

# How has each of the major monotheistic religions left its mark on jerusalem essay...

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



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## **Jerusalem**

How has each of the major monotheistic religions left its mark on Jerusalem?

Introduction:

The three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam have all left their particular mark on the city of Jerusalem. Founded in the early days of Solomon, Jerusalem has always been an important bone of contention, both as a historic city but also as a point of reference for religion. Naturally it has also been an important rallying cry for Christianity in the days of the Crusades as well as the development of the story of Jesus Christ. However today, one can say that it has reverted to its rightful owners which are the Jews although the city is still torn by sectarian strife which threatens to damage its reputation as a place for peace and tranquility.

## **The beginnings as the City of Judah**

Jerusalem saw a considerable expansion in the second half of the Eighth century BC when the influx of refugees from the Assyrian expulsions began reaching its environs. Here one may consider the archeological remains and references which are currently below the city to observe the substantial contribution that Jewish architecture made to it. King Solomon who was undoubtedly a wise and grandiose ruler commissioned several well known architects in the building of the city and his contribution to its intrinsic history may be enjoyed also today.

Some major features which remained extant until Roman times include the stepped stone structure which is an intrinsic feature of Jewish customs and religion. This characteristic feature has remained up to a point visible today and is a clear part of the architectural prowess from early Biblical times.

## **Further expansion of Jerusalem under Judaism**

In fact, the city of Jerusalem had its beginnings well before the 10th and 12th centuries BC. Discoveries which were unearthed by several archeologists in the 1920's indicate houses with iron beams and superstructures which were quite advanced for their time. The early Jewish influence can be seen in these buildings which continue to astonish to this day for their avante garde prowess and rather impressive strength. In fact, buildings continue to be built in this manner as time progressed while the architectural style culminated in the Great Temple which was a miracle of architecture but which was unfortunately destroyed by the Romans in the infamous sack of 70 AD.

## **Christian influences**

Christianity undoubtedly had an incredible effect on Jerusalem especially after its establishment as the religion of the Roman Empire after 333 AD. The architectural style of the city began changing overnight as several new churches and other buildings began being erected, particularly in the Eastern part of the city. The creation of groves, gardens, pools and other oasis like architectural features continued dominating the city while the Jewish influence was shunned and kept away. In fact according to accounts from the Bordeaux pilgrims<sup>1</sup>, we can observe that Christianity brought about a considerable change to the lifestyle and practice of the great city. Obviously not everything changed overnight but by at least 800 AD, Jerusalem could have said to be a thoroughly Christianized city.

According to Katz<sup>2</sup>, the Christians were heavily engaged in the construction of a Christianized city in the heart of Jerusalem, particularly where the Temple Mount was concerned. Viewing Jews as traitors to Christ was also another important facet to erasing any trace of Jewish customs and religion in this centre and in fact, the Jews were seen as outcasts in their own city – in all accounts a rather believable aspect. To sum up, Christianity had an incredible influence on Jerusalem in the centuries after Constantine right to the very end of the Muslim conquest.

## **Islam and the Islamification of Jerusalem**

Of course, the other monotheistic religion which held sway over Jerusalem for a number of centuries was Islam. Jerusalem is seen as a holy place by Muslims due to the fact that it is seen as the city blessed by Allah and it is

also seen as an important city in the sense that one must make a pilgrimage at one time in his/her life to it. There are also several areas which are deemed to be of historically significant importance inside the city including the area known as Al Quds where the solitary nature of prayer and meditation is important<sup>3</sup>. Obviously Jerusalem was heavily rebuilt during Muslim times with a number of mosques and other similar buildings sprouting up all over the place, most of them sublime examples of architecture and great beauty. The Muslims also introduced customs such as fasting and burial which were seen as a crucial part of their religion here and they attached great significance to the area where the Second Mosque was built. This magnificent structure which was unfortunately destroyed in the Crusades could be said to be the most spectacular contribution that Islam made to the city of Jerusalem. Several legends on the Al Quds area abound and although it is difficult to identify them today, they are undoubtedly some of the most important topographical parts of Jerusalem as a city of the Prophet.

### **Conclusion: Jerusalem today and in the early 20th century**

Jerusalem today remains a city riven by religious factions although it is controlled practically in its entirety by Israel who have kept the most important icons as a bastion of Judaism. After centuries of decadence and abandon by the Turks where the city was left to rot without much hope of rising again, the British occupied it in the early 20th century where a revival of archeological interest took place and many important finds were unearthed<sup>4</sup>. However the city was still populated by Arabs which had

reduced it to a stinking hovel and this undoubtedly had a great effect on the architecture and splendor of Jerusalem as a whole. It was not until 1947 and the establishment of a Jewish state did Jerusalem really take off as a city of beauty once again, a phoenix actually rising from the ashes.

Today Jerusalem is practically a city where Jewish influence is paramount. The Christian influence has almost disappeared although there is a vast tourism industry in that respect. The Muslim culture certainly has no place at the moment as the Jews are adamant not to accept any partition of the city alongside sectarian or religious lines. Thus one can conclude that all three religions have had a profound influence on the city of Jerusalem over several centuries yet it has returned full circle to its original roots, the roots of Judaism and Jewishness which after all make it the City of Judah.

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