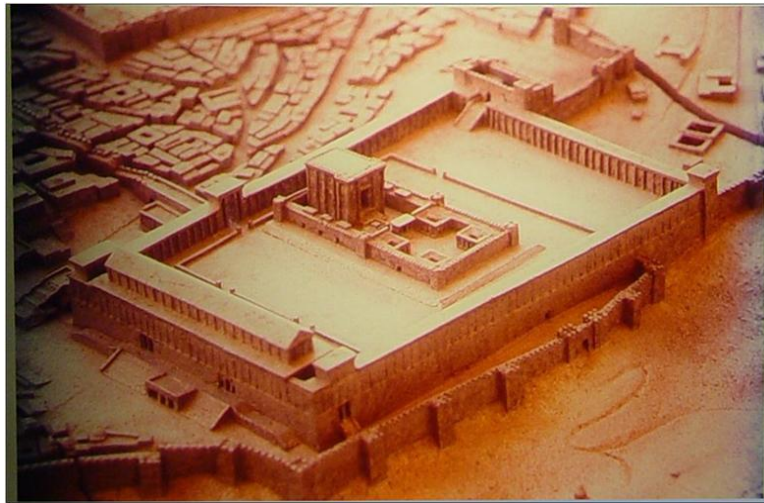
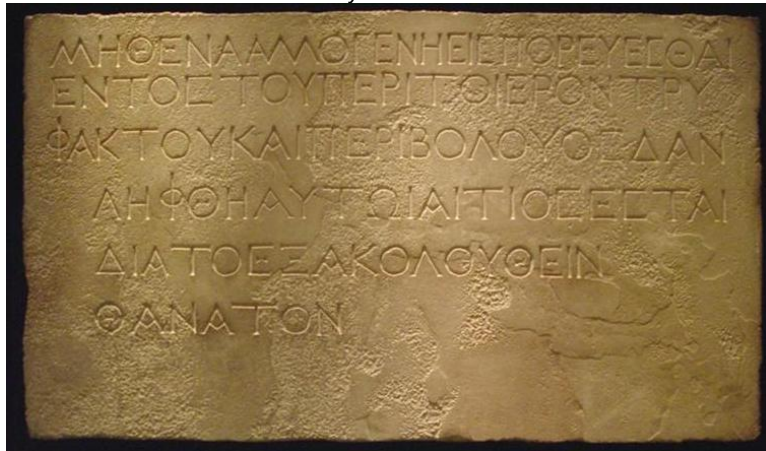


NO ENTRY GREEK INSCRIPTION



Photos by Chuck Louviere



"No stranger is to enter within the partition wall and enclosure around the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will be responsible to himself for his death, which will ensue."

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Temple, Herod's

The temple erected by the exiles on their return from Babylon had stood for about five hundred years, when Herod the Great became king of Judea. The building had suffered considerably from natural decay as well as from the assaults of hostile armies, and Herod, desirous of gaining the favour of the Jews, proposed to rebuild it. This offer was accepted, and the work was begun (B.C. 18), and carried out at great labour and expense, and on a scale of surpassing splendour. The main part of the building was completed in ten years, but the erection of the outer courts and the embellishment of the whole were carried on during the entire period of our Lord's life on earth (John 2:16,19-21), and the temple was completed only A.D. 65. But it was not long permitted to exist. Within forty years after our Lord's crucifixion, his prediction of its overthrow was accomplished (Luke 19:41-44). The Roman legions took the city of Jerusalem by storm, and notwithstanding the strenuous efforts Titus made to preserve the temple, his soldiers set fire to it in several places, and it was utterly destroyed (A.D. 70), and was never rebuilt.

Several remains of Herod's stately temple have by recent explorations been brought to light. It had two courts, one intended for the Israelites only, and the other, a large outer court, called "the court of the Gentiles," intended for the use of strangers of all nations. These two courts were separated by a low wall, as Josephus states, some 4 1/2 feet high, with thirteen openings. Along the top of this dividing wall, at regular intervals, were placed pillars bearing in Greek an inscription to the effect that no stranger was, on the pain of death, to pass from the court of the Gentiles into that of the Jews. At the entrance to a graveyard at the north-western angle of the Haram wall, a stone was discovered by M. Ganneau in 1871, built into the wall, bearing the following inscription in Greek capitals: "No stranger is to enter within the partition wall and enclosure around the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will be responsible to himself for his death, which will ensue."

There can be no doubt that the stone thus discovered was one of those originally placed on the boundary wall which separated the Jews from the Gentiles, of which Josephus speaks.

It is of importance to notice that the word rendered "sanctuary" in the inscription was used in a specific sense of the inner court, the court of the Israelites, and is the word rendered "temple" in John 2:15 and Acts 21:28,29. When Paul speaks of the middle wall of partition (Ephesians 2:14), he probably makes allusion to this dividing wall. Within this partition wall stood the temple proper, consisting of, (1) the court of the women, 8 feet higher than the outer court; (2) 10 feet higher than this court was the court of Israel; (3) the court of the priests, again 3 feet higher; and lastly (4) the temple floor, 8 feet above that; thus in all 29 feet above the level of the outer court.