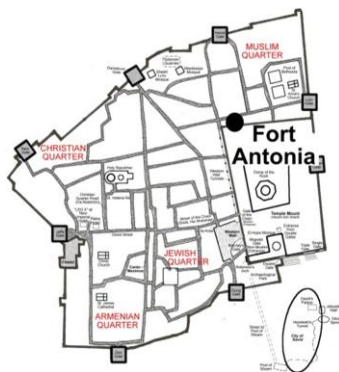


Antonia (Fort Antonia)

Fort Antonia, Herod's fortress used to oversee the Temple Mount, sat on this outcropping of rock that served as the foundation of the north wall of the Temple Mount. Herod built a fortress on the higher bedrock in the northwest corner of the Temple Mount to keep an eye on activities and oversee the Jews in the Temple. He named this stronghold Fort Antonia after his friend Marc Antony.

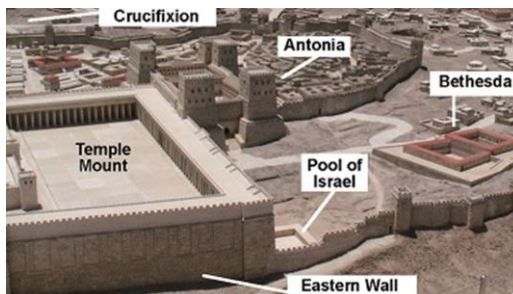


The south wall of Fort Antonia was built in line with the north wall of the Temple Mount on an outcropping of rock. This rockscarp can still be seen today protruding above ground level. The south wall of a Muslim boys' school sits on this rockscarp on the outside. Still remaining in this wall are about 26 Herodian ashlar stones, still in contact with the bedrock where they were originally placed. In addition to the typical margins and bosses of the ashlar, a couple of interesting things can be seen in these blocks and on the rockscarp itself. In the rockscarp below the school are two sets of sockets (notches cut into the rock to support a beam that extends out from the wall to support the roof of a structure):

- 1) The lower trapezoidal sockets are in the photo (9 feet above the ground). They are from 661-900 AD and were made to hold the vaulting springs, or beams of the roof, of a portico built by the Muslims at that time.
- 2) 20 feet above them is a series of sockets 19 inches square, which held the massive roof beams of a majestic portico (or a covered colonnade) whose columns were 29 feet high. This portico, which Josephus says was 50 feet wide (War, 5:190), was built by Herod and went all the way around the Temple Mount.



Today, above the rockscarp is the Umariyya School, a Muslim school for boys. Herodian stones from the outside south wall of Fort Antonia can be seen in the south wall of the Umariyya School.



A model of Herod's Temple Mount with Fort Antonia against the outside wall on the NW corner of the Temple. A 13-foot ancient wall can be seen inside the rooms of the Umariyya School.