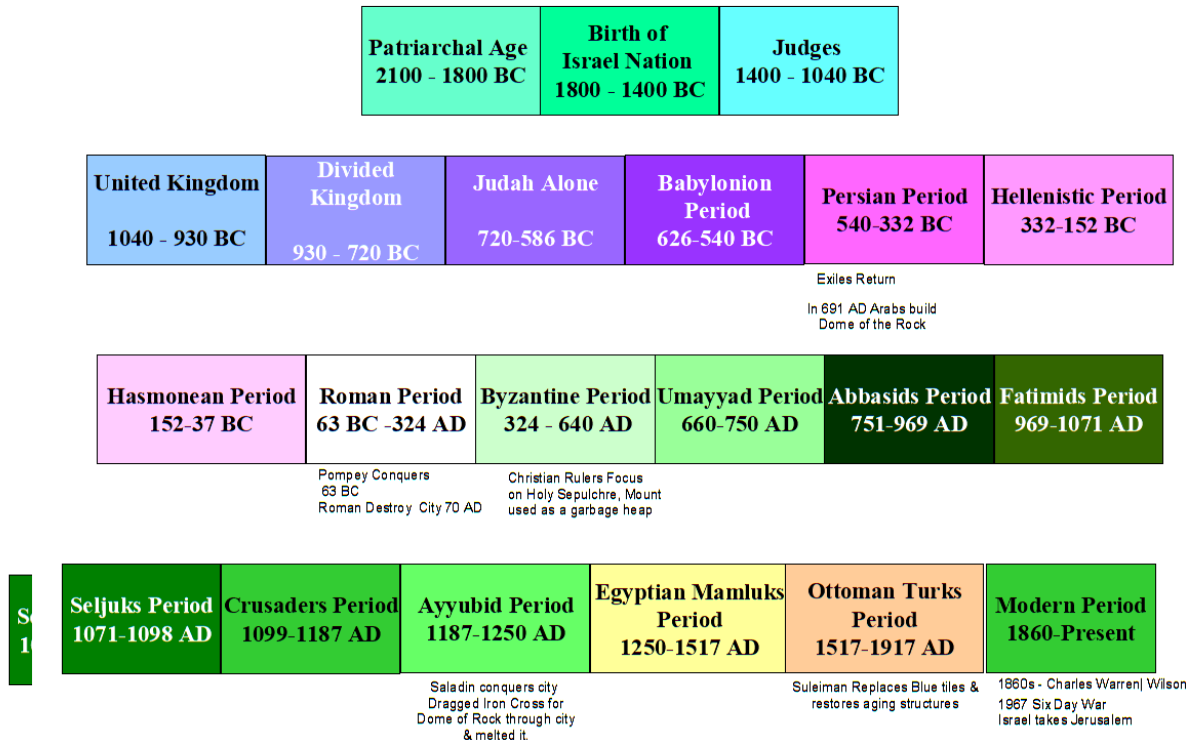


Lesson 16: Archaeology in Jerusalem

We will literal cut a trench line through the bible, to see God’s interaction with the people of Jerusalem from the days of Abraham down to the “Acts of the apostles” and the destruction of Herod’s temple in 70 A.D. from a perspective of archaeological remains.

The following chart lays out the timeline from the days of the patriarchs to modern times.

Jerusalem Timeline

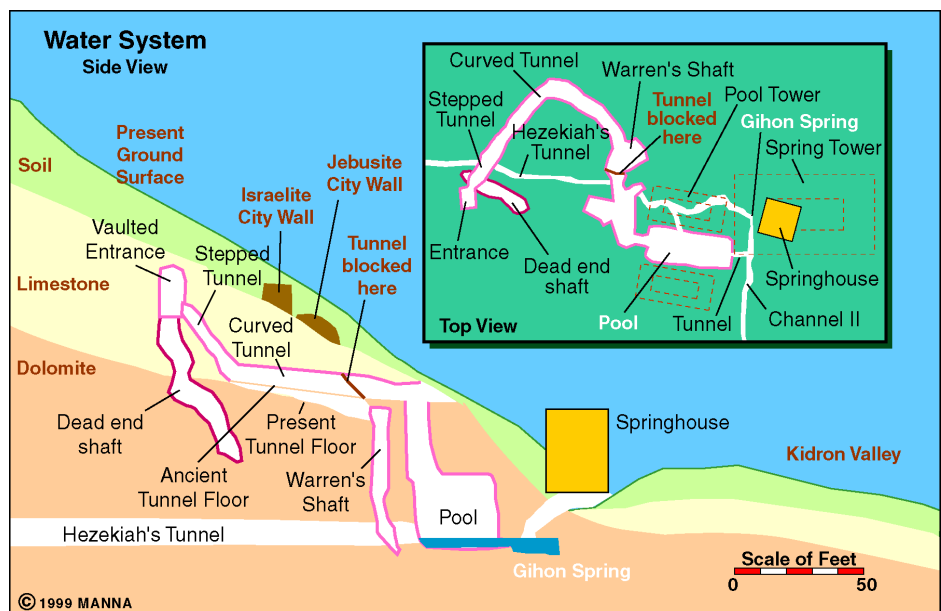


The earliest mention of Jerusalem is in Genesis 14, where we are told that Melchizedek was its king. The shortened form Salem, meaning `Peace', is used, and is used in Ps. 76:2 to refer to Jerusalem. Melchizedek was King of Peace, as Christ will be (Isa. 9:6; Zech. 6:13). Melchizedek means `King of Righteousness', and Jerusalem will be a centre of righteousness from which peace will radiate to all the world (Isa. 2:2-4). Melchizedek greeted Abraham, returning from the rout of the four kings, with bread and wine. Not only was Melchizedek a king, he was also a priest of the most High God (Elyon, the power or strength above all other forms of power). It was superior to the Levitical priesthood (Heb. 7:4-11), preceding it and having no end.

The second possible mention is in Genesis 22. Abraham was directed by God to take his son Isaac, to go into the land of Moriah, and there to offer him for a burnt offering (Genesis 22:2) upon a mountain which God would show him. This land is mentioned only here, and there is little to guide us in trying to identify it. A late writer (2 Chronicles 3:1) applies the name of Moriah to the mount on which Solomon's Temple was built, possibly associating it with the sacrifice of Isaac.

The Jebusite city wall has been discovered on the eastern slopes of the City of David. This had been partially excavated in the sixties by Dame Kathleen Kenyon, then Director of the British School of Archaeology in the city. It consisted of a forty-one-foot length of cyclopean fortification, some seven to ten yards wide. Kathleen Kenyon interpreted the right angle, which was a feature of the wall's northern portion, as a gate-tower, which gave access in peacetime to the Gihon Spring below, and the gate became known as the Water Gate. The recent excavations led by the late Yigal Shiloh uncovered a 100-foot-long continuation of this wall. This broad sweep of fortification, which the archaeologists determined from pottery found in its fill was initially constructed in the Middle Bronze IIB period (1800 B.C.), proves that the Jebusite city was large enough to warrant such defenses. Several finds from this period support the picture portrayed in the El-Amarna letters (1405-1350 BC) of Jerusalem as an influential town in the Judean Hills. Of the 350 letters, six were sent by Abdi-Hepa, a king of Jerusalem. The Egyptian garrison in Jerusalem was transferred to Gaza. With his defenses weakened and under constant attack from the Apiru and from his rivals in Canaan, the king of Jerusalem complained in his last letter that all was lost. Then the letters stopped. We do not know what became of him and his city.

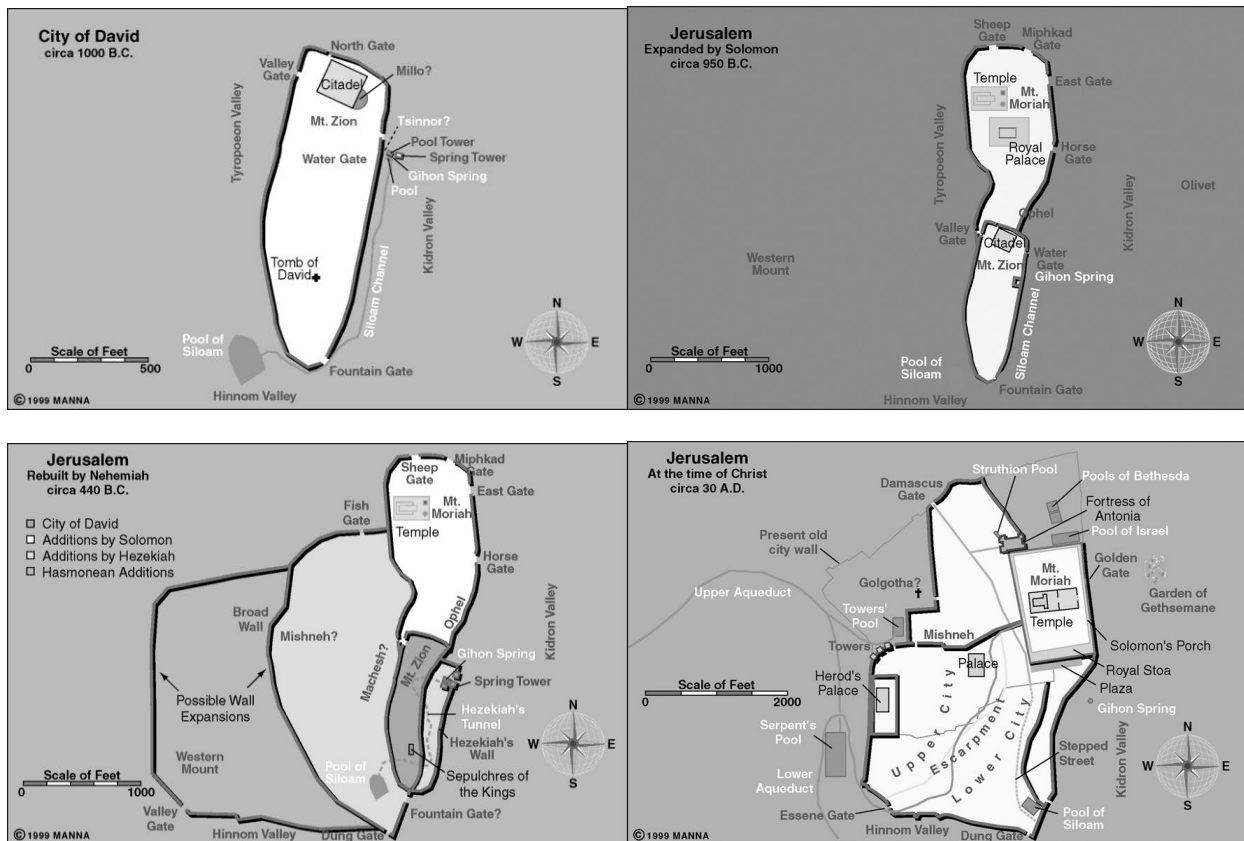
The story of David's battle for Jerusalem appears twice in the Bible (II Samuel 5:6-9 and I Chronicles 11:4-7). The Bible relates that "the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land. The Jebusites said to David, 'You cannot come in here except by removing the blind and the lame. (II Samuel 5:6-7). Maybe a Jebusite taunt; i.e. the city is so strong that even the blind can defend the walls. Jerusalem's defenses, natural or supernatural, stymied David, and he sought help from volunteers, proclaiming that whoever led the attack would be named commander in chief of the army. By use of the "tzinor" his relative Joab successfully conquered Jerusalem. The meaning



of this word is unclear. The term tzinor ("pipe" in modern Hebrew) probably refers to a shaft like Warren's shaft, a secret Jebusite tunnel connecting the city to the Gihon Spring. Perhaps Joab discovered the tunnel and infiltrated into the city. Yigal Shiloh described his scaling of Warren's shaft with a group of Alpine mountaineers, when the first to ascend used the most advanced equipment available and took two hours.

David's building work was concentrated in an area described as the "Millo". Since the excavations on the eastern or 'Ophel' hill, carried out by Dame Kathleen Kenyon in the 1960s, the term 'Millo' has been understood to refer to a series of terraces on the eastern side of the hill, formed from retaining walls with levelled filling; the name 'Millo' is derived from the verb male, 'to be full' or 'to fill'.

Expansion of Jerusalem under David and Solomon. The city conquered by David was very small, about 60 dunam (15 acres). It appears that David did not alter the basic plan of the Jebusite city. He moved his residence to the Jebusite fortress and the city was renamed "the City of David." He built a royal palace around a site called the "millo" (II Samuel 5:9). Solomon became king in 967 B.C.E., when he was only 16 years old. During his 40-year reign the country enjoyed peace and prosperity. Jerusalem was the capital of a vast kingdom extending from Damascus to Eilat. Solomon initiated many building projects, more than doubling the size of Jerusalem. Above the City of David he built his palace and royal administrative complex, in the area known as the Ophel (which means "high"). Above the Ophel, on the site that David purchased from Arvana, he built the Temple. Solomon united the three hills (the Temple Mount, the Ophel and the City of David) into one royal complex, with a wall separated it from the rest of the city.



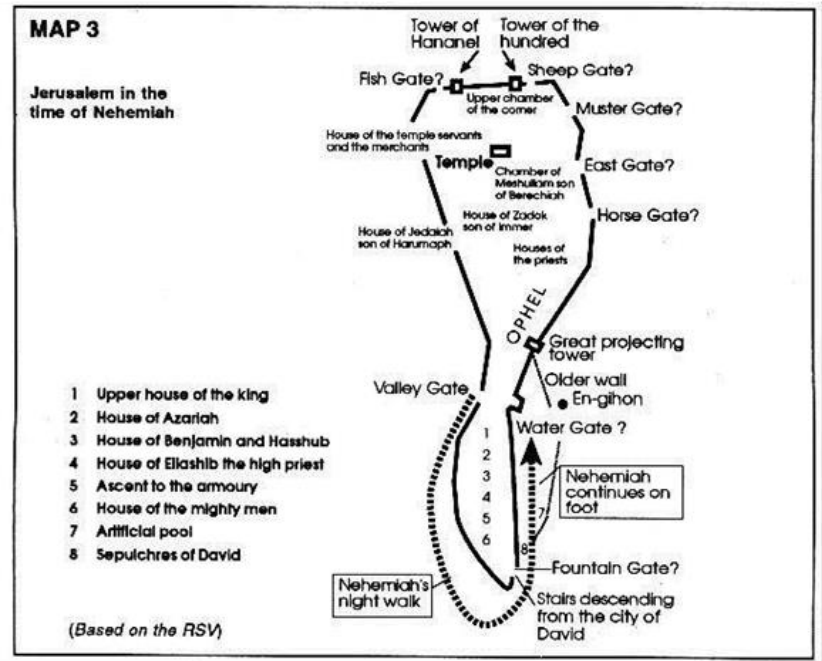
During his childhood, Hezekiah must have witnessed many of the terrible excesses of idolatry perpetrated by his father Ahaz in Jerusalem, including Baal-worship and human sacrifice. Once again, the temple treasures were given as tribute, this time to the rising power of Assyria, and various forms of desecration were inflicted on the temple courts, culminating in the shutting of the doors of the sanctuary (2 Kgs. 16:10-18; 2 Chron. 28:24,25; 29:7). Consequently, the very first action of Hezekiah upon his accession to the throne was to begin the reversal of Ahaz's violation of the house of God: "He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them" (2 Chron. 29:3). Hezekiah's reformations include a wholesale purging of idols, the restoration of the City of David, and the cleansing and reconsecration of the temple as a center of worship for the nation, marked by the reinstatement of the Passover feast. However, there was a major setback, when the Assyrians invaded the land and Hezekiah was

forced once again to strip the temple of its silver and gold in order to meet the tribute demands of the enemy (2 Kgs. 18:13-16). Apart from the work of Uzziah, there is no indication in the Scripture record that there had been any significant growth in the size of Jerusalem from the time of Solomon. But now Hezekiah, determined to throw off the yoke of Assyria, engaged in the enlargement and fortification of the city, encompassing the suburbs which had probably spread onto the western hill by "another wall without" (2 Chron. 32:5), across the Tyropoean valley (Map 2). He also dug the Siloam tunnel to divert the waters of the Gihon spring within the city wall and safeguard the supply in time of siege (2 Kgs. 20:20; 2 Chron. 32:2-4). The building of the new wall on the western hill, necessitating the demolition of existing houses outside the previous city wall, was reproved by Isaiah because of the people's lack of reverence for the Maker of Israel (Isa. 22:9-11). The archaeological evidence shows that this twenty-three-foot-wide city wall cut through and destroyed eighth-century B.C. houses which stood in its way. This fits in precisely with the picture given in the Bible of Hezekiah's building activities: "and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall" (Isa. 22:10).

It is clear that the corruption of Manasseh's reign (the son of Hezekiah) had gone deep into the lives of his people, and his personal repentance could not eradicate it. Even the godly character of his grandson Josiah, and the great reformation which he undertook in his reign, cleansing the city and the land of many of their idolatrous shrines, could not reverse the people's headlong decline into paganism. Immediately after praising the outstanding qualities of Josiah, the record declares: "Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of His great wrath, wherewith His anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations [that is, idolatry, cf. 17:11,12] that Manasseh had provoked Him withal. And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there" (2 Kgs. 23:26,27). Thus the doom of the city was pronounced because of the wickedness of its citizens. In the days of Josiah's sons, the Babylonians came and deported many of its inhabitants, and eventually, in 586 B.C., after a two-and-a-half-year siege, the walls were breached and the city fell. As the agents of God's anger, the Babylonians had no respect for the beauty of Zion which had so moved the psalmist. The walls were broken down and the temple was burnt.

The Assyrians and Babylonians used mass exile to eliminate popular movements for national independence and maintain peace within their vast empires. King Cyrus of Persia, who conquered Babylonia and established an even greater empire, reversed this policy and allowed local religious autonomy. Jerusalem became the capital of Yehud (named for the tribe of Judah) a small Persian province 40 km. by 50 km. The book of Ezra opens with Cyrus's call to the Jews to return to their land and rebuild their temple (in 538 B.C.). Construction of the Second Temple began in 521 and was completed in 516. The Second Temple was built on the spot where the First Temple had stood, with the same dimensions, but with an important difference. The First Temple had stood next to the king's palace, almost as if it were his private house of worship while no royal palace complex existed next to the Second Temple thus appearing more accessible to the common people.

Despite the rebuilt Temple, Jerusalem had declined a long way from its former glory. It had no city walls. Many of its residents, including some of the priests, had married local non-Jewish women. Ezra, a Torah scholar and priest whom King Artaxerxes had permitted to return to Jerusalem (c. 457) to teach Torah and judge the Jews according to Torah laws (Ezra ch. 7) was shocked by the reality he found. He tried to persuade the people to divorce their foreign wives, and taught Torah to the public (Nehemiah ch. 8). Thirteen years later he received invaluable assistance from Nehemiah, the Jewish Cup Bearer to the King, who was appointed governor of Yehud and arrived in Jerusalem c. 444. Nehemiah's first concern was Jerusalem's physical security. He made a secret nighttime survey of the broken city walls and resolved to rebuild them. He assigned sections of wall to different families, and repairs were quickly made.



Herod who ruled from 37 to 4 B.C. over large parts of what is today Israel yet remained dependent upon Rome. As a matter of fact if they hadn't closed the list of the wonders of the ancient world before his time, Herod would probably have had half the list to his credit. Almost all archeologists and students of architecture of the ancient world appreciate that he was one of the greatest builders of all human history.

- He built relentlessly -- cities, palaces and fortresses, some of which still stand:
- the fortresses at Masada, Antonia and Herodium
- the port city of Caesarea
- the huge edifice at the top of the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron
- the massive fortifications around Jerusalem as well as three towers at the entrance to the city (the remains of which are today erroneously named the Tower of David)

It was Herod's city that Jesus walked. Jesus's lament anticipated Jerusalem's fall, which came about because of the refusal of most of the nation to heed his call to repentance: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Mt. 23:37,38). It was this community in the past that had rejected and killed the prophets. It was the same community, although with different individuals, that had recently hailed Jesus's entry to the city and would within days shout "Crucify him!".

