But back to Solomon, we read that he also established an excellent relationship with Hiram, king of Tyre, which was another wise political move, and again it gave him access to a valuable trading partner. Hiram had highly skilled labor—stone masons, metal workers, and tree cutters. It also gave Solomon access to the greatest seafarers of that time, the Phoenicians, for Hiram was a king of the Phoenicians. And by making both Egypt and Tyre allies and trading partners, instead of enemies, he secured a peace that lasted throughout his reign.

¹ When Hiram king of Tyre heard that Solomon had been anointed king to succeed his father David, he sent his envoys to Solomon, because he had always been on friendly terms with David.² Solomon sent back this message to Hiram: ³ “You know that because of the wars waged against my father David from all sides, he could not build a temple for the Name of the Lord his God until the Lord put his enemies under his feet.⁴ But now the Lord my God has given me rest on every side, and there is no adversary or

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disaster.⁵ I intend, therefore, to build a temple for the Name of the Lord my God, as the Lord told my father David, when he said, 'Your son whom I will put on the throne in your place will build the temple for my Name.'⁶ So give orders that cedars of Lebanon be cut for me. My men will work with yours, and I will pay you for your men whatever wages you set. You know that we have no one so skilled in felling timber as the Sidonians."

⁷ When Hiram heard Solomon's message, he was greatly pleased and said, "Praise be to the Lord today, for he has given David a wise son to rule over this great nation."

⁸ So Hiram sent word to Solomon: "I have received the message you sent me and will do all you want in providing the cedar and juniper logs.⁹ My men will haul them down from Lebanon to the Mediterranean Sea, and I will float them as rafts by sea to the place you specify. There I will separate them and you can take them away. And you are to grant my wish by providing food for my royal household."

¹⁰ In this way Hiram kept Solomon supplied with all the cedar and juniper logs he wanted,¹¹ and Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand cors [3,600 tons] of wheat as food for his household, in addition to twenty thousand baths [120,000 gallons] of pressed olive oil. Solomon continued to do this for Hiram year after year.¹² The Lord gave Solomon wisdom, just as he had promised him. There were peaceful relations between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty. – 1 Kings 5:1-12

The Bible tells us that one of the secrets of how Solomon maintained his great wealth was using Hiram's ships. Thus, Solomon was able to establish trade with the land of Ophir, which was a source for importing gold. Solomon sailed ships on both the Red Sea, from the port of Ezion-Geber, and on the Mediterranean Sea, from his port in Joppa. His ships also sailed to Tarshish and

brought back silver and gold and other valuable goods. No other king of Israel ever secured the resources that Solomon had or restored his trade route to Ophir (*1 Kings 22:48*).

And Hiram sent him ships commanded by his own men, sailors who knew the sea. These, with Solomon's men, sailed to Ophir and brought back four hundred and fifty talents [17 tons] of gold, which they delivered to King Solomon. – 2 Chronicles 8:18

For the king had the ships of Tarshish at sea with Hiram's ships; once every three years the ships of Tarshish would come carrying gold and silver, ivory, monkeys, and peacocks. – 1 Kings 10:22

The depth of the relationship that Solomon forged with Hiram tells us that when we are looking at interpreting the history and archaeology of the Near East, we must consider not only the influence that Phoenician culture had on the Israelites, but also the influence that the Israelites, led by Solomon, had on the Phoenicians. What lessons from the Hebrew culture and the wisdom of Solomon were passed on to the Phoenicians in those days, and through them to all the peoples along the Mediterranean? Not a lot is known about the Dark Ages of the Mediterranean and the Near East from 1000 to 750 BC, but it's clear that the Phoenicians contributed a lot to the later development of Greece.⁹ We should also be looking for evidence of advanced stonemasonry and metalworking capabilities in the 1000 to 900 BC timeframe in Lebanon and Syria and parallels to those styles in the land of Israel.

⁹ Carolina López-Ruiz. *Phoenicians and the Making of the Mediterranean*. Harvard University Press, 2021.

Another political ally and trading partner of Solomon was the Queen of Sheba. Her territory was what the Bible later calls the land of Cush, which is now seen in the modern countries of Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Yemen, Eritrea, and Djibouti. In fact, Cushitic languages are found throughout the Horn of Africa. The ancient peoples that might be associated with this area are the Nubians, Kushites, the Kingdom of Aksum and its predecessor D'mt, and the Kingdom of Seba (*or Saba*). There is especially solid evidence for associating both Ethiopia and Yemen with the Queen of Sheba. In those regions today, there are strong local traditions of a connection with Solomon, archaeological evidence for the existence of the biblical kingdom of Sheba, and a Jewish presence in both Yemen and Ethiopia for more than two thousand years.¹⁰ The biblical account not only tells us about the ancient kingdom of Sheba and their legendary queen, but it also gives us additional insight into Solomon himself.

¹ When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relationship to the Lord, she came to test Solomon with hard questions. ² Arriving at Jerusalem with a very great caravan—with camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones—she came to Solomon and talked with him about all that she had on her mind. ³ Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too hard for the king to explain to her. ⁴ When the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon and the palace he had built, ⁵ the food on his table, the seating of his officials, the attending servants in their robes, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he made at the temple of the Lord, she was overwhelmed.

⁶ She said to the king, “The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. ⁷ But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not

¹⁰ Louis Rapoport. *The Lost Jews: Last of the Ethiopian Falashas*, Stein and Day (1980): 114-9.

even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard. How happy your people must be!⁸ How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom!⁹ Praise be to the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne of Israel. Because of the Lord's eternal love for Israel, he has made you king to maintain justice and righteousness.”

¹⁰ And she gave the king 120 talents [4 ½ tons] of gold, large quantities of spices, and precious stones. Never again were so many spices brought in as those the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.
– 1 Kings 10:1-10

The Queen of Sheba was a trading partner for spices and precious stones. Evidence for this trading relationship, in the form of an incense jar inscribed in Sabean script dated to the tenth century BC, was found south of the Temple Mount in the Ophel area in 2012.¹¹ And with her visit, an avenue for commerce was established. **More importantly though, she was overwhelmed with what she saw in Jerusalem.** This tells us that Jerusalem was awe-inspiring to her. It was not overshadowed by any other place she had seen before; otherwise, she wouldn’t have been so impressed. Since her kingdom was part of the African continent and was very close to Egypt, it is reasonable to assume that when she was awestruck by what she saw in Jerusalem, it wasn’t because she had never seen the wonders of Egypt.

Therefore, we should understand that what Solomon built was of a magnitude comparable to or even exceeding the magnificent structures of ancient Egypt. Constructions like those would be

¹¹ Daniel Vainstub. “Incense from Sheba for the Jerusalem Temple,” *Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology* 4 (2023): 42–68.

very difficult to erase with the passage of time. Especially since we are told that the temple and Solomon's palaces were built of stone—giant stones. Could they really have just disappeared, or have we missed something? Consequently, the most important thing we learn from the Queen of Sheba is that Solomon's works caused her, an African queen who knew about the wonders of Egypt, to gasp at their grandeur and magnificence. Surely her astonishment at Solomon's work was not naïve of the splendor of Egypt, making her an eyewitness whose testimony is important to consider. One might then infer that the temple of Solomon and his palaces were even more wondrous than the buildings of Egypt around that same time, circa 950 BC.

Could Solomon's kingdom truly have been so grand? The Bible tells us that in addition to his close relationship with Egypt, Tyre, and Sheba, Solomon's rule extended to the Euphrates River and that he also enjoyed trading relationships with Ophir, the Hittites, the Arameans, the kings of Arabia, and the governors of the surrounding territories. In fact, it is said in 1 Kings 4:34 that all the kings of the earth sought an audience with Solomon. This can be taken to allude to emissaries from all over the known world of the tenth century BC. They would have been connected by sea through the Phoenician traders and overland via an Iron Age precursor of the Silk Road that crossed over the Euphrates from the East into Solomon's kingdom, probably at Tiphrah (*1 Kings 4:21-24*), or from the south through Egypt. So, whether by land or by sea, all the world was drawn to visit Jerusalem.

Trade would have been the natural outcome of such an unprecedented era of peace lasting for forty years—perhaps not unlike the peace and global trade that flourished after the fall of the Soviet Union in the twentieth century. There are certainly many archaeological finds along the Mediterranean that

demonstrate that global trade and travel were not uncommon even in the Bronze Age.¹² Likewise, the Silk Road is generally considered to have begun in the second century BC, but archaeological evidence exists for extensive overland trade networks and even East-West trade back to the second millennium BC.¹³ And there is growing evidence for direct connections between China and the Near Eastern and Mediterranean worlds back to the first millennium BC,¹⁴ i.e., right at the time of Solomon.

The Wealth of Solomon

Another aspect of Solomon's reign to consider is just how wealthy he really was. To begin with, his father, David, stored up an enormous fortune for the building of the temple of the Lord.¹⁵ The treasury Solomon inherited contained 3,750 tons of gold and 37,500 tons of silver. That's more gold than the reserves of most modern nations. To put those numbers into perspective, in 2023 the United States had the highest national gold reserve of 8,133 tons, and Germany was in second place at 3,353 tons. It also says that David stored up so much bronze and iron for Solomon to build the temple that it wasn't even possible to weigh it all. And that's not all; David even began developing Solomon's workforce for him, leaving him with so many trained stonecutters, masons, carpenters, and metalsmiths that he couldn't count them all, either. Not only did Solomon have immense wealth to start

¹² Nils-Axel Mörner and B.G. Lind. "Long-Distance Travel and Trading in the Bronze Age: The East Mediterranean-Scandinavia Case." *Archaeological Discovery* 3, no. 04 (2015): 129-139; Shelley Wachsmann. *Seagoing Ships & Seamanship in the Bronze Age Levant*. Texas A&M University Press (2009).

¹³ David F. Graf. "The Silk Road Between Syria and China," in *Trade, Commerce, and the State in the Roman World*, Oxford University Press (2018): 443-530.

¹⁴ Anthony J. Barbieri-Low. *Ancient Egypt and Early China: State, Society, and Culture*, University of Washington Press (2021): 12-3.

¹⁵ See *1 Chronicles* 22:14-16.

building with, but he also received regular tributes of gold and silver from the surrounding nations, which would have kept him from running out of money.¹⁶ Tribute was brought to Solomon from Syria, the Philistines, the kings of Arabia, and even Egypt throughout the duration of his reign. He received 25 tons of gold every year, for a total of 1000 more tons during the time he reigned, plus many other gifts of gold and silver and the revenues from all his trading activities. Solomon was a superstar in his age, a true international celebrity. Everyone loved him and wanted to get an audience with him, to sit at the king's table like the Queen of Sheba did. There's never been another time like it in Israel. It was the opposite of antisemitism; the whole world admired his kingdom and wanted to learn from him. The best of the whole world was brought to him as gifts. And everything in his palace was made from pure gold.

All King Solomon's goblets were gold, and all the household articles in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Nothing was made of silver, because silver was considered of little value in Solomon's days. – 1 Kings 10:21

When we read that silver was considered of little value in Israel during Solomon's reign, we know that his reign truly was the golden age of the Israelites. Through the hard work of his father and the robust trading relationships that he maintained, Solomon possessed a level of wealth that had never been experienced in Israel before and, apart from modern times, was never seen again. This wealth fueled his equally extensive building projects.

¹⁶ See 1 Kings 4:21, 2 Chronicles 9:13-14, and 2 Chronicles 9:22-24.

His Building Program

And now we get to the heart of the book. What did Solomon build? A lot. He built up cities and towns all over Israel. But most importantly, he built the temple of the Lord and some palaces for himself in Jerusalem. He used his connections with Hiram for the expertise to get his building program started and then his trading relationships to sustain it. The Bible gives us an extensive list of building projects that Solomon carried out over the whole of his forty-year reign as king. It describes impressive projects in Jerusalem and all over Israel and the Middle East. The Bible tells us specifically that Solomon had over 150,000 men working on cutting and hauling stone for 20 years just to build the Temple and his palaces in Jerusalem. After that, it says that he built all over the land of Israel, wherever he wished. He also employed another 30,000 men to harvest cedar trees from Lebanon. That would make Solomon as large an employer as the Ford Motor Company, which in 2025 was reported to have 171,000 employees.

¹ Solomon gave orders to build a temple for the Name of the Lord and a royal palace for himself. ² He conscripted 70,000 men as carriers and 80,000 as stonemasons in the hills and 3,600 as foremen over them. – 2 Chronicles 2:1-2

¹³ King Solomon conscripted laborers from all Israel—thirty thousand men. ¹⁴ He sent them off to Lebanon in shifts of ten thousand a month, so that they spent one month in Lebanon and two months at home. Adoniram was in charge of the forced labor. – 1 Kings 5:13-14

²⁰ There were still people left from the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (these peoples were not Israelites). ²¹ Solomon conscripted the descendants of all these peoples remaining in the land—whom the Israelites could not exterminate—to serve as slave

labor, as it is to this day.²² But Solomon did not make slaves of any of the Israelites; they were his fighting men, his government officials, his officers, his captains, and the commanders of his chariots and charioteers.²³ They were also the chief officials in charge of Solomon's projects—550 officials supervising those who did the work. – 1 Kings 9:20-23

It took Solomon four years to plan and get ready to start building the temple of the Lord. He built it over the threshing floor on the mountain of Moriah that David bought from Araunah the Jebusite for 600 shekels of gold, which was where the Lord showed his father David it should go.¹⁷ Solomon used enormous, costly stones for building the Temple. They were finely carved and squared blocks of masonry, called ashlars. They were sawed on all sides, meaning they were perfectly flat and quadrangular. Some of the stones were said to be 8 and 10 cubits, or 14 ft and 17 ft. Exactly which dimension of the stone was being referenced is unclear, but they were big stones. Based on the number of men that Solomon employed as stone cutters, it was a workforce that none of the later kings of Judah, nor anyone else, would ever match in Israel until the modern era. Solomon used the same stones for all his buildings associated with the temple, and the description sounds a lot like the lower stones of the Temple Mount we see today.

Then Solomon began to build the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David. **It was on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite**, the place provided by David. – 2 Chronicles 3:1

At the king's command they removed from the quarry **large blocks of high-grade stone** to provide a foundation of **dressed stone** for the temple. – 1 Kings 5:17

¹⁷ See Deuteronomy 12:8-14, 1 Kings 5:5, 1 Chronicles 21:25, and 2 Chronicles 3:1-2.

⁹ All these structures, from the outside to the great courtyard and from foundation to eaves, were made of blocks of high-grade stone cut to size and **smoothed on their inner and outer faces.** ¹⁰ The foundations were laid with **large stones of good quality**, some **measuring ten cubits** and some eight. ¹¹ Above were high-grade stones, **cut to size**, and cedar beams. – 1 Kings 7:9-11

In Jerusalem, Solomon built many large and substantial buildings. We are also given many specific details about some of those buildings, including their dimensions, how long it took to build them, and the components used in their construction. It is written that all the palaces and the Hall of Justice, for example, were similar in design and construction. Altogether, Solomon built at least eight named structures in Jerusalem:

- The Temple of the Lord
- A great courtyard
- A massive colonnade and covered portico
- The Palace of the Forest of Lebanon
- The Hall of Justice
- A palace for Pharaoh's daughter
- The Millo
- The wall of Jerusalem

It took him seven years just to finish the temple and another thirteen years to complete his palace and the rest of the great courtyard.¹⁸ Considering he had 150,000 men working for him, that was a very long time—a total of twenty years! Along with the temple, Solomon built the Forest of Lebanon as his palace and the Hall of Justice, where he had a throne for administering justice for

¹⁸ See 1 Kings 6:37-38, 1 Kings 7:1, and 1 Kings 9:10.

the people. All the buildings were built from stone, had decorated windows and doorframes, and were roofed and paneled on the inside with cedar. This was yet another way Solomon demonstrated his wisdom. Many people have cedar closets and chests because it naturally repels many bugs, gives off a pleasing aroma, and is moisture absorbing, but Solomon covered the whole building. When paneled over stone, it would feel a lot warmer in the winter, too. The cedar was also elaborately carved with decorative designs on the walls and ceiling. They must have truly been amazing structures to behold! That made a total of three major buildings within the Temple Mount complex and at least one impressive portico, so it must have been a huge courtyard. Everything is described in detail in 1 Kings chapters 6 and 7. Altogether, the Bible gives us specific details about four of the structures Solomon built on Mount Moriah: 1) the Temple of the Lord, 2) the Hall of Justice, 3) his palace, the Forest of Lebanon, which was 142 ft long x 71 ft wide x 43 ft tall, and 4) a colonnade that was 71 ft long by 43 ft wide with pillars in front of it and an overhanging roof.

And there was a fifth building like those others that is also mentioned, a palace for Pharaoh's daughter. It was similar in design to the Hall of Justice, and Solomon built it after he completed his palace. Pharaoh's daughter's palace had to be outside the Temple Mount and the City of David, though. Solomon declared that anywhere the ark had entered was holy. And as a foreigner, probably still worshiping her foreign gods, it was improper for her to live in those places. Fortunately for her, Solomon must have waited until her palace was ready to make that declaration. Because, after apparently living there for a long time anyway, she was finally moved out of the City of David into alternate accommodations—once Solomon finally got around to building a suitable palace for her.

Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter up from the City of David to the palace he had built for her, for he said, "My wife must not live in the palace of David king of Israel, because the places the ark of the Lord has entered are holy." – 2 Chronicles 8:11

Hence, Pharaoh's daughter's palace had to be outside of both the Temple Mount and the City of David—meaning possibly to the west or north of both places, as it was unlikely to have been in the area between the two. This shows that even though Solomon disobeyed God's command about marrying foreign women, he still had some respect for it by keeping them separated from the holy things—but he was compromising and doing what was right in his own eyes.

Another important structure we are told about was the Millo¹⁹, often translated as "supporting terraces," but the meaning is likely closer to a citadel or castle. It was built after the temple courts and Solomon's palaces. That makes the reference unlikely to be associated with them and therefore a completely different construction. Based on the association of the word "millo" with fortifications, the conclusion that this is a reference to a citadel or fortress is more logical. Thus, the Millo was a defensive citadel outside of the temple area and separate from the citadel that was already a part of the City of David.

As soon as Pharaoh's daughter came up from the city of David to her house which Solomon had built for her, then he built the Millo.
– 1 Kings 9:24 NASB

¹⁹ Strong's Concordance, H4407, rampart, mound, citadel, fortification.

After working for twenty years on the temple and his palace, Solomon continued to build for another 16 years—all over the land that he ruled, even in Lebanon. This begins to create quite a list of places where Solomon built cities, towns, structures, and fortifications. He had projects all over his entire kingdom.²⁰ Some of the location names are still a mystery, but we get the picture that it included an impressive number of sites. In addition, Solomon gave towns to Hiram and received some towns from him in return. Presumably in some kind of trade, but we are told that the towns Solomon received he also built up. Based on these accounts, we are getting an increasingly grandiose picture of what Solomon’s building program must have looked like. Thus, in addition to the temple and his palace, Solomon built up:

- Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer
- Villages in the Galilee
- Hamath-Zobah
- Store cities in Hamath
- Upper and Lower Beth Horon
- Baalath
- Tadmor in the desert
- Other store cities
- Other cities for his chariots and horses
- Whatever he desired to build in Jerusalem, Lebanon, and throughout the territory that he ruled...

²⁰ See *1 Kings 9:15*, *2 Chronicles 8:1-6*, and *1 Kings 9:11*.

Solomon continued to build projects until his death at the end of a forty-year reign. This is shown by the fact that when Rehoboam became king after Solomon, his laborers approached him and asked for a reduction of their workload. If they weren't still being worked so hard, then they wouldn't have needed to make such a request, i.e., Solomon never stopped building. Unfortunately, Rehoboam wasn't wise like his father. When the workers asked for him to lighten their work, not only did he say no, but he promised to increase it even more. That was a big mistake, and it caused the fracture of the kingdom into two, Israel and Judah. The tragic account is found in 1 Kings chapter 12. Overnight, the great kingdom of Israel had fallen apart, just as Ahijah the prophet foretold.²¹ Thus, Solomon worked the people hard for forty years and had an army of laborers to carry out his projects along with almost limitless wealth to fund everything that he wanted to do. But Solomon's projects didn't end there. In the book of Ecclesiastes, we read that he also built large pools for storing and distributing water, and he planted trees, vineyards, and gardens. We can't expect a lot of evidence for all those gardens to have survived, but it tells us that the water systems he would have needed were extensive, which is something that one might expect to still be around in some form.

⁴ I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. ⁵ I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. ⁶ I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees.
– Ecclesiastes 2:4-6

There were also fine tombs made for David, Solomon, and the kings of Judah. While we aren't told who built the tombs, we may presume that Solomon built them, or at least his own. Having been

²¹ See 1 Kings 11:29-39.

told that the kingdom was going to be torn from his son's hands, he would have most likely made provision for his own burial, as so many other famous kings are known to have done. It is of course possible that David did the same thing and prepared his own burial chamber, but scripture says that the tombs of the kings were in the City of David, and it implies that they were all buried close together. The kings who were buried in the City of David are David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Josiah.²² *The rest of the kings of Judah were buried elsewhere for a variety of reasons, but often because they were captured and carried away to a foreign land.* The New Testament also gives us some reason to suspect that the tombs of the kings of Judah, specifically David's, were still identifiable in the first century AD.

"Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day." – Acts 2:29

The Bible also tells us that Solomon's temple and his palaces were elaborately decorated with beautiful carvings that included all kinds of classical architectural elements and figures for moldings and column capitals, etc.²³ The descriptions are so ornate that they should really raise our expectations for the sophistication of the work that we are looking for. He directed a multitude of different designs and architectural elements to be used, including:

- Gourds or volutes (*peqaim*)—knob-shaped or ball-shaped or vine-like
- Open flowers or rosettes (*tsitsim*)—flower, bloom

²² See 1 Kings 2:10, 2 Chronicles 9:30-31, 1 Kings 15:8 & 24, 1 Kings 22:50, 2 Kings 12:21, 2 Kings 14:20, 2 Kings 15:38, 2 Kings 16:20, 2 Kings 20:21, 2 Kings 24:6, and 2 Chronicles 35:24.

²³ See 1 Kings 6:18 & 29, 2 Chronicles 3:5, and 1 Kings 7:15-22 & 36.

- Cherubim (*cherubim*)—angelic beings
- Palm Trees (*timmorot*)—palm tree, palm-like
- Chains (*sharsherot*)—chains, an architectural element
- Latticework (*sebakah maaseh*)—twisted, braided, or intertwined chains & nets or lattices
- Pomegranates (*rimmonim*)—pomegranate fruit
- Lilies (*shushanim*)—the lily flower or trumpet-shaped
- Bowl-shaped caps (*beten*)—rounded, belly- or womb-like
- Wreaths (*loyahot*)—an architectural element, wreaths of various designs, including leaves
- Lions (*arayot*)—lions
- Frames (*shkofim and shakef*)—for doors, windows, etc.
- Columns (*ammudim*)
- Capitals (*kothereth*)
- Carved Panels (*halluhot*)

Unfortunately, to appease his foreign wives, Solomon also built a pagan temple on a hill east of Jerusalem and in some other places as well. This marked a tragic turning point in Solomon's life, which would darken the remainder of his reign and lead to the fracture of the nation of Israel. The hill was to the southeast of the temple, on the Mount of Corruption.

The king [Josiah] also desecrated the high places that were east of Jerusalem on the south of the Hill of Corruption—the ones Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the vile goddess of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the vile god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the people of Ammon. – 2 Kings 23:13

Finally, Solomon had at least two seaports, one at Joppa and the other at Ezion-geber near Eloth.²⁴ Joppa is just south of Tel Aviv, and Eloth was near modern-day Eilat. Those ships supported his extensive trading relationships and brought in gold, silver, tin, copper, and iron from his mines.

In summary, from all these biblical accounts, here are the things we should be looking for:

1. **Evidence of the remains of a magnificent temple.** All the cedar would have been burned up, and the gold, silver, and bronze stolen, but some of the stones should have survived and would be found scattered around in secondary use or displayed as remnants of the past temple.²⁵
2. **A great court surrounding the area of the temple.** The Bible says that a great court, made from costly sawed and dressed stones, surrounded the temple.
3. **A great portico.** We read about its continued existence in the days of Jesus and the apostles.
4. **The remains of a great palace, the Forest of Lebanon.** This was said to be similar in construction to the temple.
5. **The remains of the Hall of Justice.** This was a public building, but its construction was similar to the Temple and Solomon's palace.
6. **The Millo** (The Supporting Terraces or The Citadel). This was probably a prominent fortification.
7. **A palace for Pharaoh's daughter.** A building similar to the Hall of Justice and Forest of Lebanon, but it was outside the temple courts because she was a foreigner.

²⁴ See *2 Chronicles 2:16* and *1 Kings 9:26*.

²⁵ See *1 Kings chapters 5-7* and *2 Chronicles chapters 2-4*.

8. **Great pools of water.** There are numerous likely candidates in and around Israel.
9. **The Walls of Jerusalem.** Solomon expanded the borders of Jerusalem and built a massive wall around the city.
10. **The tombs of David and Solomon.** If they survived and were known in the first century, then they are as likely to be found as any of the other relics of Solomon's time.
11. **Huge quarries for harvesting stone.**
12. **Fortifications at Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer.** We know specifically that these three cities were fortified.
13. **Villages in the Galilee.**
14. **Upper and Lower Beth Horon.**
15. **Baalath.** Possibly the town of Baalbek.
16. **Tadmor.** A store city of Solomon.
17. **Hamath Zobah.** This may be the present-day city of Hama in Syria.
18. **Store Cities.** Hamath was one, but we are also looking for other store cities that provided food and supplies to the kingdom of Israel.
19. **Two Seaports.** One at Joppa and the other at Ezion-geber.
20. **Pagan temples for his foreign wives.** Solomon built multiple temples to foreign gods.
21. **Other unnamed projects in Lebanon and throughout the region he ruled.** We can also look for other projects which match the styles and timeframes of Solomon in the areas that he is said to have ruled over.

If all Solomon's building programs were of a grandeur and scale that would even impress someone who had seen the wonders of

Egypt, then how could we fail to find the evidence of such marvels when remains from every other era of building in Israel are regularly uncovered?

Solomon's Contributions to Global Knowledge

Solomon was clearly wise, but did he make any contributions to science? The Bible gives us some big clues but still leaves us to wonder about exactly how much Solomon understood about the nature of the world around him. Solomon authored three books, but none of them are exactly scientific. Nevertheless, I think that the depth of Solomon's wisdom is often underestimated by the modern world—particularly when you consider who historians typically credit as being the great thinkers and intellectuals of the ancient world. That honor is most often bestowed on the Greeks, the ancient Egyptians, Hammurabi, or any other people group or individual, but not on Solomon. However, here is what the Bible says about Solomon's wisdom.

²⁹ God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. ³⁰ Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹ He was wiser than anyone else, including Ethan the Ezrahite—wiser than Heman, Kalkol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. ³² He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. ³³ He spoke about plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also spoke about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. ³⁴ From all nations people came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.
— 1 Kings 4:29-34

Could some of his knowledge have survived by transmission to other visiting intellectuals, preserved for later generations down through the centuries? An analogy would be the way the teachings of Socrates were preserved in the writings of his students. In the same way, the kings who visited Solomon would have carried away insight, knowledge, and wisdom from Solomon that became part of the culture of those other kingdoms. And clearly, there was more for them to learn from Solomon than just pithy proverbs. We now know that Solomon excelled in building projects, in wealth, in politics, in the writing of psalms and proverbs, and in gardening. He had a great understanding of plants and animals, and by extension the natural world, from cedar for building to hyssop as a medicinal plant. Therefore, we might even assume that Solomon was well versed in the use of herbal medicines. When you consider that pharmacies are a completely modern phenomenon, then you'll understand that the only pharmacies for most of human history were herbal apothecaries. The proper use of herbs for healing has always been coveted and closely guarded information. If Solomon was giving that kind of information out, then it would have been something that was worth a long trip. Because of Solomon's interest in horses and his knowledge of animals, one might also guess that he also had an interest in horse breeding. How much of the legendary breeding of modern Arabian horses may owe its original inspiration to Solomon? Again, I recognize that I'm speculating here, but my point is that contributions to our present knowledge from that far back are often not given much thought.

To bolster the idea that Western civilization may owe a much greater debt to Solomon than most people are aware of, consider just a few profound statements that Solomon makes in the opening verses of the book of Ecclesiastes. Based on such simple proverbs, we can infer that he really understood a lot about the world around

him. For example, we can derive the idea that the earth is a sphere from the way he describes the movement of the sun and the wind. We can also see an allusion to the hydrologic cycle and the conservation of water in the way Solomon describes the flowing of the rivers into the sea. When he says that they continuously flow into the sea, and yet it is never full, he says it is because the water returns to the place where it came from. Now some may see a primitive or even fanciful expression of what is now understood as science, and yet, his statements are perfectly accurate within the constraints of the simplicity in which they are expressed.

⁵ The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. ⁶ The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. ⁷ All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again. – Ecclesiastes 1:5-7

Now, considering that these descriptions were made circa 950 BC, would Solomon's wisdom be of poor comparison with the greatness of the knowledge later assembled by famous Greeks, such as Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, etc.? There are probably two main reasons we don't hear more about Solomon in secular circles. First, the main reference for Solomon's greatness comes from the Bible (instead of a cuneiform tablet or a stone pillar dug up somewhere), and that is treated more as a religious text than a primary source by most scholars. Second, since the great works of Solomon are not recognized today, then there is no external evidence of the majesty of his kingdom to corroborate the biblical accounts of his reign. Thus, scholars have overlooked Solomon's contributions to just about every major civilization that has dominated the world stage since his time, starting with the Phoenicians.

If you take a History of Western Civilization class in college, you will learn that most of what is modernly thought of as Western civilization and philosophy began with the Greeks. But that is a relatively modern reinterpretation of history that didn't develop until the twentieth century. In fact, the Phoenician origin of Western civilization, influenced heavily by Solomon in the tenth century, was held by virtually everyone until the idea was finally overcome at the close of the nineteenth century by scholars like Salomon Reinach and Julius Beloch.²⁶ Over just a few decades, the arguments in favor of a purely Greek origin began to win scholars over until it became the dominant consensus. The belief that Western Civilization was built primarily on the civilization and innovations of the Greeks continues into the present.²⁷

However, I would suggest that the best of what we call Western Civilization didn't begin with the Greeks; it began with Moses on Mt. Sinai circa 1450 BC. Then about five hundred years later, there was a type of ancient enlightenment led by Solomon that, through the Phoenicians, influenced the whole of the ancient world. And of course, the biggest influence on what we call Western Civilization came from a Jew named Jesus of Nazareth in the first century AD.

However, despite the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity in the fourth century, secular Roman thought, which was heavily influenced by the Greeks, continued to battle against the revelation of the Bible as the cornerstone for all philosophical, scientific, political, and religious thought. But lest we be tempted to surmise that the Greeks derived all their ideas from within

²⁶ William F. Albright. "New Light on the Early History of Phoenician Colonization," *Bulletin of the American Society of Overseas Research* 83, no. 1 (1941): 14-22.

²⁷ Bruce S. Thornton. *Greek ways: how the Greeks created western civilization*. Encounter Books, 2000.

themselves, we should remember that Solomon lived over three centuries before one of the earliest recorded Greek philosophers, Thales of Miletus (c. 623-545 BC). According to Herodotus, Thales was a descendant of the Phoenicians.²⁸ It is also known that there were at least some interactions between the Phoenicians and the Greeks in the centuries between Solomon and Thales of Miletus from Homer's *Odyssey* (eighth century BC), which was also reported by Thucydides and Herodotus in the fifth century BC.

The Global Influence of the Jewish Alphabet

One proof of this exchange of ideas between the kingdom of Israel and the rest of the world is the adoption by the Greeks of the Phoenician alphabet between 950 and 750 BC.²⁹ Naturally, some modern critics have attempted to deny the obvious similarities between the two scripts in spite of the extensive interaction between the two civilizations—claiming the Greeks did not adopt the Phoenician alphabet, asserting it is simply an illusion of causality.³⁰ However, common sense should prevail and maintain that the Greeks learned the alphabet from the Phoenicians, whose use can be traced back to the script in use in Solomon's time.

The extensive connections Solomon had with the Phoenicians and the complete similarity of Paleo-Hebrew and Phoenician script are well-known, and they descend from the earliest alphabet, Proto-Sinaitic, which arose in the time of Abraham.³¹ This should be all

²⁸ George Rawlinson et al., eds. *The History of Herodotus: A New English Version*. Vol. 1. D. Appleton (1859): 235-6.

²⁹ Anthony M. Snodgrass. *The dark age of Greece: An archaeological survey of the eleventh to the eighth centuries BC*. Taylor & Francis (2001): 350-2.

³⁰ Barry B. Powell. "Why was the Greek alphabet invented? The epigraphical evidence." *Classical Antiquity* 8, no. 2 (1989): 321-350.

³¹ For more information see: Joel Hoffman. *In the beginning: A short history of the Hebrew language*. NYU Press (2004).

we need to understand that we have the Israelites (beginning with Abraham) and God's written revelation to Moses to thank for the origin of the alphabet. The historians have it all wrong. The alphabet was not given to the world by the Phoenicians but by the Jews, who already had scriptures written with an alphabetic script from Moses five centuries earlier. It was Solomon who influenced the Phoenicians and, through them, brought the alphabet to the rest of our modern world. Even the name "alphabet" comes from *aleph* and *bet*, the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which also inspired the first two Greek letters, *alpha* and *beta*.

New Testament Affirmation of Solomon's Splendor

God's gift of wisdom set the stage for all the achievements that would be made by Solomon over his forty-year reign. The breadth of the biblical account of Solomon's influence is staggering. One might even be tempted to suspect, like many modern archaeologists have, that there was a great deal of hyperbole in the biblical accounts or that they just represent myths and fables. However, we find affirmations of the reality of Solomon in the New Testament scriptures as well. In fact, when we are looking for confirmation of the greatness of Solomon and which of his works may have survived into the first century AD, we have a handful of accounts that are referenced there. This is incredibly important because they are nearly a thousand years after Solomon and are from just a few decades prior to the first extra-biblical accounts of Jerusalem and its destruction, which were famously recorded by Flavius Josephus circa AD 100.

The first testimony I would like to point out comes directly from Jesus of Nazareth—a direct descendant of King David and Solomon. In the days of the temple, all the genealogical records for the tribes of Israel were known and recorded. It was how they

proved their identities, their ownership of land, and any other legal claim derived by birthright. The records were lost after the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, but the genealogy of Jesus has been preserved in the book of Matthew.

¹ This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham:

² Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³ Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵ Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, ⁷ Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, ⁸ Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, ⁹ Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, ¹⁰ Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, ¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jeconiah [Jehoiachin] and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

¹² After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah [Jehoiachin] was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, ¹³ Zerubbabel the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, ¹⁴ Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Elihud, ¹⁵ Elihud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷ Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah. – Matthew 1:1-17

The genealogy tells us several things. First, we have a record of descendants going back all the way to Abraham, with whom God first made a covenant to give the whole land of Israel to him and his descendants in perpetuity. Second, we see that complete annals were maintained for every Israelite, including foreigners who joined themselves to Israel—as Ruth the Moabitess is also mentioned in the list. Third, Jesus is a direct descendant of David living in the land of Israel, so he is in an excellent position to provide an authoritative affirmation of the reliability of the biblical accounts about Solomon. So, what did Jesus say about him? While teaching a beautiful message about not worrying and trusting in God to provide all that we need, Jesus made a simple analogy. And it clearly assumes that Solomon was in fact the greatest king of ancient Israel, because Jesus used the accounts of his splendor as an example to be measured against.

²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? – Matthew 6:28-30

We also read that Jesus affirmed that the Queen of Sheba traveled to Israel and recognized Solomon’s great wisdom. He was addressing the Pharisees and Sadducees in his day and was condemning them for their hard heartedness, but at the same time, he was testifying to the historical reliability of the accounts of Solomon’s wisdom.

³⁰ For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. ³¹ The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, **for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom**; and now something greater than Solomon is here. ³² The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and now something greater than Jonah is here. – Luke 11:30-32

And there is more. We also find an account of Jesus standing in the temple courts on Hanukkah and being asked directly by other Jews whether or not he was the Messiah. The account is insightful to help understand why Jesus stirred up so much controversy. He was challenging the understanding of the law and the prophets that was popularly accepted and taught in his day. However, while doing this, we also read an important clue about Solomon, which was recorded by the apostle John in his account of the event. In the time of Jesus there was a colonnade (Greek, *stoa*) in the temple courts that was attributed to Solomon.

²² Then came the Festival of Dedication [Hanukkah] at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and **Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's Colonnade.** ²⁴ The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”

²⁵ Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”

³¹ Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, ³² but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?”

³³ “We are not stoning you for any good work,” they replied, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”

³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are “gods”’? ³⁵ If he called them ‘gods,’ to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be set aside—³⁶ what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’? ³⁷ Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. ³⁸ But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.” ³⁹ Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.

⁴⁰ Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. There he stayed, ⁴¹ and many people came to him. They said, “Though John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true.” ⁴² And in that place many believed in Jesus. – John 10:22-42

There are two more mentions of Solomon’s Colonnade at the temple in Acts 3:11 and 5:12. In Acts 3, we read that Peter and John were going up to the temple when they met a man that was lame from birth begging at the so-called “Beautiful Gate.” Peter goes on to say, “*Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.*” And instantly the man’s legs and ankles became strong, and he jumped up and walked. Then they entered the temple courts and were surrounded by crowds “*in the place called Solomon’s Colonnade.*” Those are big clues, because they tell us to look for a beautiful gate

1—WHO WAS KING SOLOMON OF THE BIBLE?

that led into the temple courts that was part of or near a large colonnade, and it was there in the first century AD.

When we consider these testimonies, we should wonder if there could be more of Solomon's constructions surviving into the first century AD and even into the modern era. Now, clearly, sorting out which relics are truly of Solomon's day from those of later eras is a challenge, but we have another witness that we can review from the first century, from before and after the destruction of Jerusalem, who can aid us in our quest to rediscover the lost works of Solomon—Flavius Josephus.

Chapter Two

Josephus, the Misread Witness

THEREFORE, ON ACCOUNT OF YOU ZION WILL BE PLOWED AS A FIELD, JERUSALEM WILL BECOME A HEAP OF RUINS, AND THE MOUNTAIN OF THE TEMPLE WILL BECOME HIGH PLACES OF A FOREST. – MICAH 3:12

OUTSIDE OF THE BIBLE, perhaps the best testimony about the works of Solomon is Flavius Josephus (AD 37–100). He was an eyewitness of the splendor of the temple and the city of Jerusalem before it was destroyed in AD 70, and he gave an account of its destruction. While the testimony of no historian (outside of the Bible) can be considered perfect or flawless, we should grant him the same weight and respect that we would accord to any eyewitness of a crime who swears to “tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” in a court of law. *Why?* Because, for one, Josephus testifies in his works that he understood that his role as a historian was to tell the truth.

I have said so much out of a desire that my readers may know that we speak nothing but the truth, and do not compose a history out of some plausible relations, which deceive men and please them at the same time, nor attempt to avoid examination, nor desire men to believe us immediately; nor are we at liberty to depart from speaking truth, which is the proper commendation of a historian, and yet to be blameless. But we insist upon no admission of what we say, unless we be able to manifest its truth by demonstration and the strongest vouchers.³² — Josephus

So, as we consider the words of Josephus from almost two thousand years ago, I think it is safe to treat his words as generally truthful while acknowledging the possibility of errors on certain points. In a review of works citing Josephus, the idea that Josephus is trustworthy but not always one hundred percent accurate with his numbers or estimates has been widely expressed by historians and archaeologists over the years. Josephus is a subordinate witness to Scripture for two reasons. First and primarily, because scripture was inspired by the Holy Spirit and is without error in everything it relates. Furthermore, it has been wholly and reliably preserved for us today, with indisputably more care than any other ancient document in human history.³³ Second, we have very few copies of Josephus, and the oldest manuscripts are from the eleventh century, a thousand years after they were originally written. Whereas, for the Bible, we have complete copies of the New Testament in the Codex Vaticanus as early as AD 325-350, papyri fragments from as early as AD 130 (P52), about 5,700 copies of the Greek New Testament from the 3rd to 10th centuries AD, and at least twenty thousand more copies in multiple languages from the same period. We also have copies of the Old

³² Flavius Josephus. *Antiquities of the Jews*, 8,2,56.

³³ There are a great many sources for substantiating that claim, but for one, see: Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell. *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Thomas Nelson (2017).

Testament found in the Dead Sea Scrolls dated between 250 and 150 BC. Thus, while Josephus' account is very important, it cannot reasonably be treated with the same weight as the Bible. Nevertheless, he had much to say about what Solomon did, and if we fail to understand or misconstrue the details that he took the trouble to hand down to us, then we will miss some very important details. Josephus provides us with many clues to aid us in interpreting the archaeological finds in our present day, and if we listen carefully, they can help us find Solomon. However, his accounts are not without some difficulties, which have been commented on from the earliest days of archaeology in the Holy Land. The problem was that Josephus wrote from Rome, not Israel, two to three decades after the destruction of Jerusalem, and from memory or source materials that are now lost.

The account which Josephus has left us of the Jewish temple, with its courts and walls, as they existed in his day, is in some particulars confused, and in others undoubtedly exaggerated. He wrote at Rome, far from his native land, and long after the destruction of Jerusalem; nor is there any evidence or probability that he had collected specific materials for his works in his own country, previously to that event. Hence, when he enters into minute descriptions, and professes to give the exact details and measurements of heights and magnitudes, there is every reason to distrust the accuracy of his assertions, except, perhaps, in things of public notoriety—such, for example, as the distances between places situated on the great roads. But in cases where he describes in specific terms the length and breadth and height of buildings or the like—measures which he himself had certainly never taken, and which were not likely to be publicly known—we can regard these only as matters of estimate or conjecture.³⁴ – Edward Robinson (1841)

³⁴ E. Robinson and E. Smith. *Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petrea. A Journal of Travels in the Year 1838*. London: John Murray (1841): 415.

And seeing that Josephus so often exaggerates, that his unsupported testimony as to dimensions is not of great value in the case in point. I think his assertion that the area was square, is contradicted by the actual state of the locality.³⁵
 — F. Catherwood (1846)

[Speaking of the Temple Mount as Moriah] The fact is, that unless Josephus is allowed some latitude, and we are permitted to resolve this difficulty in some such manner as this, we are reduced to the alternative of supposing that Moriah is not correctly placed; for there is not a hill in the neighborhood which is not higher than that now occupied by the mosque of Omar (i.e., the *Dome of the Rock*), and then we have to seek new postulates before we can advance a single step in the topography of Jerusalem, for this point is commonly assumed and allowed by general consent as one of the very few data on which we may build.³⁶ — George Williams (1845)

Thus, those that have intently studied Josephus are forced to confront the fact that while his accounts are an invaluable reference, they also contain numerous difficulties with some uncertain descriptions and questionable measurements. Therefore, there is a danger that on a given difficult question in Josephus' account, one will simply assume it to be resolvable in favor of their own respective viewpoint. And this is indeed what is commonly found when scholars reference Josephus' work in archaeology. Each one resolves the difficulties according to their own reasoning. So, what can we do to guard against misusing his historic reports? First, it must be admitted that there is a danger of misconstruing his reports. And second, his accounts must be held subordinate to Scripture, geographic realities, and archaeological

³⁵ Quoted in, William Henry Bartlett. *Walks about the City and Environs of Jerusalem*. George Virtue: London (1846): 165.

³⁶ George Williams, *The Holy City*, John W. Parker: London (1845): 284.

findings. In so doing, we will find that the great work of Solomon has not been lost after all.

Solomon and the Temple

Now that we are armed with those cautions, what did Josephus write about Solomon and his temple? Well, that's exactly the problem. I think the common understanding of what Josephus wrote about Solomon is wrong. Some very important passages have been misconstrued to the point that the attribution of Solomon's important works has been lost and given to others, like Herod the Great. Thankfully, however, we still have Josephus' writings to reference and therefore the opportunity to restore a correct understanding.

Let's begin our review with Solomon's Colonnade, which is reported in the New Testament to have still been in existence during the first century. The Greek word used for "colonnade" is "*stoa*," and it means a covered walkway with a roof set on columns. They often run along walls or buildings and are open on the opposite side. You will also commonly find the same area referred to as Solomon's Porch, and the term "cloisters" is also used. If it was reported in Jesus' day, then it must have also been something that Josephus would have seen and written about. And he did.

It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. – John 10:23

[speaking of the temple area in the days of King Agrippa]...so they persuaded him to rebuild the eastern cloisters. These cloisters belonged to the outer court, and were situated in a deep valley, and had walls that reached four hundred cubits [in length], and were built of square and very white stones, the length of each of which stones was twenty cubits, and their

height six cubits. This was the work of King Solomon, who first of all built the entire temple.³⁷ – Josephus

The description by Josephus is from before the destruction of the temple, but his testimony gives us some important information: 1) Josephus agreed that cloisters were standing in the first century from the time of Solomon, 2) they were located on the eastern side of the temple, 3) they were also in the outer court, which means the southern end of the enclosure, and 4) they were built with very large white stones made by Solomon that were twenty cubits by six cubits, or thirty-four feet long by ten feet tall! Only a few of the largest stones in the lower parts of the Western Wall have been found to be of that size. Therefore, either those measurements are exaggerated, or Josephus was only referring to the largest stones in the wall in general. However, when taken as a whole, the description is clearly speaking of the giant ashlars at the southeast corner of the Temple Mount. That is where the highest point from the top of the wall down to the bottom of the Kidron Valley is also found. But the important part is that he says it was done by Solomon, followed by the general statement that he “first of all built the entire temple.” We can speculate what Josephus was including in his mind with the word “entire.” But by pointing us towards the southeast corner and its giant ashlar stones, we may logically deduce that he was referring to the entire Temple Mount. This becomes even more clear if we examine closely another passage from him. See if you agree that Josephus is saying that it was Solomon, not Herod, who built the great foundations of the Temple Mount enclosure. If this account had not been so often misread and misquoted, we wouldn’t be debating this issue today. Read his account and decide for yourself.

³⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20,9,7.

Excerpt from Chapter 11: How Herod Rebuilt the Temple and Raised it Higher and Made it More Magnificent Than it Was Before; As Also Concerning That Tower Which He Called Antonia.

But while they were in this disposition, the king [Herod] encouraged them, and told them he would not pull down their temple till all things were gotten ready for building it up again. And as he promised them this beforehand, so he did not break his word with them, but got ready a thousand wagons, that were to bring stones for the building, and chose out ten thousand of the most skillful workmen, and bought a thousand sacerdotal garments for as many of the priests, and had some of them taught the arts of stone cutters, and others of carpenters, and then began to build; but this not till everything was well prepared for the work.

So Herod took away the old foundations, and laid others, and erected the temple upon them, being in length a hundred cubits, and in height twenty additional cubits, which [twenty], upon the sinking of their foundations, fell down, and this part it was that we resolved to raise again in the days of Nero. Now the temple was built of stones that were white and strong, and each of their lengths was twenty five cubits, their height was eight, and their breadth about twelve; and the whole structure, as also the structure of the royal cloister, was on each side much lower, but the middle was much higher, till they were visible to those that dwelt in the country for a great many furlongs, but chiefly to such as lived over against them and those that approached to them. The temple had doors also at the entrance, and lintels over them, of the same height with the temple itself. They were adorned with embroidered veils, with their flowers of purple, and pillars interwoven, and over these, but under the crown-work, was spread out a golden vine, with its branches hanging down from a great height, the largeness and fine workmanship of which was a surprising sight to the spectators, to see what vast materials there were, and with what great skill the workmanship was done. He also encompassed the entire temple with very large cloisters, contriving them to be in a due proportion thereto: and he laid

out larger sums of money upon them than had been done before him, till it seemed that no one else had so greatly adorned the temple as he had done. [Note: *This is where I believe that Josephus clearly changes his builder reference from Herod to Solomon.*] There was a large wall to both the cloisters; which wall was itself the most prodigious work that was ever heard of by man. The hill was rocky ascent, that declined by degrees towards the eastern parts of the city, till it came to an elevated level. **This hill it was which Solomon, who was the first of our kings, by divine revelation, encompassed with a wall; it was of excellent workmanship upwards, and round the top of it.** He also built a wall below, beginning at the bottom, which was encompassed by a deep valley; and at the south side he laid rocks together and bound them one to another with lead and included some of the inner parts, till it proceeded to a great height, and till both the largeness of the square edifice and its altitude were immense, and till the vastness of the stones in the front were plainly visible on the outside, yet so that the inward parts were fastened together with iron, and preserved the joints immovable for all future times. When this work for the foundation was done in this manner, and joined together as part of the hill itself to the very top of it, he wrought it all into one outward surface, and filled up the hollow places which were about the wall and made it a level on the external upper surface, and a smooth level also. [Note: *Here Josephus introduces another wall within the Temple Mount that marked off the Jewish area, and then an inner third wall around the area for the priests and the Temple.*] This hill was walled all round, and in compass four furlongs, [the distance of] each angle containing in length a furlong; but within this wall, and on the very top of all, there ran another wall of stone also, having, on the east quarter, a double cloister, of the same length with the wall; in the midst of which was the temple itself. The cloister looked to the gates of the temple; and it had been adorned by many kings in former times; and round about the entire nations; all these had been dedicated to the temple by Herod, with the addition of these he had taken from the Arabians... Now on the north side [of the temple] was built a citadel, whose walls were square, and strong, and of extraordinary firmness. This citadel was built by the Asmonean race, who were also high priests before Herod, and they called it the Tower, in which were reposed

the vestments of the high priest, which the high priest only put on at the time when he was to offer sacrifice.³⁸ – Josephus

Now that you've had a chance to read through the text with my notes in brackets, let's examine the testimony above.

1. The title of the whole chapter gives a clear indication that the work described was pertaining to the improvements of the temple itself, not the amplification of the Temple Mount enclosure.
2. Josephus said that Herod 1) built up a new and larger temple, 2) built large cloisters around the temple, and 3) adorned the gates of the temple.
3. He also said “that there was a large wall to both cloisters.” He did not say that he built a large wall to both cloisters. That means Herod did not build the wall because it was already there. He says almost the same thing regarding the citadel on the north end of the temple, which Josephus attributed to the Hasmoneans.
4. Speaking of the wall, he says that it was “the most prodigious work ever heard of by man,” and indeed it is the largest manmade platform ever built in the ancient world.
5. Solomon is then attributed as the builder of the wall after describing the hill he enclosed in the next sentence, meaning that this great wall was already in existence and its builder was Solomon.

This account provides a testimony that it was Solomon who built the entirety of the base foundations of the Temple Mount. Now that is a big statement because it would change what most scholars and historians have traditionally been taught. And it would need additional evidence to back it up, but it should be enough to at

³⁸ Josephus. *Antiquities*, 15,11,2-4.

least begin to question the typical assertion that Josephus attributed the Temple Mount construction we see today entirely to Herod. It can't be stressed enough how significant this is because the nearly unanimous consensus amongst scholars and the people living in Israel today, whether they are Jews, Christians, or Muslims, is that Herod built the Temple Mount, including the giant ashlar stones that we see today, and they will quote Josephus as the primary testimony supporting that claim.



Aerial View of the 35-acre Temple Mount from the East

The reason it is so important to reproduce this passage from Josephus, and any of the ancient testimonies here in this book, is so that all the evidence can be brought to light in one place to review. And hopefully it is now evident that Josephus did not attribute the massive encompassing walls of the Temple Mount to Herod, but instead he credited Solomon. This should be jaw-dropping, but many will start to present objections here. Saying, "Hold on, it's not that clear; Josephus is talking about a smaller inner structure that is no longer there," etc. To which the counter is, then why did Josephus write, long after the destruction of Jerusalem, that the walls Solomon built were "preserved immovable for all future times"? Clearly, if they had been torn down, then he wouldn't have written this. He also wouldn't have

said “which wall was itself the most prodigious work that was ever heard of by man” if Herod built something even larger and grander than Solomon that covered it up. Gazing up at the Temple Mount walls today, it is still one of the most amazing constructions of man anywhere in the world.

There is another detail that should be discussed because it has led many researchers to conclude that Solomon’s enclosure was originally smaller than today’s Temple Mount. Josephus said that the wall was four furlongs all around, or a furlong per side. Most people will need to be reminded what a furlong is. The Romans used the measure of a stadium (*stadia*), translated here as furlong. A *stadium* is 625 ft, while a furlong is 660 ft, but they’re close. Because Josephus used the large Roman measurement of a *stadium*, we should recognize right away that he is talking about a general estimate rather than a precise measurement. Plus, it is a Roman unit of measure, while the Jewish temple would have used cubits. Now here’s a little more historical trivia: there were two different lengths for a cubit, a short cubit and a long cubit. The short cubit was around 17 inches, but the long cubit was the measurement used for the temple and was around 20.67 inches.³⁹ This would make Josephus’ estimate equivalent to 363 long cubits, which is a lot smaller than any dimension of the Temple Mount. From rabbinic records in the Mishnah, we learn that the temple enclosure was a 500-cubit square, but even that is a lot larger than what Josephus reported. Thus, there is no denying that there is a mystery to solve there, but we’ll get into all those details later in the book. For now, though, consider that he was referring to the inner wall of the temple area where only Jews could enter, not the Temple Mount enclosure walls that Solomon built. And while that may not be perfectly clear at this point, it may at least give you

³⁹ Leen Ritmeyer. *The Quest* (2006): 129

some insight into why Josephus' accounts are in some places confusing and therefore possible to misconstrue. That's why we need to analyze all of Josephus' statements together, and we also need to compare his statements with the Bible. It says that the stones used for Solomon's temple, palaces, and his "great courtyard" were all the same type—sawed and dressed stones of great cost. So, we need to compare what Josephus described to what Scripture tells us to look for. Here's what Josephus had to say about the foundations needed for Solomon's Temple, which I think also applies to the walls of the Temple Mount, since all were made with the same stones:

[Speaking of Solomon building the Temple] Now, therefore, the king (Solomon) laid the foundations of the temple very deep in the ground, and the materials were strong stones, and such as would resist the force of time; these were to unite themselves with the earth, and become a basis and a sure foundation for that superstructure which was to be erected over it; they were to be so strong, in order to sustain with ease those vast superstructures, and precious ornaments, whose own weight was to be not less than the weight of those other high and heavy buildings which the king designed to be very ornamental and magnificent.⁴⁰ – Josephus

These details are helpful because they affirm that great foundations were laid for the temple by Solomon, and Josephus is writing at a time when the great bordered ashlar stones of the Temple Mount were without doubt the same ones we see today. If Solomon's foundations were not comparable to what was present in the first century AD, then Josephus probably wouldn't have given such high praise to Solomon. Furthermore, such large stones are not the kind of thing that can simply vanish. Next, speaking of the

⁴⁰ Josephus. *Antiquities of the Jews*, 8,3,63.

quality of the workmanship that was found in Solomon's palaces, Josephus wrote:

Some of these Solomon built with stones of ten cubits and wainscoted the walls with other stones that were sawed, and were of great value, such as are dug out of the earth for the ornaments of temples, and to make fine prospects in royal palaces, and which make the mines whence they are dug famous. Now the contexture of the curious workmanship of these stones was in three rows, but the fourth row would make one admire its sculptures, whereby were represented trees, and all sorts of plants, with the shades that arose from the branches, and leaves that hung down from them. Those trees and plants covered the stone that was beneath them, and their leaves were wrought do up to the roof, was plastered over, and as it were, embroidered with colors and pictures.⁴¹ – Josephus

This description of Solomon's fine workmanship suggests that when we are looking for remnants of his temple and palaces, we need to be looking for truly exquisite work—the kind of stonework that is generally ascribed to the Hasmoneans, to Herod, and often to the Romans, the Byzantines, or even the Umayyads, but never to Solomon. And why not? Because scholars started casting doubt about whether such fine work could have really been done by the Jewish people in the tenth century BC, but we'll get into that discussion in *Chapter Five*.

Even with these accounts from Josephus, there is still the question of which of Solomon's structures could have survived the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Fortunately, we have an account of some structures associated with the temple that Josephus tells us were preserved through the destruction. He describes two gates of the temple being spared and some of the

⁴¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8,5,2.

walls. In my first book, *The Temple Revealed*, I talk about the significance of these passages for establishing today's Golden Gate as a true landmark for the former location of the Jewish temple; however, they also give a surprising testimony about the survival of the Temple Mount in general and, therefore, the survival of one of the greatest works of Solomon.

And now the Romans, judging that it was in vain to spare what was round about the holy house, burnt all those places, as also the remains of the cloisters, and **the gates, two excepted; the one on the east side and the one on the south**; both which, however, they burnt afterward.⁴²

And now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings round about it, brought their ensigns to the temple, and set them over against its **eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator**, with the greatest acclamations of joy.⁴³

Now, as soon as the army had no more people to slay or to plunder, because there remained none to be objects of their fury (for they would not have spared any, had there remained any other such work to be done). Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency; that is, Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne, and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side. This wall was spared, in order to afford a camp for such as were to lie in garrison; as were the towers also spared, in order to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was, and how well fortified, which the Roman valor had subdued.⁴⁴

⁴² Josephus, *Wars*, 6,5,2.

⁴³ Josephus, *Wars*, 6,6,1.

⁴⁴ Josephus, *Wars*, 7,1,1.

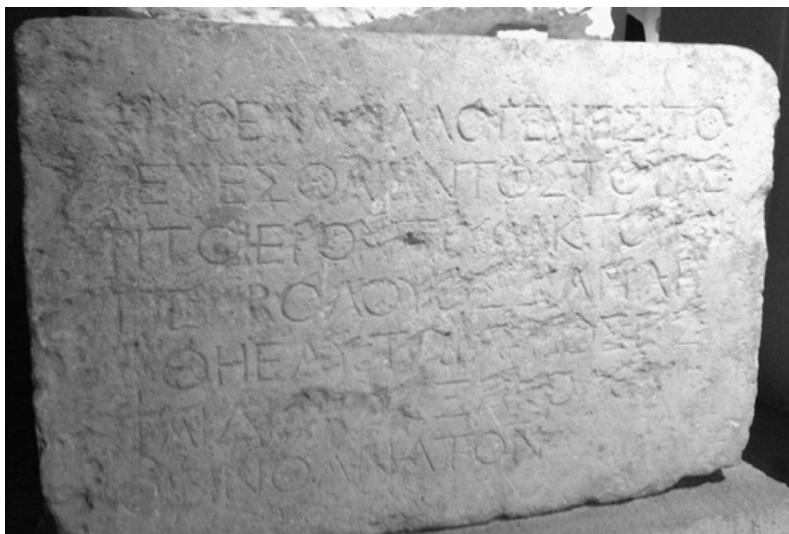
But (Titus) permitted the tenth legion to stay as a guard at Jerusalem.⁴⁵ – Josephus

So how do we know from these passages that the East Gate was preserved? First, Josephus specifically wrote that it was spared. He also says that it was later burned, but we can be sure that it was not destroyed completely because the gate is primarily stone, not wood. Fire would only damage the surface of the stone. Plus, after the destruction and fire were over, the army chose to place their banners (ensigns) at the East Gate, offering sacrifices to them, and they made Titus Imperator there in the same spot. This confirms that it was kept as a nice and usable area that maintained a character befitting their honor as soldiers. Finally, Josephus tells us that a west wall was preserved to provide a base camp for the garrison of the Tenth Legion in Jerusalem. Archaeological findings have proven that the Tenth Legion was indeed camped on the Temple Mount during this time, which helps to understand that the western wall that Josephus says was spared was not on the western edge of the city but was the Western Wall. This wall certainly communicates to posterity the grandeur that Jerusalem possessed in the days before its destruction. Josephus also described the Temple Mount walls as the “first enclosure.” He then goes on to describe a second enclosure, which would have been the area of the temple that was partitioned off within the temple area that was only for Jews that no foreigner could enter. It was called the soreg. A carved stone warning sign that was posted before the entrance to the Jewish area was found not far from the Temple Mount.

Thus, was the first enclosure. In the midst of which, and not far from it, was the second, to be gone up to by a few steps; this was encompassed by a stone wall for a partition, with an

⁴⁵ Josephus, *Wars*, 7,1,17.

inscription, which forbade any foreigner to go in, under pain of death. Now this inner enclosure had on its southern and northern quarters three gates [equally] distant from one another, but on the east quarter, towards the sunrising, there was one large gate through which such as were pure came in, together with their wives; but the temple farther inward in that gate was not allowed to the women; but still more inward was there a third [court of the] temple, whereunto it was not lawful for any but the priests alone to enter. The temple itself was within this; and before that temple was the altar, upon which we offer our sacrifices and burnt offerings to God. Into none of these three did King Herod enter, for he was forbidden, because he was not a priest. However, he took care of the cloisters and the outer enclosures; and these he built in eight years.⁴⁶ — Josephus



*Second Temple inscription stone warning foreigners not to enter inner temple courts.*⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Josephus. *Antiquities*, 15,11,5.

⁴⁷ Photo by the Istanbul Archaeology Museum. Translation: "Let no foreigner enter within the parapet and the partition which surrounds the Temple precincts. Anyone caught [violating] will be held accountable for his ensuing death." CC BY-SA 3.0.

Was the Temple Mount Built in Stages?

Perhaps the most difficult testimony of Josephus to deal with, regarding the case for Solomon, is found in his account of the Temple's construction in *Wars of the Jews*. His description presents several challenges in its interpretation. For one, the language is so general it leaves a lot to the imagination, which is dangerous if we are trying to use it as a guide. His account is also not focused on providing a detailed and precise history of every development on the Temple Mount; rather, it is a general overview. He begins by saying that Solomon started his work on the Temple Mount building the eastern side and then seems to imply that "in future ages" the Jewish people built the rest of it. If that was the case, then it is easy to understand why most scholars believe that Solomon did not build the whole of the Temple Mount. But there are two immediate problems for such an interpretation. First, that would not agree with the accounts in the Bible, which describe Solomon building everything together over 20 years. Second, it doesn't even agree with Josephus' own account in *Antiquities of the Jews*. Nevertheless, it does give us some useful information. Let's take a look at his account, and then we'll finish breaking it down.

Now this temple, as I have already said, was built upon a strong hill. At first the plain at the top was hardly sufficient for the holy house and the altar, for the ground about it was very uneven, and like a precipice; **but when king Solomon, who was the person that built the temple, had built a wall to it on its east side**, there was then added one cloister founded on a bank cast up for it, and on the other parts the holy house stood naked. **[But in future ages the people added new banks, and the hill became a larger plain.]**⁴⁸ They then broke down the wall on the north side, and took in

⁴⁸This sentence that has been placed in brackets seems to be a parenthetical statement, with the remainder of the paragraph still discussing the work of Solomon, not later builders.

as much as sufficed afterward for the compass of the entire temple. And **when they had built walls on three sides of the temple round about**, from the bottom of the hill, and had performed a work that was greater than could be hoped for, (in which work long ages were spent by them, as well as all their sacred treasures were exhausted, **which were still replenished by those tributes which were sent to God from the whole habitable earth**,) they then encompassed their upper courts with cloisters, as well as they [afterward] did the lowest [court of the] temple. **The lowest part of this was erected to the height of three hundred cubits, and in some places more**; yet did not the entire depth of the foundations appear, for they brought earth, and filled up the valleys, as being desirous to make them on a level with the narrow streets of the city; wherein **they made use of stones of forty cubits** in magnitude; for the great plenty of money they then had, and the liberality of the people, made this attempt of theirs to succeed to an incredible degree; and what could not be so much as hoped for as ever to be accomplished, **was, by perseverance and length of time, brought to perfection**.⁴⁹

— Josephus

In the passage above, we read that Josephus attributed the eastern wall to Solomon. But the most useful part of this narrative is that he gives us a basic order for the construction of the sanctuary, which is probably correct. He would have started on the southeast with a retaining wall and then built to the north. Next, he would have needed to cut out some of the bedrock on the northwestern end of the sanctuary where there is a large rock outcropping (where Herod later built the Antonia Fortress). Then building back towards the south, the Temple Mount would have been encompassed on three sides, as Josephus said. Lastly, Solomon would have built out the southern end of the enclosure, where his palace was located. And through “perseverance and length of time”

⁴⁹ Josephus, *Wars*, 5,5,1.

(20 years), it was all “brought to perfection.” Josephus also wrote that it was done using funds that were “sent to God from the whole habitable earth,” which was something that happened under the reign of Solomon (*1 Kings 4:34*). Thus, the paragraph is best understood as describing the work of Solomon, with a short parenthetical note that later Judean kings also continued the development of the city and temple areas. Another thing that can be said is that the numbers he uses for the height, over 517 ft tall, and the length of the stones, 69 ft long, are clearly exaggerated, which should give us further pause in taking the account too literally. Lastly, there is something important that Josephus did not say. He omitted any mention of Herod the Great expanding the Temple Mount, because it didn't happen.

Josephus' Testimony—the Cities Solomon Built

Josephus also tells us about several different cities that Solomon built up, beginning with Jerusalem. Next, he affirms that Solomon built up Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. Then, Josephus names Beth-horon and Baalath. All of which we are told about in the Bible. He also adds that some pleasure cities were made by Solomon without naming them. Finally, we read that Solomon built Tadmor, which Josephus says was also called Palmyra.

How Solomon Fortified the City of Jerusalem, and Built Great Cities; And How He Brought Some of the Canaanites into Subjection, and Entertained the Queen of Egypt and of Ethiopia.

Now when the king saw that the walls of Jerusalem stood in need of being better secured, and made stronger, (for he thought the walls that encompassed Jerusalem ought to correspond to the dignity of the city,) he both repaired them, and made them higher, with great towers upon them; he also built cities which might be counted among the strongest,

Hazor and Megiddo, and the third Gezer, which had indeed belonged to the Philistines; but Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, had made an expedition against it, and besieged it, and taken it by force; and when he had slain all its inhabitants, he utterly overthrew it, and gave it as a present to his daughter, who had been married to Solomon; for which reason the king rebuilt it, as a city that was naturally strong, and might be useful in wars, and the mutations of affairs that sometimes happen. Moreover, he built two other cities not far from it, Beth-horon was the name of one of them, and Baalath of the other. **He also built other cities** that lay conveniently for these, in order **to the enjoyment of pleasures and delicacies in them, such as were naturally of a good temperature of the air, and agreeable for fruits ripe in their proper seasons, and well watered with springs.** Nay, Solomon went as far as the desert above Syria, and possessed himself of it, and built there a very great city, which was distant two days' journey from Upper Syria, and one day's journey from Euphrates, and six long days' journey from Babylon the Great. Now the reason why this city lay so remote from the parts of Syria that are inhabited is this, that below there is no water to be had, and that it is in that place only that there are springs and pits of water. **When he had therefore built this city, and encompassed it with very strong walls, he gave it the name of Tadmor**, and that is the name it is still called by to this day among the Syrians, **but the Greeks name it Palmyra.**⁵⁰

— Josephus

And we find another name of a city, Etham, which may also have been one of the cities for relaxation mentioned earlier. It was said to have been fifty furlongs from Jerusalem, or approximately 6 miles. That city is near a set of three giant pools called the Pools of Solomon and an aqueduct system that delivered water to Jerusalem for millennia, which we'll investigate later in the book.

⁵⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8,6,1.

There was a certain place about fifty furlongs distant from Jerusalem, which is called Etham, very pleasant it is in fine gardens, and abounding in rivulets of water; thither did he use to go out in the morning, sitting on high [*in his chariot.*]⁵¹

– Josephus

Josephus' Testimony—Things Herod Built

We have two different accounts of the Fortress Antonia from Josephus. One from *Antiquities of the Jews* and another in *Wars of the Jews*. In *Antiquities* he attributes the foundations of the tower to the Hasmoneans, which were fortified by Herod.⁵² However, in *Wars*, he reports that it held a legion of soldiers and only credits it to Herod. The differing accounts present some challenges to reconcile. One problem is that Josephus wrote “legion” when he should have said “cohort.” According to the New Testament, only a cohort was stationed in Jerusalem, not an entire legion. This is seen in the account of Jesus’ arrest in Jerusalem, and the later account of the arrest of the apostle Paul, which both indicate that a single cohort was stationed in Jerusalem.⁵³ But this can also be deduced from Roman reports and histories on the movements and activities of their legions, which do not report a legion being stationed in Jerusalem during that time. They were only brought in to wage war or put down a rebellion.

Consequently, the fortress may have housed up to six hundred men, not six thousand. And those six hundred men did not have private rooms. They shared bunkhouse-style quarters and slept in 24-hour rotations while keeping watch and performing their duties. Plus, soldiers were often stationed outside the fort and

⁵¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8,7,3.

⁵² Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15,11,4.

⁵³ See *Matthew* 27:27 and *Acts* 21:30-32.

slept in tents. Consequently, a fort of only a few acres would have been large enough. In Britain, multiple Roman fortifications have been found that housed a cohort of soldiers, with six barracks for 600 men, that measured about 300 ft x 420 ft, covering 3 acres.⁵⁴ And given that the area of the Temple Mount is approximately 35 acres, that is about the size we should expect for a fort that was situated at its northwest corner.

Now on the north side [*of the temple*] was built a citadel, whose walls were square, and strong, and of extraordinary firmness. This citadel was built by the kings of the Asamonean (*Hasmonean*) race, who were also high priests before Herod, and they called it the Tower, in which were reposed the vestments of the high priest, which the high priest only put on at the time when he was to offer sacrifice... But for the tower itself, when Herod the king of the Jews had fortified it more firmly than before, in order to secure and guard the temple, he gratified Antonius, who was his friend, and the Roman ruler, and then gave it the name of the Tower of Antonia.⁵⁵

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 the work of king Herod, wherein he demonstrated his natural magnanimity... but on the corner where it joined to the two cloisters of the temple, it had passages down to them both, through which the guard (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; for the temple was a fortress that guarded the city, as was the tower of Antonia a guard to the temple.⁵⁶ – Josephus

⁵⁴ Professor F. Haverfield. *Roman Britain in 1914*, Oxford University Press (1915): 10-5.

⁵⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15,11,4.

⁵⁶ Josephus, *Wars*, 5,5,8.

Herod repaired and enhanced other structures as well. One was a citadel above Jericho, and another was the tower, Phasaelus, which may have been part of what is now the Tower of David.

He also built a wall about a citadel that lay above Jericho, and was a very strong and very fine building, and dedicated it to his mother, and called it Cypros. Moreover, he dedicated a tower that was at Jerusalem, and called it by the name of his brother Phasaelus, whose structure, largeness, and magnificence we shall describe hereafter.⁵⁷ – Josephus

These testimonies don't tell us anything about Solomon, but they establish once again that Herod is building on the foundations of others who came before him. That's not a bad thing; it just helps establish the pattern. And, as Josephus did in his second account of the Fortress Antonia, it is easy to credit the later builder and ignore the builder of the foundations that were already there.

Josephus has a lot more to tell us that we will explore later in the book, but for now, these few quotes should begin to cast serious doubt on the assertion that Josephus credited Herod the Great with the construction of the Temple Mount we see today. And far from affirming that the works of Solomon were lost to time, Josephus gives a strong testimony that his works were still present in the first century. Furthermore, he provided many detailed descriptions that we can use to help us identify their remains in present-day Jerusalem.

⁵⁷ Josephus, *Wars*, 1,21,9.

Chapter Three

Finding the Stones of Solomon

¹³ YOU WILL ARISE AND HAVE COMPASSION ON ZION, FOR IT IS TIME TO SHOW FAVOR TO HER; THE APPOINTED TIME HAS COME. ¹⁴ FOR HER STONES ARE DEAR TO YOUR SERVANTS; HER VERY DUST MOVES THEM TO PITY. – PSALM 102:13-14

HAVING REVIEWED the testimony of Scripture and the first century historian Josephus, we have some excellent reasons to be looking for structures today that were originally built by Solomon. But there is another compelling rationale for believing that his work must still be present, which very few, if any, scholars have truly considered. It is based on the massive size of Solomon's workforce, men who were solely dedicated to cutting and hauling stone for his projects throughout his 40-year reign. Where did all those stones go? According to Psalm 102, they should be dear to us, and they are the key to finding Solomon.

Counting the Stones

The first thing we need to do is to truly consider exactly how many men the Bible says Solomon employed for his building efforts. He had over 150,000 men cutting and transporting stones for his projects. We also know that he spent 20 years just to complete the whole temple complex, including his palace.

¹⁵ Solomon had **seventy thousand carriers and eighty thousand stonecutters** in the hills, ¹⁶ as well as thirty-three hundred foremen who supervised the project and directed the workers. ¹⁷ At the king's command they removed from the **quarry large blocks of high-grade stone** to provide a **foundation of dressed stone** for the temple.

– 1 Kings 5:15-17

It came about **at the end of twenty years** in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD and the king's house.

– 1 Kings 9:10

It has been estimated that ancient stone masons could produce about 1.4 ft³ of cut stone per day per person.⁵⁸ In that case, Solomon's workmen could have produced up to 112,000 ft³ of dressed stone per day!⁵⁹ The smallest of the fine-bordered stones in the Temple Mount are around 35 ft³ and weigh about 3 tons. At the above rate, it would take a skilled mason 25 days to fully produce a finished stone of that size, which is plausible. Some of the largest stones are up to hundreds of tons, but a typical stone is around 120 ft³ and weighs 10 tons,⁶⁰ so a single stone mason would not finish very many stones in a year.

⁵⁸ Galyn Wiemers. *Jerusalem: History, Archaeology and Apologetic Proof of Scripture*. Last Hope Publishing (2010): 107. Some have estimated that 200 workers could produce about eight cubic meters of finely finished stone each day—1.4 ft³ (0.04 m³) per day per person.

⁵⁹ 80,000 stone masons producing 1.4 ft³ of cut stone per day is 112,000 ft³ per day.

⁶⁰ The typical height of the courses of the Temple Mount is 40-42 inches tall, and many stones are at 6 ft deep and 6 ft wide and the Jerusalem limestone weighs about 170 lb/ft³.

If we assume that Solomon's stonecutters had 120 productive working days per year (allowing for them to also work their fields at home, take care of their families, etc.), then his men could have produced over 13 million ft³ of finished stone every year. For comparison, in a marble quarry in Italy, it is reported that 7 million ft³ of stone is extracted per year by 220 people using heavy equipment.⁶¹ Such a modern example demonstrates that a quarry operation of the size described in 1 Kings is not unthinkable, and more importantly, that it was of a reasonable and necessary magnitude to achieve what was recorded. Over a period of twenty years, we could be looking for up to 271 million ft³ of cut stone. That's a lot of stone! After running these numbers, it should be clear that Solomon's men cut so much stone that it is simply impossible that all his work could have been lost to time.

One important thing missing from this estimate is the fact that natural flaws in the stone often meant that many quarried stones would end up being unsuitable for use in the Temple. Thus, there would have been a lot of wasted effort quarrying stones that ultimately were not good enough. Consequently, the resulting number of finely finished stones that were suitable for use in the temple would have been only a portion of the total stone they quarried. As an example, there is a partially quarried megalithic column that is 40 ft long and 6 ft in diameter that was found in Jerusalem near the Russian Compound. Presumably, it was abandoned before it was fully finished because defects were discovered as it was being carved out of the solid rock. However, unlike that column, the defective blocks and lower-quality quarried stone would have likely found many other uses for building up the walls of Jerusalem and people's houses, etc.

⁶¹ "200,000 m³ (7.06 million ft³) per year." *Levantina's large-scale operation provides an easy and safe process for its employees*, Retreived from <https://www.stoneworld.com/articles/88524-levantinas-large-scale-operation-provides-an-easy-and-safe-process-for-its-employees>



Abandoned giant column found in Jerusalem near the Russian Compound

So, where are all of Solomon's stones? One of the tenants of archaeology (and crime scenes for that matter) is that there is always something left behind. This is particularly true of stone. If we are seriously contemplating that we can't find any significant amount of work from King Solomon in our present day, then the obvious conclusion is that either the biblical account is not accurate, or we have failed to recognize his work. There is no

other real alternative. Why? *Because stone doesn't just disappear.* It can be weathered, broken, re-carved, repurposed, moved, or buried. But it's like matter and energy that can be neither created nor destroyed; the stone can only change form. So, assuming the Bible is true, we have missed the elephant in the room. The stones must be hidden in plain sight and have, quite frankly, just been misidentified.

The Temple Mount and the Great Pyramid of Giza

Let's put the estimated 271 million ft³ of cut and dressed stones that Solomon's men should have produced over 20 years into perspective. The Great Pyramid at Giza contains approximately 94 million ft³ of quarried stone, constructed of an estimated 2.3 million blocks weighing about 2 ½ tons each.⁶² Pliny the Elder wrote that 360,000 men were used to build the Great Pyramid at Giza over a period of 20 years. However, he acknowledges that the historical sources disagreed as to the builders, who have been “consigned to oblivion.”⁶³ With Pliny's account being written up to 1500 years after its construction from sources that we no longer have, the exact numbers quoted are questionable. Nevertheless, it provides a basis for estimating what it might have taken to build the Temple Mount, using a source outside the Bible.

We can also calculate the volume of stone and fill needed for the Temple Mount. It is in the shape of a trapezium that measures 1591 ft on the west, 1542 ft on the east, 1027 ft on its north, and 918 ft on the south, giving a total area of 35 acres. The heights of the large ashlar walls down to bedrock vary, but at the southwest corner of the Temple Mount the large ashlars have been preserved to a height of 115 ft, and at the southeast corner to a height of 129 ft.

⁶² Barnes. *Secrets of Lost Empires*, 48 and 70.

⁶³ Pliny the Elder, (c. 20 A.D.), *Natural History*, Book 36.

The original wall was likely a little higher still, but not more than the present maximum height of 147 ft. Based on the estimated variations in the height of the bedrock around the Temple Mount,⁶⁴ and assuming that the original ashlar wall height was the same level all around as the highest remains that are “in their original position,” i.e., “*in situ*,” then the estimated average wall height and fill over the entire area would be about 82 ft. In that case, the build volume of the Temple Mount could be as much as 125 million ft³, making it an overall larger construction project than the Great Pyramid of Giza!⁶⁵

This proves that the Temple Mount could have only been constructed by a massive labor force, on the scale of those used to build the pyramids. There are a few differences, though. First, the Great Pyramid was built to a height of 481 ft, which is about three times the highest point of the Temple Mount. Second, the Temple Mount was built to level off Mount Moriah, so fewer earthworks would have been required to lift the stones to their placement height because they could slide them up the surrounding natural mountain slopes to raise them to the required elevation. Third, the pharaohs had to bring their stone from much farther away. Solomon’s quarries were within one to three miles. The pharaohs, on the other hand, had to bring some of their granite ashlar from Arabia and their limestone from about forty miles away.⁶⁶ Those additional factors would account for a larger labor force being required by the pharaohs to build the pyramids. It could also be that the Israelites just worked harder and more diligently than the Egyptian slaves, or that Pliny’s number was inflated. Nevertheless, it represents a corroborative account of similar magnitude, which was contemporary with the writings of Josephus.

⁶⁴ Eilat Mazar. *The Walls of the Temple Mount*, Shoham Academic Research (2011).

⁶⁵ The estimated volume of the Temple Mount construction of 125 million ft³ was calculated by multiplying its area of 1.52 million ft² by an estimated average wall height of 82 ft (25 m).

⁶⁶ Dieter Arnold. *Building in Egypt: Pharaonic Stone Masonry*. Oxford U.P. (1991): 27.

Large, Costly, and Finely Cut Stones

We must also recognize that the Bible gives very detailed descriptions of the stones that Solomon used to construct the Temple, his palaces, and the great courtyard that supported them. And what the Bible describes sounds very similar to the giant ashlars that are seen in and around the Temple Mount today.

⁹ All these were of costly stones, of stone cut according to measure, sawed with saws, inside and outside; even from the foundation to the coping, and so on the outside to the great court. ¹⁰ The foundation was of costly stones, even large stones, stones of ten cubits and stones of eight cubits. ¹¹ And above were costly stones, stone cut according to measure, and cedar. – 1 Kings 7:9-11 NASB

These verses are helpful because they tell us that the stones were cut to precise measurements, but they also bring our first challenge. When we are looking for stones that might match the description in the biblical text of “some measuring ten cubits and some eight,” there is a bit of mystery to be solved. The first thing one might think is that this was simply a length measurement. As such, it could refer to stones that were as short as 13 ft and as long as 17 ft. Certainly, those would be very impressive and would coincide with many of the stones seen in the Temple Mount walls today; however, it doesn’t encompass the largest stones in the retaining wall structure. One of which is over 44 ft long!

There are several possible solutions to this dilemma, though, besides concluding that they don’t match the description in the Bible. One possible solution is to conclude that the largest stones just weren’t mentioned. Another possibility is that the given measurement was a way of referring to the volume of the stone, not a specific length. Therefore, a measurement of ten could have

meant a cube of ten cubits, as a measurement of volume, which would equate to one thousand cubic cubits or 5111 ft³.⁶⁷ The largest stone in the walls is called the Great Western Stone, but its volume is in dispute. Its thickness was estimated to be 14 to 16 ft thick in 1995,⁶⁸ which would give it a volume of up to 7522 ft³. However, there have been two more recent measurements made using ground-penetrating radar. One published in 2006 found it to be between 6 and 8 ft deep, in which case it could be 3,849 ft³ or less, but the most recent study performed in 2020 measured the walls to be up to 11 ft deep, giving a volume of about 5,000 ft³, which would be right in line with a measurement of ten cubic cubits.⁶⁹ There is also a third possibility. The measurement could be referring to the depth or thickness of the stones. Without dismantling the wall, it is difficult to be certain; however, based on observable areas and nondestructive measurements, the stones of the Temple Mount range between 6.5 and 16 ft thick. But the thickest measurements range between 13 and 16 feet, or exactly 8 to 10 cubits. Now clearly, we are speculating here, but these are at least a few plausible explanations for how the stones in the Temple Mount enclosure might be said to match with the description of Solomon's work in the Bible.

Comparing the Workforces of Herod and Solomon

I want to stress again that Solomon had over 150,000 people cutting and hauling stones for 20 years. How much labor is that? Just multiply 20 years by 150,000 people, and it's **3 million man-years of work**. A man-year is the amount of work a man

⁶⁷ This calculation is using a long cubit of 20.67 inches, so a 10 cubic cubit cube would be a cube with sides of 17.225 ft and a volume of 5110 ft³.

⁶⁸ Mazar, *The Walls of the Temple Mount*, 91. The thickness was estimated to be 4.2-4.9 m.

⁶⁹ A depth of 1.8-2.5 m (5.9-8.2 ft) was measured using ground penetrating radar. Jol, H.M., Bauman, P., & Bahat, D. (2006). "Looking into the Western Wall, Jerusalem, Israel." In *Proceedings of the 11th International Conference on Ground Penetrating Radar*, 19-22. And a more recent study found depths up to 3.3 m (10.8 ft): <https://guidelinegeo.com/case-stories/gpr-imaging-of-the-western-wall/>

can accomplish in one year. Estimating 10-hour days for 120 days per year, it would be up to **3.6 billion man-hours of labor**. That's a way of thinking about it that no one may have considered before. For starters, you can't lose that much stonework. And second, it was a lot more labor than any other builder in ancient Israel had, including Herod the Great. One of the ways to solve a problem or answer a difficult question, when we don't have all the information we need, is to work the problem backwards. And regarding the question of what Herod could have accomplished and the extent of his renovations of the Temple, we can work the problem backwards by looking to Josephus for the magnitude of Herod's labor force and the length of time they worked.

But while they were in this disposition, the king encouraged them and told them he would not pull down their temple till all things were gotten ready for building it up entirely again. And as he promised them this beforehand, so he did not break his word with them, but got ready a thousand wagons, that were to bring stones for the building, **and chose out ten thousand of the most skillful workmen**, and bought **a thousand sacerdotal garments for as many of the priests**, and had some of them taught the arts of stone cutters, and others of carpenters, and then began to build; but this not till everything was well prepared for the work.⁷⁰

However, he took care of the cloisters and the outer enclosures; and these he **built in eight years**... But the **temple itself was built** by the priests **in a year and six months**, upon which all the people were full of joy; and presently they returned thanks, in the first place, to God; and in the next place for the alacrity the king had shown.⁷¹ — Josephus

⁷⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15,11,2.

⁷¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15,11,5-6.

When we compare the workforces of Solomon and Herod, there is no contest for who was the greater builder. The Bible says that Solomon had 150,000 men and 3,300 foremen working on the stone cutting and hauling for 7 years for just the temple and a total of 20 years to complete the great courtyard and other buildings. Versus Herod who had 10,000 men and 1,000 priests working for a year and a half for the temple, and a total of eight years to complete his work on the cloisters and outer enclosures. When placed side-by-side, we should see that there is a big problem ascribing such magnificent work to Herod and yet nothing to Solomon.

There is more than an order of magnitude difference between the two work projects. Solomon worked his men 2.5 times longer and employed about 14 times as many men. Herod paid for about 90,000 man-years of labor to enhance the Temple (and that really is a lot of labor), but Solomon had over 3,000,000 man-years of labor for his work. Thus, we should expect that Solomon's work, based on the number of laborers and length of time that they worked, to be over 30 times more extensive than Herod's. That means Herod had the manpower to accomplish about 3% of what Solomon did with his men on the temple. Plus, we have Pliny the Elder's account from the same era as Josephus reporting that it took 360,000 men working for 20 years to build one of the pyramids at Giza. How can Herod's work on the Temple be greater than Solomon's? And how could it be enough to build something like the Temple Mount? Herod's men would have needed more than two centuries to complete the same amount of work that Solomon's men did...

The best conclusion is that Josephus was only talking about Herod making an expansion and enhancement of the temple and its buildings; he was not claiming that Herod built the entire platform. Although modern archaeological opinion unanimously

attributes almost the whole Temple Mount platform of today to Herod the Great, this simply isn't possible with the resources that we are told he had. Based on this point alone, the case for Herod the Great unravels, and we're just getting started. There are many more exciting finds ahead.

Was the Temple Built in Eight Years or Forty-Six?

One might partially counter that point, though, by citing the scriptures where the Jews said to Jesus that it had taken forty-six years to build the temple, not eight. But that still wouldn't resolve the shortfall.

¹⁸ The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?”

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

²⁰ They replied, “**It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?**” ²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. – John 2:18-22

This passage does introduce a good question, though. Why then did the Jews say that the Temple had taken forty-six years to build when Josephus said eight? The scriptures don't tell us, but there is more than one possible explanation. First, they could have been counting the years since Herod the Great first started working to rebuild the temple. The idea would be that priests who were trained to work on the Temple under Herod continued to do so, even though he was no longer funding their work, which is plausible. Josephus says that Herod got the idea to rebuild the

temple in his eighteenth year, but he waited to start until he had everything ready,⁷² which, based on some deductions from other statements Josephus made, must have been 20 BC.⁷³ If we count 46 years from 20 BC, then the year the Jews made their comment to Jesus would have been 27 AD—46 years after the start of Herod’s rebuilding of the temple.⁷⁴ Which all lines up, since we also know the account in John 2 took place at the start of Jesus’ ministry, which began in 27 AD.⁷⁵ A second possibility is that they were adding up all the individual years of work on the Temple from the time of Ezra to Herod, using Temple records that no longer exist (*because they were destroyed in 70 AD*). Truthfully, we don’t know, but there is more than one possible explanation for why the Jews would have said it had taken forty-six years. Regardless, even in 46 years, Herod’s workforce wasn’t enough to build the entire Temple Mount. They would have needed either a lot more men or another 200+ years to match the amount of work Solomon’s men did.

[in the days of Herod Agrippa, 40 to 44 AD] And **now it was that the temple was finished**. So, when the people saw that **the workmen** who were employed **were above eighteen thousand**, and that they, receiving no wages, were in want, because they had earned their bread by their labors about the temple.⁷⁶ – Josephus

⁷² Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15,11,1-2.

⁷³ Herod reigned for 37 years starting in 40 BC. Referencing the introductory statements in Book 16 of *Antiquities*, Josephus says that Aristobulus was killed 12 years after the completion of the temple. It can be deduced that he was referring to the first year and half, not the eight years, because otherwise Herod’s reign would be over 37 years (18+8+12), which it wasn’t. Aristobulus IV and Alexander, Herod’s sons, were killed in 7 BC [Peter Richardson, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans*, USC Press (1996): 288.] Assuming it was the latter half of 7 BC, 12 years earlier plus a year and a half was 20 BC.

⁷⁴ There is no zero year, so you lose a year when you count from BC to AD.

⁷⁵ For a defense of 27 AD, see Widener, *Witnessing the End*, 135-9.

⁷⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20,9,7.

And speaking of more men, Josephus said that in the days of Herod Agrippa (sometime between 40 and 44 AD) there were 18,000 men who had finished working on the temple and were looking for additional work. We'll discuss their request later, but the relevant question for discussion here is what work had they been doing on the temple and for how long? The temple expansion of Herod the Great was completed in 12 BC. So, whatever it was, it had nothing to do with the work of Herod the Great, since the two accounts are more than 50 years apart. We can only guess what the men had finished doing for the temple, but there was an earthquake in Judea in 33 AD that happened when Jesus was crucified. The temple curtain was also torn in two, and tombs were broken open at the same time, so there could have been other damage from that earthquake that needed repairs. It was the only major one close to that time, and it has been independently confirmed and dated to $31 \text{ AD} \pm 5$ years, which proves that one occurred around that time in Judea.⁷⁷ Historical sources are the only way the earthquake can be pinpointed to 33 AD, though. The date comes from the report of Phlegon, who wrote *Olympiads* in 137 AD, which was a history of events from the 1st Olympiad to the 229th. He said there was an earthquake and a darkening of the sun that was greater than any seen before it that took place in the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad, i.e., 33 AD.⁷⁸ Again, this doesn't answer what the workers were doing before they approached Herod Agrippa looking for more work, but it may make more sense than assuming that somebody just kept paying those 18,000 workers for another 50 years after Herod the Great finished in 12 BC. Therefore, the most likely scenario is that those workers had been engaged in either a major repair or some large periodic maintenance project, like repaving the courtyard, repairing roofs, etc.

⁷⁷ Jefferson B. Williams, Markus J Schwab and A. Brauer. "An early first-century earthquake in the Dead Sea" *International Geology Review* 54.10 (2012): 1-10.

⁷⁸ Jerome, *Chronicle* (2005):188-332. [//www.tertullian.org/fathers/jerome_chronicle_03_part2.htm](http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/jerome_chronicle_03_part2.htm)

Comparison With Herod's Other Great Works

Beginning in the nineteenth century, the idea that Solomon built the Temple Mount began to be challenged by scholars. But those who would defend the notion were at a loss to present any other constructions for comparison that were definitively built by Solomon, apart from the very ones that were being challenged. The problem was expressed well (but somewhat obtusely) in a quote from William Bartlett.

To derive any argument in favor of the stones being of the time of Solomon, from their peculiar, beveled character, is to assume the question; for where are we to find specimens of the architecture of his day to compare them with? It would be more to the purpose to show that they are not, for this reason, of the time of Herod, but how this is to be proved, we are at a loss to conceive.⁷⁹ – W.H. Bartlett

His point is that a Solomonic origin must just be assumed because there was no other proven work of Solomon with which the great ashlar stones of the temple could be compared. Therefore, he was at a loss regarding how to substantiate that they were not made instead by Herod. Under the precepts of higher criticism, the scholars of that day wanted more than just the testimony of Scripture to establish an attribution to Solomon. Furthermore, as Bartlett admitted, he was unable to come up with satisfactorily persuasive arguments to prove that they were not made by Herod the Great, nor was anyone else at that time. However, that is exactly what this section of the book will attempt to do. Since Bartlett's time, many ruins that are definitively attributable to Herod have been discovered that can be used to test the Herodian hypothesis. For example, Caesarea Maritima wasn't excavated and

⁷⁹ Bartlett. *Walks about the City*, 152.

studied until the 1950s, nor was Masada until the 1960s. The Herodian Quarter in the Old City was only discovered in 1969, and the Herodium in 1972. All four of these sites present strong evidence of true Herodian construction methods. Strangely, it seems that once the Herodian hypothesis was accepted, a test of comparison between his work and the Temple Mount was never done, even after new evidence emerged. I am proposing that we use the same criteria and examine these other structures that Herod built at entirely new sites, i.e., sites where it is believed that previous significant foundations did not already exist, and see if Herod anywhere used the same quality of building materials as evidenced at the Temple Mount. This is where the real problem with the idea of identifying the great ashlars of the Temple Mount as his work can be seen.

To begin with, remember that Herod was not the ruler of an empire. He was the king of Judea, a small province of Rome, and he was subject to Rome's rule. Second, Herod was inspired to build up Judea based principally on what he saw in Rome and to a lesser extent by his visits to Antioch, Alexandria, and Rhodes.⁸⁰ And he was also influenced by the works of Solomon that he saw in Jerusalem, which were certainly still visible in his day. The problem for Herod is that none of the other places he was inspired by had stonework of the quality found in Jerusalem. So where did he learn it, if in fact he learned it at all?

We must ask this question because we don't find work of the same quality as the Temple Mount when we visit the major sites that are most firmly attributed solely to Herod, like the Herodium, Masada, and Caesarea Maritima. And we should ask, why not? These are some of the most monumental constructions in Israel,

⁸⁰ Duane W. Roller. *The Building Program of Herod the Great* (1998): 33-42.

outside of Jerusalem, and yet Herod did not build even a small portion of any of those sites using fine ashlar stones like those found in Jerusalem. Instead, what do we find? In those locations Herod used Roman-style stone blocks and simple quarried stone with rough finishes, mortared together, and then covered over with plaster, which was then carved to look like the fine dressed ashlar stones of the Western Wall, but only as a veneer.



Plaster veneer over stone carved to look like fine drafted ashlar stones at Masada.

This is a considerable problem that is either unrecognized or has simply been ignored. Certainly, the argument could be made that by this time Herod no longer had the resources to afford such costly work, as he had spent too much money on the Temple

Mount and the Tomb of the Patriarchs, but that answer won't work. For one, the use of this plaster technique spans the entire length of Herod's building program. Second, the ability to perform such high-quality stonework would have been a matter of pride. Herod would have possessed much more sophisticated craftsmen than even Rome had, and a very large number of them, too! Where did they go? Did they just stop working because Herod couldn't pay them anymore? No, of course not. They didn't exist because Herod never made such enormous and costly stones, and he didn't build the Temple Mount or the Patriarch's tomb, either.

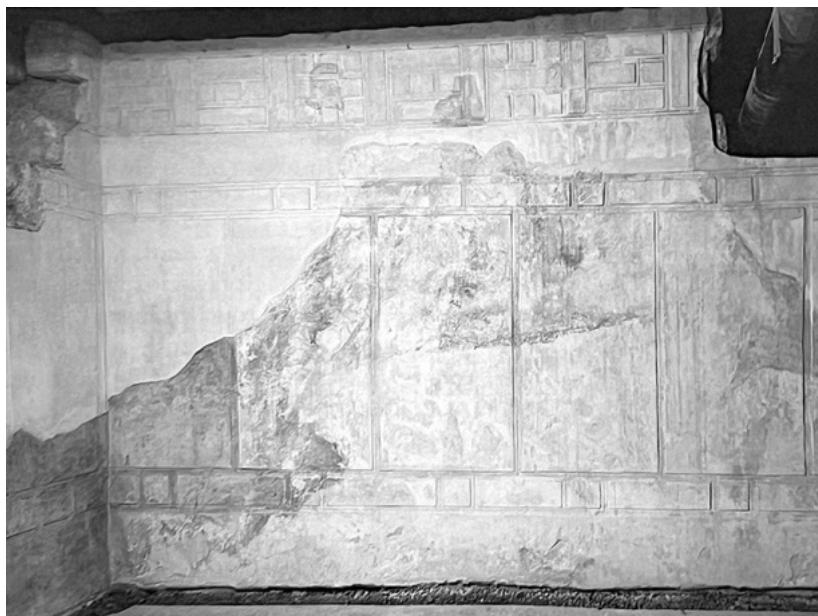


A plaster remnant over Herod's stonework at the Herodium that was carved to look like bordered ashlars is seen here (arrow).

The third reason we know Herod didn't build with fine ashlar stones is the fact that he copied them in plaster. This demonstrates that he wants to make his structures look grand, like the Temple Mount. He admired its remarkable craftsmanship and wanted to copy it. The same smaller stone and simpler construction practices are seen in Caesarea Maritima, the city Herod is credited with building on the seacoast. Herod the Great also built the Roma and Augustus Temple in honor of Caesar Augustus at Caesarea. So, clearly, this temple structure was arguably just as important for King Herod as the Temple Mount was, since it was a temple that he built for Caesar and Rome, but the craftsmanship is far inferior to the ashlar of the Temple Mount and the Tomb of the Patriarchs. Thus, the more plausible scenario is that Herod, being a practical man and without the nearly limitless resources of King Solomon a thousand years earlier, built with more cost-effective methods, including smaller quarry stones and plaster overlays.



The plaster over the stonework at Caesarea was again carved to look like the ashlar stones of the Temple Mount.



The Palatial Mansion, reception hall with stucco carved to mimic ashlar stones, The Herodian Quarter, Old City, Jerusalem.⁸¹

And there is another difficulty for Herod. According to Josephus, his rebuilding of the Temple later encountered some structural problems. Josephus said that some parts of the temple built by Herod collapsed because of sinking foundations and were rebuilt in the time of Emperor Nero (*between 54 and 68 AD*).

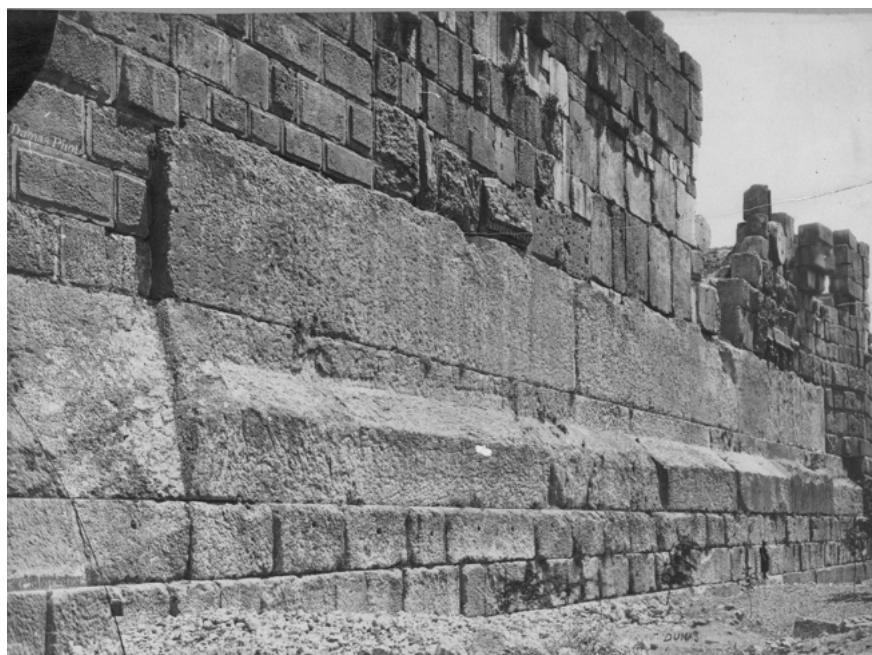
So **Herod took away the old foundations, and laid others**, and erected the temple upon them, being in length a hundred cubits, and in height twenty additional cubits, which [twenty], **upon the sinking of their foundations, fell down**; and this part it was that we resolved to raise again **in the days of Nero.**⁸² — Josephus

⁸¹ Hillel Geva (ed.). *Jewish Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem, Volume VIII*. Israel Exploration Society (2021): 200.

⁸² Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15,11,3.

That doesn't sound like the work of someone who could build walls that were "for all time immovable." Which is what Josephus said of the Temple Mount walls that were really built by Solomon. Thus, one might conclude from these examples that Herod built fast and cheap, plastering over things to make them look grandiose, but they weren't built to stand the test of time like Solomon's work was.

Megalithic Stonework Ends in the 6th Century BC



The megalithic Trilithon stones of the Temple of Baal (Jupiter) at Baalbek, Lebanon.

Another major issue is that megalithic stonework, like the giant ashlar stones of the Temple Mount, faded out of use by the end of the sixth century BC. Thus, by the time Herod was beginning to build, that type of construction had been out of use for five centuries. By what means would Herod have reinitiated it? Should

we believe that Herod was a kind of Leonardo DaVinci who had personally rediscovered the secrets of building with giant stones? No, that just wasn't the case. Herod hired all his help and expertise. If Herod really had built with giant stones, then he would have had to hire men with that knowledge. Therefore, the technology would not have been his alone but would have continued and been widely available throughout the Roman world, just like his early use of concrete at Caesarea Maritima, which he imported from Italy.⁸³ Herod wasn't personally an inventor or innovator. He was a bold, ambitious man and risk-taker who wasn't afraid to use new technology for his own benefit.

But despite it being well known that megalithic stonework was no longer common in Herod's day, it is still believed that he somehow brought it back. That is one reason, along with a striking similarity in style, that some scholars have proposed that Herod must have also helped to build Baalbek.⁸⁴ There are several megalithic stones there that are even larger than the Great Western Stone of the Temple Mount and are assembled in a very similar way. They are called the Trilithon, and each of the three stones is about 62 ft long, 14 ft high, and 12 ft deep and weighs between 825 and 880 tons. The stones form the base of the Temple of Baal (later Jupiter). And some of the fine ashlars even have similar borders carved around their faces.

The similarity of design with the Temple Mount and the temple's location in Lebanon brings a better explanation to mind, though. Scripture tells us that Solomon's stonemasons were trained by

⁸³ Barbara Bergin. "The Innovative Genius of Herod at Caesarea Maritima," *Cultural and Religious Studies* 6.7 (2018): 377-390.

⁸⁴ Kropp, Andreas J. M., and Daniel Lohmann. 2011. "Master, Look at the Size of Those Stones! Look at the Size of Those Buildings!": Analogies in Construction Techniques Between the Temples at Heliopolis (Baalbek) and Jerusalem." *Levant* 43 (1): 38–50.

experts from Hiram, king of the Phoenicians, who ruled over the area of modern-day Lebanon. Thus, the more likely and obvious deduction is not that Herod helped build Baalbek, but that, like the Temple Mount, its stonework is really about 1000 years older than scholars believe, and it was originally a city built by Hiram, whose men trained Solomon's. Solomon may have even bought Baalbek from Hiram as a part of the deal he made with him for cities in the Galilee. In which case, Baalbek might also be Solomon's city, Baalath.

¹⁷ At the king's command they removed from the quarry large blocks of high-grade stone to provide a foundation of dressed stone for the temple. ¹⁸ The craftsmen of Solomon and Hiram and workers from Byblos cut and prepared the timber and stone for the building of the temple.— 1 Kings 5:17-18

It is true, though, that there were still a few cases of megalithic stone being moved in the Roman world, but they were rare and were mostly associated with monuments, like obelisks, statues, and columns. The typical ashlar stone of the Roman world was only about 3 ft³ and weighed about 200 lbs. Even in the Great Pyramid of Giza, most of the ashlar blocks were less than 35 ft³ and weighed about 2.5 tons. Whereas the typical ashlars in Solomon's constructions are at least 70 ft³ and weigh 5 to 6 tons, many are over 350 ft³ and 30 tons, and the largest stone weighs up to 430 tons. There is also the notable absence of mortar between the stones, which was a common element in first century construction but wasn't used in the walls built by Solomon. When the Roman world began adopting the use of concrete and mortar, it made the use of larger stones impractical in most cases. And it was just categorically another level of cost and difficulty that was not found in Herod's day, not even by the emperors of Rome. Thus, if the inclination and technology to build with giant stones

weighing tens and hundreds of tons was missing in the Roman world, which is borne out by their general absence in the constructions in Rome itself, then of necessity, the great ashlar stones of the Temple Mount must have been laid long before Herod the Great. And even in the review of the kings of Judah, the one who most had the time, wealth, and manpower to accomplish the task was Solomon.

Everything Starts with the Temple Mount

Why must we begin with the Temple Mount? Because it is at the center of the debate. Its finely cut, megalithic ashlar stone blocks are the key to finding Solomon. The work is truly stunning, and it has no equal—not even in the great works of Egypt. And even though most guides, archaeologists, and historians would agree that there was a temple built by Solomon that was formerly located in the area we now call the Temple Mount, they would unfortunately also tell you that little or nothing of what he built remains in the things that are now seen there. However, that is precisely the assertion that this book is calling into question.

But is this suggestion that Solomon built the great foundations of the Temple Mount really a new idea? Actually... no. In fact, as we'll examine later, there has been consistent historical testimony that it was Solomon who built the Temple Mount platform we see today down through the centuries. Here's one example from theologian Heinrich Ewald (1803-1875), which was still affirmed in the Pulpit Commentary circa 1950, which clearly attributes the Temple Mount walls to Solomon.

Amid the wreck and havoc of war, amid the changes and chances of the world, **the colossal foundations of Solomon remain undisturbed**. His “great stones” are to be seen at the

present day at the southeast angle and underneath the temple area... But through all these great and various demolitions and restorations on the surface, its foundations, with their gigantic walls, have been indestructibly preserved. After the lapse of nearly three thousand years, "The foundations standeth sure." ⁸⁵ – Heinrich Ewald

And why shouldn't they be from Solomon? Scripture says that Solomon made a great courtyard for the temple and that it was also built with costly dressed stones. Today's Temple Mount is truly such a courtyard, and it is one of the largest and finest constructions of the ancient world.

The Dimensions of Solomon's Courtyard

Here we will examine an argument that has already been widely accepted, but it is currently seen to be in favor of Herod the Great. After some reexamination, though, it will be seen how strongly it points to Solomon. Basically, the case is built on the recognition that the entire area of today's Temple Mount must have had a single builder. That means that either it was built earlier all at once, or if there were successive periods of subsequent expansion, the last one encompassed them all. How can we prove that? Well, first, there are giant ashlar cornerstones at each corner of the Temple Mount, lying in their original positions, and they are bordered in the so-called "Herodian" style. The undisturbed stones demonstrate that they were placed there without any intention or sign of connecting to any other adjoining walls. This proves two things. One, that the Temple Mount was originally a single, quadrilateral, standalone structure. And two, that those cornerstones were laid at the same time, defining the present dimensions of the Temple Mount. It must therefore be one continuous work, despite any incongruities in between those cornerstones.

⁸⁵ *Pulpit Commentary – I&II Kings*, vol. 5, Funk & Wagnalls Co. (1950): 91.



The SW cornerstones of the Temple Mount.

The only corner of the Temple Mount that isn't comprised of a giant wall of immovable stones, like the ones seen at the southwest corner, is the northwest corner. It is the only one where the bedrock rises nearly to the height of the wall. Fortunately, there are two courses of ashlars that have survived at this corner, resting

on the bedrock.⁸⁶ This also agrees with the testimony of Josephus about the Fortress Antonia being founded upon a large outcrop of rock at the northwest corner of the temple area.⁸⁷ The bedrock was carved out for the stones, they remain in situ, and they were all made the same way, suggesting they were built at the same time. But how can we be sure that the very fine bordered ashlar stones of the Temple Mount are really from Solomon and not Herod? First, the greatest piece of evidence is the Great Western Stone, located near the middle of the western side of the platform, that also contains the same finely chiseled border as the cornerstones of the Temple Mount.



The Great Western Stone measures 44.5 ft long (between the white arrows). It has a finely chiseled, smooth-bordered face and sits on top of a row of smaller bordered stones that all match the typical “Herodian” style ashlars (photo from a fish-eye lens).

Measuring 44.5 ft x 10.5 ft x 10.5 ft and weighing about 430 tons, a stone of this magnitude could not have been made in Herod's

⁸⁶ Mazar, *Walls of the Temple Mount*, 123-5.

⁸⁷ Leen Ritmeyer. *The Quest* (2006): 123-30.

day. The technology for that kind of work was no longer known or in use, as we discussed earlier. It belonged to prehistory, possibly even the Antediluvian era. It continued in the Bronze Age and was used in great kingdoms, like the pharaohs of Egypt. And later it was seen in use by the Phoenicians and then by Solomon, but that kind of work disappeared by the end of the Iron Age. Rome didn't use stones like that, and Herod the Great certainly didn't reinvent it, which can be confirmed by a study of Herod's other great works, like Masada, Caesarea, and the Herodium.

Thus, if these megalithic stones of the Western Wall also match exactly with the style of the megalithic cornerstones, then they are all logically of the same era and were made by the same builder. And despite the many questions that remain about the various anomalies in between, we have firmly established that the foundations must be King Solomon's work, which, as Josephus wrote, were placed for "all time immovable." It's really that simple. No one else could have made these giant stones, and therefore the entire footprint of the Temple Mount can be securely identified as the work of Solomon.

There is a question that should be answered, though, about the size of Solomon's Temple area as reported by Josephus. He gave two accounts measuring the perimeter of the "temple," one of four stadia and another of six (one *stadium* was about 625 ft, or 363 cubits). Many people have read the account of four stadia (or furlongs) and misunderstood it to be a statement about the outer walls of the courtyard of the temple in Solomon's time, rather than the inner wall of the temple area (*soreg*) that was only for Jews. But Josephus gives a detailed description of Solomon's temple having three distinct "temples" and three temple walls. *Huh?* Yes, Josephus described three walls. One was only three cubits tall and ran around the temple itself and separated the area that was only

for priests. The second was the soreg wall that was much larger and more substantial that went around the area of the temple where only Jews could enter. Finally, the third wall was of the outer courts that were the massive walls of the Temple Mount enclosure. Thus, the six-furlong measurement given by Josephus was for the whole courtyard, four furlongs described the soreg, but the dimensions for the inner wall of the priests were not given. Armed with that explanation, hopefully the following descriptions from Josephus will make this clear.

The cloisters [of the utmost court] were in breadth thirty cubits, while **the entire compass of it was by measure six furlongs.**⁸⁸

When this work [for the foundation] was done in this manner, and joined together as part of the hill itself to the very top of it, he (*Solomon*) wrought it all into one outward surface, and filled up the hollow places which were about the wall, and made it a level on the external upper surface, and a smooth level also. **This hill was walled all round, and in compass four furlongs**, [the distance of] each angle containing in length a furlong: but within this wall, and on the very top of all, there ran another wall of stone also,⁸⁹ having, on the east quarter, a double cloister, of the same length with the wall; in the midst of which was the temple itself. This cloister looked to the gates of the temple.⁹⁰

He [*Solomon*] also placed a partition round about **the temple**, which in our tongue we call *Gison*, but it is called *Thrigcos* by the Greeks, and he raised it up to the height of three cubits; and it was for the exclusion of the multitude from coming into the temple, and showing that it was a place that was free and open only for the priests. **He also built beyond this court a**

⁸⁸ Josephus, *Wars*, 5,5,2.

⁸⁹ There were three walls, this last one, three cubits tall, is described in *Antiquities*, 8,3,9.

⁹⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15,11,3.

temple, whose figure was that of a quadrangle, and erected for it great and broad cloisters; this was entered into by very high gates, each of which had its front exposed to one of the [four] winds, and were shut by golden doors. Into this temple all the people entered that were distinguished from the rest by being pure and observant of the laws. **But he made that temple which was beyond this a wonderful one indeed**, and such as exceeds all description in words; nay, if I may so say, is hardly believed upon sight; for when he had filled up great valleys with earth, which, on account of their immense depth, could not be looked on, when you bended down to see them, without pain, and had elevated the ground four hundred cubits, he made it to be on a level with the top of the mountain, on which the temple was built, and by this means the outmost temple, which was exposed to the air, was even with the temple itself.⁹¹ – Josephus

Seeing now that there were three different temple areas should make it easier to interpret Josephus' descriptions. And while his measurement of six furlongs (*stadia*) for the circuit of the cloisters is a little underestimated (it would probably be over seven *stadia* to walk around the inside cloisters), it is sufficiently close to understand what he is referring to. And another important observation to make is that Josephus even used the name “temple” to refer to all three parts of the temple complex. He called the temple building itself the temple, the area for those “pure and observant of the laws” a temple, and then he said there was another “temple” that was beyond that area (the outer courts, i.e., the court of the Gentiles). That’s an important observation by itself because it means we should be careful when interpreting which part of the “temple” Josephus is describing in his various accounts.

And clearly, Josephus was incorrect when he said the walls were 400 cubits high in the account above, because at most they could

⁹¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8,3,9.

have been called 200 short cubits if one measured from the top of the wall down to the very bottom of the Kidron Valley.⁹² But aside from that, it is a very clear match for the Temple Mount, where on three sides the walls were raised between 130 and 160 ft above the bedrock, which is quite high enough to cause dizziness for many people. And the great heights of most of the sections of the wall below ground also serve as reliable landmarks for the dimensions of the Temple Mount. Such great foundations could not have been moved. For instance, the maximum build height of the wall down to the bedrock is found on the eastern wall. Its deepest portion is approximately 130 ft south of the northeast corner, where the wall would have risen a total of 151 ft from the bedrock to be level with the top of the Golden Gate.⁹³ But the wall is almost entirely buried and hidden below ground. At the southeast corner the wall was nearly as tall, about 148 ft above the bedrock. Remarkably, most of the Solomonic (“Herodian”) portion of the southeast corner of the wall has been preserved, up to a height of 129 ft. The way these walls were built, they are truly immovable and stand as an enduring testament to Solomon’s work.

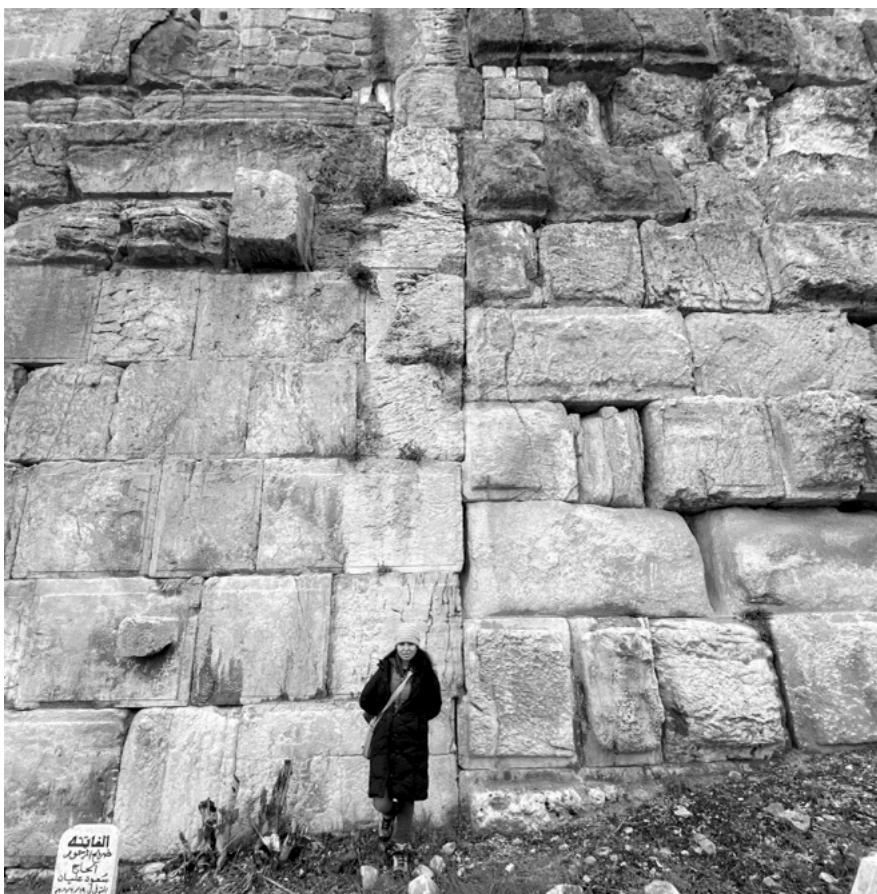
Resolving Some Anomalies in the Walls

But if the Temple Mount is so clearly a match for Solomon’s work, why is everyone convinced it was built by Herod? One reason is that in the study of the Temple Mount walls there are numerous anomalies resulting from multiple destructions and reconstructions over the years, which, combined with a misunderstanding of Josephus, have caused archaeologists to conclude that the Temple Mount was built and expanded in stages.

⁹² If you measure from the height of the temple using the elevation of the Dome of the Spirits, 743 m (2435 ft), to the bottom of the Kidron Valley, south of the southeast corner of the Temple Mount, where the elevation is 659 m (2159 ft), then you could say the entire height is about 200 short cubits, which at least is only exaggerated by double.

⁹³ The elevation of the bedrock is about 694 m (2277 ft) and the expected height of the wall was 740 m (2428 ft), being equal with the height of the Golden Gate.

And once those early interpretations were accepted, they became very difficult to overturn, even when new evidence later became available. Some of the anomalies in question include a seam in the southeastern portion of the wall, some bends that exist in the visible portion of the eastern wall, and varying types of stone finishes in the faces of the ashlars that are present at various points around the foundation. But they can all be attributed to intentional features of Solomon's original construction or the rebuilding and repair of the wall since then.



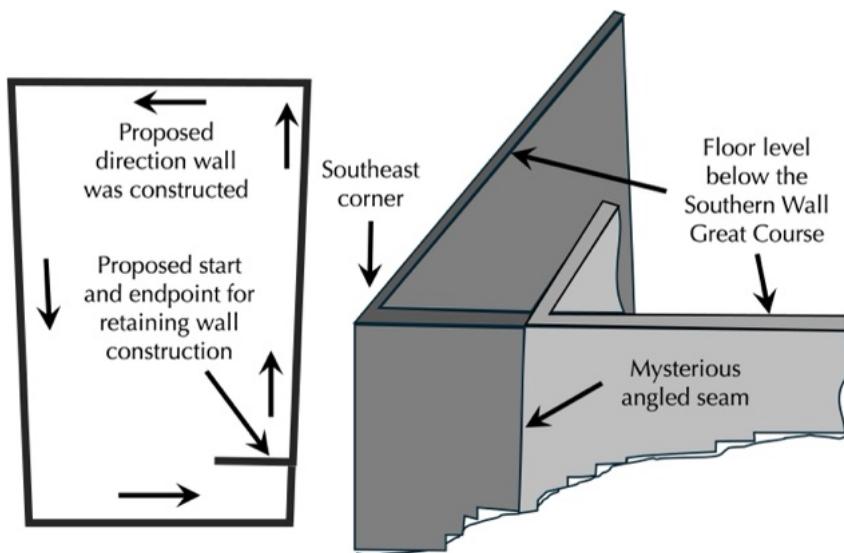
The author's wife standing beside the vertical seam near the southeast corner of the eastern wall to provide perspective.

Regarding the first issue, yes, there is a large vertical seam in the eastern wall that is approximately 105 ft north of the southeast corner. Such a clear break in the wall could support the idea that the Temple Mount was built and expanded in stages over time. Since this seam obviously shows a break in the construction of a contiguous wall, it is generally assumed that the seam marks the beginning of a Herodian extension that was added onto a Hasmonean extension.⁹⁴ If one assumes that Herod made the final extension of the Temple Mount complex, it is a plausible and straightforward explanation. However, if Herod was not the builder of the main Temple Mount courtyard, but instead, it was Solomon, then the seam presents a problem for the assertion that Solomon built the whole thing. The problems are twofold. First, if it was all built by Solomon at the same time (at least over a 20-year period), then why is the seam there? Second, if the stonework was performed by Solomon and his workers, why does the style of stonework appear to be different to the right of the seam compared to the left of the seam? The view that the Temple Mount was constructed in stages over a period of about 900 years easily explains the discrepancy, but explaining these differences over the building tenure of Solomon is more difficult. However, Hasmonean and Herodian origins are not the only reasonable explanation for the seam.

To that point, let's consider the fact that the southern end of the eastern wall was built on a steep slope in two directions. Considering the weight of the stone wall, this could present a significant challenge for the construction and support of the retaining wall. One solution to that problem would be the placement of a tier in the construction of the retaining wall, which would entail the placement of a second corner in the wall, before

⁹⁴ Ritmeyer, Leen. *The Quest*, 102-5.

reaching the bottom of the southeast corner, to provide a stable footing to support the great weight of the wall sections above it. This would relieve stress from the bottom southeast corner, ensuring its strength and longevity. The present seam is even angled to lean into the hill in support of this conjecture. The height of the reinforcing tier would have been only up to the level of what Charles Warren called Course G in the Temple Mount walls, which is at the level of the floor in the area known as Solomon's Stables. It is also the level just below the Great Course that runs along the southern wall. If that is correct, there should be a remnant of that wall running west beneath the floor of Solomon's Stables, but that area has not been excavated. The seam probably disappeared above this level in the original build, but the present stones above that level of the seam are now in secondary use, and so it is no longer clear where the seam ended.



Proposed 3-D Layout of a Reinforcing Seam in the Eastern Wall

Another possible solution is simply that the seam is part of a massive repair to a collapsed section of the wall. If it is a repair, it was most likely made by Ezra (c. 538-516 BC), but it could have

also been done by Nehemiah (c. 444 BC), the Hasmoneans (c. 165 BC), Antipater (c. 55 BC), or even by someone in between. After all, Jerusalem was besieged and conquered ten times between Solomon and Herod the Great.⁹⁵ If it is a repair, then it was almost certainly performed by Jewish craftsmen because it was done with great care and it matches the style of the wall. Thus, any difference in stone quality could be well explained by those repairs. The seam would be a remnant of the way the damaged wall was first stabilized so that a new section could be built up from the seam. The margin cuts at the seam would have been made to add strength to the interface by interlocking the stones.

After the building of the temple, which, as we have before said, was finished in seven years, the king laid the foundation of his palace.⁹⁶ – Josephus

A final possibility is that the seam marks the very beginning stage of Solomon's construction, as shown in the diagram. From there he built the eastern wall to the north. After building to the northeast corner, they continued to the west and then south again, establishing the area for the temple itself, which they finished in seven years. Then by the time they got around to the southwest corner, they were laying the foundation for the southern extension to make room for Solomon's palace, which took another 13 years to complete. After reaching the new southeast corner, they tied back into the seam. In those first seven years of work, the stone masons also improved their skill, and so the quality of the stone extending the southeast corner ended up having a little finer finish than their earliest work. This would provide a logical explanation for the presence of a seam in the wall from the very beginning.

⁹⁵ Warren, *Survey of Western Palestine*, 1. “Chronological Synopsis of the History of Jerusalem”

⁹⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8,5,1.

Another issue that has caused much speculation is an apparent bend in the southern part of the eastern wall and an offset in the wall north of the Golden Gate. But they are easily explained with observations made by Charles Warren and Claude Conder in their examination of the eastern wall well over a century ago. They excavated along the wall in numerous locations and took detailed measurements of everything. They also found the remains of a great tower at the northeastern corner of the Temple Mount, which they believed were the remains of the Tower Antonia because it was made from stones like those of the lower part of the Western Wall.⁹⁷ But the important thing is that they discovered the eastern wall is all in a straight line below ground from there all the way to the southeast corner, despite the obvious joint, bend, and offset that are visible in the upper portion of the eastern wall. This lends incredible support to the notion that the wall was originally built all at once, despite the anomalies that are now seen in the upper portions of the wall from later repairs.

[Speaking of the stones of the tower at the northeast corner] The stones are similar to those in the Wailing Place, and are of considerable weight, one being over 24 feet in length. The remainder of the tower, up to a height of 45 feet from the surface, is built of small, squared stones of more than one date, apparently Saracenic. It may be pointed out that the production on plan of the wall of the tower falls upon the junction of the wall with the Golden Gate, and if still further produced, coincides with the wall running north from the southeast angle for some distance. **It is thus apparent that the foundation of the east wall is in one line, although the superstructure as now seen above ground has more than one bend to its length.**⁹⁸ – Sir Charles Warren

⁹⁷ Thus, they located the Fortress Antonia at the northeast corner, rather than the northwest one. The northeast one, though, was built by Solomon. Another was later built by the Hasmoneans on the northwest, as reported by Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews*, 15,11,4.

⁹⁸ Warren, *Survey of Western Palestine*, 127.

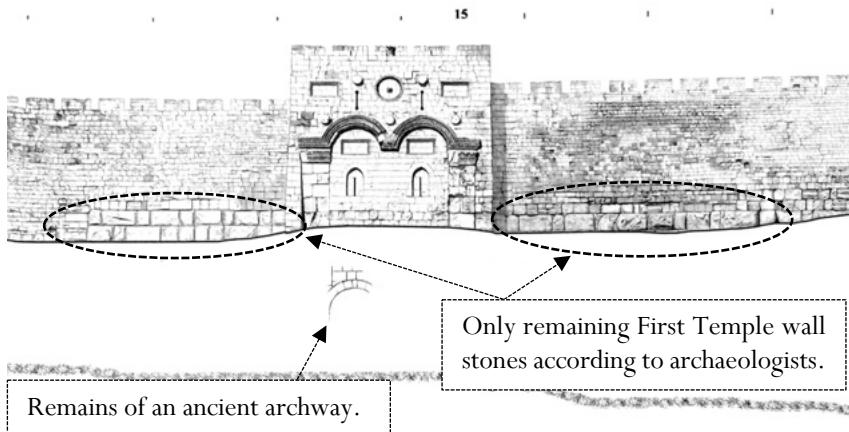
Another one of the anomalies that supported the multiple stages of construction theory is the fact that there are several different styles for the faces of the giant ashlar stones that have been employed in the construction of the Temple Mount. This led some to assume that it must mean there were multiple builders over time, rather than a single builder who used multiple styles for various reasons, or simply that they are evidence of later repairs. To prove that the same builder used both styles, there is a stone in the Western Wall tunnels that exhibits two apparently distinct styles in one stone. In general, the finely finished stones were made to be seen, and the rough-finished faces were not, because they were buried underground or were not in a prominent location. But a single stone, in its original location, with two face styles proves that there was a single builder for both styles. When all these things are considered, there are good explanations to resolve these anomalies that are more logical than concluding Solomon was not the original builder of the Temple Mount.



A single ashlar stone where only half has been finished with a smooth front (a white arrow marks the transition).

The Elevations Within Solomon's Courtyard

Not only can it be established that the area of the Temple Mount hasn't changed, but the elevations of the Temple Mount are also substantially unchanged. This can be seen by recognizing the levels of the work that has already largely been identified as "Herodian." But presently, the only portion of the Temple Mount that archaeologists will admit could be from the time of the first Temple and Solomon is a short section of stones remaining around the Golden Gate on the eastern side of the Temple Mount.⁹⁹ However, some would even argue against those few stones, saying that they should be dated to the Second Temple period as a construction of the Hasmoneans.



The Golden Gate and the oldest remains from the First Temple that are acknowledged by most archaeologists today.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, there are two giant gatepost stones inside the Golden Gate, which are aligned with those same courses of this eastern wall; however, most archaeologists don't connect the gate with the same time as the wall or even with the time of the Second Temple (much less the First Temple). One notable exception is

⁹⁹ Eilat Mazar. *The Walls of the Temple Mount*. Shoham Academic Research (2011): 172.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, Supplemental Diagram, *The Walls of the Temple Mount – The Eastern Wall*.

Dr. Leen Ritmeyer, who makes it clear that the Golden Gate is the only possible location for the eastern gate of the temple.¹⁰¹ *Not to mention that Josephus recorded that the East Gate survived the destruction of the Temple, as we read in Chapter Two.* The gate matters because it has survived from the time of Solomon and is a landmark for the temple. It also establishes two important elevations within the great courtyard: the height of the wall and the elevation of its entrance. Some archaeologists doubt the origins of the present Golden Gate, though, because of an archway that was discovered underneath and in front of it by James Fleming in 1969, which some have supposed to be the original eastern gate entrance into the Temple. However, it is too low to have served that purpose and would have led into the mountain of Moriah. The elevation of the threshold of the Golden Gate is 2396 ft above sea level.¹⁰² And while another gate entrance 30 ft below it could theoretically fit, it would be too low to be of practical use because the bedrock rises rapidly inside the Temple Mount walls. Thus, a gate even lower than the current entrance would lead almost immediately into the steep slope of the bedrock, and it would be 73 ft below the level of the Temple (*using the bedrock measurement at the Dome of the Spirits of 2435 ft above sea level*),¹⁰³ which would be impractical. Therefore, it must have been something other than the entrance of an even older gate.

22 Cubits Show Us Where the Temple Was Located

Not only would such an entrance be unfeasible since it would require nearly six stories of stairs to reach the level of the temple, but it would also be at odds with the descriptions in the Mishnah of the entrance from the East Gate being exactly 43 steps, totaling

¹⁰¹ Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, 109 and 177-8.

¹⁰² Charles Warren. *Survey of Western Palestine*, 141.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 277. (No. 3, Kubbet el Arwâh)

22 cubits, below the elevation of the temple floor.¹⁰⁴ Hence, the arch that was discovered by Fleming is better understood as being a remnant of the support structure for the walkway that would have led to the gate, as proposed by Dr. Ritmeyer.¹⁰⁵

Thus, the ground [on which] the Temple building [was located] was 22 cubits higher than the ground [on which] the Eastern Gate [was located]. – Mishnah Torah, The Chosen Temple, 6.5

And here's where we find an amazing piece of evidence. How much is 22 cubits? It's 38 feet—the exact height difference between the level of the Golden Gate and the bedrock floor of the Temple that is now covered by the Dome of the Spirits.¹⁰⁶ The distance measured by Warren was 39 ft, not 38, but the Jews took their measurement from the sum of the heights of 43 steps inside the Temple Mount, while Warren's measurement was taken from the outside of the Golden Gate threshold. Accounting for the upward slope of the floor between the two measurements, a 1 ft rise over the approximately 100 ft span from the entrance to the start of the stairs can be assumed, making it exactly 38 ft. Additionally, the gate height up to the upper arches of the gate (without Sultan Suleiman's additions) is about 19 cubits, or 33 ft. That is incredibly close to what the Mishnah says, 20 cubits high, or 34.4 ft. In the days of the temple, the whole eastern wall was set to this height—just two cubits below the temple floor.¹⁰⁷ That also means the present eastern wall near the gate is 10 ft taller than

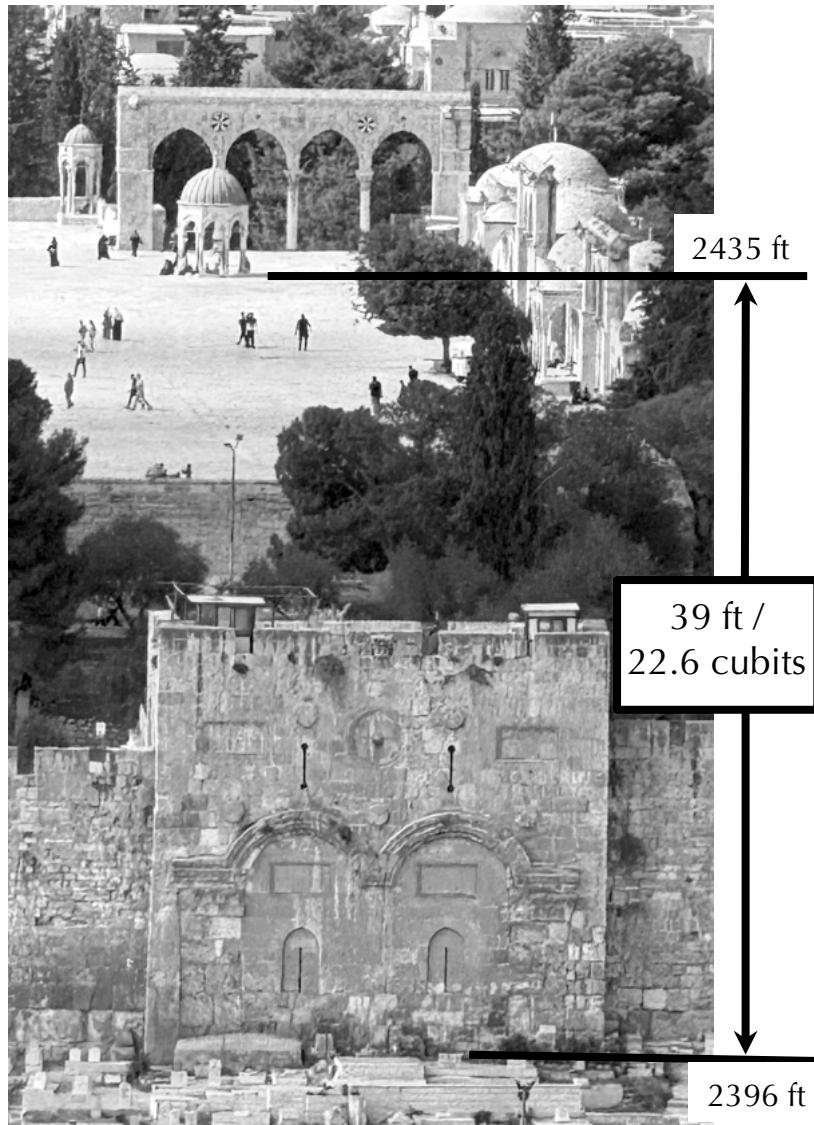
¹⁰⁴ Mishnah Torah, The Chosen Temple (*Bet Habechirah*), Chapter 6.

¹⁰⁵ Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, 110.

¹⁰⁶ Warren measured 2435 ft above sea level at the Dome of the Spirits and 2396 ft at the exit of the Golden Gate threshold, a difference of 39 ft.

¹⁰⁷ Mishnah Torah, The Chosen Temple, 6.5, “*The Eastern Gate was 20 cubits high. Accordingly, a person standing opposite the Eastern Gate could not see the Temple building. For this reason, the wall above this gate was low. Thus, the priest [who offered the Red Heifer] could see the opening of the Temple when he sprinkled its blood, while standing on the Mount of Olives.*”

it used to be. The agreement of these measurements provides even greater confidence that the bedrock at the Dome of the Spirits was the original level of the floor and the Holy of Holies in the temple.



The Golden Gate and the Dome of the Spirits and the difference between their respective elevations are shown here for reference (view looking west at the former location of the Jewish temple).



The Dome of the Spirits can be seen standing over a single piece of flat bedrock in front of the Dome of the Rock (looking southeast).

The fact that the elevation rise from the Golden Gate to the Dome of the Spirits matches the Mishnah is a major confirmation that we are truly looking at the original ascent into the Jewish temple. But the measurements also indirectly prove that the Golden Gate was in a direct line with the Holy of Holies and the temple because they are given in narrative form that is clearly proceeding directly in a straight line from the East Gate to the temple. Plus, it is also directly stated in the Mishnah that the eastern gate was in front of (opposite) the Holy of Holies. There really can no longer be any doubt that the Jewish Temple once stood exactly in this spot.

One may not act irreverently or conduct himself flippantly opposite the eastern gate of the Temple Mount, which is aligned opposite the Holy of Holies. – Mishnah Berakhot, 9.5

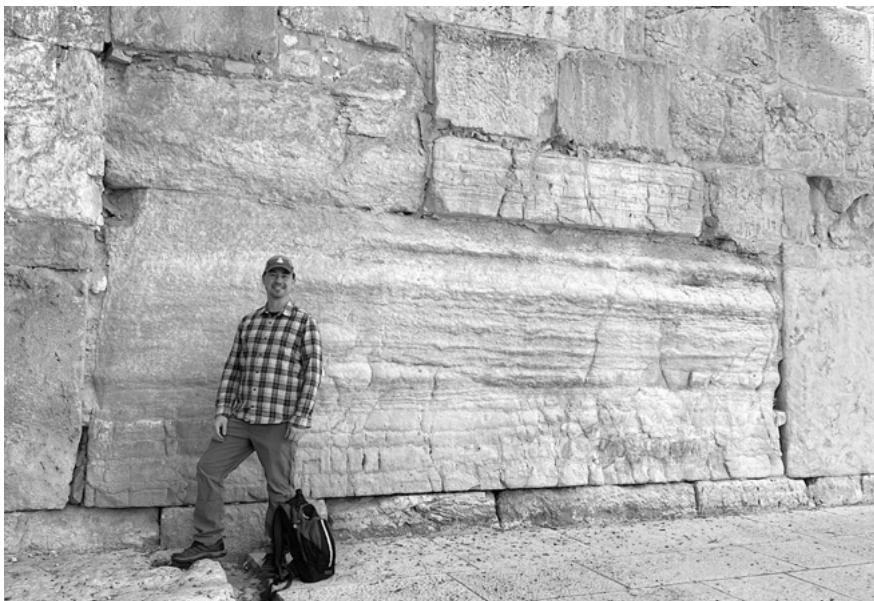


Photoshopped Image of Where the Temple Once Stood

The Two Levels on the Southern Boundary

Now that the picture of the great courtyard for the temple Solomon built is coming into focus, we can recognize a couple more important details. There are two Solomonic (“Herodian”) access points to the southern end of the Temple. One is Robinson’s Arch, and the other is fixed by the steps carved into bedrock that led up from the Pilgrim’s Road and the Pool of Siloam to the surviving southern gate, the Huldah Gate, which Josephus also reported survived the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. Most scholars would not dispute the connection of these structures to the Second Temple, but probably none of them believe they are from the time of Solomon. Once we connect the megalithic and finely bordered stones to him, though, we begin to see the true magnificence of Solomon’s temple and can better understand why the Queen of Sheba praised Solomon so highly when she first came to visit Jerusalem (*1 Kings 10:1-9*).

The first level of the Temple Mount from the time of Solomon is 2 ft above the level of the bedrock, where the Great Course of stone, which is about 6 ft tall, runs for 217 ft along the portion of the wall between the double and triple gates where the bedrock of the mountain rises underneath to meet the base of the wall. Here the Huldah Gate enters the Temple Mount at an elevation of 2380 ft.¹⁰⁸ But we know that wasn't the final height of the southern end of the enclosure in Solomon's day because of the height of the western and eastern cornerstones and the remnants of Robinson's Arch with a stairway that led to an upper level. All have megalithic ashlar stones with the fine "Herodian" border and establish that there was an upper level in Solomon's courtyard.



Author standing beside the first stone in the Great Course south of and at the level of the entrance to the Huldah Gate.

¹⁰⁸ Warren, *Survey of Western Palestine*, 158.

The upper elevation of the platform would have been very close to its present elevation of 2420 ft.¹⁰⁹ These two levels are where we need to look for the remains of three structures that Solomon also built on the great courtyard: his palace called the Forest of Lebanon, the Hall of Justice, and a portico (hall of pillars).



Robinson's Arch and the remains of the stairway that connected to it at the southwest corner of the Temple Mount

The Southern Gate and Solomon's Portico

Next, we'll look for the other gate that Josephus said survived the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, the double gate called the Hulda Gate. This is the best candidate for the events of Acts 3, where Peter and John healed the lame man at the Gate Beautiful. The location of this gate is at the terminus of the Pilgrims Road that led up from the great pool and mikvah at the Pool of Siloam,

¹⁰⁹ Warren, *Survey of Western Palestine*, 187.

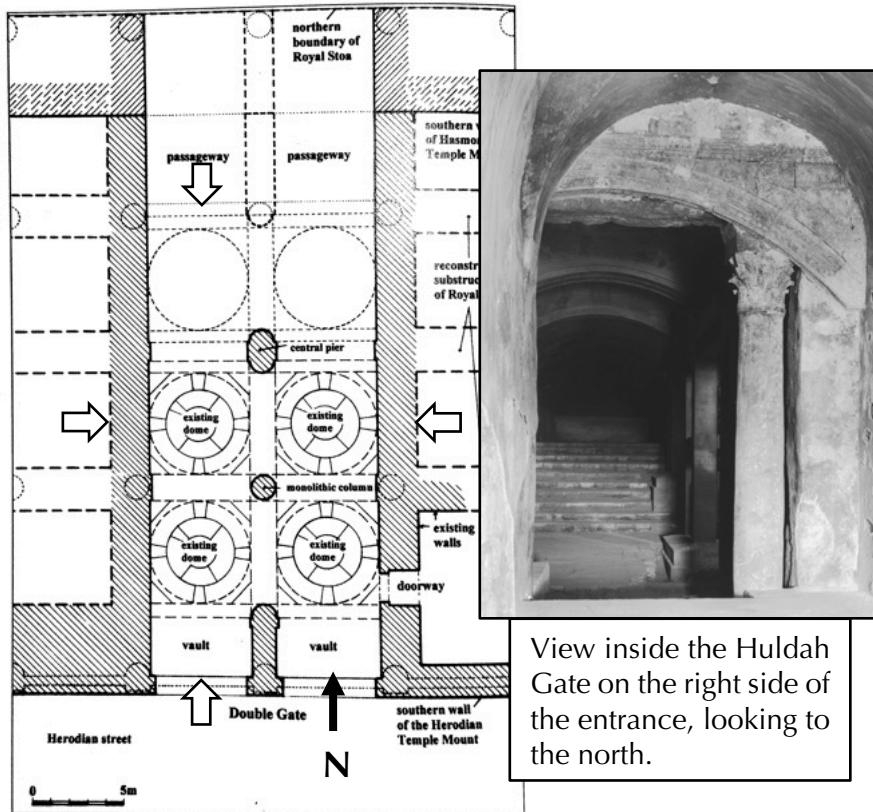
where the masses could ritually purify themselves before ascending to the Temple Mount.

³ Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? ⁴ The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. – Psalm 24:3-4

This was the main ascent for the people to go to the Temple. The priests and Levites would often enter through many of the other temple gates, and people might exit the temple using other gates, but the main entrance was through the southern gate. There is an account in Acts 3 of the disciples healing a lame man who sat in the gate called Beautiful to beg for money. He sat there because so many people came into the temple through there, but not far from that gate, or as a part of it, was Solomon's Portico. It was a large area where many people could congregate. There is a hall of pillars, i.e., a portico, that 1 Kings 7:6 says was built by Solomon. It was 30 cubits wide by 50 cubits long and had additional pillars and a roof in front of it. And it coincides with the structure that was in existence in the days of Jesus and the apostles.

⁹ When all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at **the temple gate called Beautiful**, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. ¹¹ While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in **the place called Solomon's Colonnade**. – Acts 3:9-11

He made a colonnade fifty cubits long and thirty wide. In front of it was a portico, and in front of that were pillars and an overhanging roof. – 1 Kings 7:6



Solomon's Colonnade—preserved to this day and matching the description in 1 Kings 7:6 of 30 x 50 cubits (white arrows).¹¹⁰

Interestingly, the remains of the Huldah Gate we see today have dimensions that uncannily match those dimensions. The gate is 30 cubits (about 52 ft) wide. The interior passages are each about 17 ft wide, with another 18 ft of stonework from the sides and middle of the gate. Then there is an approximately 50-cubit-long (about 86 ft) entrance that would have been the principal colonnade of the gate, followed by two covered passageways that led up to the Temple Mount surface. Those passages have been further

¹¹⁰ Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, 70. This diagram from Ritmeyer shows the layout and dimensions of the gate and colonnade, which he comments many have been referenced in Acts 3 (p. 74).

extended to exit in front of the al-Aqsa Mosque,¹¹¹ but the original colonnade of Solomon is fully intact and in a good state of preservation. The ancient stairway also opened onto this upper level. The passage is not open to the public or generally accessible by non-Muslims, but the entire area is still there just behind the small section of walled-up entrance that is visible from the southern steps of the Temple Mount. This entrance is entirely of “Herodian” stone, meaning it goes back to Solomon. There are some later modifications, but the entrance has been preserved. And the fact that it happens to be 30 x 50 cubits should not be ignored.

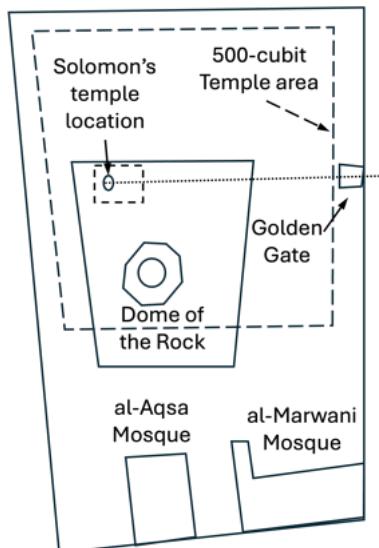


The stairway in front of al-Aqsa Mosque that leads to the underground tunnel and the now blocked entrance of the Gate Beautiful, i.e., the 1st Huldah Gate entrance on the west.

¹¹¹ Hamilton, *The structural history of the Aqsa Mosque*, 63.

Solomon's Palace and the Southeast Corner

The greatest structure built on the Temple Mount, besides the temple itself and its courtyard, was Solomon's own palace, called the Forest of Lebanon. Solomon had another 30,000 men, working in shifts of 10,000 per month, cutting and preparing cedar trees from Lebanon all year long (*1 Kings 5:13-14*), in addition to the stone masons and laborers we already talked about. His palace was a beautiful mixture of both cedar and stone. And from *1 Kings 7:2-5* we know that Solomon's palace was 100 cubits x 50 cubits, or 172 ft x 86 ft, and it had four rows of pillars of cedar, plus side chambers with another 45 pillars in three rows, and three rows of windows. Presumably, Solomon's entire palace was burned and destroyed, but it is the remnants of that palace that we are looking for, particularly the foundations of stone on which it was built. While it was certainly destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, it would have been rebuilt somehow as part of Ezra and Zerubbabel rebuilding the temple, and they would have likely used some of the original stonework to do it. Understanding that the temple was in the northern part of the Temple Mount and in line with the Golden Gate, then the other structures Solomon built must have been in the southern portion, outside of the general 500-cubit (861 ft) square area reserved for the temple. Today, there are two primary locations that bear consideration, because both are known to have ancient remains: the al-Aqsa Mosque and the area traditionally called Solomon's Stables. The latter has now been converted into al-Marwani Mosque and sits at the southeast corner of the Temple Mount. Furthermore, Josephus also gives us a description of the palace of Solomon that should be useful in figuring out where it was located and some additional details to look for. He wrote that the palace had additional space for guest quarters, some of which were subterraneous, and that there were views of a garden with groves of trees to provide shade.



Temple Mount Diagram

He, moreover, built other edifices for pleasure; as also very long cloisters, and those situate in an agreeable place of the palace; and among them a most glorious dining room, for feastings and compotations, and full of gold, and such other furniture as so fine a room ought to have for the conveniency of the guests, and where all the vessels were made of gold. Now it is very hard to reckon up the magnitude and the variety of the royal apartments; how many rooms there were of the largest sort, how many of a bigness inferior to those, and how many that were subterraneous and invisible; the curiosity of those that enjoyed the fresh air; and the groves for the most delightful prospect, for the avoiding the heat, and covering of their bodies. And, to say all in brief, Solomon made the whole building entirely of white stone, and cedar wood, and gold, and silver. He also adorned the roofs and walls with stones set in gold, and beautified them thereby in the same manner as he had beautified the temple of God with the like stones.¹¹² – Josephus

¹¹² Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8, 5, 2.

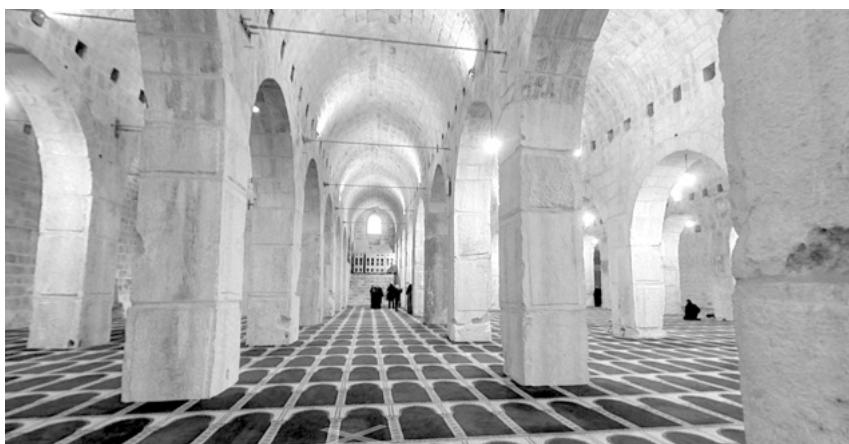
The first suggestion for the former location of Solomon's palace was made by the Bordeaux Pilgrim in 333 AD, who said that it was at a place that is now identified as Solomon's Stables. There are several clues in the pilgrim's account that reveal its location. First, it's near one of the corners, which must be either the southeast or the southwest, with the southeast being the tallest because it looks over the Kidron Valley. Second, he said there was a room there that was covered with a single stone. Today, that room is known as the Chamber of Mary, and its roof is indeed covered with a single carved stone.

There was a great cornerstone, of which it was said, "The stone the builders rejected has become the head of the corner." Under the pinnacle of the tower are many rooms, and here was Solomon's palace. There also is the chamber in which he sat and wrote the Book of Wisdom; this chamber is covered with a single stone. – The Bordeaux Pilgrim



The so-called Cradle of Jesus in the Chamber of Mary in the southeast corner of the Temple Mount—the room has survived mostly intact and is covered with a single giant stone.

But perhaps the most telling thing in the pilgrims' account is that "under the pinnacle there are many rooms," which would be a fair description for the multiple vaults that make up the area now known as Solomon's stables. The area looks to have been rebuilt at some time after whatever Solomon originally built there was first destroyed, but the question is when. Amazingly, though, the stones that form the southeast corner of the wall have survived intact since the days of Solomon. And as the Bordeaux Pilgrim also reported, there is still the room where he said Solomon wrote his books of wisdom, which is now called the Chamber of Mary. It is part of Solomon's stables in the area that is now a mosque. The area includes approximately 65 rebuilt quadrangular "Herodian" stone pillars, typically bordered on four sides, along with some additional pillars that look like they were made later to match or just lost their borders due to fire damage.



Solomon's Stables, which were converted into the al-Marwani Mosque at the southeast corner of the Temple Mount.

The biggest question is, when were these vaults first rebuilt? It appears the vaults were built after the pillars were first made, because the stonework is much smaller and does not seem to be of the same era. The most likely rebuilders were Ezra and Zerubbabel

from 539 to 516 BC. But the vaults had to be rebuilt by the time of Herod the Great, because, as we'll discuss in the next section about the Hall of Justice, the floor of Herod's royal stoa was built on top of them. The most logical choice, based on Josephus, is that they were repaired by Zerubbabel and Jeshua (a Levite) along with Ezra. From his narrative, we have good reason to suspect the repairs they made included the southeast corner of the Temple Mount because it was part of the outer walls, which are like a citadel but are also part of the temple and were the focus of their work. It also says that the cloisters and walls they rebuilt were strong, further supporting the conclusion that Solomon's Stables were rebuilt by Zerubbabel.

[In the time of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, c. 539-516 BC] Now at this time Sisinnes, the governor of Syria and Phoenicia, and Sathrabuzanes, with certain others, came up to Jerusalem, and asked the rulers of the Jews, by whose grant it was that **they built the temple in this manner, since it was more like to a citadel** than a temple, and for what reason it was that **they built cloisters and walls, and those strong ones too**, about the city?¹¹³ – Josephus

But if there is any doubt about that, there was a second chance to rebuild Solomon's Stables over a century before Herod the Great. Josephus wrote that cloisters of the temple were repaired under King Antiochus the Great (III). The Jews were treated well and were given resources to repair them and “render the temple more glorious.” Either way, based on these accounts, it is likely that the area of Solomon's Stables was already rebuilt by the time of Herod the Great, and the present vaults are therefore still of Jewish construction.

¹¹³ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 11, 4, 4.

I would also have the work about the temple finished, and the cloisters, and if there be anything else that ought to be rebuilt. And for the materials of wood, let it be brought them out of Judea itself and out of the other countries, and out of Libanus tax free; and the same I would have observed as to those other materials which will be necessary, in order to render the temple more glorious; and let all of that nation live according to the laws of their own country.¹¹⁴ – King Antiochus the Great (c. 223-187 BC), quote by Josephus

Of course, Solomon's Stables could have had additional repairs after the destruction of 70 AD by Hadrian, the Byzantines, the Umayyads, the Crusaders, or even as late as Sultan Suleiman. Nonetheless, the evidence indicates that the core of what we see today survived the destruction and that the structures that are there now were rebuilt from the remnants of Solomon's Palace on its ancient foundations. Let's keep looking at exactly what the evidence shows, though.

For instance, one might also ask, do the pillars now seen in Solomon's Stables correspond with the pillars described for his palace? And the answer, based on another record given by Josephus, is yes, because he wrote that Solomon's pillars were quadrangular like the pillars now seen in the vaults. One challenge, though, is that the Bible and Josephus both say that the pillars were of cedar, not stone, but they might still have had stone bases. Besides, Josephus also reported that the building was (like the temple) built of both stone and cedar. And there is one more point to consider in 1 Kings 7:2-3. There is an apparent contradiction between verses 2 and 3, where it says there were 4 rows of columns and then rows of 15 columns for a total of 45, which

¹¹⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 12,3,3.

should be three rows, not four. So, which is it? The best resolution is probably to understand that there were two sets of pillars, not one. One set had four rows of cedar pillars, and the other set had three rows with 15 columns in each row, totaling 45 pillars. The pillar type of the second set was not specified and could have been stone, and even the first set of pillars could have still had stone bases. Looking at the stone pillars now in Solomon's Stables, the borders match well with the other ashlar stones of the temple and look like the work of Solomon, so one way or another they do match up. The remnants of the pillars are probably in secondary use and weren't necessarily rebuilt the same way they were before, so we don't know how tall the stone pillars would have originally been, but Solomon's palace was 30 cubits (52 ft) high, which is around 30 ft taller than the present columns. With a building that tall, stone bases, or even a first level of stone, would have been used to support the cedar columns.

² He built the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon a hundred cubits long, fifty wide and thirty high, **with four rows of cedar columns** supporting trimmed cedar beams. ³ It was roofed with cedar above the beams that rested on the columns—**forty-five beams, fifteen to a row.** – 1 Kings 7:2-3

It was a hundred cubits long, and fifty broad, and thirty high, supported by quadrangular pillars, which were all of cedar... And, to say all in brief, Solomon made the whole building entirely of white stone, and cedar wood, and gold, and silver.¹¹⁵ – Josephus

The vaults are about 100 cubits deep, the same length given for his palace in the Bible.¹¹⁶ The most plausible layout for his palace

¹¹⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8,5,2.

¹¹⁶ The actual measurement from this diagram is about 57 m (187 ft) deep, which is just a little more than the 100 cubits (53m / 172 ft) that we are looking for.

within the area of the vaults is an area in the southeast corner that is 50 cubits wide with four rows of stone columns running from north to south for 100 cubits. This would fit the building dimensions perfectly. Then there were probably another three rows of 15 columns each, running north to south, west of his palace that were part of a colonnade and a covered outdoor area in front of the palace. It is also possible that the area underground had a different layout than the colonnade on the upper level.

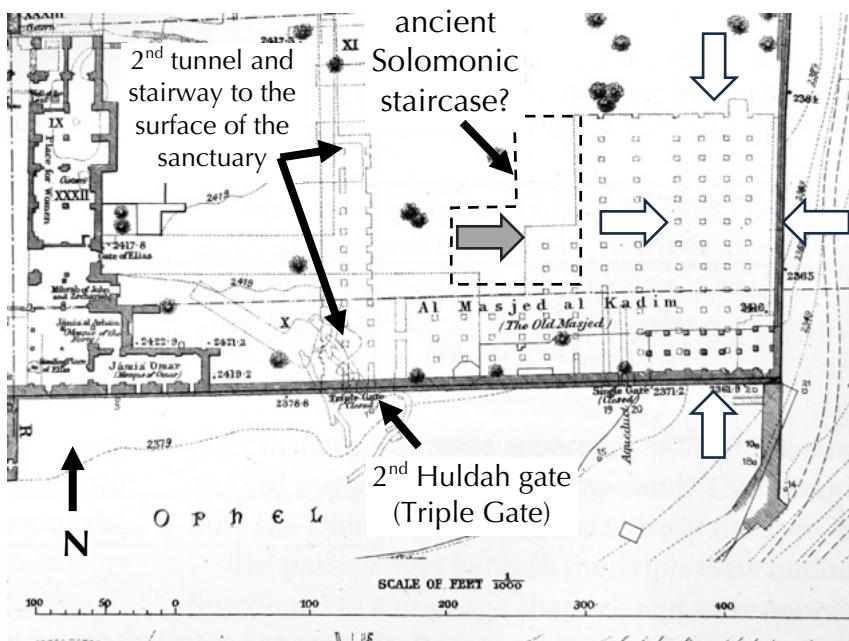
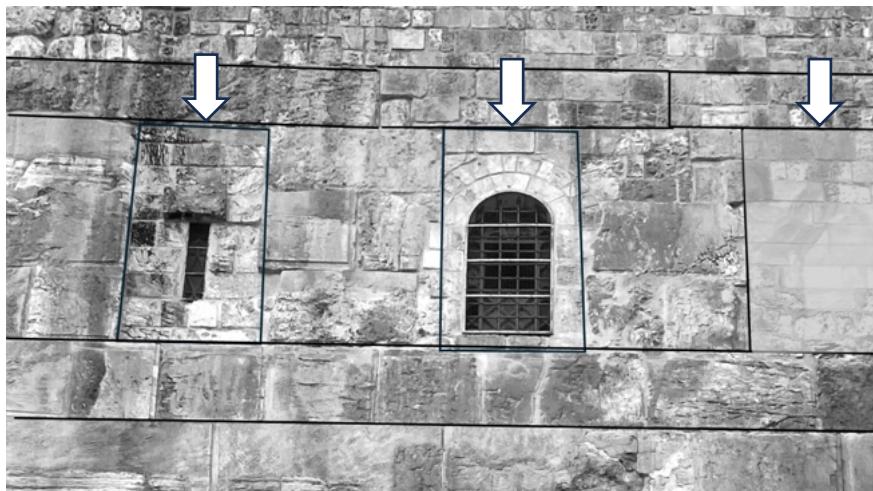


Diagram of the southeast corner of the Temple Mount by Warren and Conder (1884); arrows indicate where rows of columns may match the foundations of Solomon's palace. An ancient stairway arch was also discovered by Conrad Schick in 1891 (gray arrow).

A third point of agreement between this area and the biblical description is that the base elevation of the southern lower level is 2380 ft above sea level, while the top of the wall of the current Temple Mount is about 2428 ft, which is nearly 50 ft and about 30

cubits over the base level. This demonstrates that 1) the height given for Solomon's palace is reasonable, 2) it also means the present height is about the same as the ancient one, and 3) his palace would not have obstructed the view of the Temple.



The remains of three "Herodian" windows at the southeast corner—a match for the windows of Solomon's Palace?

And in the remnants of the southeast corner is a fourth point of corroboration: windows. The remains of three "Herodian" windows can be seen on the east side of the southeast corner, beginning 18 ft north of the corner.¹¹⁷ The windows were 4 ft wide by 10 ft tall and were about 113 ft above the bedrock.¹¹⁸ Once again, these remains affirm the biblical account, which says that Solomon built with narrow windows high up on the wall.

He made narrow windows high up in the temple walls.
– 1 Kings 6:4

¹¹⁷ Mazar, *Walls of the Temple Mount*, 179.

¹¹⁸ Eilat Mazar. *The Walls of the Temple Mount*. Shoham Academic Research (2011): 179.

All in all, it appears the whole area was effectively rebuilt into a giant porch, or stoa, in the outer court where the Gentiles could also congregate. It was rebuilt using remnants of great bordered ashlar stone pillars from Solomon's palace. In the first century, the whole area was probably known as Solomon's porch, or Solomon's stoa. This might seem to conflict with the Beautiful Gate being recognized as the stoa in 1 Kings 7:6, but not necessarily. Both areas were stoas with connections to Solomonic construction; however, once the palace area was rebuilt and became a public space, the stoa for the gate would have been easily identified as just a part of the gate itself. And here's one more amazing find in Solomon's Stables, now al-Marwani Mosque. What is left of an arch, like Robinson's Arch, built with large, bordered ashlar stones, was found in 1891 by Conrad Schick.¹¹⁹ It's inside the mosque on the western wall and was likely part of a stairway that connected the upper and lower levels of Solomon's palace.



The possible remains of a Solomonic staircase, evidenced by the spring of an archway, were found inside Solomon's Stables as part of the west wall (right)¹²⁰ that is similar to Robinson's Arch (left).

¹¹⁹ Conrad Schick. "Letters from Herr Schick, Spring of an Ancient Arch," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly Report*, London (1891): 199.

¹²⁰ Rev. J.E. Hanauer. *Walks in and Around Jerusalem*, Church Missions to Jews (1926): 184.

The monumental staircase may have been too difficult to rebuild in the days of Ezra and Zerubbabel or wasn't needed. The second Huldah gate (*now the Triple Gate*) had a doorway into the lower level of Solomon's Stables, and it also had a tunnel and stairway that led to the upper surface, making the giant staircase somewhat redundant. The remains of the arch in the wall prove that it predates the current vaults, though. The other side of it has been removed, but the structure was probably originally part of the supports for a staircase to move between the upper and lower levels of the palace and temple courtyard, like Robinson's Arch was. The stairway would also explain why a section appears to be cut out of the northwest corner of the underground vaults; it may have been where a flight of stairs descended.

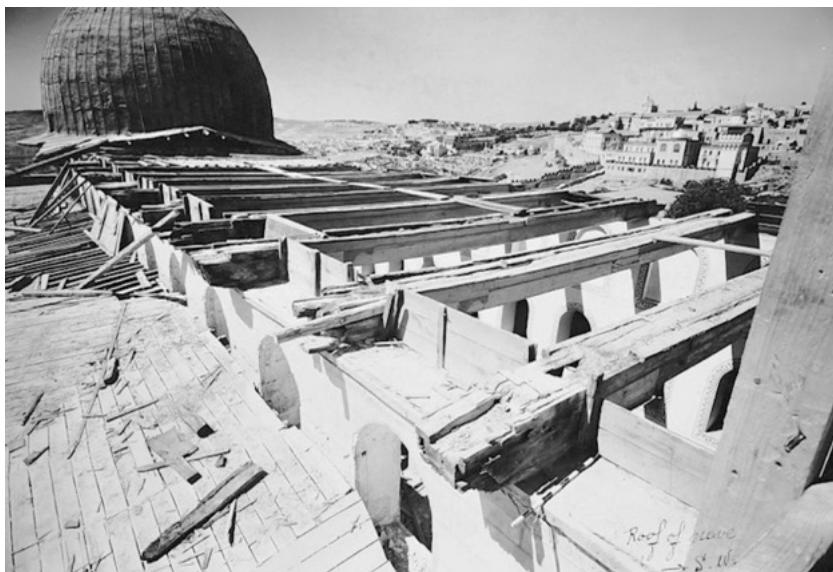
The Hall of Justice and al-Aqsa Mosque

The final building we should look for on the Temple Mount is the Hall of Justice. It is the building that we know the least about, but there is a clue in the account of Josephus that locates it near the middle of the southern end of the Temple Mount. He also said that it was 30 cubits wide, was raised on pillars, and that the whole place was covered in cedar. This would place the building for judging disputes and hearing the cases of the people close to where the al-Aqsa Mosque is found today. The Huldah Gate (or Beautiful Gate) passage, which is also 30 cubits wide and passes right below the mosque, may have somehow been associated with it. And here are a couple more reasons to think so. For one, the passage of the gate also has massive ("massy") pillars that run just below that area, and for another, the two are found listed together in the same passage of Scripture.

⁶ He made a colonnade fifty cubits long and thirty wide. In front of it was a portico, and in front of that were pillars and an overhanging roof.

⁷ He built the throne hall, the Hall of Justice, where he was to judge, and he covered it with cedar from floor to ceiling. – 1 Kings 7:6-7

There was also another house so ordered, that its entire breadth was placed in the middle; it was quadrangular, and its breadth was thirty cubits, having a temple over against it, raised upon massy pillars; in which temple there was a large and very glorious room, wherein the king sat in judgment.¹²¹ – Josephus



Ancient beams in the roof of al-Aqsa Mosque uncovered during restorations performed in the 1930s.

If the area most likely to be associated with the former location of the Hall of Justice is near the al-Aqsa Mosque, has there been any evidence found to support that? Well, excavations on the Temple Mount have been very rare and limited in scope, but in one of the more recent rebuilding efforts of the al-Aqsa Mosque that took place from 1938 to 1942, there were significant excavations and renovations performed that confirmed the presence of earlier

¹²¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8, 5, 2.

structures underneath it.¹²² The question is, which ones? Because this area would have also served as the place where Herod the Great built his stoa, which reportedly ran the entire length of the southern end. It was probably also rebuilt before that by Zerubbabel, and it could have been rebuilt or repaired after Herod the Great by Emperor Hadrian. That's a lot of potential activity to sort out.

Nevertheless, during the reconstruction, some amazing finds were uncovered. For starters, carved wooden panels and structural beams were removed and discarded. They were comprised mainly of cedars and cypress from Lebanon and some Turkish oak. Some of the panels were dated to between the 9th and 2nd centuries BC, which is solidly into the time of the first and second Jewish temples. For instance, a cypress panel (now in the Rockefeller Museum) was dated to between 351 and 312 BC. The oldest sample that was found was from a beam of Turkish oak that was radiocarbon dated to 880 ± 180 BC.¹²³ This is solid evidence that it may have survived in secondary use from the time of Solomon's construction of the temple. Now admittedly, carbon dating is certainly not a precise dating technique, even though many people wish it was, and the results can be highly variable depending on the assumptions utilized for setting the samples' initial conditions. But there is solid circumstantial evidence to suppose that many of these panels could indeed be from Solomon's temple, his palace, or possibly even the Hall of Justice itself. Another important observation about these panels is the style of their carvings. As we'll explore in *Chapter Four*, there are also good reasons to associate the designs that are carved on the panels with Solomon.

¹²² Hamilton, R. W. *The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque: a record of archaeological gleanings from the repairs of 1938-1942*. London: Oxford University Press (1949).

¹²³ Nili Liphshitz and Gideon Biger. "Comparative Dating Methods: Botanical Identification and 14C Dating of Carved Panels and Beams from the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem," *Journal of Archaeological Science* (1997) 24, 1045–1050.

The uniformity and skill of the designs across dozens of these panels of supposedly differing ages suggest that the finest ones are all from the same period and could be much older than currently believed.



Cypress Panel 53.10 at the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem is dated to between the 1st and 4th centuries BC.



More carved cypress panels from the al-Aqsa Mosque at the Rockefeller Museum of supposedly differing and younger ages

Besides the cedar panels and beams, they also excavated beneath the floor of the mosque. The work was documented by R. W. Hamilton and published in his book, *The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque*, in 1949. They uncovered the remains of limestone paving stones and drain channels that predate the Islamic structures and show the level of the floor from before the mosque. Some of the pavers may even date back to the time of Solomon, as this area was made by him to be a solid raised platform. Unlike the southeast corner, where Solomon's palace was located, it doesn't appear that there were any rooms built below the upper level of the Temple Mount at the southwest corner that connected to Robinson's Arch.¹²⁴ That means Solomon's Hall of Justice was probably on this upper level, too.

The most compelling find, though, is the remains of a foundation wall of large, dressed ashlar blocks about 40 inches (2 cubits) wide that

¹²⁴ There are plausible reasons for that. First, because of the great weight of Robinson's Arch that the wall needed to support, and second because the bedrock is about 10 m (33 ft) higher in elevation at the southwest corner versus the southeast.

was covered over in the construction of the mosque. The wall is at least 60 ft long, runs east-west, contained pilasters on the inside walls spaced 22 ft apart, and was located about 62 ft south of the present northern wall of the mosque. Evidence of a border on the face of the ashlars can be seen, and it was reported that the fine chisel marks of the typical (adze) comb pick were observed on them (which is like Solomon's work).¹²⁵ They even found the threshold of an ancient building in the section of the wall they uncovered. If the doorway was centered in the wall, then the building was at least 120 ft (69 cubits) wide, but if it had a second door to the west, yet undiscovered, it may have been shorter than that.

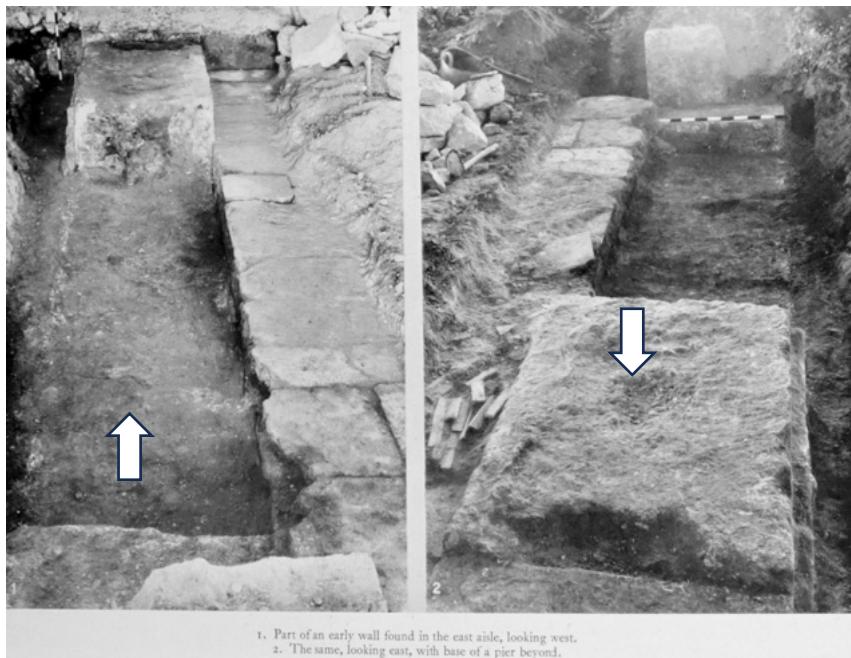
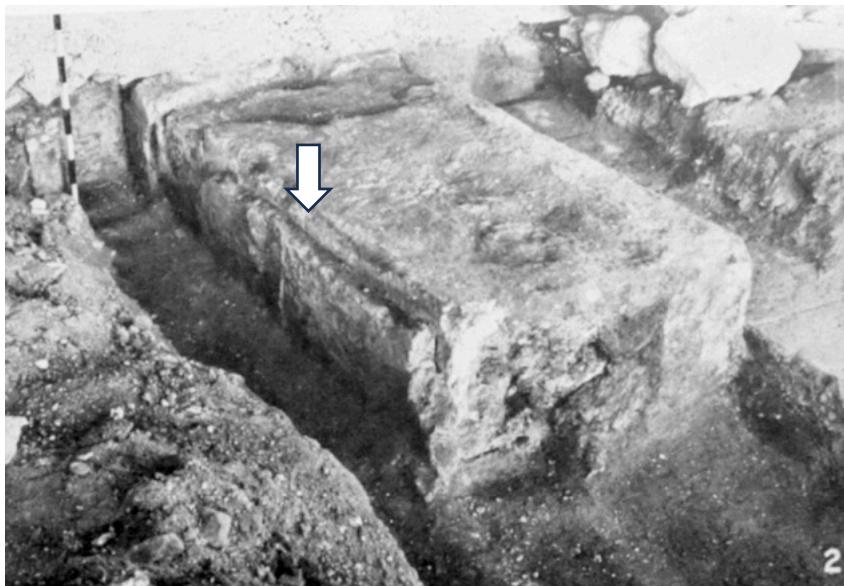
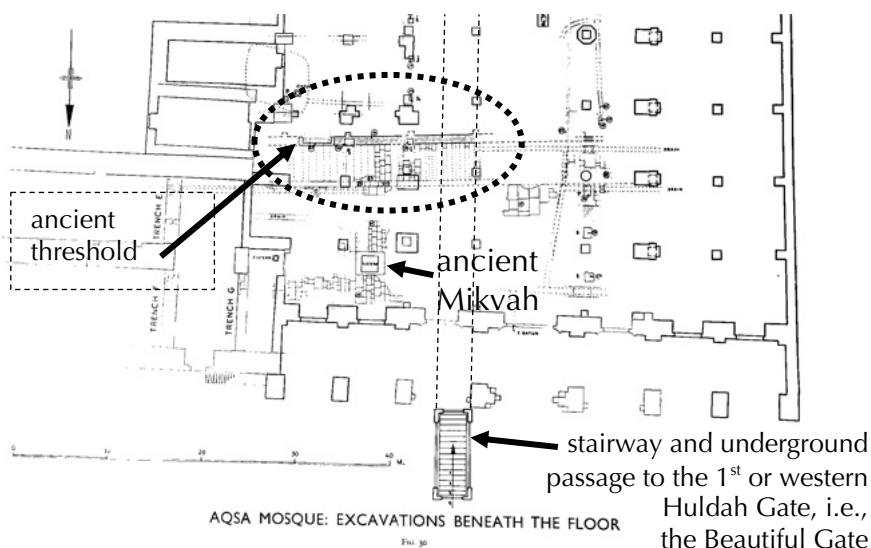


Plate XXXIV from the excavations of R.W. Hamilton that were published in his book, ***The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque*** (1949), white arrows show the large ashlar wall.

¹²⁵ Hamilton, *The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque*, 57-8.



"Herodian-like" bordered ashlar with a fine chiseled border and remnants of plaster on the face, found as part of an ancient wall by Hamilton in excavations at al-Aqsa, Plate XXXVI-2.



Map of R.W. Hamilton's excavations at al-Aqsa. The area of the ancient wall and threshold is circled with a dotted black line.



Ancient threshold and possible entrance to the Hall of Justice, Plate XXXVI-2, from Hamilton's excavations.

The large ashlar walls were also plastered over on the inside (south side) and either covered with revetments (marble tiles) or painted in colors of red, black, and yellow.¹²⁶ Marble floor tiles were also uncovered inside the old building below the present floor of the mosque. And like the wall tiles and red, black, and yellow painted plaster, they are all reminiscent of the style of decoration seen in

¹²⁶ Hamilton, *The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque*, 57-8.

Herod's palaces at Masada, Jericho, the Herodion, the Herodian Quarter, etc. This evidence supports the conclusion that some remains of the Hall of Justice were reused and redecorated as a part of Herod's Royal Stoa.



1. Part of a lower pavement found in the eastern aisles, looking south.
 2. Marble flags partly exposed in trench C, with upturned limestone block.

Plate XXXI from the excavations of R.W. Hamilton at the al-Aqsa Mosque: a white arrow points to the marble floor tiles underneath the present floor.

Furthermore, in analyzing the pottery fragments found during the excavation, the author admitted that below the level of the present floor they only found mostly first century Roman pottery types. What that means is that the present floor wasn't even built by the Umayyads, but instead it was built by Emperor Hadrian when he cleaned up the Temple Mount and built his temple between 130 and 138 AD. *We'll discuss more about Hadrian's work later in this chapter.* The marble floor underneath must therefore be even older and would date to the time of Herod the Great and his Royal Stoa. But unfortunately, Hamilton made a claim that is impossible in an apparent attempt to avoid the conclusion that the marble floor goes back to the time of the temple.

Between the present floor and the marble pavement or its bedding, the filling yielded consistently Roman or early Byzantine sherds. Scarcely any fragments suggested a date later than the fourth century; the majority resembled first-century types and included a few Iron Age sherds...

... Beneath the marble pavement or its bedding, the pottery changed. Here the great bulk of the sherds collected were ribbed Byzantine types, the latest of which included hard-baked, metallic wares, often with a polished surface, characteristic of the latest pre-Islamic and earliest Islamic levels in other areas of Jerusalem. The pottery beneath the floor of Aqsa I was thus precisely what we should expect to find. The same Byzantine-to-early Arab types prevailed in the filling, cut by our trench A, which immediately covered the back of the vaults leading to the Double Gate (Figs. 31, 32). Both the pottery and the soil which contained it may be attributed to rubbish dumps tipped on the derelict temple area during Christian times.¹²⁷ – R.W. Hamilton

What Hamilton claimed was that the material underneath the marble floor was more recent (newer) than the material on top of it, which is basically impossible. To support his claim, he referenced only a single point of excavation in Trench A, which happened to be over the vaults of the Double Gate entrance. Why does that matter? Because we know that this area was previously excavated to extend the Double Gate entrance to come out in front of the mosque, probably somewhere between 780 and 1065 AD.¹²⁸ Thus, if that area was previously dug up in the Islamic era, then of course an excavation at that location would show pottery

¹²⁷ Hamilton, *Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque*, 66.

¹²⁸ The first al-Aqsa mosque was a wooden structure and was probably smaller than the current one. Thus, the first construction of the mosque that could have also extended the tunnel was ordered by the Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdi in 780 AD. But if it wasn't done at that time, it was certainly completed under the Fatimid Caliphs by 1065 AD.

dated to the Islamic era, regardless of its depth. Hamilton even admitted that only fragments of the marble floor were found in the trench, demonstrating that the area had been previously disturbed.¹²⁹ He recognized that his conclusions were a problem. But he attempted to explain it away by theorizing that the Islamic builders must have used some old fill dirt. But that doesn't explain how they would have avoided contaminating it with anything more modern, as they built the floor of the mosque on top of the marble floor. It is not a genuinely reasonable explanation, and the marble remnants they found, supported by the account of Josephus describing the stoa, are enough to disregard Hamilton's conclusions. Amazingly, even with all he found, he denied that any of it was from the Jewish era, saying, "Amongst these early remains there is a notable absence of all traces of monumental building of the Jewish period," even though his excavations also revealed steps leading down into a small tank or bath not far from the ancient wall that was an obvious mikvah.¹³⁰ He preferred saying it was simply a bath or baptismal from the post-Jewish era. On the contrary, as it was well below the level of the marble floor, it may even date back to the time of the First Temple.

So, what has been found under the al-Aqsa Mosque from the time of Solomon? Most likely, 1) the wall and threshold of the Hall of Justice, 2) the carved cedar panels that survived its destruction (or from the Forest of Lebanon or both), 3) further evidence for the existence of the Royal Stoa of Herod the Great, which looks to have been built over the remains of the Hall of Justice, and 4) an ancient mikvah. And here's a final point to generally support the

¹²⁹ Hamilton, *Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque*, 54-5. Only fragments of the marble flooring were found in trench A. No marble floor tiles were found in trench B, which was dug along the line of the extended vaults. One would need to look under an intact and undisturbed portion of the marble floor to make any definitive conclusions, but those were not the conditions of the trench that Hamilton based his conclusions on.

¹³⁰ Hamilton, *The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque*, 65.

fact that there were substantial decorated buildings at the southern end of the Temple Mount, i.e., the Hall of Justice and the Forest of Lebanon. Most of the carved ashlar decorative elements that have been found with the typical “Herodian” (Solomonic) motifs were found at the southern wall of the Temple Mount in the Ophel, while very few were found in the Western Wall excavations.¹³¹ Archeologists have generally concluded that they must have come from Herod’s royal portico, but the broken pieces are from large, finely carved ashlars, not carved into plaster, so they should better be attributed to Solomon and his work on the southern end of the enclosure.

Establishing the Dimensions of the Temple Area

The case for Solomon just keeps getting stronger, but still mysteries remain. For instance, the area of the temple is generally understood from the Mishnah to have been a 500-cubit square (863 ft).¹³² But the Temple Mount is a rectangle, so there has been no end of debate about the proper location of the temple square within it. The Golden Gate is 440 ft from the northern boundary on the inside, which is about 250 cubits. That matches up with a 500-cubit square at the far north end of the Temple Mount and the gate at its middle. Plus, the Mishnah says that the temple was not in the middle of the Temple Mount (*like the Dome of the Rock is*); rather, it was closest to the northwest corner.¹³³ This agrees well with the area centered at the Dome of the Spirits and in line with the Golden Gate.¹³⁴ However, while the temple area is generally described as a 500-cubit square, the lengths for the temple courts and surrounding soreg were less than that. And this is where the mystery begins. The soreg was really the area where Gentiles were

¹³¹ Orit Peleg-Barkat. *Herodian Architectural Decoration and King Herod’s Royal Portico*, Qedem 57, Hebrew University (2017): 31.

¹³² Mishnah Torah, *The Chosen Temple*, 5.1.

¹³³ Mishnah Middot, 2.1 and The Chosen Temple, 5.6.

¹³⁴ For a defense of this location see: Widener, *The Temple Revealed* (2020).

forbidden to enter, not the 500-cubit square. The Mishnah records the dimensions for the temple courts within the soreg as being 135 cubits wide by 322 cubits long from the back of the Temple Courtyard to the Court of Women.¹³⁵ It also says that there was an area between the soreg wall that surrounded the courtyards called the Hel or Chayil that was a 10-cubit border all around, which also had an elevated rampart.¹³⁶ Altogether, the soreg was not a 500-cubit square but was 342 cubits long by 155 cubits wide. This is confirmed by a statement in the Mishnah that there was a courtyard (partition) around the temple that resembled the Tent of Meeting, which was also a similarly shaped rectangle.¹³⁷

The Mishnah also says that the Entrance Hall and the rest of the temple were all on one level, 6 cubits higher than their surroundings, and that it was 135 cubits wide from north to south and 111 cubits deep from east to west.¹³⁸ That would mean there was a platform that was level with the threshing floor when Solomon built his Temple over it that was 6 cubits (10 ft) higher than its surroundings and measured 233 ft by 191 ft. It was much smaller than the giant platform where the Dome of the Rock presently sits. The level of today's platform is exactly 6 cubits (10 ft) above the remnants of some ancient paving stones west of a large piece of flat bedrock, covered by the Dome of the Spirits, which is what remains of Araunah's threshing floor.¹³⁹ Thus, the elevations on the west side of the temple haven't really changed.

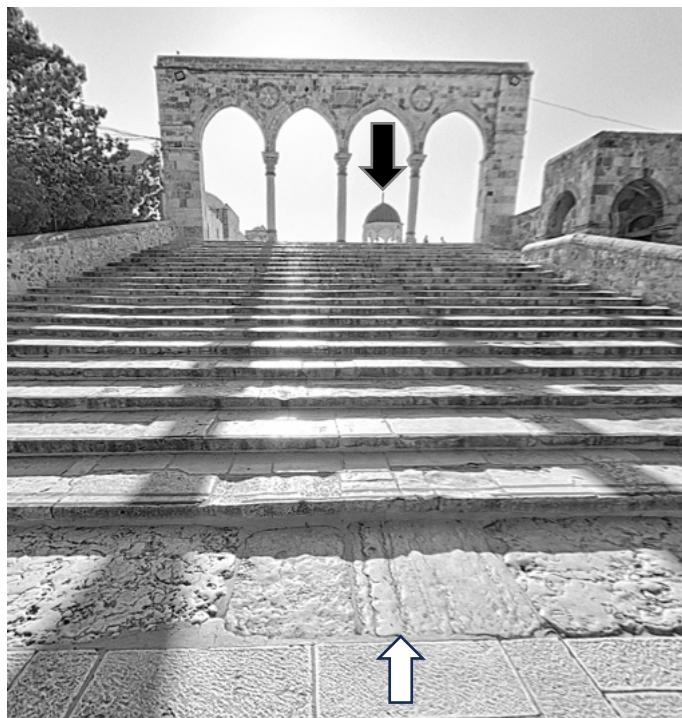
¹³⁵ The length of the Temple area was 187 cubits long and the Court of Women was 135 cubits long, added together it is 322 cubits (Mishnah Middot 2.5 and 5.1).

¹³⁶ Mishnah Middot, 2.3 and The Chosen Temple, 5.3.

¹³⁷ Mishnah Torah, The Chosen Temple, 1.5.

¹³⁸ Mishnah Torah, The Chosen Temple, 6.4 and Middot 5.1.

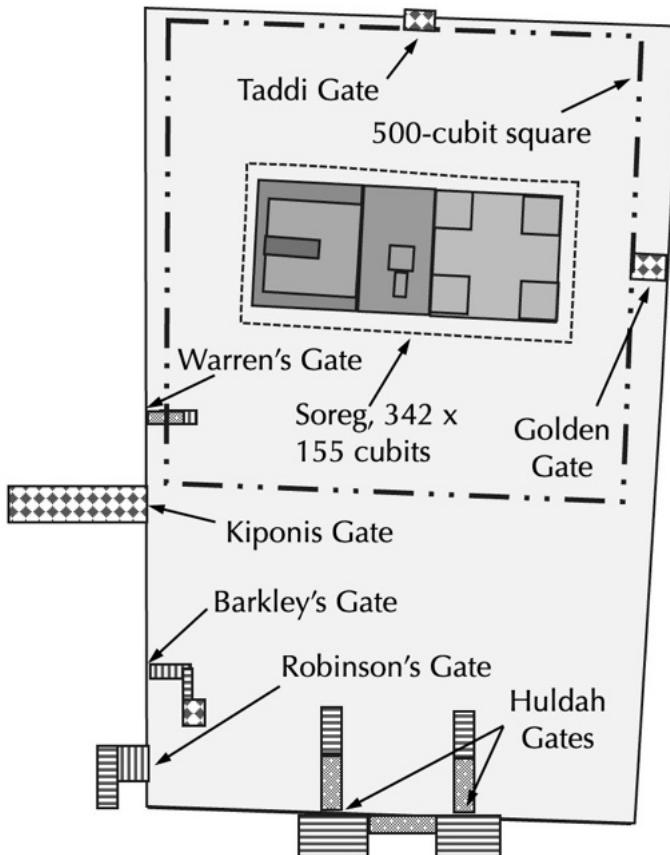
¹³⁹ The case for the threshing floor was made in my first book, *The Temple Revealed* (2020), but one of the first people to suggest that the Dome of the Spirits was over the threshing floor of the Temple was Rev. J.E. Hanauer, *Walks in and Around Jerusalem* (1926): 260. The 10 ft elevation is found from Warren, *Survey of Western Palestine*, 277. The elevation of the rock for No. 3, Kubbet el Arwah (Dome of the Spirits), is 2435 ft, and a piece of exposed bedrock in the NW corner (No. 15), is on the same level as the paving stones at 2425 ft.



Remnants of ancient limestone pavers (white arrow) 6 cubits below the floor level of the Dome of the Spirits (black arrow).

We also read in the Mishnah that there were five main gates leading into the Temple Mount, along with three additional western gates. There was the Taddi gate on the north that was rarely used (most likely the current location of the Gate of Darkness), the Golden Gate on the east, two Huldah gates on the south, and the Kiponus gate on the west.¹⁴⁰ Josephus also says there were a total of four gates on the west. Using his description, the main one, the Kiponus Gate, led over the bridge to Mount Zion. The two to the suburbs of the city should be identified as Barklay's Gate and Warren's Gate. And the last one was the gate at Robinson's Arch that descended on a great staircase to the Pilgrim's Road, which went down to the City of David.

¹⁴⁰ Mishnah Middot, 1.3.



The two areas of the temple (the 500-cubit square and the soreg area for Jews only) and the main gates of the Temple Mount.

Now in the western quarters of the enclosure of the temple there were four gates; the first led to the king's palace and went to a passage over the intermediate valley; two more led to the suburbs of the city; and the last led to the other city, where the road descended down into the valley by a great number of steps.¹⁴¹ – Josephus

¹⁴¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15,11,5.

Who Built the Dome of the Rock Platform?

Another mystery is, who built the current platform of the Dome of the Rock? It presents itself as somewhat of an enigma to archaeologists and historians. It had to have been built sometime after the destruction of 70 AD and before the construction of the Dome of the Rock. The first people to occupy the Temple Mount after its destruction were the Tenth Legion. The remains of clay tiles with the insignia of the legion have been found there, meaning they built small houses and shelters there, but no major reconstruction of the area would have taken place. Then, within 60 years, it was renamed Aelia Capitolina when the Roman Emperor Hadrian (c. 130-138 AD) began to rebuild Jerusalem. But Hadrian wanted to rebuild it as a pagan city, which ultimately led to the Bar Kokhba Revolt (c. 132-135 AD). So, in total, Hadrian had only about five years to work on the city himself. But as reported in the *Chronicon Paschale* (c. 628 AD), Hadrian built two public baths, a *trikameron*, a colonnade, a *quadra* (which in Latin means “something square,” like a platform), and a temple, and it is believed that he rebuilt the Damascus Gate, which we’ll discuss later.¹⁴² According to Dio Cassius and the *Historia Augusta*, Hadrian built a temple to himself (and/or Jupiter) in the area of the destroyed Jewish temple around 131 to 132 AD, which was probably the offense that led to the Bar Kokhba revolt. But before Hadrian could build his temple, he would have needed to prepare a foundation or platform for it.

At Jerusalem Hadrian founded a city in place of the one which had been razed to the ground, naming it Aelia Capitolina, and on the site of the temple of the god he raised a new temple to Jupiter. This brought on a war of no slight importance nor of brief duration, for the Jews deemed it intolerable that foreign

¹⁴² Peters, *Jerusalem*, 129.

races should be settled in their city and foreign religious rites planted there.¹⁴³

Finally, after his return to Rome from Africa, he immediately set out for the East, journeying by way of Athens. Here he dedicated the public works which he had begun in the city of the Athenians, such as the temple to Olympian Jupiter and an altar to himself; and in the same way, while traveling through Asia, he consecrated the temples called by his name.* [**note: They were, in fact, temples dedicated to the cult of the emperors, including Hadrian himself, who was worshipped in the cities of Asia Minor as well as in the Olympieion at Athens]*...¹⁴⁴

For Hadrian ordered a temple without an image to be built in every city, and because these temples, built by him with this intention, so they say, are dedicated to no particular deity, they are called today merely Hadrian's temples.¹⁴⁵
– Dio Cassius

The next account of the condition of the Temple Mount was provided by the Bordeaux Pilgrim in 333 AD. His arrival was not long after Constantine converted to Christianity and began to develop and commemorate the holy sites in Israel. It is the earliest report of the condition of Jerusalem after the era of paganization. His testimony confirms that Hadrian built a temple on the Temple Mount and that he placed statues of himself there, meaning it may have been more of a temple for himself than Jupiter.

And in the building itself (in *Æde*), where stood the temple which Solomon built... [Nearby] There are two statues of Hadrian. – The Bordeaux Pilgrim

¹⁴³ Earnest Cary. *Dio's Roman History*, VIII. G.P. Putnam's Sons (1925): 447 (69.12).

¹⁴⁴ Historia Augusta, *The Life of Hadrian Part 1*, Loeb Classical Library (1921).

¹⁴⁵ Historia Augusta, *The Life of Severus Alexander Part 2*, Loeb Classical Library (1924).

The remains of a Temple of Jupiter are still in Rome today, located on the *Area Capitolina*, but only part of it is still visible. It was built in 82 AD by Emperor Domitian. The name of that temple, though, is the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, or in Latin, *Aedes Iovis Optimus Maximi Capitolini*. Thus, when the pilgrim used the words “in *Æde*,” he was either referring to the Temple Mount as the temple in general, or he may have been looking at the temple Hadrian built, which may have still been standing in 333 AD, especially since the two statues of Hadrian were still there.

Having confirmed Hadrian built a temple there, we can look to the Temple of Venus and Roma in Rome that was designed by him. It is thought to have been the largest temple in ancient Rome. It is on the Velian Hill near the Colosseum. Construction began in 135 AD, just a few years after he began the construction of his temple in Jerusalem. It also sits on a large platform, 476 ft x 330 ft, and is comparable in many ways to the one under the Dome of the Rock. It is safe to assume that Hadrian could not have built a temple on top of the destruction debris of the Temple Mount without first preparing a suitable foundation, i.e., a platform.



The Temple of Venus and Roma, built by Hadrian around 135 AD.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ “Temple of Venus and Roma” (2015), photo by Jacopo Werther, cc-by-sa-2.0.

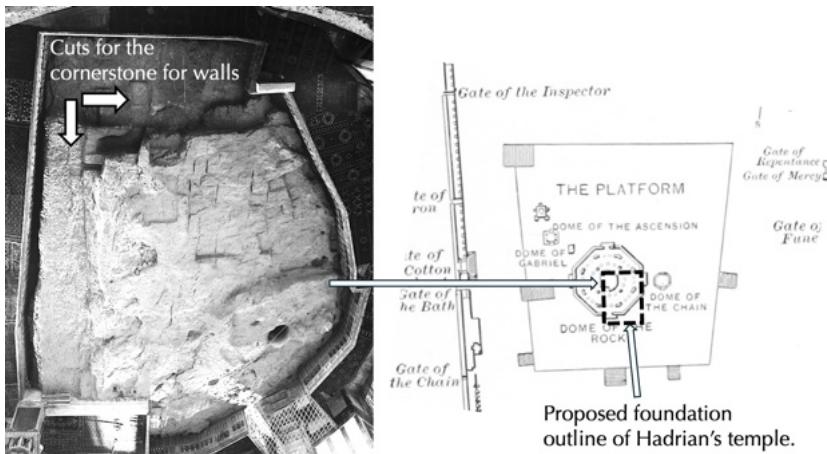
The platform of the Dome of the Rock is nearly square, and approximately 524 ft on each side. Except for one side that is only 393 ft long, making the eastern side of the platform perpendicular to true east and forming a trapezium rather than a square. Nevertheless, the dimensions are comparable to the platform of the temple of Venus and Roma built by Hadrian. The departure from a square platform is mysterious, regardless of who built it, but it has been reported that Hadrian used a technique called forced perspective in his projects, which includes deviations from perfectly square forms for the purpose of creating a pleasing optical illusion.¹⁴⁷ It may have also been modified to take advantage of some existing foundations or to avoid an obstacle presented by the bedrock. And while the general design for most temple complexes is square or rectangular, trapezoidal areas have been found.¹⁴⁸ The only other candidate for building the platform of the Dome of the Rock besides Hadrian would be the Umayyad caliphs, as it is unlikely to have been built by either Constantine or Justinian. The historian Eutychius (c. 876 AD) recorded that no churches were built on the Temple Mount and gives the account of Sophronius, the Jerusalem Patriarch who handed over Jerusalem to Umar ibn al-Khattab in 638 AD, explaining why not.

The patriarch (Sophronius) said to him: "I will give to the Commander of the Faithful a place to build a sanctuary where the kings of Rum (the Byzantines) were unable to build. It is the rock where God spoke to Jacob and which Jacob called the Gate of Heaven and the Israelites the Holy of Holies. It is the center of the world and was a Temple for the Israelites, who held it in great veneration and wherever they were they turned their faces towards it during prayer. But on this condition, that you promise in a written document that no

¹⁴⁷ Bennett, Paul. "Home Away From Rome." *Smithsonian Magazine*, 6/2010, www.smithsonianmag.com/history/home-away-from-rome-109868/#PZ7g1kftkLGgIm4R.99

¹⁴⁸ For instance, the Court of Venus and the Muses at the Baalbek, Lebanon is in the shape of a trapezoid.

other sanctuary will be built inside of Jerusalem." ... The place of the rock and the area around it were deserted ruins and they [*the Romans*] poured dirt over the rock so that great was the filth above it. The Byzantines, however, neglected it and did not hold it in veneration, nor did they build a church over it because Christ our Lord said in his Holy Gospel, "Not a stone will be left upon a stone which will not be ruined and devastated." For this reason, the Christians left it as a ruin and did not build a church over it.¹⁴⁹ – Eutychius



Proposed layout of Hadrian's temple using the al-Sakhra stone in the Dome of the Rock as a cornerstone.

Additionally, the accounts of building the Dome of the Rock, which was completed in 692 AD,¹⁵⁰ only mention clearing off the area and constructing a building around the al-Sakhra stone, not building the giant platform it rests on today; and the platform is not centered around the rock like the building is, making it even more unlikely they were built together.¹⁵¹ Plus, there are cuts in the al-Sakhra stone that are sure to have been used to support the

¹⁴⁹ Peters, *Jerusalem*, 189-90.

¹⁵⁰ Peters, *Jerusalem*, 197.

¹⁵¹ Widener, *The Temple Revealed*, 105-34.

corner of a wall for a large stone structure, like Hadrian's temple. Those cuts were not made by the Muslims because they didn't build on top of it, and they aren't the result of random quarrying for keepsakes by Crusaders. They weren't made for the Jewish temple either, because it was built over a threshing floor, which had to be a flat surface so that a threshing sledge could be dragged over it to separate the heads of wheat from the stalks and the chaff. The al-Sakhra stone was never a flat threshing floor (*but the bedrock 200 ft northwest of it under the Dome of the Spirits was*). The most logical candidate for making both those cuts in the stone is Emperor Hadrian when he built a platform around it and used it as the cornerstone for his temple in Aelia Capitolina (*Jerusalem*).

Then What Did Herod Build?

Now that it has been established that Solomon built the great base of the Temple Mount, it raises another important question. What did Herod the Great build then? And I think the answer is simple. Herod did what Josephus said. He rebuilt and increased the size of the temple building, added huge cloisters (stoa) at the southern end, built up the fortress Antonia, and completed a covered walkway that encircled the whole Temple Mount. Thus, Herod's finished project could have looked much like the model of Herod's Temple Mount at the Israel Museum. The difference is that he just built everything on top of the existing foundations, which included Solomon's giant ashlar stones. That would still be an appropriate amount of work for 11,000 men to accomplish in eight years. Once it is understood that Herod just built directly on top of the existing Temple Mount, then it is much easier to understand Josephus's descriptions.

And now Herod, in the eighteenth year of his reign, and after the acts already mentioned, undertook a very great work, that is, to build of himself the temple of God, and make it larger in compass, and to raise it to a most magnificent altitude, as

esteeming it to be the most glorious of all his actions, as it really was, to bring it to perfection; and that this would be sufficient for an everlasting memorial of him.¹⁵²

So Herod took away the old foundations, and laid others, and erected the temple upon them, being in length a hundred cubits, and in height twenty additional cubits... Now the temple was built of stones that were white and strong and each of their lengths was twenty-five cubits, their height was eight, and their breadth was about twelve.¹⁵³ – Josephus



The model shown at the Israel Museum for Herod's temple

One of the difficulties posed by Josephus's description is that he says that the stones of the temple Herod built were 25 x 8 x 12 cubits, which gives credence to his having built with the large stones on the scale of what we see in the Temple Mount. But let's think about this for a minute. Stones that large would weigh over 1000 tons each!¹⁵⁴ That's at least twice the size of the largest stone in the Temple Mount, the Great Western Stone. Thus, doing a little math, I believe we can safely disregard those measurements. Josephus is either mistaken, because he didn't witness the construction, or it means Herod used his carved plaster technique

¹⁵² Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15,11,1.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 15,11,3.

¹⁵⁴ Limestone is about 3 tons per 35.3 ft³. The stones as reported by Josephus were about 43 ft x 14 ft x 20 ft = 12,642 ft³, meaning each stone would weigh about 1000 tons.

on the temple, too. In that case, he could have carved the plaster to make it look like the temple was built with giant stones. In support of that notion, there are statements in the Mishnah that the temple was whitewashed and stucco (concrete) was reapplied every year. After seeing how Herod decorated the Herodium, Masada, and Caesarea, I think we can probably assume that Herod used plaster to help adorn the temple he built for the Jews as well.

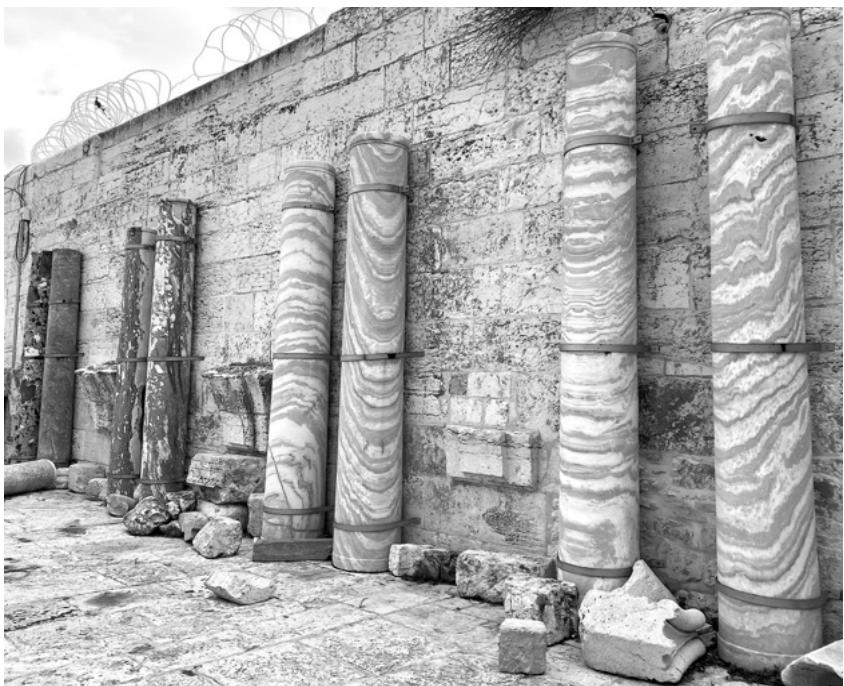
And the Sanctuary was whitewashed once a year, at Pesach.
– Mishnah, *Middot* 3.4

Once a year, from Passover to Passover, they coated the Temple building with cement. – Mishnah, *The Chosen Temple*, 4.13

Herod's Royal Stoa

Herod built the Royal Stoa, also described as cloisters or a covered walkway. It had four rows of 162 pillars, making three parallel and covered rows with the central area 45 ft wide and 50 ft high and the sides 25 ft high and 30 ft wide, all a *stadium* in length, about 625 ft. The total width of the stoa was 105 ft. It's impossible to know the exact layout of the 162 columns, but it seems safe to assume that most of them would have been smaller diameter columns that formed the outer perimeter of the stoa. Many such columns are on display on the Temple Mount or are in use in the Dome of the Rock and in the arches made for the entrances to the platform it sits on. Only a portion of them would have been the larger columns for the taller section at the center of the colonnade, which Josephus reported were 27 ft tall and three men could join hands around. Those numbers are more likely confused with Solomon's columns, but there are some examples of larger marble columns that Josephus could have been thinking of seen in the al-Aqsa Mosque.

3—FINDING THE STONES OF SOLOMON



The remnants of smaller-diameter marble columns are seen on display on the Temple Mount.



Large fine marble columns are seen in the al-Aqsa Mosque.

Some of the numbers remembered by Josephus may have been confused or exaggerated. He is certainly exuberant enough in his descriptions to be prone to inflating the account, but nevertheless, the base description is expected to be accurate. Josephus also recorded that Herod used the Corinthian style for his columns, which is something to keep in mind.

As also it had the royal cloisters, with three walks, which reached in length from the east valley unto that on the west, for it was impossible it should reach any farther: and this cloister deserves to be mentioned better than any other under the sun... This cloister had pillars that stood in four rows one over against the other all along, for the fourth row was interwoven into the wall, which [also was built of stone]; and the thickness of each pillar was such, that three men might, with their arms extended, fathom it round, and join their hands again, while its length was twenty-seven feet, with a double spiral at its basis; and the number of all the pillars [in that court] was a hundred and sixty-two. Their capitals were made with sculptures after the Corinthian order, and caused an amazement [to the spectators], by reason of the grandeur of the whole. These four rows of pillars included three intervals for walking in the middle of this cloister; two of which walks were made parallel to each other, and were contrived after the same manner; the breadth of each of them was thirty feet, the length was a furlong, and the height fifty feet; but the breadth of the middle part of the cloister was one and a half of the other, and the height was double, for it was much higher than those on each side; but the roofs were adorned with deep sculptures in wood, representing many sorts of figures. The middle was much higher than the rest, and the wall of the front was adorned with beams, resting upon pillars, that were interwoven into it, and that front was all of polished stone, insomuch that its fineness, to such as had not seen it, was incredible, and to such as had seen it, was greatly amazing.¹⁵⁵ – Josephus

¹⁵⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15,11,5.

Cloisters Around the Outer Court of the Temple

In addition to the grandiose Royal Stoa at the southern end of the Temple Mount, Josephus said that Herod also built smaller cloisters around the whole temple. His statement is further reinforced by additional references that he made to the cloisters that were built on the western, eastern, and northern sides of the outer enclosure.

He also **encompassed the entire temple with very large cloisters**, contriving them to be in a due proportion thereto; and he laid out larger sums of money upon them than had been done before him, till it seemed that no one else had so greatly adorned the temple as he had done.¹⁵⁶

... one was at the western cloister of the outer court of the temple; the other against its northern cloister.¹⁵⁷

But the next day the Romans **burnt down the northern cloister entirely, as far as the east cloister**, whose common angle joined to the valley that was called Cedron, and was built over it; on which account the depth was frightful. And this was the state of the temple at that time.¹⁵⁸

They therefore erected a wall upon the uppermost building which belonged to the inner court of the temple towards the west, which wall when it was built, did not only intercept the prospect of the dining room in the palace, but also of **the western cloisters** that belonged to the outer court of the temple also, where it was that the Romans kept guards for the temple at the festivals.¹⁵⁹ – Josephus

¹⁵⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15,11,3.

¹⁵⁷ Josephus, *Wars*, 6,2,7.

¹⁵⁸ Josephus, *Wars*, 6,3,2.

¹⁵⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20,8,11.

Hence, Herod built cloisters around the perimeter of the Temple Mount. However, unlike the model at the Israel Museum, they would not have been taller than the level of the Golden Gate on the eastern side, which was lower than the foundation of the Temple. The level of the wall on the east side would not have been raised above the height of the gate prior to 70 AD. It would have remained low during the days of temple service out of necessity for the ceremony of the Red Heifer, which required a line-of-sight view from the Temple to the Mount of Olives.

All the walls that were there [in the Temple] were high except the eastern wall, for the priest who burned the red heifer would stand on the top of the Mount of Olives and direct his gaze carefully to see the opening of the Sanctuary at the time of the sprinkling of the blood. – Mishnah, *Middot* 2.4

This means that the cloisters built on the east side of the Temple Mount couldn't have been taller than the wall either. And as mentioned previously in this chapter, the eastern wall today is about 10 ft taller on the northern end of the enclosure than it was in the days of the Temple. The height was supposed to be the same as the eastern gate—two cubits below the level of the floor of the Temple.¹⁶⁰ The reason all that matters is because there is yet another mystery about what the height and layout of the Temple Mount on the eastern side was in the days of Solomon. Along with the wall height, there are two prominent places that can help us answer that question: the Golden Gate and Solomon's Stables. The Golden Gate, as one sees it today, was excavated, walled around, and buttressed with two supports on the west entrance between 1891 and 1892 by the Ottomans.¹⁶¹ At some point long before

¹⁶⁰ That would give the eastern wall an elevation of about 741 m (2427 ft) above sea level.

¹⁶¹ “Letters from Herr Schick, Excavations at the Golden Gate,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly Report*, London (1891): 201; “Letters from Baurath C. Schick,” *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Report*, London (1892): 189.

that, the Golden Gate was partially buried on the inside of the wall when the floor of the enclosure on the east side was filled in with dirt and raised about 11 ft.¹⁶² We'll get to the question of who buried the gate later, but first, the entrance level of the gate that is now uncovered also reveals the original floor level of the Temple Mount at this eastern entrance in the time of Solomon. According to the Mishnah and associated notes, one entered the Golden Gate on one level for about 68 cubits and then ascended to the Court of Women by 12 steps, rising 6 cubits in height, or about 10.3 ft.¹⁶³ Thus the present floor level west of the Golden Gate is only about half a foot higher than it was in the days of the First Temple, when it led into the Court of the Women.

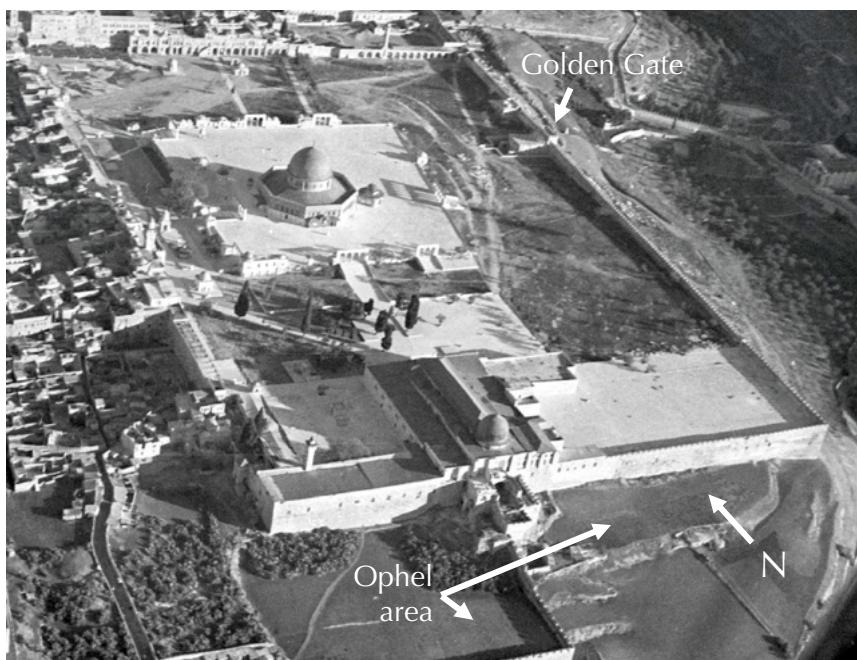


Excavated Golden Gate with retaining walls to protect it (white arrow), entrance stairs (black arrow), and arches (gray arrow) that were added to support the walls of the gate in 1892.

¹⁶² The level of the threshold of the Golden Gate is 2396 ft above sea level and the level of the platform just west of and surrounding the inside of the gate is at 2408 ft, from *The Survey of Western Palestine* by Warren and Conder, adding a 1 foot rise for slope, it was raised 11 ft.

¹⁶³ Mishneh Torah, The Chosen Temple 6.1, Trans. by Eliyahu Touger, Moznaim Pub., see Note 2. https://www.sefaria.org/Mishneh_Torah%2C_The_Chosen_Temple.6.1

And here's another intriguing point: the steps that today lead up from the Golden Gate into the plaza (*see the black arrow in the photo*) are approximately 110 ft from the outer wall, or just short of the 68-cubit (117 ft) measurement taken in the days of the Temple. The excavation work was performed by the Ottomans in 1891, so there was no effort made to determine where the former steps of the Jewish ascent into the temple were, but they are likely still there, a bit deeper into the hill and underneath the present steps.



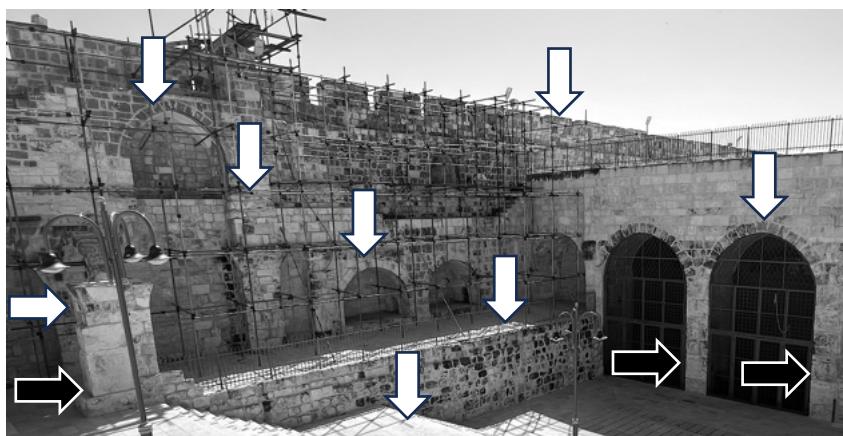
Aerial view of the Temple Mount in 1934 by Walter Mittelholzer

The area just in front of the Golden Gate was an area that the Gentiles could also be in. It was part of a walkway that would have gone from north to south along the eastern side of the Temple Mount, and it was where Herod later built his eastern cloister. The colonnade would have been at the same floor level as the entrance to the Golden Gate and would have continued to the north and south on a modest slope towards the south.

There is a mystery, though, when we look at the present level of the sanctuary and the southeast corner. As seen in an aerial view of the Temple Mount from 1934, the southeast corner was filled in to be all on one level, which would not have been the original state in Solomon's time. Fill dirt was probably also brought in at the same time to level off the Ophel area to create the same uniform look. So, who brought in all that fill dirt and leveled the platform? Well, we'd have a lot harder time answering that question if, starting in 1999, the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement, with the approval of the Jordanian Waqf, hadn't illegally excavated the area of the fill dirt near the southeast corner so that they could turn Solomon's Stables into the al-Marwani Mosque. They removed about 9000 tons of fill dirt and dumped it in the Kidron Valley, which was subsequently collected by the Temple Mount Sifting Project so it could be examined for archaeological remains.¹⁶⁴ What they found is amazing, but for this discussion, the dates for the items they found ranged from the tenth century BC to the 1900s but were predominantly items before the 1500s. That makes Sultan Suleiman (c. 1537-1541) the most likely candidate for having brought in all that fill dirt that was taken back out again 450 years later. But that aerial photo shows more or less what the Temple Mount looked like for over four centuries after Suleiman rebuilt Jerusalem. The main exception would be the excavations around the Golden Gate in 1891 and whatever general improvements were made before 1934 because of the increased attention the Temple Mount began receiving when the Palestine Exploration Fund first began conducting surveys and investigations in 1867.

¹⁶⁴ Amanda Borschel-Dan. "Temple Mount Sifting Project reboots, aims to salvage ancient temple artifacts," *Times of Israel*, 6-7-19, //www.timesofisrael.com/temple-mount-sifting-project-reboots-to-seek-more-direct-evidence-of-1st-temple/

Here's something ironic about the excavations, though. A lot of people in Israel were upset that so much dirt was removed without archaeological supervision because the Muslim workers just used excavators and dump trucks to dig it out. But it turns out it was all fill dirt anyway. There would have been no archaeological layers to explore and interpret. What the fill dirt contained and what they uncovered are what's important. [*And there's still a lot more that could be removed to get things back to their original levels.*] The good thing is that a part of the southeast corner can now be seen, which was probably open and in regular use until 1541. And it looks like it was used a lot, as there are at least half a dozen different building eras, from Solomon (possibly in secondary use) to Suleiman, that are visible in the present building remnants that were recently uncovered. And with the modern modifications they've made, there is now 3000 years of building history here.



Many different eras of building are present in the same corner. From Solomon (black arrows) to Zerubbabel and everyone else up to the present day (white arrows).

The floor level inside the mosque is 2380 ft above sea level. The floor of the Golden Gate is 2396 ft above sea level, so there was a total descent of 16 ft over the approximately 750 ft between the entrance to Solomon's Stables and the south side of the Golden Gate,

which would be a modest slope of a quarter inch per foot. Hence, there was probably a single gently sloped walkway and cloister between the two points. The eastern cloisters were most likely built down at floor level all the way to the entrance to Solomon's Stables. The floor of the bottom landing that was recently added is another 4-5 feet above the ancient floor level and then descends by steps to the now carpeted floor inside the mosque. Having put all these pieces together, we can answer one more mystery now. There was a report by Josephus that the eastern cloisters needed repair in the days of Herod Agrippa (c. 41-44 AD), and one might wonder which cloisters he was referring to. Josephus was most likely talking about the cloisters that ran along the eastern wall, not the arches of Solomon's Stables in the southeast corner. The vaults of the southeast corner also supported the floor above them that the Royal Stoa was built upon. That could not have been ignored if they needed repair. On the other hand, the covered walkway that ran along the eastern wall for about 1,375 feet was not essential. Therefore, it was a request that could be easily denied.

So they persuaded him to rebuild **the eastern cloisters**. These cloisters belonged to the outer court, and were situated in a deep valley, and had walls that reached four hundred cubits [in length], and were built of square and very white stones, the length of each of which stones was twenty cubits, and their height six cubits. This was the work of king Solomon, who first of all built the entire temple. But king Agrippa, who had the care of the temple committed to him by Claudius Caesar, considering that it is easy to demolish any building, but hard to build it up again, and that it was particularly hard to do it to these cloisters, which would require a considerable time, and great sums of money, he denied the petitioners their request about that matter.¹⁶⁵ – Josephus

¹⁶⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20,9,7.

And just a quick comment about the western cloisters that are visible on the Temple Mount today. They were rebuilt between 1329 and 1335 under the Mamluks, according to Mujir al-Din.¹⁶⁶ Nonetheless, they serve as an example of what Herod's cloisters could have looked like, since they run along the entire western side of the Temple Mount. *And who knows? They may have even been rebuilt using some of the debris of the original cloisters.*

How did Herod “double” the area of the Temple?

There are so many different questions to address regarding Herod's work and what Josephus wrote about him that it can be difficult to address them all and keep everything straight in the process. But one that can't be missed is, how could Josephus say that Herod doubled the size of the wall around the Temple if he wasn't the one who expanded the Temple Mount?

Accordingly, in the fifteenth year of his reign, Herod rebuilt the temple, and encompassed a piece of land about it with a wall, which land was twice as large as that before enclosed. The expenses he laid out upon it were vastly large also, and the riches about it were unspeakable. A sign of which you have in the great cloisters that were erected about the temple, and the citadel which was on its north side. The cloisters he built from the foundation, but the citadel he repaired at a vast expense; nor was it other than a royal palace, which he called Antonia, in honor of Antony.¹⁶⁷ – Josephus

The challenge is to look at this quote with fresh eyes and ask some critical questions. First, when Josephus justified how vastly large the expenses were that Herod laid out, he gave the cloisters he built around the temple and the fortress Antonia as examples. The

¹⁶⁶ Barclay, *City of the Great King*, 386.

¹⁶⁷ Josephus, *Wars*, 1,21,1.

Antonia fortress was probably 2-5 acres, but doubling the Temple Mount would have been an addition of nearly 18 acres. Neither the cloisters nor the fortress would be comparable to building the southern end of the Temple Mount. So we can infer from this account that Herod built the cloisters on existing foundations because they were deemed to be less expensive than his work on the Fortress Antonia, which was also just a remodel, not a building constructed from scratch. Reading between the lines, this account provides further confirmation that Herod couldn't have afforded to "double" the Temple Mount, because if the Fortress Antonia was expensive, then the larger area of the temple would certainly be out of the question.

The question remains, though, what walls did Herod expand then? One possibility is the building of the temple itself, but Herod only made it taller by 60 cubits, according to Josephus.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, the answer that makes the most sense is that he enlarged the area of the soreg (the place that only Jews could enter), which we discussed earlier in this chapter in the section titled, *Establishing the Dimensions of the Temple Area*. Herod must have doubled it from 342 x 155 cubits to something like 342 cubits (590 ft) square. There was plenty of room to double the size of the soreg from north to south, but there would not have been any room to increase the length of the soreg east to west. The soreg was a completely walled-in area that fits with Josephus' description, and it would have greatly pleased the Jews to increase the size of the space that was strictly allocated for their use. Plus, it better explains why Josephus said the temple area was a furlong all around,¹⁶⁹ implying it was at that time in the shape of a square, not a rectangle. And even though Josephus is using a furlong (*stadia*) as a basic approximation, not a precise measurement, it is roughly

¹⁶⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15,11,1.

¹⁶⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15,11,3.

equivalent to the dimensions of the soreg (remembering that one *stadium* was about 625 ft, or 363 long cubits). That might not seem astounding, but it's the closest match with the dimension given by Josephus that one could propose. And as we've already discussed, the walls of the Temple Mount, or even a 500-cubit square, are larger and a much poorer match with the length of one *stadium*.

Other Places Herod Built or Renovated

Within Jerusalem, there is also evidence that Herod took over and renovated a royal residence in the Jewish Quarter, or Upper City, that is today known as the Herodian Quarter. This interpretation has been challenged, though, in favor of an area adjacent to the Tower of David at the Kishle Prison.¹⁷⁰ Regardless, the historical and archaeological evidence for the Herodian Quarter remains strong.

He (Herod) also built himself a palace in the Upper City, containing two very large and most beautiful apartments; to which the holy house itself could not be compared [in largeness].¹⁷¹ – Josephus

The Herodian Quarter royal palace was found with walls carved to look like the Temple that is a perfect match with the other plaster overlays that Herod made, which we discussed previously. But it even has similarly plastered and painted walls and geometric tile floors, etc. Plus, it has an impressive view of the Temple Mount that would be hard to pass up. *However, as in the days of Herod Agrippa, when walls were raised to obstruct his view of the Temple activities, the view is similarly obstructed today.*

¹⁷⁰ Amit Re'em. "First and Second Temple Period Fortifications and Herod's Palace in the Jerusalem Kishle Compound," in *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed: Archaeological Discoveries, 1998-2018*, Israel Exploration Society (2019): 136-44.

¹⁷¹ Josephus, *Wars*, 1,21,1.



Herodian-style painted walls at the Herodian Quarter palace.



Geometric tiles and a monumental entrance to the palace in the Herodian Quarter.

The palace is reported to have first been built by the Hasmoneans, but the decorative elements found suggest strongly that it was also remodeled by Herod because they have so many of the same styles and materials in their construction. Nevertheless, Josephus tells us that it was later adopted by King Agrippa as his own palace. It

seems unlikely that Herod would have failed to make use of such a prime location, especially considering that he remodeled many other Hasmonean palaces, but it could be that it was only later renovated by King Agrippa in the style of his grandfather. Or, Herod may have built at both this location and the area near the Tower of David. Either way, the Herodian Quarter is an excellent match with what Josephus described and what can be seen in other palaces that were remodeled by Herod the Great.

About the same time, King Agrippa built himself a very large dining room in the royal palace at Jerusalem, near to the portico. Now this palace had been erected of old by the children of Asamoneus and was situated upon an elevation, and afforded a most delightful prospect to those that had a mind to take a view of the city, which prospect was desired by the king; and there he could lie down, and eat, and thence observe what was done in the temple.¹⁷² – Josephus

Herod built and renovated many more places outside of Jerusalem than within it. We can be certain that he built up Caesarea, Sebaste, Masada, Machaerus, Alexandreion, the Herodium, and a palace in Jericho.¹⁷³ And as impressive as that obviously is, most, if not all, of the locations were founded before Herod the Great arrived. He probably did that on purpose so he could finish faster and reduce expenses by having something to build on.

Since, therefore, he had now the city fortified by the palace in which he lived, and by the temple which had a strong fortress by it, called Antonia, and was rebuilt by himself, **he contrived to make Samaria a fortress for himself** also against all the people, **and called it Sebaste**, supposing that this place would

¹⁷² Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20, 8,11.

¹⁷³ Roller. *The Building Program of Herod the Great*, 125, 129, 164, and 184.

be a stronghold against the country, not inferior to the former. So he fortified that place, which was a day's journey distant from Jerusalem, and which would be useful to him in common, to keep both the country and the city in awe. **He also built another fortress** for the whole nation; **it was of old called Strato's Tower; but it was by him named Caesarea.**

... and these were places which he particularly built, while he always was inventing somewhat further for his own security and encompassing the whole nation with guards...¹⁷⁴ – Josephus

In support of that point, notice that when Josephus said Herod built something, it was often built on earlier foundations. Josephus just meant in general that Herod worked on it—rebuilding, fortifying, restoring, or improving something for his own purposes. And it should also be understood that Herod the Great was a practical man who took shortcuts and used techniques that saved time and money. Examples of this have already been seen in the use of plaster to beautify simple stonework. Another is his use of giant concrete blocks for the expansion of the harbor at Caesarea with cement imported from Italy.¹⁷⁵ Even at Masada we see that Herod took advantage of the natural terrain, which greatly enhanced the grandeur of the site, and according to Josephus, there was a preexisting fortress there, too, built by Jewish kings.

There was a fortress of very great strength not far from Jerusalem, which had been built by our ancient kings, both as a repository for their effects in the hazards of war, and for the preservation of their bodies at the same time. It was called Masada.¹⁷⁶ – Josephus

¹⁷⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15,8,5.

¹⁷⁵ Kenneth G. Hollum et al. *King Herod's Dream: Caesarea on the Sea*. W.W. Norton & Co. (1988): 100-105.

¹⁷⁶ Josephus, *Wars*, 4,7,2.

Herod wanted to build as big and imposing as anything seen in Rome, but on a budget, because he wasn't an emperor of Rome. Later Roman emperors did build in Jerusalem, though, and they provide a good point of comparison. Hadrian, for one, built up Jerusalem, but his opportunities to build were cut short by the Bar Kokhba revolt in 132 AD and his death in 138 AD. Constantine, on the other hand, had both opportunity and a profound interest in Jerusalem. He was responsible for the rebirth of the city and the establishment of the holy places in the fourth century, based on the accounts of the Christian community in the Middle Ages.¹⁷⁷ His mark on the city remains to this day. But Herod was not nearly as wealthy or powerful as these later Roman builders. Therefore, the extent of what they were able to accomplish in Jerusalem should also constrain our expectations for the magnitude of Herod's building program.

It is possible that Herod didn't start from scratch at the Herodium, either. There were pools, gardens, and a monumental building in a complex that was also found at the Herodium.¹⁷⁸ And giant ashlar stones were found in secondary use, which were presumably from an earlier structure.¹⁷⁹ They are in the style of Solomon's ashlar stones, which presents a case that it was Solomon that first brought the aqueduct from the Pools of Solomon to the base of the hill at Herodium, which is only about 2 km from the ancient city of Tekoa. In that case, this could be another location where Solomon had gardens, pools, and at least one monumental building. Following Solomon's death, the water may have been cut off or

¹⁷⁷ Nicole Chareyron. *Pilgrims to Jerusalem in the Middle Ages*. Columbia University Press (2005): 79.

¹⁷⁸ Ehud Netzer. *Herodium*, The Herodium Expedition (2013): 29-39.

¹⁷⁹ Ehud Netzer. "Herodium-Herod the great's prestige building project." *Scientific Anniversary of the Philosophical School of the University of Athens* (2015): 545-6. <http://epub.lib.uoa.gr/index.php/epetirisphil/article/viewFile/1201/1376>

directed elsewhere, and the gardens quickly forgotten. Such a short time of use would not leave a lot of archaeological evidence, beyond the constructions themselves, which certainly recall Solomon's other work. Thus, Herod may have just restored the aqueduct, rather than constructing the entirety of it, which is almost as long as the one to Jerusalem.

Besides this, he (Herod) brought a mighty quantity of water from a great distance, and at vast charges, and raised an ascent to it of two hundred steps of the whitest marble, for the hill was itself moderately high, and entirely factitious. He also built other palaces about the roots of the hill.¹⁸⁰ – Josephus

The Tomb of the Patriarchs

The Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron could be considered the best wholly preserved example of Solomon's work anywhere in Israel. But this is where someone will say, “Ha! Gotcha! That's wrong because Josephus said that the tomb was built by Herod!” Except that he didn't. Josephus certainly mentioned the tomb, but he never mentioned Herod. This fact was openly acknowledged by historian Duane W. Roller, author of *The Building Program of Herod the Great*, who noted that he was surprised by the omission of Herod's name by Josephus. The idea that Herod built the Tomb of the Patriarchs is based solely on the similarity it shares with the design of the Temple Mount. It's a type of self-supporting circular logic, but once you recognize the “Herodian” style as belonging to Solomon, then the case falls apart. A similar argument is made by historians and archaeologists for another monument nearby called Elonei Mamre.

¹⁸⁰ Josephus, *Wars*, 1,21,10.

The ancient city of Hebron, renowned as the home and burial place of Abraham (Gen. 23), **is somewhat of a puzzle for the student of Herod's building program**. It was described by Josephus (BJ 4:529-31), with particular emphasis on its fine marble tombs, **but there is no mention of Herod**. One might argue that Herod's architectural endowment of traditional Jewish cult was limited to Jerusalem, and that at other cities within his kingdom, even those of ancient significance, such as Samaria, his focus was on Hellenizing and Roman influences. Yet at the same time it is inconceivable that Herod would have done nothing at the second most important Jewish site, which stood in the heart of Judaea and had been part of his kingdom from the beginning. Even if the archaeological evidence did not give strong support to Herodian construction at Hebron, in this case the lack of a literary citation cannot be used to exclude Herod's activity at the site.¹⁸¹

Josephus mentioned no Herodian construction at Mamre, but there is compelling archaeological and intuitive evidence.¹⁸²
– D.W. Roller

The admission by Dr. Roller is very insightful to understand the bias that has begged the question of Herodian construction at Hebron. Josephus never mentioned Herod. To be fair, he doesn't say anything about who the builder was, but my point is that archaeologists have assigned Herod as the builder of the Tomb of the Patriarchs simply because it looks like the Temple Mount. It is an assumption with zero historic testimony. But it's not a bad idea to recognize that the two structures are nearly identical in their craftsmanship and that they should be assigned to the same era of construction, i.e., they clearly have the same builder. The finely cut ashlar stones of the lower portion of the Temple Mount that

¹⁸¹ Roller. *The Building Program of Herod the Great*, 162.

¹⁸² Roller. *The Building Program of Herod the Great*, 186.

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are now visible in the Western Wall tunnels are the same kind of ashlar stones seen in the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron.



Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, Israel.



Two stories of similarly pristine stone courses are now on display below the Western Wall Plaza.

What I am proposing would literally upend over a century of archaeological interpretation and would make the stones of the Temple Mount about nine centuries older than previously thought. It would also upset entire lifetimes of work, and therefore you can be sure that such a profound correction to the understanding of biblical archaeology will not be easily accepted—but because it is so obvious when you examine the evidence, the truth will eventually win out. And once that happens, many other assumptions can be reevaluated, too. For example, listen to the justification made for why Josephus may not have mentioned Herod. The same author goes on to explain that he assumes that Josephus didn't mention any Jewish religious constructions not because Herod didn't build any, but because Josephus just didn't want to write about them (except for the temple). Of course, the other obvious possibility is that Josephus really did write about all of Herod's religious works for the Jews, but that there was only one—his work on the temple.

Josephus's reason for not including this important place, as well as its companion Mamre, six stadia to the north, where Abraham actually lived, provides some insight into the nature of Josephus's information regarding the Herodian building program. With the exception of the temple at Jerusalem, which could hardly be ignored, all the constructions documented by Josephus are either secular or, if religious, Greek or Roman.¹⁸³

— D.W. Roller

Here's the important point about the Tomb of the Patriarchs. It is the only completely intact building of its kind that has survived to the present day. If it was built by Herod, then it critically weakens the proposal that Solomon built the Temple Mount, but if it was

¹⁸³ Roller, *Building Program of Herod the Great*, 162.

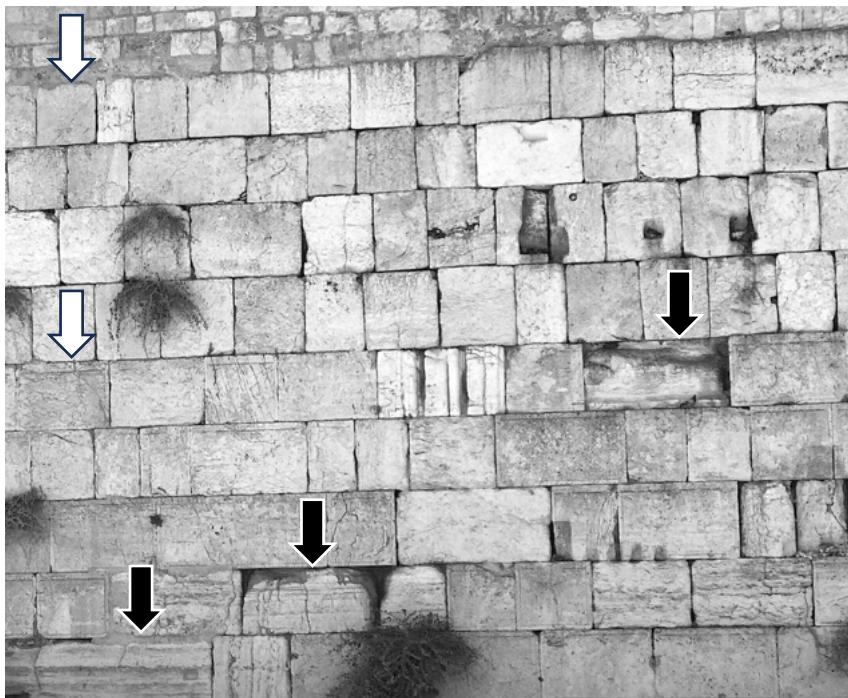
Solomon, then it is one of the prime examples for understanding the other buildings Solomon constructed. It becomes the evidence William Bartlett said was missing to corroborate that the beautiful ashlars of the Temple Mount belonged to Solomon. (*We discussed his comment in the previous section, Comparison With Herod's Other Great Works.*) Most importantly, it can provide some valuable insights into the design and construction of the Temple Mount walls.

A Closer Look at the Temple Mount Walls

When one examines the Temple Mount walls, there are three main stone styles that could be assigned dates of Jewish construction from Solomon to the Hasmoneans. First, there is one megalithic class of stonework that uses different kinds of limestone and some different finishes on the faces of the stone, but they are all attributable to a common builder. Second, there was a later stage of building that also used very large ashlar stones, but they were smaller and plainly dressed, having no borders at all. There is also possibly a third style—stonework that was nearly of the same size and style as Solomon's but may have been of slightly lesser quality, using only shorter ashlars (not much more than 2 m long). These would be the hardest to identify, though, because damaged Solomonic stones in secondary use might also be taken for a lower-quality copy. Or a good copy might be indistinguishable from one of Solomon's ashlars, because it was made to match them.

Let's begin with the stones in the lower courses that Solomon built. As we've already discussed, they range in size from just over 3 ft to 10 ft tall and 3 ft to 44 ft long (the Great Western Stone), and they typically have chiseled borders around the edges of their faces. However, the stones are also made up of predominantly two different types of limestone, *mizzi hilu* and *meleke*. The *meleke* is

harder and more durable, so most of the ashlars that have experienced significant weathering over the millennia are of the *mizzi* type. This can make them look like different stones, even though they are all from the same period.

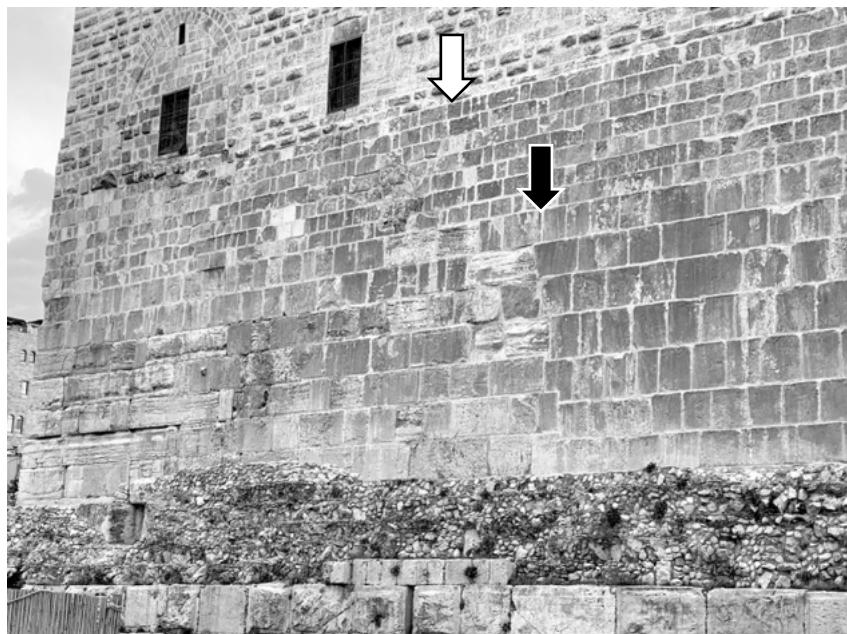


*The Western Wall with the transition from Solomon to smaller plain ashlar stones (white arrows) and some of the *mizzi* limestone blocks (black arrows).*

Then about a third of the way up the exposed Western Wall, we see the style change from Solomon's bordered ashlars to a second style of ashlar block that is comparable in size but averages less than half of the width of the standard bordered ashlar blocks and has no border at all. There are four courses of those ashlar stones at the Western Wall. They have been attributed to the Umayyads,¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Mazar, *The Walls of the Temple Mount*, 70-1.

but they should be assigned to Jewish work, most likely Zerubbabel. The Mishnah records that the Jews were supposed to make their repairs with large ashlars, which these are. And like Solomon's work, they were costly stones cut and finished at the quarry. Besides their size, the only obvious difference is the lack of extra embellishment with the border that Solomon used. That fits well with the fact that the temple was also rebuilt with less grandeur than Solomon's, as Haggai the prophet wrote.



At the west end of the southern wall of the Temple Mount, the black arrow indicates the transition from bordered ashlars (left) to smooth ashlars (right). Roman-style fine ashlars are seen in the courses between the white and black arrows.

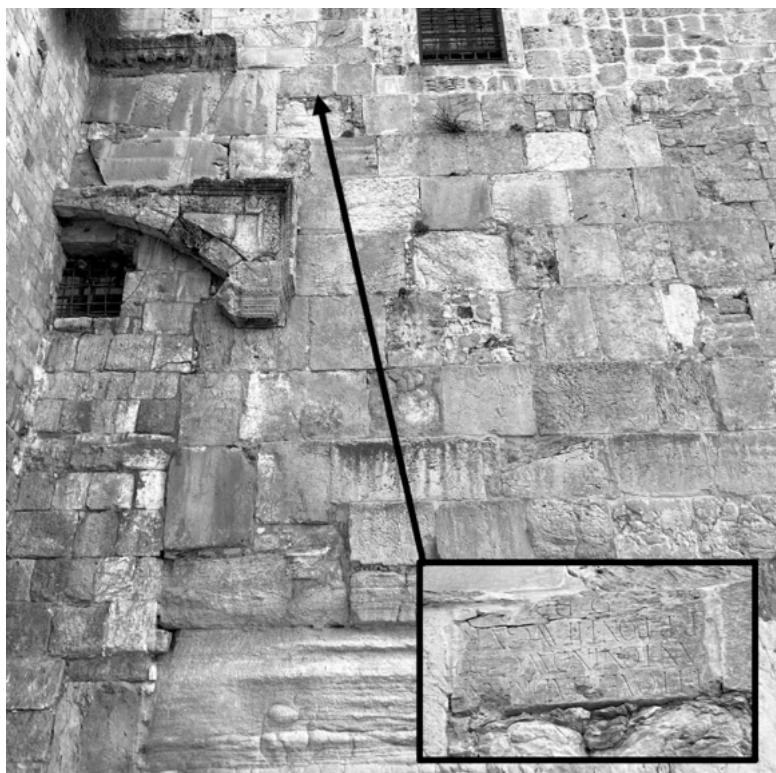
² "Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people. Ask them, ³ 'Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?'" – Haggai 2:2-3

When we build the Temple and the courtyard, we must use large stones... We may not split the stones used for the building on the Temple Mount. Rather, we must split and chisel them outside and [afterwards] bring them in. – Mishnah, *The Chosen Temple*, 1.8.

That same style of ashlar stone is continued on the southern end of the enclosure on the western side. There are nine courses of those large, plain ashlars that were skillfully joined to match with the surviving “Herodian” (Solomonic) courses in the southwest corner. The fact that the builders repairing this part of the wall maintained the original course heights and lines strongly favors Jewish construction (most likely Zerubbabel), because there was a desire to maintain quality and aesthetics. But again, most scholars would identify the work as Umayyad.

The Jewish repairs on the south wall extend from the southwest corner to about 100 ft beyond the Huldah Gate and continue sporadically after that to the southeast corner. Despite the popularity of the idea, it’s unlikely that Herod the Great built any of the Temple Mount outer walls. The only one we haven’t discussed who probably did was Emperor Hadrian. His work would be in the Roman style with fine, plain ashlars about half the size of the Jewish ones. His ashlars would be found on top of Jewish ones, too. They are likely represented in the upper layers of what is also commonly ascribed to the Umayyads at the southwest corner, where seven courses of smaller Roman-style ashlars are seen above the Jewish repairs. Since he built a temple on the platform (c. 130-138 AD), he would not have left the Temple Mount walls completely in ruin. There is also an intriguing piece of evidence that the true Umayyad repairs begin on top of this Jewish and Roman layer that can be seen at the Huldah Gate. Near the upper corner of the eastern side of the gate

there is a small upside-down inscription stone inscribed to Hadrian's successor, Titus Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Pius (c. 138-161 AD). Clearly the plaque is in secondary use, but as it sits on top of a level that is supposed to be Umayyad work (which is really the upper level of Hadrian's work), it suggests that the real Umayyad repairs are seen at this point in the wall and above.



Stone inscription to Antoninus Pius (c. 138-161 AD) in secondary use in the wall above the Huldah Gate.

The final type of stone that could also be present are ones that were intentionally made to look like Solomon's work. And there is reason to believe that the Hasmoneans may have had both a need to make repairs to the Temple Mount and the time to use stones that matched Solomon's style. They would have had repairs to

make after the assault and desecration of the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes IV (c. 169-164 BC) and after Antiochus Eupator V (c. 164-162 BC) had part of the Temple walls pulled down, according to Josephus. Eupator was a boy king, though, of only about 9 or 10 years of age, and he needed to quickly return to Antioch to defend it against a rebellion. Then not long after that, he was put to death, having ruled only two years. Thus, it is unlikely to have been a very substantial destruction and logically would have focused on the northern end of the complex, the easiest side to attack it from and the one that was most destroyed. That's probably about all that can be said about the stonework built after Solomon, which can be safely attributed to Jewish or Roman builders. Everything after that, especially the smaller stonework, is less relevant to the question at hand concerning Solomon.

Accordingly, the king (Eupator) sent to Judas (Maccabeus), and to those that were with him, and promised to give them peace, and to permit them to make use of and live according to the laws of their fathers; and they gladly received his proposals; and when they had gained security upon oath for their performance, they went out of the temple; but when Antiochus came into it, and saw how strong the place was, he broke his oaths, and ordered his army that was there to pluck down the walls to the ground; and when he had so done, he returned to Antioch.¹⁸⁵ — Josephus

And so, we should be reaching a point where we stop calling the fine ashlar stones of Jerusalem “Herodian” and start calling them Solomonic. And they are far more extensive than most people know. There are many more of them to be seen below ground than are visible in the upper walls that we’ve been discussing. They make an almost unbroken line of fine ashlar stonework down to

¹⁸⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 12.9.7.

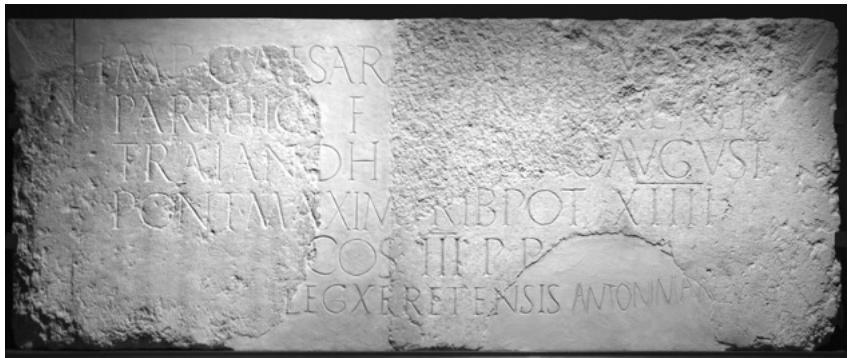
the bedrock around the entire perimeter of the wall. Thankfully, the beautiful work of those lower courses is now exposed in some places and can be seen on public tours with The Western Wall Heritage Foundation. Those excavations reveal that much of the ancient splendor of the Temple Mount has been covered up over the centuries. Were it fully revealed, it would be difficult not to acknowledge it as a wonder of the ancient world. Truly, the scope of the work that continues to be uncovered in Jerusalem around the Temple Mount is staggering and can no longer be honestly attributed to King Herod except by the simple repetition of the Herodian dogma that should have long since been discredited.

The Fine Ashlars of the Damascus Gate

And lest one think those stones were only used for the temple itself, they are found at multiple locations within Jerusalem. The foundations of the Damascus Gate on the north side of the Old City of Jerusalem are one example and remain in excellent condition, demonstrating that the ashlars of the Temple Mount were also used in select locations for the defense of the city. The stones are clearly undisturbed and are in their original placement. All the joints are tight and the lines are clean; however, the upper courses of the gate were destroyed and have been rebuilt multiple times. On close inspection, they are no less remarkable than the Temple Mount itself. Archaeologists attribute this gate to Hadrian, though, based on an inscription by the Tenth Legion that was found at the gate dedicated to Emperor Hadrian for his visit in 129/130 AD.¹⁸⁶ However, they only repaired the gate. They were soldiers, not master masons. Then they carved the plaque to commemorate his conquest of Jerusalem and to welcome him into

¹⁸⁶ Avner Ecker and Hannah M. Cotton. “The Legio X Fretensis Welcomes the Emperor: A Latin Inscription on a Monument Erected for Hadrian in 129/130 CE,” *Israel Museum Studies in Archaeology* 9 (2018-2019): 58-67.

the city. And now that we've gotten a sense of the work Solomon did, we can look at the size, fineness, and design of these ashlars and see how well they match the work we now know was done by Solomon.



Tenth Legion inscription dedicating the city to Hadrian in 129/130 AD, which was found at the Damascus Gate.¹⁸⁷



NE side of the Damascus Gate with its giant ashlar stonework.

¹⁸⁷ “To the Imperator Caesar Traianus Hadrianus Augustus, son of the deified Traianus Parthicus, grandson of the deified Nerva, high priest, invested with the tribunician power for the fourteen time, consul for the third time, father of the country [dedicated by] the Tenth Legion Fretensis (second hand) Antoniniana”



Closeup of drafted ashlar stones of the Damascus Gate

Ashlars at the Tower of David, aka The Millo

Another remarkable example of Solomon-like work is seen in the moat around the Tower of David, which is near the Jaffa Gate of the Old City. Scripture says that both David and Solomon built a “millo.” The word “*millo*” means the supporting terraces or a citadel. The exact meaning is a bit of a mystery. However, understanding that it was some kind of fortification and that it has stonework that matches with the time of Solomon, the Tower of David is a likely candidate for the Millo of Solomon. Fine ashlar stones are found only in the lower courses of the outer moat, but one corner is relatively pristine. The stones could not be in secondary use because they were cut for this location, the seams are all nice and tight, and they have borders that match the stones of the Temple Mount. Examined up close, they have all the hallmarks of Solomon’s work.



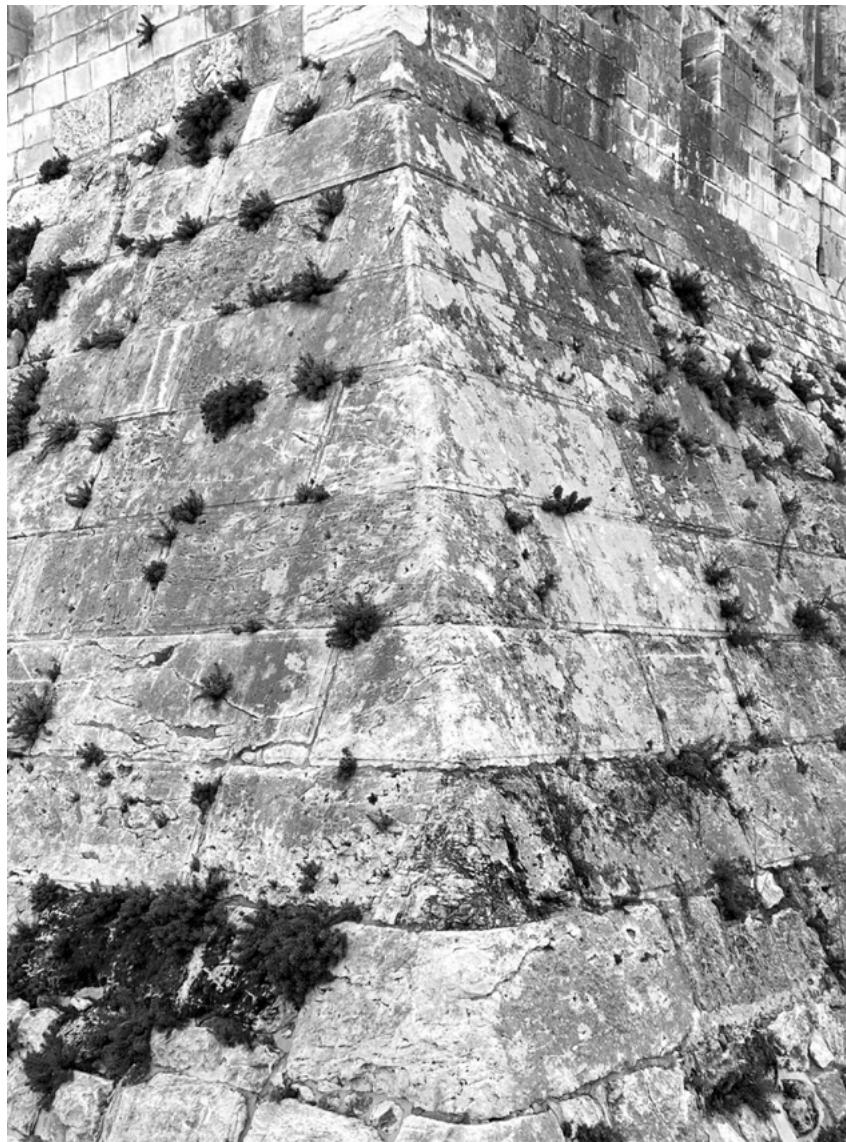
Close-up of the defensive corner of the Tower of David built with large, fine ashlars with chiseled margins.

The striking resemblance of these stones to the Temple Mount firmly connects this construction with Solomon. Plus, a verse in the Bible mentions the Millo and the wall together in the larger context of fortified cities. That makes a compelling identification of the Tower of David as Solomon's Millo—a citadel connected with the wall for the defense of Jerusalem.

Now this is the account of the forced labor which King Solomon levied to build the house of the LORD, his own house, the Millo, the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. – 1 Kings 9:15

And making the connection of these two landmarks, the Damascus Gate and the Tower of David, with King Solomon, we suddenly have two important landmarks for establishing the dimensions of ancient Jerusalem. And it might help us also understand a mystery at the Tower of David. The oldest tower of the citadel is also

constructed of giant ashlars with drafted margins, but the stones have roughened faces and more irregular margins, which would seem to indicate they were made at a different time.



Fine angular ashlar stones in the moat of the Tower of David



Tower of David with smooth faces like the Temple Mount (white arrow) and large ashlars with rough faces (black arrow).

The construction phases of this tower are difficult to interpret—at least three are present now, and this citadel has been rebuilt many times over the past three thousand years. But understanding that Jerusalem extended all the way to the Tower of David in Solomon's day could mean it's possible that the original tower is, as the name suggests, the work of King David. That would mean that Jerusalem's boundaries were already expanding under King David into the area we now call the Old City, and that the Millo of David in 2 Samuel 5:9 was built at the same place as the Millo of Solomon. And that could make sense, since Solomon would have likely built a wall around a city that was already in existence, rather than enclosing a large open field and waiting for people to move in. And then later, when he began fortifying Jerusalem, he

just added onto the existing Millo. Another possibility is that Hezekiah also worked on repairing and building up the Millo, based on 2 Chronicles 32:5. So his work should be present there, too, and he may have also had the desire and the ability to build with giant ashlars.

A Palace for Pharaoh's Daughter?

Perhaps the most mysterious structure that has been found with fine ashlar stones in Jerusalem is concealed within the Church of Saint Alexander Nevsky, which is near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Two walls and an entrance with a threshold were uncovered and identified as Jewish construction by Conrad Schick in 1888. They may have already been in secondary use when they were uncovered, but the presence of a threshold suggests they are in situ, because that would not be an easy part of a building to move. If they are in fact in their original location, they are probably part of something Solomon built there. Some believe the hole in the wall to the left of the doorway was the “eye of the needle” referenced in the Gospels, supposing it was an entrance into the walls of Jerusalem for travelers arriving after the gate was closed for the night. As attractive as that notion might be, it would be an awkward city gate location and orientation because the gate leads north, and it would be very unusual to leave a permanent hole in the city wall that someone could pass through. Plus, the wall is only about 3 ft thick, which is too thin for a defensive outer wall. And it has a right angle near the threshold, indicating it’s more likely that it was an entrance to a building than a gate into the city. The building was probably rebuilt and reused during the Roman or Byzantine eras, though, so not everything may be in its original location. It may have even been rebuilt into a part of the church complex of the Holy Sepulchre in the days of Constantine. This could account for the hole in the wall beside the door. But those

questions aside, an intriguing possibility is that it could be part of the remains of the palace that was built for Pharaoh's daughter, which was also reported to have been built with fine ashlar stonework like the Hall of Justice and Solomon's palace (*1 Kings 7:8*).



Ashlar stonework found within the Church of St. Alexander Nevsky, Old City, Jerusalem, with the “Eye of the Needle” entrance (white arrow).

And speaking of the Hall of Justice. The two thresholds look surprisingly similar and are both a little over 3 ft deep. The threshold on the Russian property is roughly 8 ft wide, while the one under the al-Aqsa Mosque is 11.5 ft wide, but it would make sense for a public building to have had a wider door.

[at the old “Market”, southeast of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the Russian property] At the bottom of this wall there is the ancient “threshold”; it is one stone, with a tread little more than one inch high, for the folding doors to shut against. The “threshold” of an ancient door is certainly Jewish, and in Byzantine times it was used again as a door; but it opened (unexpectedly) outwards, proving that the open Propyleum could be shut up against the court of the Church. The lower part of the western wall of the Propyleum is of Jewish masonry, with drafted stones.¹⁸⁸ – Conrad Schick



Closeup of the ashlar stonework found in the Church of St. Alexander Nevsky. The chiseled margins of the stone and their overall size and precision match the Temple Mount stones.

¹⁸⁸ “New Excavations in Jerusalem,” Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Report, London (1888): 57.

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Map of the building remains by Conrad Schick, c. 1888

They never finished excavating the area around the walls and threshold, so there is no way to confirm if the remains are truly in situ. But if they are, then it would stand as a good candidate for Pharaoh's daughter's palace. The other places to look for it would be near the Ophel south of the Temple Mount, up on Mount Zion in the Jewish Quarter, in the northwestern part of the city (where this building was found), or possibly around the Pools of Bethesda north of the Temple. The Ophel and the Jewish Quarter have been heavily excavated, so those areas can probably be ruled out. If the Pools of Bethesda were once a garden area for a queen's palace, that might be an intriguing possibility, but nothing like this has been found there. The only area out of all those options where fine ashlar stonework and a threshold for a building have been found is in that church.

Missing the Forest for the Trees

The evidence referenced here is all known, but scholars have been missing the forest for the trees on Solomon. Once the proposal of

his involvement was thrown out, it was never brought back up again, even though a massive amount of new evidence has come to light since then. It's been over a century since the case for Solomon was comprehensively considered. So, hopefully this chapter has made some points very clear. First, when viewed objectively, what we in fact find in Israel and Jerusalem is in excellent archaeological agreement with what the Bible says about Solomon's work. Second, when his workforce is compared to that of Herod the Great, the numbers show that Solomon was a much greater builder in terms of both manpower and wealth, and furthermore that such a large amount of stonework is truly impossible to lose. Finally, while there is no disputing that Herod the Great made elaborate embellishments to the Temple and the Temple Mount during his reign (40 to 4/3 BC), the overwhelming conclusion is that, when everything has been heard, he has been mistakenly credited with the works of Solomon as well.

And so back to Psalm 102:14, "*For her stones are dear to your servants.*" Despite scholars being so unanimous that little remains from Solomon's time in Israel, there is tremendous evidence in his favor. If one considers the biblical descriptions of his work and is willing to look beyond the labels of modern scholarship using data and reason to see what is plainly on display for all to see, then Solomon's work will no longer be lost—the stones that are so dear will be found. So, with all we've learned in the previous chapters, we can hopefully begin to restore what was lost to the contemporary visitor to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. That search had to begin with the fine-cut ashlar stones of the Temple Mount to establish a baseline for recognizing his work, but we are far from finished. Next, we will review the clues in Scripture about the styles and motifs that Solomon used and to look for agreement between those descriptions and real examples that have been found carved on the same type of giant ashlar stones.

Chapter Four

Solomon's Designs

A NOTHER ASPECT of finding Solomon that has been overlooked is a serious study of the stylistic elements that were used in the design of his buildings. The Bible has a lot to say about what Solomon's work looked like, but those descriptions need to be carried to the field and correlated with actual archaeological remains. To further assist us in that task, we have the first century testimony of Josephus, who described the buildings of Solomon in detail, providing additional insights. If the styles of the archaeological finds in Israel are compared to Scripture, supported by the accounts of Josephus, and combined with a recognition of the fine ashlar construction techniques of Solomon that we have now uncovered, then we can put even more of the puzzle together. So, what are the design elements that should be associated with Solomon?

Well, let's begin this discussion by recognizing that there is not a perfect guide for translating the architectural terms in the Bible to our modern vocabulary of styles and forms, but it should be possible to better develop one by properly identifying Solomon's work and comparing it with the descriptions in Scripture. And archaeologists have already established a substantial list of architectural elements associated with Herod, which could also be from Solomon. They include rosettes, geometric frames, vine scrolls & volutes, astragals, cables, acanthus leaves, ivy leaves, grape clusters, palm trees & palmettes, egg and dart, bead and reel, and Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian capitals.¹⁸⁹ However, many of them are found on the large, finely carved ashlar stones that are unlikely to be from Herod's time. And not only is the evidence strong that Solomon built with very large and finely carved ashlar stones, but the Bible also records that Solomon used many varied and elaborate decorative motifs on the Temple and his palaces. Thus, we should be able to look for them within the archaeological remains that are present in Israel and the surrounding regions. Doing so is sure to produce a much greater understanding of Solomonic design and provide a way to begin to identify the design elements that he used.

What we will see in this chapter is that much of the world has been copying the designs of Solomon for the past three thousand years. Think of it. We are still using the elements of classical architecture today. They are so strong and so timeless that they just keep getting reused, with very little innovation on their basic designs. In other words, even though there are differences in the degree of quality and detail, countries all over the world have been essentially using the same design elements for thousands of years. Why would it therefore be so surprising to find that they might

¹⁸⁹ O. Peleg-Barkat, *Herodian Architectural Decoration*, 25-90.

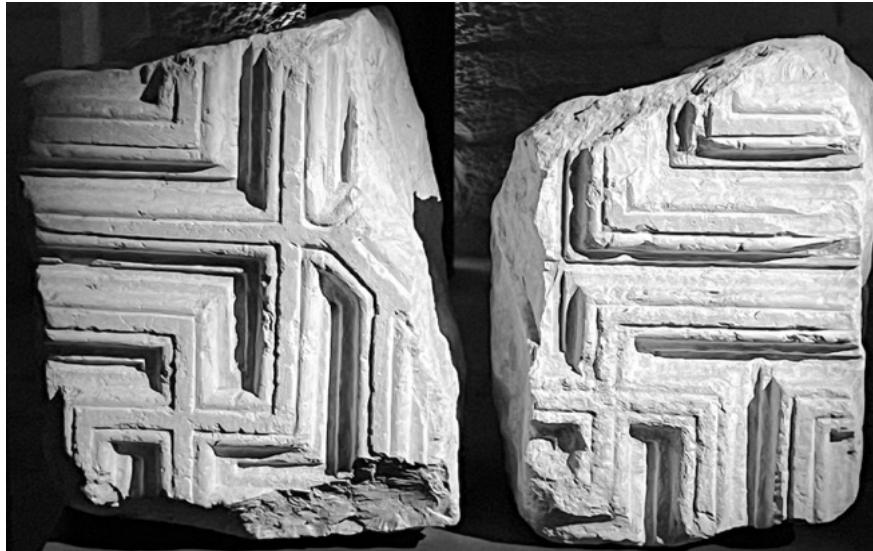
have originated even earlier with Solomon? Let's review and examine some of his design elements in the Bible and compare them to actual architectural elements found in and around Israel.

Latticework (*sebakah & sebakah maaseh*)

The first design element is the Hebrew word "*sebakah*," which means a lattice, like the ones often placed in windows, and "*sebakah maaseh*" seems to refer to more elaborate work that may include twisted, braided, intertwined, or interconnected chains, nets, or lattices. This might mean a simple crisscross pattern, or it may also refer to interconnecting patterned lines like those seen on decorated ashlar found near the Temple Mount and in Jerusalem.



Possible "latticework" ashlar found near Triple Gate, Temple Mount



More ashlar fragments with a latticework of interconnected carved patterns, Terra Sancta Museum, Jerusalem



Another carved ashlar stone with “latticework” on display in the Tower of David.

Chains & Chainwork (*sharsherot*)

The next design element comes from the Hebrew word “*sharsherot*,” which literally means a chain. In this context, it refers to an architectural element that has a repeated pattern—like a network of repeated elements that is seen in a chain, cable, or braided pattern. Another description is “*gedilim ma'aseh sharsherot*,” which includes “*ma'aseh*,” meaning something that is made or worked, and the word “*gedilim*,” which are the twisted threads and knots of the tassels (tzitzits) that are worn by Torah-observant Jews. The knotted portion of the tzitzit is called the “*gedil*,” which is between the loop and the splayed ends of the threads. Thus, something that looks like chains or a series of knots in a tzitzit. In a general sense, it could be a description of an element followed by a space and then another repeated element. Examples might be something like the classic bead and reel or dentil designs.

He made interwoven chains (*sharsherot*) and put them on top of the pillars. He also made a hundred pomegranates and attached them to the chains (*sharsherot*). – 2 Chronicles 3:16

A network of interwoven chains (*gedilim ma'aseh sharsherot*) adorned the capitals on top of the pillars, seven for each capital.
– 1 Kings 7:17

Make tassels (*gedilim*) on the four corners of the cloak you wear. – Deuteronomy 22:12



An example of Jewish tassels, called tzitzit.

The dentil design with triglyphs, which is generally said to have originated in ancient Greece, has been found in Israel dating back to at least the tenth century BC.¹⁹⁰ This is clear evidence that at least some classical design elements are much older than people think, predating the earliest Greek temples by three centuries, and that they originated in the Near East.¹⁹¹



Dentil molding in a temple shrine found at Horvat Qeiyafa, 10th century BCE, limestone and pottery

¹⁹⁰ Yosef Garfinkel and Madeleine Mumcuoglu. *Solomon's Temple and Palace: New Archaeological Discoveries*, Biblical Archaeology Society (2016): 37-60.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 58.

The small carved stone shrine that was found in Israel proves that the dentil block pattern existed in the time of the First Temple and King Solomon, i.e., the tenth century BC. It is also very similar to the doorway designs seen around the temple, with its three frames within a frame motif. It is an important piece of evidence that what is thought of today as classical architecture did not arise from Greece between the third and fifth centuries BC but could have developed in Israel in the tenth century BC during the reign of Solomon. His designs seem to be a fusion of Egyptian styles, via trade and marriage to Pharaoh's daughter, and Phoenician influences from the workmen and guidance provided to him from King Hiram. The dentil and triglyph designs and similar repeated geometric features are seen in many places throughout Israel and adjacent areas.



Dentil cornice ashlar with egg and dart style (or possibly stylized pomegranates), Banias, Caesarea Philippi, Israel



Dentil-type and diamond patterns forming “chains” at the top of a Corinthian capital, Temple Mount

Pomegranates (*rimmonim*)

Literally, “*rimmon*” means pomegranate, either the fruit or the trees; however, in the context of architectural elements, it might be more symbolically interpreted. In these instances, *rimmon* is always combined with either *sharsherot* or *sebakah*, evoking the image of a chain or a network of round objects. The difference may be whether it was a single chain or a network of double chains. And the idea that it may refer more symbolically to round spherical shapes is supported by Exodus 28:33-34, where “pomegranates” were to be made from blue, purple, and scarlet thread for the hem of the high priest’s robe. In that context, it sounds like a tassel or pompom, since they were to be made from thread.

³³ Make pomegranates (*rimmonim*) of blue, purple and scarlet yarn around the hem of the robe, with gold bells between them. ³⁴ The gold bells and the pomegranates are to alternate around the hem of the robe. – Exodus 28:33-34

He made interwoven chains (*sharsherot*) and put them on top of the pillars. He also made a hundred pomegranates (*rimmonim*) and attached them to the chains (*sharsherot*). – 2 Chronicles 3:16

He made pomegranates (*rimmonim*) in two rows encircling each network (*sebahah*) to decorate the capitals on top of the pillars. He did the same for each capital. – 1 Kings 7:18

Therefore, when the Bible describes a network of “pomegranates” that surrounded the tops of the two pillars of bronze that were placed in front of the temple, it might mean something more emblematic than realistic—something that we see today as a classical design element. And it may also be a reference to the arils of the fruit (the individual juice-laden fruit segments that contain both the juice and the seed). In that case, it would be a series of round oblong shapes for which the classic egg and dart motif would be a good match. The arils are also enclosed in the white mesocarp of the fruit, which might be represented by the thin border surrounding the center ellipsoid.



Peqaim—Egg and dart style seen on a large carved ashlar found at the Tower of David, Jerusalem



Peqa—Deeply carved egg and dart motif, Bet Shean

Both the stylized egg-and-dart motif and a group of three mature pomegranate fruits are seen on a carved ashlar lintel at the Capernaum Synagogue. If the true date of the carving of the lintel goes back to Solomon, then both stylized and realistic pomegranates were used. The difference would be that the grouping of three would not be described as a chain or network.



Pomegranates and an egg-and-dart motif carved on the same ashlar lintel (white arrows), the Capernaum Synagogue, Israel

Another example of pomegranates is seen on one of the carved wooden panels that was removed from the al-Aqsa Mosque, and as we discussed earlier, it is probably much older than presently acknowledged. Based on the similarity of its design and apparent age, it is likely at least as old as the other panels that were carbon dated to the days of the Temple. The panel also has open flowers, interwoven lines, and palm-like branches, matching other motifs seen carved in stone that could be associated with Solomon.



Wood panel from al-Aqsa Mosque with pomegranate motif. On display in the Rockefeller Archaeological Museum, Israel.

Bowl-shaped caps (gullah or beten)

Another element found in Solomon's work is described by the words “*gullah*” or “*beten*,” meaning a rounded belly or womb-like. There are two references to this style of capital in 1 Kings chapter 7 that refer to the bronze capitals at the entrance of the temple. Those bronze capitals are probably long melted down and repurposed, but you might expect to see similar design elements in other more common stone capitals that did survive.



Bowl-like capital with lattice, lilies, and a corded border on the top, and a wreath around the bottom, Temple Mount

On the capitals of both pillars, above the bowl-shaped part (*beten*) next to the network (*sebakah*), were the two hundred pomegranates in rows all around. – 1 Kings 7:20

... the two pillars and the two bowls of the capitals which were on the top of the two pillars, and the two lattices (*sebachot*) to cover the two bowls (*gullah*) of the capitals which were on the top of the pillars... – 1 Kings 7:41



A bowl-shaped (gullah) capital with lattice (sebakah) and a palm-like top (timmor) that is repaired or in secondary use in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem.

Wreaths (loyot)

Solomon also used an architectural element called “*loyah*,” which by itself means a wreath or garland. But “*loyot ma’ase morad*” probably refers to something more elaborate that curves, slopes, or hangs down, like a garland. It evokes the image of something made up of a repeated arrangement of leaves as an architectural element that could be turned down or sloping downward, etc. The meaning is not fully certain, but the root of the word is “*livyah*,” a garland or wreath of leaves that could be worn as a crown, reinforcing a connection with something leaf-like. It may also refer to spirals or scrolls, leafy vines, or chains of leaves.

He engraved cherubim, lions and palm trees on the surfaces of the supports and on the panels, in every available space, with wreaths (*loyah*) all around. – 1 Kings 7:36

And on the borders which were between the frames were lions, oxen and cherubim; and on the frames there was a pedestal above, and beneath the lions and oxen were wreaths of hanging work (*loyot ma'ase morad*). – 1 Kings 7:29



Wreath-style (loyah) motif of lilies or leaves, above a chain of diamond shapes on a column capital, Temple Mount

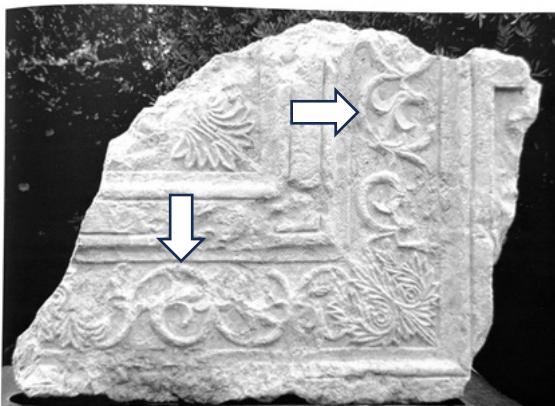


Fig. 2.85. Decorated soffit/coffering fragment (No. 1210; Photo: O. Peleg-Barkat)

Carved ashlar fragment, 3 ft wide, with acanthus scrolls.¹⁹² This may be a candidate for “loyot ma’ase morad.”

¹⁹² O. Peleg-Barkat, *Herodian Architectural Decoration*, 71.

Open flowers—rosettes (tsitzim)

One of the most easily recognized elements in the descriptions of Solomon's buildings is the word "tzitz," which means a flower in bloom, i.e., a rosette. According to Scripture, Solomon had open flowers, "*ufturi tsitzim*," carved on a lot of the things around the temple. If he did that, then it's logical to assume that he used them elsewhere, too. And in fact, all over Israel you will find open flowers carved in stone. Not surprisingly, rosettes are also a common element in classical design.

On the walls all around the temple, in both the inner and outer rooms, he carved cherubim (*cherubim*), palm trees (*timmor*) and open flowers (*ufturi tsitsim*). – 1 Kings 6:29



Open flower on a fine ashlar stone remnant, Davidson Center, Temple Mount



Remains of an open flower carved on ashlar stone found at the Tower of David, Jerusalem



Open flower design on ashlar stone remnant, Davidson Archaeological Center, Temple Mount



Open flowers encircled by vine volutes carved on a large ashlar stone at Bet Shean, Israel.

Peqaim—knobs, gourds, or volutes?

The next architectural element is called “*peqaim*,” which most translators identify as a knob, ball, or gourd-shaped element because an unused root of the word means to burst. From that description, it sounds like it could also be a match for the egg and dart motif, especially when one verse seems to say that there were ten to a cubit, which implies that they were in a chain or series of some kind. However, in another verse, it is a design element that also appeared with rosettes (*tsitzim*). But the biggest clue comes from the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament. Based on the way the Hebrew was translated into Greek around the 3rd century BC regarding the *peqaim* used for the bronze sea, they were probably volutes, which are both a support element (like a corbel or bracket) and a design element. Volute together with flowers is common in classical design (as seen above), and supporting brackets fashioned as volutes are also common.

Below the rim, gourds (*peqaim*) encircled it—ten to a cubit. The gourds were cast in two rows in one piece with the Sea. – 1 Kings 7:24 [And supports under its rim encircled it, ten cubits round about, supporting the sea. – LXX 7:11, NETS-Septuagint]

The inside of the temple was cedar, carved with gourds (peqaim) and open flowers (tsitzim). – 1 Kings 6:18a



Corinthian capital with motifs of volutes, acanthus, palm, and wreaths of lilies and small disks, Temple Mount

Palm Trees (*timmorot*)

Another architectural element found in Solomon's descriptions is *timmorot*, which are palm trees or features stylized with a palm-like structure. This is reminiscent of the Corinthian-style capitals seen all over Israel, although most may not think of them that way. More importantly, Josephus mentions Solomon's use of the Corinthian order, so there is good reason to connect this design with Solomon.¹⁹³ That interpretation also matches Ezekiel chapter 40, where it describes the columns or pilasters of the temple area being decorated with a palm-like top, i.e., like what we now call

¹⁹³ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8, 5, 2.

a Corinthian-style capital. And if the Corinthian capitals seen all over Israel are compared with the tops of the palm trees seen in Israel and the Middle East, the resemblance is even more striking.

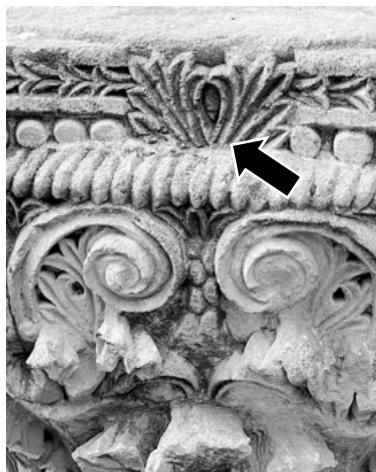


(a) a palm-like capital, also called the Corinthian style, seen on the Temple Mount, and (b) a closeup of a palm tree in Israel.

Its porches were toward the outer court; and **palm tree** (*timmor*) **ornaments were on its side pillars**, on each side, and its stairway had eight steps. – Ezekiel 40:34 NASB



Golden Gate capital, palm-like Corinthian style, with acanthus-like leaves, outside the east wall, Temple Mount



Closeup of palm carving (white arrow) with stylized leaves on a Corinthian capital, Temple Mount. The palm leaves are stylized like the “acanthus-style” leaves below them (black arrow).

Cherubim — Angels or Acanthus Leaves?

The most challenging architectural element to identify is based on the Hebrew word *cherubim*. It seems easy, because in biblical Hebrew it is exclusively translated as an angelic being. But in modern Hebrew, the singular form of the word is also translated as “cabbage,” or “*kheruv*” (*Brassica oleracea*), and there are ancient varieties whose leaves appear similar to acanthus leaves. This notion will undoubtedly seem preposterous to many people, but the idea of angelic figures being carved all over everything is more of a problem than one might think. First, the idea of an actual angelic figure being carved or depicted at all seems pagan and counter to the commandment to not make any graven images. Especially when there were many cherub-type figures being carved all over the pagan Middle East, from Abraham’s time to well past the time of Solomon. Clearly, later in Solomon’s life, he did get into a lot of pagan practices brought about by his foreign wives, but that was after building the Temple complex.



Acanthus Leaf



Brassica Oleracea

Comparison of an Acanthus Mollis leaf with Brassica Oleracea, commonly known as wild cabbage.

If it really was a figure, the predominant suggestion would be either a winged human-looking being or a sphinx. However, there are no such figures to speak of that have been found in excavations around Israel that could be associated directly with Solomon. If, on the other hand, we are looking for something more mundane, like acanthus leaves, then there are many examples included in the previous figures. Especially if we should expect to find palms, cherubim, and flowers all grouped together based on 1 Kings 6:29, and there are plenty of known examples of the other two. And the word is probably confusing because it can correctly mean either one, depending on the context. That is undoubtedly true for a very similar word in Hebrew, *seraphim*. In Numbers 21:6 the word clearly means a natural but poisonous snake that was afflicting the people, whereas in Isaiah 6:2 it was an angelic being in Heaven.

Above him were *seraphim*, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. – Isaiah 6:2

Then the LORD sent venomous snakes (*seraphim*) among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. – Numbers 21:6

So, what is it, angels or cabbage leaves (acanthus)? When one stops to consider the strangeness of the Israelites carving images of human-like angels all over everything, stylized leaves start to sound more like a genuine possibility. However, does that mean that the giant gold cherubim that Solomon carved and covered in gold in the Holy of Holies with “wings” that stretched across the entire room (*1 Kings 6:23-28*) were just giant cabbage leaves? And how about the cherubim on the ark of the covenant (*Exodus 25:10-22*)? Well, no, probably not. Just like with the word “*seraphim*,” it is up to the reader to understand and discern which meaning best fits the context.

Another thing to consider is that there is a similarity between the use of both leaves and the wings of angels as coverings in Scripture. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve covered themselves up with fig leaves after they sinned (*Genesis 3:7*), and even the angels cover their faces in God's presence with their wings (*Isaiah 6:2*). Acanthus, cabbage, and fig are all large leaves that could theoretically be used to cover something up. The difference is even less significant if one considers that the stylized acanthus leaf motif is not an exact match for a real *Acanthus mollis* leaf, either. Truly, the stylized leaf of the Corinthian order could represent many different types of large ornate leaves.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. – *Genesis 3:7*

Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. – *Isaiah 6:2*

Lilies (*shushanim*)

The capitals on top of the pillars in the portico were in the shape of lilies (*shushanim*), four cubits high. – *1 Kings 7:19*

It [the bronze sea] was a handbreadth in thickness, and its rim was like the rim of a cup, like a lily (*shushan*) blossom. It held two thousand baths. – *1 Kings 7:26*

Another easy element to identify comes from the word “*shushan*,” which means the lily flower or a trumpet-shaped decorative feature. This is a readily identifiable emblem, but it has several variations associated with it, and in some cases it may be confused

with the palm volute. In the design of the temple, Scripture says that some of the capitals were of a lily design, and therefore it seems likely that Solomon used that design for some of the capitals he made for the other things that he built. And there are many lily-like designs found on remains around the Temple Mount and within Israel.



Lilies on an ashlar stone set in secondary use, Temple Mount



Fragment of a carved lily, Temple Mount area ashlar



Lily flower capital remnant, Jewish Quarter, Jerusalem.



Wall pilaster capital with lily design and volutes, in situ, under the Great Bridge in the Western Wall Tunnels.

Lions (arayot)

The rarest architectural reference and the hardest to find is “*arayot*,” which means lions. While it is clear what the word means, it presents a challenge for two reasons. First, it’s hard to securely identify a clear Solomonic example. Second, just like today, lion statues and carvings have historically been highly sought after and would have been among the most likely looted items following the destruction of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, here are multiple possible styles of lions that have been found in the region that we can refer to. Several have been found in and around Israel, but it’s not easy to tie them to the tenth century and Solomon. One reference sample might be at the Qasr al-Abed temple in Jordan, where the building uses large, finely cut ashlar stones that closely match those seen at the Temple Mount. One was also found at Tel Megiddo and is a lion image that has become associated with the kingdom of Israel. Another one was uncovered at Hazor, but it has been dated to the fifteenth century BC, which would be the time of the Exodus.



Lion statue found at Hazor, Israel, circa 15th century BC



Carved Lion Frieze, Qasr al-Abed Temple at Iraq al-Amir, near Amman, Jordan, in the ancient Israelite territory of Gad



Lion carved on a stone box, Tel Megiddo National Park, Israel

The Bible also says that Solomon had a great lion throne that was made of ivory and overlaid with gold. In the tenth century, when his throne was made, the Bible says that “nothing like it was made for any other kingdom.” However, by the ninth to seventh centuries, carved ivory overlaid with gold became very popular, especially using lions. There are examples of small Urartian ivory lion figures from the 8th century BC that were also overlaid with gold, and were found in a horde at Altintepe, Turkey.¹⁹⁴ Another cache of Assyrian carved ivory pieces, which included lions for furniture embellishment, was found in the storerooms of the Assyrian city Nimrud of king Ashurnasirpal II, dated to the 9th century BC.¹⁹⁵ These two prominent examples of storing up ivory pieces as treasure would suggest that some of the parts from Solomon’s throne may have survived, too. Unfortunately, the provenances of items from caches like those often can’t be determined—nevertheless, the possibility is intriguing.



Lion's head carved in the round, ivory, Assyrian, c. 9th–7th century BC, 2.2 x 3.0 x 1.9 in., The Met Fifth Avenue, NY.

¹⁹⁴ Esra ALP. “Rethinking: On the Urartian Ivory Artefacts,” *Anadolu Arastirmalari* 20 (2017): 135-159.

¹⁹⁵ <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/325086>

¹⁸ Then the king made a great throne covered with ivory and overlaid with fine gold. ¹⁹ The throne had six steps, and its back had a rounded top. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with a lion standing beside each of them. ²⁰ Twelve lions stood on the six steps, one at either end of each step. Nothing like it had ever been made for any other kingdom. – 1 Kings 10:18-20

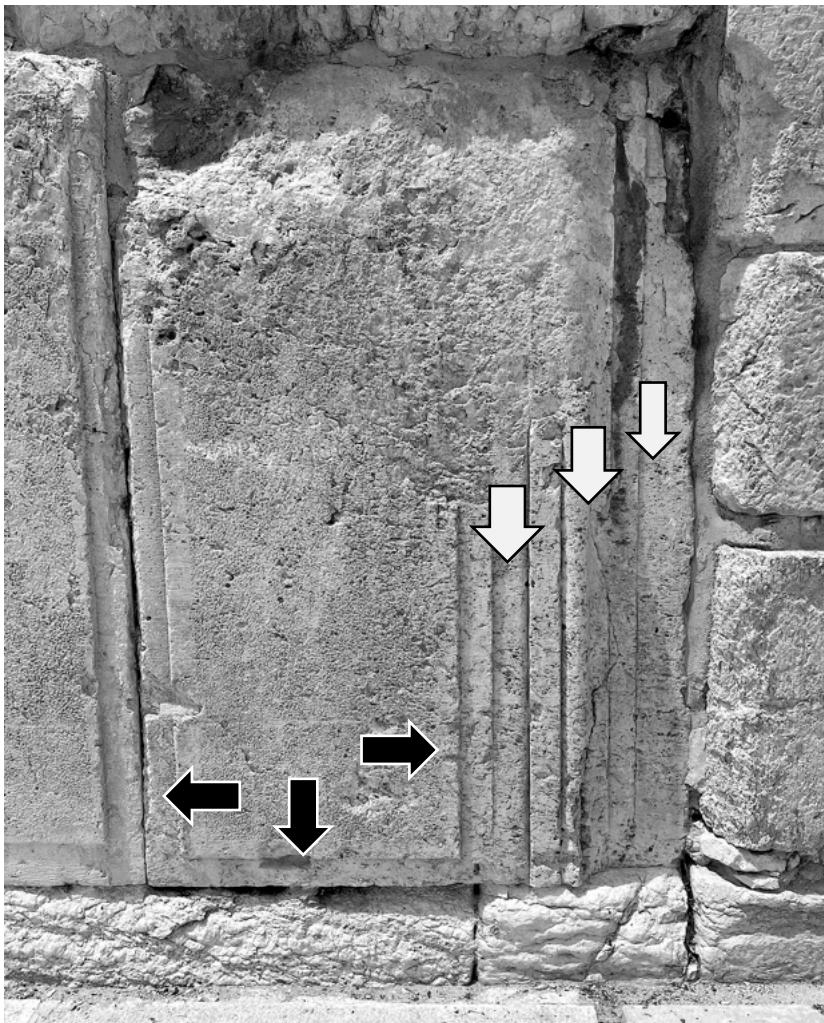
Frames (*shkofim* and *shakef*)

One of the simplest elements, which has also been found around the Temple Mount in high abundance, is a frame. In Solomon's palace, the Bible says that the windows had frames, "*shkofim*." The doorways also had frames called "*shakef*," which included the casing and lintel of a doorway. They are sometimes described as being in sets of three, which could refer to the architectural design of three carved inset frames, i.e., two additional frames within a single frame (*like the small stone temple model found at Horvat Qeiyafa from the tenth century BC that we looked at earlier in this chapter*). There is also a description of *shkofim atumim* that might be a latticed or narrow window. That idea of frame design around the doors and windows, though, would be called a molding. While the designs of the frames that have been found in stone are relatively simple, they are also classical molding designs that are still widely in use today and can include astragals, bevels, flutes, etc.

Also for the house he made windows with artistic frames (*shkofim atumim*). – 1 Kings 6:4 LSB

Now there were artistic window frames (*shkofim*) in three rows, and window was opposite window in three ranks. – 1 Kings 7:4 LSB

All the doorways had rectangular frames (*shakef*); they were in the front part in sets of three, facing each other. – 1 Kings 7:5



Door Frame Portion from the second Huldah Gate (at the Triple Gate) in situ in the southern wall of the Temple Mount with three different frame sections (white arrows) that transition from the typical dressed border design (black arrows).

Something that strongly resembles the description of the doorways into Solomon's palace is seen at the second Huldah gate entrance, which today is the Triple Gate. There is one giant ashlar stone that still appears to be in situ at the gate with a frame for a doorway

carved into it that is believed to be “Herodian” and date back to when the temple was in use.¹⁹⁶ Of course, that means it is really a stone from Solomon’s time and therefore looks like a match with 1 Kings 7:5. The doorframe could be said to have three separate molding sections that transition from the typical ashlar border (which is around a flat, raised center rectangle on the outer surface of the wall like all the other ashlar in the Temple Mount) to the inner surface of the doorway casing. This doorway was located at the place that led to Solomon’s palace. Other broken ashlar remnants from this gate or a similar doorframe molding have also been found in the Ophel area.¹⁹⁷

Columns (ammudim) & Capitals (kothereth)

And two of the most ubiquitous architectural elements found that are directly named in the construction of Solomon’s buildings are columns and capitals. This is perhaps no surprise, since columns and capitals are one of the oldest building features in existence, but if Solomon made such grand ashlar stones, we might expect to find similar quality in the columns and capitals that the Bible records he made. We find in 1 Kings 7:15 that Solomon made two bronze pillars that were twelve cubits in circumference. Twelve cubits would mean a diameter of 6.6 ft using the long cubit. None of the bronze pillars have been found because they were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, but stone pillars of that same size have been. One notable set of pillars, approximately 33 ft tall with 6 ft diameter bases, were found in secondary use in the Nea Church excavations. They are a good example of how the magnificent stones carved under Solomon’s reign could have found reuse in many later structures, like churches.

¹⁹⁶ Mazar, *Walls of the Temple Mount*, 214.

¹⁹⁷ O. Peleg-Barkat, *Herodian Architectural Design*, 77.



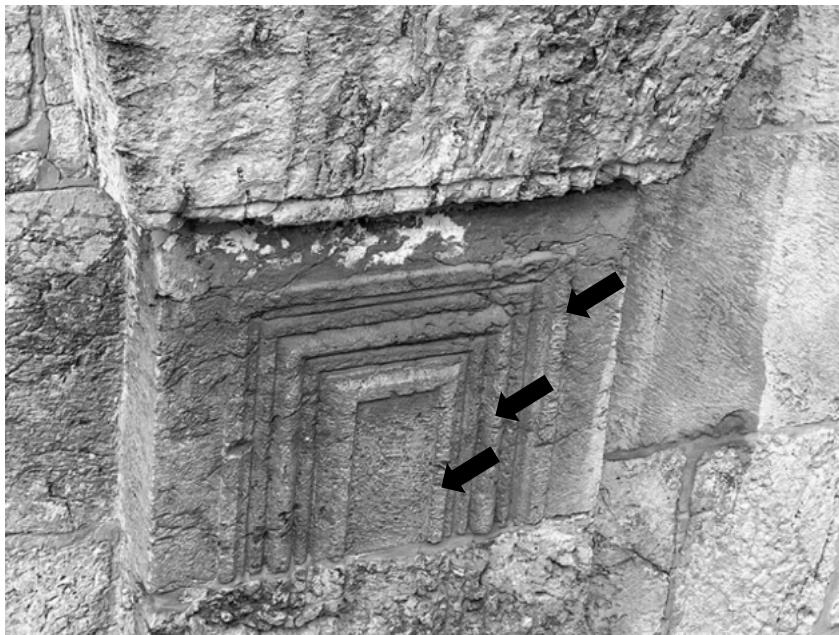
Stone pillar base, circumference of twelve cubits, “Herodian” style chisel marks and craftsmanship. Found in secondary use in the Nea Church excavation, on display in the Jewish Quarter.

He cast two bronze pillars, each eighteen cubits high and twelve cubits in circumference. – 1 Kings 7:15

There is also an interesting reference by Josephus, who said that Solomon used a three-fluted design on some of his pillars. The meaning is uncertain, but notice that there are three concentric “flutes” on the pilasters seen on the sides of the Golden Gate. Since Josephus says that the flutes were limited to only three, it suggests

that what he is describing were not just simple vertical flutes. Once again, the connection to the Golden Gate is uncertain, but one would expect that many of the features Solomon used would have been repeated elsewhere.

[speaking of Solomon's Hall of Justice] ...and their adjoining pillars of equal magnitude, **each fluted with three cavities**; which building was at once firm, and very ornamental.¹⁹⁸
— Josephus



Golden Gate carved pilaster, as seen on the outsides of the gatehouse inside the Temple Mount. There is a design of three concentric frames, which might also be described as "fluted with three cavities" from the depressions that make the frames (see areas indicated with black arrows).

¹⁹⁸ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8, 5, 2.

We have already seen many of the capitals found around Israel, but there is another one that doesn't seem to fit the style and quality of the others, but there may be a reason for it, besides just concluding that it was made at a much later time. The dimpled structure on the lower bowl-like portion of the capital may have been prepared in this fashion so that the entire capital could be clad in hammered gold. The overall shape is finely chiseled, but the dimples are roughly chipped and evenly spaced. A logical explanation for this discrepancy could be to allow for the adherence of hammered gold. The upper features of the capital have enough texture carved into them to allow for the attachment of gold sheets by hammering, but the smooth rounded lower portion would not have. We read that Solomon covered all the insides of the temple with gold (*1 Kings 6*). It would be no surprise if he also added gold accents to some of the capitals in his palace. Such a capital covered in gold would make this plain stone look outstanding, and then it would fit in nicely with the other finely carved capitals on the Temple Mount.



A stone capital seen on the Temple Mount that may have once been overlaid with something, like hammered gold.

He carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers on them **and overlaid them with gold hammered evenly over the carvings.**
— 1 Kings 6:35

Admittedly, some of these examples may not date back to the time of Solomon. And it could be difficult to tell because the style continued to be copied by later craftsmen. But by connecting any of them to the time and quality of craftsmanship commonly called “Herodian,” then there is a strong case to be made that the original design of these classical elements goes back to Solomon.

Symbolism in the Features Carved by Solomon

The presence of so many carved objects must not only be for the simple aesthetic of beauty, but there must also be some meaning that they are meant to convey. But before we begin to explore what these things may mean, it is necessary to make some general contextualizing statements about ancient iconography. First, some of the images described in Scripture that were carved in and around the temple were not unique to Israel in the tenth century. This has given rise to the assumption that the Jews were simply borrowing from the surrounding pagan nations as they “invented” their own religion, but that is entirely the wrong conclusion. A more reasonable and biblically faithful interpretation would be to understand that God chose to use symbols that were already widely understood in the world to communicate his message. A modern analogy would be to recognize that if modern man sees the need for international symbology for communicating things like exits, danger, emotion (using emojis), road signs for driving, recyclability, religious affiliation, currency type, etc., then certainly God does, too. Thus, the things that God instructed to have carved in and around the temple were not “borrowing” from

pagan culture but were communicating to man with symbols that were universally understood by ancient man. Therefore, it is not necessarily wrong to look at the surrounding cultures to help interpret what that iconography probably meant. Quite the contrary, we see God redeeming the true and appropriate meaning of those symbols, showing that he is reaching out to man in a way that he can understand. The assumption would be that the understanding and use of these images may go all the way back to the Great Flood or even before it. And even though language was confused for the whole world at the Tower of Babel, the understanding of these images would have remained reasonably consistent, albeit with some corruption over the centuries.

The Palm

First, let's consider that palm designs were carved in the temple. Why palms? In a Middle Eastern context, palms are often thought to have symbolized the tree of life. The association may be debatable, but it's a common enough belief, and it appears consistently in iconography from Egypt to Assyria.¹⁹⁹ It is also a reasonable association, since date palms indicated a source of water, provided food, and their leaves could be used to make shelters, and they create an environment where other plants and animals can thrive, i.e., they are the foundation of an oasis. Therefore, when we read in Ezekiel chapter 40 that the capitals of the pillars lining the sides of the gateways into the temple were topped with palm tree ornaments, it evokes an image of the trees of life that will line the river that flows from God's temple and his throne in the last days (*Ezekiel 47* and *Revelation 22*). The trees were on each side of the river, just like the capitals lining the

¹⁹⁹ Andrew J. McDonald. "Botanical Determination of the Middle Eastern Tree of Life." *Economic Botany* 56, no. 2 (2002): 113–29.

entrances to the temple area. Obviously, based on Revelation 22, the Tree of Life is not like any tree currently on Earth because no tree gives a new crop of fruit every month for twelve months or has leaves like the ones it has, but the palm is still a recognized symbol for it.

Its side pillars were toward the outer court; **and palm tree ornaments were on its side pillars on each side**, and its stairway had eight steps. – Ezekiel 40:37 NASB

By the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing. – Ezekiel 47:12 NASB

¹ Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. **On each side of the river stood the tree of life**, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.
– Revelation 22:1-2

The Lily

The Hebrew word for lily, *shushan*, is very similar to the Egyptian word for lotus, and in some ways the flowers themselves are similar. The lily is white and represents holiness and purity. We know from Song of Songs that lilies were held in high esteem and could bloom even among thorns, showing that the righteous shine and prosper even among the wicked because they are blessed and protected by God. And they are beautiful and fragrant. All those descriptions are fitting for God's house.

¹ I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys. ² Like a lily among thorns is my darling among the young women. – Song of Songs 2:1-2

The flower has six petals, making it an early representation of the Star of David. The lily also became associated with the House of David and Israel in general, as seen on the one-shekel coin in use in Israel today.



*A fully open white lily, *Lilium Candidum**



One shekel coin with lily (reverse), Israel



Magdala Synagogue stone, engraved with the six-leaved lily flower, circa 1st century AD

The Pomegranate

The pomegranate seems to be a fruit that is loaded with meaning. First, it is filled with tons of individual seeds, which, according to Jewish tradition, if counted, equal 613, the number of commandments in the Torah. The seeds could also be understood to symbolize life, fertility, and prosperity. Every pomegranate also has a kind of crown on it with six points, so it is also associated with royalty and the house of Israel. Pomegranates also represent romantic love, based on the language used in conjunction with them in the Song of Songs. Lastly, since pomegranates were carved on the capitals of Solomon's temple, they are also thought to symbolize eternal life and blessing from God.

Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; your mouth is lovely. Your temples behind your veil are like the halves of a pomegranate.
— Song of Solomon 4:3



Carved ivory pomegranate inscribed with “House of the Lord” in paleo-Hebrew from the First Temple period.²⁰⁰

The Lion

Lions are the symbol of Judah, which began with the blessing of Jacob for him in Genesis. It also extended to Jesus, the Messiah, the root of David, as it is written in the Book of Revelation. They represent strength, courage, nobility, judgment, and victory.

You are a lion’s cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? – Genesis 49:9

Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep! **See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed.** He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.” – Revelation 5:5

²⁰⁰ Hershel Shanks. “Ivory Pomegranate: Under the Microscope at the Israel Museum.” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 42.2 (2016): 50-57.

Cherubim or Leaf Coverings

Finally, the cherubim that are mentioned are guardians. They are first mentioned in the book of Genesis, where cherubim were stationed as guards to prevent man from returning to the Garden of Eden and partaking of the fruit of the Tree of Life.

After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. – Genesis 3:24

But if we are looking for acanthus leaves, then they could have a more enigmatic meaning. To begin with, it is thought that the classic design using acanthus leaves was invented in Greece. But Josephus said that Solomon used the Corinthian style.²⁰¹ So, if we accept Josephus' testimony that Solomon was already using (or invented) the Corinthian order, and we can believe that at least some of the great stone capitals that have been found around the Temple Mount were carved for Solomon, then it provides a good explanation for why the origin of the use of acanthus leaves in architecture is shrouded in mystery. The Greeks didn't invent the style. They just used it for the same reason that everyone else has been using it for thousands of years—it is just so beautiful.

The Greeks do have a story that suggests that Callimachus invented the style in the 3rd century BC in Corinth after he found an acanthus plant sprouting up from an overturned basket and was struck by the beauty of it as a decorative motif. But the story is fanciful and was recorded by Vitruvius about 250 years after the supposed event. There are also examples of Corinthian capitals

²⁰¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8,5,2.

from the late fourth to early third century BC, which securely rules out its invention by Callimachus (*who wasn't even born until 310 BC*).²⁰² That would also mean that the leaves never meant anything at all.

There are even early fifth century BC versions of the Corinthian order that have been used to support the conclusion that the design wasn't based on the acanthus leaf at all but rather developed stylistically from palmettes.²⁰³ A connection to palmettes moves the invention back even further to Egyptian and Phoenician influences. And suddenly, the suggestion that it was first invented by Solomon becomes more plausible. In that case, the leaves likely do mean something. If the connection to cherubim is correct, then they represented covering and protection. By placing them all over the temple, it reinforced the whole purpose of the sacrificial system, which was to provide a temporary covering for sin, and it symbolized God's protection over them. But whether one accepts this interpretation or doesn't believe it means anything at all, the design is striking and elegant and is just the right thing for so many different situations that people have continued to use it for at least twenty-five hundred years, or, as you now know, for three thousand years...

²⁰² Joan Aruz et al. "Recent Acquisitions: A Selection 1995-1996, Ancient World," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 54.2 (1996): 7

²⁰³ Alois Regel, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*, Princeton (1992): 190-5, 200-2.

Chapter Five

When Was Solomon Lost?

SOLOMON'S WORK is not lost, but the knowledge of it is. In the previous chapters, we've learned a lot about Solomon and reviewed what the Bible records he built. And then, along with the testimony of Josephus in the first century and some engineering-based deductions, calculations, and archaeological evidence, it can now be demonstrated that much of Solomon's work remains visible today but has not been widely recognized for what it is. By directly comparing all the so-called "Herodian" stonework seen in Israel today with the descriptions in Scripture and those found in the eyewitness accounts of Josephus, who saw the Jewish temple prior to its destruction, we are now in a good position to judge between the works of Solomon and Herod the Great. And if we really stick to the Bible, Solomon's work is seen all over Jerusalem, Israel, and its surroundings. And that is exactly what most of the early explorers to Jerusalem and the Holy Land concluded as well. So, the question is, when did we lose Solomon? Historically, it really wasn't that long ago. It was within the last century and a half that modern historians and archaeologists concluded that Solomon's work was mostly lost or never existed in the first place. Tragically, they are completely mistaken.

The first seeds of doubt were sown in the 1800s and may have been an outgrowth of the higher criticism movement. Up until that time, Solomon was widely recognized for his contributions to the remains present in Israel. Visitors to Jerusalem commonly stated that Solomon was the builder of many of the structures they observed, particularly the Temple Mount, until the early 1900s. Nearly two millennia of positive historic testimony should give us more pause in assuming that little of what we see today remains of the structures built by him—even though that is precisely what is taught to most everyone visiting Jerusalem today.

And lest someone construe from the previous chapters that I've come to these conclusions about Solomon all on my own and without the support and consensus of anyone else, I ask you to review with me the myriad testimonies down through the centuries in favor of Solomon. In this chapter we'll explore the historic accounts of the Holy Land from Christian pilgrims up to the early explorers of Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the 19th century. We'll begin by examining the earliest testimonies of pilgrims and other travelers. Their testimonies provide valuable insight into the conditions visible in the land during the time of their visit, as well as a record of what was commonly held as truth regarding the origins and history of what they saw.

Early Christians Don't Mention Herod

As we look for surviving records, we find there are numerous accounts of pilgrims and visitors to the Holy Land who wrote about what they saw beginning almost 1700 years ago. Notably, many of the accounts mention the works of Solomon. But what is equally important is what is absent from any of the early testimonies about the Temple Mount. Shockingly, what is clearly missing are attributions to Herod the Great! If Herod had really

been the one who built the magnificent Temple Mount and the other similar constructions around Jerusalem, then you would have expected visitors down through the ages to commonly remark about it—but they didn’t.

However, one can find visitors referenced the writings of Josephus as early as 430 AD in Eucherius’ Letter to Faustus the Island Presbyter, so his accounts were well-known to pilgrims. This alone would be a good reason to question the modern interpretations that have been applied to Josephus to erase Solomon and insert Herod the Great as the builder of the Temple Mount. As you will see, the pilgrims didn’t misconstrue the accounts of Josephus. If they had, then the modern views might have more merit. But when one realizes that the opposite is true, it completely undermines the present belief that Josephus said Herod the Great built the Temple Mount with the “Herodian” stones he is credited with. Instead, it leads one to the inexorable conclusion that they are all predominantly Solomonic.

Josephus, the noble historian of the Jews, also describes the topography of the whole region, and shows what is the boundary of Galilee and Samaria, and the various nations bordering on Galilee, Syria, and Phoenicia, but distinct from them. ²⁰⁴ – Eucherius (430 AD)

The Bordeaux Pilgrim Attributes the Temple Mount to Solomon in 333 AD

The earliest account by a pilgrim visiting Jerusalem post-70 AD, besides the writings of Josephus, comes from the Pilgrim of Bordeaux (333 AD). He discusses what he saw there and mentions

²⁰⁴ John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*. Aris and Philips (2002): 96.

multiple places that he ascribes to Solomon, including the Temple Mount. Here's what he wrote:

There are in Jerusalem two large pools (piscinae) at the side of the temple (ad latus templi), that is, one upon the right hand and one upon the left, **which were made by Solomon**; and farther in the city are twin pools (piscinae gemellares), with five porticoes, which are called Bethsaida (Bethesda). There persons who have been sick for many years are cured; the pools contain water which is red when it is disturbed. **There is also here a crypt, in which Solomon used to torture devils.** Here is also the corner of an exceeding high tower, where our Lord ascended and the tempter said to Him, 'If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence.' And the Lord answered, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God, but him only shalt thou serve.' There is a great cornerstone, of which it was said, 'The stone which the builders rejected is become the corner.' **Under the pinnacle of the tower are many rooms, and here was Solomon's palace. There also in the chamber in which he sat and wrote the Book of Wisdom;** this chamber is covered with a single stone. There are also large subterranean reservoirs for water and pools constructed with great labour. And **in the building itself, where stood the temple, which Solomon built**, they say that the blood of Zacharias which was shed upon the stone pavement before the altar remains to this day. There are also to be seen the marks of the nails in the shoes of the soldiers who slew him, throughout the whole enclosure, so plain that you would think they were impressed upon wax. There are two statues of Hadrian, and not far from the statues there is a perforated stone, to which the Jews come every year and anoint it, bewail themselves with groans, rend their garments, and so depart.²⁰⁵
 – Bordeaux Pilgrim

²⁰⁵ The Bordeaux Pilgrim. (1887). *Itinerary from Bordeaux to Jerusalem: The Bordeaux Pilgrim* (333 A.D.). Trans. Aubrey Stewart. London: Palestine Pilgrim's Text Society, 19-21.

This is from an unnamed Christian pilgrim living at the start of the Byzantine era, about two centuries after the second of two destructions of Jerusalem (*by Titus in 70 AD and Hadrian in 135 AD*). He is writing not long after Constantine converted to Christianity and assembled the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. It's the earliest detailed description of Jerusalem of its kind, and it confirms that there were still structures present that were believed to have been built by Solomon. The timing is important because it is near enough to know if anything he is reporting about was built after Jerusalem's destruction or before it. Anything built by the Romans after the destruction of Jerusalem would still have been considered "modern" or recent in his day. The most important conclusion to draw from the testimony of the Bordeaux Pilgrim is that it confirms that Solomon built the Temple Mount. It does so in several ways. First, he says that the rooms under the pinnacle of the tower, which is in the southeast corner of the sanctuary, were part of Solomon's Palace. The chamber he mentioned, with a small window looking out of the wall roofed by a single stone that Solomon sat in to write his book of Wisdom, is still there, too. The window is framed with giant, fine-cut ashlars like those seen in the rest of the Temple Mount. The whole area is called Solomon's Stables today. The Pilgrim also confirms that it was all built by Solomon by saying that "in the building itself, where stood the temple, which Solomon built." Notice that the "building itself" is separate from the temple. He is saying that both the temple and the area it sat in were built by Solomon. Furthermore, if Solomon's palace was part of the southeast corner, then the entire structure must be Solomon's work. The perforated stone he said the Jews anointed was probably the flat pitted bedrock under the Dome of the Spirits. He also mentioned the great cisterns under the sanctuary, which he said took great labor to produce. Lastly, he mentions two other pools that can be identified as the Pool of Israel and the Struthion Pool. Their remains are still present below ground just outside the northern walls of the Temple Mount.

Such corroborating references should remove any doubt that we have correctly identified the place that he is referring to. And lastly, having correctly recognized the above places, then the “crypt in which Solomon used to torture devils” could be the Lithostrotos underneath the Convent of the Sisters of Zion, where some believe that Jesus was held when he was beaten and mocked by the soldiers before his crucifixion. This would mean that the lowest levels of the site could be much older than presently believed, and it would provide further support for considering it as the site later reused by the Romans as a prison.

Piacenza Pilgrim in 570 AD Recognizes the Golden Gate was Part of the Temple

The Piacenza Pilgrim also lived in the Byzantine era. His account begins where he came down from the Mount of Olives, went past Gethsemane in the Kidron Valley, and he was heading towards the eastern gate of the city (which is called the Lions Gate today). Next to it, he reported seeing “the Gate Beautiful.” That term can be confused with the double gate (Hulda Gate) on the south, but the locations given in the description make it clear that he meant the Golden Gate, which he said was a part of the Temple. This was before Heraclius returned the Holy Cross to Jerusalem in 629 AD or Jerusalem fell to the Umayyads in 638 AD, and if it was built by the Romans or the Byzantines, he would have known that.

This valley of Gethsemane is also called Jehoshaphat. We climbed by many steps up from Gethsemane to the gate of Jerusalem...This gate of the city is next to **the Gate Beautiful which was part of the Temple, and its threshold and entablature are still in position there.**²⁰⁶ – Piacenza Pilgrim

²⁰⁶ Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, 138.

The Piacenza Pilgrim then moves on to an area that overlooked both the temple and the City of David where the Siloam spring is located. It's unclear if the Basilica of Saint Sophia was another name for the Church of Zion (that was located where David's Tomb is today) or the Nea Church built by Justinian, or if it was a third church near them. Regardless, he calls the whole of the large platform area before him the "Temple of Solomon." The pilgrim also mentions a road leading from Solomon's Porch at the temple down to the Pool of Siloam, which has now been uncovered by the City of David archaeological project as the Pilgrim's Road that leads up to the southern steps of the Temple Mount.

We also prayed in the Praetorium, where the Lord's case was heard; what is there now is the basilica of Saint Sophia, **which is in front of the Temple of Solomon**. Below the street which runs down to the spring of Siloam outside **Solomon's porch**.²⁰⁷ – Piacenza Pilgrim

Bishop Willibald Identifies the Porch of Solomon in 724 AD

Another account of Solomon's work is reported in the *Memoranda from the Travels of Bishop Willibald. By a nun of Heidenhum* (c. 721-727 AD). It was said that the Porch of Solomon still existed at the "pool where the infirm wait for the motion of the water" in Jerusalem. We might surmise from other accounts, like the Pilgrim of Bordeaux, that it is the Pool of Bethesda that is being described. In this reference, Bishop Willibald seems to be calling the whole Temple Mount the Porch of Solomon, and thus the Pools of Bethesda are immediately north and adjacent to it. And while the account is brief, there is no mention of Herod the Great having built anything.

²⁰⁷ Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, 141.

He got up and went off to visit the church called Holy Zion, which stands in the middle of Jerusalem. He prayed there and **went on to Solomon's Porch. There is a pool, and sick people lie there waiting for the water to be moved**, and for the angel to come and move the water: then the first to get down into it is cured. It is where the Lord said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk!" ²⁰⁸ – Bishop Willibald

Photius Writes to Amphilius About Solomon's Court of the Temple in 867 AD

Here is another account from the ninth century AD that continues to affirm that Solomon built the Temple Mount. By saying that Saracens occupy it, we know that he is talking about the *Haram al Sharif*, or Temple Mount. In Arabic, "*haram*" means forbidden, i.e., forbidden to non-Muslims. *Al Sharif* means "the noble" or "the noble place"; hence, *Haram al Sharif* is often translated as The Noble Sanctuary. Conveniently, that leaves the word "*haram*" untranslated and avoids the controversy of admitting that Muslims do not want Christians or Jews to have access to the Temple Mount. Also, the fact that Photius used the term "court of Solomon" so broadly and in reference to the entire Temple Mount area lends support to the idea that a couple of centuries earlier, when Bishop Willibald referred to the Porch of Solomon, he was using the term in very much the same way, i.e., both terms were used to mean the whole of the Temple Mount that was raised as a porch or court for the Temple. We can also infer that Photius considered the entire area to be the holy place of the Temple, by calling it the "Holy of Holies." And he did not believe that Muslims and Christians worship the same God, because he called them "the godless Saracens." He also made no mention of Herod the Great, only Solomon.

²⁰⁸ Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, 243. "Hugebuc. *Life of St. Willibald—Extracts*, Ch. 19"

The court of Solomon, itself the ancient Holy of Holies, but now occupied by the godless Saracens and providing them with a site for a mosque, has not been familiar to any one of the Christians in Jerusalem, for Christians cannot enter the places kept holy by the Saracens.²⁰⁹ – Photius

Eleventh Century Norman Chronicler—Golden Gate Built by Solomon, 1099

An account of Jerusalem during its occupancy by the Franks, about the period of their expulsion by Saladin, at the close of the 11th century.²¹⁰ This Norman chronicler documented that the Golden Gate was “another” of the gates built by Solomon (presumably the other he was referring to is the southern gate that Josephus wrote was also not destroyed). There continues to be a lack of any mention of Herod the Great having anything to do with the temple area by any pilgrim. The author also reports that the Golden Gate was the gate that Jesus entered on Palm Sunday and that it was still being kept shut in those days and only opened for special occasions. The report that the gate was periodically reopened on rare instances does not invalidate the simple fact that the gate was consistently kept shut for almost 2000 years, as Ezekiel 44:1-2 predicted, demonstrating an amazing fulfillment of prophecy.

¹ Then the man brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, the one facing east, and it was shut. ² The LORD said to me, “This gate is to remain shut. It must not be opened; no one may enter through it. It is to remain shut because the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered through it. – Ezekiel 44:1-2

²⁰⁹ Wilkinson. *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*, 258.

²¹⁰ The Norman chronicler’s travels were between 1099 and 1131 AD, so he could also be called twelfth century.



The Golden Gate, view looking west

At the head of this pavement [*the current platform where the Dome of the Rock sits*], towards the eastern sun, **one descended by some steps to go to the Gates Oires [Golden Gate]**.²¹¹ When one had descended, one found there a large place, **thus as one came to the gates: there was the other which Solomon built**. Through these gates one could not pass, being walled; and one could not pass but twice during the year when they were unwalled: and they went in procession the day of Palm Sunday, because that Jesus Christ passed there on this day, and was protected by a procession; and the day of the feast of the holy cross in Steuben, for through these gates was carried the cross into Jerusalem, when the Roman Emperor Heraclius conquered it from Persia, and through this door recovered it into the city, and these in procession against it.²¹² – *A Norman Chronicler*

²¹¹ Pratt, Karen. "The genre of Gautier d'Arras's Eracle: a twelfth-century French 'history' of a Byzantine emperor." *Reading Medieval Studies* 34 (2008): 174.

²¹² Barclay. *The City of the Great King*, 371-2.

Saewulf in 1102 Says Solomon Built the Temple Mount

Then Latin of Saewulf in 1102 AD wrote about the wonderful work of Solomon in building the temple and said the Golden Gate was one of its gates. He is clearly calling the entire area the work of Solomon, but he also refers to both “a high and large rock” as the temple to the Lord and then to the southeast corner of the Temple Mount (where the cradle of Christ is) as the location for the Temple of Solomon. Thus, it isn’t clear whether he is referring to the tradition that the rock underneath the Dome of the Rock was the site of the temple, or perhaps he was referring to the rock of Mount Moriah in general and he thought the temple was in the southeast corner. Either way, once again there is no mention of Herod the Great anywhere.

Solomon built a temple to the Lord of magnificent and incomparable work, and decorated it wonderfully with every ornament, as we read in the Book of Kings. It exceeded all the mountains around in height, and all walls and buildings in brilliancy and glory. In the middle of which temple is seen a high and large rock, hollowed beneath, in which was the Holy of Holies.

There is the gate of the city on the eastern side of the Temple, which is called the Golden, where Joahchim, the father of the Blessed Mary, by order of the Angel of the Lord, met his wife Anne. By the same gate the Lord Jesus, coming from Bethany on the day of olives, sitting on an ass, entered the city of Jerusalem, while the children sang, “Hosanna to the son of David.” By this gate the emperor Heraclius entered Jerusalem, when he returned victorious from Persia, with the cross of our Lord; but the stones first fell down and closed up the passage, so that the gate became one mass, until humbling himself at the admonition of an angel, he descended from his horse, and so the entrance was opened to him. In the court of the Temple of the Lord, to the south, is the Temple of Solomon, of wonderful magnitude, on the east side of which is an oratory

containing the cradle of Christ, and his bath, and the bed of the Virgin Mary, according to the testimony of the Assyrians.²¹³ – *Saewulf*

Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela Identified Solomonic Structures in Jerusalem in 1173

Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela traveled in and around the Holy Land from 1160 to 1173 AD. He offers a unique perspective on the beliefs of the Jewish community in his time. In particular, he mentioned the stables erected by Solomon and the remains of a building that he also reported was originally built by him, which was probably where the al-Aqsa Mosque is now. He does express his belief that the Dome of the Rock, then called the *Templo Domino*, was the former location of the temple, showing that the tradition was established by that point. And like the others, he makes no mention of Herod the Great at all.

There are two hospitals that support four hundred knights and afford shelter to the sick; these are provided with everything they may want, both during life and in death; **the second is called the Hospital of Solomon—being the palace originally built by King Solomon.** This hospital also harbors and furnishes four hundred knights... **At Jerusalem you also see the stables erected by Solomon**, and which formed part of his house. Immense stones have been employed in this fabric, the like of which are nowhere else to be met with... If you leave the city by the gate of Jehoshaphat, you may see the pillar erected on Absalom's place, and the sepulcher of king Uzziah, and the great spring of Shiloah, which runs into the brook Kedron. ²¹⁴ – *Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela*

²¹³ Thomas Wright. *Early Travels in Palestine*. Cosmo Classics (2011): 39-41.

²¹⁴ Wright. *Early Travels in Palestine*, 83-84.

Mujir al-Din, a Muslim Cleric—Many Structures Built by Solomon, 1495

An Islamic testimony describing Jerusalem was given in *The Sublime Companion to the History of Jerusalem and Hebron* by Mujir al-Din around the year 1495. For starters, he said the ruins underneath the mosque that was called “the Ancient Aksa” were probably from Solomon. That’s more reason to believe the wall and threshold found in the excavations under al-Aqsa Mosque could be from his Hall of Justice. He also attributed the southern portion of the Temple Mount and the Tower of David to Solomon.

The Ancient Aksa. Beneath the Mesjid (mosque) on the south side is a great building, in which are piers supporting the roof, and it is under the place of the Minbar and Mihrab. This place is called the ancient Aksa, and these are perhaps the remains of Solomon's building, as may be judged from their solidity.

The Stable of Solomon. At the side of that, also beneath the Mesjid, under where the olives grow, there is a walled place called the Stable of Solomon. It runs under the greatest part of the Mesjid, and occupies the subterranean space of most of the above-noticed southern localities of the Mesjid. It is probably Solomon's building.

The Castle. This is without Jerusalem on the west side, formerly called the Mihrab of David, who dwelt there. It is said that the building joined the Convent of Sion. It has a great tower named of David, and built by Solomon. ²¹⁵ – Mujir al-Din

In Mujir al-Din’s report, he said that the vaulted stone structure of the Golden Gate was made by Solomon. This is significant because if it had been constructed by the Umayyads in the seventh century, he would have known about it. But the only thing he said

²¹⁵ Barclay, *The City of the Great King*, 389 & 399.

about them was that they kept the gate closed. He did name many other things that were built by the Umayyads in his walk around the sanctuary, though. His account is before Suleiman built up the gate and walled up its doorways between 1537 and 1541.

Gates of the Mesjid (*Temple Mount*)—**There are first the two gates pierced in the east wall** (*the Golden Gate*), of which God speaks in the Koran, saying, "He raised a wall, whose gate on the inside is the Gate of Mercy, and on the outside the Gate of Torture." The valley behind this last is called Wady Jehennom (*Kidron Valley*). They are now stopped. **Remains of the work of Solomon may still be seen on the inside of the enclosure**, the only remains that are found within the Mesjid. This place is much revered and visited by pilgrims. I heard from a sage that these two gates were closed by Omar Ibn Khatab and will only open at the end of the world, when Jesus the Son of Mary, shall descend upon the earth. It seems they were closed for fear and to secure the Haram and the city, because they face the desert, and there could be no advantage in having them open (to facilitate the entrance of the Bedouin).²¹⁶ — *Mujir al-Din*

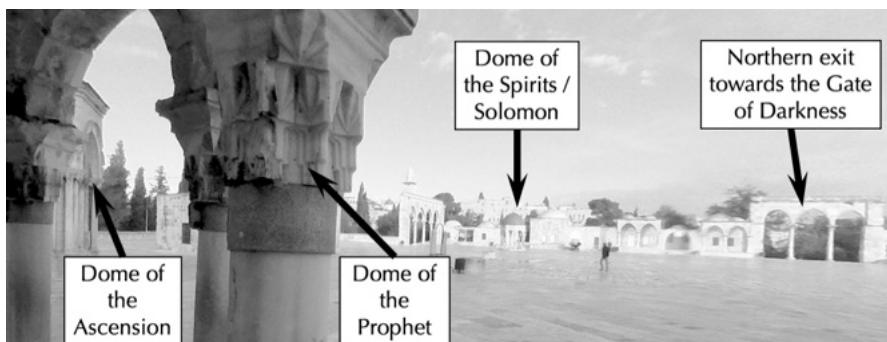
And Mujir al-Din had one more interesting note to share. It was about the “Dome of Solomon.” He said it was built over “natural” rock, i.e., bedrock, which may have been referencing the Dome of the Spirits (*Qubbat al-Arwah*).²¹⁷ In his report, the dome was near the “Place of the Prophet” (a prayer “mihrab” now covered by the *Dome of the Prophet*) and the “Dome of the Prophet’s Ascension.” Both are just a little northwest of the Dome of the Rock and south of the Dome of the Spirits. The Dome of the Spirits (*Solomon*) would have been easy to call out on the way to the Gate of Darkness to the north. If so, Mujir al-Din said it was originally built by the

²¹⁶ Barclay, *The City of the Great King*, 390.

²¹⁷ The Dome of Solomon could have also been farther north at a place called the Dome of the Little Rock (*Kubbet Es Sakkrah Es Saghira*), see Hanauer, *Walks in and Around Jerusalem*, 315-6.

Umayyads; however, it was not mentioned as one of the domes on the platform by Mukaddasi in 985 AD (*but the Dome of the Prophet was*), so it remains in doubt.²¹⁸ Today's dome was likely rebuilt by the Ottomans along with the similar Dome of the Prophet (*Qubbat al-Nabi*), which more than likely does date to the Umayyads.²¹⁹

The Dome of Solomon. — On this side, near the gate of the Dewatar (*Gate of Darkness, or Gate of al-Dawadariya*), **is a dome solidly built on the natural rock, called the Dome of Solomon**; and the rock must be that where he stood to pray after having finished the Temple. . . This dome dates from the time of the Ommiades (*Umayyads*).²²⁰ — Mujir al-Din



Orientation of the Domes Identified by Mujir al-Din (looking north)

A Pilgrim Reports on the Golden Gate in 1499

A German pilgrim reported that the wooden doors of the Golden Gate were still in place and closed during his visit to the Holy Land in 1496 to 1499 AD, and that Islamic tombs were being placed in front of it at that time. This means it was already a practice before

²¹⁸ Mukaddasi. *Description of Syria, Including Palestine*, trans. Guy Le Strange, Palestine Pilgrim's Text Society (1886): 42.

²¹⁹ S. Auld and R. Hillenbrand. *Ottoman Jerusalem*, Altajir World of Islam Trust (2000):701-2.

²²⁰ Barclay, *City of the Great King*, 385-6.

Sultan Suleiman permanently walled it up. The pilgrim also shared his belief that Jesus entered Jerusalem through this same gate.

We came then to **the Golden Door through which our Lord Jesus rode in on Palm Sunday**, sitting on an ass. This gate is of cypress wood covered with copper and is much cut and mutilated. Therefore, the heathen guard the doorway closely, so that no Christian may approach it. They have also their cemetery outside the gate toward the Vale of Jehoshaphat (*Kidron Valley*), where they bury their dead.²²¹ – Arnold von Harff

Reports From the Holy Land Fall Silent Under the Ottomans Between 1566-1828

After the rebuilding of Jerusalem by the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman I, whose reign ended in 1566, a more oppressive era began in Jerusalem and the Holy Land under Turkish rule. Because it was profitable to control the holy sites, they were taken over by their new Ottoman rulers, and much of the former traditions and history were lost. A dark time ensued in Jerusalem and the Holy Land until things began to lighten up in the early 1800s and finally ended with the liberation of Jerusalem from the Ottoman Empire in 1917.²²² As an example, Henry Maundrell, a chaplain for the Aleppo factory of the English Levant Company, wrote *A Journey From Aleppo to Jerusalem*, documenting his visit there in 1697. Being a non-Muslim, he was allowed to see very little of the city, mainly just the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and he was poorly treated.²²³ One of the few detailed reports from that time was shared by Elzear Horn in 1744. He confirmed that Suleiman walled up the Golden Gate and hinted at the messianic associations that even Muslims held regarding the future purpose of the gate.

²²¹ von Harff, Arnold. (1946). *The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff 1496–1499*, London: 104.

²²² Peters. *Jerusalem*, 545-7.

²²³ *Ibid*, 516-24.

Beneath the Temple of the Lord, there is another gate looking east, which is called the Golden Gate; formerly in the days of the Christians and the Saracens, it was opened only on Palm Sunday; at present it is closed by a permanent wall, for in 1541 the Turks removed the wooden doors and closed it with a wall, so that it might not be accessible to anyone after that; for they believed that the Christians would enter by this gate and capture the city after they had expelled or killed the Muslims. Father Quaresmi, while in Jerusalem as Superior of the Holy Land [A.D. 1618] asked some Turks rather high in dignity and quite learned in the law, "Why is it that this gate is not open like the others?" They replied that it was reserved for some great king to be opened. Who that king would be they did not wish to state.²²⁴ – Elzeair Horn

The Early Reports of Modern Biblical Archaeology from 1838 to 1903

It wasn't until 1828, when the Ottoman Empire began reforms under the Tanzimat Era, that Jerusalem started to emerge from that dark age and became more open for exploration. This is the time when the early explorers, like Edward Robinson, William Henry Bartlett, George Williams, J.A. Spencer, M. de Saulcy, and James Barclay, began to make serious investigations into the history and archaeology of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. But at the same time, historical criticism was developing in Europe, and the interpretation and understanding of biblical history began to be questioned and challenged based on external evidence and one's own reason. Consequently, visitors were much more critical of

²²⁴ Horn, Elzeair, Bellarmino Bagatti, and Eugene Hoade. *Ichnographiae monumentorum Terrae Sanctae 1724-1744* [lat. u. engl.] of the Lat. text with Engl. version by Eugene Hoade, OFM and pref. and notes by Bellarmino Bagatti, OFM. 1962. He was a Franciscan resident of Jerusalem, 1724-1744, who recorded the story of Father Quaresmi, Superior of the Holy Land from 1618.

tradition and more reserved in their identifications of the holy sites, and they began to develop their own thoughts and interpretations for the sights they were shown, especially after three centuries of Turkish rule had totally rewritten some of the local history, creating many clearly spurious stories.

Nonetheless, the early explorers who visited Jerusalem and the Holy Land all talked about the works of Solomon. No doubt, many errors were made in those early days of biblical archaeology, and yet, somehow the later errors were much worse—they threw the baby out with the bathwater by losing the chief works of Solomon altogether. I hope these selected quotes will help to establish just how pervasive the modern recognition of Solomon was heading into the twentieth century.

The problem wasn't that they didn't expect to find Solomon's work; it was that everyone began to interpret the history and the archaeology differently and according to their own understanding. They all saw things in those early years that they felt belonged to the time of Solomon, but they were deeply divided about which of the things visible really were built by him. The net effect was that no matter what location one might mention as possibly pertaining to Solomon, one or more experts of the day would present arguments to refute it. Hence, in a skeptical, modern world, it wasn't long before every location was eventually determined to be of dubious association to Solomon and was finally settled as the work of more modern builders. But, if we view all these testimonies in the affirmative, then we can't escape the conclusion that the opposite is true—namely, that Solomon built most of the great things that they all debated about. The analogy would be that of a man who was often accused of being a thief but was continually set free because there was insufficient evidence to convict him. And while there may have been a lack of evidence in those early

days in favor of Solomon, there is a lot more now, so it's long past time to reopen the case.

But in defense of the explorers prior to the 1860s, visitors to Jerusalem and the Holy Land could only view the exposed portions of ancient structures, which were all under the control of the Ottoman Empire, and access was strictly controlled. The first systematic studies and surveys of Jerusalem's Old City and its environs weren't begun until Captain Charles Wilson of the Royal Engineers was first sent to Jerusalem in October 1864 to start making the first truly detailed map of Jerusalem.²²⁵ He was soon joined by many others, and a new era began in the understanding of the archaeological history and character of Jerusalem, and of the Middle East in general. Those early explorations discovered remains and uncovered places that no one else has been able to investigate since that time. So, while one might be tempted to simply dismiss their old research as no longer relevant, it is still often the only source of information available. The work of the men in that early era made modern biblical archaeology what it is today. Visitors like Ermete Pierotti, Melchior de Vogüe, Captain Charles Wilson, Sir Charles Warren, Captain Claude Reignier Conder, James Fergusson, Conrad Schick, Charles Clermont-Ganneau, James E. Hanauer, and many others. Those early explorations were often led or supported by the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF), which was established in 1865.

Very little was known at that time about Jewish archaeology and architecture in any formal sense of the word. This is evidenced by a statement made in one of the early PEF meetings by Austin Henry Layard, a famous excavator of Nineveh at that time. With

²²⁵ Gibson, Shimon. "British archaeological work in Jerusalem between 1865 and 1967: an assessment." *Galor and Avni, Unearthing Jerusalem* (2011): 23-57.

his simple comment, we see that not much was expected at that time of any greatness in the building programs of the Jews, because nothing much was known about it.

Indeed, we know scarcely anything of the Jews from existing monuments and remains. A few large stones and foundations discovered at Jerusalem in casual excavations are all we can point to with certainty.²²⁶ – Austin Layard, PEF, 1865

Edward Robinson Visits Jerusalem in 1838 and Makes the Case for Solomon

One of the earliest visitors to Jerusalem in the era of relaxed control of the holy sites was the biblical scholar Edward Robinson, known as the “Father of Biblical Geography.” His observations undoubtedly helped pave the way for the extensive explorations that would begin a few decades later. He also solidly affirmed that the work of Solomon was clearly present in the remains that were visible above ground. He also correctly understood that Josephus made no mention of Herod “having had anything to do with the massive walls of the exterior enclosure.” In other words, Robinson would have heartily agreed that Josephus did not name Herod as the builder of the massive walls of the Temple Mount that were established “for all time immovable.” He did add, though, “or his successors,” which was likely based on something Josephus said about later kings of Judah adding onto Solomon’s work.²²⁷ This was discussed in *Chapter Two*, but as a reminder, Josephus was not talking about the great cornerstones of the platform, which would contradict his other more detailed accounts of Solomon’s work. And most importantly, Herod’s name wasn’t even mentioned in the account in question, securely ruling out any contributions by him.

²²⁶ “Public Meeting, June 22nd 1865,” *PEF Proceedings and Notes*, (1865): 6.

²²⁷ Josephus, *Wars*, 5,5,1.

It was this Naos, or the body of the temple alone, which was rebuilt by Herod; who also built over again some of the magnificent porticos around the area. **But no mention is made of his having had anything to do with the massive walls of the exterior enclosure.**²²⁸

[Speaking of the SW portion of the Western Wall where Robinson discovered the remains of the arch named after him.] Here, then we have indisputable remains of Jewish antiquity, consisting of an important portion of the western wall of the ancient temple area. They are probably to be referred to a period long antecedent to the days of Herod; for the labors of this splendor loving tyrant appear to have been confined to the body of the temple and the porticos around the court. The magnitude of the stones also, and the workmanship as compared with other remaining monuments of Herod, seem to point to an earlier origin. In the accounts we have of the destruction of the temple by the Chaldeans, and its rebuilding by Zerubbabel under Darius, no mention is made of these exterior walls. The former temple was destroyed by fire, which would not affect these foundations; nor is it probable that a feeble colony of returning exiles could have accomplished works like these. **There seems therefore little room for hesitation in referring them back to the days of Solomon**, or rather of his successors; who, according to Josephus, built up here immense walls, “immovable for all time.” Ages upon ages have since rolled away; yet these foundations still endure, and are immovable as at the beginning. Nor is there aught in the present physical condition of these remains, to prevent them from continuing as long as the world shall last. It was the temple of the living God; and, like the everlasting hills on which it stood, its foundations were laid “for all time.”²²⁹ – Edward Robinson

²²⁸ Robinson. *Biblical Researches*, 418.

²²⁹ Robinson. *Biblical Researches*, 427-8.

That's a clear affirmation by Robinson that Solomon probably built the Temple Mount. He also associated the underground vaults in the southeast corner with Solomon. He called the Pool of Siloam the King's Pool (*in reference to Solomon*). And Robinson said the Pools of Solomon and the connecting aqueducts were originally his work.²³⁰ Thus taken altogether, Robinson certainly believed that he was looking at many of the works of Solomon.

The lower part of this wall in several places is composed of very large hewn stones, which at once strike the eye of the beholder as ancient; **as being at least as old as the time of Herod, if not of Solomon.** The upper part of the wall is everywhere obviously modern; as is the whole wall in many places.²³¹

– Edward Robinson

And it would have been great if he had stopped there, but he didn't. He may have been the first person to introduce the name of Herod the Great as the latest possible builder for the great ashlars of the Temple Mount walls. It wasn't a serious proposal. It was more of a casual statement setting an outer limit for the structure's construction date, and he later even discredited the possibility, as we read in the first quote. Nevertheless, he may have unintentionally opened the door to debate the issue. He also introduced the idea that when Josephus said the enclosure was four stadia square, he was referencing the outer enclosure wall instead of the inner soreg wall.²³² We discussed earlier how Josephus used two measurements when referencing the temple, 4 *stadia* and 6 *stadia*, so the shorter circuit has to be a reference to the inner soreg, not the walls of the outer court. Nevertheless, many people would later follow his suggested reading of the text.

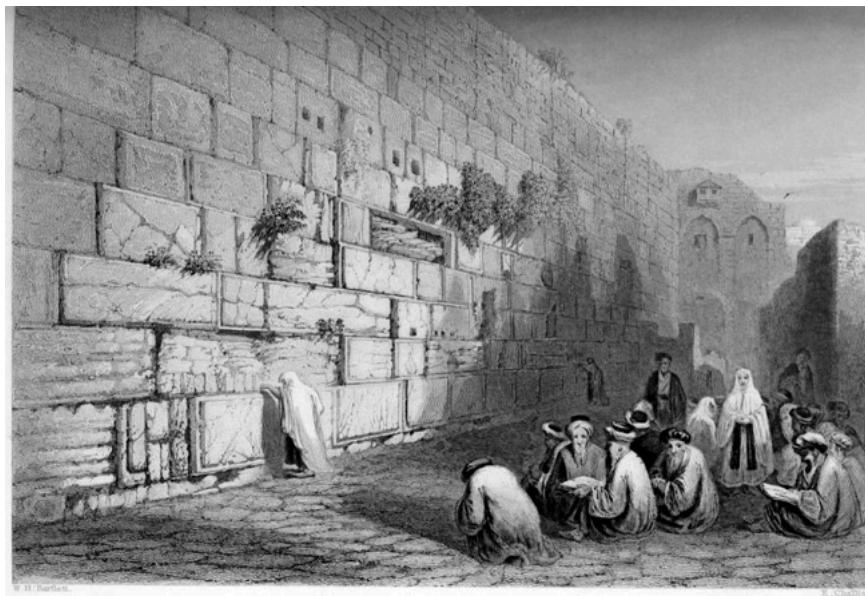
²³⁰ Robinson. *Biblical Researches*, 446, 504, and 516.

²³¹ *Ibid.* 343.

²³² *Ibid.* 419. The soreg was the area for Jews only that was inside the Temple Mount.

William Henry Bartlett—Doubts the Jews Could Have Used Arches, but Affirms the Solomonic Foundations of the Golden Gate, 1844

One of the early explorers of the Holy Land and a highly acclaimed artist recorded his observations in his book, *Walks About the City and Environs of Jerusalem* (1844). He wasn't a scholar, but he was an amazing artist. He was also good friends with another early explorer of Jerusalem who was an architect and orientalist named Mr. Frederich Catherwood. Bartlett's sketches of the Holy Land were dearly loved, and that probably gave him more credibility than his academic preparation merited. He was persuaded by his friend Catherwood that arches weren't known in Solomon's day, and furthermore that the designs in use in the temple were Roman in character and could not be Jewish.



Jews' Place of Wailing, Jerusalem by W.H. Bartlett²³³

²³³ Bartlett, *Walks about the City*, drawing insert.

Thus, these two men were probably the earliest ones to suggest that Herod the Great built the whole of the Temple Mount. They came to that conclusion because the fine ashlars stones of the Temple Mount were also clearly from the same builder as Robinson's Arch, and he was unwilling to suppose that the Jews could have invented arches or used them at such an early time in history, i.e., before he believed they had been invented. Therefore, they concluded that it must have all been the work of Herod the Great.

[Speaking of Robinson's Arch as “the bridge”] If we refer the bridge itself to the age of Solomon, we are in contradiction with the belief that the use of the arch was not common till long afterwards, or we are compelled to suppose, that its earliest known instance is in the metropolis of a people who have most probably copied their architecture from that of other nations. Is it not more likely that both the remains of the bridge and the ancient wall, connected as they are with the subterranean vaults and gateways, are of the time of Herod, who rebuilt the temple and its appendages in a style of great splendor on the site of the old and inferior one of Zerubbabel?

We throw out this idea (which we think will be confirmed by referring to Josephus's account of the rebuilding by Herod) with hesitation, being unwilling to differ from the learned Dr. Robinson on this or any other point connected with the antiquities of Jerusalem. It would be far more interesting, indeed, could we view these stones as relics of the time of Solomon; and we might be justified in supposing that the bridge was added at a later period than the wall itself, which might thus be of very high antiquity; though, from the manner in which it is attached to the wall, we should rather refer both to the same builders.²³⁴ – W.H. Bartlett

²³⁴ Bartlett, *Walks about the City*, 138-9.

So here is a quote of Mr. Catherwood that Bartlett published in his book, but remember that they were looking at the Temple Mount before any excavations had been performed. In this excerpt, he is declaring his belief that Herod built the things above ground because of the style of their architecture. Notice also that he clearly recognizes that the walls, the arch, the Golden Gate, and the southern Huldah Gate (that is underneath al-Aksa) were all from the same builder, which is true, but it wasn't Herod. Nonetheless, he still believes that Solomon's work must be there, and he supposes that the presently visible stonework must be resting on Solomon's foundations down below. This shows that he too understood that Josephus was saying that Solomon's foundations were the ones that were "for all time immovable."

... the arches at the southeast angle, built evidently to make that part of the area level with the rest, are probably of the time of Herod, as I do not suppose arches were in use in the time of Solomon, however far back the mere invention of the arch may go. Dr. Robinson states his belief that they are of the time of Solomon, from the angles of the piers being beveled. What proof of antiquity is to be seen in this I am at a loss to conjecture. The springing-stones of the arch, at the southwest angle, and the Golden Gate, and that under al-Aksa are probably of the same period... With regard to the age of such portions of these enclosing walls as now remain, we would finally observe, that although upon the grounds before stated, we should be inclined to refer their erection to Herod; yet they must, in any case, rest upon the massive and indestructible foundations of Solomon, described by the Jewish historian as calculated to endure for ages.²³⁵ – Mr. F. Catherwood

Finally, he clearly saw the potential antiquity of the Golden Gate, and yet, based on his understanding of the style of its architecture,

²³⁵ Bartlett, *Walks about the City*, 163-6.

he believed it had to be of more modern construction. Nevertheless, he believed that the origins of the gate were probably correct in their present location based on the massive stones that are incorporated into its construction, meaning he recognized it was probably from the First Temple.

[Golden Gate] Its exterior, as shown in the annexed cut, presents two archways of Roman character, resting on capitals of the same workmanship, filled up with Saracenic masonry, and presenting a singular piece of patchwork... The interior length of the gateway is about seventy feet, by a breadth of thirty-five. The walls are of great solidity, being eleven feet in thickness on each side, and the outside walls are decorated with pilasters and entablature in the same style. As I before stated, the gateway under the mosque el-Aksa is evidently of the same architecture, and connected with the same general design.* [*Note: We are quite unable to decide the question, whether these gateways are really those of the ancient temple, or erected by Hadrian at a later period. Upon the first supposition we are met with this difficulty—how they should have escaped so completely the general wreck of the building and its courts. On the other hand, their extent and massiveness seem greater than we might expect in Hadrian's erection of a provincial city. May they not have been rebuilt by him on the foundation of the original temple gates, of which the more solid masonry might have escaped destruction?] ²³⁶
 – W.H. Bartlett

Bartlett could have answered his own question about the Golden Gate if he had reread Josephus' description of the destruction of Jerusalem, where Josephus specifically mentioned that the eastern and southern gates were spared. And although it also says the gates were later burned with fire, they were stone. ²³⁷ Plus, it would

²³⁶ Bartlett, *Walks about the City*, 158-60.

²³⁷ Josephus. *Wars*, 6.5.2.

make no sense for Josephus to record that the gates were spared if they really didn't survive the destruction.

In conclusion, we see that Bartlett and Catherwood look to be the ones that really opened the door to begin doubting whether the Temple Mount in Jerusalem could be attributable to Solomon. In summing up what he found, Bartlett gave scant encouragement that Solomon's works had survived, seeing mostly Islamic architecture dominating what was visible in that day. To be fair, though, most of the sanctuary was still buried in those days, but his sentiments were quite influential and carried on into the future, even after major excavations were later able to take place.

To sum up our examination—of the time of Jewish glory under Solomon there are but few vestiges, of the long interval between his reign and that of Herod, nothing that we are able to identify—of the works of this splendid tyrant, there remain several interesting relics; such as the tower of Hippicus, and, unless we suppose them to be of a more ancient date, the temple wall and bridge. The Roman architecture of Hadrian is swept away, if we are not to refer the Golden Gate to that period; and there are few traces of the Byzantine, of Constantine, Justinian, and the early ages of Christianity. The principal part of the existing city is of Saracenic architecture, with later additions by the Turks.²³⁸ — W.H. Bartlett

George Williams Also Sees Solomon, but Follows Bartlett in Questioning Masonry of the Arch, 1845

When one examines the writings of these early explorers, it is easily discovered that they did not all agree on what work should be properly attributed to Solomon, but they were certainly all fully aware of the issues under debate. To demonstrate that point,

²³⁸ Bartlett, *Walks about the City*, 53.

here is what George Williams wrote in justification for his own two-volume book on Jerusalem, called *The Holy City*, that he published in 1845. He claimed that Edward Robinson was making erroneous conclusions based on insufficient evidence and was attempting to overturn “catholic antiquity” using nineteenth century observations. Williams was so affected and concerned about Robinson’s conclusions that he had to make his own investigation into the history and archaeology of Jerusalem and then ultimately published his own work on the subject to refute Robinson.

I do not hesitate to declare that one object of the present volume is to expose the fallacy of many conclusions, argued out very often on insufficient premises, or in contravention of historical or topographical phenomena, by the author of the *Biblical Researches in Palestine* [Edward Robinson], in the hope that the consideration of facts, which he has either overlooked or neglected, may prove, what some might imagine requires no demonstration, that the evidence of a partial witness of the nineteenth century is insufficient against the voice of catholic antiquity. My motive I need not be ashamed to avow.²³⁹ – George Williams

Ironically, he simply did the same thing (*making erroneous conclusions based on insufficient evidence*), according to his own views and biases that were themselves much more in error and self-contradicting. On the one hand, Williams, too, was fully convinced that Solomon was the builder of the Temple Mount and had his temple there, and yet on the other, he was looking for the evidence of the later constructions of the Byzantine Emperors, like Justinian, based on purely speculative arguments of style or the supposed origins of certain architectural features. Williams was convinced by the argument of Fredrich Catherwood, who William Bartlett quoted

²³⁹ Williams, *The Holy City*, vi-vii.

in his book, that arches were not in use in the days of Solomon, and consequently Robinson's arch must be more modern. He therefore disagreed heartily with Edward Robinson that the southern end of the Temple Mount could be of Jewish origin and built by Solomon. Furthermore, Williams was convinced that even the Golden Gate must be of the time of Justinian because he believed the testimony of an artist (*a reference to W.H. Bartlett & Catherwood*) that the style of the upper arches could only be Roman.

[Golden Gate] But the architecture is Roman, supposed by an artist to be of the same date as the works which I have ascribed to Justinian, I am in a fair way to be crushed beneath the weight of my own argument. That its architecture is decidedly Roman, I cannot hesitate to admit. But it is indisputably of the same period as the Roman remains on the south.²⁴⁰

[Speaking of the Temple Mount] This site has the singular good fortune to be the only one of all the sacred localities in Jerusalem whose identity has not been disputed in modern times. It is universally agreed that the hill now occupied by the mosque of Omar and its surrounding courts, is "the Mountain of the Lord's house," though the ingenuity of travelers has been exercised in attempts to lay out the ground, and determine the exact position of the temple.²⁴¹ – G. Williams

Because Williams believes the style of the gate must be Roman, he is convinced it must have been built after Solomon. But he couldn't decide when it was built, either, because he also recognized that it was probably contemporary with the whole southern end of the Temple Mount enclosure. After discussing the idea that it could have been built by Justinian, he recalls the proposal of Dr. Robinson that it could have been built by Emperor

²⁴⁰ Williams, *The Holy City*, 342.

²⁴¹ Williams, *The Holy City*, 15.

Hadrian and Mr. Catherwood's suggestion that it was built by Herod before offering up his own suggestion that it could have been built by Herod Agrippa.²⁴² And at the heart of the confusion is this steady belief that classical architecture could not have ever been Jewish. Fortunately, we can finally find something to agree with Williams about. He is in full agreement that the Pools of Solomon and the great pool at the southern end of the Gihon Spring are both of great antiquity and were built by Solomon.

Proceeding now up the Valley of Hinnom, we arrive at the large pool, commonly called "Birket es-Sultan," marked in modern plans as "the Lower Pool of Gihon," without any warrant whatever. It is beyond all doubt an ancient pool, as a comparison with the Pools of Solomon, south of Bethlehem, would prove.²⁴³

Now Etam, or Etham, Josephus tells us, was the name of that place where the pleasure gardens of the great king Solomon were situated; and Holy Scripture would teach us to look for the gardens in the neighborhood of the pools, which were constructed with a view to the gardens, as Solomon himself informs us. It is a most gratifying fact, that not only has the name of this interesting locality been perpetuated among the natives to this day, but the very spot is still marked by gardens, the largest and most luxuriant that are to be met with in the whole of the mountain region of Judea.²⁴⁴ – G. Williams

And thus, we see that the early explorers were from the beginning quite divided in their thinking about the ancient origins of the principal sites of interest in Jerusalem regarding Solomon, even though none of them doubted that Solomon was real or that he built many grand structures.

²⁴² Williams, *The Holy City*, 342-3.

²⁴³ Williams, *The Holy City*, 410.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 413.

The Reverend J.A. Spencer Rightly Deduces Only Solomon Had the Necessary Workforce, 1850

To this list of early explorers we may add the Reverend J.A. Spencer, who adeptly made the case for Solomon's construction of the Temple Mount walls in support of Edward Robinson. He recognized the simple logic that only Solomon truly had the wealth and workforce required to build with such megalithic stonework in Israel. Hopefully, such a simple and obvious observation will also be impressed upon all the readers of this book.

[Speaking of the Western Wall and Robinson's Arch] I went to look at this spot, and to gaze upon the remains of the wall which Dr. Robinson and others attribute to the era of Solomon; and if I may venture an opinion, not without reason. The massive stones, of themselves alone, point back to a period of great antiquity, and unless we refer the erection of so grand a work to the time of Solomon, I know not when, or by whom, it could have been accomplished; for there has never been, since his days, an era of wealth and prosperity sufficient to enable the Jews to devote time and labor to such undertakings as these.²⁴⁵ – Rev. J.A. Spencer

M. de Saulcy Attributes the Fine Masonry of the Temple Mount to Jewish Construction, 1854

Louis Félicien de Saulcy (M. de Saulcy) was another early explorer of Jerusalem under the reforms that were enacted late in the rule of the Ottoman Empire over Palestine. He made the very true and important declaration that the type of stonework exhibited in the Temple Mount is unique and must therefore be Jewish. Here is what he wrote about the masonry of the Western Wall.

²⁴⁵ J. A. SPENCER. *The East: Sketches of Travel in Egypt and the Holy Land*, G.P. Putnam: New York (1850): 279-80.

Up to a height of more than 12 meters (about 39 ft), the original building has remained entire; regular courses of fine stones, perfectly squared, but with an even border standing out as a kind of framework, enclosing the joints, rise over each other to within two or three yards from the top of the wall. A moment's inspection is enough to ascertain, without any doubt, that the Jewish tradition is positively correct; a wall like this has never been constructed either by Greeks or Romans. We have evidently here a sample of original Hebraic architecture.²⁴⁶ – M. de Saulcy

M. de Saulcy was later criticized for mistakenly identifying the tomb of Queen Helena of Adiabene as the Tomb of the Kings (of Judah), a name the site still retains. But I don't think his candid observations can be so easily dismissed. His point that "a wall like this has never been constructed either by Greeks or Romans" is still a valid one. Based on the work of Herod at Caesarea, his palaces, the Herodium, and Masada, there is no stonework like that seen at the Temple Mount. And there is no place quite like it in Rome or Greece, either, even though they do obviously have some amazing temples. The problem with his comments, especially at that time, was that they challenged the accepted dogma that classical architecture arose from the Greeks, and this would mean that instead it was borrowed from the Jews.

Dr. James Barclay Identifies Many Structures as Solomon's, 1858

In the mid-1800s, there were no archaeologists *per se*; there were learned men who made a study of Jerusalem and the Holy Land in general because they were fascinated by it. One of those men was

²⁴⁶ M. de Saulcy (edited by Count E. de Warren), *Narrative of a Journey round the Dead Sea, Vol. II* (1854): 100-1, found in E. Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored* (1864): 72.

James Turner Barclay, who wrote *The City of the Great King; or Jerusalem as it was, as it is, and as it is to be*, published in 1858. He clearly sees the work of Solomon represented in the ruins that were visible.

The east end of the palace was connected with the Temple by that cyclopean bridge so often mentioned by Josephus, spanning the Tyropoeon and forming a noble highway between Moriah, the colossal remains of which are still to be seen at its abutment against the Temple wall—the highway, or "ascent" of Solomon, so much admired by the Queen of Sheba.²⁴⁷

At the southwest corner these colossal blocks of stone are found still larger than those at the other corners, as might be reasonably inferred from the vicinity of the immense bridge, probably just as they were placed by the architect of Solomon or his immediate successor.²⁴⁸

Substructions of Southeast Corner—Solomons Stables. The substructions under the southeast corner of the Haram are doubtless alluded to by Josephus in describing the construction of the Temple wall. The declination of the hill being greater here than elsewhere, it was found more advantageous to bring it to a general level, by erecting vaults upon lofty columns, than by filling up either with solid masonry, or by earth as in the case of the narrow ravines...

The keenest controversies have been waged about these substructions, which are undoubtedly of the highest antiquity, and pre-eminently possess the peculiar features of Jewish architecture... Judging from appearances, these piers may all be ascribed to Solomon or his immediate successors, though the vaults are apparently more modern.²⁴⁹

— James Turner Barclay

²⁴⁷ James Turner Barclay. *The City of the Great King; or Jerusalem as it was, as it is, and as it is to be*. Philadelphia: James Challen & Sons (1858): 440.

²⁴⁸ Barclay, *City of the Great King*, 492.

²⁴⁹ Barclay, *City of the Great King*, excerpts from 503-9.

Furthermore, Barclay made the same obvious assertion proposed in this book, which is that the Damascus Gate certainly predates Hadrian (or any Romans) and is clearly contemporary with the construction of the Temple Mount. He also identified it as Nehemiah's "Old Gate."

Remains at Damascus Gate. The very ancient, massive, and characteristically Jewish remains found in the two towers on each side of the Damascus Gate, indisputably indicate that spot as a portion of the "Second Wall." Their semblance between the architecture of the outer Temple wall (which was undoubtedly built either by Solomon or his immediate successors) and the lower portions of the Damascus Gate towers (and also of the wall for some distance on each side), is so very striking, that it cannot fail to arrest the attention of the most superficial observer, and produce the conviction that they are the works of the same age and of one common system. The Gate of Damascus, without doubt, is identical with the "Old Gate" of Nehemiah, and in the accompanying representation of the lower room on the east of the gate, the reader has before him the best specimen of ancient Jewish mural structure that the battering ram and tooth of time have spared to us.²⁵⁰ – James Turner Barclay

But Barclay had more insights to share. He astutely recognized that the al-Sakhra stone underneath the Dome of the Rock could not be the location of the Jewish temple because its surface is not flat—as a threshing floor must be. And so, it is good to see that others have also made the same obvious observation for the purpose of determining the temple's former location.

[Speaking of al-Sakhra under the Dome of the Rock] The belief that this rock is the identical threshing floor of Araunah, the

²⁵⁰ Barclay, *City of the Great King*, 132-3.

Jebusite, is almost universally entertained; and could it be identified as such, would be decisive as to the general location of the "House of the Lord God," but that it is that memorable spot is improbable in the highest degree. For it is by no means level enough for such a purpose—being considerably higher in the middle than elsewhere and sloping irregularly in different directions.²⁵¹ – James Turner Barclay

Barclay represents yet another voice who unreservedly accepted the assertion that the Pools of Solomon were indeed constructed by him, as well as the large pool just south of the Gihon Spring, which was uncovered at the City of David National Park. In Barclay's time it was called the Birket es-Sultan, or King's Pool.

And it is certainly probable in the highest degree that Solomon himself is the author of these waterworks between Jerusalem and Etham which Josephus informs us (Ant. viii. vii: 3) was "a certain place, about fifty furlongs distant from Jerusalem, which is called Etham very pleasant it is in fine gardens, and abounding in rivulets of water."²⁵²

To this conclusion also, the name by which alone it is designated by the natives, significantly points to Birket es-Sultan, or King's Pool. And that this is a very ancient pool, and indeed one of Solomon's construction, is still further evident from a comparison of its general design, structure, and appearance with those of Etham, acknowledged to be his on all sides being made unlike all others, but identically like them, by clearing away the soil, erecting two cross-walls (the lower very massive, the upper rather slight), connecting them by side-walls, scarping the shelving ledges of rock on its sides, and plastering the whole over with water cement.²⁵³ – J.T. Barclay

²⁵¹ Barclay, *City of the Great King*, 242.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 317.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 326.

And Barclay, a contemporary of both Robinson and Bartlett, defended the Solomonic attribution of the Temple Mount and Robinson's Arch and argued against Bartlett's assertion that arches had not been invented in the time of Solomon. He cited an arch that was found at Solomon's Pools, which everyone at that time generally agreed was from the time of Solomon, and some ancient examples of other arches that were just being discovered at that time as proof that arches were in use in antiquity in Egypt and Assyria. How much like today when some scholar persists with false arguments out of pride or an ideological bias, even though the evidence to refute their argument is widely available. The strange thing is that even though there were scholars fighting for the truth about Solomon, who had a lot of the right evidence to support their case, ultimately the arguments fell on deaf ears.

[Speaking of the Tyropœon bridge that connected to Robinson's Arch on the western side of the Temple Mount] The antiquity of the structure to which these ruins belonged, has been a subject of much discussion from the period when Dr. Robinson first called attention to the subject, and suggested their connection with the bridge so frequently mentioned by Josephus and generally ascribed to Solomon, down to the present time. This high antiquity, however, is not universally conceded; but questioned, mainly because certain archaeologists have denied the discovery—or at least the practical use—of the arch at a period farther back than the sixth century before Christ. But as no one questions that the large reservoirs at El Burak, called Solomon's Pools, are really the work of that monarch, and of course were constructed about 1000 years before the Christian era, the architecture of these works ought to have an important bearing upon the decision of this question. Having, after long awaiting an opportunity, at last succeeded in exploring the room underneath the lowest of these pools, and also that of the "Fountain Sealed," by whose waters they are mainly supplied, I was delighted to find as veritable an arch as ever was made—

and with a true keystone, too—and not only arches but vaults! This objection is, therefore, no longer tenable. Arches of a still higher antiquity have also been lately discovered in Egypt and Assyria. **Neither their great antiquity nor their Solomonic origin need therefore be any longer called in question.**²⁵⁴

— Dr. James Turner Barclay

Ermete Pierotti Wrote About Extant Works of Solomon, 1864

Ermete Pierotti was another early explorer who strongly supported the idea that the fine ashlars of the Temple Mount were made by Herod, not Solomon. He was also a friend of George Williams, who assisted Pierotti in preparing his book, *Jerusalem Explored*. And so, we see that the circle of scholars in those early days who supported the Herodian narrative were all connected. Nevertheless, like Williams, Pierotti remained convinced that many of the works of Solomon were still present, despite not believing the massive stones of the arch and Temple Mount could have been built by him.

I have found fragments of the age of Solomon in the foundations of houses, in the walls of the Pool of Bethesda, and in the eastern and southern boundary walls of the Haram.²⁵⁵

Now the surface of the *Haram*, at the present time, is divided into three stages of different levels. The highest is the rock *es-Sahkarah* (*al-Sakrah*); unquestionably the summit of Mount Moriah, which, doubtless, was left standing in a conspicuous position, as a perpetual memorial to posterity of the spot, where David offered the sacrifice, which God had so mercifully accepted. On this, then, I place the altar of burnt offerings.

²⁵⁴ Barclay, *City of the Great King*, 102.

²⁵⁵ Ermete Pierotti. *Jerusalem Explored*. London: Bell and Daldy (1864): 24.

The platform of the present mosque is to be regarded as the space leveled by Solomon to support the House itself, with the Inner Court of the Priests, and the Great or Outer Court, occupied by the people, during the performance of the sacred rites. The lower plateau of the Haram has been formed by the made ground constructed by Solomon; which was afterwards extended, especially at the time of Herod, to make a large and convenient space round the Temple; and was at that time called the Court of the Gentiles.²⁵⁶ – Ermete Pierotti

Pierotti was one of the first to be able to conduct excavations at the eastern wall of the Temple Mount. And based on what he saw, he decided that the foundations of the whole eastern wall had to be of Solomonic origin.

... the Mohammedan cemetery is reached, which occupies almost the whole of the high narrow plateau running parallel to the east wall of the Haram, along the Kidron Valley. I consider the foundation of the whole line of wall, from the northeast to the southeast corner, to be the work of Solomon; being led to this conclusion by a series of observations, carried on when graves were dug against the wall, and by excavations which I made with the help of the keepers of the cemetery, whenever I could do it without exciting suspicion and arousing the fanaticism of the Mohammedans.²⁵⁷ – Ermete Pierotti

Pierotti also recognized Jewish stonework within the Golden Gate but believed it had been substantially rebuilt by Hadrian in the same location as the original gate. Pierotti, like his other friends, was fully convinced by the argument that the style of the outer stonework must be Roman. He also believed it was the gate that Jesus entered on Palm Sunday. But Pierotti's most helpful

²⁵⁶ Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored*, 88.

²⁵⁷ Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored*, 66.

observation was that the stones inside the gate were calcined and crumbling because of the action of fire. Rather than suggesting that the gate was rebuilt, it confirms the gate was not destroyed but was burned with fire, just like Josephus said.

Passing through the entrance [of the Golden Gate], we find the piers and architraves of the doors composed of immense blocks, six in number, which resemble Jewish work. Their state of decay shows their antiquity, and they must have been exposed to the action of fire, being calcined and crumbling; for otherwise, from their great size and sheltered situation, they ought to have been in good preservation.²⁵⁸ – Ermete Pierotti

And like all the explorers before him, Pierotti assigned the Pools of Solomon and the origins of the aqueduct that brought the water from there to Jerusalem to Solomon. Unfortunately, this surprising early consensus did not last long into the 20th century.

[Speaking of the Pools of Solomon] In these walls, and especially in their lower parts, very ancient Jewish work is seen, which may be assigned to the reign of Solomon; not the slightest trace of mortar is visible, and where the wall has been wantonly injured, pieces of iron appear with the holes in the stones for clamps.²⁵⁹

According to my opinion, it was Solomon that ordered and executed the important work of bringing the water from Etham into Jerusalem by means of a conduit; which is indeed generally attributed to him, though it is called by a few that of Pontius Pilate. The primary design of this undertaking was unquestionably that the Temple and its precincts might not suffer from a lack of water. It is very remarkable that neither the Bible nor Josephus make express mention of this; but it is

²⁵⁸ Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored*, 68-9.

²⁵⁹ Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored*, 248.

probable that all the pools, now existing at Etham, are referred to in Ecclesiastes; and Josephus informs us that the summer palace of Solomon was at the town of Etham, in the neighborhood of Bethlehem, fifty stadia from Jerusalem. Perhaps he did not describe the waterworks, because he considered them well-known. However, it is certain that history does not afford us any positive data for ascribing these constructions to Solomon; but the magnitude of the work, and tradition, induce me to attribute them to him.²⁶⁰

It is impossible to suppose that these can be the work of any of the conquerors of Palestine, for none of them would have undertaken a work of such magnitude, especially as their mission has always been rather to destroy than to build; neither can we attribute them to Herod, on account of the silence of Josephus, who mentions all his chief works; so that we naturally assign them to the epoch of Solomon. The ability of the engineer who constructed these works is shown even more in the aqueduct than in the pools, as it falls and rises, winding through valleys and hills on its way from the castellum, until, after a course of about 40,000 feet, it empties itself into the great reservoir in the Valley of Gihon, not far from, and on the north of, the Birket es-Sultan (the ancient Lower Pool), where its waters were allowed to settle. Here the aqueduct was formerly divided into two branches, whereof the one flowed into the pool below, and the other, after crossing the valley, still rises up the side of Sion, and having skirted the eastern slopes above the Tyropoeon valley, crosses it and enters Moriah, as I have already described.²⁶¹ – E. Pierotti

He also included the Pool of Siloam as being constructed in the same period, and therefore also by Solomon. Again, he was able to do excavations at these sites, which solidified his conviction.

²⁶⁰ Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored*, 246.

²⁶¹ Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored*, 249.

The positions of the fountain of Siloam and the pool of Solomon (*Pool of Siloam*) cannot be doubted. As the latter is filled with earth, I was obliged to make excavations, in order to ascertain whether it still retained marks of its antiquity. I found that the wall on the east side, especially in its lower part, was of ancient Jewish work; so also were parts of the northwest side and the east extremities of the other two walls. The pool is from 7½ to 10 feet deep on the southeast and 14 feet on the northwest. I have no doubt that it is as old as the time of Solomon, and I think it may be the one named by the prophet Isaiah, “Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the waters of the old pool, but yet have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago.” (Isaiah 22:11)²⁶² – Pierotti

Pierotti also wrote about another interesting observation of M. de Saulcy regarding the monument known as the Tomb of Pharaoh’s Daughter, which he attributed to an Egyptian-style monument and connected to Solomon as a construction for his wife, as the name would suggest, and with which Pierotti agreed.

[*Speaking of Silwan & the Tomb of Pharaoh’s Daughter*] At the north end of the village is a monolithic monument, whose architecture resembles the Egyptian. It is a square in plan, and is entirely detached from the rock. Within are two chambers. M. de Saulcy considers it to be an Egyptian chapel, constructed by Solomon to receive the remains of his wife. Pharaoh’s daughter. To this opinion I incline, as I cannot find any more satisfactory explanation of it.²⁶³ – Pierotti

Pierotti also believed the so-called Solomon’s Quarries were truly from the time of Solomon. He recognized that the remains of

²⁶² Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored*, 31.

²⁶³ Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored*, 190.

quarried stones from there are a match for the stones of the Temple Mount.

[Speaking of Solomon's quarries found east of the Damascus Gate, also known as Zedekiah's Cave] I have frequently measured the cavities from which blocks have been removed, and also the stones themselves which have been left partially attached to the rock, or which are lying on the ground, and found them correspond perfectly with many large blocks built into the east side of the Haram wall, more especially in its lower parts. Moreover, the mineral character of the stones is the same; so that I am fully persuaded that these caverns were made by Solomon, when he built the Temple, and were afterward enlarged by Herod for the same purpose, and by Agrippa for the new or third lines of walls, which he was obliged to leave unfinished. The stones quarried here well deserve the term applied to them by Josephus, that they were 'exceeding white.'

²⁶⁴ – Pierotti

Finally, Pierotti also believed that the area known now as Solomon's Stables was originally constructed by Solomon due to the immensity of its foundations; however, the style of the masonry he was still inclined to attribute to Roman or "Herodian" work. His statements really appear contradictory, though. On the one hand, the project is admittedly too large to have been Herodian or Roman, and yet on the other he is not ready to ascribe all the fine bordered ashlars to Solomon. Thus, he is forced to leave open Solomonic origins while overlooking the necessity of attributing most of the construction to him.

[Speaking of the underground vaults in the southeast corner of the Temple Mount] I believe that this immense building was originally constructed by Solomon, in order to increase the

²⁶⁴ Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored*, 227.

area of the platform of the Temple; and at the same time to contain water, which was used in such quantities in the service of the Sanctuary; the height of the vault, measured near the southeast corner, is 39 feet above the floor of rock... The whole building has evidently undergone restoration at different periods; as is shown by its irregular shape and the condition and different kinds of masonry of the present walls. Of these the east and south walls (being part of the Haram wall) are Herodian work; at the southeast corner, by the chamber of the cradle of Christ, which we have already visited, we see Roman work in the inner wall and in some masonry on the north, at which point it is evident that the size of the vault has been diminished. Some other small walls in the interior belong to a much later period, perhaps that of the Crusades. The plinths of the numerous columns are rusticated in the Herodian style, but their shafts are Roman. Their length diminishes towards the north owing to the rise of the rocky floor towards the main mass of the hill on that side; which however is generally not visible from within, as it is faced with masonry. The whole vaulting, supported by semicircular arches, is Roman. I consider therefore that the last restoration was made by order of Justinian, but cannot allow that the whole building dates from that time, because it is not likely that his historian, Procopius, would have omitted to mention so stupendous a work; nor would there have been any necessity for that Emperor to enlarge this part of the area of Moriah. From within, we plainly see the triple gate and the pointed arch, to which we drew attention during our circuit of the walls.²⁶⁵ – Pierotti

Warren and Wilson Find Phoenician Letters on the Stones, 1871

Captains Charles Wilson and Charles Warren discovered compelling epigraphic evidence to support the Solomonic origin

²⁶⁵ Pierotti, *Jerusalem Explored*, 77.

of the great bordered ashlar stones in the form of letters inscribed on the stones of the lower courses of the Temple Mount walls. As they dug down along the outside of the walls and approached the foundations that had been buried since the days of their original construction, they encountered quarry markings with Phoenician letters (which are the same as early Hebrew letters) made in red paint on some of the stones. The style of the writing would have normally been taken as a clear indication that it was from the eighth to tenth centuries BC. And yet, Warren proposes that the stone masons of Herod's day could have still been using Phoenician letter script in their work since the writing would have still been known at that time. However, it is far more likely to be from the time when the Phoenician letter script was in common use, e.g., 900 years earlier. Just because the script of the tenth century BC was known in the first century BC, it does not follow that Herod's builders were likely to be using it. There is a branch of archaeology that is related to the dating of writing called paleography. Certainly, it is an imperfect method, but it's unreasonable to suggest that there is no paleographic evidence to associate the Phoenician writing on the ashlar stones with Solomon. And mason marks have now been found on stones carved for Herod's mausoleum at the Herodium, but they used Hebrew letters that were contemporary for the first century.²⁶⁶ This provides positive evidence that Herod's masons probably did not use Phoenician script after all. Not only that, but Warren also said that the letters must have been painted on in the quarry before they were set in place, because the letters showed distinct signs that they were made before the stones were placed in situ.

The letters or characters are in red paint, apparently put on with a brush; the larger letters are 5 inches high. There are a

²⁶⁶ Esther Eshel. "The Hebrew and Aramaic Inscriptions from the Area of the Tomb at Herodium", *Herodium Final Reports of the 1972–2010 Excavations Directed by Ehud Netzer Volume I: Herod's Tomb Precinct*, IES (2015): 464-72.

few red splashes here and there, as if the paint had dropped from the brush. The general impression resulting from the examination of these marks is that they are the quarry marks, and were made before the stones were placed in situ. If this be the case, then the stones must have been dressed previously to their having been brought from the quarries.²⁶⁷ – Charles Wilson

This corroborates the account of the building of the temple that we read in Scripture. It doesn't say that the stones were marked at the quarry, but we can logically deduce they would have needed to be. If they were cut and finished on-site, then perhaps they could just be set directly into the correct spot by verbal direction, but not if they were finished in the quarry like the Bible says. Since the stones were cut-to-measure and finished in the quarry, they had to be marked so they would know where to place them.

The house, while it was being built, **was built of stone prepared at the quarry**, and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any iron tool heard in the house while it was being built. – 1 Kings 6:7

And above were costly stones, **stone cut according to measure**, and cedar. – 1 Kings 7:11 NASB

James Fergusson Believes the Southeast Corner of the Temple Mount Was Built by Solomon, 1878

Another early explorer who traveled to Jerusalem was James Fergusson, an architectural historian, who published his work in, *The Temples of the Jews and the Other Buildings in the Haram Area at Jerusalem* (1878). Fergusson demonstrated great common sense in his arguments for the construction of the southeast angle of the

²⁶⁷ Wilson, *Recovery of Jerusalem*, 139.

Temple Mount by Solomon. Since most of the excavations that were ever performed around the Temple Mount were mostly complete by then, his assessment of the evidence is still relevant today—for nothing has been revealed since then to refute his logical assertions that Solomon built its foundations.

[The southeast angle of the Temple Mount] Herod certainly built nothing in this angle, and we are thus reduced by a process of exhaustion to Solomon as the only historical person we know of who was at all likely to undertake such a work as this. When once it is suggested that this angle really is the “great tower that lieth out, even unto the wall of Ophel,” the whole thing becomes so clear, and everything fits so exactly into its place, that we feel at once that we have a new and fixed starting point for the topography of Jerusalem. It is not easy to determine how far the masons’ marks found on the lower courses of the wall and the so-called Phoenician pottery found in front of it may be used for fixing the date of these foundations. Their age seems to have been arrived at from very slender data, and if the date of the masonry depended on them alone, it might still be open to dispute. Fortunately, their evidence may almost be dispensed with. The historical and local evidence, combined with the character of the masonry, seems quite sufficient to settle the point. At the same time, it is satisfactory to find that there is nothing either in the inscriptions or the pottery that at all tends to invalidate this conclusion. On the contrary, their evidence, insofar as it goes, is a contribution towards the proof that the lower part of the masonry of this wall really is the work of Solomon.²⁶⁸ – James Fergusson

But again, we find that these early explorers all had different things that they thought were or were not made by Solomon. Unfortunately, Fergusson was also swayed by the style argument

²⁶⁸ James Fergusson. *The Temples of the Jews and the Other Buildings in the Haram Area at Jerusalem*, John Murray: London (1878): 41.

over other evidence regarding the Golden Gate. It came from a misplaced confidence that the classic style, thought of as Roman or Greek, could not have possibly been invented by Solomon. Educated people of his day had fully accepted the theory of the Greco-Roman origins of classical design by the late 1800s. To postulate that classical design really began with Solomon was pretty much inconceivable. Ultimately, he concluded the gate was built by Constantine, which introduced another flawed speculation to further confuse the discussions of his day. Nevertheless, his observation that the Golden Gate was largely intact is very helpful. Because, aside from the fire damage noted by Pierotti, he provides another vote of attestation that the gate does appear to have survived mostly unaltered, meaning the stones look to be in their original locations and were not rebuilt. If that is correct, then the gate is still mostly the way Solomon built it.

In itself, the Golden Gateway is one of the least altered buildings in Jerusalem. It has not been occupied and reoccupied by contending religions and adapted to their various purposes; and, except for a slight alteration in the roof, of no great importance, it remains substantially as it was originally erected.²⁶⁹ – James Fergusson

Charles Warren and Claude Conder Debate the Evidence for Solomon, 1884

But by the late 1800s, so many anomalies had been uncovered in the construction of the wall that many of the early explorers, the fathers of modern biblical archaeology, began to assume that the lower portion of the walls must be a mixture of many builders, just as the upper portions obviously were. And little by little, the

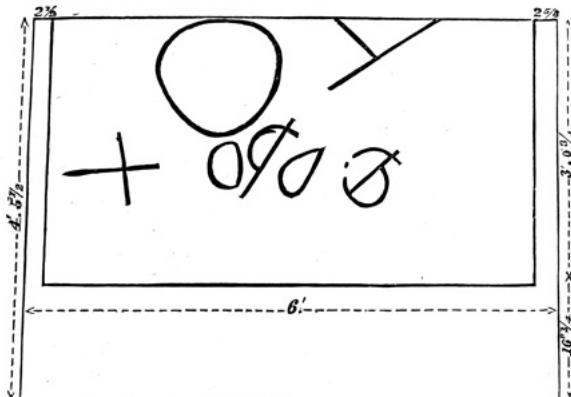
²⁶⁹ Fergusson, *The Temples of the Jews*, 229.

presumed areas attributable to Solomon were reduced. Charles Warren reported a change in the consensus in his day and expressed his belief that the southwest corner of the Temple Mount, from Barclay's Gate to the remaining Huldah Gate, was built by Herod the Great, based on the transition from rough masonry to smooth-faced masonry. We can also assume that he was following the belief that arches of the magnitude of Robinson's Arch could not have been made by Solomon. Furthermore, he considered it reasonable to assume that everyone up to Herod Agrippa's time had the ability to build with megalithic stones. But most importantly, Warren still maintained that Solomon built the southeast corner of the Temple Mount, as well as the area of the Wailing Wall. And he believed the southeast corner was the site of Solomon's palace.

The masonry at the southwest angle of the Sanctuary is now allowed by all classes of controversialists to be of the Herodian period. It extends as far as Barclay's Gate on the east side and as far as the Double Gate on the south side; beyond these points there is a change. The peculiarity of this portion of the Sanctuary wall is that it is built with drafted stones with rough projecting faces up to a certain height (Course P), whereas at the southeast angle and from Barclay's Gate to the Wailing Place, the drafted stones have their faces nicely worked throughout the wall from the foundation. The remains of a pavement have been found, running round the wall at the height of the termination of the drafted stones with rough faces, and the inference to be drawn is that this portion of the wall is of a construction later than the portions above mentioned; that is to say, that the portions about the Wailing Place and southeast angle were built before the time of King Herod, and that the southwest angle was the extension by King Herod... There is thus evidence of five distinct periods of construction, which probably succeeded each other in the following order:

1. The large stones with marginal drafts. Epoch from Solomon to Herod Agrippa.
2. The large plain-dressed stones, from Hadrian to Justinian.
3. The medium plain-dressed stones, sixth to eighth centuries.
4. The small stones with marginal drafts and projecting faces, ninth to twelfth centuries.
5. Small stones of various descriptions, recent. ²⁷⁰

It is the belief of most writers that Solomon's Palace stood on the site of the southern cloister of Herod's Temple Enclosure, and Sir Charles Warren believes the eastern part of the south wall of the Haram to be the original wall of the palace.²⁷¹
 — Capt. Charles Warren



STONE C OF SECOND COURSE OF EASTERN WALL.

Warren's example of a stone with typical Phoenician lettering²⁷²

²⁷⁰ Warren, *Survey of Western Palestine*, 173-5.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.* 97.

²⁷² *Ibid.* 151.

One of the reasons Charles Warren was persuaded that the southeast corner was built by Solomon was because of the Phoenician letters, made with a red paint on the great stones of the southeast corner (which he also wrote about in 1871).²⁷³ This presented strong epigraphic evidence that the letters were placed on the stones in the tenth century, when that lettering was primarily in use. By the first century, the letters of the Hebrew alphabet had changed significantly. However, Captain Conder was persuaded that since Phoenician lettering was still known in the first century, it could have been used by Herod's masons as well. *They hadn't yet found mason's marks on real Herodian stonework in Warren's day to refute that argument.* Thus, Captain Conder was persuaded that all the drafted masonry belonged to Herod's time and not Solomon's. And so the two captains, who had both seen the same evidence, were at odds in their conclusions.

The great drafted masonry of the Haram walls is all of one class to the foundation (with differences of finish according to position), and it is referred by the Duc de Vogüé entirely to the Herodian period. The discovery of Phoenician letters at the base of the wall near the southeast angle does not of necessity prove that this rampart was erected by Solomon, as the character was also in use in Herod's time. Captain Conder has followed De Vogue in supposing the present ramparts to have been erected from their foundation by Herod.²⁷⁴ – C. Warren

Captain Conder was following the notion championed by Melchior de Vogüé that Josephus should be understood as saying that Herod doubled the size of the Temple Mount and laid the foundations that were for all time immovable.²⁷⁵ And therefore, de Vogüé

²⁷³ *Ibid*, 151-2.

²⁷⁴ Warren, *Survey of Western Palestine*, 8.

²⁷⁵ Melchior de Vogüé, *Le Temple de Jérusalem*, Paris: Noblet & Baudry (1864): 21

joined the group that was in support of Herod the Great, and he began to convince others that the great stones of the Haram (Temple Mount) should be attributed to him, not Solomon. De Vogüé reasoned that Herod desired to surpass the glory of Solomon and that the “enlightened” Jews of Herod’s day (presumably referring to the Hellenistic Jews) had forgiven Herod for his non-Jewish origin, his name, his violations of Mosaic laws, and his love of the Romans. Moreover, de Vogüé believed that Herod, driven by an insatiable vanity, wanted to surpass Solomon, or at least associate himself with his glory. He believed that Herod saw in the reconstruction of the Temple a means of popularity in the present and fame in the future, and that he therefore decided to undertake the work to enhance the temple. However, since the Temple itself could hardly be expanded, he assumed that Herod’s great expansion was to build the massive retaining walls. But this is where he made a tragic mistake and misread Josephus.

First, logically, if Herod was truly obsessed with surpassing Solomon or at least doing something associated with his former glory, then there must have been much of Solomon’s work remaining in Herod’s day for him to admire! One can’t on one hand assume that Herod was trying to achieve some elevated status like Solomon, but on the other hand assume that there was nothing to be seen or admired that would make Herod feel that way. And one cannot say that Herod was simply obsessed with the Arthurian-type legends of Solomon that were common in his day. That would only make sense if Jerusalem were halfway around the world. For those that lived there, such legends would fall flat if nothing remained of the grandeur of his reign in Jerusalem. Plus, we already read that the New Testament affirms Solomon’s greatness and the existence of Solomon’s Portico in the first century, so there had to be magnificent remains of Solomon’s work still surviving in Herod’s day for him to envy. And therefore,

if we believe we can find the work of Herod, then there must also be the remains of Solomon's work still surviving today.

But no such arguments were voiced by Warren. Instead, Warren allowed himself to make some tenuous suppositions that the southern corners of the Temple Mount must have had different builders. This was presumably to preserve a part of the construction for Solomon, who he really believed must have built at least part of the Temple Mount. Not surprisingly, all the arguments that one might suppose should have come up to refute the idea that the southeast corner was built at a different time than the southwest corner did come up. And ultimately, they were resolved in favor of eliminating Solomon altogether and assigning everything to the time of Herod, as Captain Conder had already been convinced.

But the problem may have first begun when these early explorers were persuaded that Solomon couldn't have built Robinson's Arch because that technology didn't exist in the tenth century BC. They must have paid no attention to Dr. Barclay's defense of the use of the arch long before Solomon. And they didn't know much about Herod's other buildings yet, which were so poorly constructed by comparison; otherwise, they may have come to a better conclusion. Regardless, here is a discussion of their debate that may help illustrate the complexity of the arguments and explain how slowly the opinion of these early scholars was shifted to Herod.

Sir C. Warren is disposed to give different dates for different parts of the ancient Sanctuary wall for two principal reasons. First, because of the distinct style of the masonry north of the Golden Gate, west of the Double Gate, and on the west wall south of the Prophet's Gate, where the stones have rustic bosses with great projection. Secondly, because the master

course, which ran from the Double Gate to the southeast angle, is not found west of the Double Gate. With regard to these two arguments it may, however, perhaps be useful to remember, first, that in the three places where the rustic work occurs a valley intersects the east, the west, and the south walls of the Sanctuary respectively. It may be suggested that the ground was filled in in these valleys, both inside and outside the Sanctuary, above the level of the rough masonry, at the time of the construction of the walls, and that the pavement at this level at the Prophet's Gate and southwest angle belongs to the time of the building of the wall. In this case the rough-faced stones would have been left unfinished because they were never intended to be seen, and the drafts were only cut to ensure the fitting of the joints, which is so close that a knife can hardly be inserted between the stones. It would not on such a theory be necessary to suppose that the rougher masonry is of a different date than the smooth; but the masonry must in this case be later than the original Tyropœon Bridge. Secondly, as regards the master course, it may be remarked that this band of stone is not continued northwards along the east wall, any more than westwards from the Double Gate. It is replaced on the east by two ordinary courses; but the east wall (towards its south end) is supposed by Sir C. Warren to be of the same date with the south wall for two-thirds at least of its length towards the east. The argument drawn from the absence of the master course would affect the east wall as well as the western part of the south wall and the southern part of the west wall; remembering, however, the many irregularities of material, finish, and angular measurement in the Sanctuary walls, it does not perhaps seem possible to draw a very definite conclusion from the extent of the Great Course.²⁷⁶

— Capt. Claude Conder

²⁷⁶ Warren, *Survey of Western Palestine*, 242-4.

The Reverend James King Visits Jerusalem and Finds Solomonic Works, 1884

And while the debate over Solomon versus Herod is beginning to bloom, others continue to clearly see the evidence for Solomon. Rev. James King recorded a great account of a Jewish man named Dr. Frankl who visited the Holy City and who also understood Josephus' comment about the walls being immovable for all time to be speaking about Solomon, not Herod.

The following is an account of a visit to the Wailing Place by Dr. Frankl, a Jew, who visited the Holy City: "The Jews have a firman from the Sultan, which, in return for a small tax, ensures them the right of entrance to the Wailing Place for all time to come. The road conducted us to several streets, till, entering a narrow, crooked lane, we reached the wall, which has been often described. There can be no doubt that the lower part of it is a real memorial of the days of Solomon, which, in the language of Flavius Josephus, is immovable for all time. Its cyclopic proportions produce the conviction that it will last as long as the strong places of the earth.²⁷⁷ – Dr. Frankl

Rev. King was following the writings of the early explorers like Charles Warren and Captain Conder. And he added some additional information about a Phoenician writing expert who had reviewed the lettering found by Warren and Conder before his death, who attested to the likely age of the inscriptions.

[Speaking of the Phoenician writing found on the stones of the lower courses of the Temple Mount] The late Emanuel Deutsch was regarded as a student of the highest authority in the epigraphy of Phoenician inscriptions. Ashmunazar was a king

²⁷⁷ Rev. James King. *Recent Discoveries On The Temple Hill At Jerusalem*, The Religious Tract Society (1884): 108.

of Sidon, who died about 600 B.C., and his well-known sarcophagus bears a long Phoenician inscription. The fact that some of the painted marks on the substructures of the Temple Hill closely resemble similar marks on this antique coffin, affords a presumption in favor of their great age. Phoenicia was at the height of its glory in the days of Solomon, and the surviving vestiges of its ancient buildings date from the days of Hiram, the great mason king of Tyre, and contemporary of Solomon.²⁷⁸ – Rev. James King

Rev. King also recognized that the Pools of Solomon, the aqueducts themselves, and the cisterns found within the Noble Sanctuary (Temple Mount), that they filled, all had to be constructed at the same time. And therefore, even the platform itself of the sanctuary must have all been constructed at the same time and were the work of King Solomon.

There is abundant evidence to prove that Solomon constructed the magnificent reservoirs at the head of the Urtas Valley, south of Bethlehem, still known as Solomon's Pools. The same monarch also constructed the original aqueducts bearing water from the Pools to Jerusalem, and we may be sure that the reservoirs under the Temple Mount are coeval with the aqueducts themselves. We are thus led, both by external and internal evidence, to the conclusion that the large rock-cut excavations of the Noble Sanctuary are the works executed by King Solomon.²⁷⁹ – Rev. James King

J.L. Leeper Comments on Solomon, 1903

And here is one final explorer to Jerusalem, early in the twentieth century, named J.L. Leeper. He demonstrated in his writings that

²⁷⁸ King, *Recent Discoveries on the Temple Hill at Jerusalem*, 52.

²⁷⁹ King, *Recent Discoveries on the Temple Hill at Jerusalem*, 172.

he was fully aware of what had been written about the Temple Mount and the Holy Land up to his time, and he remained convinced of the general evidence that Solomon's works were still present at the Temple Mount, even if some of it had later been rebuilt. He also believed that both Solomon's Pools and Solomon's Quarries (near the Damascus Gate) were the work of Solomon. One of the more intriguing accounts he gave was of a jar believed to contain anointing oil from the time of Solomon that was taken back to London. It was found in a receptacle alongside the great southeast cornerstone (which weighed about 60 tons).

At the base of the southeast corner, imbedded in the native rock, was found the most interesting stone in the world, the chief cornerstone of the Hebrew sanctuary. It was found to be three feet eight inches high and fourteen feet in length; facing both ways, it bound the east and south walls together. It is finely dressed and polished except where it is hidden from view in the cutting, which would indicate that it had been prepared for the cornerstone. Alongside of it, in a rock-cut receptacle, was found a jar (now in the office of the Palestine Exploration Fund, London), which is believed to have contained the anointing oil used in connection with the laying of the cornerstone. This stone was probably laid with impressive ceremonies in the presence of King Solomon three thousand years ago. Sure and steadfast in its abiding position, it is a fit emblem of the Rock of Ages. Numerous Phoenician graffiti, incised or painted, were found upon the lower courses.²⁸⁰

— J.L. Leeper

How Dating Methods and Biases Lost Solomon

As one tries to wrestle with the enormous weight of the evidence that has been presented, the obvious question is, how could this

²⁸⁰ J. L. Leeper, "Remains of the Temple at Jerusalem," *The Biblical World* 22.5 (1903): 333-4.

have happened? But the answer is little by little, and by not holding firmly to the testimony of Scripture. People stopped looking for Solomon because over the last 150 years archaeologists have concluded that the later kings of Judah, the Hasmoneans, Herod, Hadrian, Constantine, Justinian, the Umayyads, the Abbasids, the Fatimids, the Crusaders, the Ayyubids, the Mamluks, Suleiman the Magnificent, and the later Ottomans—literally everyone except Solomon—were the great builders of Jerusalem. The evidence to say otherwise was just reinterpreted. And over time, everything one might suggest was built by Solomon was attributed to someone else. Hence, by the end of the nineteenth century, scholarship began to settle on the idea that Herod was the builder who best deserved the attribution of the beautiful lower stones of the Western Wall and similar such stones in and around Jerusalem. Even those that believed the biblical accounts about Solomon simply accepted the idea that the destructions of 586 BC and 70 AD had removed all traces of his work from the city and nearly the whole of Israel. And yet, archaeologists should know that while you can destroy a city, you can't really erase it. Nevertheless, scholars stopped pushing back and accepted it.

The beautifully dressed and jointed stones in the walls of the Haram Area and the lower courses of the Jews' Wailing-place, **usually assigned to the time of Herod**, stand unique in their character.²⁸¹ – Frederick Jones Bliss (1898)

Thus, the archaeological world that developed heading into the 20th century was fully convinced that the question of Solomonic origins was settled. Everything that has been done since then has essentially assumed Herodian origins, the very thing that was

²⁸¹ Frederick Jones Bliss. *Excavations at Jerusalem, 1894-1897*. Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund (1898): 279.

criticized for Solomon. But more importantly, the interpretations of the archaeological finds relevant to determining dates and ages were also calibrated to that assumption.

Which now brings us into modern biblical archaeology, where there are dating arguments that have been made to refute a tenth century origin for many of the things that I believe were clearly built by Solomon, and they cannot just be disregarded. But here's the problem: there are several established dating methods or conventions that are consistently biased in the direction of assigning younger dates to archaeological sites. For starters, in general, when it is deemed that there is a lack of sufficient evidence to indisputably assign an older date, a younger date will almost always prevail. And just as importantly, in those cases where the evidence is not overwhelming, the testimony of Scripture will generally not be accepted as sufficient evidence to tip the balance in favor of an older date, assuming the situation would agree with what is recorded in the Bible. However, in the case of extra-biblical testimony, like that of Josephus, for example, it is generally sufficient to establish a fact, even in the presence of minimal archaeological data. This is a clear form of bias, and it results from assigning a low value to the testimony of Scripture.

Second, there are many sites that have been assigned dates based on stylistic assumptions regarding their architecture, and as shown here in this book, many of those assumptions about when the classical styles first developed are probably wrong. The consequence is that the interpretations of many of the things that archaeological dates were developed from were also biased to a younger date.

Third, sites that are continuously inhabited tend to predominantly preserve dating references concentrated at the end of the period

of use, with only a small minority of the finds being related to its first establishment. That's because the refuse of the previous generations is continuously cleared away as the living spaces are maintained. This results in a significant bias towards assigning younger dates simply based on the volume of the dating references found. Because they are less frequently encountered, older samples may be considered incidental finds that predate the establishment of the city, rather than being understood to prove that the city was established for a long time.

Similarly, dates are also generally assigned based on the youngest provable date associated with the dating references found, which often means using the date of destruction. For example, a city that may have been inhabited for two centuries would generally be dated to its destruction layer, even though it was really two centuries older than that. Now, in cases where there are multiple destruction layers, then yes, the full date range of that period of civilization is preserved. However, the dates of destruction are not always reliably known, and it doesn't solve the problem of the city's founding or buildings that were built and rebuilt on the bedrock, rather than rebuilding on top of the rubble of the last destruction layer. This is a massive problem for many dating arguments in Israel, because there is an established bias towards dating based on the youngest item found. The logic is that an antique item from some other place could have been present in the town, making it look older than it was, but an item from the future could not have been there. Therefore, the younger date is thought to be surer than an older date. However, when a place is continuously inhabited for many years or when an old structure was repaired or rebuilt later, the ancient structure is often dated to the time of its last repair or rebuilding or to the final date of its occupation.

Another consistent bias is that while most dating references have wide general date windows, the ones for the periods during the kings of Israel and Judah have been assigned into narrow categories that follow the main events in Israel's history. However, the occurrence of the dating reference materials that have been assigned to those categories generally did not really stop and end within those same blocks of time. So, what does that mean? It means that pottery samples that truly appeared over a long period of time will be categorized into a section of time that was much shorter than their true period of usage, giving a false sense of specificity and narrowing the apparent period of occupation of the site. Furthermore, select pottery styles that were rare and had a very limited period of use, or that had epigraphic evidence for assignment to a particular king, for example, could be taken as the controlling dating references for the overall site. And again, such dating assignments are often made without giving much weight to what should be understood from the testimony of Scripture.

Pottery Dating

This brings us to some of the potential problems with pottery dating. While it must be clearly acknowledged that the pottery found at a site is important and it can be a very useful dating reference (especially when it is highly decorated or inscribed), the whole system of dating that has now been developed is subject to the danger of circularly reinforcing all the biases mentioned above. How so? Because even though the pottery is now very well studied and classified, many types of pottery are now placed in dating boxes that were developed under the assumptions mentioned above. That means the pottery at these sites has been thoroughly examined and assigned dates based on generally earlier dates that were in many cases already assigned to those locations. But then later, the same pottery can be referenced to prove the age of those

locations, even though the presumed dates of that pottery were developed from those sites to begin with. Nevertheless, pottery shards have become a universally accepted dating procedure that is now applied almost without question; however, most people are unaware of how imprecise and subjective its interpretation can really be. First, it requires a high level of expertise that is calibrated not on true knowable data, but on the experience and biases of one's teachers and the existing literature in a narrow field of subject matter experts who have a strong bias towards maintaining consensus. To help better explain and illustrate these challenges, here is an excerpt from a reference guide for dating the ancient pottery of Transjordan (the area of the Holy Land on the east side of the Jordan River).

When studying the many variations in pottery shapes, surface treatments, and technologies, several concepts must be understood.

First, while pottery forms constantly changed, they did not always improve. Each period had its mixture of the new and the old, the sophisticated and the mundane. The pottery of any particular period might be more, or less, "advanced" than its predecessors.

Second, each ancient pottery vessel—being custom-made by individuals—was invariably unique. Potters had their own styles, techniques, and traditions. While the archaeologist can speak generally of the ceramic corpus of a particular period, such generalization only approximates any given specific vessel.

Third, not all pottery was originally excavated with the same precision, nor were the various find spots all equally secure stratigraphically. This variability in the quality of the stratigraphy directly impacts the confidence with which the periodization based on such pottery can be held.

Fourth, it is also possible that since vessel styles and potters' traditions did not abruptly begin or end at the arbitrary limits of an archaeological period, a particular vessel could be actually more representative of a different period than the one in which it was found. While it is possible that a particular vessel was found in a specific stratigraphic context, the majority of known examples may have been dated to an earlier or later period.

Methodologically, archaeologists associate all artifacts (including pottery) with the latest (i.e., the youngest) period to which they can be dated. (This maxim is particularly important for transitional periods and for less archaeologically known periods.)²⁸² – R.E. Hendrix et al.

What we learn from such a clear assessment of pottery is that interpreting the dates of shards found at archaeological sites is often not as clear as the strength of the assertions that are made interpreting their dates would indicate. There are lots of variations and unknowns because pottery was handmade, and many styles were in use for hundreds if not thousands of years. And because of those uncertainties, even when pottery is found which would by itself suggest a later date, archaeologists still tend to “associate all artifacts (including pottery) with the latest (i.e., the youngest) period to which it can be dated,” because it is a “maxim” in archaeology. What that means is that pottery can be dogmatically used to refute an older date in favor of a younger one, but not to substantiate that an older date should be assigned instead. Consequently, there is an inherent bias in the method, and the interpretations of dating references remain somewhat subjective. And in many cases the differences between pottery types of ages are very subtle. For example, the same author noted that the main

²⁸² R.E. Hendrix et al. *Ancient Pottery of Transjordan: An Introduction Using Published Whole Forms Late Neolithic Through Late Islamic*, Andrews University (1996): 74.

difference between what was called red slipped pottery between Iron I and Iron II was whether it was hand-burnished or wheel-burnished.²⁸³ That presumes that once wheel burnishing appeared, hand burnishing ended (which is unlikely), and that wheel burnishing wasn't known much earlier than what they suppose (which is likely). Not only that, but pottery is almost always found broken into many pieces and must be painstakingly reassembled to identify its forms. Hence, there is at least some risk that one will tend to only select the broken pieces for the reconstruction of the pottery forms that one expects to find, while failing to recognize what was not expected or that which would tend to contradict or weaken the initial presumptions about the site.

Despite those challenges, significant advancements have been made in understanding and documenting the wide range of pottery that has been found to date.²⁸⁴ The question is how reliably such information can be used to securely determine the dates of a site simply based on the occurrence or prevalence of certain styles. Especially when there is a tremendous overlap of those pottery styles over many centuries. The idea of pottery dating is certainly not new, nor are the problems of its interpretation. It was already being discussed in the late 1800s, as this interaction illustrates between W. M. Flinders Petrie, the father of pottery dating, and Major Claude Reignier Conder, a British Royal Engineer and member of the Palestine Exploration Fund. Major Conder had criticized Mr. Petrie's usage of pottery to ascribe an early date to the ruins at Lachish by prioritizing it over other dating evidence. In response, Mr. Petrie wrote a rebuttal, to which Major Conder was also permitted to respond, and both were published together in the Palestine Fund Quarterly Statement of 1891.

²⁸³ Hendrix, *Ancient Pottery of Transjordan*, 65.

²⁸⁴ Seymour Gitin, *The Ancient Pottery of Israel and its Neighbors, from the Iron Age through the Hellenistic period*, v. 1-2, IES (2015).

CHRONOLOGY OF POTTERY. By W. M. Flinders Petrie.

I am sorry to see an assertion in the last Quarterly Statement that "deductions from pottery" "are apt to mislead." This is a serious thing to say, as a knowledge of pottery is really the essential key to all archeological research. I have never found it mislead; and I think no person has tested and tried it more completely. Whenever digging is going on I look at every scrap of pottery that is found, for each man has orders to heap up for my inspection every sherd he finds in his work. Then I recognize the style of each piece and consider if it accords or disagrees with the conclusions that I have already formed as to the age of the deposits.

Last spring I estimated that the marks of potters and owners, found on potsherds, occurred on one piece in 5,000 to 10,000, both in Egypt and Syria; this estimate was made by the number of baskets of potsherds searched, or the number of sherds looked at on the ground in a minute, before a marked piece is found. Thus the number of marks found serves as a rough tally of the whole number of pieces seen. At Lachish I must have looked over about 50,000 or more pieces. In Egypt in the last two years about 3,000,000 pieces have been clearly looked at by me.

If after such searching during the last nine years I have never yet seen any distinctive pottery of any age which I could mistake for that of any other known period, though I was always searching and looking for exceptions—or anything which disagreed with the conclusions which I was forming—I think it is justifiable to say that deductions from pottery are not misleading.

Of course, the subject needs to be learned before it can be used, like any other study. But no excavations can yield their proper fruits without using this main key to understanding them.

I may say that eight periods can already be distinguished as entirely different in their pottery in Palestine; and more detailed research, with the aid of dated monuments, would greatly subdivide this chronological scale. (25th October, 1890)

NOTES BY MAJOR CONDER. CHRONOLOGY OF POTTERY.

That the chronology of pottery is more likely to give good results in the hands of Mr. Petrie than of most antiquarians, I feel convinced, on account of his experience. The distinctions between early pottery, and that of Byzantine or Roman times, is also well marked; but, as Mr. Petrie has himself noted, the old black pottery is still made in Palestine.

The question is, whether the results as to date agree with those which may be deduced, with greater certainty, from other data. No scholar acquainted with the history of letters can doubt that the Lachish text, found by Mr. Petrie, dates about 7-800 B.C., and I think the date of the capital is also fairly certain. Yet Mr. Petrie has suggested much earlier dates for Lachish ruins, being guided I understand by the pottery. I do not know that any data exist whereby to judge of the age of "Amorite" pottery, or how it is known to be "Amorite," especially as the Amorites lived in the Hebron mountains, and not in the Philistine plains.

I had seven years' experience of pottery of every age in Palestine, and always examined that found at the ruins. But I consider that the character of lettering on texts, the character of the tombs found at a ruin, and of the masonry and architecture, form together much safer data for determining date than can be ever expected to result from the study of the uninscribed pottery.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁵ "Notes by Major Conder: Chronology of Pottery," *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, London (1891): 68-9.

So, what does this all mean, and what is the crux of the problem? Pottery is still important. It can tell us about many things in the affirmative, especially when there are specific decorative motifs, imported pieces, seals, and inscriptions. There are also major eras of pottery in Israel that are clearly defined and easily recognizable. However, within the chronology of the kingdom of Israel, pottery is often systematically used to dogmatically refute older dates at sites using an interpretive framework that is inherently biased towards a younger Israel and effectively obscures the evidence for the time of David and Solomon. Furthermore, the extensive catalogs that have been developed to characterize it have also been developed under some flawed assumptions, with a general bias towards earlier dates (particularly during the time of the kings of Israel) and without a strict adherence to the testimony of Scripture. Thus, in its current form it is highly problematic.

Some Comments About Radiocarbon Dating

And about radiocarbon dating, a 2024 report on Iron Age dating of samples in Jerusalem was published that illustrates many of the problems encountered during attempts to precisely date objects found in biblical archaeology.²⁸⁶ For example, radiocarbon dating has significant calibration challenges to produce accurate results. There are regional and significant lab-to-lab variations, and there is a kind of dating dead zone called the “Hallstatt Plateau” that makes it hard to distinguish dates between 770 and 420 BC. Recent advancements using microarchaeological tools to improve sampling and testing techniques have made more accurate calibration curves possible, and they show promise that many of those obstacles may be overcome. Nevertheless, radiocarbon dating still faces many challenges, not the least of which is getting

²⁸⁶ J. Regev et al., “Radiocarbon chronology of Iron Age Jerusalem reveals calibration offsets and architectural developments,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, U.S.A.* 121 (2024), <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2321024121>

reliable samples from “tightly secured, sequential archaeological contexts with unambiguous stratigraphic provenance.” In other words, the test results are only as good as the assumptions, knowledge, and quality of samples that they are supplied from the archaeological site and will still be somewhat subject to the bias of interpretation, and different labs may not produce the same results.

A Decidedly Anti-Biblical Bias in Biblical Archaeology

There are many secular or agnostic archaeologists studying the lands of the Bible that do not believe the accounts of the Bible are wholly true.²⁸⁷ They contend that the stories in the Bible were simply made up many centuries after the supposed events happened and consequently cannot be accepted as factual. This creates an active bias that begs the question of Solomon’s existence, as described in the Bible, by assuming that a king like that never existed in the first place! And if someone retorts that the biblical archaeologist does the same thing, that’s not true because the biblical archaeologist takes the historic testimony of the Bible and then investigates to see what evidence can still be found to support it. This is done not only to substantiate the accounts of the Bible but also to aid in better understanding them and to learn additional details which were not recorded. For example, imagine two police investigators who both interview a witness. From the beginning, one assumes that the witness is lying and is delusional and so ignores their account and begins to investigate their own private theories of who the perpetrator is. While the other investigator is following up on the leads given by the witness, and attempts to corroborate their story and find evidence to convict the perpetrator. Are both approaches equally valid? Thus, there are now two sides to “biblical” archaeology—

²⁸⁷ Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts*, The Free Press (2001): 22-4.

those that believe the Bible is true and those that do not—and the chasm is widening. Anti-biblical bias is so strong that in many cases it now begins by assuming that the Bible is false, then interprets the archaeological data discovered per that assumption, and finally presents its faulty conclusions as proof of its premise. Ironically, this is exactly what biblical archaeologists are accused of doing by their secular counterparts, but it isn't the same thing, as the example of the two police investigators above illustrates.

One of the main reasons that the findings in biblical archaeology are so convoluted and tangled up is because of the conflict of worldviews regarding the interpretation of the evidence. There has been an increasing amount of discussion, in Christian circles at least, about the importance of a correct worldview in interpreting scientific and observational data. Modern secular archaeologists, while proposing to be objective, display an active bias against taking the Bible at face value. You will often find references criticizing any dependence on scripture to interpret the archaeology of Bible lands. The result is an attempt to rewrite history according to one's own speculations and interpretations, based on digging up a few remains thousands of years after the fact, with limited data compared to what the original authors, who were eyewitnesses, wrote their accounts from. And the damage done is this, it adds confusion to the interpretation of what has been found and muddies the water with contradictory assertions about the same supposed facts. And once labels are placed and accepted, we can miss the “orange” that we are looking for because it has a sticker on it that says “apple.” When archaeologists and historians lightly cast aside the accounts of the Bible, they doom their work to run afoul of the truth because they have abandoned the best account available to them of the events that they are attempting to understand.

Furthermore, modern archaeological methods have divided eras of ancient history into stratigraphic layers so that each layer becomes a certain period. This can be a wonderful aid to dating any given site as you dig down through various layers and attempt to reconstruct the full history of habitation and destruction for any given city or town. However, in many cases it has become a stumbling block as well, for once layers are misconstrued, then the evidence can be lost because it is allotted to another period and dismissed, even though the evidence is staring them in the face. In many cases, the refusal to reconsider the evidence is purely ideological and deeply rooted in the assumption that the Bible contains myths rather than true accounts.²⁸⁸

Today, many scholars don't even feel they need to defend their anti-biblical bias, which blinds them to the simple truths that they claim religious scholars are incapable of seeing. For example, an LA Times article back in 2008, talking about Solomon and his mines, sums up some of the problems for both secular and biblical archaeologists on this issue. The first problem is that there are too many people in the field who don't believe the Bible is factual, and unless the Bible is taken as fact, there can be no "biblical" archaeology. And on the other side, there is a major problem for the ones who do believe the Bible, because they get stuck playing by rules that are inherently biased against them. Rather than focusing on demonstrating the truth of the whole literal narrative of the Bible, they have a hard time just trying to prove that the people mentioned in it existed at all.

²⁸⁸ Gertoux, Gerard. "Kings David and Solomon: Chronological, Historical and Archaeological Evidence," Dissertation (2015): 3, accessed on 11/29/25 from: https://www.academia.edu/5183268/Kings_David_and_Solomon_Chronological_Historical_and_Archaeological_Evidence

Ruins bolster legend of Solomon by Thomas H. Maugh II.²⁸⁹

A massive copper smelting plant in the biblical land of Edom is at least three centuries older than researchers previously believed, placing it firmly in the traditional timeline of King Solomon, considered the greatest ruler of Israel, researchers reported Monday.

The existence of Solomon 3,000 years ago has been questioned by some scholars over the last two decades because of the paucity of archaeological evidence supporting the biblical record and the belief that there were no complex societies in Israel or Edom capable of building fortresses, monuments and other sophisticated public works, such as large mines, in the 10th century BC.

"This is the most hotly debated period in biblical archaeology today," said archaeologist Thomas E. Levy of UC San Diego, who reported the new radiocarbon dates for the copper smelting operation in modern-day Jordan in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

"We're not answering the question" of whether Solomon existed, he said. "But we've brought empirical data that shows we have to reevaluate those questions. We're back in the ballgame now."

Archaeologist William Schniedewind of UCLA agreed, saying Levy "is completely right. The scientific evidence seems to be going in his favor."

Critics, however, charge that Levy is overinterpreting the importance of the radiocarbon dates, because there is no evidence of habitation at the earliest dates to go with them. That suggests the site was operated periodically by nomads

²⁸⁹ Maugh, Thomas H. II. (2008, October 28). Ruins bolster legend of Solomon. *Los Angeles Times*, online, Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2008-oct-28-sci-solomon28-story.html>.

and not associated with any city or kingdom, much less an empire, according to archaeologist Piotr Bienkowski of the University of Manchester in Britain. Without further evidence, "it is premature to start talking about links with a 'biblical Solomon,'" he said.

Archaeologist Israel Finkelstein of Tel Aviv University in Israel, added: "Taking the biblical description of King Solomon literally means ignoring two centuries of biblical research."

The stories recounted in the Old Testament, he said, "depict the concerns, theology, and background of the time of the writers" in the 5th century BC and **cannot be accepted as factual.**

Stop Compromising

For the Bible-believing archaeologist, the Bible must be assumed to be trustworthy from the very beginning. And most would say that they do believe it. That is in fact the reason they are interested in archaeology. But why is the secular archaeologist interested in the Holy Land? The problem is that currently both groups are sort of working together and attempting to contribute to a common body of knowledge. And for a time, a little skepticism in the field was probably healthy. There was even a shared approach and integrity to interpreting the data that produced reliable results without blatant bias. But in the case of the present situation, this is arguably no longer the case. The common ground between the two camps has nearly vanished. And the outcome of trying to hold them together has resulted in tremendous compromises. Arguably, we may have reached the point that creation scientists did in the fields of biology, geology, and anthropology... they struck out on their own.

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. – James 4:4

As an example of how ostensibly Bible-believing archaeologists have been forced to compromise, consider the outcome of not being able to find the great kingdoms of David and especially Solomon in Jerusalem. Yes, the City of David is there, but it is relatively small. In its present area of excavation, you don't see the grandeur and sophistication of a united monarchy that ruled over the whole of the land of Israel. It encourages the false narrative that neither were the great kings the Bible describes, because there is a limited amount of concrete archaeological evidence to refute that accusation. To at least defend the fact that David and Solomon were real kings who lived and ruled in Israel, some archaeologists have resorted to proposing that their kingdoms are hard to find because the Israelites remained primarily nomadic until the destruction of Jerusalem, and therefore their kingdoms will always be somewhat invisible.²⁹⁰ But such compromises should be entirely unacceptable.

"We contend, however, that archaeology, at least as traditionally practiced, will likely never be able to identify David and Solomon's kingdom. Why? Because it was largely invisible." ²⁹¹

Assuming the kingdom of Israel was mainly nomadic is not the answer. But that is exactly what compromises like this lead to. Compromising just makes the corner of the rug biblical

²⁹⁰ Erez Ben-Yosef and Zachary Thomas, "Complexity Without Monumentality in Biblical Times," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 49.2 (2023): 40-5.

²⁹¹ *Ibid*, 40.

archaeologists are standing on get smaller and smaller, and it is how Solomon's work was lost in the 1800s. Traditional archaeology will never really accept the biblical accounts of David and Solomon unless overwhelming evidence is found—which means they may never find them, unless they are willing to reconsider the evidence they already have and overturn many of their mistaken conclusions. And that includes realizing that Solomon built the great foundations of the Temple Mount.

And there are other challenges as well. One issue is that in general, even strong Bible-believing archaeologists must rely on reference sources from the archaeological community to interpret their findings. But those sources were developed under assumptions and biases that hold scriptural testimony of questionable or marginal value in interpreting archaeological data. Consequently, they may obscure or appear to refute the truth. Another thing is that even when more data becomes available, the weight of consensus and a fair amount of anti-biblical bias make it very difficult to claw back parts of the rug that were lost earlier through compromise.

Rather than being an indictment of biblical archaeology as a whole, hopefully this section will be a wake-up call and encouragement to critically question everything that does not align with Scripture. I hope it inspires new investigations into the works of Solomon and starts a renaissance and renewal of open adherence within archaeology to Scripture. May it return to its roots of carrying a Bible in one hand and a spade in the other.

Chapter Six

Rediscovering More Works of Solomon

AT THIS POINT, we should have a firm foundation to begin looking for more of Solomon's work, confident that he really was the most prodigious builder of ancient Israel. We have already successfully identified 1) the remains of a magnificent temple, 2) a great court surrounding the area of the temple, 3) a great portico, 4) the remains of his great palace, the Forest of Lebanon, 5) the area of the Hall of Justice, 6) the location of the Millo, and 7) a possible location for the palace for Pharaoh's daughter. We also identified the Damascus Gate and the Tomb of the Patriarchs as constructions of Solomon. But the Bible tells us that Solomon built a whole lot more.

One hallmark of the work of his men is the size of the stones involved and the fineness of the chiseled finish, which Charles Warren observed to have been made very skillfully with an adze comb or chisel having 8 teeth per inch.²⁹² That finish has a characteristic look, and once identified, it becomes a good

²⁹² Warren, *Survey of Western Palestine*, 243.

reference point for evaluating many of the other sites around Israel. When you start associating not only the bordered margins on fine ashlar but also the same general quality of craftsmanship, the same type of chisel marks, and all the design patterns that we explored in *Chapter Four*, then a much larger body of work can be identified.

And why should we enlarge our view of what we associate with the huge ashlar masonry from the time of Solomon? Because the Bible says that not only did Solomon build a lot of things in Jerusalem, but he also built all over Israel and even in the surrounding areas (an area also called the Levant), which extended into parts of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. Solomon built walls around Jerusalem, he built streets with sewers underneath them, and he built waterways and pools, great cisterns, towns, fortifications, and store cities. There is no way that so much work could be hidden and undiscovered today. But his greatest works, by virtue of both their quality and magnitude, will be the easiest to firmly attribute to him. The first place we need to look for more works of Solomon, beyond the Temple Mount, is for the water that was supplied to it.

The Pools of Solomon

We've already seen the evidence that Solomon built the Temple Mount, which included Robinson's Arch and Wilson's Arch. But Wilson's Arch was also part of a bridge that went between Mount Moriah and Mount Zion on the west. There are two reasons we can be sure that this bridge was built by Solomon. One is that the giant stones of the arch are comparable to and contemporary with the other fine ashlar stones of the Temple Mount. The second reason, though, is that the bridge carried the Lower Aqueduct over to fill the cisterns in the Temple Mount. That aqueduct was

supplied by the Pools of Solomon, and the Bible says that Solomon built great pools of water.

I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. – Ecclesiastes 2:6

There are numerous likely candidates in and around Israel for those pools, but the best one is called... Solomon's Pools. The site has retained its historical association, despite the claim of modern archaeologists that the site is not older than the second century BC. There are three cascading pools with a total retention volume of up to sixty million gallons of water. These pools were fed by two aqueducts (one was 3 miles long and the other 25 miles!) that brought spring water and rainwater to fill them, and then they also fed two other aqueducts that went to the city of Jerusalem, the upper and lower aqueducts (8.7 & 13.3 miles long, respectively), with the lower one feeding directly into the Temple Mount.



Solomon's Pools, near Bethlehem, Israel – The upper pool.



Section of the aqueduct between Solomon's Pools and Jerusalem

These waterworks were maintained, repaired, and rebuilt, as needed, over the centuries because they were the primary water supply for most of Jerusalem until the modern era. They are truly massive infrastructure projects that display a degree of engineering skill that would be difficult to duplicate today without modern tools and equipment. These aqueducts were desperately needed in Jerusalem as soon as the city expanded beyond the City of David because the Gihon Spring did not supply enough water for a growing city. Extra water would have been needed for any significant population growth, and it also needed to be delivered up to the elevation of the city expanding on the hills above. And not only was more water needed for the residents, but also for the Temple services, which have been estimated to have required up to 10,000 gallons of water per day—that much water could not have been feasibly transported up to the Temple from the Gihon spring, even if it provided the necessary flow rate.²⁹³

²⁹³ “30-40 m³ of water per day” from: Nadav Shragai. “The Forgotten Discovery: A First Temple Era Water Cistern near the Temple Mount in Jerusalem,” *Jerusalem Center for Security*

The early explorers of Jerusalem and pilgrims down through the centuries have all maintained that these pools should be dated to the time of Solomon, which so many of the pilgrims and explorers testified to in the last chapter. But besides the consistent historic testimony attributing these pools to him, they are also what we should expect based on the biblical accounts of his work. And furthermore, they would have been vital for the development and growth of Jerusalem and the operation of its temple from the very beginning. Thus, there is little doubt that they were built by him.

This means most of the cisterns on the Temple Mount are also likely from the First Temple period, as they were all interconnected to allow fresh water to continue to flow into and out of them so that they wouldn't stagnate. And while archaeologists may contest a First Temple date in the sanctuary, a cistern uncovered underneath the Pilgrim's Road on the way up to the temple has already been determined to be from the First Temple period,²⁹⁴ and it confirms that there was another source for water to Jerusalem besides the Gihon Spring, because the cistern is above it in elevation. And because the aqueduct from Solomon's pools was the only other external water source for Jerusalem, the cistern must have also been supplied by the same source as the ones up on the Temple Mount. The historian Tacitus also talked about the abundance of water for the temple. He assumed it must be from a spring within the temple area itself, but it was from the aqueducts that came from Solomon's Pools.

The Temple resembled a citadel, and had its own walls, which were more laboriously constructed than the others. Even the colonnades with which it was surrounded formed an

and Foreign Affairs Support, August 8, 2019. <https://jcfa.org/the-forgotten-discovery-a-secret-water-cistern-from-the-first-temple-era-at-the-foot-of-the-temple-mount/>

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

admirable outwork. It contained an inexhaustible spring; there were subterranean excavations in the hill, and tanks and cisterns for holding rainwater.²⁹⁵ – Tacitus (c. 105 AD)

And once we have identified the size and method of construction of these pools, then they can be compared to many similarly sized pools found in and around Jerusalem that may also have been built by Solomon's men. The pools that most merit consideration are the Pool of Siloam, the Pool of Israel, the Mamilla Pool, and the Southern Pool of Bethesda. The last three pools would have been fed by the aqueducts that came from Solomon's Pools near Bethlehem, as well as locally collected rainwater. Iron Age archaeological remains dating to the First Temple period were found near Mamilla Pool, along with evidence to support the pool being fed by the aqueduct from Solomon's Pools.²⁹⁶ The finds are dated to the eighth century BC, but as we discussed in the last chapter, pottery finds are somewhat imprecise to begin with. Nevertheless, it establishes that the age of the pool is very near the time of Solomon and shows that the city quickly outgrew even the limits of today's Old City, since Mamilla is outside the walls of Jerusalem to the west.

The Pool of Siloam & Pilgrims Road

Almost as essential as the aqueduct bringing water to Jerusalem for sacrifices at the temple is a giant mikvah, or pool, where the people could wash before ascending to the Temple Mount, especially when all the men of Israel were charged to appear before the Lord three times a year. About 480 years after the commandment was

²⁹⁵ Tacitus, Cornelius. (1942). *The Complete Works of Tacitus*. Translated by Alfred John Church and William J. Brodribb. Edited by Moses Hadas. New York: Modern library, The History, Book 5, sections 11-12.

²⁹⁶ David Amit, "Discoveries from the First and Second Temple Periods near the Mamila Pool in Jerusalem," in *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed* (2019): 145-52.

given, the place God chose for them to assemble became the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Before ascending, they needed to wash their bodies in water to be purified.

¹⁶ Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks, and the Festival of Tabernacles. No one should appear before the LORD empty-handed. ¹⁷ Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you. – Deuteronomy 16:16-17

This meant that millions of men, women, and even children could need to bathe before ascending to the Temple Mount during one of those three festivals. Solomon would have been aware of the commandment and the logistical challenges this would present once he built the Temple of the Lord on Mount Moriah. It's a safe assumption that his planning for building the Temple included the infrastructure to support the services that would immediately be required once the Temple was consecrated. His father David, after all, composed Psalm 122, which is about making that ascent to the Temple of the Lord that he knew his son would build.

¹ *A song of ascents. Of David.* I rejoiced with those who said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD.” ² Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem. ³ Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together. ⁴ That is where the tribes go up—the tribes of the LORD—to praise the name of the LORD according to the statute given to Israel. ⁵ There stand the thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David. ⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May those who love you be secure. ⁷ May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.” ⁸ For the sake of my family and

friends, I will say, “Peace be within you.”⁹ For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your prosperity. – Psalm 122

The Pool of Siloam has another name, the King’s Pool, and most of the early explorers also agreed that this, too, was built by Solomon. Even Josephus called it “Solomon’s pool,” which is clear from its proximity to the fountain of Siloam.



Excavations underway at the Pool of Siloam, November 3, 2025

And after that it [*the wall of the city*] went southward, having its bending above the fountain Siloam, where it also bends again towards the east at Solomon’s pool, and reaches as far as a certain place which they called "Ophlas" (*Ophel*), where it was joined to the eastern cloister of the temple.²⁹⁷ – Josephus

The pool was still being excavated in 2025, but steps have been revealed around its perimeter, facilitating entry and exit like a mikvah. Upon exiting the pool, they also found the beginning of the steps of the Pilgrims Road that led up from the pool to the

²⁹⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 5, 4, 2.

southern steps of the Temple Mount. The City of David Foundation has uncovered the entire pathway from the pool to the temple. There is also evidence of many shops that would have lined the way on the ascent. Every man needed to bring a gift proportionate to how he had been blessed by the Lord. Hence, there would have been many vendors there ready to help provide a suitable sacrifice for them to take up with them. The road is now underground, but it can be seen by traveling up through a tunnel.

The Pilgrims Road is often called the Herodian Street because of giant ashlar paving stones which have the same kind of chisel marks and quality we see in the Temple Mount ashlar typically associated with Herod the Great. The street is about 26 ft wide and 650 yards long, which would require about 3600 tons of quarried stone.²⁹⁸ The prevailing academic view is that this road was built by Pontius Pilate, based on coinage found underneath some of the paving stones.²⁹⁹ First of all, while I agree that finding coins underneath a paving stone appears to offer an excellent dating reference, I don't agree that just because you find a coin underneath such a stone it must have been placed there when the stone was first set. In fact, it seems highly unlikely that a coin would fall by accident during the work of placing a stone or that coins would be regularly contained within the bedding material placed underneath them. Rather, what is more likely is that after the stones have been laid in place, a pedestrian might drop a coin that falls into a gap between paving stones, and via the conduction of rainwater, it would be washed underneath it over time. Therefore, a coin found under the steps can indicate that the destruction of Jerusalem happened no earlier than the date it was minted, but it cannot definitively prove when the stone was first set. Especially when it is known that the paving stones were later

²⁹⁸ Assuming 10 in. thick pavers, 42,250 ft³ of quarried stone was needed for the street.

²⁹⁹ Nahshon Szanton et al. (2019) "Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem: The Monumental Street from the Siloam Pool to the Temple Mount," *Tel Aviv*, 46:2, 147-166.

repaired at various points in the road. This could have certainly introduced dating reference materials of a later period, but that wouldn't mean the road was newly constructed. Josephus did record that paving stones were installed in the days of Herod Agrippa, who reigned when Pilate was governor in Judea. But that doesn't change the fact that the overall pathway is as old as the Temple Mount.



Steps of the Pilgrims Road that led from the Pool of Siloam to the southern Hulda gates.

But king Agrippa, who had the care of the temple committed to him by Claudius Caesar, considering that it is easy to demolish any building, but hard to build it up again, and that it was particularly hard to do it to these cloisters, which would require a considerable time, and great sums of money, he denied the petitioners their request about that matter; but he did not obstruct them when they desired the city might be paved with white stone.³⁰⁰ – Josephus

³⁰⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20,9,7.

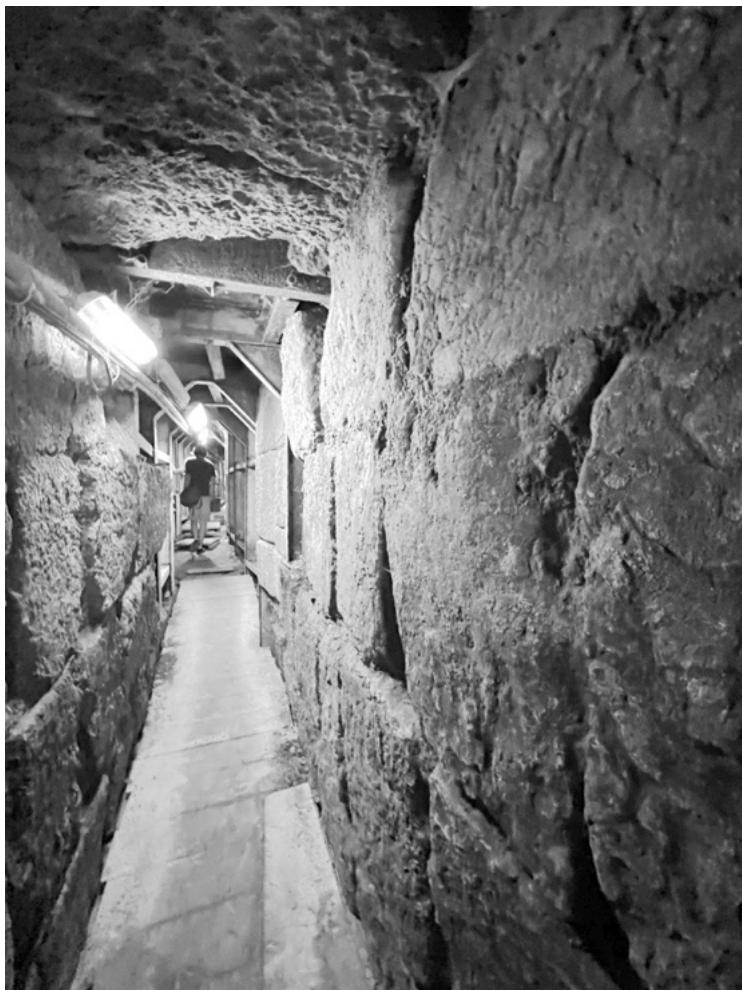
The Breadth of Basic Infrastructure

And another way we know the Pilgrims Road is even older than the first century is that they found more than just an old walkway leading up from Siloam; they also found an entire sewer and drainage system far beneath the paving stones, which is a level of construction far beyond simply installing new pavers. The paved path even had drain holes that emptied into the sewer below. That demonstrates a level of city planning that is very similar to what we still do today. And it should assure us that simply finding a few coins under a couple of pavers does not preclude dating the entire system back to the time of Solomon.

In general, when people think of the works of great builders, they are thinking of the noteworthy buildings that were left behind, but it's also important to remember how much mundane infrastructure would have been required to support the glorious temple above. We've talked about the waterworks; next there would have been many other streets all over the city of Jerusalem, in addition to this one from the Pool of Siloam to the temple. But one more part of Solomon's work that remained hidden, from most of the public at least, is now on display in the City of David. It is part of an amazing drainage system that was made for the city. There is an extensive network of sewer and drainage channels running underneath the ground in Jerusalem and even in the Temple Mount. The principal tunnel, which follows underneath the pathway down to Siloam and the junction of the Tyropean and Kidron Valleys, is now open to the public. The section of tunnel below the road represents at least another 9000 tons of quarried stone, which is a lot more than what was needed for paving the pathway above it.³⁰¹ The drain was built underground with large,

³⁰¹ Based on an estimate of 54 ft² of stone forming the 650-yard channel, for a total of 104,574 ft³ of stone for this one section, weighing 3 tons per 35.3 ft³., that equals 8,887 tons.

undressed ashlars and was then paved over with the beautiful limestone now seen above it. The pavers are generally called “Herodian,” but it is likely a mixture of time periods, as we just read that Herod Agrippa could have done some repairs to the paving stones in the city. High traffic paths with millions of visitors every year would have certainly needed periodic maintenance.



Drain channel section that runs over 650 yards from the temple area down past the Pool of Siloam.

The sewers are a very important find for Solomon. Not only does it show his great wisdom in city planning, but it also shows that Solomon used cruder forms of masonry, too. He didn't always use beautiful and costly stones on everything he made. Sometimes he just used rough-cut blocks because they were cheaper and faster, and his master craftsman would have been in limited supply. Thus, he logically didn't build everything the same way. Some of his work was rougher and less sophisticated looking because it didn't need to be any better. Therefore, it is likely that most of the mundane work of Solomon's men would be indistinguishable from later builders with stone in Israel (with the only exception being that Solomon may have tended to use larger stones than what later became normal). Hopefully, these examples help illustrate that the extent of the building program of Solomon was so much more than just fine buildings.

The Walls of the Old City

The Bible also tells us that Solomon built up the walls of Jerusalem. Under the leadership of his father David, Jerusalem was growing. By the time Solomon came to power, the city had greatly expanded, and Solomon needed to build a massive wall around the whole city. We've already looked at the evidence that the Tower of David and the Damascus Gate were built by Solomon and discussed how that expands the dimensions of Jerusalem in the tenth century beyond what most scholars think it was. Plus, as we just discussed earlier in the chapter, by at least the eighth century BC, Jerusalem had already expanded beyond the Old City to the area of the Mamilla Pool to the west. This has major implications for the extent of the walls of Jerusalem in the time of Solomon, which again, would be much greater than most scholars now believe. But there is also evidence for the location of the walls based on places where stone was quarried around the city, including the place called King Solomon's Quarry. To begin with,

we already discussed how Solomon's 80,000 stonemasons could have quarried 271 million ft³ of limestone in twenty years, and nearly double that during the forty years of his reign. That much stone couldn't have come from just one quarry, and indeed there are multiple quarries that have been found around Jerusalem. But one of the obvious places that were both quarried for stone and used to create a defensive buffer was around the walls of Jerusalem, particularly on the north. By quarrying stone at the areas where they wanted to build up the walls of Jerusalem, they were able to build the walls faster and taller. What do I mean? The stone they quarried could be used to build the wall, and every foot they quarried down also made the wall effectively a foot taller.



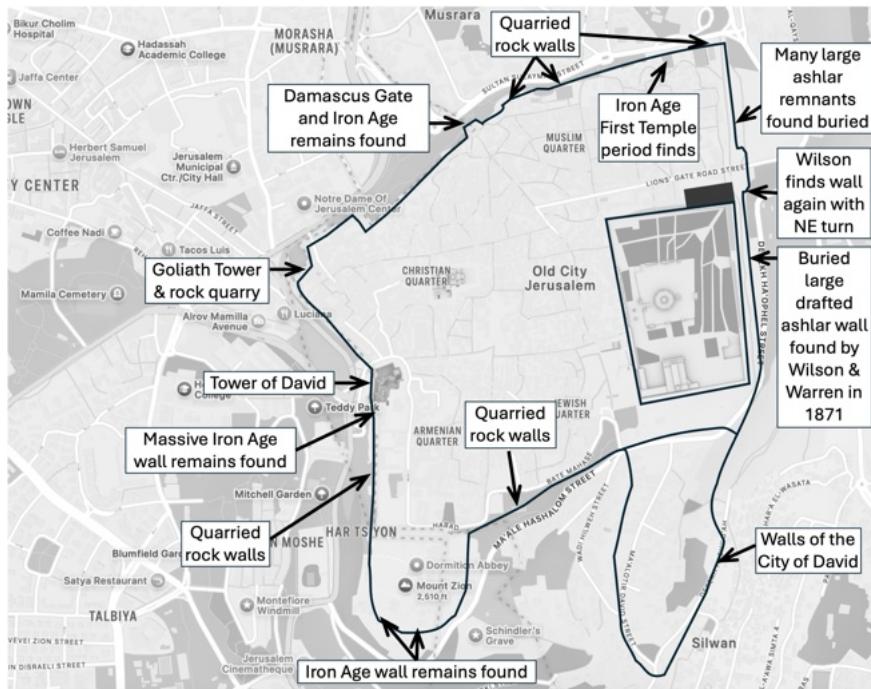
Section of the wall set on top of a quarried cliff east of the Damascus Gate of the Old City, Jerusalem

Obviously, quarrying wasn't only done in the time of Solomon, but there is good reason to suspect that the walls that he built would have been large, well-built, and strategic. That means he would have taken advantage of both good terrain positions and quarried stone to further enhance those positions. Once that was done, those spots would forever be ideal locations for future walls. Thus, that gives us good reason to expect that walls would continue to stand in the same places if they were originally built in good, defensible spots. Just because a wall is torn down, the overall landscape doesn't change, and it is faster and easier to rebuild in the same place. That means the best place to build a wall generally remains in the same location. This is particularly true if stone was quarried away from that location to create a favorable disposition for the wall or if the terrain was already a natural high point or outcropping.

Solomon's City Wall

According to historic reports, as Jerusalem grew, new outer perimeter wall sections were just added on, while the old walls remained in place. That was strategic also, giving defenders a place to fall back to if the new wall was ever overrun. The walls of the Old City in Jerusalem today are mostly located at the best natural locations for the defense of the city, taking advantage of the natural rise of the terrain to enhance the effective height of the wall where available. So, it is prudent to consider that Solomon would have also chosen similar places, and most likely those same places. So, with those thoughts in mind, and considering the locations of the Temple Mount, the Tower of David, and the Damascus Gate, all or most of what is called the Old City was probably within Solomon's Jerusalem. The idea that Jerusalem was that large in the tenth century would be ridiculed by scholars who don't believe it reached that size until centuries later, but let's look at the evidence.

The greatest unknown is the northeast corner, which is the most level and least defensible portion of the city. It was the most attacked because it was the hardest to protect. Most of that area is flat or contains low spots that had to be raised up so that some parts of the walls seem to be just sitting at the ground level, lacking quarried cliffs to provide extra advantage. A notable exception is the northeast corner, across from the Rockefeller Museum. At that corner it is obvious that an entire portion of a connecting hill was quarried away to make the wall more defensible. The volume of limestone removed was about 380,000 ft³, which equates to 2700 standard dump truck loads.³⁰² Such a large effort gives us some reason to consider associating it with Solomon.



Solomon's city wall with approximate locations and supporting archaeological features.

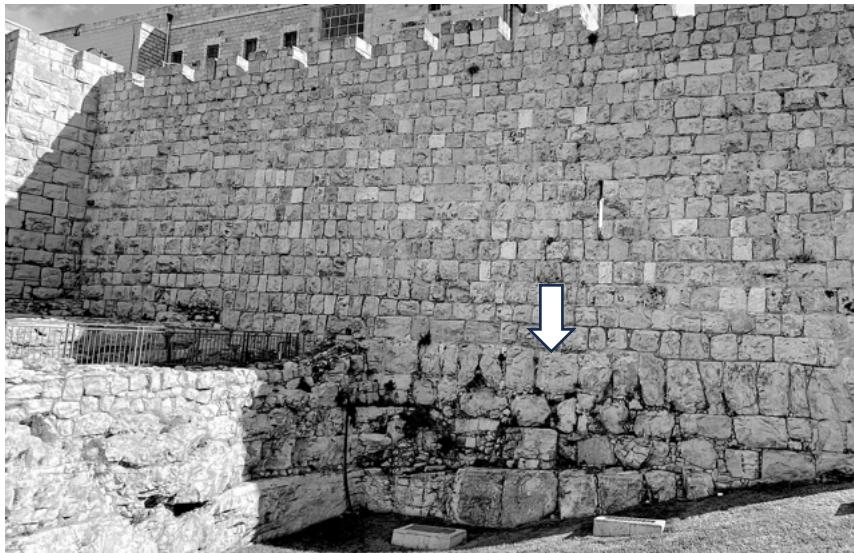
³⁰² The area is about 400 ft x 60 ft and the visible height is around 16 ft, so the volume was 380,000 ft³ and the weight was 32,400 tons. A typical dump truck can carry 12 tons.

But not far from this corner, near the present wall of the city and 400 ft east of Herod's Gate, is one of the few locations that have been excavated in the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem. Archaeologists reported finding remains from the eighth century BC, but they said the buildings in that area should not be associated with that period, presumably based on their stated belief that the city of Jerusalem did not extend that far north during that time. Interestingly, though, the First Temple era pottery they found and the buildings they dated to the end of the Second Temple period were all found at the same bedrock level.³⁰³ Thus, it may be more of a matter of interpretation than fact that the buildings were not also from the First Temple period, like the pottery. Those findings, plus the anchor point of the northeast corner on a modestly defensible hill, support the conclusion that the walls of Jerusalem could have extended fully to the same point in Solomon's time. Furthermore, the report also acknowledged that this was an area of quarrying that also went back to the eighth century BC. And as mentioned in the last chapter, pottery dating is not that precise (unless it is stamped or inscribed), the eighth century is not so different from the tenth century, and additional assumptions must be added that end up making it more of a professional opinion subject to certain biases than an absolute fact.

Quarried areas that enhance the height of the wall are also seen at the northwest corner of the Old City walls. The remains of a tower called the Goliath Tower can be seen at this corner, and it has a dry moat quarry in front of it. The whole tower is believed to have been a new construction in the 11th century AD, but its lowest foundation stones are giant unfinished ashlar stones that are similar in size to those seen at the oldest part of the Tower of David but less finished. It seems natural to assume that the poorer quality

³⁰³ Yuval Baruch and Gideon Avni. "Excavations East of Herod's Gate, 1998," *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed: Archaeological Discoveries, 1998-2018*, IES (2019):229-31.

large ashlar stones produced at the quarry, which were unsuitable for fine finishing, would be used in the defensive walls of the city—rather than concluding that of necessity the poorer quality stone must be from a different builder. That means Solomon is still just as likely to have been the original builder, even though the stones here do not exhibit the same fine finish.



Tower of Goliath Foundation with several courses of large stones (white arrow) at the northwest corner of the Old City.

That covers two corners of the present Old City. The third one, though, is anchored by the southeast corner of the Temple Mount, so it is the surest. The final corner of the city walls to consider is on the southwest, but there the city wall is built on an excellent natural outcropping that makes the wall location an obvious choice based on its strategic position. And a massive fortification wall dated to between the eighth and ninth centuries BC has been uncovered running north to south in the Kishle (*Qishle*) Excavation south of the Tower of David.³⁰⁴ The full width of the wall was not

³⁰⁴ Amit Re’em, *The Qishle Excavation in the Old City of Jerusalem*, IES (2018): 68-9.

exposed because it extended beyond the excavation area, but a narrower 10 ft wide wall sits on top of it, so it should be several feet wider than that. The walls of the present building also look to be sitting on top of it. In that case, the wall could be up to 16 ft wide, approaching the width of the Broad Wall in the Jewish Quarter (20+ ft). If we understand that the ninth century date is still conservative, then this presents evidence that Jerusalem's walls were in place in the days of David and Solomon and ran south from the Tower of David towards the southwest corner of the present Old City. This would complete the circuit of the walls, with perhaps one caveat. It is likely that the wall extended farther at the southwest corner of the city to encompass the southwestern extension of Mount Zion, where the Dormition Abbey is located. And indeed, the remains of a wall dating back to the Iron Age were found during excavations looking for the Essene Gate cited by Josephus at a site south of the Christian cemetery there.³⁰⁵ Consequently, when all these Iron Age remains that have been found along various portions of the circuit of the present walls are fully considered, there is good reason to suspect that the original walls of Jerusalem from the time of Solomon were in nearly the same locations we see today.

There was also an important clue about the extent of the wall on the eastern side of the city that was discovered by Charles Wilson while digging underground towards the Golden Gate from the east. He encountered an "impenetrable" section of wall 50 ft in front of the gate that had large, drafted masonry. He tried to penetrate the wall, but after five feet he gave up. Then he tried to dig over it, but it was too tall. Next, he followed the wall to the north and south. On the south it was only safe to dig for fourteen feet, but the wall continued without a break. On the north he saw

³⁰⁵ Bargil Pixner, Doron Chen, and Shlomo Margalit. "Mount Zion: The 'Gate of the Essenes' Re-Excavated." *Zeitschrift Des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 105 (1989): 85–95.

that it gradually bent westward, but he was only able to follow it for another seventy feet before the tunnel began to cave in and the work was abandoned.

The massive wall where first encountered is about 50 feet in front of the Golden Gate. It appears from thence to run to the north and gradually turns in toward the west, apparently following the contour of the ground. This wall is composed of large quarry-dressed blocks of Mezzeh, so far similar to the lower course seen in the Sanctuary wall near the Golden Gate.³⁰⁶ – Capt. Charles Wilson

This account gives us excellent reason to conclude that in the time of Solomon, the city wall was never directly connected to the walls of the Temple Mount. And notably, none of its four corners present any evidence that another wall was originally connected to them. Thus, Solomon's city wall traveled outside the eastern wall of the Temple and followed it to the north. Wilson also encountered the same wall 65 ft east of the northeast corner of the Temple Mount.³⁰⁷ Wilson found the remains of a wall corner and noted that there was significant fire damage to some of the stones. That could mean he found the edge of the city gate that exited to the east, assuming the stones were in situ, but he was unable to investigate more. Unfortunately, the outer wall was not followed any farther to the north. And when they excavated a portion of the present city walls north of the Lions Gate, they observed that its foundations had been rebuilt down to the bedrock on a base of concrete. Thus, there was no visible evidence of an older wall preserved underneath the present wall.³⁰⁸ However, a pile of large ashlar remnants has been uncovered outside the city wall, about 250

³⁰⁶ Wilson, *The Recovery of Jerusalem*, 121-3.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 139-40.

³⁰⁸ Wilson, *The Recovery of Jerusalem*, 133, 140.

ft north of the Lions Gate. While the stones could have come from anywhere, there are enough of them to suggest that they are the remains of an older wall that passed nearby. It seems likely that the “impenetrable wall” that they found east of the present walls continued to the north, and at some point, turned west north of the Lions Gate to eventually either join with the line of the present wall or meet up with it at the current northeast angle.



Large ashlar remnants were found buried outside the city wall north of the Lions Gate.

Consequently, there is solid evidence that Solomon's city wall did not originally connect to the sanctuary on the east, as it did in the first century when it was reported by Josephus. Instead, the city

wall passed around the temple. That must have been changed when Nehemiah rebuilt the walls for the sake of expediency, or if not, for the same reason in the days of the Hasmoneans. It should be noted here that Warren and Wilson also drove a shaft east from the southeast corner of the Sanctuary in search of a possible pier if there had been an arch like Robinson's on the east side, but digging out 50 ft from the wall, none was found. One can only guess, but it seems they must have stopped only a few feet from the outer city wall that Wilson encountered running from in front of the Golden Gate and up past the northeast corner of the Temple Mount.

Checking the Gates and Walls Against Scripture

Some might be doubting if it's even possible to answer these questions about the ancient locations of the walls and gates, but there is a prophecy that seems to suggest that it should be. Zechariah recorded a fascinating prophecy that the First Temple gates of Jerusalem, which were already destroyed in his time, would be raised back up and remain in their places. This should give us a prophetic expectation that it is possible to find the original locations of the gates (and connected walls) because they would be restored and “remain in place.”

The whole land, from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, will become like the Arabah. **But Jerusalem will be raised up high from the Benjamin Gate to the site of the First Gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the royal winepresses, and will remain in its place.** – Zechariah 14:10

As we consider this prophecy, notice that there are two directions being spelled out by Zechariah that also help us understand the ancient extent of the city of Jerusalem. The first seems to be from East to West, starting at the Benjamin Gate (same as the Sheep

Gate and today's Lions Gate), then to the First Gate (which also means "chief" gate and is the same as the Old Gate and today's Damascus Gate), and finally ending at the Corner Gate (today's Jaffa Gate). The next direction is from the Tower of Hananel (northeast corner of the city) down to the royal winepresses at the southern end of the City of David (near the King's Garden). Some candidates have been found for the royal winepresses as close as 2 miles south of the City of David.³⁰⁹ But the Bordeaux Pilgrim in 333 AD reported that there were still vineyards in the Kidron Valley.³¹⁰ Being that there is a prophetic expectation for the winepress of God's Wrath in the Kidron Valley (*Zechariah 14:4-5 and Revelation 19:15*), there is even more reason to believe that royal winepresses were once there, too. Thus, the arrangement of gates on the map presented here of Solomon's city walls is in agreement with a logical understanding of the order of the gates described by Zechariah. That's good. Check.

³⁸ "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when this city will be rebuilt for me from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. ³⁹

The measuring line will stretch from there straight to the hill of Gareb and then turn to Goah. ⁴⁰ The whole valley where dead bodies and ashes are thrown, and all the terraces out to the Kidron Valley on the east as far as the corner of the Horse Gate, will be holy to the LORD. The city will never again be uprooted or demolished." – Jeremiah 31:38-40

Those identifications are also in agreement with the prophet Jeremiah. He described the city being rebuilt from the Tower of Hananel (northeast corner of the Old City) to the Corner Gate

³⁰⁹ Benyamin Storchan, Nathan Ben-Ari, Neria Sapir, and Oded Lipschits. "Identifying the (Royal) Winepresses in the 'Valley of the King.'" Nov. 2024, *Atiqot* 114(1):1-22

³¹⁰ He said they were in the Valley of Josaphat, east of Jerusalem and in front of the Mount of Olives. *Itinerary from Bordeaux to Jerusalem*, Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society (1887): 24.

(the Jaffa Gate), which is a good east-west approximation. Then he says from there to the hill of Gareb, which is a good match for the southern hill of Mount Zion where the Dormition Abbey is located. From there he said it would go to Goah, which should be identified with the southern part of the City of David and the Hinnom Valley. The name means “the place of lowing,” the sound that animals and cattle make, which suits the southern valley outside the city. Lastly, Jeremiah calls out the entire Kidron Valley all the way down to the Horse Gate, which was the southernmost eastern gate of Jerusalem. That would cover the whole eastern side of Jerusalem from the Tower of Hananel on the northeast to Goah on the southeast below the City of David. That’s another check.

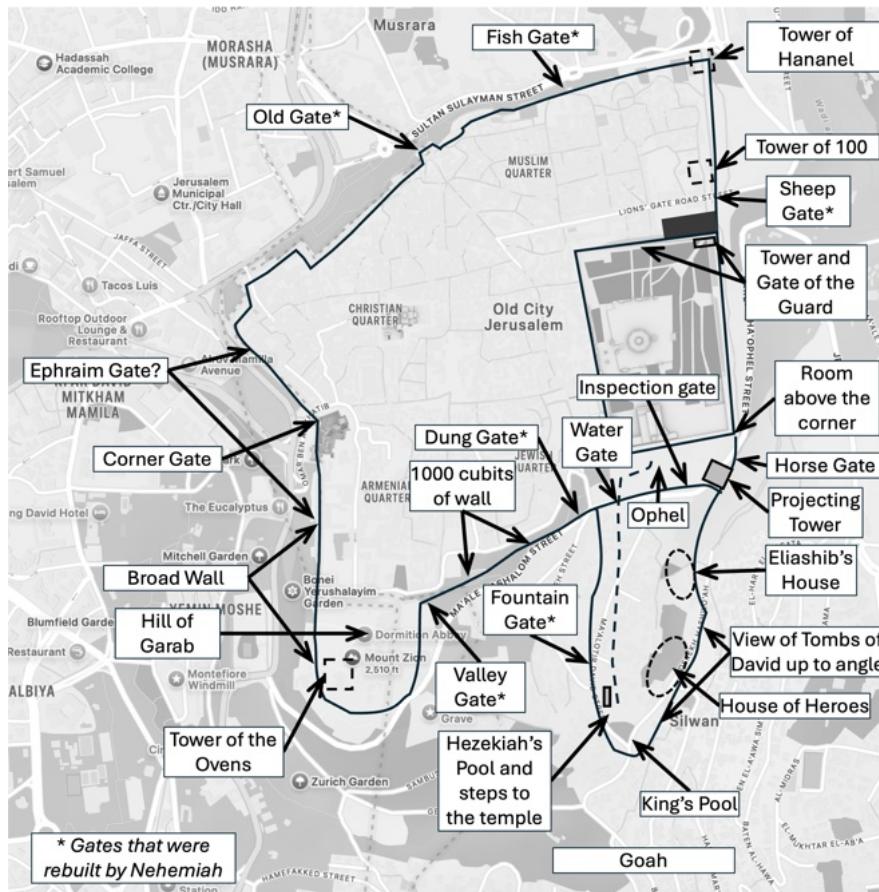
Identifying Nehemiah’s Circuit of the Walls

The next route for the walls that these identifications can be tested against is the path that Nehemiah and the singers followed to consecrate the walls of Jerusalem after they were rebuilt. But there is one gate that hasn’t been located yet, the Gate of Ephraim. Fortunately, there is another account in Scripture that mentions this gate that can help us place it. It’s found in 2 Kings, and it records that there was an Ephraim Gate with about 400 cubits of wall between it and the Corner Gate. If the Corner Gate is identified as the Jaffa Gate, then the Ephraim Gate was either north of it, near the northwest corner of the Old City, or it was about 400 cubits south of the Corner Gate.

Then Jehoash went to Jerusalem and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate—a section about four hundred cubits long. – 2 Kings 14:13

Neither location would conflict with the account in Nehemiah chapter 12, because the Corner Gate is not mentioned, which

means we don't know if it was before or after the Ephraim Gate in the path. Regardless, the path is given from two directions, one heading towards the northern part of the Temple Mount and the other towards the southern end. Assuming they began at the Valley Gate, then the description agrees with the map of the gates in the locations indicated here on the map.



Map of Nehemiah's Locations Along the Wall

³⁰ When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall. ³¹ I

had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks. One was to proceed on top of the wall to the right, toward the Dung Gate... ³⁷ At the Fountain Gate they continued directly up the steps of the City of David on the ascent to the wall and passed above the site of David's palace to the Water Gate on the east [*near the southern end of the Temple Mount*]. ³⁸ The second choir proceeded in the opposite direction. I followed them on top of the wall, together with half the people—past the Tower of the Ovens to the Broad Wall, ³⁹ over the Gate of Ephraim, the Jeshanah [Old] Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel and the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Sheep Gate. At the Gate of the Guard they stopped [*northeast corner of the Temple Mount*]. ⁴⁰ The two choirs that gave thanks then took their places in the house of God. – Nehemiah 12:30-31, 37-40a

Path 1: Valley Gate left to the Tower of Ovens, then to the Broad Wall, over the Ephraim Gate, the Old Gate, the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, the Tower of the Hundred, to the Sheep Gate, to the Gate of the Guard, which sat at the northeast corner of the Temple Mount, and then into the courts of the Temple through the Taddi Gate.

Path 2: Valley Gate right to Dung Gate, the Fountain Gate, up the Pilgrim's Road, to the Water Gate, and up to the Southern Steps of the Temple Mount and into the courts of the Temple through one of the Huldah gates.

The most complicated route to follow is the description of the repairs that Nehemiah gives in chapter 3. The biggest challenge is identifying all the locations that the rebuilding events are referring to. The gates and key locations have all been identified on the map included here. Here is a summary of the key events:

- 1) The Sheep Gate was repaired.

- 2) Next, the wall was repaired to the Tower of the Hundred.
- 3) Then to the Tower of Hananel.
- 4) From there the walls were rebuilt to the Fish Gate, which was also repaired.
- 5) From there an extensive amount of work was done up to the Jeshanah Gate (Old Gate), which needed repairs.
- 6) From there, repairs were made up to the Broad Wall. The Ephraim Gate and the Corner Gate are not mentioned, so they probably didn't need repairs because the attack had not been focused at those gates.
- 7) Then repairs were made up to the Tower of the Ovens.
- 8) From there, repairs were made up to the Valley Gate, which needed repairs.
- 9) Then one thousand cubits of the wall were repaired up to the Dung Gate, which also needed repairs.
- 10) Then the walls to the Fountain Gate were repaired, and the gate too.
- 11) Then the wall of the Pool of Siloam, by the King's Garden, was repaired over to the Pilgrim's Road (which led up to the Temple from the City of David).
- 12) Then repairs were made to a point where the tombs of David could be seen in front of the King's Pool and the House of Heroes.
- 13) From there, repairs were made up to a point where the ascent to the armory began, up to an angle in the wall.
- 14) From the angle to the entrance of the house of Eliashib.
- 15) Then from Eliashib's house repairs were made to the angle and the corner.
- 16) Then across from the angle and the large projecting tower, repairs were made from the upper palace near to the court of the guard.

- 17) Next to him, repairs were made in front of the Ophel between the projecting tower and the Water Gate.
- 18) Then repairs were made in front of the great projecting tower up to the wall of Ophel.
- 19) Along with the Horse Gate, repairs were made near it.
- 20) Next to them, the Keeper of the East Gate made repairs.
- 21) Next to him repairs were made up to the house of the temple servants and the merchants, in front of the Inspection Gate, and as far as the room above the corner.
- 22) Then repairs were made from there to the Sheep Gate.

The solution presented here on the map considers all the other verses previously mentioned but makes a few additional deductions. One, it seems necessary to recognize that the wall repairs included an extra wall section between the Dung Gate and the Horse Gate, which separated the City of David from the new extension of Jerusalem. Two, that this extra wall section also included the Water Gate, which would have been an interior gate on the path down to the Gihon Spring. And lastly, that the Inspection Gate mentioned that was “opposite” or in front of a wall area that was repaired was either also in the same wall with the Water Gate, or it was a name for one of the southern Huldah gates (presumably the most eastern one).

Next, all the named locations need to be identified. Some of them can be positively identified, and others can only be guessed at, but this breakdown of the locations should aid in looking for them. For instance, the Tower of the Ovens seems to have been on the southwest hill of Mount Zion, which was probably called the Hill of Gareb, at the place that is now the Jerusalem University College. There are some reasons to suspect that this was the case besides the geographic clues in the description. When the college

was first constructed as the Bishop Gobat School, the foundation of a tower built on a rock-quarried cliff was found along with large ashlar stones with drafted margins, cisterns for water storage, and indications of a wall running along the cliff that would align with the southwest corner of the Old City.³¹¹ Later excavations also found Iron Age remains at the site.³¹² Thus, Scripture aligns well with the archaeological remains found at that location, making it a strong possibility.

The location of the armory referenced in Nehemiah 3 can be found by making a deduction from Scripture. There is a verse in Isaiah about weapons being kept in the Forest of Lebanon, which we now know was Solomon's Stables. That means the location in Nehemiah 3 is a reference to the path following the eastern wall of the City of David, ascending towards the southeast corner of the Temple Mount.

The Lord stripped away the defenses of Judah, and you looked in that day to the weapons in the Palace of the Forest. – Isaiah 22:8

The Horse Gate has three different markers in Scripture. First, it must have been near the City of David, based on Nehemiah 3. Second, it also had to be near the temple and the king's house, because Athaliah was put to death at the Horse Gate as soon as she was taken out of the Temple Mount. Third, the gate should have been near a corner or a tower, according to Jeremiah 31:40. The tower was the Projecting Tower that is also mentioned and has now been found. Dr. Eilat Mazar identified the tower, which she

³¹¹ Warren, *Survey of Western Palestine*, 393-7.

³¹² Evgeni D. Kagan, "Jerusalem, Mount Zion, Bishop Gobat School: Final Report," *Hadashot Arkheologiyot: Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 125 (2013): 11 pages.

also dated to the time of Solomon, in the Ophel area.³¹³ This is one of the few examples where stonework has been directly attributed to Solomon. Putting all those things together, the Horse Gate was between the southeast corner of the Temple Mount and the Projecting Tower. And by locating the Horse Gate exiting into the Kidron Valley between the southern wall of the Temple Mount and a northern wall of the City of David (“*between the two walls*”), it means that this was probably the gate that Zedekiah fled through when trying to escape Nebuchadnezzar. The king’s garden would have been a large area that extended from the Garden of Gethsemane down past the King’s Pool, which would have provided cover for the men to escape during the night.

¹⁴ For the priest said, “Let her not be put to death in the house of the LORD.” ¹⁵ So they seized her, and when she arrived at the entrance of the Horse Gate of the king’s house, they put her to death there.
 – 2 Chronicles 23:14-15 NASB

Then the city was broken into, and all the warriors fled at night by way of the city gate between the two walls near the king’s garden, even though the Chaldeans surrounded the city. As the king made his way along the route to the Arabah. – 2 Kings 25:4

There are also two pools mentioned in Nehemiah 3; the first should be Hezekiah’s Pool at the Gihon Spring, and the second, the lower pool, would be the King’s Pool built by Solomon.

You saw that the walls of the City of David were broken through in many places; you stored up water in the Lower Pool. – Isaiah 22:9

³¹³ Eilat Mazar. “The Royal Quarter Built by King Solomon in the Ophel of Jerusalem in Light of Recent Excavations (2009-2013),” in *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed* (2019): 54-66.

The Inspection Gate is perhaps the most challenging because it is too close to be in the same wall with the Horse Gate. Consequently, it must be referring to either the eastern Huldah gate that led into the Temple and Solomon's Stables, or it was a gate on the eastern side of the same wall that had the Water Gate to the west. The name of the gate also has the identical spelling as another Hebrew word, which means "to muster" or "take a census," which David wrongly did in 1 Chronicles 21. Thus, being just above David's palace in the City of David, it might make more sense that it was a second gate about 400 cubits or so east of the Water Gate, leading into the City of David from the Ophel. The places like the House of Heroes and Eliashib's house can only be guessed at, but it seems clear they were on the eastern side of the city. The location indicated on the map for Eliashib's house would be very near the area that today has been identified as David's palace in the City of David National Park, which would be a fitting location for the high priest in the days of Nehemiah.

One thing that cannot be fully settled is exactly when the outer eastern defensive wall, which Warren found only 50 feet beyond the eastern wall of the Sanctuary running parallel with it, was abandoned in lieu of making the Temple Mount wall the only eastern wall. Was that decision made by Nehemiah or later by the Hasmoneans? It is possible that Nehemiah was describing repairs being made in front of priestly houses all along the gap between the two walls to the north of the Ophel area up to the Sheep Gate, but it hardly seems wide enough for that. Plus, the two groups of worshippers that walked along the top of the wall, marching in opposite directions, did not meet again at the same gate opposite to their starting location. Rather, one finished on the north side of the Temple Mount and the other on the south side of it. That seems to weigh more in favor of the change being made by Nehemiah, who also finished repairing the walls very quickly.

What about the Broad Wall in the Jewish Quarter?

One major point of dispute or question about the walls of Jerusalem that needs to be answered, though, would be about the supposed section of city wall, called the Broad Wall, that was discovered in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. The first thing to say about it is that there are two possible meanings of “broad,” either the depth of the wall or the straight-line width of the wall. For the layout of the wall being proposed here, it is shown as the long uninterrupted section of wall between the Corner Gate and the Tower of the Ovens on the southwest wall of the city. And as mentioned previously, a massive Iron Age wall section was found in the Kishle Excavation that is probably between 13 and 16 ft wide. This section of wall could be called “broad” in either sense. But in the Jewish Quarter there is a famous section of ancient wall that has popularly been identified as the “Broad Wall” of Hezekiah, based on its great width, which ranges from 20 to 24 ft wide.³¹⁴

But as impressive as that is, its association with the walls of Jerusalem is more problematic than one might suppose because it is two times thicker than almost any other section of the city wall that has been found in Jerusalem. The only exception may be the section of wall that was found in the Kishle Excavation. The Broad Wall was made with mostly irregular field stones. Many of them are up to 3 ft or more in at least one dimension in the outer parts of the walls, and smaller stones were generally used in the middle. Surprisingly, the walls look very similar to the “cyclopean” walls, which are made up of very large fieldstones,³¹⁵ that are in the City

³¹⁴ Hillel Geva. *Jewish Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem I*, IES (2000): 49-54.

³¹⁵ “A cyclopean wall is defined as a wall primarily built of rubble (at least in its base), unworked polygonal stones substantially larger than 0.5 m each, with its stones not laid in horizontal courses, but rather with courses adapted to the polygonal lines of the individual stones.” David Ben-Shlomo, “Fortifications of Tel Hevron During the Bronze and Iron Ages, Once Again,” *Judea and Samaria Research Studies* 34.1 (2025): 41.

of David and the massive wall surrounding Tel Hebron that have both been dated to the Middle Bronze Age or early Iron Age.³¹⁶ And a radiocarbon study performed in 2017 on organic matter that was found under the fortifications in the City of David was dated to the 10th century BC.³¹⁷



"The Broad Wall" – Jewish Quarter



Bronze Age Wall – Tel Hebron

Comparison of the walls in the Jewish Quarter with the massive "cyclopean" wall at Tel Hebron

When one considers that Canaanites ruled prior to David, and that they each ruled at both places, the similarities of construction between Jerusalem, the City of David, and Hebron should be hard to ignore. Despite those similarities and the fact that Bronze Age and early Iron Age finds were made around the Broad Wall excavation area,³¹⁸ it was only dated to be no later than the eighth century BC by the excavators. However, in 2024, a radiocarbon dating study (made by the same group that tested the materials from the City of David) found numerous samples from the twelfth

³¹⁶ David Ben-Shlomo, "Fortifications of Tel Hevron During the Bronze and Iron Ages, Once Again," *Judea and Samaria Research Studies* 34.1 (2025): 37-64.

³¹⁷ J. Regev et al. "Absolute Dating of the Gihon Spring Fortifications, Jerusalem." *Radiocarbon* 59.4 (2017): 1171–93.

³¹⁸ Hillel Geva. *Jewish Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem*, v. 2, IES (2000): 504.

to tenth centuries BC, which were widely distributed over the entire excavation area. The results proved that some of the buildings were also much older than the excavators believed. As this quote from the study confirms, the evidence indicates this area was well inhabited, but that was at odds with the young dates that archaeologists had ascribed to the buildings before the radiocarbon testing was performed. Thus, the conclusions by the researchers are understandably cautious and understated, leaving out the broader implications of what it means for the history of Jerusalem. They hinted at them, but they are left to the reader to discern. However, the research provides solid evidence that this part of Jerusalem was already well inhabited, probably even before the time of King David by the Jebusites.

Radiocarbon chronology of Iron Age Jerusalem reveals calibration offsets and architectural developments: The 12th to 10th centuries BC: founding of Iron Age Jerusalem (excerpt)

(various areas). Altogether, almost 20% of the samples (18 dates) fall within the timeframe of the early Iron Age (12th to 10th centuries BC). This is highly significant, since only in three cases do the dates derive from contexts with clearly associated early Iron Age pottery, while the remaining dates come from charred remains from building materials. The abundance of early Iron Age dates, measured from all the areas in our study, clearly indicates widespread occupation of yet undetermined character, often underestimated due to the limited architectural contexts attributed to this period.³¹⁹

Another important point about the Broad Wall is that the plan and significance of the whole area is still very unclear. The wall was only uncovered for about 213 ft, and it was found in an area that

³¹⁹ J. Regev et al., “Radiocarbon chronology of Iron Age Jerusalem reveals calibration offsets and architectural developments,” *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.* 121 (2024):4-5, <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2321024121>

doesn't clearly connect to any other key features or wall sections. It may run as far west as the Cardo, and one could speculate that it may even reach to the Tower of David, but there is nothing to prove that. The wall section that was found has a significant curvature to it that could just as easily indicate it curved back on itself to enclose an area to the northwest, making a standalone fortification, instead of being part of a longer wall running mostly east and west. At this point, it's unclear whether it was a remnant from an older Jebusite city or fortress that once sat on Mount Zion or a wall section from an early stage of Jerusalem's expansion by King David. Regardless, it probably doesn't have anything to do with the walls that Solomon built around Jerusalem, and whatever it was, it was clearly swallowed up in the expansion of Jerusalem. Thus, while it is an important part of Jerusalem's growth and development as a city, there are many reasons to disregard it as a part of the wall that was included in Nehemiah's repairs.

The Tombs of the Kings and Pharaoh's Daughter

There is one final point that can be made about Nehemiah's description of the walls. There are several possible locations for the tombs of David that are mentioned. One is the traditional site on Mount Zion, which would be west of the City of David high up on the hill. That is unlikely, though. The tradition probably sprang out of the services of the Byzantine Church of Zion in the fourth to sixth centuries AD that once stood over the same spot; however, the tradition that it was the Tomb of David really didn't solidify until the time of the Crusaders in the twelfth century AD.³²⁰ And some simple and unmarked tombs have been suggested around the City of David itself. But the best option is to the north and east across the Kidron Valley to the monumental tombs known as

³²⁰ Ora Limor. "The Origins of a Tradition: King David's Tomb on Mount Zion." *Traditio* 44 (1988): 453–62.

Absalom's Pillar, the Tomb of Zechariah, and the carved cliff face tombs between them, the Tombs of the Sons of Hezir.

The location of the Tombs of the Kings, mentioned in Scripture, has long been debated. Back in the mid-1800s, the tombs at the southeast corner of the Temple Mount were identified as possible candidates for the kings of Judah.³²¹ But that idea was later rejected by scholars, but so has every other proposed location to date. Thus, the location of the tombs remains “unknown,” as stated by archaeologist Shimon Gibson in 2011.

It is interesting to note that after 140 years of research... the situation of the royal tombs of David and Solomon are still not known. ³²² – Shimon Gibson



The Tombs of the Kings in the Kidron Valley (white arrows)

Once again, the correct answer has been hiding in plain sight. They are exactly where we should expect them to be based on the accounts in the Bible. There are three unique tombs situated on the eastern side of the Kidron Valley (also called the Valley of the Kings that lies between the Mount of Olives and the Temple Mount), which are compelling candidates for the location of the

³²¹ Williams, *The Holy City*, 521-3.

³²² Gibson, Shimon. "British archaeological work in Jerusalem between 1865 and 1967: an assessment." *Galor and Avni, Unearthing Jerusalem* (2011): 23-57.

Tombs of the Kings that were near the City of David. The tombs of David and Solomon were still known in the first century, so they are as likely to be found as any of the other relics of Solomon's time. And most scholars have already accepted that these monumental tombs were carved before the destruction of Jerusalem and date them to the time of the Second Temple.

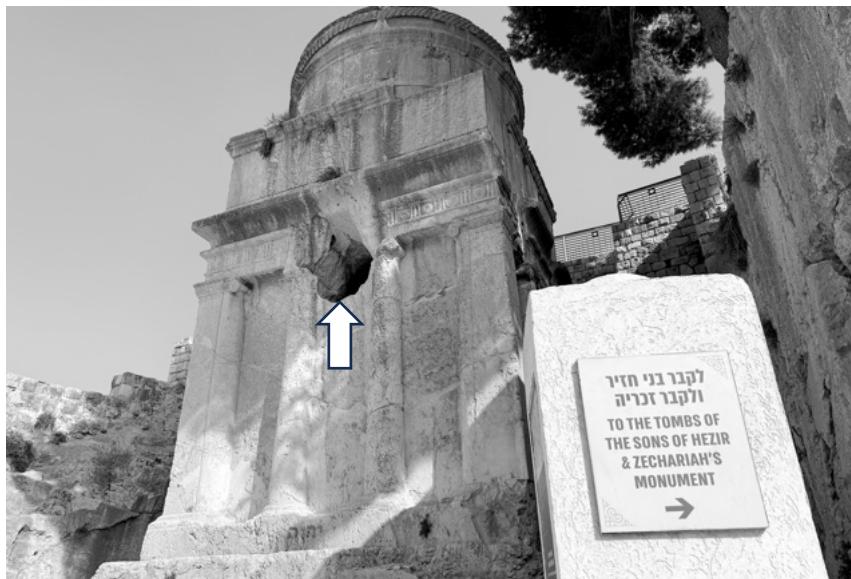
Absalom's Pillar

The tomb on the left is called Absalom's Pillar. There is some scriptural support for such a name because it says in 2 Samuel that a pillar was raised for Absalom in the King's Valley, i.e., the Kidron Valley. Absalom's body was initially thrown into a pit, but his bones could have later been transferred to a tomb. Based on the way David mourned for his son, it seems likely he didn't just leave his body to rot there. However, the important thing is that Scripture testifies that a monument was set up in the Kidron Valley. If we are talking about the pillar that stands there today, then we also know that Absalom didn't build it alone; his father, David, paid for it. Josephus also affirmed the story and said it was two stadia from Jerusalem. That's about 1250 ft, which is about how far it is from the Lions Gate to Absalom's Tomb.

¹⁷ They took Absalom, threw him into a large pit in the forest, and raised up a huge mound of stones over him. And all Israel fled, each to his tent. ¹⁸ **When he was alive, Absalom had taken a pillar and raised it up for himself in the King's Valley**, since he thought, "I have no son to preserve the memory of my name." So he named the pillar after himself. It is still called Absalom's Monument today...

³³ The king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber above the city gate and wept. As he walked, he cried, "My son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you, Absalom, my son, my son!" – 2 Samuel 18:17-18, 33

Now Absalom had erected for himself a marble pillar in the king's dale, **two furlongs (stadia) distant from Jerusalem**, which he named Absalom's Hand, saying, that if his children were killed, his name would remain by that pillar.³²³
— Josephus



A hole was opened into Absalom's Pillar (white arrow).

Furthermore, family members were often buried together. When David died, it's possible that he would have wanted to be buried with his son, but all we know from Scripture is that David was buried in the City of David (*1 Kings 2:10*). However, that is also the name of Jerusalem. It was Salem in the days of Abraham and Melchizedek, then Jebus in the days of Joshua, and by David's time it was already called Jerusalem from Jebus-Salem. Only after David conquered it did it receive another name, the City of David. Plus, Josephus wrote that David was buried “in Jerusalem” with “great magnificence” and “funeral pomp” and that great wealth was

³²³ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 7,10,3.

buried with him as well. That's a grand funeral that is reminiscent of what was done for the pharaohs, and it should rule out a simple unmarked hole in the rock. Thus, the monumental tombs that are literally across the valley from the City of David proper, in an area that was certainly under the control of the city and part of Jerusalem as a whole, is a solid match for David's burial location. And there's one more potential confirmation that comes from Josephus. He said that Hyrcanus, the high priest, broke into David's sepulcher (tomb) and took out 3000 talents of silver to pay off Antiochus VII, circa 134 BC. He also said that later Herod the Great did the same thing and opened another room and took out a lot of money but didn't find the bodies of David or Solomon. So, David and Solomon were somehow buried together but in different "rooms," a possible reference to two separate tombs. Coincidentally, Absalom's Pillar was broken into at some point in the past, and it is near a matching tomb, called Zechariah's Tomb.

He [*David*] was buried by his son Solomon, in Jerusalem, with great magnificence, and with all the other funeral pomp which kings used to be buried with; moreover, he had great and immense wealth buried with him, the vastness of which may be easily conjectured at by what I shall now say; for a thousand and three hundred years afterward Hyrcanus the high priest, when he was besieged by Antiochus, that was called the Pious, the son of Demetrius, and was desirous of giving him money to get him to raise the siege and draw off his army, and having no other method of compassing the money, opened one room of David's sepulcher, and took out three thousand talents, and gave part of that sum to Antiochus; and by this means caused the siege to be raised, as we have informed the reader elsewhere. Nay, after him, and that many years, Herod the king opened another room and took away a great deal of money, and yet neither of them came at the coffins of the kings themselves, for their bodies were buried under the earth so artfully, that they did not appear to even

those that entered into their monuments. But so much shall suffice us to have said concerning these matters.³²⁴
—Josephus

But later in *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus retells the story of Herod the Great breaking into David's tomb. He seems to contradict what he said in the first account by saying that Herod found no money, but he adds that he took out the furniture and everything else that was inside. Either Josephus made a mistake, or it could mean that Herod broke into the tombs of both Solomon and David. In Solomon's he found money, but in David's it was already gone. Then Josephus recounted a fanciful-sounding tale that fire burst out and killed some of the men who were robbing the tombs. His story probably inspired the tale told in the time of the Crusades, which was shared by Benjamin of Tudela, about two men who found the Tomb of David on Mount Zion, but being terrified by God, they sealed and hid the tomb.³²⁵ However, what is clear is that the tradition that the Tomb of David was on Mount Zion is not much older than that because earlier traditions place his tomb, oddly enough, in Bethlehem. The Bordeaux Pilgrim and Eusebius both reported that David and Solomon were buried there.³²⁶ One can only speculate why, but neither would have been ignorant that the Bible says they were buried in the City of David. Consequently, one might decide that they were fooled by a spurious legend, or maybe their bodies were moved to Bethlehem after Herod the Great broke into their tombs.

As for Herod, he had spent vast sums about the cities, both without and within his own kingdom; and as he had before heard that Hyrcanus, who had been king before him, had

³²⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 7,15,3.

³²⁵ Peters, *Jerusalem*, 329-30.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 455.

opened David's sepulcher, and taken out of it three thousand talents of silver, and that there was a much greater number left behind, and indeed enough to suffice all his wants, he had a great while an intention to make the attempt; and at this time he opened that sepulcher by night, and went into it, and endeavored that it should not be at all known in the city, but took only his most faithful friends with him. As for any money, he found none, as Hyrcanus had done, but that furniture of gold, and those precious goods that were laid up there; all which he took away. However, he had a great desire to make a more diligent search, and to go farther in, even as far as the very bodies of David and Solomon; where two of his guards were slain, by a flame that burst out upon those that went in, as the report was. So he was terribly frightened and went out, **and built a propitiatory monument** of that fright he had been in, **and this of white stone, at the mouth of the sepulcher**, and that at great expense also.³²⁷ – Josephus

And here is where another mystery comes in. What was the monument that Herod built “at the mouth of the sepulcher” of David at great expense? There certainly don’t seem to be any additional monuments in front of these tombs today. But if we look at the monument that Herod built for himself at the Herodium, a surprising resemblance is seen between the construction of his tomb and Absalom’s Pillar. There is at least one major difference between the two monuments, though. Absalom’s Pillar is carved from solid rock and has stood for thousands of years, while Herod’s monument was constructed more simply from small ashlar stones and is now a complete ruin down to its foundation. Who could have built a monument so grand that Herod wanted to copy it but couldn’t with the same quality? Some have suggested that the tomb in the Kidron Valley was built by his grandson, Herod Agrippa I, based on the similarity of the tombs, but that is unlikely in the highest degree. Agrippa died quite

³²⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 16,7,1.

unexpectedly in the fourth year of his reign over Judea when he was only 54 years old, and his son, Herod Agrippa II, was only 16 at the time and was away in Rome. According to Josephus, the local people hated Agrippa and celebrated his death, robbed his house, and abused his daughters. The son was even passed over for kingship by Rome because he was so young. Instead, Judea was made a Roman province. The son never returned to Judea to entomb his father like his grandfather was, and the people hated Agrippa and would not have permitted a grand burial.³²⁸ And Herod the Great's memorial was so hated it was torn down by the Jews between 66 and 73 AD during their revolt against the Romans.



Absalom's Pillar (left) and the Reconstructed Model of Herod's Monument at the Herodium (right)

³²⁸ Josephus, *Wars*, 19,8,1 to 19,9,1.



Remains of Herod's monument at the Herodium

By matter of deduction, Herod's funerary monument was constructed after Absalom's Pillar, with the intention of emulating it. They have nearly identical lower sections and borders around the top of the capitals, so the resemblance cannot have been accidental. And they even have the same round pointed top over a square, pillared base. But here is where it gets interesting. Looking at Absalom's Pillar, it appears that the round pointed top was possibly made at a later time than its solid rock base. Especially if one looks at the other stone monolith to the south, called Hezekiah's Tomb.

Hence, here is the conjecture. Herod the Great rebuilt a top for Absalom's Pillar (David's tomb) after breaking into it, and then he later made his monument to match it. This would solve the mystery of what Josephus said Herod built out of white stone at the mouth of (*on top of the opening into*) David's sepulcher at great expense, and it answers why Herod would have wanted to copy the design.



Herod's monument model design produced from remains found at the location (left) and Absalom's Pillar (right).



Sarcophagus of Lucius Cornelius Scipio Barbatus, circa 270 BC, Tomb of the Scipios, Via Appia—Vatican Museum, Rome

Another observation can be made about the obvious similarity of the design between Herod's monument and Absalom's Pillar. In Herod's time, such a design would not be rare. For example, there is a 270 BC sarcophagus made for Lucius Cornelius Scipio Barbatus, a consul of Rome, which demonstrates that the Doric design with triglyphs and metopes used on these tombs in Israel was already old in the first century BC. The style has been

attributed to the Greeks and goes back to at least the seventh century BC,³²⁹ but little is known about the Greeks between the sixth and tenth centuries in the Greek Dark Ages and Archaic periods. *But the real question is how could that style have been used by Solomon?* So, either the style is a lot older than most people think, or it would mean that the design couldn't have been carved into the monolith by Solomon.

Well, one thing we can say about the Greeks is that they learned their alphabet from the Phoenicians between 950 and 750 BC, which includes the time when Scripture says that “all the kings of the earth sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart” (*2 Chronicles 9:23*). Hence, the argument being made here is that if the Doric style was already being copied for centuries in Herod’s time, and it is still being copied in the modern world today, then it’s not that hard to conceive of it being copied for a little longer, i.e., back to the days of Solomon—meaning that his designs were from the outset “an instant classic.”

And speaking of sarcophagi, if Herod really did rob David’s tomb, then the finely carved sarcophagus that was found broken at the Herodium may not have been carved by Herod at all but by Solomon for his father David using the flower motifs that have been seen on other finely carved ashlar stones attributable to Solomon. That may not resonate right away, but it is carved with wonderful precision from a single piece of limestone, using the same kind of 8-toothed adze chisel that was used on Solomon’s work, and the flowers on the end seem to match the style that Solomon used.

³²⁹ Mark Wilson Jones. “Tripods, Triglyphs, and the Origin of the Doric Frieze.” *American Journal of Archaeology* 106.3 (2002): 354.



So-called sarcophagus of Herod the Great

There is only one other sarcophagus that has been found in Israel that is truly an equal to the one thought to have been made for Herod the Great. It was found in a comparatively plain tomb of priests from the first century AD along with other ornate ossuaries, but none of them were like this one. Although it is more decorated than Herod's, it is an excellent match for it in terms of being comprised of the same type of red limestone, the perfection of the finish, and the general style of the motifs employed.



Red limestone sarcophagus found in the Tomb of the Nazirites, Mount Scopus, Jerusalem

This raises the question of whether it too was found in secondary use. And if so, could it have originally been Solomon's? Obviously, that's total conjecture, but there is a basis for it. Very few fine sarcophagi have been found in Israel, and if one of them was for Herod the Great, it stands to reason that those that have been found of this same quality were either in reuse from an earlier age or were only fabricated for the greatest of royalty by the rarest of craftsmen; otherwise, they would have been more common.

But back to the tombs in the Kidron Valley. In 333 AD, the Bordeaux Pilgrim believed that these tombs were already ancient and were from the time of Isaiah and Hezekiah, as they were named in his day. That means he thought he was looking at tombs that were a thousand years old, not a few hundred. Another mystery is why the names given to these tombs have changed so many times over the centuries. For example, in the pilgrimage of Arculfus to the Holy Land in 670 AD, he reported that these tombs were of Simeon and Joseph. This demonstrates that the true histories of these tombs became confused and were lost. This may have been because the tombs were reused for later burials or because stories were invented to attract pilgrims. Regardless, an older date than the first century AD is certain. And how the name of such a grand tomb could have been lost in the first place is a mystery, whoever it was made for.

Not far from thence, about a stone's throw, are two notable (monubiles) tombs of wondrous beauty; in the one, which is a true monolith, lies Isaiah the prophet, and in the other Hezekiah, King of the Jews.³³⁰ – *The Bordeaux Pilgrim*

In the same valley [Josaphat, i.e., Kidron] that has been mentioned above, not far from the Church of St. Mary, is shown the Tower of Josaphat, in which his sepulcher is seen.

³³⁰ *Itinerary from Bordeaux to Jerusalem*, Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society (1887): 24.

This little tower is joined on the right hand by a stone house, cut out of the rock and separated from the Mount of Olivet, within which are shown two sepulchers cut out with iron tools, destitute of ornament. One of these is that of Simeon, the just man, who, having embraced the little infant, the Lord Jesus, in the Temple in both his hands, prophesied about Him. The other is that of Joseph, the spouse of St. Mary and the upbringer of the Lord Jesus.³³¹ — *Arculfus*

Tomb of Zechariah

The other matching monolithic tomb carved out of the solid rock is the Tomb of Zechariah. This one is very similar to the other, except that the top of it is a simple pyramid. But both appear to be contemporary structures. The drastic difference between their tops, however, adds credence to the notion that the top of Absalom's Pillar may have been enhanced by Herod the Great, according to the account of Josephus. The tomb is now associated with the priest and prophet Zechariah, the son of Jehoida (c. 800 BC), who was ordered to be stoned by King Joash (2 *Chronicles* 24:20-22), and while that's not impossible, he was not loved by the king and was stoned as a blasphemer. Thus, it seems he would have only been buried there if the tomb already existed and his body was just placed there. It sounds unlikely that they would have carved such a monumental tomb for a guy they just stoned. And again, even if it was for Zechariah, the style of the tomb would challenge what scholars believe about the timing of the emergence of the Doric style, because the end of the ninth century BC would be well over a century before the style's recognized emergence in Greece.

³³¹ *The Pilgrimage of Aruculfus in the Holy Land (About the Year AD 670)*. Palestine Pilgrims Text Society (1895): Book 1, XV-XVI.



Zechariah's Tomb in the Kidron Valley

But more importantly, this tomb looks like the best candidate for the tomb of Solomon. Why? For one, consider the great effort he expended to memorialize the tomb of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Hebron at the Tomb of the Patriarchs. Would Solomon have

made no preparation for his own tomb, or only prepared a plain and simple monument for himself? Another reason is because of the account of Josephus about Herod robbing the tombs of David and Solomon. That means that Solomon had a major tomb just like the one for his father David. Furthermore, like Absalom's Pillar, this monolith may have been dug into after it was first constructed, based on the cave that is now seen carved into its base. Unlike Absalom's Pillar, though, there appears to be no chamber inside. This may be what Josephus meant when he said the bodies of David and Solomon were not found and were hidden farther underneath. *If these tombs do go back to Solomon, it would be very interesting to see if ground-penetrating radar could reveal any hidden chambers within or around these tombs...*

It has also been noted that this tomb is not fully finished on all four sides. The columns on the back and sides have not been as finely carved as the front, as if the work was left unfinished. Compared to Absalom's Pillar, this does indeed appear to be the case. One possible explanation for why it was left unfinished by Solomon is that it may not have been completed before his death. If so, then that would be a good explanation for why it was never finished. Because almost immediately after Solomon's death, Rehoboam lost most of his workmen when he refused to lighten their workload (*1 Kings 12:1-16*).

The Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter

There is a third reason to consider that the Tomb of Zechariah could be the tomb of Solomon, and it's because of the Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter on the Silwan necropolis. This tomb has been dated to between the ninth and seventh centuries BC.³³² There are

³³² David Ussishkin, "The Necropolis from the Time of the Kingdom of Judah at Silwan, Jerusalem," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, 33.2 (1970): 33-46.

three other monumental tombs there that are also dated to that period, and it has been suggested that they are the royal tombs of the City of David. In many ways, it is a compelling connection to make; however, it overlooks the significance of the truly grand monolithic tombs that are only a stone's throw to the north.



The Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter is just a little south of Zechariah's Tomb.

There are a few facts about the tombs in Silwan that bear consideration. First, the tombs are cut out of the solid rock, and while simpler overall, they also exhibit fine craftsmanship and required a lot of labor. Second, they are unique in Israel. If this type of tomb was common, then that would be one thing, but when it isn't, it speaks more to them being of the same era. Third, the Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter had a pyramid top that would have looked very much like the top of Zechariah's Tomb. They know this because the very bottom edges of the pyramid that was once carved on top of it are still attached to the roof, and there are signs that it was removed by quarrying in the Roman period of Aelia Capitolina. It was the pyramid shape of the top that led to its

identification as the tomb of the pharaoh's daughter whom Solomon married (*1 Kings 3:1*).



The Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter with the remains of a Phoenician inscription, Silwan Necropolis, Jerusalem (with an added sketch of its former pyramidal roof).

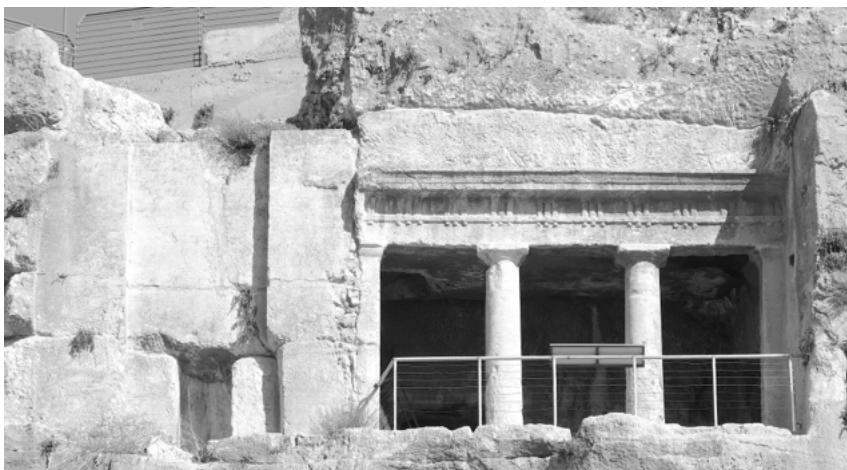
A third fact to consider is that the tombs in Silwan contain some Phoenician (early Hebrew) inscriptions that fix an undeniable early date to these tombs (tenth to seventh centuries BC). There was once an inscription in Pharaoh's Daughter's tomb possibly telling who was buried there, but only two Phoenician letters from it have survived. Fortunately, there is an inscription in one of the other tombs that tells us that it was not made for a king but for a high-ranking official. It may have even been the biblical Shebna, the steward and treasurer of King Hezekiah. But the most important thing the inscription tells us is that the tombs of the kings must have been even more grand and ornate if a steward was buried in

a monolith like this one. Granted, Shebna was reaching above his station, which is clearly implied in those verses, but Hezekiah would not have let him build his tomb right next to the kings of Judah. So, this servant's tomb sets an upper bar for how nice a tomb we could expect for someone who wasn't a king, as well as setting a lower bar for how nice a tomb we should expect for a king. All within a couple of centuries from the time of David and Solomon. As for the one called the Tomb of Pharaoh's Daughter, it's a nice idea, but there's no way to really know for sure who it was made for. *It is plausible, though, that Solomon could have made a lesser tomb for her that later a steward might have aspired to reach up to by having a similar tomb carved to match it nearby.*

¹⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: "Go, proceed to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the house, and say: ¹⁶ 'What have you here, and whom have you here, that you have hewn a sepulcher here, as he who hews himself a sepulcher on high, who carves a tomb for himself in a rock? – Isaiah 22:15-16 NKJV

The Tombs of the Sons of Hezir

So then, where are the tombs of the kings of Judah, if they aren't on Mount Zion, or on the Silwan Necropolis, or in a plain unmarked stone tomb in the City of David? The answer that has eluded the archaeological world for a century and a half is that they have been hiding in plain sight, sitting right between the Tomb of Zechariah and Absalom's Pillar. It is a large and ornately decorated tomb complex with a matching Doric design and columns. The tomb has been dated to the Hasmonean period because of an inscription scratched below the Doric frieze saying that the sons of Hezir were buried there.



Tombs of the Sons of Hezir, aka the real Tombs of the Kings of Judah in the Valley of the Kings (Kidron Valley)



Lightly scratched inscription (white arrows) below the Doric frieze of the cliff face tomb in the Kidron Valley, saying that the sons of Hezir were buried there (circa 2nd century BC).

But that lightly scratched inscription doesn't mean the tomb was carved for them. It does mean that the tomb cannot be younger than the inscription, but the tomb could easily be much older. The inscription is shallowly carved compared to the fine deep carvings of the Doric frieze itself, suggesting the inscription was made at a later date. The sons are believed to have been priests in the

Hasmonean period. By then, these tombs were likely already looted and were being reused by this wealthy priestly family. But the origin of those tombs would fit well with the time of the kings of Judah, buried between the tombs of David and Solomon.

These simple and obvious associations have been dismissed for over a century because of the many reasons we have discussed. However, as one reviews all the evidence and begins to logically eliminate other possibilities, the simplest answer that remains is generally the right one. In this case, the idea that wealthy priestly families living in the Hasmonean period or first century AD could have carved such amazing monolithic tombs is untenable. If that were true, then Israel would have many such tombs, but it doesn't. There are some, but most look like poor copies of these ones. And certainly not right here in the Valley of the Kings, exactly where they are supposed to be. These are the tombs of kings, plain and simple. And they belong to the greatest kings of Israel. And the Bible even gives us one more clue about the tombs of the kings in the account of Hezekiah's burial. He was buried in the "upper tomb," or what should probably best be translated as the cliff tomb of the sons of David, i.e., the cliff tomb of the kings of Judah.³³³

So Hezekiah rested with his fathers, and **they buried him in the upper tombs of the sons of David**; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death. Then Manasseh his son reigned in his place. – 2 Chronicles 32:33

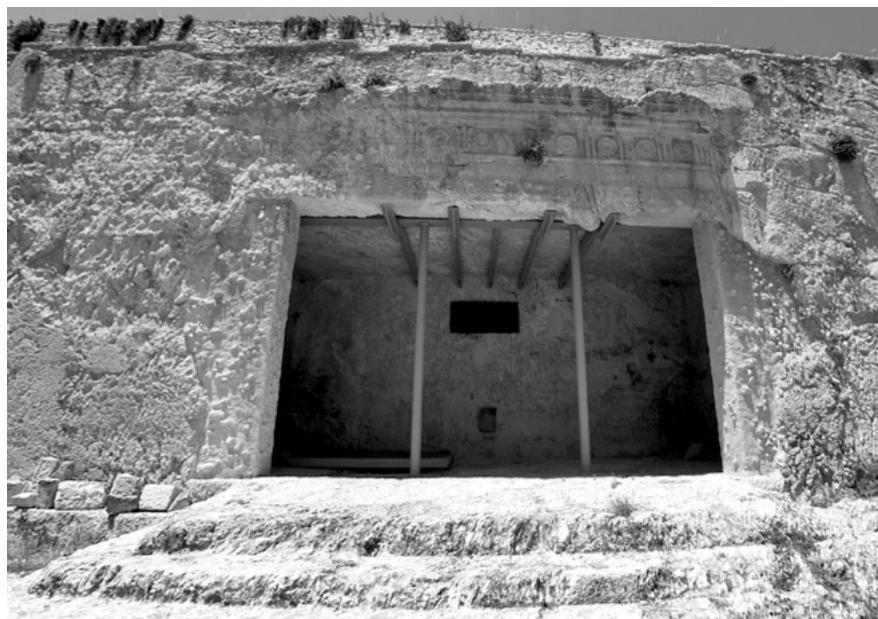
The last king of Judah buried in the tombs of the kings would have been Josiah (2 *Chronicles* 35:24) around 609 BC. The next king, Jehoahaz, was carried off to Egypt where he died (2 *Chronicles* 36:4). Then Jehoiakim was carried off to Babylon by

³³³ The upper tomb or cliff tomb in Hebrew is *bema'ala kavri*—Strong's H4608 & H6913.

Nebuchadnezzar (*2 Chronicles 36:6*), and so was Jehoiachin (*2 Chronicles 36:10*). And finally, when Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC, Zedekiah, too, was carried off to Babylon, where he died (*Jeremiah 52:11*), breaking the reign of the kings of Judah. After being looted and sitting empty for centuries, it's easy to understand why these tombs would have later been reused.

Solomon's Quarries

Quarries are natural places to later cut tombs because the site has already been prepared. And Solomon didn't just have one quarry; he had many. [*You can't have 80,000 men all cutting and shaping stone in the same place.*] And the other location in Jerusalem that is on par with the cliff-cut tombs of the kings in the Kidron Valley is the so-called Tombs of the Kings that is situated in a quarry 1 mile southwest of the Old City.



The Tomb of the Kings is now believed to be the tomb of Queen Helena of Adiabene.

The same Doric frieze is found over the top of the tomb, and it is also cut into a sheer quarried cliff face. It likely also had two columns supporting its center span, just as the tomb in the Kidron Valley does, making it a close match. Could this tomb also be contemporary with the others? Well, most likely the quarry it was cut into does go back to the time of Solomon. The question is when was the tomb itself cut? It is conceivable that the style was copied centuries later, but there would be at least some reason to suspect that it was also cut at the same time, perhaps for some of Solomon's many queens. One might expect them to have generally outlived him, but his older wives or any that may have died giving birth would have preceded him.



Doric Frieze above the Tomb of the Kings (SW of Old City)

The tomb is generally attributed to Queen Helena of Adiabene, circa 50-56 AD, based on the testimonies of Josephus and Eusebius and on an inscription naming “Tsadah the queen” on one of the five sarcophagi that were found in the tomb by Louis Félicien de Saulcy in 1863.³³⁴ The inscription was written in both Hebrew and

³³⁴ R. Steven Notley and Jeffrey P. Arroyo García. “Queen Helena’s Jerusalem Palace—In a Parking Lot?” Biblical Archaeology Review 40.3 (2014): 28–37, 39.

Aramaic, using scripts that had overlapping usage between the fourth and second centuries BC.³³⁵ That isn't unusual by itself, but one part of the inscription was in Seleucid Aramaic, which transitioned into Hasmonean Aramaic in the second century.³³⁶ The fact that both scripts were carved together suggests it was a time when both were still in common usage, and therefore at least one of the sarcophagi was placed in the tomb centuries before Helena of Adiabene was in Jerusalem. That means the tomb was probably carved long before her time as well, but she might have still been buried there. Perhaps it became associated with her burial, making it the monument Eusebius was speaking of that was in the suburbs of Jerusalem in the fourth century AD (*the three pyramids referenced is still a mystery, though*). Nonetheless, there are better reasons to associate the construction of the tomb with Solomon rather than Helena.

Accordingly, she [Helena] went to him in haste; and when she was come into Adiabene, she did not long outlive her son Izates. But Monobazus sent her bones, as well as those of Izates, his brother, to Jerusalem, and gave order that they should be buried at the pyramids which their mother had erected; they were three in number, and distant no more than three furlongs from the city of Jerusalem.³³⁷ – Josephus

Of this same Helen, mentioned by historians, splendid monuments are still to be seen in the suburbs of the city (Jerusalem) now called Aelia. But she is said to have been queen of Adiabene.³³⁸ – Eusebius

³³⁵ The inscription was in Seleucid Aramaic script and Aramaic/Hebrew Square Script, indicating a time from Alexander the Great to the start of the Hasmonean era.

³³⁶ Holger Gzella. *A Cultural History of Aramaic: From the Beginnings to the Advent of Islam*. Brill (2015): 212-7.

³³⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 20,4,3.

³³⁸ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2,12,3.

And there is one more reason to suspect a connection to Solomon at the Tombs of the Kings. One of the five sarcophagi found in the tomb was ornately carved and unique in comparison with the others. It was made from one solid piece of red limestone and was covered in large open flowers carved as a metope in the Doric style between curved triglyphs with an egg and dart border. After it was discovered, it was moved to the Temple Mount and put into secondary use as a step for the Qayit Bey fountain.³³⁹ Based on its size and the style of carving, it looks like it could also be originally from Solomon's time.



Stone sarcophagi in secondary use under the Qayit Bey fountain on the Temple Mount.



Closeup of the carvings on the sarcophagus

³³⁹ “Sarcophagi from the ‘Tomb of the Kings,’” Sidebar to: Queen Helena’s Jerusalem Palace—In a Parking Lot? <https://library.biblicalarchaeology.org/sidebar/sarcophagi-from-the-tomb-of-the-kings/>

Solomon's Quarry—East of the Damascus Gate

The quarry that is most famously tied to Solomon however is known appropriately as Solomon's Quarries, and it is also called Zedekiah's Cave. It is accepted by most archaeologists to have been a quarry where many of the great ashlar stones of the Temple Mount were harvested from. Iron Age remains have been found in the quarry, so it is hard to deny its ancient past.³⁴⁰ Nevertheless, because the great ashlar stones are believed by most scholars to have been placed by Herod the Great, not Solomon, the ancient origin of the quarry is in doubt.



An area within King Solomon's Quarry that exhibits signs of quarrying (vertical, evenly spaced cuts in the wall)

The quarry is not nearly large enough to have supplied all the stone needed for Solomon's building programs, so it is certainly not the only one, as mentioned previously. The area underground is estimated to be about 5 acres, which would have produced up to

³⁴⁰ Yehiel Zelinger. "Jerusalem, 'Zedekiah's Cave'", *Hadashot Arkheologiyot: Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 119 (2007): 479–480.

3.5 million ft³, i.e., up to 300,000 tons of limestone block. That may sound like a lot, but millions of tons of stone would have ultimately been produced by Solomon's men. The quarry was also used into the Islamic period until it was finally sealed up by Sultan Suleiman around 1540. It then lay hidden until it was rediscovered in 1854 by James Turner Barclay. It is now open as an archaeological site and special event venue. Thus, these caverns continue to be in use, nearly three thousand years later.

Other Quarries—Ramat Shlomo and Har Hotzvim



Remains of a large block quarry at Ramat Shlomo in Area B.³⁴¹

³⁴¹ Irina Zilberbod, "Jerusalem, Ramat Shlomo," *Hadashot Arkheologiyot: Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 126 (2014): Figure 13.

Two other substantial quarries have been discovered in the northern part of modern Jerusalem. The largest one discovered to date was at Har Hotzvim.³⁴² Another one was found nearby in Ramat Shlomo. This quarry showed evidence that many of the very large stones in the Temple Mount could have come from this quarry.³⁴³ Together, these quarries demonstrate that Solomon's stonemasonry operations were much larger than one might imagine. And if you think about it, multiple quarries with sufficient space for everyone to get to work were a necessity for the 150,000 men that Solomon had cutting and hauling stone.

Solomon's Fortified Cities—Hazor, Megiddo, & Gezer

One area that is mostly accepted by modern archaeologists as belonging to Solomon are the six-chambered gates that have been found in the citadel cities of Hazor, Gezer, and Megiddo (there are also similar gates at Ashdod and Lachish).³⁴⁴ This admission is welcome, but it doesn't help with identifying the finer workmanship of Solomon. On the positive side, though, these sites are all completely abandoned, allowing for a complete excavation of the entire area. And in the case of these three cities, very compelling arguments can be made in favor of their age, extending even beyond the time of Solomon into the Bronze Age and the days of the Judges or even back to Abraham. The problem is, it doesn't look like Solomon sent his best stone masons to any of these sites, because you don't find the same quality of stonework that is present at the Temple Mount.

³⁴² “Largest ever Second Temple era quarry discovered in Har Hotzvim Hi-Tech Park, Jerusalem,” *The Jerusalem Post*, August 2, 2024, <https://www.jpost.com/archaeology/article-812998>

³⁴³ Irina Zilberbod, “Jerusalem, Ramat Shlomo,” *Hadashot Arkheologiyot: Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 126 (2014): 19 pages.

³⁴⁴ Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000–586 B.C.E.* Doubleday (1990): 380–7.



Six-chambered gate at Tel Megiddo (white arrows)

Nevertheless, all three sites have some large ashlar construction that could be from the time of Solomon. And while it would certainly be nice if he had used some stones with the same borders and quality of workmanship that we see in Jerusalem, it's easy to understand why he wouldn't have wanted to in these fortified cities. First, high-quality masons would surely have been in short supply. So logically, they would have been employed on the more important projects in Jerusalem, which it seems were being built at the same time (*1 Kings 9:15*). Second, every well-dressed stone starts off as a rough-cut stone. Thus, what may appear to be a differentiation in stone working skill could simply be a financial consideration of time and effort, rather than an indication that the ability to do such fine work was absent. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that when the direct quality of the stonework is not comparable, we may still resort to other dating evidence and similar designs. For example, the use of six-chambered gates, "header and stretcher" construction with ashlars,

and basic infrastructure like water systems and cisterns.³⁴⁵ And of course, we have the accounts of the Bible to justify such comparisons and help solve some of these riddles. For example, the most excavated of the defensive cities mentioned that were built up by Solomon is Tel Megiddo. It has large ashlar masonry, an elaborate water system, storehouses, a palace, and the remains of proto-Aeolic capital design that is associated with King David (who presumably conquered Megiddo prior to Solomon's reign).



Proto-Aeolic capital, associated with King David, that was found at Tel-Megiddo.

Towns of the Galilee

After Solomon completed the temple and his palaces, we read that Solomon traded cities with Hiram and built up the towns he received in the Galilee. So based on those accounts, we should expect to find the remains of the works of Solomon in some of the towns of the Galilee.

³⁴⁵ Amnon Ben-Tor. *Hazor: Canaanite Metropolis, Israelite City*, IES (2016): 192.

¹⁰ At the end of twenty years, during which Solomon built these two buildings—the temple of the Lord and the royal palace—¹¹ King Solomon gave twenty towns in Galilee to Hiram king of Tyre, because Hiram had supplied him with all the cedar and juniper and gold he wanted. ¹² But when Hiram went from Tyre to see the towns that Solomon had given him, he was not pleased with them. ¹³ “What kind of towns are these you have given me, my brother?” he asked. And he called them the Land of Kabul, a name they have to this day. ¹⁴ Now Hiram had sent to the king 120 talents of gold.
—1 Kings 9:10-14

¹ At the end of twenty years, during which Solomon built the temple of the Lord and his own palace, ² Solomon rebuilt the villages that Hiram had given him and settled Israelites in them. — 2 Chron. 8:1-2

Now some may see a bit of contradiction in the two passages above. Were towns given to Hiram or received from him? Dr. Kitchen, in *On the Reliability of the New Testament*, gives a simple explanation for the apparent discrepancy by suggesting something that was commonly done in the Middle East—they agreed to some land swaps by trading towns.³⁴⁶ Since the towns are not named, we can only turn to archaeological evidence to attempt to identify which ones may have been included. But the first question is, where was the Galilee? The first hint, besides the Gospel accounts, is found in the book of Isaiah.

But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, **on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.**—Isaiah 9:1 NASB

³⁴⁶ Kitchen, *On the reliability of the Old Testament*, 113-4.

We know from the New Testament that the Galilee included the area around the Sea of Galilee, but how big was it overall? Isaiah names three areas that all seem to be part of a larger designation of the Galilee: the territories of Zebulun, Naphtali, and an area beyond the Jordan, called Galilee of the Gentiles—which was the territory of the half tribe of Manasseh. Their territory was near the Sea of Galilee and was made up of the northern part of Gilead and Bashan, which today includes the Golan Heights.

The rest of Gilead and all Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh, all the region of Argob (concerning all Bashan, it is called the land of Rephaim). – Deuteronomy 3:13 NASB

Clearly, the name “Galilean” was a reference to a general area, not a tribal designation. It would be like someone in the United States being from the “South” or a “Southerner,” which could mean any of a dozen different states. And based on a description of the region of the Galilee by Josephus, it was indeed a larger area and referred to the north-central part of Israel plus the area east of the Jordan River around the Sea of Galilee. To be connected to Solomon, we should be looking for towns in the Galilee region that date back to the Bronze Age or early Iron Age. That would include at least Bethsaida (Et-Tell), Gennesaret (Kinneret), Sepphoris (Tzipori), Yodfat (Jotapata), Nazareth, and Kedesh (Tel-Kedesh). Josephus also specifically named Samaria (Sebastia) and Beit She'an (Scythopolis, a Decapolis city) as the lower boundary of the Galilee, and he included the cities of Hippos (Sussita National Park, Israel, a Decapolis city), Gadara (Umm Qais, Jordan, a Decapolis city), Tiberias (Rakkath), and Zabulon (Cabul).³⁴⁷ In the time of Solomon, the full tribal territories were under his control,

³⁴⁷ Josephus, *Wars*, 3,3,1.

so we can also look to some of the cities even farther east, like Pella (Tabqet Fahel, Jordan, a Decapolis city), Abila (Jordan, a Decapolis city), Gerasa (Jerash, Jordan, a Decapolis city), and Gamla (Golan Heights, a first century BC synagogue). Any of those places with remains dating back to the tenth century BC could have evidence of Solomon's reign.

And of those cities just mentioned, six of them were part of the Decapolis. If they were built up by Solomon, then that might be part of the reason those cities were later more prosperous and were selected to be part of the Decapolis. Jesus also spent time ministering in the Decapolis as part of his ministry in the Galilee.

Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis.
– Mark 7:31

But the cities of the Decapolis were not part of the territory ruled by Herod the Great. Thus, any “Herodian-like” work would be a natural candidate to consider as Solomon’s. And of those cities, the most important one to consider, with the greatest amount of stonework that could be preserved from Solomon, is Beit She’an.

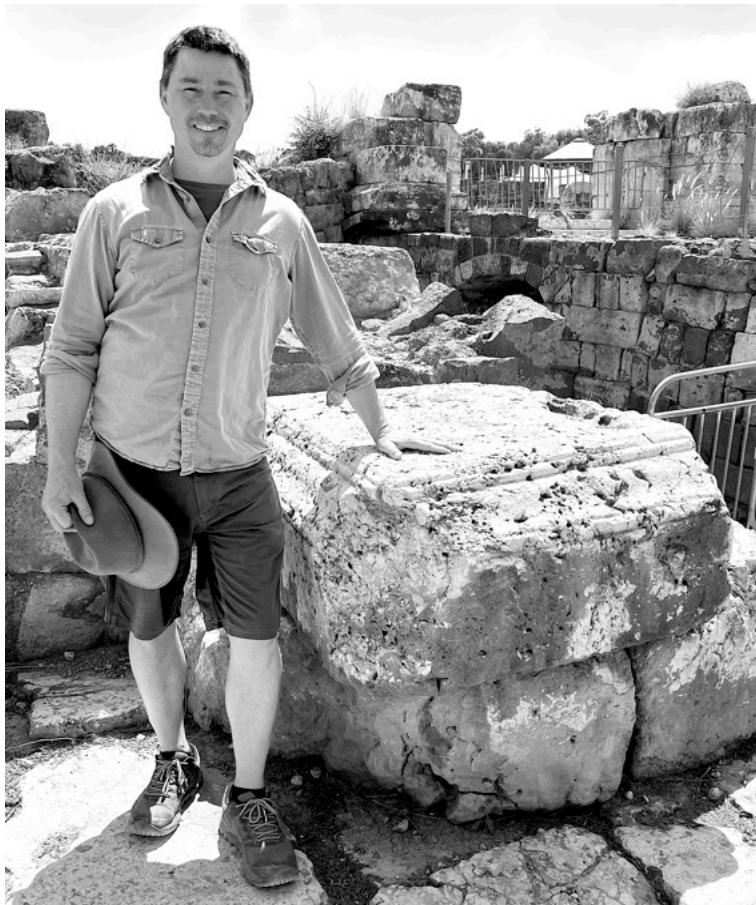
Beit She’an (Bet Shean)

The city is about 18 miles south of the Sea of Galilee and 80 miles north of Jerusalem. But whether it was properly considered to be in the Galilee region or not, it looks to be a city that Solomon worked on, and 1 Kings 4:12 says that Bet Shean was under his control. The challenge is that many other people also built there. The Egyptians had a major settlement there from the fifteenth to the twelfth centuries BC. They were replaced by Canaanites from

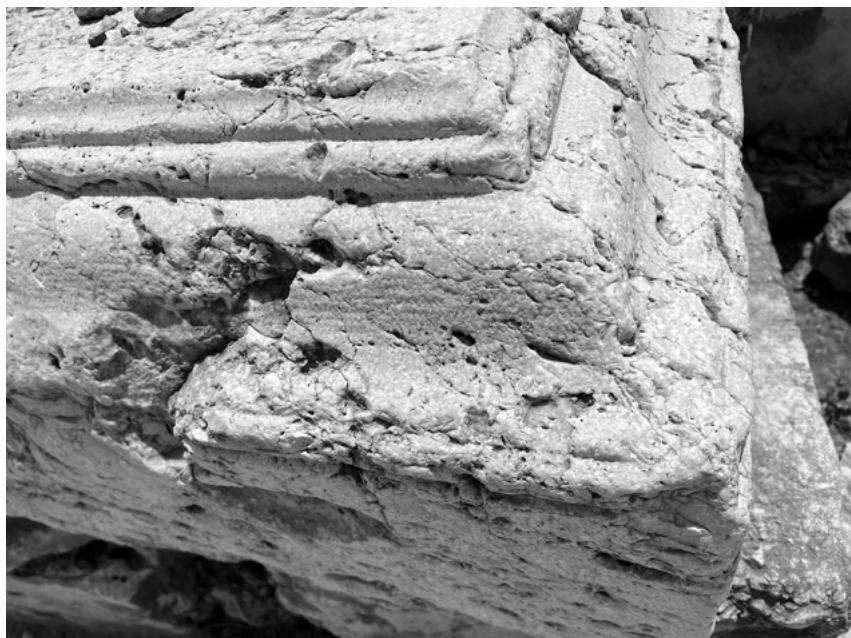
the twelfth to the tenth century BC, when they were presumably conquered by King David. Then it was destroyed by Tiglath-Pileser III of the Assyrians in 732 BC. It was rebuilt in the time of Alexander the Great, and then it became a Roman city in 63 AD, when Pompey conquered Judea. The city continued to thrive into the Byzantine and early Muslim eras until it was devastated by an earthquake in 749 AD, after which it never fully recovered. The city has also been inhabited into the modern era. Then it was excavated and established as a national park in Israel in the 1990s. With so many periods of building, determining what Solomon may have built is no easy task, especially when the city was rebuilt in the time of Alexander the Great and then again in the Roman age. And if the assertion of this book is correct that many of the Greek and Roman motifs originated with Solomon, then it is a lot harder to separate Solomon's work from later craftsmen who were employing the same style.

Nevertheless, the best work of Solomon was in general done with large ashlars, fine finishing, and without the use of mortar, as was typical of later Roman work. Solomon also undoubtedly had men doing the simple stonework that was common throughout the Iron Age, but that work could only be connected to Solomon through other dating references, like inscriptions, pottery, organic matter, etc. It's only his finer signature work that would really stand out. At Bet Shean, there are many large, carved white limestone ashlars, lintels, columns, and capitals that have been found at the site. Here is one example of a square column base that matches very well with the style and quality of chisel finish seen at the Damascus Gate. Since the Bible says Solomon had control over Bet Shean, the similarity of the work should be enough to consider attributing these ashlars to his craftsmen. The objective here is not to prove that this stone is indisputably from the work of Solomon. Rather, it is to demonstrate that many candidates exist, and that

so far, the idea that some of these buildings could be incorporating some of his stonework has not been considered as part of the range of possible interpretations for the development of this site. And what I mean by that is that it has not been considered that “Herodian-like” work could be the hallmark of King Solomon. Scholars do not see the fine chisel patterns observed on the large Temple Mount ashlar stones as being connected with him. Consequently, they are not even entertaining the notion that similar craftsmanship might be stones from his era.



Author standing next to an ashlar base that is a good match for the quality of Solomon's work.



A closeup of the same large ashlar column base showing the fine adze chisel finish that is so similar to Solomon's work.

Fine Synagogues of the Galilee

To that point, there are several towns in the Galilee with fine synagogues that are not associated with the Iron Age but nevertheless have stones that look much older than their fourth century AD dating assignments would suggest. For example, Capernaum, Korazin, Baram, and Kokhav have beautiful synagogues, but Capernaum is the most important to consider. It was built with beautiful white limestone and large ashlars, and the motifs beckon back to Solomon's work in Jerusalem. This would suggest two possibilities. Either they were originally made by Solomon, or they were made to be like his work in design and quality. The present ruins found in those towns are reported to be from late in the fourth century, when there was evidently an

explosion of Jewish development and rebuilding that went on in the Galilee region. Those specific towns are not reported to have archaeological remains dating back to the Bronze and Iron Ages, so that creates a dilemma. Either the cities are older than what has currently been revealed, or the synagogues were constructed with ruins from an older location. If these synagogues do go back to the time of Solomon, it would challenge the idea of when synagogue usage began in Israel. That is probably something that needs to be challenged, though, because Jews meeting to read the Tanakh (*the Old Testament*) on the Sabbath must have begun long before the first century. There is reason to suspect that Solomon could have built many of these synagogues in addition to building the temple in Jerusalem because their designs and construction so clearly match with the stones we now know were built by Solomon, not Herod.

For example, in Capernaum, the ancient ruins of the synagogue are truly magnificent. Like all the archaeological sites in Israel, there is no lack of debate about the age of these ruins, but the accounts of Jesus teaching at the synagogue of Capernaum in the Gospels assure us that one was there in the first century AD. The reason the present synagogue is thought to have been constructed in the fourth century AD is because of the coins and pottery that were found around the building and under its flagstones. Another reason is the difference in the stone type between the foundation and the building itself. The lower foundation stones are basalt, a common local stone, while the rest of the synagogue is made from fine limestone. The assumption is that the basalt of the foundation is from an earlier synagogue; however, it could also be that a foundation was prepared for the synagogue using local stone, while the fine limestone blocks were taken from an earlier monumental building. Some archaeologists have noticed that the design of the building seems much older than the late date it has been given and have suggested that the stones could be in

secondary use, which does seem to be the case.³⁴⁸ This would also explain why the construction method of the foundation is actually inferior to the building above it. The foundation was laid by fourth century masons with less skill than those who carved the ashlars of the original synagogue. Then, after the foundation was prepared, the entire synagogue was reconstructed using the finer stones of an older synagogue.



Capernaum synagogue on a basalt foundation with fine limestone ashlars above with carved pilasters like those seen in Jerusalem.

The town itself has only been dated to the third or second century BC. If that's accurate, it would mean it wasn't a village in

³⁴⁸ Sharon Lea Mattila, "Capernaum, Village of Nahum, From Hellenistic to Byzantine Times," in *Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods*, 2, Fortress Press (2015): 225.

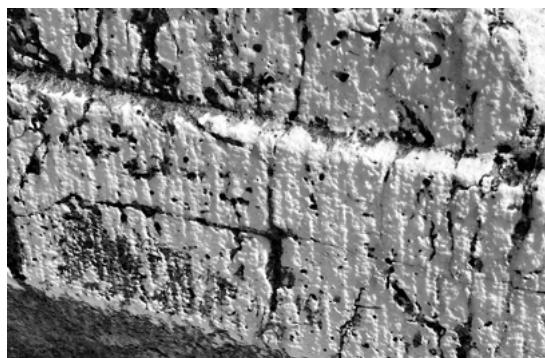
Solomon's day, but it may also be that the oldest part of the city has yet to be uncovered. Nonetheless, the stonework, as well as its apparent age, are quite comparable to the structures of Solomon now identified in Jerusalem. It looks overly elaborate for a first century fishing village and too old to be a fourth century AD structure. So, however one looks at it, it must be much older than presently believed. Identifying it as the original work of Solomon's men is worth strong consideration. There are also very fine columns with Corinthian-style capitals and a pilaster doorway that all exhibit hallmarks of the stonework that should now be associated with Solomon in Jerusalem. [*The upper lintel of the doorway may be a later addition, though.*] Standing in the synagogue in person, it is hard to imagine that it isn't exactly the synagogue that Jesus taught in, even if it was later destroyed and had to be completely rebuilt on a new foundation in the fourth century.



Suspected Solomon-era columns at Capernaum



Solomonic-style doorway at Capernaum, but the upper lintel could be a later addition.



Chisel marks on one of the fine limestone ashlar blocks that match the quality and style of Solomon's men in Jerusalem.

Sebastia (Samaria)

Another city that deserves strong consideration as a city built up by Solomon is the town of Samaria, which was also called Sebastia (*Sebaste*) in Roman times. It is widely believed that Samaria was founded in the ninth century by King Omri of Israel; however, the city shows evidence of activity back to the eleventh century BC.³⁴⁹ We should assume that if Omri made it his capital, then it was already an established town with lots to offer. It's more likely he chose it because it was already a wonderful city built up by Solomon.



Columns and fine ashlar work seen at Sebastia (Samaria)

Once again, examples are found there of carved ashlars that are very much like the fine ashlars seen in Jerusalem. However, in this case, Herod the Great is credited with the work because it was a city under his control. Josephus records that Herod rebuilt

³⁴⁹ Lawrence E. Stager. "Shemer's Estate," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 277/278 (1990): 93-107.

Samaria and named it Sebastia. He strengthened its city wall and built a palace and a temple to make it grander than it was before.³⁵⁰ Undoubtedly, Herod did so, but the attribution of these stones to the workmanship of his craftsmen should now be questioned. With such fine chiseling that matches the great ashlars of the Temple Mount, the attribution should be reconsidered in favor of Solomon—as in many other places.



Chisel marks on fine limestone ashlars at Sebastia

³⁵⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15,8,5.

Another reason that it is sure that Samaria was a more developed city in Solomon's day than scholars generally suppose is the fact that they found a proto-Aeolic capital there. That should connect it to the reign of King David and may mean it was a captured Canaanite city before that.³⁵¹ And if David already had a royal residence or presence there, then it should be a given that Solomon also had building activities in the city.

The Ports of Solomon—Joppa and Ezion-geber

Solomon had two major port cities. One was at Joppa, and the other was Ezion-geber near Eloth.³⁵² The ancient site of Eloth is believed to have been on the Red Sea, not far from modern-day Eilat in Israel. Most scholars believe that Eloth's remains are seen in the nearby port city of Aqaba in Jordan, which has an archaeological history as a town and port dating back about four thousand years.³⁵³ There has been scant development of Aqaba as an archaeological site, and what has been done is much more focused on the Islamic history of the site than on uncovering evidence of a Jewish presence there. The city has also been in continual use since ancient times, so it cannot be fully explored. There are a few remnants that may date back to Solomon in the Aqaba Archaeological Museum, but it is generally accepted that Aqaba was the site of Eloth and Ezion-geber.

King Solomon also built a fleet of ships in Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom.

— 1 Kings 9:26 NASB

³⁵¹ Y. Shiloh. "New Proto-Aeolic Capitals Found in Israel," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 222 (1976): 67-77.

³⁵² 1 Kings 9:26

³⁵³ Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 8.

There is a mystery, though, about how ships could have been constructed in Ezion-Geber so that they could sail to Tarshish, which most commentators believe was in the Mediterranean Sea, based on the account of Jonah setting sail for Tarshish from Joppa. But setting the story of Jonah aside, Solomon's ships sailed from Ezion-geber, on the Red Sea, with Hiram's ships, which were out of Tyre on the Mediterranean Sea. How did the ships sail between all these ports, Ezion-geber, Joppa, and Tyre? Did they sail around the Horn of Africa, a journey of over 12,000 nautical miles?

After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah allied himself with Ahaziah king of Israel. He acted wickedly in so doing. So he allied himself with him **to make ships to go to Tarshish, and they made the ships in Ezion-geber.** – 2 Chronicles 20:35-36 NASB

But Jonah got up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. **So he went down to Joppa, found a ship that was going to Tarshish,** paid the fare, and boarded it to go with them to Tarshish away from the presence of the Lord. – Jonah 1:3 NASB

It is possible that they did sail around the cape, but one intriguing option is that they may have used the Egyptian canal that was the precursor for the Suez Canal, called the Canal of the Pharaohs, to travel between the two seas. According to Pliny the Elder (c. 77 AD), the Egyptian pharaoh Sesostris, also known as Senusret III (c. 1878–1839 BC), built a 60-mile-long canal from the Red Sea to the delta of the Nile on the Mediterranean Sea.³⁵⁴ If the canal was in place and still working in Jehoshaphat's time, then it is a simple explanation for why he built ships for a journey to Tarshish in Ezion-geber instead of Joppa.

³⁵⁴ *Pliny's Natural History*. Trans. Dr. Philemon Holland, Edited by the Wernerian Club, George Barclay (1847-1848): 153 (Book VI, Ch. 29).

Another possibility is that they really did sail around the cape of Africa, because 1 Kings 10:22 says that the round-trip journey of Solomon's ships took three years! That suggests the journey to Tarshish was a lot farther away than someplace within the Mediterranean Sea. To complicate matters further, Tarshish was probably both a place and a certain type of ship, i.e., a long-distance trading vessel, because 1 Kings 22:48 says that ships of Tarshish were built to go to Ophir for gold. That might also mean that the two places were along the same sea route, which would explain why Ophir and Tarshish seem to be used interchangeably. Finally, it says they also brought back peacocks. Since those come from India, it may corroborate the identification of Ophir as India by Josephus. Or if Ophir and Tarshish were two different places along the same sea route, one of them may have been in India, and the other even more remote. Lastly, one might assume that there were two completely different places called Tarshish in ancient times, an eastern one and a western one, but that seems like the least satisfactory solution.

For the king had at sea the ships of Tarshish with the ships of Hiram; once every three years the ships of Tarshish came bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes, and peacocks. – 1 Kings 10:22 NASB

Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold, but they did not go for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber.
– 1 Kings 22:48 NASB

King Solomon's Mines

And speaking of Solomon's ships that brought back gold and silver, one of the more famous and almost mythological stories about King Solomon is about his mines. He had at least three major mining regions that he received metals from: gold from Ophir,

silver from Tarshish, and copper from the Negev. And it's not just from the Bible; Josephus also talked about the naval voyages that brought back the gold of Ophir to King Solomon.

Moreover, the king built many ships in the Egyptian Bay of the Red Sea, in a certain place called Ezion-geber: it is now called Berenice, and is not far from the city Eloth. This country belonged formerly to the Jews, and became useful for shipping from the donations of Hiram king of Tyre; for he sent a sufficient number of men thither for pilots, and such as were skillful in navigation, to whom Solomon gave this command: that they should go along with his own stewards **to the land that was of old called Ophir, but now the Aurea Chersonesus, which belongs to India**, to fetch him gold. And when they had gathered four hundred talents together, they returned to the king again.³⁵⁵ – Josephus

It is well documented that India has extensive gold resources and has a history of gold mining and development going back into ancient times.³⁵⁶ Hence, Josephus' naming of India as the source of Solomon's gold from Ophir is possible. But another, almost impossibly remote location has been suggested on the Bougainville Island of Papua New Guinea.³⁵⁷ The claim may not be fanciful, though. They certainly have gold there in abundance, and it is a part of the chain of Solomon Islands, so named by the Spanish in the late 1500s based on their belief that they had found the ancient location of Solomon's Ophir. As we just discussed, the round-trip journey took three years, so such a remote location may not really be out of the question. Plus, if Tarshish and Ophir were along the

³⁵⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8,6,4.

³⁵⁶ A.K. Grover and M.K. Pandit, "Ancient Gold Mining Activities in India - An Overview," *Iranian Journal of Earth Sciences* (2015) 7, 1-13.

³⁵⁷ Catherine Wilson, "Ophir: Bougainville's epic struggle for freedom," *Pacific Journalism Review* 27.1-2 (2021): 304.

same sea route, then it could be that both places were stops on a single trading mission, because you would have to sail past India to get to the Solomon Islands anyway. The Bible says that he received silver, iron, and tin in abundance from Tarshish. As common as silver was in Solomon's kingdom, he must have gotten a lot from there, but tin was also an important element for making bronze, and of course iron was needed for making tools and weapons. India was a good source of gold, silver, and iron in the Bronze and Iron Ages, so that's possible, but they are not known for tin. Nearby Papua New Guinea and Indonesia are big producers of tin modernly, but it's not known if they have an ancient history of mining tin. Going west in the Mediterranean Sea, though, both Britain and Sardinia are known to have been ancient producers of tin.

Hammered silver is brought from Tarshish and gold from Uphaz. What the craftsman and goldsmith have made is then dressed in blue and purple—all made by skilled workers. – Jeremiah 10:9

Tarshish did business with you because of your great wealth of goods; they exchanged silver, iron, tin and lead for your merchandise. – Ezekiel 27:12



The Pillars of Solomon at the ancient copper mine in Timnah

As for the copper to make the bronze, Solomon wouldn't have needed to travel so far. Numerous copper mines from antiquity have been found in the vicinity of Israel, but the most well-known that could be associated with Solomon is found at Timna Park. It is located about 165 miles south of Jerusalem in the Negev desert, only a short distance from Eilat, Israel. It is now open to visitors as a national park. Archaeological evidence reveals that the mine was first developed by the Egyptians, and radiocarbon dating results have confirmed that it was in heavy usage during the time of Solomon in the tenth century BC.³⁵⁸

Solomon's Other Cities Named in Scripture

Solomon also built up the cities of Hamath-Zobah, Tadmor, Upper and Lower Beth Horon, Baalath, and his store cities, which were towns that supplied food and goods for the kingdom. The list of places to consider and the magnitude of his operations in Israel and the surrounding areas is truly staggering.

¹ At the end of twenty years, during which Solomon built the temple of the LORD and his own palace, ² Solomon rebuilt the villages that Hiram had given him, and settled Israelites in them. ³ Solomon then went to Hamath Zobah and captured it. ⁴ He also built up Tadmor in the desert and all the store cities he had built in Hamath. ⁵ He rebuilt Upper Beth Horon and Lower Beth Horon as fortified cities, with walls and with gates and bars, ⁶ as well as Baalath and all his store cities, and all the cities for his chariots and for his horses—whatever he desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon and throughout all the territory he ruled. – 2 Chronicles 8:1-6

³⁵⁸ Aaron Kalman, “Timna copper mines dated to King Solomon era,” *Times of Israel*, 8 September 2013, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/timna-copper-mines-dated-to-king-solomon-era/>; Beno Rothernberg. *Were These King Solomon's Mines? Excavations in the Timna Valley*, Stein and Day (1972): 105-111.

Hamath Zobah. This city's location is still unknown. It may be the present-day city of Hama in Syria, or just an undiscovered city on the border of Hamath and Zobah.

Tadmor (Palmyra). A store city of Solomon was identified as Palmyra by Josephus.³⁵⁹ Palmyra is in the desert in modern Syria, about 150 miles from the Mediterranean Sea and around 190 miles north of the Golan Heights, the northernmost border of modern Israel. That puts it a very long way from Jerusalem, but at least by the second century BC, a large Jewish population lived there. It was also an important trade city along what centuries later became known as the Silk Road to the East. Palmyra's archaeological remains go back beyond the Bronze Age, so it was certainly a city in Solomon's day. The current accepted narrative about the fine buildings of Palmyra is that they mostly date to the first centuries BC and AD, but that is nearly contemporary with Josephus. He could not have been unaware of Palmyra's history and would not have claimed that Solomon built it up in the tenth century BC if the only substantial buildings in the city were new in his day. He was also in an excellent position to judge its architecture and compare it to Solomon's. So once again, many of those buildings are likely older than currently acknowledged. And remembering that Josephus also said that Solomon used the Corinthian order, much of Solomon's work could easily be misinterpreted as Greek or Roman today. The size of the ashlars alone should indicate that some of the buildings, like the Temple of Baal-Shamin, are older than the Hellenistic period and the second century BC, which is the date that it has been given by archaeologists. With its pilaster-style wall columns, large ashlar stone construction, and Corinthian capitals, it may well be from Solomon's time. Unfortunately, the city was greatly damaged in the Syrian Civil War and other fighting

³⁵⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8,6,1.

with terrorist groups between 2013 and 2024, and it has complicated and prevented any further evaluation of the archaeological evidence at Palmyra.



Temple of Baal-Shamin (2010), Palmyra, Syria



Palmyra, Syria – The Great Colonnade.

Upper and Lower Beth Horon. These have been identified today as the Arab-Muslim towns of Beit Ur al-Fauqa and Beit Ur al-Tahta, which lie about 10 miles to the northwest of Jerusalem. Extensive archaeological excavations have not taken place there, but some initial surveys were conducted. Potsherds have been found to corroborate their ancient origins, and there are still some remnants of reconstructed buildings. Perhaps the most supportive find for a connection with Solomon, however, would be the remnants of “well-dressed and coursed, whitish limestone ashlar” that were found in secondary use in a structure called The Tower in Beit Ur al-Fauqa.³⁶⁰ While some visible remains have been cataloged, no in-depth studies have been performed at either site.

Baalath. Possibly the town of Baalbek, which was identified by Mukaddasi in *Description of Syria Including Palestine* (c. 985 AD) as one of the cities of Solomon.

The cities of Solomon—upon whom be peace—are Ba’albakk and Tadmur; they are among the marvelous sights to see.³⁶¹
 – Mukaddasi

Joshua 19:44 names Baalath as a city in the territory of the tribe of Dan, but in the time of the Judges, Dan had to move north into territory near the Sidonians (*Judges 18*). Since the tribe of Asher had territory up to the city of Tyre (*Joshua 19:29*), it’s reasonable to conclude that Dan included territory north of Tyre and far inland from Sidon. Baalbek meets that criterion. Plus, in the same verse it says that Solomon built in Lebanon and that he built up Baalath, giving at least some support for the idea that it could have

³⁶⁰ Mahmoud Hawari (2004) Bait 'Ur al-Fauqa: a Medieval and Ottoman Village on the Ancient Road between Jerusalem and the Coastal Plain, *Levant*, 36:1, 251-270.

³⁶¹ Mukaddasi. *Description of Syria, Including Palestine*. Palestine Pilgrims Text Society, London (1896).

been a city in Lebanon and thus possibly Baalbek itself. But Baalbek must have been a Phoenician city under Hiram's rule, as we have already discussed in *Chapter Three*, but Baalath was listed as one of Solomon's cities. Thus, if Baalath really was Baalbek, then it might have been one of the cities that Solomon received in trade for the Galilean cities he gave to Hiram. In that case, it would perfectly explain why Hiram was disappointed with the towns he received versus the ones he gave up (*1 Kings 9:13*).

Store Cities. There were store cities near Hamath and Baalath, but no extra details were given to understand what they were. The term “storecity” is made up of two words, “*miskenot*,” which means storehouses for produce, crops, wine, oil, etc., and “*ir*,” which means city. Based on the description of storehouses in 2 Chronicles and the fact that at least some of the tribes also had designated store cities, these were probably agrarian and manufacturing communities, as well as livestock cities. There were also cities that kept his horses and chariots, like his fortified cities of Hazor, Gezer, and Megiddo, where the remains of stables have been found. They could have also been merchant cities on the borders of Israel for import and export with other nations.

Now Hezekiah had immense riches and honor; and he made for himself treasures for silver, gold, precious stones, spices, shields and all kinds of valuable articles, storehouses also for the produce of grain, wine and oil, pens for all kinds of cattle and sheepfolds for the flocks. – 2 Chronicles 32:27-28 NASB

So Ben-hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel, and they conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim and all the store cities of Naphtali. – 2 Chronicles 16:4

So Jehoshaphat grew greater and greater, and he built fortresses and store cities in Judah. – 2 Chronicles 17:12

The Towns that Solomon Governed

And we shouldn't overlook the towns and regions where Solomon had governors appointed and thus would have had reason to do work to improve them, which are listed in 1 Kings 4:9-25: The hill country of Ephraim, Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth Shemesh, Elon Bethhanan, Arubboth, Sokoh, Hepher, Naphoth Dor, Taanach, Megiddo, Beth Shean, Zarethan, Jezreel, Abel Meholah, Jokmeam, Ramoth Gilead (with sixty large walled cities with bronze gate bars), Naphtali, Asher, Aloth, Issachar, Benjamin, Gilead, Tiphsah, Gaza, Dan, and Beersheba. Based on this list, key cities with substantial populations were listed by name, but otherwise regions or tribes were listed. Included in that list are many cities we already know Solomon built up, like Megiddo and the regions of the Galilee, including Naphtali and Gilead. Many of these other cities may have been built up too, but not all their locations are known. Many of them are, however, including Tel Taanach, Tel Dor, Tel Jezreel, Tel Beit Shemesh, Tel Dan, and Beersheba. For instance, the city of Taanach was rediscovered, and it is another city within Israel that may have been one of Solomon's store cities. Large ashlar stone fortifications have been found there dating back to the tenth century BC.³⁶² And it has been noted that the construction techniques of the royal buildings at Megiddo, Jezreel, Samaria, and Tanaach of this time are almost the same.³⁶³ Along with the timing of those buildings in the tenth century BC, it speaks strongly in support of a single coordinated building program under King Solomon. Taanach was also a city that began producing iron at that time and would have been a shelter for the surrounding farmlands.³⁶⁴

³⁶² Yigal Shiloh. *The Proto-Aeolic Capital and Israelite Ashlar Masonry*. Hebrew University (1979): 56.

³⁶³ Lorenzo Nigro. "The 'Nordostburg' at Tell Ta'anek: A Reevaluation of the Iron Age IIB Defence System." *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* (1953-) H. 2 (1994): 178.

³⁶⁴ T. Stech-Wheeler, et al. "Iron at Taanach and Early Iron Metallurgy in the Eastern Mediterranean," *American Journal of Archaeology* 85.3 (1981): 245-268.

For he ruled over all the kingdoms west of the Euphrates River, from Tiphsah to Gaza, and had peace on all sides. – 1 Kings 4:24

Solomon's rule extended to the town of Tiphsah, which could be understood to be at the northernmost extent of his reign near the River Euphrates. It has been suggested that Tiphsah was ancient Thapsacus, which was later called Carchemish, an ancient city along the Silk Road that was also a crossing point on the Euphrates River located near Turkey. According to Strabo (c. 24 AD), the Greek geographer Eratosthenes (c. 194 BC) said that Thapsacus was 4800 stadia from Babylon and 2400 stadia from the Tigris River, which matches the known location of Carchemish and further supports the connection.

In the first place, take the statement of Eratosthenes that the distance from Babylon to Thapsacus is four thousand eight hundred stadia...³⁶⁵ after beginning in the inverse order at the Euphrates and its passage at Thapsacus. Accordingly, for the distance from the Euphrates to the Tigris, at the point where Alexander crossed it, he lays off two thousand four hundred stadia.³⁶⁶ – Eratosthenes

Another reason to connect the city of Carchemish with the Tiphsah of Solomon is that “*tiphsah*” in Hebrew means “to cross over” or “to ford,” as in a river crossing, and the city was well-known for that. Hence, we could assume that Tiphsah was Solomon's Hebrew name for the city. Both were associated with Israel and were on the Euphrates River. The city probably didn't stay long under Israelite control after the northern ten tribes separated from the tribe of Judah. Some connection with the city must have

³⁶⁵ *The Geography of Strabo*, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons (1917): 291-3 (2.1.21).

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 301 (2.1.24).

continued, though, because Josiah (c. 640-609 BC) went there to battle against Pharaoh Necho. That seems likely only if the territory was at least friendly to Israel. Thus, it makes good sense that Israel's history with Carchemish probably went all the way back to Solomon's time because it was Tiphsah. Plus, the greatest extent of Israel's kingdom was experienced during his reign, not afterwards.

After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order, Necho king of Egypt went up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah marched out to meet him in battle. – 2 Chronicles 35:20

And if Carchemish is correct, then Solomon would be the King Suhi I that mysteriously reigned in the tenth century and was succeeded by his son who was born to the local queen. A remote outpost like this might easily declare its independence but retain the son of Solomon, who was born to their own ethnic queen, to rule after the collapse of the Israelite monarchy. Thus, Astuwalamanza, son of Suhi I, would have been a son of Solomon. Little is known about these kings and the exact timing of their reigns; however, if a connection to Solomon is made, then more precise date ranges for them could be established. For example, the reign of Suhi I would be the same as Solomon (c. 970-930 BC), and then the kings Astuwalamanza, Suhi II, Katuwa, and Suhi III would be placed between Suhi I and Sangara (c. 870-848 BC).³⁶⁷ Again, the goal is not to definitively prove all these points but to suggest possible connections and future areas for investigation, showing that there are a lot of puzzle pieces that might fall into place if Solomon's place in history was restored.

³⁶⁷ For more information on these kings see: Trevor Bryce. *The World of the Neo-Hittite Kingdoms: A Political and Military History*. Oxford University Press (2012).

Pagan temples for his foreign wives

As Solomon got older, he turned away from the Lord and was led astray by his foreign wives to follow other gods, in disobedience to the Lord's command. He built pagan temples to please his foreign wives, and he worshiped with them.³⁶⁸ One of the places we know he built a pagan temple was on a hill southeast of Jerusalem for worshipping Chemosh and Molek. This greatly angered God, and even more so because he had twice appeared to Solomon, giving him no excuse for not following God's command.

⁷ On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. ⁸ He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods. – 1 Kings 11:7-8

That hill is commonly believed to have been the Mount of Corruption or Mount of Offense that is southeast of the Temple Mount on the hill of Silwan, possibly on the top of the hill where the Maison-Abraham Guest House was established in 1903. Unfortunately, significant archaeological excavations have not been performed there, nor have any others been able to find the remains of the pagan temple built by Solomon east of Jerusalem. Some have suggested it could be the Mount of Olives itself, or it may be even farther east. The best explanation, though, is that it was on the hill of Silwan, which also sits at the end of the Valley of Ben Hinnom, and it was destroyed by Josiah. If we recognize it as the place called Topheth, which was also dedicated to Molek, then it was torn down by Josiah after he rediscovered the law and rededicated the people to follow the commandments of the Lord.

³⁶⁸ See 1 Kings 11:3-10.

He (Josiah) desecrated Topheth, which was in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, so no one could use it to sacrifice their son or daughter in the fire to Molek. – 2 Kings 23:10

Scripture indicates that Solomon also built other pagan temples, and some of them may have been found at the sites like Palmyra and Baalbek. It would make sense that Solomon may have had some of his wives spread around his kingdom and only saw them when he visited. Remote outposts like those would have also been the most likely to have had pagan temples.

Other Possible Projects of Solomon, Not Named

We should also look for other projects which match the styles and timeframes of Solomon in the whole of the territories that Solomon ruled over. There are several additional places that have Davidic connections or that look like the pleasure cities that Josephus described that are worth considering because they also exhibit some stonework with Solomonic characteristics. The pleasure cities that Josephus said he built were situated in places that had a good climate, were good for growing fruits, and were fed by natural springs. There are at least five more places that might fit with that description: Ramat Rachel, Haniya Spring, Elonei Mamre, ancient Susya, and the palace at Iraql al-Amir.

He also built other cities that lay conveniently for these, in order to the enjoyment of pleasures and delicacies in them, such as were naturally of a good temperature of the air, and agreeable for fruits ripe in their proper seasons, and well-watered with springs.³⁶⁹ – Josephus

³⁶⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 8,6,1

Ramat Rachel

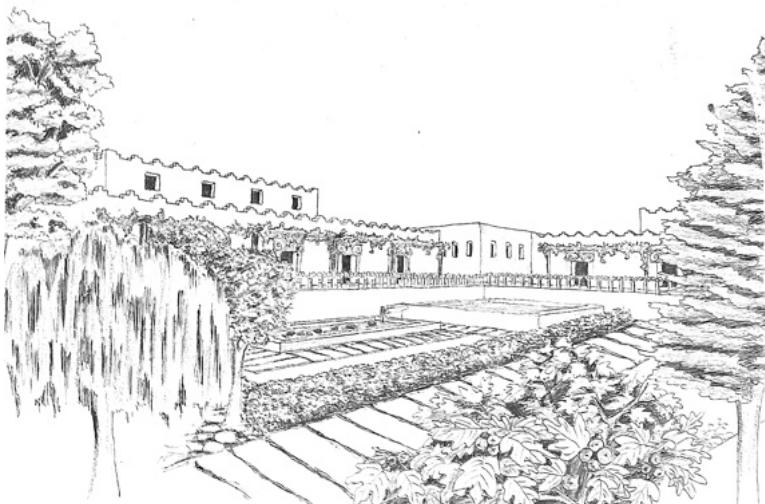
One place that is likely to have work from Solomon and certainly from King David is the palace, gardens, and pools at Ramat Rachel. Proto-Aeolic capitals were found there, linking the site to King David. The capital design is from Canaanite-Phoenician origins³⁷⁰ and was probably already in use at some of the places he conquered, like the City of David. Although the design carried on with the Phoenicians and pagan nations to the north, it should not be assumed that the Israelites adopted its usage as their own. The locations that were found with those capitals are few and are mostly associated with cities that were conquered from the Canaanites, like the City of David, Hazor, Megiddo, and Samaria. Ramat Rachel may be an exception, but its limited occurrence outside of those cities and its absence from the work of Solomon strongly support the idea that the usage of those capitals in Israel did not extend beyond King David. And being so close to Jerusalem, the palace was probably further enhanced in the days of Solomon. Most scholars resist dating the site any further back than the seventh or eighth centuries, but that should not be accepted. There are fine ashlar walls here which were at least ascribed to the ninth century, and the same style capitals that have been found at Megiddo, Samaria, and Hazor are mostly all admitted to be much older than that, up to the tenth century.³⁷¹ The extent of the gardens and pools found there, though, speaks more to the time of Solomon than David, especially considering that some of the plants found there were imported from remote parts of other empires. There is evidence at the site that it continued to be used for many centuries by the kings of Judah, then it was apparently rebuilt and expanded after the destruction

³⁷⁰ Yigal Shiloh. *The Proto-Aeolic Capital and Israelite Ashlar Masonry*. Hebrew Univ. (1979): 26-49.

³⁷¹ Shiloh, *The Proto-Aeolic Capital*, 10 & 58.

of Jerusalem by Babylon, and finally it was even inhabited into the early Islamic era.³⁷²

The royal garden surrounding the western façade of the palace was planted in the seventh century BCE. The bedrock was lowered and leveled, and specially imported gardening soil was laid and planted on the resulting platform. The garden boasted water installations such as plastered tunnels, reservoirs, ornamental pools, and open stone channels. The garden's vegetation was reconstructed through an analysis of pollen grains trapped in the ancient pool's plaster. Apart from local species such as myrtle, grape, fig, poplar, willow, and water lilies, traces of plants imported from distant parts of the Assyrian and Persian empires were identified, such as cedar of Lebanon, Persian walnut, and citron (etrog). – The Ramat Rachel Archaeological Garden, posted signage, June 4, 2023



Artistic reconstruction of the gardens and palace at Ramat Rachel by N. Kedem, Tel Aviv University, displayed on posted signage.

³⁷² The Ramat Rahel Archaeological Project, Tel Aviv - Heidelberg Joint Project (2010), <https://www.tau.ac.il/~rmtrachl/archaeology%20of%20site.htm>



Proto-Aeolic Capitals at the Ramat Rachel Royal Palace



Garden and pool at Ramat Rachel palace

But as beautiful as Ramat Rachel must have been, it was also fortified and walled all around, enclosing an area of about 5 acres with a wall that was 10-13 ft thick. They were built with wide walls from uncut fieldstones of mixed sizes, with many large

stones up to 3 ft long.³⁷³ That manner of construction is very similar to the “cyclopean” walls of the older Canaanite era or early Iron Age walls that were also found at Canaanite sites where King David was established, like Hebron, the City of David, the Broad Wall in the Jewish Quarter, and possibly the massive wall in the Kishle at the Tower of David. The fortifications are also thought to be from the seventh century BC, but based on the proto-Aeolic capitals alone, one could argue that the site must be a lot older than currently accepted. The excavators have even admitted that differentiating between the strata at Ramat Rachel is difficult because most of the remains are less than 5 ft deep, many of the building materials were reused, and much of the earlier remains have been destroyed by later activities at the site.³⁷⁴ A reevaluation of the strata, ashlar stonework, and dating references with a comparison to the finds at the City of David should be conducted under the hypothesis that the first strata layer and founding of Ramat Rachel were possibly Canaanite or Jebusite, rather than Israelite. Another possibility is that it was founded by David but then rebuilt and expanded by Solomon.

Haniya Spring (Ein Haniya)

It would be easy to doubt the modern identification of the famed spring that God caused to burst forth from the ground in answer to Samson’s prayer asking for water to quench his thirst after defeating a thousand Philistines. However, this ancient spring has been memorialized with ancient stonework that can still be seen in the Israel National Park at Haniya Spring.

³⁷³ Oded Lipschits, Yuval Gadot, Benjamin Arubas, and Manfred Oeming. “PALACE AND VILLAGE, PARADISE AND OBLIVION: Unraveling the Riddles of Ramat Rahel.” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 74.1 (2011): 10-11.

³⁷⁴ The Ramat Rahel Archaeological Project, Tel Aviv - Heidelberg Joint Project (2010), <https://www.tau.ac.il/~rmtrachl/archaeology%20of%20site.htm>

¹⁵ Finding a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he grabbed it and struck down a thousand men. ¹⁶ Then Samson said, “With a donkey’s jawbone I have made donkeys of them. With a donkey’s jawbone I have killed a thousand men.” ¹⁷ When he finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone; and the place was called Ramath Lehi. ¹⁸ Because he was very thirsty, he cried out to the LORD, “You have given your servant this great victory. Must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?” ¹⁹ Then God opened up the hollow place in Lehi, and water came out of it. When Samson drank, his strength returned and he revived. So the spring was called En Hakkore, and it is still there in Lehi. – Judges 15:15-19



Haniya Spring—Where Samson quenched his thirst in Judges 15:19

What makes the identification compelling is the fact that the style and apparent age of the stonework is also a good match with Solomon. It was built with the same style of limestone ashlar with carved pilasters and Corinthian-style capitals that were found there and have now been reconstructed. The ashlars are not

megalithic, but they are large, and the site should be dated to the time of King David, because a proto-Aeolic capital was also found at Ein Haniya.³⁷⁵ The capitals were found at a palace compound nearby, which is reminiscent of the palace and gardens at Ramat Rachel, where the same type of capitals were also found. This is another place where the archaeological finds should be re-evaluated in consideration of the evidence for a connection back to David and Solomon. Their presence at this location would substantiate the ancient existence of the spring and strengthen its connection to Samson. To identify it securely as Samson's spring would require more evidence, but it was certainly a place chosen by King David that Solomon further enhanced, so it could be.

Elonei Mamre

So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the LORD.
– Genesis 13:18

Another important place in Jewish history that also seems to have been commemorated by David and Solomon is the little-known site of Elonei Mamre in Hebron. Situated in the midst of the city are some remarkable ruins with walls constructed using very large ashlar stones. Some of them even have chiseled borders that are much like the masonry seen at the nearby the Tomb of the Patriarchs, albeit not quite as large. It was where Abraham built an altar to the Lord at the Oaks of Mamre and where God later visited Abraham and promised him that within the next year his barren and aged wife, Sarah, would bear him a son, Isaac. The son of

³⁷⁵ Michael Bachner. "First Temple-era relics of possible royal estate found in Jerusalem hills," *Times of Israel*, 31 January 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/first-temple-era-relics-of-possible-royal-estate-found-in-jerusalem-hills/>

God's promise. The son Abraham was asked to sacrifice, but God provided himself the sacrifice of a ram to save Isaac, foreshadowing God sending his only son Jesus Christ, two thousand years later to die and save the world from sin. And Isaac was the father of Jacob, whom God renamed Israel and who became the father of the twelve tribes. The remains of an altar, Bronze Age pottery, large holes in the limestone bedrock where the giant oaks once grew, and a spring that would have kept the trees strong have all been found at the site to confirm its ancient origins.³⁷⁶ A thousand years later, King David ruled in nearby Hebron for seven years before conquering Jerusalem and making it the new capital of the united monarchy. And there is evidence of an early Israelite period of building here in the tenth century BC,³⁷⁷ which may have been done by David, before Solomon further improved the site with these very large ashlar stones.



Giant ashlar wall enclosure at Elonei Mamre in Hebron enclosing the ancient site of Abraham's Oaks of Mamre.

³⁷⁶ Joel P. Kramer. *Where God Came Down*, Expedition Bible (2020): 11-23.

³⁷⁷ Joel P. Kramer. *Where God Came Down*, Expedition Bible (2020): 11-23.



Remnants of a bordered ashlar entrance into Elonei Mamre

Ancient Susya (Carmel)—Another Synagogue

The archaeological remains of ancient Susya (Khirbet Susiya), which have been identified as a Jewish town from the fourth century AD, look to be much older than presently accepted. Based on its size and the grandeur of the finds here, some have proposed that it could be the ancient city of Carmel (also Chermala and Karmelos), where Nabal and David's wife Abigail were from (*1 Samuel 25*). But there is another site two miles northeast of Susya called Khirbet Carmel that also has ruins and has been accepted as ancient Carmel. Susya's identification as a part of the same town of Carmel is probably correct, though. The two sites are so close together that they are within the Sabbath limit for Jews to walk to synagogue. Hence, there is no real contradiction. Eusebius wrote that Carmel was very large, 10 miles from Hebron, and had a Roman fort there, which could describe these two areas.³⁷⁸ It was not a significantly fortified city, so it could have been more spread out. They found olive presses and wine presses and cellars for

³⁷⁸ Avraham Negev. "Excavations at Carmel (Kh. Susiya) in 1984: Preliminary Report." *Israel Exploration Journal* 35.4 (1985): 231–52.

storing and aging wine, so it was probably more of an agrarian store city. Nevertheless, it also had monumental buildings with very large ashlar stones (up to 2 m long) and a finely carved ashlar synagogue, making it a substantial city.



Susya synagogue, Hebron District, Israel

The excavators did not report finding any Iron Age pottery finds there, though, so that does present a problem for assigning an ancient date to the site, but in some cases, scant finds are not reported or are ignored because they were not deemed to be in sufficient abundance to prove a sustained period of activity. However, in places that are continuously inhabited and do not have multiple layers of destruction, it is often the case that the remains from earlier eras are not found in abundance. Even if Susya was founded as a Jewish colony outside of Carmel proper in the second or third centuries AD, as suggested by the excavators, they could have moved and rebuilt the synagogue with the

materials they salvaged from nearby Khirbet Carmel. The synagogue that is present there contains some very fine ashlar stones that are of a quality and style that are comparable with the work on Solomon's temple and the synagogue at Capernaum and certainly appear to be much older. Regardless, it is the general area of the town of Carmel, where David's wife Abigail was from, which was a large and important city for over 2000 years, so it is likely that there is more that could be found to substantiate the antiquity of Susya and its connection to nearby Kirbet Carmel.



Susya synagogue entrance pilaster that looks much like some pilasters now uncovered in the Western Wall tunnels.

Qasr al-Abed Palace



The Qasr al-Abed Palace near Amman in the territory of Gad

The Qasr al-Abed structure at Iraq al-Amir, near Amman, Jordan, is a palace or possibly a temple that was found in the Israelite territory of Gad on the east side of the Jordan River. It is near a system of cave dwellings where the name of Tobiah (*the Ammonite?*) is inscribed on the wall, who is believed to have lived there in the time of Nehemiah.³⁷⁹ Most scholars credit this structure to John Hyrcanus (c. 134–104 BC), though, based on the writings of Josephus, whose description of the location is a perfect match, not only for the giant white stone palace and cave system nearby, but also for the animals carved above and around the walls of the structure. However, it is unlikely that John Hyrcanus, who was the one who had to loot David's Tomb to pay the 3000 talents of

³⁷⁹ Avraham Negev and Shimon Gibson (eds.), "Araq al-Amir". *Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*, Continuum (2001): 46 ; Garfinkel, *Solomon's Temple and Palace*, 55-6.

silver to pay Antiochus around 133 BC, had the wealth and leisure to build such a palace or carve the tombs from scratch. It is much more likely that he simply took over and revitalized the place.

However, Hyrcanus determined not to return to Jerusalem any more, but seated himself beyond Jordan, and was at perpetual war with the Arabians, and slew many of them, and took many of them captive. He also erected a strong castle, and built it entirely of white stone to the very roof, and had animals of a prodigious magnitude engraven upon it. He also drew round it a great and deep canal of water. He also made caves of many furlongs in length, by hollowing a rock that was over against him; and then he made large rooms in it, some for feasting, and some for sleeping and living in. He introduced also a vast quantity of waters which ran along it, and which were very delightful and ornamental in the court. But still he made the entrances at the mouth of the caves so narrow, that no more than one person could enter by them at once. And the reason why he built them after that manner was a good one; it was for his own preservation, lest he should be besieged by his brethren, and run the hazard of being caught by them. Moreover, he built courts of greater magnitude than ordinary, which he adorned with vastly large gardens. And when he had brought the place to this state, he named it Tyre. This place is between Arabia and Judea, beyond Jordan, not far from the country of Heshbon. And he ruled over those parts for seven years, even all the time that Seleucus was king of Syria.³⁸⁰ – Josephus

And so while Hyrcanus surely resided there, there must be more to the story. First, the entire site looks like Solomon's work and is 125 ft long by 62 ft wide by 40 ft high. It is similar in size and proportions to his palace, the Forest of Lebanon, which was 100 cubits long, 50 wide and 30 high. Archaeologists have also discovered that the palace was surrounded by an artificial pond,

³⁸⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 12,4,11.

and it was suggested that it may have been a pleasure palace.³⁸¹ So, how could all this fit together? Well, if it was originally a palace built by Solomon, by the time John Hyrcanus came along in 134 BC, it would have likely been in ruins and needed to be rebuilt. It wouldn't explain why Josephus didn't mention a former connection to Solomon, but then again, he may not have known about it, especially if the palace had long since been destroyed and forgotten. The ashlars are certainly large enough to associate with Solomon, but they are not quite as finely finished. They are still good candidates for the work of Solomon's men, though. The rarity of these kinds of structures in Israel, or almost anywhere, should tell us that this is the kind of work that only the greatest kings and pharaohs could have constructed.



Author standing in front of the giant bordered ashlar stones of the Qasr al-Abed palace in Jordan.

³⁸¹ Netzer, Ehud. "Floating in the Desert: A Pleasure Palace in Jordan." *Archaeology Odyssey* 2, no. 1 (1999): 46-55.

Finding Solomon

If the fundamental revelations of this book and the full weight of the Bible's testimony about Solomon have been accepted and believed, then a great work can now begin. The enormous task of resifting the evidence from all the archaeological investigations throughout Israel and the Levant, looking for the traces of Solomon that were passed over. This must include a review of the method of pottery dating and the interpretation of the styles employed during the tenth century BC at the height of power and influence in Israel under the kingdoms of David and Solomon.

I can't imagine, though, that such a task will be quickly taken on by the mainstream of archaeology today. It would be a revolution in thinking that would reshuffle a century of interpretation, which can only be vigorously opposed by those who don't hold the Bible as the highest authority for the interpretation of archaeological evidence. However, some will recognize the immense weight of these findings and, having their eyes opened, will recognize that the evidence for Solomon has been hiding in plain sight all this time. Hopefully, that is now true of you, the reader, as well.

May these findings be a blessing to the person who reads their Bible and expects to find the things it describes—should they have been, or will someday be, fortunate enough to make their own visit to the Holy Land to see them with their own eyes—and a breath of fresh air for the casual reader of biblical archaeology reports who has always wondered why there wasn't more discussion about the work of Solomon. But most of all, may this research bless the Jewish people who have been robbed of a piece of their great history. May it give them the courage to look past the labels of the scholars to see what is plainly visible to those with eyes to see it. Solomon truly was the greatest builder of ancient Israel.

Chapter Seven

Solomon, Israel, and the Messiah

¹² WALK ABOUT ZION, GO AROUND HER, COUNT HER TOWERS, ¹³ CONSIDER WELL HER RAMPARTS, VIEW HER CITADELS, THAT YOU MAY TELL OF THEM TO THE NEXT GENERATION. ¹⁴ FOR THIS GOD IS OUR GOD FOR EVER AND EVER; HE WILL BE OUR GUIDE EVEN TO THE END. — PSALM 48:12-14

PROPHETICALLY, the restoration of the knowledge of Solomon’s work on the Temple Mount is important, *even to the end*. David prophesied that we should walk about Jerusalem (Zion) and count the towers, ramparts, and citadels of the city and “tell of them to the next generation.” So, in that sense, this book is a fulfillment of prophecy, even here at the end of the age. It is also important because it is a testimony to the trustworthiness of God’s Word. Solomon really was the great king that we read about in the Bible—the wisest man who ever lived and the greatest king of his time. But there is another reason that Solomon matters in these last days.³⁸² He is an archetype of the nation of Israel. His life is a pattern for the Jewish people. And he is a picture of the coming Messiah who will soon rule and reign over the whole earth.

³⁸² If you don’t think we are in “the last days” check out my book, *Witnessing the End: Daniel’s Seventy Sevens and the Final Decree Everyone Missed*.

Israel's Final Redemption

How is Solomon a picture of the redemption of Israel? First, Solomon started out wonderfully, asking God to give him wisdom so that he could lead Israel well (*2 Chronicles 1:1-12*). Next, he was led astray by his foreign wives, and he followed after other gods for a large part of his life. But finally, he returned to God before the end. How do we know that he returned to God? The book of Ecclesiastes internally demonstrates that it was written at the end of Solomon's life, not the beginning, because he summarizes his life and activities within it. He also calls most of the pursuits of his life meaningless or pure vanity, "a chasing after the wind." And at the end of the book, he gives the summary of what he learned. He recommends remembering God while we are young, "before the days of trouble come" (*Ecclesiastes 12:1*). We also get the sense that many of the proverbs were written later in his life, because lots of them sound like lessons learned the hard way. But the final verses present the best advice Solomon could offer after all his endeavors.

¹³ Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. ¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. – Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

Those are not the words of a man who has walked away from God, but of a man who has returned to God before it was too late. *May many people today understand the warning of Solomon's life and do the same.* This is precisely what is prophesied to occur for the Jewish people in both the Old and New Testaments. First, one of the most famous promises comes from the prophet Zechariah. It is about the Jews of today accepting Jesus Christ—the one who was pierced by the Romans at the request of the Pharisees and

Sadducees—who became the sacrificial lamb for the forgiveness of the sins of both Jews and Gentiles. But notice that their repentance and acceptance of the Messiah will begin with a massive work of the Holy Spirit. He will pour out a spirit of grace and supplication on the House of David and Jerusalem, meaning all Jews, and they will receive understanding and repent.

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. – Zechariah 12:10

In Ezekiel 37 there is another prophecy about the return of Israel to the land and God breathing his Spirit into them so that they will live. Many people point to the Jews in Israel today and say that they cannot be those people because they don't believe in Jesus as their messiah, and about half of them don't even believe in God (based on national survey results). But this is exactly what was prophesied. First, the dry bones would be assembled in the land, then tendons and sinews would be added, and then flesh would be added to the body (*Ezekiel 37:8*). All of this speaks to the return of a nation while they are yet spiritually dead. The very last thing is that God will breathe his Spirit into them and they will live. Looking at the whole picture of these prophecies, this is something that will happen only after God has gathered the Jews back to their land. God has promised it, and he will do it. Until then, they may be enemies of the Gospel, but they are loved on account of the Patriarchs (*Romans 11:28*), which is why Christians should love and support Israel and the Jewish people, despite their current unbelief, knowing someday that is going to change.

I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD. – Ezekiel 37:14

And God has already started. It is estimated that nearly 2 million Jewish descendants in America believe in Jesus,³⁸³ where almost half of the global Jewish population resides. Within Israel, the figures are thought to be much lower, in the tens of thousands,³⁸⁴ but the number is growing every day and much more so since the attack by Hamas on October 7th, 2023, from Gaza. The way that Christians around the world rose up to support Israel while the rest of the world began persecuting them has had a powerful influence on Israelis.³⁸⁵ And Christians know from the New Testament that the return of the Jews to God and faith in Jesus as the Messiah was also prophesied by Paul in Romans chapters 9 to 11. The rejection of Jesus as Messiah by the Jewish establishment in the first century opened the door for the Gospel to be spread to the Gentiles until their “full number” has come in. That means it was foretold that Jews would mostly continue to reject Jesus until the very end of the age when God was finished calling the Gentiles to repentance. After that, he promised he would turn to the Jews and pour out his Spirit on them. And again, it is already happening. But the biggest outpouring of God’s Spirit on the Jewish people since the first century will probably be initiated at the time when Jesus comes on the clouds to gather his elect and “every eye will see him, even those that pierced him.” It will be a lot better for

³⁸³ C. Casas. “There are more Jewish believers in Jesus than you think,” *cmj-usa.org*, 4/14/25, <https://www.cmj-usa.org/there-are-more-jewish-believers-in-jesus-than-you-think>

³⁸⁴ David Serner and Alexander Goldberg. *Jesus-believing Israelis – Exploring Messianic Fellowships*, Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies (2021).

³⁸⁵ Chris Mitchell, “Battered, Yet Strong: With Christian, US Support, Israelis Mark 2 Years Since October 7th Atrocities,” *CBN News*, 10-07-2025, <https://cbn.com/news/israel-battered-yet-strong-christian-us-support-israelis-mark-2-years-october-7th-atrocities>

everyone, though, to have already made a decision to follow Jesus before that day of trouble comes.

²⁵ I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in,

²⁶ and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: “The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. ²⁷ And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.” – Romans 11:25-27

“Look, he is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him”; and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.” So shall it be! Amen. – Revelation 1:7

Not everyone sees this hope for the Jewish people, though. Some also doubt that Solomon ever truly repented and believe that he was a wicked king who died in his sins. Many also embrace the deception of Replacement Theology, which is the notion that God is completely done with the Nation of Israel as an entity, Jews as a special people group, and the city of Jerusalem as the exact location of Christ’s future reign on the earth. Yes, there is a new covenant, and there is no salvation through the old one, for “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (*Hebrews 10:4*). And it is true that Christians will also inherit the spiritual promises of Israel and “are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household” (*Ephesians 2:19*). But the Bible (*and specifically Romans 9-11*) is very clear that God is not done with the Jewish people, the land of Israel, or the Nation of Israel. Christians have only been grafted in; they have not replaced anyone. The return of Israel as a nation in 1948 was no man-made accident. It was a direct fulfillment of God’s promises and necessary for the course of events in these last days. To deny that their return to the land is

a fulfillment of Bible prophecy is to call God a liar. It's not necessary to understand everything God is doing, but it is necessary to believe what he says. That is why Christians must reject Replacement Theology and stand with and love the Jewish people, and the nation of Israel as if they were Jewish and citizens of Israel themselves.

Their Great Wisdom and Giftings

I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. – Ecclesiastes 2:9

And in all of Solomon's life, even in his disobedience, his wisdom stayed with him—just like the exceptional giftings that are widely acknowledged to have been generally bestowed on the Jewish people have stayed with them. What do I mean? One well-known statistic is that 22 percent of the winners of Nobel prizes have been Jewish, despite the fact that they make up less than 0.2 percent of the world's population.³⁸⁶ Some might say that just means the awards are rigged, and there may be a little truth to that in the form of some bias, but the achievements for which the awards have been given are real and verifiable. Similarly, sixteen of the top fifty richest people in the world in 2023 were Jewish.³⁸⁷ Like it or not, that is a measure of success that is obviously outsized to their population. Israel has the highest per capita number of unicorns (companies with valuations over \$1B USD) and high-tech start-up companies of any nation in the world.³⁸⁸ They have introduced

³⁸⁶ Alan Aziz, "Why are there so many Jewish Nobel winners?" *Jewish Chronicle*, 12-8-22, //www.thejc.com/opinion/why-are-there-so-many-jewish-nobel-winners-ctycke48

³⁸⁷ Gali Raz, "16 Jews Made the Forbes List of 50 Richest People in the World 2023," *JBN*, December 21, 2023, <https://jewishbusinessnews.com/2023/12/21/16-jews-made-the-forbes-list-of-50-richest-people-in-the-world-2023/>

³⁸⁸ "Israel Tops Innovation Rankings Per Capita On Global Stage," *TheJ.CA*, 8/17/2025, <https://thej.ca/2025/08/17/israel-tops-innovation-rankings-per-capita-on-global-stage/>

incredible innovations in agriculture, water technology, biotechnology, software, pharmaceuticals, robotics, AI, and many more areas. In other words, they have clearly been blessed, which is promised in Scripture. Their blessings have literally also been extended to the whole world through many of their amazing inventions.³⁸⁹ Admittedly, the list of inventions attributable to the Jewish people are not all good things, ranging from Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity to the Communist Manifesto by Karl Marx, but they are all significant.

In a similar way, Solomon's pagan temples were likely quite remarkable. Obviously, so was the Temple in Jerusalem, but sadly, Solomon didn't just use his wisdom for good things to glorify God alone. Nonetheless, the blessings that the Jewish people have brought to the world should be undeniable and are a fulfillment of Scripture. And the warning in Scripture not to curse the Jewish people is also still in force. That doesn't mean that wrong or bad things can't be called out. To be a walking contradiction is the present state of our fallen human nature. But it does mean Israel needs to be given the same grace that other great nations need, like America, which is famous for many great and terrible things at the same time.

¹ The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. ² “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” – Genesis 12:1-3

³⁸⁹ “The Great Jews and Their Inventions,” *MNews.world*, 04 April 2025, <https://mnews.world/en/news/the-great-jews-and-their-inventions>

And that's not all. In his time, Solomon's wisdom was recognized by the kings of the earth, and they came to Israel to learn from his wisdom (*2 Chronicles 9:23*). In a similar way, the nations of the earth today are coming to Israel to benefit from their knowledge and technology. Truly, history is again repeating itself.

A Future King Like Solomon but Greater

Solomon was the greatest king Israel has ever had, but an even greater king is anticipated by the prophets. They wrote of some incredible promises from God for the nation of Israel—a future king whose reign would not come to an end and who would even bless the entire world. Many of the prophecies were given centuries after the end of Solomon's reign, so we know that they were not about him. They were the assurance of a return to a time like the days of Solomon, but even better. Just as Solomon ruled from the Euphrates River to Gaza and the border of Egypt, and their kings brought tribute to him, a future king will also rule from sea to sea, and all the kings of the earth will bring him gifts. The first prophecy of the Messiah is in *Genesis 3:15*, when the seed of the woman would someday crush the head of the serpent, Satan. But David gave the first prophecy of a future messianic king. It could partially be applied to his son Solomon—and yet it is also clearly speaking of a future messianic reign that would be far greater in scope than Solomon's kingdom and would continue until the end of this present world when “the moon is no more.”

And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These countries brought tribute and were Solomon's subjects all his life.
– *1 Kings 4:21*

¹ Of Solomon. Endow the king with your justice, O God, **the royal son with your righteousness.** ² May he judge your people in

righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice.³ May the mountains bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness.⁴ May he defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; may he crush the oppressor.⁵ **May he endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations.**⁶ May he be like rain falling on a mown field, like showers watering the earth.⁷ **In his days may the righteous flourish and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.**⁸ May he rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.⁹ May the desert tribes bow before him and his enemies lick the dust.¹⁰ May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores bring tribute to him. May the kings of Sheba and Seba present him gifts.¹¹ **May all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him.**¹² For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help.¹³ **He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death.**¹⁴ He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight.¹⁵ Long may he live! May gold from Sheba be given him. May people ever pray for him and bless him all day long.¹⁶ May grain abound throughout the land; on the tops of the hills may it sway. May the crops flourish like Lebanon and thrive like the grass of the field.¹⁷ May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. Then all nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed.¹⁸ Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvelous deeds.¹⁹ Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen.²⁰ This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse.
— Psalm 72:1-20

The prophet Micah gave a similar prophecy that Israel would be rebuilt, their borders would be restored and extended, the kings of the earth would come to Israel, and that in the end the sins of the Jewish people will be forgiven. But it says that day will come in the last days at the time when “the earth will become desolate,” meaning at the time of judgment. It also means that the time of their forgiveness will come with the Day of the Lord.

¹¹ The day for building your walls will come, the day for extending your boundaries. ¹² In that day people will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, even from Egypt to the Euphrates and from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain. ¹³ **The earth will become desolate because of its inhabitants, as the result of their deeds.** In that day people will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, even from Egypt to the Euphrates and from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain... ¹⁸ **Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.** ¹⁹ You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. ²⁰ You will be faithful to Jacob, and show love to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our ancestors in days long ago.
– Micah 7:11-13 and 18-20

Zechariah prophesied something similar about the coming Messiah. It is a double prophecy that speaks of both the first and second comings of Christ. The first is lowly and humble, riding on a colt, the foal of a female donkey. The second will be righteous and victorious, riding on a male donkey (*a reference to the white horse of Revelation 19*).³⁹⁰ At that time, his rule will also extend from sea to sea, as Solomon's did, but also to the ends of the earth, surpassing Solomon. And like Solomon brought peace to his whole kingdom, when the Messiah comes, peace will finally come to the whole earth. Peace did not come to the earth at Christ's first coming, though, which is another way that we know these verses are referring to His return.

³⁹⁰ This can be difficult to see, but donkey and horse are synonyms. Kings rode donkeys in the time this prophecy was given, not horses (2 Samuel 16:2). It wasn't until centuries later that horses were first bred and domesticated to the point that they made good animals for kings. Before that they were too wild and were mainly used for war and to pull chariots. By the first century, when John wrote Revelation, however, horses were the established choice for a king to ride.

For he ruled over all the kingdoms west of the Euphrates River, from Tiphsah to Gaza, and **had peace on all sides.** – 1 Kings 4:24

⁹ Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰ I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and **the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.** – Zechariah 9:9-10

Solomon also kept the people safe and ensured that justice prevailed within his land during the time of his reign, making the people prosperous. The prophet Micah prophesied that this would happen again, but in an even greater way in the last days.

During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, **lived in safety, everyone under their own vine and under their own fig tree.** – 1 Kings 4:25

¹ In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. ² Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ³ He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. ⁴ **Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid,** for the LORD Almighty has spoken. – Micah 4:1-4

When Jesus began his ministry, he told them that he is the one who was promised that is greater than Solomon. Even though they heard his wisdom and could not refute anything he said, the religious leaders refused to recognize that he was the Messiah.

The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom; **and now something greater than Solomon is here.** – Luke 11:31

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. – Luke 2:52

¹⁴ Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not? ¹⁵ Should we pay or shouldn't we?" But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." ¹⁶ They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. ¹⁷ Then Jesus said to them, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him. – Mark 12:14-17

No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions. – Matthew 22:46

And just like Solomon was the son of David, who received his kingdom from his father after all their enemies had been subdued, so also, Jesus is the Son of David who is going to receive the kingdom of the earth from his Father when his enemies are made a footstool for his feet. And as Solomon built the first temple, Jesus will build the last one in the Millennium. As Solomon made silver as common as stones, Jesus will one day pave the streets with gold. Thus, as the son of David, we see another way that Solomon is a picture of Jesus as the Messiah and the fulfillment of all God's promises to David.

Then Jesus said to them, “Why is it said that the Messiah is the son of David? David himself declares in the Book of Psalms: ‘The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’ David calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?” – Luke 20:41-44

The Apostles and other early Jewish followers understood that Jesus was the promised Messiah who would also one day restore the kingdom of Israel, and they asked him after his resurrection if it was now time. Jesus answered them that it was not the time, nor was it for them to know. Then he ascended before their eyes into a cloud and into heaven. And while they still stood there staring up into the sky, two angels promised that Jesus would someday return in the same way (coming on the clouds) to fulfill the rest of the messianic promises.

⁶ Then they gathered around him and asked him, “**Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?**” ⁷ He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” ⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? **This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.**” – Acts 1:6-11

Now, after nearly 2000 years, the time for his return is almost here. The time for the prophetic fulfillment of the Messianic Age

is approaching, but so is the Day of the Lord that precedes it. The evidence that we are truly now in the Last Days before that time of reckoning and restoration is presented in my last book, *Witnessing the End: Daniel's Seventy Sevens and the Final Decree Everyone Missed*. If you appreciated the detailed and methodical way I made the case for Solomon, you'll also enjoy the same sensible and levelheaded approach I've taken to understanding Bible prophecy. And as we've been discussing in this final chapter, there is a surprising prophetic connection between Solomon and the end of the age.

Finding Jesus

Hence, the fullest and most significant part of Finding Solomon is to come to know the Messiah of Israel that Solomon points us to, Jesus Christ. He is the one promised to Moses that will be the Presence of God to go with us and give us rest.

The LORD replied, “My Presence will go with you, **and I will give you rest.**” – Exodus 33:14

²⁸“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, **and I will give you rest.** ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” – Matthew 11:28-30

So, if you're wondering, how can I be saved? Then the question back is, do you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? If not, now is a very good time to start—today is the day of salvation. Do not harden your heart against God; know that he loves you and will not turn away anyone who calls on him.

Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. – Hebrews 4:7

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. – Romans 3:23

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. – Romans 5:8 NASB

For the wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 6:23 NASB

⁹ If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ¹¹ As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” – Romans 10:9-13

I urge you to pray in your heart to God and cry out for his help, his love, and his forgiveness. Choose to follow him by reading the Bible and obeying his commandments and teachings. God promises that if we repent of our sin and turn to him, his Spirit will begin living inside us and start changing our hearts and minds so that we will hunger for the truth and ways of God. His Spirit then gives us the ability to love and obey him. The Bible teaches us everything we need to know about how to live a godly life. If you've decided to follow Jesus, know that you have now been adopted as a child of God (*Galatians 4:4-6*), he will not leave you as an orphan (*John 14:18*), and he's coming soon (*Revelation 22:7*). Maranatha!

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About the Author

DR. CHRISTIAN WIDENER is a biblical scholar, researcher, and engineer. He is the author of three revolutionary books.

The Temple Revealed

The True Location of the Jewish Temple Hidden in Plain Sight

Witnessing the End

Daniel's Seventy Sevens and the Final Decree Everyone Missed

Finding Solomon

Rediscovering the Works of Israel's Greatest Builder

His interest in Bible prophecy and biblical archaeology stems from a passion for apologetics and the reliability of the literal and historical accounts of the Bible, as well as its prophetic predictions for the coming tribulation, the last-days temple, and the return of Jesus Christ to bring “all things in heaven and on earth together under one head” (*Ephesians 1:10*). While the Scriptures include many things that may be challenging to believe or understand, Dr. Widener believes that the Bible is trustworthy and that it can be tested scientifically and reasoned out logically, providing one separates facts from their interpretations. He believes that the Bible—not external sources or modern secular speculations based on naturalistic assumptions—is the preeminent testimony about the past. But he believes that true wisdom and understanding can only come from God through the gift of the Holy Spirit—the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and from him come knowledge and understanding (*Proverbs 9:10*).

Dr. Widener has a PhD in mechanical engineering, with an emphasis in materials and manufacturing from Wichita State University, and he was a tenured associate professor at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. In his professional career, he was a successful entrepreneur and an internationally recognized expert in the fields of solid-state metals deposition and joining, additive manufacturing, and repair.

Sensing a call from the Lord in 2020, he gave all that up and now writes and blogs full-time about Bible prophecy, biblical archaeology, and the scientific defense of the Scriptures. He is the founder of End Times Berean, a ministry dedicated to helping Christians get ready for the last days and the rapidly approaching return of Jesus Christ. Christian lives in the Black Hills of South Dakota with his wife and their four children.

You can follow him on his website and check out his posts at www.endtimesberean.com.

You can also find him at:

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YouTube – [@EndTimesBerean](https://www.youtube.com/@EndTimesBerean)

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“A must read for students of biblical prophecy.” —JOEL RICHARDSON

CHRISTIAN WIDENER, PH.D.

Foreword by JOSH McDOWELL



THE TEMPLE REVEALED

THE TRUE LOCATION OF
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SEVENTY SEVENS
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EVERYONE MISSED

CHRISTIAN WIDENER

The Internationally Acclaimed Researcher Who Solved The Enigma Of The Temple Location In Jerusalem Has Made Another Mind-Blowing Discovery...

2020

2027

NOW THE BEREAN JEWS WERE OF MORE NOBLE CHARACTER THAN THOSE IN THESSALONICA, FOR THEY RECEIVED THE MESSAGE WITH GREAT EAGERNESS AND EXAMINED THE SCRIPTURES EVERY DAY TO SEE IF WHAT PAUL SAID WAS TRUE. – ACTS 17:11

Berean noun

Be·re·an bə-'*rē-*ən

A Berean refers to the Jewish believers of the ancient city of Berea, known for their noble character in the Bible, as they diligently searched the Scriptures to verify what Paul was teaching. In a Christian context, it describes someone who carefully studies the Bible and wants to check and verify everything for themselves so that they will know that what they have been taught is true. It is a character trait that is desperately needed to avoid deception in the last days.