

Herod's Temple (various articles)

Herod's Temple - The Jewish Temple in the First Century A.D. (Bible History)

The Jewish Temple in the First Century A.D.

It is interesting that in the Middle East certain places have remained holy throughout the centuries, even if another religion may have taken possession of them. Today the Moslem Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem is the prominent building where the Jewish temple once stood.

When Jesus came to Jerusalem, the Temple had just been marvelously rebuilt by Herod the Great. The Temple area had been enlarged to a size of about thirty-five acres. Around the Temple area were double colonnades.

The Jewish historian Josephus describes the colonnades:

"All the cloisters were double, and the pillars to them belonging were twenty-five cubits in height, and supported -the cloisters. These pillars were of one entire stone each of them, and that stone was white marble; and the roofs were adorned with cedar, curiously graven. The natural magnificence, and excellent polish, and the harmony of the joints in these cloisters, afforded a prospect that was very remarkable; nor was it on the outside adorned with any work of the painter or engraver. The cloisters -(of the outmost court) were in breadth thirty cubits, while the entire compass of it was by measure six furlongs, including the tower of Antonia; those entire courts that were exposed to the air were laid with stones of all sorts" (Jewish War 5. 5. 2).

The eastern portico was named after King Solomon and the part to the south, which overlooked the Valley of Kidron, was called "Royal." On the east side the high corner was possibly the pinnacle of the temple, mentioned in the story of the temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:5).

There were *eight gates* leading into the temple.

There were the two *Huldah Gates* or "mole" Gates from the south, which passed underneath the Royal Porch.

To the east was the *Gate of Susa*, still visible as the *Golden Gate* which was walled up by the Byzantines.

In the western wall was the main gate named the *Gate of Coponius* after the first procurator; it was decorated with the golden eagle as a sign that the Temple had been placed under the protection of Rome.

Anyone was allowed to enter the outer area, which was therefore called the Court of the Gentiles. The actual Temple was enclosed by a balustrade, and at the entrances to it were warning notices, one of them is now in a museum in Istanbul. It says that foreigners have freedom of access provided they do not go beyond the balustrade which went all around the central edifice and which no uncircumcised could cross without incurring the death penalty.

Fourteen steps led through the *Beautiful Gate* to the Court of the women where the poor boxes were, into one of which the poor widow cast her two mites (Luke 21:1-4).

Another fifteen steps led up to the famous *Gate of Nicanor*, to which Mary had brought the child at the time of his presentation; this led through the Court of the Men to that of the priests, which had in its center the altar for the burnt offerings and to the left of it a large basin called the Brazen Sea resting upon twelve bulls cast in bronze.

Further steps led up to the actual temple, a comparatively small building. A priceless curtain, embroidered with a map of the known world, concealed from view what lay beyond, and none except the priest on duty was allowed to go farther.

It contained the golden altar at which incense was offered and next to it the seven-branched candelabrum and the table with the twelve loaves of shewbread, which were replaced by fresh ones every sabbath. Beyond it, behind another large curtain, lay the Holy of Holies, which none except the high priest was allowed to enter, and he only on the Day of Atonement. A stone designated the place where once the Ark of the Covenant had stood.

Jesus came to the Temple at a very young age and in Solomon's Porch the boy argued with the rabbis, astonishing them with his questions and with his answers. He remained behind when his parents left, and when his worried mother at last found him he said to her enigmatically: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49).

It is one of the most original sayings of Jesus, in which he speaks of God for the first time as "avi" (My Father) which was an expression reserved for the Son of God.

Today the Western Wall, the so-called Wailing Wall, is all that remains of the ancient walls of Herod's Temple; one can still see the pilaster and the beginning of Robinson's Arch, which was part of a large viaduct leading to the upper city. Excavations in 1967, led by the well-known archaeologist Benjamin Mazar, revealed the cornerstone. Adjacent to it on the southern side remain traces of the road from which the pilgrims entered the gates.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Temple

The Second Temple

The **Second Temple** (**Hebrew**: בֵּית־הַמִּקְדָּשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי, *Beit HaMikdash HaSheni*) was the [Jewish holy temple](#), which stood on the [Temple Mount](#) in [Jerusalem](#), between c. 516 BCE and c. 70 CE, defined as the [Second Temple period](#).

According to the [Hebrew Bible](#), the Second Temple replaced [Solomon's Temple](#) (the First Temple),^[1] which was destroyed by the [Neo-Babylonian Empire](#) in 586 BCE, when [Jerusalem was conquered](#) and part of the population of the [Kingdom of Judah](#) was taken into [exile to Babylon](#).

According to the Bible, the Second Temple was originally a rather modest structure constructed by a number of Jewish exile groups returning to the [Levant](#) from [Babylon](#) under the [Achaemenid](#)-appointed governor [Zerubbabel](#). However, during the reign of [Herod the Great](#), the Second Temple was completely refurbished, and the original structure was totally overhauled into the large and magnificent edifices and façades that are more recognizable. Much as the Babylonians destroyed the First Temple, the Romans [destroyed the Second Temple](#) and Jerusalem in c. 70 CE as retaliation for [an ongoing Jewish revolt](#). The Second Temple lasted for a total of 585 years (516 BCE to c. 70 CE).^{[2][a]}

[Jewish eschatology](#) includes a belief that the Second Temple will be replaced by a future [Third Temple](#).

Some [Eastern Orthodox Christians](#) contend that the Third temple already exists in every [consecrated](#) and [canonical](#) church through the [real presence of Christ in the Eucharist](#).

Biblical narrative

The accession of [Cyrus the Great](#) of the [Achaemenid Empire](#) in 559 BCE made the re-establishment of the city of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple possible.^{[3][4]} Some rudimentary ritual sacrifice had continued at the site of the first temple following its destruction.^[5] According to the closing verses of the [second book of Chronicles](#) and the books of [Ezra](#) and [Nehemiah](#), when the Jewish exiles returned to Jerusalem following a decree from Cyrus the Great ([Ezra 1:1–4](#), [2 Chronicles 36:22–23](#)), construction started at the original site of the altar of Solomon's Temple.^[1] After a relatively brief halt due to opposition from peoples who had filled the vacuum during the Jewish captivity ([Ezra 4](#)), work resumed c. 521 BCE under [Darius I](#) ([Ezra 5](#)) and was completed during the sixth year of his reign (c. 516 BCE), with the temple dedication taking place the following year.^[citation needed]

These events represent the final section in the historical narrative of the [Hebrew Bible](#).^[3]

The original core of the book of Nehemiah, the first-person memoir, may have been [combined](#) with the core of the [Book of Ezra](#) around 400 BCE. Further editing probably continued into the [Hellenistic era](#).^[6] The book tells how Nehemiah, at the court of the king in [Susā](#), is informed that Jerusalem is without walls and resolves to restore them. The king appoints him as governor of the province [Yehud Medinata](#) and he travels to Jerusalem. There he rebuilds the walls, despite the opposition of Israel's enemies, and reforms the community in conformity with the [law of Moses](#). After 12 years in [Jerusalem](#), he returns to [Susā](#) but subsequently revisits Jerusalem. He finds that the Israelites have been [backsliding](#) and taking non-Jewish wives, and he stays in Jerusalem to enforce the Law.

Based on the biblical account, after the return from Babylonian captivity, arrangements were immediately made to reorganize the desolated [Yehud Province](#) after the demise of the [Kingdom of Judah](#) seventy years earlier. The body of pilgrims, forming a band of 42,360,^[7] having completed the long and dreary journey of some four months, from the banks of the [Euphrates](#) to Jerusalem, were animated in all their proceedings by a strong religious impulse, and therefore one of their first concerns was to restore their ancient house of worship by rebuilding their destroyed Temple^[8] and reinstating the sacrificial rituals known as the *korbanot*.

On the invitation of [Zerubbabel](#), the governor, who showed them a remarkable example of liberality by contributing personally 1,000 golden [darics](#), besides other gifts, the people poured their gifts into the sacred treasury with great enthusiasm.^[9] First they erected and dedicated the altar of God on the exact spot where it had formerly stood, and they then cleared away the charred heaps of debris that occupied the site of the old temple; and in the second month of the second year (535 BCE), amid great public excitement and rejoicing, the foundations of the Second Temple were laid. A wide interest was felt in this great movement, although it was regarded with mixed feelings by the spectators.^{[10][8]}

The [Samaritans](#) wanted to help with this work but Zerubbabel and the elders declined such cooperation, feeling that the Jews must build the Temple unaided. Immediately evil reports

were spread regarding the Jews. According to [Ezra 4:5](#), the Samaritans sought to "frustrate their purpose" and sent messengers to [Ecbatana](#) and Susa, with the result that the work was suspended.^[8]

Seven years later, [Cyrus the Great](#), who allowed the Jews to [return](#) to their homeland and rebuild the Temple, died,^[11] and was succeeded by his son [Cambyses](#). On his death, the "false [Smerdis](#)", an impostor, occupied the throne for some seven or eight months, and then [Darius](#) became king (522 BCE). In the second year of his rule the work of rebuilding the temple was resumed and carried forward to its completion,^[12] under the stimulus of the earnest counsels and admonitions of the prophets [Haggai](#) and [Zechariah](#). It was ready for consecration in the spring of 516 BCE, more than twenty years after the return from captivity. The Temple was completed on the third day of the month [Adar](#), in the sixth year of the reign of Darius, amid great rejoicings on the part of all the people,^[13] although it was evident that the Jews were no longer an independent people, but were subject to a foreign power. The [Book of Haggai](#) includes a prediction that the glory of the Second Temple would be greater than that of the first.^{[14][8]}

Some of the original artifacts from the Temple of Solomon are not mentioned in the sources after its destruction in 586 BCE, and are presumed lost. The Second Temple lacked the following holy articles:

- The [Ark of the Covenant](#)^{[4][8]} containing the [Tablets of Stone](#), before which were placed^[15] the pot of [manna](#) and [Aaron's rod](#)^[8]
- The [Urim and Thummim](#)^{[4][8]} (divination objects contained in the [Hoshen](#))
- The [holy oil](#)^[8]
- The sacred fire^{[4][8]}

In the Second Temple, the [Kodesh Hakodashim](#) ([Holy of Holies](#)) was separated by curtains rather than a wall as in the First Temple. Still, as in the [Tabernacle](#), the Second Temple included:

- The [Menorah](#) (golden lamp) for the [Hekhal](#)
- The Table of [Showbread](#)
- The golden [altar of incense](#), with golden [censers](#)^[8]

According to the [Mishnah](#),^[16] the "[Foundation Stone](#)" stood where the Ark used to be, and the [High Priest](#) put his censer on it on [Yom Kippur](#).^[4]

The Second Temple also included many of the original vessels of gold that had been taken by the [Babylonians](#) but restored by [Cyrus the Great](#).^{[8][17]} According to the [Babylonian Talmud](#)^[18] however, the Temple lacked the [Shekhinah](#) (the dwelling or settling divine presence of God) and the [Ruach HaKodesh](#) (holy spirit) present in the First Temple.

Rabbinical literature

Traditional [rabbinic literature](#) states that the Second Temple stood for 420 years, and, based on the 2nd-century work *Seder Olam Rabbah*, placed construction in [350 BCE](#) (3408 [AM](#)) [*sic*], [166 years later than secular estimates](#), and destruction in 70 CE (3829 [AM](#)).^{[19][b]}

The fifth order, or division, of the [Mishnah](#), known as [Kodashim](#), provides detailed descriptions and discussions of the religious laws connected with [Temple service](#) including the [sacrifices](#), the Temple and its furnishings, as well as [the priests](#) who carried out the duties and ceremonies of its service. [Tractates](#) of the order deal with the sacrifices of animals, birds, and [meal offerings](#), the laws of bringing a sacrifice, such as the [sin offering](#) and the [guilt offering](#), and the laws of misappropriation of sacred property. In addition, the order contains a description of the Second Temple ([tractate Middot](#)), and a description and rules about the daily sacrifice service in the Temple ([tractate Tamid](#)).^{[20][21][22]}

Rededication by the Maccabees

Following the conquest of [Judea](#) by [Alexander the Great](#), it became part of the [Ptolemaic Kingdom](#) of Egypt until 200 BCE, when the Seleucid king [Antiochus III the Great](#) of Syria defeated Pharaoh [Ptolemy V Epiphanes](#) at the [Battle of Paneion](#).^[23] Judea became at that moment part of the [Seleucid Empire](#). When the Second Temple in Jerusalem was looted and its religious services stopped, [Judaism](#) was effectively outlawed.

In 167 BCE, [Antiochus IV Epiphanes](#) ordered an altar to [Zeus](#) erected in the Temple. He also, according to [Josephus](#), "compelled Jews to dissolve the laws of the country, to keep their infants un-[circumcised](#), and to sacrifice swine's flesh upon the altar; against which they all opposed themselves, and the most approved among them were put to death."^[24] This accords with the account in the book of [1 Maccabees](#).

Following the [Maccabean Revolt](#) against the Seleucid empire, the Second Temple was rededicated and became the religious pillar of the Jewish [Hasmonean Kingdom](#), as well as culturally associated with the Jewish holiday of [Hanukkah](#).

Hasmonean dynasty and Roman conquest

There is some evidence from archaeology that further changes to the structure of the Temple and its surroundings were made during the Hasmonean rule. [Salome Alexandra](#), the queen of Hasmonean Kingdom appointed her elder son [Hyrcanus II](#) as the [high priest of Judaea](#). Her younger son [Aristobulus II](#) was determined to have the throne, and as soon as she died he seized the throne. Hyrcanus, who was next in the succession, agreed to be content with being high priest. [Antipater](#), the governor of Idumæa, encouraged Hyrcanus not to give up his throne. Eventually, Hyrcanus fled to [Aretas III](#), king of the [Nabateans](#), and returned with an army to take back the throne. He defeated Aristobulus and besieged Jerusalem. The [Roman](#) general [Pompey](#), who was in Syria fighting against the [Armenians](#) in the [Third Mithridatic War](#), sent his lieutenant to investigate the conflict in Judaea. Both Hyrcanus and Aristobulus appealed to him for support. Pompey was not diligent in making a decision about this, which caused Aristobulus to march off. He was pursued by Pompey

and surrendered but his followers closed Jerusalem to Pompey's forces. The Romans [besieged](#) and took the city in 63 BCE. The priests continued with the religious practices inside the Temple during the siege. The temple was not looted or harmed by the Romans. Pompey himself, perhaps inadvertently, went into the [Holy of Holies](#) and the next day ordered the priests to repurify the Temple and resume the religious practices.^[25]

Solomon's Temple, which was on the site prior to the building of the Second Temple; at bottom center looking south east to Northwest

When the Roman emperor [Caligula](#) planned to place his own statue inside the temple, Herod's grandson [Agrippa I](#) was able to intervene and to persuade him not to do that.

Herod's Temple

Date and duration

Reconstruction of the temple under [Herod](#) began with a massive expansion of the Temple Mount. For example, the Temple Mount complex initially measured 7 hectares (17 acres) in size, but Herod expanded it to 14.4 hectares (36 acres) and so doubled its area.^[26] Herod's work on the Temple is generally dated from 20/19 BCE until 12/11 or 10 BCE. Writer Bieke Mahieu dates the work on the Temple enclosures from 25 BCE and that on the Temple building in 19 BCE, and situates the dedication of both in November 18 BCE.^[27]

Religious worship and temple rituals continued during the construction process.^[28] An agreement was made between Herod and the Jewish religious authorities: the sacrificial rituals, called *korbanot* (offerings), were to be continued unabated for the entire time of construction, and the Temple itself would be constructed by the priests. This is the reason Herod's Temple is still counted as the Second — functioning did not stop, although it was the third building fulfilling the purpose.^[citation needed]

Extent and financing

The old temple built by [Zerubbabel](#) was replaced by a magnificent edifice. Herod's Temple was one of the larger construction projects of the 1st century BCE.^[29] Josephus records that Herod was interested in perpetuating his name through building projects, that his construction programs were extensive and paid for by heavy taxes, but that his masterpiece was the Temple of Jerusalem.^[29]

Later, the [sanctuary shekel](#) was reinstated to support the temple as the [temple tax](#).^[30]

Elements

Platform, substructures, retaining walls

[Mt. Moriah](#) had a plateau at the northern end, and steeply declined on the southern slope. It was Herod's plan that the entire mountain be turned into a giant square platform. The Temple Mount was originally intended^[by whom?] to be 1,600 feet (490 m) wide by 900 feet

(270 m) broad by 9 stories high, with walls up to 16 feet (4.9 m) thick, but had never been finished. To complete it, a trench was dug around the mountain, and huge stone "bricks" were laid. Some of these weighed well over 100 tons, [the largest](#) measuring 44.6 by 11 by 16.5 feet (13.6 m × 3.4 m × 5.0 m) and weighing approximately 567-628 tons,^[c]^[31] while most were in the range of 2.5 by 3.5 by 15 feet (0.76 m × 1.07 m × 4.57 m) (approximately 28 tons). King Herod had architects from Greece, Rome and Egypt plan the construction. The blocks were presumably quarried by using pickaxes to create channels. Then they hammered in wooden beams and flushed them with water to force them out. Once they were removed, they were carved into precise squares and numbered at the quarry to show where they would be installed. The final carving would have been done by using harder stones to grind or chisel them to create precise joints. They would have been transported using oxen and specialized carts. Since the quarry was uphill from the temple they had gravity on their side but care needed to be taken to control the descent. Final installation would have been done using pulleys or [cranes](#). Roman pulleys and cranes were not strong enough to lift the blocks alone so they may have used multiple cranes and levers to position them.^[32]^[better source needed] As the mountainside began to rise, the western side was carved away to a vertical wall and bricks were carved to create a virtual continuation of the brick face, which was continued for a while until the northern slope reached ground level. Part of the Antonia hill to the north of Moriah was annexed to the complex and the area between was filled up with landfill.

The project began with the building of giant underground vaults upon which the temple would be built so it could be larger than the small flat area on top of Mount Moriah. Ground level at the time was at least 20 ft (6.1 m) below the current level, as can be seen by walking the [Western Wall](#) tunnels. Legend has it that the construction of the entire complex lasted only three years, but written sources such as [Josephus](#) say that it took far longer, although the Temple itself may only have taken that long. During a Passover visit by Jesus, the Jews replied that it had been under construction for 46 years.^[33] It is possible that the complex had only just been completed a few years previously when the future emperor [Titus](#) destroyed the Temple in 70 CE.

Court of the Gentiles

The Court of the Gentiles was primarily a [bazaar](#), with vendors selling souvenirs, sacrificial animals, food. Currency was also exchanged, with Roman currency exchanged for [Tyrian](#) money, as also mentioned in the New Testament account of [Jesus and the Money Changers](#), when Jerusalem was packed with Jews who had come for Passover, perhaps numbering 300,000 to 400,000 [pilgrims](#).^[34]^[35] Guides that provided tours of the premises were also available. Jewish males had the unique opportunity to be shown inside the temple itself.^[citation needed]

The [priests](#), in their white linen robes and tubular hats, were everywhere, directing pilgrims and advising them on what kinds of sacrifices were to be performed.^[citation needed]^[clarification needed]

Behind them, as they entered the Court of the Gentiles from the south through the [Huldah Gates](#), was the Royal Porch, which contained a marketplace, administrative quarters, and a

synagogue.^{[citation needed][dubious – discuss]} On the upper floors,^[whose?] the [great Jewish sages](#) held court, priests and [Levites](#) performed various chores, and from there, tourists^[dubious – discuss] were able to observe the events.

The Royal Porch is widely accepted to be part of Herod's work; however, recent archaeological finds in the Western Wall tunnels suggest that it was built in the first century during the reign of Agripas, as opposed to the 1st century BCE,^[36] while the theory that Herod began the extension and the Royal Porch is based mainly on Josephus's possibly politically motivated claim. During Herod's reign the porch was not yet open to the public.^[citation needed]

To the east of the court was [Solomon's Porch](#), and to the north,^[dubious – discuss] the *soreg*, the "middle wall of separation",^{[37][dubious – discuss]} a stone wall described as being 3 cubits high by Josephus (Wars 5.5.2 [3b] 6.2.4), separated the Court of the Gentiles from the inner courts where only Jews could enter.

Pinnacle

The accounts of the [temptation of Christ](#) in the gospels of [Matthew](#) and [Luke](#) both suggest that the Second Temple had one or more '[pinnacles](#)':

Then he [[Satan](#)] brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here."^[38]

The Greek word used is *πτερυγιον* (*pterugion*), which literally means a tower, rampart, or pinnacle.^[39] According to [Strong's Concordance](#), it can mean little wing, or by extension anything like a wing such as a battlement or parapet.^[40] The archaeologist Benjamin Mazar thought it referred to the southeast corner of the Temple overlooking the [Kidron Valley](#).^[41]

Inner courts

According to Josephus, there were ten entrances into the inner courts, four on the south, four on the north, one on the east and one leading east to west from the Court of Women to the court of the Israelites, named the [Nicanor Gate](#).^[42] The gates were: On the south side (going from west to east) the Fuel Gate, the Firstling Gate, the Water Gate. On the north side, from west to east, are the Jeconiah Gate, the Offering Gate, the Women's Gate and the Song Gate. On the Eastern side, the Nicanor gate, which is where most Jewish visitors entered. A few pieces of the Soreg have survived to the present day.^{[dubious – discuss][citation needed]}. According to Flavius Josephus, Herod the Great erected a golden eagle over the great gate of the Temple.^[43]

Within this area was the [Court of the Women](#), open to all Jews, male and female. Even a ritually unclean [priest](#) could enter to perform various housekeeping duties. There was also a place for lepers (considered ritually unclean), as well as a ritual barbershop for [Nazirites](#). In this, the largest of the temple courts, one could see constant dancing, singing and music.^[citation needed]

Only men were allowed to enter the **Court of the Israelites**, where they could observe sacrifices of the high priest in the Court of the Priests. The **Court of the Priests** was reserved for priests and Levites. [\[citation needed\]](#)

Sanctuary ("the holy")

The [Foundation Stone](#) under the Dome of the Rock, a possible historical location for the Holy of Holies

Between the entrance of the actual Temple building and the curtain veiling the [Holy of Holies](#) were the Temple vessels: the [menorah](#), the incense-burning altar, and various other implements. [\[citation needed\]](#)