

Day 6

Thanks to Laura Kiper for sharing her early morning start – sunrise over the city



Starting early again today proved to be a blessing. Today is Friday, the Muslim sabbath and the city, especially the Old City within the walls, is packed with people. The bus left at 7:30 and we arrived at the St. Stephens/ Lions' Gate entrance into the Old City.

The first city wall was constructed around 1800 BC as fortification/protection of the property. The city was conquered by the Canaanites in 1200 BC and held until conquered by King David in 1000 BC and declared the capital city for the Jewish kingdom.

King Solomon (King David's son) built the first temple in 960 BC which was destroyed, along with the wall, by the Babylonians in 586 BC and the Jewish people were exiled.

They returned in 516 BC and the second temple was built by Herod the Great. The wall rebuilt by Nehemiah in 445 BC.

The wall was expanded in 141 BC, Jesus crucified in 30 CE, and the second temple demolished in 70 CE. However, a portion of the Western Wall survived and to this day is used as the Wailing Wall.

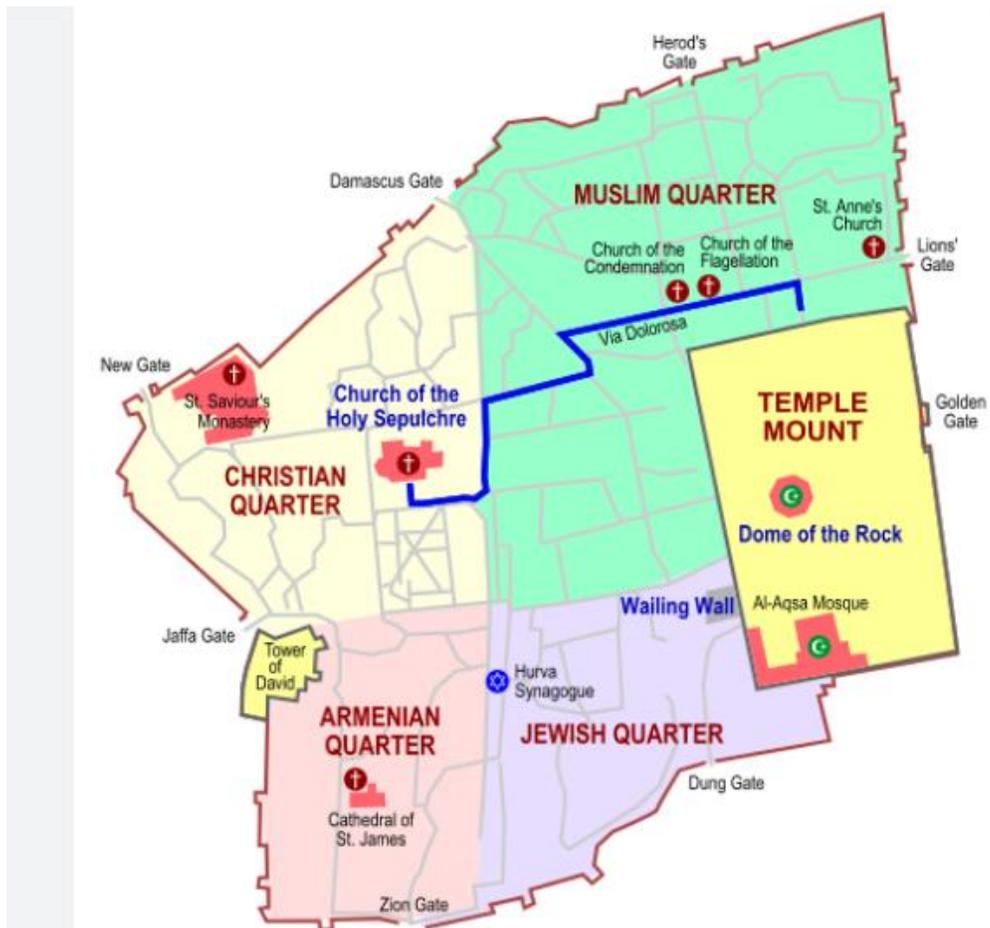
The walls were dismantled in 1250 by Muslim forces and, as it stands today, was rebuilt in 1536 by a new Muslim leader.

So the City walls have been expanded 3 times as the city grew and new fortifications were needed. Within the walls, the Old City is divided into 4 quadrants, one each controlled by Muslims, Christians, Jews, and Armenians.

The most contested place in the Middle East is the section called the Temple Mount. It has been venerated as a holy site in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam for thousands of years. Jewish tradition maintains this is the site where the Messiah will come and a third temple will be built on the site - due to extreme sanctity, many Jews will not walk on the mount. As the Noble Sanctuary, the second oldest mosque in Islam, the Temple Mount is believed to be the site

where Muhammad ascended into heaven, is the first of the directions turned to in the call to prayer, and is one of the holies of holies of Islam.

Temple Mount has been fought over for generations. Since 1967, it has been occupied by Israeli forces who provide security, administratively controlled by Muslims, but Israel wants it back. About every 6 months, a radical faction of Jews attempts to place a corner stone at the temple – but they are stopped by military authorities before they can ignite a war in the Middle East. Rula asks that we all pray for Jerusalem and a fair resolution of the Temple Mount issue.



There are eight gates to enter the city, 7 of which are open. The 8th gate is the original one, which was sealed for the final time in 1541. It is believed by Christians and Muslims that the gate will reopen when the Messiah returns through the Mt of Olives through this gate to enter Jerusalem. The cemeteries are running out of room. Only certain Jews are now allowed to be buried in Jerusalem. Many Jews in the US asked to be cremated and remains bought to Jerusalem on the belief that those closest to the gates will be among the first out of the ground and to heaven when the Messiah comes!

There are three cemeteries within the wall. Cremation is not allowed in Israel so all are buried underground, with the head facing the city. The Christians place flowers on the graves, the

Muslims place palm branches, and the Jews place stones. This comes from the historical belief that a rock would last for all eternity and by leaving the stone to note the person was remembered by a visit, the memory would also last for eternity.

Our bus ride from the hotel to the entrance to the Old City was fairly quick as we had an early start. Rula expected the area to become very crowded as the day progressed due to it being a Friday, the Muslim sabbath.

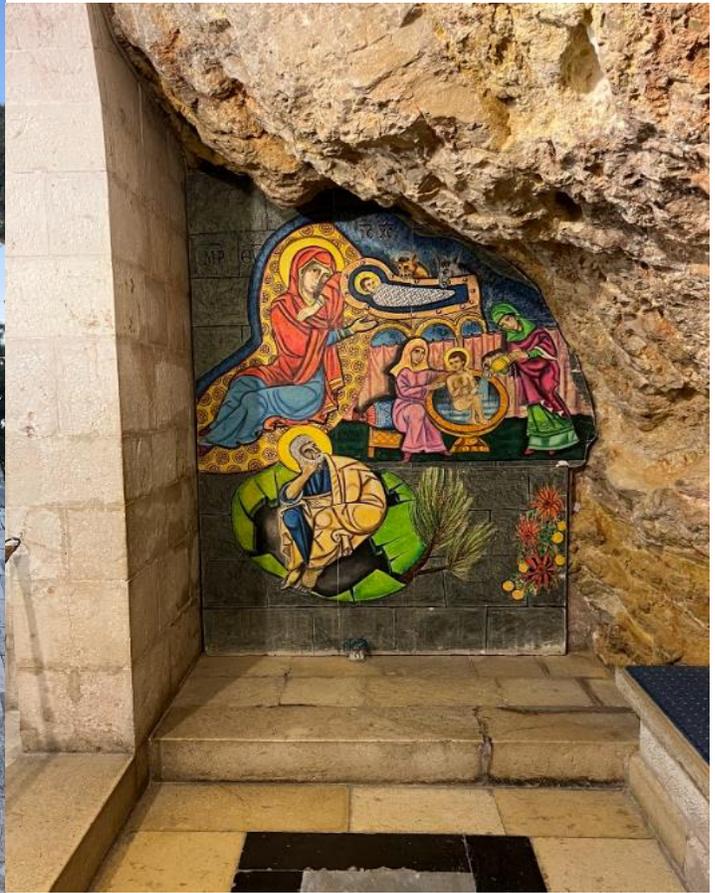
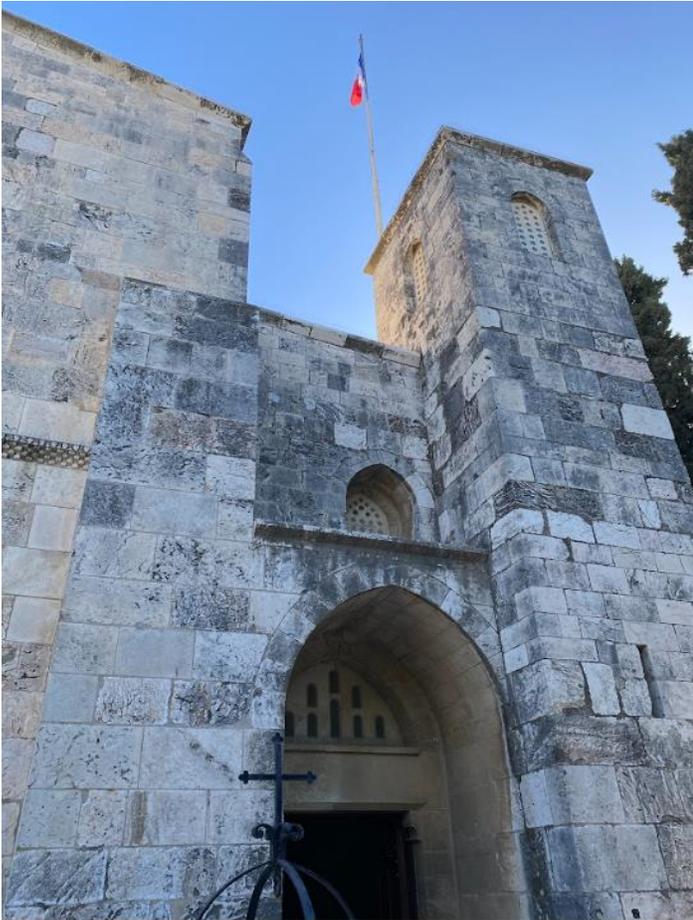


We entered the city at the Lions Gate, also called St. Stephen's Gate as it is near the site where he was stoned to death. It is also the gate used by Israeli forces used to break into the Old City when they took Jerusalem and the West Bank in 1967.



The first stop was as St. Anne's church built in 1131 over the site of a grotto believed by the Crusaders to be the childhood home of the Virgin Mary. It is dedicated to Anne and Joachim, the parents of Mary, who according to tradition lived here. In 1862 the church was given to

the French who began restorations and maintain it to this day. The actual site is below ground in a grotto/cave.



The church has amazing acoustics and tour groups are allowed time to gather and sing in front of the altar. We sang Amazing Grace and the Doxology – we should have been recorded as we sounded soooo good!!



Because the church is dedicated to Mary's parents who were the grandparents of Jesus, it is often referred to as the Grandparents' Church. The picture below is of all the grandparents in our group.



During the 1862 restoration, the remains of the Bethesda Pool were uncovered next to the church. Kathie Wilkinson read the story found in John 5 of the paralyzed man lying beside the pool who was healed by Jesus and told to "pick up your mat and walk". This was one of the events the detractors used against Jesus because he performed the miracle on the Sabbath, breaking Rabbani law which prohibited work on the day of rest. Most people picture the pool as a shallow wading-type pool. The actual pool is over 40 feet deep!





Leaving St. Anne's, we begin walking the Via Dolorosa, the pathway through the city which commemorates Jesus' walk through the City of Jerusalem from the spot of his condemnation to his burial. There are 14 sites, 9 along the narrow streets. The other 5 are inside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher which was built over Calvary/Golgotha (the site of the crucifixion) and the empty tomb where Jesus was buried and was resurrected.

Station 2 Jesus picks up the cross



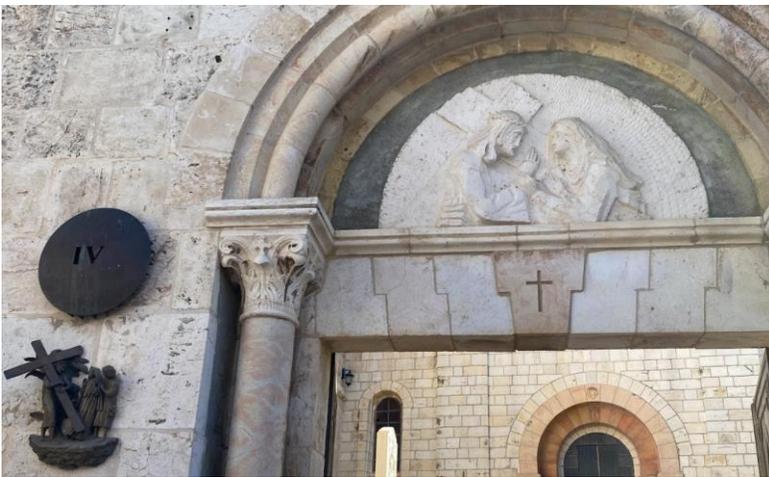
The “Ecce Homo” Arch – where Pilate presented Jesus to the people with “Behold the Man”



Station 3 Jesus Falls for the first time



Station 4 Jesus meets his mother



Station 5 Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross



Station 6 Veronica wipes his feet; his image was imprinted on the veil when returned to her



Station 7 Jesus falls for the second time



Station 8 Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem



Station 9 Jesus falls for the third time



Station 10 Jesus is stripped of his garments and lots cast for the clothing. This station is located at the top of the stairs in a chapel just outside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.



The remaining stations are inside the church.

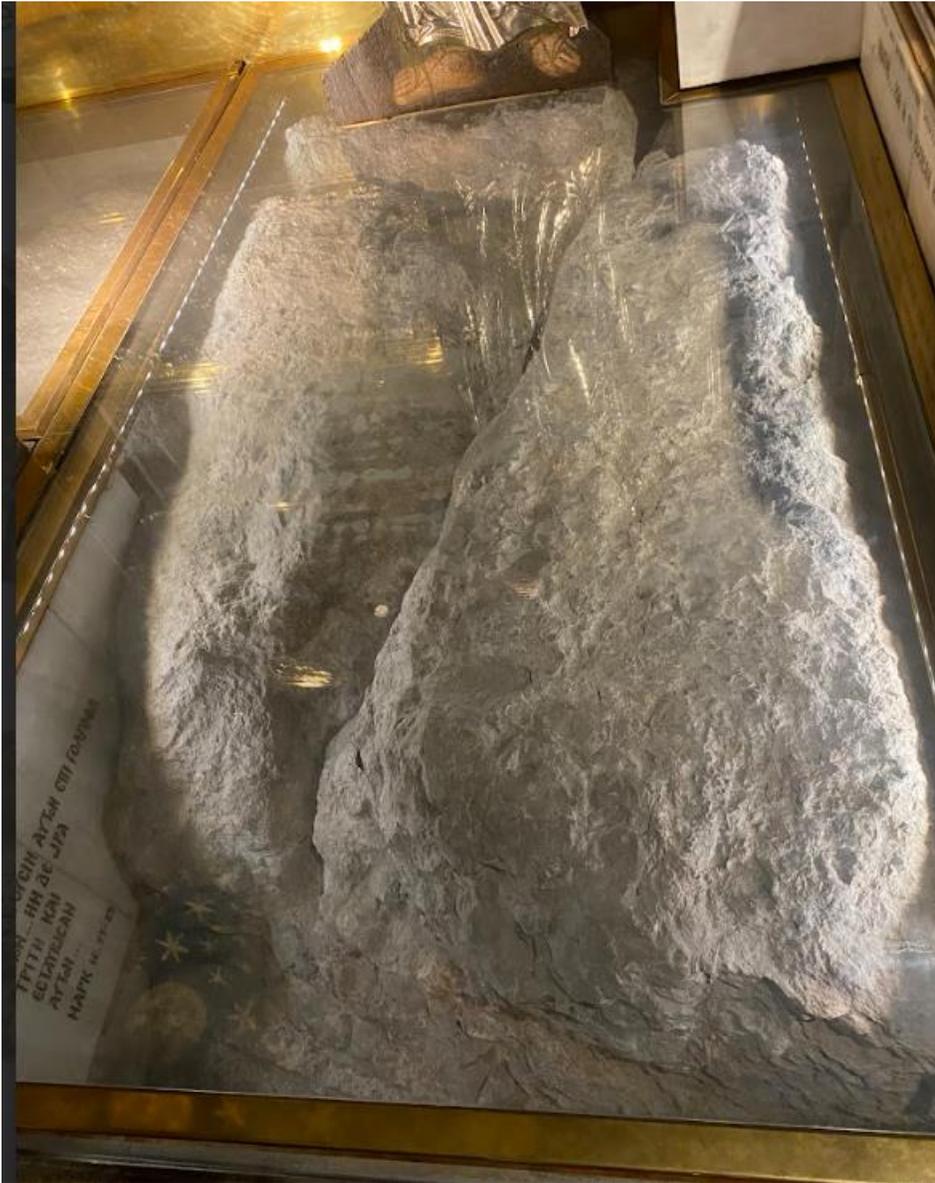
Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70 during the First Jewish–Roman War. In AD 135, the Roman emperor Hadrian ordered that a cave containing a rock-cut tomb be filled in for the foundation for a temple dedicated to Jupiter.

In AD 312 Constantine the Great sent his mother, Helena, to Jerusalem to look for Christ's tomb. She, Eusebius and Bishop Macanus located three crosses near a tomb; one which allegedly cured people was presumed to be the True Cross Jesus was crucified on, leading them to believe they had found Calvary. Constantine ordered the temple to Jupiter be destroyed, the soil was removed from the cave, revealing a rock-cut tomb that Helena and Macarius identified as the burial site of Jesus. A shrine was built, enclosing the rock tomb walls within its own. This shrine became the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

Station 11 Jesus is nailed to the cross. An incredible mosaic made with mother of pearl so it shimmers marks the spot where the nails were driven into his hands and feet



Station 12 Crucifixion and death – there is an altar over the spot where the cross was erected. Under the altar is a silver disk with an indentation you can reach into and feel the spot where the cross stood. On either side are black marble plates marking the location of the robbers' crosses.



Station 13 Jesus is taken down from the cross. The stone of anointment commemorates where Jesus' body was laid and anointed with oils.



Station 14 Jesus laid in the tomb. Helena had trenches dug around the tomb and covered the site, including placing a marble slab on top of the burial chamber. You can enter the tomb, 4 at a time, and see the slab which is lit by 43 lamps day and night.



Underneath the church are other tombs. We entered the supposed tomb of Nicodemus, a Jewish man who, according to scripture, helped Joseph of Arimathea bury Jesus (John 19).



The primary custodians of the shrine are the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic churches. The Coptic Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox and Syriac Orthodox also have some lesser responsibilities.



None of the churches control the main entrance. In 1192, door-keeping responsibilities were assigned to a Muslim family who has passed down the keys for generations. The wooden doors that compose the main entrance are the original, highly carved doors and are opened and closed daily by this family.

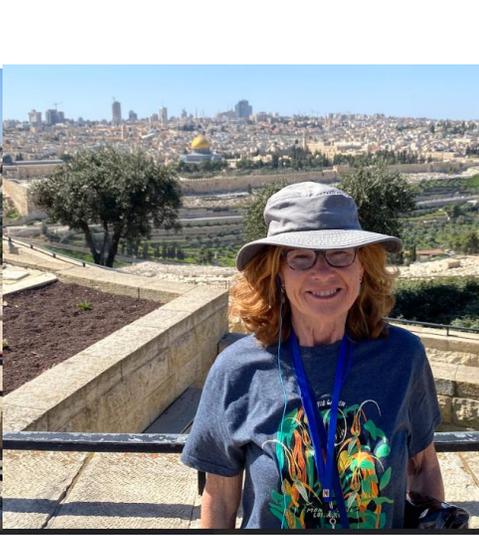
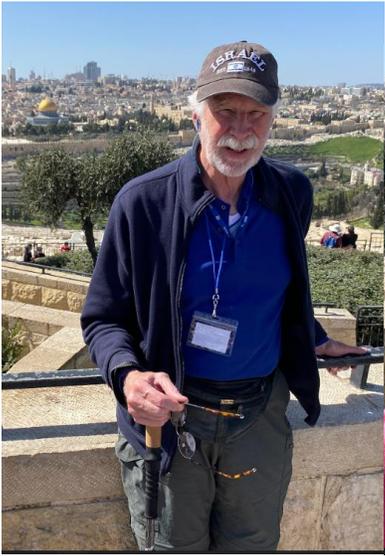


After leaving the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, we walked through narrow streets to a local restaurant for lunch, seated at an outdoor patio. Rula is a Palestinian Christian who belongs to the Greek Orthodox church next to the Holy Sepulcher. After Sunday morning mass, she goes to this same restaurant to have her morning coffee on the patio and watch the world go by!



After an interesting walk through the marketplace, we exited the Old Town at the Jaffa Gate and boarded our bus. A very short ride later, we arrived at the Mount of Olives. Rula had a professional photographer on site to take the below group picture! What an incredible venue.





We walked down – about a 45 minute all down-hill jaunt! –



to arrive at the Garden of Gethsemane – also called the Agony of Jesus Christ. On the site are many olive trees. One of them is over 3,000 years old – was there when King David ruled – and is still producing olives. There are 7 other olive trees which were there at the time of Jesus. **They are referred to as the ‘silent witnesses’ to the Lord’s agony.** The garden we saw is a small fraction of the original during the time of Jesus. It has slowly been replaced by buildings and roads.







The Church of Nations, built by Franciscans in 1924, sits next to the garden.



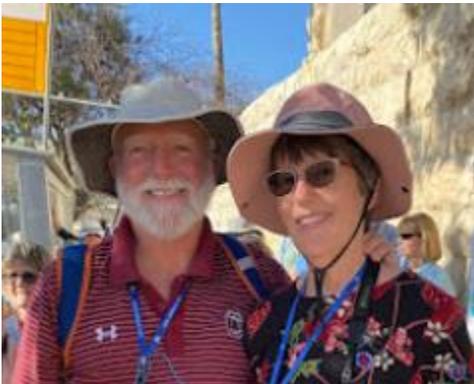
In the center of the church is the “sorrow rock” on which, according to tradition, Jesus prayed his last prayer and wept, surrounded by an iron crown of thorns with olive branches. We were able to kneel at the rock and touch it. The church has a relatively low ceiling with alabaster glass for windows. Those architectural features give a dark, foreboding feel to the sanctuary and elicits very deep emotional responses to kneeling to pray at that rock.





We left the church and returned by bus to the hotel at 3:30 – the earliest we have ended at day since we arrived. We most definitely needed some down time as today was unbelievably hot, completely sunny, and we were walking or standing in line waiting for something all day - other than the lunch break!

Rula planned exceedingly well – once again!



Tomorrow is another sort of early day - starting with the Rabbi Teaching Steps – but we do not have to be on the bus until 8:00 – which sounds like a gift as tired as we are tonight!