

grand temple. The city walls remained in ruins until Nehemiah restored them in the middle of the fifth century BC.

Jerusalem, with Judea, was ruled by the Persians from 537–332 BC, but little is known about this period. When the city's name reappeared in history, Alexander the Great was claiming an empire for Greece, and Jerusalem automatically became part of his realm when he succeeded the Persian (Achaemenid) kings.

With Alexander's death, Jerusalem came under the control of the Egyptian king Ptolemy and the Jews enjoyed considerable freedom for self-government. The third century BC was a relatively stable period and Jerusalem developed and prospered.

But in 175 BC Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, succeeded to the throne of Syria and tried to advance the worship of Greek gods. He set up a pagan statue in the Jerusalem temple. Failure to observe the pagan customs was punished

by death, and from 167–141 BC the Jews fought back in the Maccabean Wars of Liberation. The Temple Mount in Jerusalem was retaken in 164 BC and the temple rededicated, allowing the Jews to resume their sacrifices.

About eighty years of political independence from foreigners came to an end in 63 BC when the Roman general Pompey entered the city and brought Judea under Roman control. But rather than ruling the area directly, the Roman Senate put Herod the Great on the throne of Judea in 37 BC. Although hated by the Jews, he was responsible for many splendid buildings being constructed in Jerusalem, including a new temple, an imposing fortress (Fort Antonia) and a royal palace.

Many events in Jesus' life took place in Jerusalem, most notably his crucifixion and resurrection; it was from Jerusalem that his disciples went out to other areas to proclaim the Christian faith.

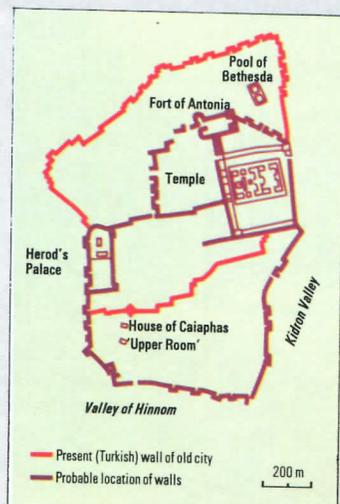
Looking at the splendour of Herod's temple in Jerusalem one day, Jesus prophesied its destruction (Matthew 24:1-2). This prophecy was amply fulfilled in AD 70 when, after about four years of guerrilla-type warfare by Jewish revolutionary groups throughout Judea, the Romans, led by Titus, captured Jerusalem after 139 days of struggle. They burned the temple and left the city in ruins. Tens of thousands of prisoners were

taken, and were either sold as slaves or forced to fight as gladiators. Exile was once again the normal condition for most Jews; but Jerusalem, though destroyed, remained their spiritual home and object of their devotion.

The war of freedom led by Simon Bar Kochba in AD 132–5 briefly made Jerusalem the Jewish capital once again, but in 135 the Emperor Hadrian totally destroyed it, then rebuilt it and called it Aelia Capitolina. And once again the city passed from hand to hand. The Persians captured it in AD 614, the Moslems in 638, the Crusaders in 1099, the Turks in 1517. The British entered it during the First World War, and after the Second World War, in 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed. Jerusalem was declared the capital in the following year.

Religious sites of Moslems and Christians have been maintained and fresh archaeological work, notably on the ancient city walls, has been undertaken. But apart from the old city itself, Jerusalem today is typical of many modern cities, with busy streets, stores and offices.

Jerusalem at the time of Christ



Right: a typical street in the old city of Jerusalem.

