

The Ancient Church of the Apostles: Revisiting Jerusalem's Cenacle and David's Tomb

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In Jerusalem, just outside the Zion Gate of the old city near the crest of Mount Zion,¹ often called Christian Sion, lie the partial remains of an ancient synagogue consisting of a niche, walls, floors, and foundations, incorporated into a building now venerated by both Jews and Christians.

For Jews the site is the traditional location of David's Tomb (the pseudo-tomb not the actual tomb) memorialized by a small synagogue on the first floor. Dominating the synagogue is the Cenotaph of David, a large Gothic sepulchral monument, shown in Figure 1. Atop the Cenotaph are several Torah scrolls, engraved silver canisters used in the Sephardic tradition to contain the Torah scroll, and other religious ornaments. The blackened stone of the niche, the result of centuries of smoke from candles and incense, are thought to be the remains of Jerusalem's oldest synagogue.

Christians commonly regard this site as that of the ancient venue of the Upper Room often referred to as the Cenacle or the Coenaculum. A memorial to this heritage, dating to the 14th century, consists of the reconstructed Room of the Last Supper and the adjoining Chapel of the Holy Spirit on the second floor. While a single building

houses the two memorials, each has a separate entrance.



FIGURE 1. The Cenotaph of David is a large Gothic sepulchral monument placed in front of the niche in David's Tomb. The Crusaders used the Cenotaph to mark the tradition that David's Tomb was on Mount Sion. The embroidered velvet cloth draping the Cenotaph highlights a series of stars of David, one for each year of Israel's independence, and inscriptions in Hebrew declaring that "David King of Israel lives forever" and from the TANAKH "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither" (Psalms 137:5).

This study entailed an examination of the veracity of these two seemingly conflicting claims and a reconsideration of the evidence, both historical and archaeological, regarding the identity

of the original structure and its relevance at the time of its construction.

The formal name of this ancient synagogue, seemingly Judeo-Christian, during the second and third centuries is now unknown. In the fourth and fifth centuries, however, Greco-Roman Christians referred to the building in a variety of ways. Eusebius called it the “Holy Church of God” (Eusebius *The Proof of the Gospel* 6.18; Ferrar 1920b:30; 1981b:30). Cyril said it was the “Upper Church of the Apostles” (Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lectures* 16.4; Schaff and Wace 1989a:116). Egeria usually referred to it as “On Sion” (Wilkinson 1971:294). Epiphanius, who alluded to it in its second century context, said that at the time Hadrian visited *Colonia Aelia Capitolina*, ca. 131/132, it was a small “Church of God” (Epiphanius *De Mensuris* 14; Koester 1989:93). Theodosius said it was Holy Sion which is the “*mater omnium ecclesiarum*” or the Mother of all Churches (Theodosius *The Topology of the Holy Land* 7(b); Wilkinson 1977:66).

With the construction of the Basilica of Hagia Sion in the early fifth century the synagogue became of less significance. For a brief period, as the sacrarium of Mt. Sion, it served as the repository of the supposed bones of St. Stephen.² Later it functioned simply as a side chapel. Centuries later it became known as the Tomb of David which remains its name to the present day.

For more than a thousand years Mt. Sion was under Christian domination and a place of Christian memorials and churches. Brief interludes of control occurred with the Persian invasion of A.D. 614 and the Islamic occupation of 1009–1099. The pseudo-Tomb of David, the remnants of this ancient synagogue, remained under Islamic control from 1219, except for the limited Franciscan occupancy of 1335–1551, until taken by the Israelis in 1948. Today it comes under the jurisdiction of the Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs.

THE PROBLEM

There is no scholarly consensus as to the identity of the original synagogue. Nevertheless, both Christians and Jews relying on the statement by Epiphanius³ (ca. 315-402/3) claim it as their own. Writing late in the fourth century, Epiphanius claimed in chapter 14 of his work *De Mensuris et Ponderibus* that when the Roman emperor Hadrian (76-138) visited Jerusalem (ca. 131/132) a small “Church of God” and “seven synagogues” existed on Mount Sion (Epiphanius *De Mensuris* 14; Koester 1989:93).

Christians, believing this site to be that of the Upper Room, argue that the present-day remains are those of this small Church of God. Jews claim it as one of seven synagogues of the Jews observed by Hadrian. The matter remains in scholarly dispute as well and there is no clear consensus of scholarly opinion. Some literary sources and archaeological data support the existence of a Judeo-Christian synagogue on Mt. Sion in the second century. On the other hand, the exclusion of Jews from *Aelia Capitolina*, the Roman persecution of Christians, and the presence of the Roman Tenth Legion on Mt. Sion mitigate against it. Whether or not the remnants of the ancient synagogue do indeed date to the early Christian period remains an open question and one examined herein.

An early account by a pilgrim from Bordeaux, possibly a Judeo-Christian who visited Jerusalem in 333, referred to the tradition of seven synagogues on Mount Sion. This visitor wrote: “Inside Sion, within the wall, you can see where David had his palace. Seven synagogues were there, but only one is left—the rest have been ‘plowed and sown’ as was said by the prophet Isaiah” (Pilgrim of Bordeaux 592; Wilkinson 1971:157-158).

With respect to the Upper Room, the question is—was there but a single upper room put to use

by the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth at the time of the Passover in ca. A.D. 31? Luke's gospel employs *anágaiōn* or *anōgēōn* as a variant for upper room (Luke 22:12) while the writer of the Acts of the Apostles uses *hupērō,ōn* for upper room (Acts 1:13). These two passages mark events in the roughly eight-week period from the Passover through Pentecost. The word *anágaiōn* refers to the venue of the Last Supper and *hupērō,ōn* the place where the disciples resided at the time of the Ascension and presumably at Pentecost. It remains to be seen whether or not these were one and the same location.

In his Vulgate translation of the New Testament, Jerome rendered these two Greek words by the single Latin word *coenaculum*, or *cenaculum*, meaning dining room which was customarily located on a second floor in Greco-Roman multi-story homes. At times translators render *coenaculum* and *cenaculum* into English as *cenacle*. Whether right or wrong, the Christian tradition ever since has been that these two places were one and the same (Lussier 1967:388; Mare 1987:233-234; Finegan 1969:147).

In early Christian tradition the location of the Upper Room was the home of Mary the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12). In his gospel John Mark, presumably the young man who followed soldiers taking Jesus to the courtyard of the high priest in the Upper City escaped naked when in attempting to grab him they got his sleeping garment instead (Mark 14:51),⁴ also uses *anágaiōn* for upper room in reference to the venue of the Last Supper (Mark 14:15).

The importance of the Upper Room to Christians arises in its symbolic imagery of three critical, or watershed, events in Christian history. First, it is the acknowledged site of Jesus' introduction of unleavened bread and wine as symbols of his broken body and shed blood at the Last.⁵ Second, it has an association with the Ascension as the place where Jesus' disciples resided awaiting the high Sabbath known as the

Feast of Pentecost or *Shavuoth*. Third, it is the traditional location of the meeting place on *Shavuoth*, a Sunday⁶, where very early in the morning the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples some fifty days from the Resurrection creating the Church of God (Hebrew: *qahal'el*; Greek: *èkklesia tou Theou*).

The early followers of Jesus of Nazareth saw themselves as the sole legitimate successor of the fathers and the new Israel of God. They referred to their community as the Assemblage or Congregation of God usually translated into English as church, presumably written as *qahal'el*, the contraction of *qahal 'elohim* (Assembly of God). As to the word *qahal'el*, according to Roloff, writing in the *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*: "The term was used because it corresponded with the eschatological self-understanding of the Church, which understood itself to be the company elect by God and determined by him to be the center and crystallization-point of the eschatological Israel now being called into existence by him" (Roloff 1993:412).

When rendered into English the term *qahal'el*, may appear as Assembly of God, Congregation of God, Company of God, or Community of God, but it usually appears in translation as church of God or Church of God depending upon the exegesis of the translators.⁷ A translator's choice of rendering the majuscule Greek text of the apostolic period as church of God or with the formal specificity of the proper name Church of God depends upon the exegesis the translator desires to emphasize, i.e., his or her own hermeneutic.⁸

The translators of the Septuagint rendered *qahal 'elohim* at Nehemiah 13:1 into Greek as "into the assembly of God." The word *èkklesia* as used in the LXX translates the Hebrew word *qehila* into its Greek equivalent, denoting the congregation of Israel. Following the Septuagint, the apostles apparently selected *èkklesia* as the appropriate Greek equivalent of *qehila*, which they chose for rendering *qahal'el*, into Greek as "Church of God."⁹

Hence, in Koinê *qahal'el* became *Ekklesia tou Theou*, Church of God, a formal self-designation, or proper name, for the ancient church.

It was not until the ninth century that the Greek text of the New Testament employed minuscules. In the shift to minuscules, the Greek text became *èkklesia tou Theou*. It appeared so in later Greek minuscule manuscripts. From then on, the Church of God commonly was known as the *èkklesia tou Theou*. In the New Testament, the terms *èkklesia*, when used in an ecclesial sense, and *èkklesia tou Theou* consistently refer to the community of Christians and not buildings. During this period Christians met in houses, hired halls, and synagogues modeled after the Jewish synagogues (Mackowski, 1980:143, 145). By the time of Epiphanius it could refer to either one. It was therefore natural for Epiphanius, writing after the A.D. 381 seizure of the Judeo-Christian synagogue by the Byzantines following the First Council of Constantinople, to refer to the meeting place of the Judeo-Christians on Mount Sion as a Church of God, distinguishing this meeting place from the seven synagogues of the Jews, believing this was the particular synagogue where Judeo-Christians assembled in Hadrian's day until its confiscation by the Byzantines.

The Greco-Roman Christian tradition is that this small Church of God, whose remnants lie on the southern part of Mt. Sion in the southwestern portion of Jerusalem, purportedly observed by Hadrian and called by Theodosius (ca. 530) the Mother of All Churches, was the seat of the Judeo-Christian community at Jerusalem. The question is—was it?

PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS

The remains of the Cenacle/pseudo-Tomb of David were subject to two archaeological inquiries, in 1859 by E. Pierotti (Pierotti 1864) and in 1951 by Jacob Pinkerfeld (Yadin 1976:116-117; R. M. Mackowski 1980:145). Bargil Pixner conducted a

series of small exploratory investigations about the site. The work of Jacob Pinkerfeld (1960), Jack Finegan (1969), and Bargil Pixner (1990, 1991) dominate the literature. E. Bagatti (1971a, 1971b), R. M. Mackowski (1980), Frances E. Peters (1985), Mare (1987) and McRay (1991) contribute commentary. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (1994) and H. Geva (1998) offer significant criticism.

In 1949, Pinkerfeld examined the site in connection with damage caused by the explosion of a mortar shell entering the Pseudo-Tomb of David through its eastern window during the War of Independence. The Director of the Moslem and Druse Department in the Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs later entrusted Pinkerfeld to make repairs to the marble floor and the damaged walls (Pinkerfeld 1960:41). Pinkerfeld collected data and prepared a preliminary report on the history of the building.

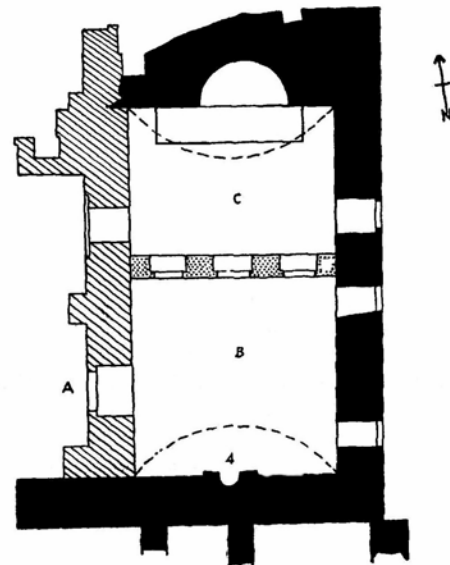


FIGURE 2. The plan of the pseudo-Tomb of David as drawn by Pinkerfeld. The present west wall (hatched) and the vault between it were built in the Arab period by the Mamelukes. The outer walls of the synagogue, shown as all black, on the north, south, and east are of the first building period

Figure 2 is the plan of the pseudo-Tomb of David as drawn by Pinkerfeld. He held that the building incorporated into the Tomb of David was a first-century Jewish synagogue. He based his conclusions on five observations. First, the niche of the apse resembled the style of the first-century A.D. synagogue found at Eshtemoa. Second, the direction of the niche was north, with a slight easterly deviation of several degrees, toward the Temple Mount and not in an easterly direction in the pattern of Christian church buildings. Third, the walls of the room were not all built at the same time. Fourth, the well-built wall containing the niche, remaining in situ, consisted of ashlar dating to the Roman period, the first building period on the site, as did the walls to the east and south. Fifth, the floor of the original building measured 1.92 meters below the threshold of the niche thereby paralleling that of the Eshtemoa synagogue at 2.08 meters below and that in Hauran at 2.20 meters.

As Pinkerfeld was one of the victims of the Jordanian attack on the Archaeological Convention of 1956 at Ramat Rahel his research came to an abrupt end. His posthumous preliminary report appeared in Hebrew (Pinkerfeld 1957). Later his widow consented to its translation and publishing, through the auspices of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Pinkerfeld 1960:43).

Bargil Pixner (1921-2002)¹⁰ published his findings and conclusions in a *Biblical Archaeology Review* article entitled "Church of the Apostles Found on Mount Zion" (Pixner 1990) and another article on the subject titled *Die apostolische Synagoge auf dem Zion* (Pixner 1991). Pixner's basic argument was that the structure venerated as the traditional tomb of David on Mt. Zion was not the real tomb of David but actually a Roman-period synagogue built by a Judeo-Christian remnant under the leadership of Jesus' cousin Simeon. This synagogue, according to Pixner, later became known as the Church of the Apostles.

He agreed with Pinkerfeld that the original building was a first-century synagogue, but he challenged Pinkerfeld's finding on the orientation of the niche of the apse. Pixner held that the orientation was toward the Church of the Holy Sepulcher not the Temple Mount. Moreover, he concluded that the original structure was a Judeo-Christian synagogue, constructed ca. A.D. 73, which remained under Judeo-Christian control and occupancy until it was taken over by the Byzantines.

Pixner's research also included excavations at the southern tip of Mt. Zion where he found three superimposed sills of a gate in the ancient Jerusalem wall. He held that the largest was built for the Herodian period Essene community in residence on Mt. Zion (Pixner 1997). Moreover, he argued that "the crudely worked middle sill" was part of a wall surrounding Judeo-Christian Zion dating to the early fourth century (Pixner 1997:31). He concluded that this gate was the one by which the Bordeaux Pilgrim entered Christian Zion and observed its synagogue in 333.

Hillel Geva, writing in the *Biblical Archaeology Review*, dismissed the views of both Pinkerfeld and Pixner. In his analysis he concluded that "both the literary and the archaeological evidence indicate that the city was totally destroyed" (Geva 1997:37) and that "the archaeological evidence clearly indicates that the entire western hill was only sporadically and sparsely inhabited during the Roman period" (Geva 1997:40). Moreover, Geva wrote that as to the "destruction layer marking the Roman conquest of the Upper City in 70 C.E., we consistently identified a construction layer of the Byzantine period (fourth to seventh centuries C.E.—with nothing in between!" (Geva 1997:38-39). He made his point quite clear in a follow-up comment about his article. He wrote "in my opinion, there was no Jewish-Christian community on Mt. Zion during the Roman period" since the whole western hill served as an encampment for

the Tenth Roman Legion (Geva 1998:14). Pixner, of course, disagreed (Pixner 1998:15-16).

While there have been calls for excavation of this ancient synagogue site for decades, particularly by the Franciscan Order, unfortunately legal, political, and religious realities remain such that, barring some unforeseen situation any excavation, will have to be left to another generation.

METHODOLOGY

The plan of this study was the testing of Pixner’s theory that the remnants of the Mother of All Churches, which he calls the Church of the Apostles, can be found on the southwestern hill of Jerusalem, through a review of the evidence, both historical and archaeological, and the reexamination of the authenticity of the present day site of the Cenacle and the pseudo-Tomb of David in order to explain its significance. This

study, therefore, presented an opportunity to reconsider the evidence regarding the identity of the original building and its relevance at the time of its construction.

The research design consisted of testing ten research hypotheses, set below in Table 1, Research Hypotheses, derived from the argument developed by Bargil Pixner, against both literary and archaeological evidence, and gathering evidence pertinent to the religious customs of its builders, e.g., Sabbath observance, Passover observance, Scripture reading, and the like. The criterion needed to falsify each research hypothesis was also set forth. This study involved acquisition, analysis, and presentation of archaeological and documentary data. As it was not possible to excavate this structure, this study employed existing data available in a published form and any necessary site survey data through field study.

TABLE 1. Research Hypotheses

Working Research Hypotheses	Criterion to Falsify Hypotheses
1. The original building with the niche of the apse dates to the time of the Roman occupation of Jerusalem in the 1st–4th centuries A.D.	The remaining walls of the original building are of the Byzantine or later periods.
2. The original building with the niche of the apse lies in an area known as Mount Zion in the Late Roman period.	Historical records contemporary with the original building verify that in the Late Roman period the term Mount Zion referred to some other area than that of the original building.
3. In the Late Roman period the original building was not known as the Tomb of David.	Historical records contemporary with the original building verify that in the Late Roman period its site was known as that of David's Tomb.
4. In the Late Roman period the traditional site of the original building with the niche of the apse was known as the location of the pre-70 A.D. house of the gospel writer John Mark (St. Mark) and the traditional location of the Last Supper.	<p>a) In the Late Roman period the tradition of the house of John Mark was an alternative site in the Jerusalem environs.</p> <p>b) The location of the Last Supper was not the home of the gospel writer John Mark</p>
5. The alignment of the niche of the apse of the original	a) The alignment of the niche of the apse of the original

building is with the cave, now incorporated into the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, traditionally known as the Tomb of Joseph of Arimathea and the place of interment of Jesus of Nazareth.

building varies significantly from that of the cave traditionally known as the place of interment of Jesus of Nazareth now incorporated in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

b) The alignment of the niche of the apse of the original building is consistent with an architectural design meant to maximize the amount of sunlight admitted through the original building's presumed one window.

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| 6. Artifacts found in the remains of the original building are consistent with the explanation that the original building was of Judeo-Christian origin and occupancy. | Artifacts found in the remains of the original building are not those associated with Judeo-Christian synagogues of the Late Roman Period. |
| 7. The architectural design of the original building is consistent with first-century A.D. synagogue design in the Levant. | The architectural design of the original building differs significantly from that of first-century Levantine synagogues. |
| 8. The original building became known as the "Church of the Apostles". | The location of the "Church of the Apostles" was at another site. |
| 9. The original building later became an extension of the Hagia Sion Basilica (A.D. 415-1009). | The location of the Hagia Sion Basilica was at another site. |
| 10. The original building later was made part of the Crusader Church of St. Mary (ca. A.D. 1110-1219). | The location of the Crusader Church of St. Mary was at another site. |

In addition to documentary evidence the principal artifacts involved in this study were the sixth century mosaic map of Palestine, preserved in the floor of the Greek Orthodox Basilica of St. George at Madaba in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the late fourth century great apse mosaic in the Basilica of St. Pudentiana in Rome, and the Cenacle/Tomb of David in Jerusalem.

As the alignment of the original building was critical to its identification as a Judeo-Christian structure a detailed typographical survey map of the Old City of Jerusalem (Salmon 1994; Survey of Israel 1994) provided precise data concerning alignments and an aerial photograph of the Old City provided a check (Survey of Israel 1988).

Investigatory visits, in the summers of 1992 and 1993, were made to the Basilica of St. George at Madaba and to the Basilica of St. Pudentiana in Rome. Moreover, a series of visits during the summers of 1992 and 1993 were made to the Cenacle/Tomb of David in Jerusalem for an on-site inspection. Photographs were taken at each site but extensive videotaping was done at the Basilica of St. Pudentiana and at the Cenacle/Tomb of David in Jerusalem. Bargil Pixner consented to an interview and on July 29, 1993, he permitted a two-hour interview (Germano 1993). The videotaped interview was held on the shore of the Sea of Galilee at Tabgha, Israel.

Part of the data analysis consisted of creating a three dimensional CAD schematic of the original building based upon the available data and their architectural implication. This required assistance of a licensed architect, Lawrence A. Thompson, of the firm of LTA–Architecture, Ventura, California.

FINDINGS

Based on the data, this investigator rejected four of the ten research hypotheses.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS 1 - DATE OF THE ORIGINAL STRUCTURE

Eusebius, writing ca. 385, reported that a large Judeo-Christian population existed at Jerusalem until the time of the siege of Hadrian (Eusebius *Demonstratio Evangelica* 3.5; Klijn and Reinink 1973:139). He listed 13 bishops, which appears to be a chronologically collapsed listing, following Simeon son of Clopas (bishop, ca. 63–98), as serving this Judeo-Christian community (Eusebius *Eccl. Hist.* 4.5; Boyle 1955:130-131).¹¹ Epiphanius held that Judeo-Christians returned to Jerusalem from Pella after the fall of the city in A.D. 70 (Epiphanius *De Mensuris* 15; Koester 1989:93).

According to Dio Cassius (ca. 150-235) Roman emperor Hadrian made a grand progress through Syria, Palestine, and Egypt in 129–130. He visited Jerusalem contemplating instituting certain building programs in the city. Hadrian renamed it *Colonia Aelia Capitolina* and raised a new temple to Jupiter (Dio Cassius *Roman History* 69.12.1-2; Cary 1969:447).¹² Concerning that visit, Epiphanius in his *De Mensuris et Ponderibus* wrote that Hadrian:

...found the entire city devastated and the temple of God trampled down, except for a few houses and the church of God, which was small, where the disciples, after they returned when the savior was taken up from the Mount of Olives, went up to the upper room. For there it had been built, that is, in the part of Zion that was kept from the destruction, and the blocks of houses around Zion itself, and seven synagogues, which stood alone like huts, one of which remained until the time of Maximona the bishop and Constantine the king, "like a booth in a vineyard," as it is written. Therefore Hadrian decided to build the city, but not the temple. And he took this Aquila, who was mentioned before, as interpreter... (Epiphanius *De Mensuris* 14; Koester 1989:93.)

The fact that Epiphanius stopped at bishop Maximus of Jerusalem (bishop 333–348) suggests that he no longer considered the Judeo-Christian synagogue as a bona fide Christian meeting place but rather from the time of Maximus a seat of heterodoxy. By 325 Greco-Roman Christianity, whose mission then included the eradication of all other forms of Christianity, sought to become the exclusive religion. By then it had distanced itself




from the Judeo-Christian Churches of God and all Jewish Christian sects. Nevertheless, the synagogue remained in the possession of the Judeo-Christians until 381, when seized under an imperial decree issued by Theodosius I following the First Council of Constantinople, and turned over to the control of Greco-Roman Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem (bishop 384/50-386).

Eusebius and Epiphanius were prolific writers deeply committed to orthodoxy. Both men were well-versed, knowledgeable historians and scholars who demonstrated in their writings their use of the records and original sources extant in their day. While their orthodox paradigm appears throughout their writings there is little, if any, reason to doubt the veracity of their statements as used above. In these instances their statements were incidental and peripheral to Greco-Roman orthodoxy. Particularly in regard to the statement from Epiphanius about Hadrian and the small Church of God on Mt. Sion the report was such a peripheral piece of information that it served no known orthodox purpose to contrive it. Apparently he simply passed on information he understood from his own study to be fact as he recounted historical events.

After the disaster of A.D. 70, with the remnant of the priesthood of little or no account and the Sadducees scattered, early rabbinic Judaism rejected Judeo-Christianity as heretical at the ca. 85 so-called council at Jamnia with the proclamation of the *birkat ha-mînîm*. This benediction was a curse on Nazarenes, in effect excluding any Jew from the emerging Pharistic synagogues if they became a Nazarene (a Levantine Judeo-Christian).¹³ Moreover, as pacifists Judeo-Christians took no part in war (see Bagatti 1971a:7; González 1984:53) which led to difficulty in both the 66-70 and 132-135 Jewish attempts to free themselves from Roman rule. Judeo-Christians opposed the messianic claims of Bar Kochba and refused to support the Second Jewish Rebellion.¹⁴ By refusing to take part in the revolts Judeo-

Christians appeared as traitors to traditional Jews but as loyalists to the Romans. Following the defeat of Bar Kochba the latter apparently rewarded Judeo-Christians with continuing access to *Colonia Aelia Capitolina* but denied Jews access to the city under the pain of death thereby precluding the construction of any Jewish synagogue on Mt. Sion 135–362.¹⁵ “This is explained by the fact that with the war a distinction was made between the Jews and the Judaeo-Christians,” argues Bagatti, “and that the decree of expulsion, promulgated by Hadrian, concerned only the Jews (Bagatti 1971a:10).

these graffiti and gave them to Professor. M. Schwabe for analysis and publication. Both died without publishing them. Moreover, translations of these graffiti by a team of specialists from the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum* led by Emmanuele Testa and Bellarmino Bagatti suggested they were of Christian origin (followed Pixner 1990:25 and Finegan 1992:238, but seen as not determinative by Murphy-O’Connor 1994:297-298). Table 2 shows the graffiti found in the pseudo-Tomb of David as copied by Pinkerfeld, interpreted by Testa, and published by Bagatti (Bagatti 1972a:120-121; Pixner 1990:23-25; Finegan 1992:238; Murphy-O’Connor 1994:297-298).

TABLE 2. Graffiti in the Tomb of David	
Graffiti	Translation
	“Conquer, O Saviour, Mercy”
	
	“Oh, Jesus, that I may live, O Lord of the autocrat”

The Greek graffiti in the earliest period of the building and their problematic translation are consistent with such logic and especially so since no Hebrew graffiti were found by a experienced archaeologist and the significant unlikelihood of any Greek graffiti with Christian overtones being present in a Pharisaic synagogue. For first-century Judeo-Christians to read the New Testament they would have to have been fluent in Greek. The implication is that the synagogue in its first use was not occupied by traditional Jews but rather by Judeo-Christians fluent in the Greek Language.

The original synagogue on the north wall had an apse with a high niche, 1.92 meters above the original floor, consistent with its functioning as a storage spot for rolls of Scripture rather than for codices. The codex form of the New Testament, which replaced the rolls of Scripture of earlier times, came into use not later than ca. A.D. 115. The John Rylands Papyrus, a ca. A.D. 115 codex fragment, is the earliest discovered text of the New Testament recording the Greek text of John 18:31-33 and John 18:37-38. While the populace of the Hellenized bilingual society of late Roman period Palestine used both Greek and Mishnaic Hebrew fluently the New Testament was for all intents and purposes a series of documents preserved in Greek. The thousands of extant manuscripts and their fragments are in Greek not Hebrew. The

Only Greek graffiti, not Hebrew nor Aramaic, were found by Jacob Pinkerfeld in the earliest remains of the ancient building on Mt. Sion. “In this first period the hall was plastered. Among the plaster fragments, a few showed traces of Greek letters” (Pinkerfeld 1960:43). Pinkerfeld copied

implication is that the construction of the synagogue occurred in the first century when rolls of Scripture were common not codices.

The height of the top of the niche from the original floor extended 4.36 meters (14.3 ft.). The wall, of course, had to extend up further to accommodate the top curvature of the niche. In any case, the niche of the apse, with its floor 1.92 meters above the original floor, would have been significantly above the heads of the building's occupants and could not have served as a *mihrab* for Moslems (Pinkerfeld 1960:43). Whatever occupied the niche was large and up and out of the way of the people beneath. Being 2.48 meters wide x 1.20 meters deep x 2.44 meters high (Pinkerfeld 1960:41) the niche was of sufficient breadth and depth to accommodate a chest, an Ark of the Law, for the storage of rolls of Scripture. The physical storage and retrieval of codices at this height would have been awkward and would have worked more efficiently with a different shelf design.

Beneath the present floor of the Tomb of David there were Crusader (12th-century), Byzantine (5th-century), and Roman (1st-century or 2nd-century) floors necessitating that the foundations of the building go back to at least the second century and possibly the end of the first century (Pinkerfeld 1960:42–43; Pixner 1990:23; Murphy-O'Connor 1998:106). The floors of the building not only paralleled the historical data concerning the destructions, reconstructions, and occupancies of the building but the earliest floor dates to late in the Early Roman Period or early in the Late Roman Period. The ancient walls of the original structure consisted of worked limestone in a secondary use, laid in irregular courses of ashlar with chipped corners suggesting their origin was as salvage from a variety of destroyed buildings, such as those resulting from the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, but absent any distinctive markings or stylistic features that would limit this secondary use to 1st–3rd century construction. Finegan held

that these large stones in the original walls were too large to belong to a private home (Finegan 1992:238).

In the apocryphal *Odes of Solomon*, the fourth ode appears to be a late first-century condemnation of the builders of the Judeo-Christian synagogue on Mt. Zion by the Ebionites for removing ashlar from the demolished Herodian Temple with the intent of transferring some of its symbolic elements, for construction of their synagogue on the new Mount Zion. In pertinent part Ode 4 as translated by Charlesworth reads:

1. No man can pervert Your holy place, O my God; nor can he change it, and put it in another place.
2. Because he has no power over it; for Your sanctuary You designed before You made special places.
3. The ancient one shall not be perverted by those which are inferior to it. You have given Your heart, O Lord, to Your believers. (Charlesworth 1985:736.)

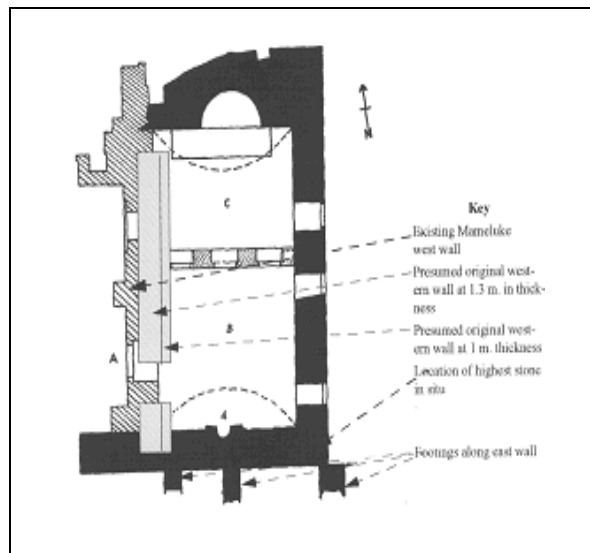


FIGURE 3. Original building outline with presumed original west wall.

Pinkerfeld made the point that the existing western wall, which puts the apse off center, was a much later addition dating to the time of

Mameluke rule. He believed that the original large hall was larger (Pinkerfeld 1960:41–42). Nevertheless, the location of the niche relative to the eastern wall, the first footing from the left along the south wall, the termination of the western part of the northern wall, and placing the wall to center the niche imply a footprint for the original western wall. Figure 3 shows the presumed west wall at 1.3 meters in thickness.

The implication is that the original hall was small and its western wall was slightly further to the east than the present-day Mameluke wall. This presumed original wall, 1.3 meters thick as the south and east walls, mirroring the dimensions of eastern wall from the midpoint of the apse would lie 5.23 meters from the east wall. This would have made the original hall 5.23 meters in width and 10.50 meters in length. The external dimensions of the original building would have been 7.56 meters wide and 15.0 meters long.

The thickness of the walls, from 1.30 meters on the south and east and 2.80 meters on the north, and the large stones in the lower courses suggest that the ancient synagogue in its initial use served as a public building of some height not a private home. Moreover, the source of these large stones, in secondary use, would have been from destroyed public buildings. The original synagogue, whose footprint was 113.4 sq. meters in area, had external dimensions of 7.56 meters in width and 15.0 meters in length. Its hall was not less than 54.9 sq. meters in area with internal dimensions of 5.23 meters in width and 10.5 meters in length. It was not less than 11.0 meters in height since the top of the highest of the ashlar in situ measures not less than 11.0 meters from the original floor level.

The architectural proportions of the original building appear to have been those of the Solomonian Temple with the height one-half of the sum of the length and width. The Mishna provided an interesting check against this proposition.

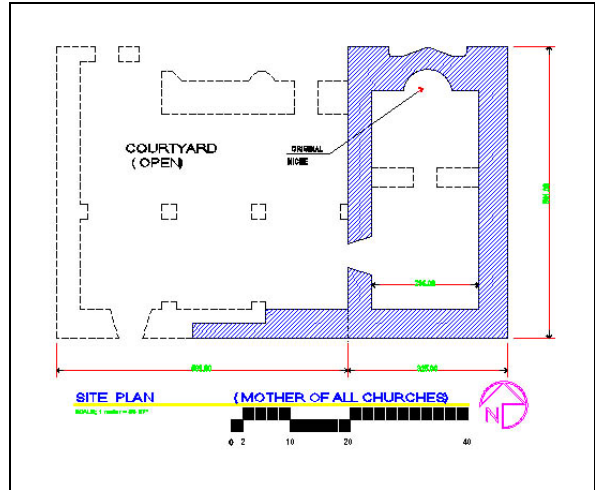


FIGURE 4. The original synagogue in its first building period.

According to the Mishna at *Baba Bathra* 4.4, with respect to the construction of a large room, the “height thereof should be [the sum of] half its length and half its breadth. The sanctuary affords proof of this” (Danby 1980:374). The sanctuary, that is the Temple, in Solomon’s time was 40 cubits long (excluding the height of the porch), 20 wide, and 30 high in external dimensions and “the inner sanctuary was twenty cubits in length, twenty cubits in width, and twenty cubits in height” (1 Kings 6:2, 20).

By definition large residential rooms [for the observant] in the period of the Mishna measured “15 feet by 12, with a height, following the model of the Temple (1 K 62ff), equal to half the sum of the length and breadth, namely 13½ feet; a ‘small’ room measured 12 by 9, with a height of 10½ feet (*Baba bathra*, vi. 4)” (Kennedy and Reed 1963:402). In these terms the exterior dimensions of original building in this study were 49.3 feet by 24.8 feet and the interior 34.5 feet by 17.2 feet, far exceeding the customary space of a private dwelling, further suggesting the building was a public facility.

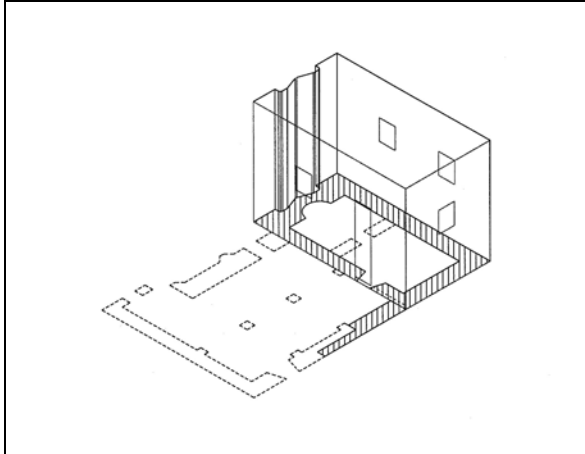


FIGURE 5. Schematic of the small synagogue in its first building period.

Figures 4 and 5 are hypothetical schematics of the original structure. Strictly following the sanctuary ratio principle the imputed internal height of the building, the interior hall, would have been $(1/2)(5.23 \text{ meters} + 10.5 \text{ meters}) = 7.73$ meters. The imputed external height of the building would have been $(1/2)(7.56 \text{ meters} + 15.0 \text{ meters}) = 11.28$ meters. The difference between the height determined by measurement of the existing ashlar of 11.0 meters on the east wall and the imputed height of 11.28 meters determined by formula yields a difference of a mere 0.28 meters. This difference presumably arose in measurement errors or perhaps the stone above the existing ashlar was lost. In any case the height of the model derived from the physical evidence was 97.5% of the height imputed by formula or in essence indistinguishable.

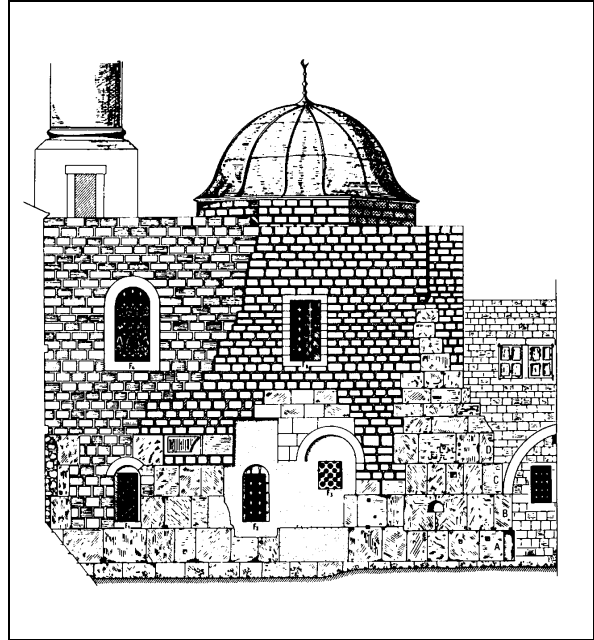


FIGURE 6. Drawing of the eastern wall by Louis Vincent. Ashlars from the original wall rise to a height of 11.0 meters.

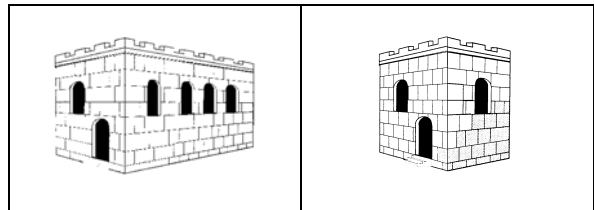


FIGURE 7. To the left is Pixner's tentative reconstruction of the Small Synagogue. To the right is the author's tentative reconstruction.

The original building was of sufficient height to have a 7.74 meters high ceiling in the hall and another 3.26 meters for an assessable flat roof, with a parapet as a protection against accident, providing a place for congregational observance of the full meal as an element of the Judeo-Christian Passover in the upper room tradition. The Jewish custom was to surround an accessible roof by a battlement or parapet for safety as set forth in the Law of Moses (Deut. 22:8; Kennedy and Reed 1963:404). Figure 6 shows the ashlar in situ rising to 11 meters.

In Judeo-Christian thinking, the *qahal'el* succeeded Israel as the people of God and the legitimate government of the People of Israel

passed from the physical nation to the possession of spiritual Israel—the Church of God. Building their synagogue on the highest summit in Jerusalem, overlooking the site of the former symbol of the old covenant, the Second Temple, then removed as prophesied by Messiah Jesus, would have been, in a manner of speaking, a symbolic statement of triumph of the new covenant over the old. If they made such a

statement in their new Judeo-Christian synagogue one would expect, in a culture filled with such symbolism, to employ the ratios of the sanctuary in its construction.



FIGURE 8. Reconstruction of the Small Synagogue. Drawing courtesy of Lawrence A. Thompson, LTA-Architecture of Ventura, California.

Figure 7 shows Pixner’s tentative reconstruction of the original structure on the left and the author’s tentative reconstruction on the right. Below in Figure 8 is a tentative reconstruction of the Small Synagogue and its courtyard developed by Lawrence A. Thompson of LTA-Architecture of Ventura, California.

The implication of these findings is that the original building was a relatively small Judeo-Christian synagogue, with an interior hall of about 54.9 sq. meters, dating to the interim between the two Jewish wars with the Romans (70–130). Therefore, the data do not support the falsification of Research Hypothesis 1.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS 2 - THE LOCATION OF MOUNT ZION

The Mt. Sion of today, Jerusalem's southwestern hill, is neither that of King David's time when Zion was the City of David on the eastern hill nor of Jesus' day when Zion referred to the Temple precincts. Josephus' *Wars* 5.4.1 and *Antiquities* 7.3.1-2 place the Citadel of Zion on Jerusalem's southwestern ridge making it the de facto Mt. Zion. Kathleen Kenyon wrote:

The view that the first Jerusalem was on the western ridge dates back to the time of Josephus, writing in the first century A.D., who calls it Mount Zion, and thus must have considered it to be David's town. Archaeological evidence is quite clear that this is wrong, and that the Jerusalem of the time of David lay on its eastern ridge. Josephus was a careful historian, and it remains an unexplained mystery why he was confused in this important matter." (Kenyon 1974:38.)

While Josephus did not call the western ridge Mount Zion, the mystery diminishes with recognition that these passages reflect the belief of the orthodox Greco-Roman Christians whose scribes preserved his writings. The implication is that simple scribal redaction, undertaken to make these texts conform to Byzantine understanding, accounts for the wording of the passage. Josephus' sense of Jewish history and the remarkable accuracy by which he provides details of Herodian Jerusalem in his works suggests that it was not he who placed the Jebusite Citadel of Zion on the western hill. This can be seen in a contradiction at *Wars* 1.1.4, a passage the orthodox scribes overlooked, where in reference to expelling the Syrian Greeks, Josephus says "...so he ejected them out of the upper city, and drove the soldiers into the lower, which part of the city was called the Citadel" (Josephus, *Wars* 1.1.4; Whiston 1957:608). Thackeray translates the passage as "he expelled the troops from the upper city and confined them to the lower

portion of the town, known as Acra" (Thackeray 1961:21).

Pixner followed the error preserved in Josephus and cited D. R. A. Hare's translation of "The Lives of the Prophets" in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Charlesworth 1985:386), as follows:

The earliest mention of Zion in this new outlook is found in the apocryphal Life of the Prophets from the end of the first century A.D. It mentions that Isaiah's tomb was close to the Siloam Fountain, near the tombs of the Kings, "to the east of Zion." The "east of Zion" could only refer to Christian Zion on the western hill. (Pixner 1990:28.)

This new outlook was the equation of Sion with the southwestern hill. While Pixner relies on this explanation, Hare wrote that as to the date of writing of The Lives of the Prophets "the most probable date is the first quarter of the first century A.D." (Hare 1985:381) and as to replication of Josephus' error concluded that "The phrase 'east of Zion' need not imply the same error. It may mean simply 'on the eastern (Kidron) slope of David's city'" (Hare 1985:386).

Bargil Pixner raised the issue of whether or not the builders of the Judeo-Christian synagogue on the western hill reused ashlar from the demolished Second Temple with the intent of transferring some of its elements to a new Mount Zion. This behavior, that is, using actual building materials from the Temple, in an effort to acquire vicarious sacrality, would have been consistent with Judeo-Christian symbolism wherein the New Covenant and its Law of Christ replaced the Old Covenant and its Law of Moses while retaining some elements of the Old in the New.

As Branham stated it, in the context of a tradition relating to an ancient synagogue at Nehardea, "this endeavor physically to incorporate the Temple's being into the synagogue legitimates the synagogue's status through the physical and symbolic appropriation

of Temple attributes” (Branham 1995:343). This is consistent with the censure in Ode 4 in apocryphal Odes of Solomon of the Judeo-Christians (the Nazarenes) for seeking to transfer some of the sacred character of the destroyed Temple to their new place of assembly on the new Mt. Zion.

While the Judeo-Christian synagogue on the western hill was a relatively small building, dating to the interim period between the two Jewish wars with the Romans (CE 70–130), connected to it was a vast amount of Judeo-Christian symbolism. The placement of the synagogue was upon the highest summit in Jerusalem triumphantly overlooking the place where the Temple once stood. Its design was in proportion to the ratios of the sacred sanctuary. Its builders evidently utilized some ashlar from the Second Temple itself. Its overseer Simeon the son of Cleophas (bishop, ca. 63–ca. 98), with title to the throne of James, was a cousin of Jesus of Nazareth and his brother James. If it was not the exact place it was at least sufficiently near the venue of the Last Supper to become symbolic of it. This Holy Church of God, as Eusebius referred to it (Eusebius *Proof of the Gospel* 6.18; Ferrar 1920b:30), was symbolic of the new Zion and so known by Christians of the Late Roman Period.

While a professor of the Alexandrian school Origin visited Palestine about 215, returned in 230, and permanently took up residence at Caesarea Maritima the following year. He was a prolific writer. In his *Commentary on Matthew* he informed his readers that he had visited various places of sacred history or as he stated it: “We have visited the places to learn by inquiry of the footsteps of Jesus and of his disciples and of the prophets” (Finegan 1992:xv). The Judeo-Christian synagogue, presumably by then known to Gentile Christians as the Upper Church of the Apostles, and its significance as the imputed place of two of

Christendom’s most sacred events, the Last Supper and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, would by necessity have required an investigatory visit. During his residence in Caesarea Maritima he completed his *Commentary on Matthew* wherein he showed that he understood the western hill to be the place of the Last Supper. He referred to two high places which were “unmistakably Mount Zion, which is the southwestern hill and the highest point in the city, and the Mount of Olives, with the Kidron Valley between” (Finegan 1992:234).

Origin wrote:

If then we wish to receive the bread of benediction from Jesus, who is wont to give it, let us go in the city to the house of that person where Jesus celebrated the Pascha with his disciples. . . . Let us go up to the upper part of the house. . . . After they had celebrated the feast with the master, had taken the bread of benediction and eaten the body of the Word and drunk the chalice of the action of grace, Jesus taught them to say a hymn to the Father, and from one high place to another high place, and since there are things that the faithful do not do in the valley, so they ascended, to the Mount of Olives. (Migne *Patrologia Graeca* 13.1736–1737; Bagatti 1971b:25; Finegan 1992:234.)

On the former high place, in the upper part of the house, his reference corresponds to the flat roof with balustrades of the Judeo-Christian synagogue on Mt. Sion, where believers observed their Judeo-Christian Passover on Nisan 14. Albeit an argument from silence, the literature reveals no other site as a likely candidate for the site of house of the Upper Room than that of the Judeo-Christian synagogue on Mt. Sion. Origin may have thought, considering the simple design of the Judeo-Christian synagogue, that it was the actual house of the upper room converted into a place of assembly.

Eusebius, writing before 311 (Finegan 1992:xvi), held that the Mount of Olives was

east of the Holy Church of God and the mount, the western hill, was the place where the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus' disciples on the first Christian Pentecost creating the Church of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Eusebius *Proof of the Gospel* 6.18; Ferrar 1920b:30-31). At the time he also held that Jerusalem, then *Colonia Aelia Capitolina*, was separate from Mt. Sion, and the site of ancient Jerusalem was now no more than a stone-quarry and Roman farm (Eusebius *Proof of the Gospel* 8.3; Ferrar 1920b:140-141).

When the Pilgrim of Bordeaux visited Mt. Sion in 333, a gate in a primitive "Wall of Sion" provided him access from the south, by means of the steep ascent from the Hinnom Valley, to a walled compound of the Judeo-Christians where they had their synagogue. He recorded in his journal that seven synagogues were there, but only one was left as the rest have been "ploughed down and sown" which suggests a significant portion of Mt. Sion was agricultural land (Pilgrim of Bordeaux 592-593; Wilkinson 1971:157-158).

While visiting Jerusalem, 381–384, Egeria recorded in her diary the stations in the liturgical year which included the place where the church now stands in Sion where the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples and the location of the column at which the Lord was scourged (Egeria 37.1; Wilkinson 1971:136). In 385 Paula visited first the Anastasis and then ascended up from the Constantinian Church of the Holy Sepulcher Church to Mt. Sion where she saw the Theodosian Octagonal Memorial and the Upper Church of the Apostles (Jerome *Letter 108* at 9:2-4; Wilkinson 1977:49; Schaff and Wace 1989b:199).

Epiphanius writing in 392 held that the Upper Room, which he understood to be the site of the "Upper Church of the Apostles" to which the disciples returned after the Ascension was built on Mt. Sion where Hadrian had seen

the small church of God (Epiphanius *Panarian* 41:843-6; cf *De Mensuris* 14; Koester 1989:93; see also Williams 1987).

The implication of these findings is that late in the Early Roman Period the southwestern hill of Jerusalem became known in Christian circles as Mount Zion, the location of the Holy Church of God, and that this name continued to designate the southwestern hill throughout the Late Roman Period and the Byzantine Period. Therefore, the data do not support the falsification of Research Hypothesis 2.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS 3 - THE DAVID'S TOMB TRADITION

The interment of the Davidic line of kings from David through Ahaz was within the city of David (see Nehemiah I Kings 2:10, 11:43; 14:31; 15:8; 15:24; 22:50 and II Kings .12:21; 14:20; 15:7; 15:38; 16:20). Nehemiah's description of repairs to Jerusalem's city walls, made in late sixth century B.C., places the city of David on the eastern hill (see Nehemiah 3). Herod the Great partially looted the tomb of David but on becoming fearful built a propitiatory monument made of white stone at the mouth of David's sepulcher (Josephus *Antiquities* 16.7.1; Whitson 1957:487-488). The last person known to know the actual location of the tomb of David was Rabbi Akiva whose testimony places it on the eastern part of the eastern hill where the impurity of the graves would flow out of the city of David into the Kidron (Pixner 1992:21).

The literature of the period shows no evidence of a belief fixing the location of the tomb of David on the western hill in the Late Roman Period nor of any relationship between David's tomb and the Judeo-Christian synagogue on Mt. Sion. When the Crusaders undertook repair of the "Mother of all the churches," probably about 1167, a wall collapsed admitting workers to a cave, likely remains of an old pre-70 A.D. synagogue containing a golden crown

and a scepter, giving credence to the popularization of the myth that the Tomb of David was on the western hill (see Armstrong 1996:286-287; Pixner 1990:43-35). Throughout the Byzantine period the tomb of David was thought to be in Bethlehem (Wilkinson 1977:151; Murphy-O'Connor 1994:296). The implication of these findings was that late in the Late Roman Period the original building was not known as the Tomb of David. Therefore, the data do not support the falsification of Research Hypothesis 3.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS 4 – THE HOUSE OF MARY THE MOTHER OF JOHN MARK TRADITION

The facts as given in Acts 1–2 make it unlikely that the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth occurred in even an extremely large residential upper room in Herodian Jerusalem and that neither the upper room of Acts 1:13 nor the Upper Room of Luke 22:8–10 and Mark 14:13 could have been the venue for the descent of the Holy Spirit. The apostles and their followers likely assembled on the Temple Mount (Acts 2:1), in Solomon's Portico or one of the large halls in the Temple Court available for public religious meetings, very early in the morning on the Day of Pentecost and they all were seated in a building (Acts 2:2).

The venue of the Last Supper, the famous Upper Room where Jesus of Nazareth observed the Last Supper, apparently a Passover, with his disciples, probably was the Essene guesthouse on the western hill of Jerusalem (Mackowski 1980:141; Pixner 1992:64).

The house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, was relatively close to the place of Peter's imprisonment pursuant to the order of Herod Agrippa I. Mary was a woman of means, apparently a widow, who was among the earliest disciples and the possessor of a first-

floor room large enough for many people to assemble at a convenient location, evidently in the Upper City, with an entrance-way separating the main house from the street by means of a courtyard. The upper room to which the apostles returned following the Ascension was probably the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. The Upper Room accounts in Luke 22:8–10 and Mark 14:13, however, do not harmonize with the house of Mary account in Acts 12:12–17.

While a very strict reading of a passage in Origin's *Commentary on Matthew* suggests that he believed that the actual house of the Upper Room where the disciples had taken the Last Supper was on the western hill and still in place in his day he does not link this belief with the house of John Mark's mother. Two Byzantine writers, Cyril of Jerusalem and Epiphanius, believed the location of the house of the Upper Room, served as a meeting place for Jesus' disciples from the time of the Ascension to Pentecost, was in that part of the Upper City escaping the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in CE 70.

A review of the archeological evidence and the extant literary sources for the period CE 70–325 revealed no site as a candidate for the house of Mary the mother of John Mark except the tradition relating to the Judeo-Christian synagogue on Mt. Sion.

The literary and the archaeological evidence indicate that the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was total and not a single building remained standing. The implication is that the home of John Mark's mother perished in the razing of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. The evidence suggests that the Upper Room where Jesus observed the Last Supper with his disciples was the Essene guesthouse on the western hill. The house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, certainly could have been where the Twelve stayed in the Upper City at the time of

the Ascension. The weight of the evidence is that the Holy Spirit descended on the assembled disciples on the Temple Mount not in an upper room. Therefore, the data require the rejection of Research Hypothesis 4.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS 5 – ALIGNMENT OF THE NICHE OF THE APSE

The orientation of the synagogue niche is not with either the Anastasis or the Martyrdom nor with the Temple Mount for the Anastasis lies eleven degrees (11°) counterclockwise, the Martyrdom eight degrees (8°) counterclockwise, and the presumed location of the Holy of Holies chamber in the Herodian Temple on the Temple Mount fifty-one degrees (51°) clockwise from the orientation of the niche. As the former Upper City resembled a more or less large level field with a rise, the synagogue builders had a clear sight line to the traditional Golgotha. Indeed, since the builders had such a clear line of sight they obviously chose not to so orient the niche. Moreover, Murphy-O'Connor argues that "orienting niches are not attested in first-century synagogues (e.g., Gamla, Masada)" (Murphy-O'Connor 1994:306 at n. 1).

For a building of this proportion, with external dimensions of 7.56 meters in width and 15.0 meters in length, placing the niche in the north wall and aligning building permits natural sunlight to illuminate the interior, through 1.3 meters thick walls, from the east, south, and west.

The implication of these findings is that the original building with the niche of the apse does not have an orienting niche. Therefore, the data require the rejection of Research Hypothesis 5.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS 6 – ARTIFACTS FOUND IN THE ANCIENT SYNAGOGUE

The only artifacts found in the remains of the original synagogue germane to the question

of Judeo-Christian origin and occupancy were graffiti, the ashlar themselves, and at the lowest floor level some plaster and smooth stones. The features of the building itself were dealt with in the testing of other hypotheses in this investigation.

The ashlar were dealt with in Research Hypothesis 1 as was the graffiti. This discussion consisted of consideration of the early floor material as well as another look at the graffiti.

There is a certain ambiguity in Pinkerfeld's observation. At the lowest level he found the remains of (1) a plaster floor, (2) quite possibly the remains of a stone pavement with some small fragments of smooth stones found slightly above this level, and (3) something that made him speculate that the lower floor was a mosaic (Pinkerfeld 1960:42-43).

A tentative explanation for these circumstances would be that in the expansion of the small Judeo-Christian synagogue into the Upper Church of the Apostles the floors remained at the same level. To devote resources to a significant expansion of the building would no doubt have given rise to renovation of the floor as well giving a uniform look to the entire hall. The result in excavation would be the ambiguous debris Pinkerfeld encountered.

No one knows what the western limit was for the Upper Church of the Apostles. The small synagogue was 7.56 meters (24.8 feet) by 15.0 meters (49.3 feet) for an area of 113.4 sq. meters (1,223 sq. feet). Assuming that the footprint of the existing foundations to the west constitute the defining limit of the Upper Church of the Apostles to the west would bring the renovated building to 23.3 meters (76.3 feet) by 15.0 meters (49.3 feet) encompassing an area of 350 sq. meters (3,758 sq. feet). This makes the building 3.1 times larger than the original building.

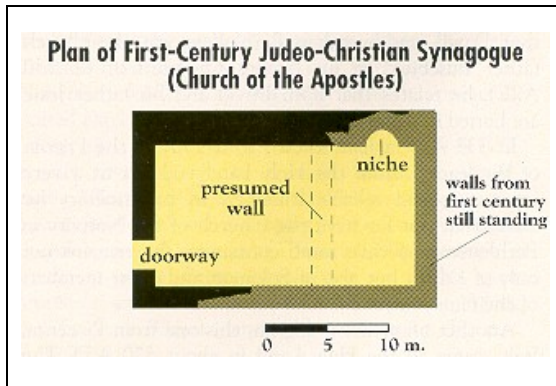


FIGURE 9. Plan of the first-century Judeo-Christian synagogue according to Pixner..

While Bargil Pixner did not state any measurements in his 1990 “Church of the Apostles Found on Mount Zion” article this is precisely what he did in his drawings and projections. Figure 9 is Pixner’s Plan of the First-Century Judeo-Christian Synagogue (Pixner 1990:22). On Pixner’s drawing the width is slightly less than 25 meters. This expanded building is what one sees in the Pudentiana mosaic. The expanded building preempted the old courtyard.

The finding is that the floor debris at the lowest level reflect a certain ambiguity likely the result of an expansion of the small synagogue into the Upper Church of the Apostles by the Judeo-Christians at the original floor level but renovated to provide a new and uniform look to the hall. The implication of this finding is that the floor debris found in the remains of the ancient synagogue is consistent with the explanation that the original synagogue was of Judeo-Christian origin and occupancy. Therefore, this investigator cannot reject Research Hypothesis 6 and as a result tentatively accepts a Judeo-Christian occupancy for the original structure.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS 7 – THE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN OF THE ANCIENT SYNAGOGUE

In Herodian times Jerusalem pilgrims would often be put up in synagogues during the festival seasons when many thousands converged on the city (Grabbe 1995:22; Wigoder 1986:11-12).

The Capernaum “black synagogue” excavators have yet to publish a report with the details of the nature and structure of that likely first-century synagogue and details of its physical nature remain speculative (Grabbe 1995:22; Flesher 1995:34-35). There are three Levantine structures for which sufficient evidence exists to date them as pre-70. They are at Masada, Herodium, and Gamala (Flesher 1995:35). Serving as assembly halls the synagogues at Masada and Herodium measured 50 feet by about 40 feet, had stone benches along the inside walls, and were of unclear orientation (see Wigoder 1986:12; Flesher 1995:36). The Gamla synagogue has rows of benches along the wall, a ritual bath nearby, an orientation toward Jerusalem, a niche in the wall for the Ark of the Torah, and absent evidence of the separation of men and women.

Many of the synagogues of Palestine after A.D. 200 were of distinguished appearance, consisted basically of a main prayer hall and a courtyard, and built on the highest point in the area or near a body of water.

For over a century after the Jewish revolt of AD 66–70, and especially after the second revolt against the Romans in 132–5, the Jews in Palestine were severely oppressed and the building of synagogues was impossible. But towards the end of the second century the roman attitude relaxed, relations with the Jewish community became more peaceful, the economic situation improved, and the next century saw a spate of building. (Wigoder 1986:18.)

The ancient synagogue on Sion consisted basically of a main prayer hall with a niche. It has no stone benches nor does it show any sign of the separation of men and women. There is no evidence of decoration. It apparently had a

courtyard in its first building period. While built on the highest point in the area it was significantly smaller than the structures at Masada, Herodium, and Gamala. Therefore, this investigator cannot reject Research Hypothesis 7 and therefore tentatively regards the original building as a first-century A.D. synagogue.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS 8 – THE CHURCH OF THE APOSTLES

Cyril of Jerusalem was the first to employ the phrase Church of the Apostles in reference to the Judeo-Christian synagogue on Mt. Sion. He referred to the “Upper Church of the Apostles” in the course of delivering a series of lectures to new converts in 347 or 348 in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher during Easter season (Cyril of Jerusalem *Catechetical Lectures* 16.4; Schaff and Wace 1989a:116). Did Cyril indicate in this passage that the phrase Upper Church of the Apostles was in his day common parlance for the title of the structure? Or was he making a statement of fact in the sense of “in the upper church of the apostles” within the meaning of common nouns?

From the perspective of the time Cyril wrote there were two opposing churches. The lower church, usually referred to as the Anastasis and the Martyrdom, and the upper church, in reference to the Judeo-Christian synagogue up on the hill. The orthodox believed the upper church was of apostolic origin. The implication is that Cyril was not using the words “upper church of the apostles” or later in the passage “upper church” as proper nouns. There is no attestation of the name in a formal sense of a proper noun in the ancient literature.

What did outsiders call the synagogue? Eusebius referred to it as the Holy Church of God (Eusebius *Proof of the Gospel* 6.18; Ferrar 1920b:30–31). Egeria does not use the term “mother of all churches” but referred to the buildings as “On Sion” which Wilkinson

suggested may have been used as a title (Wilkinson 1971:294). Theodosius, ca. 518, used the term in reference to “Holy Sion which is the Mother of all Churches” (Wilkinson 1977:66). The latter can be just as easily translated as “Holy Sion which is the mother of all churches” in a statement of fact not as a title. Not until the work of Bargil Pixner did the term Church of the Apostles become attached to the original building as a formal name.

Simply put, the ancient literature does not attest to the original building being commonly called by the title or name Church of the Apostles. Therefore, this investigator rejects Research Hypothesis 8 based on these data.



FIGURE 10. Hagia Sion Basilica (the large tiered-roofed building in the foreground) and the Cenacle or Coenaculum (the smaller flat-roofed building to the right of the basilica) as they appear in the 6th century Madaba Mosaic. The buildings appear to be attached at the northeast corner of the basilica.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS 9 – AN EXTENSION OF HAGIA SION

The Madaba Mosaic Map, ca. 560, presumably a symbolic representation or index map, has the synagogue with a single entrance (presumably due to an enlargement of the entry ca. 415 when the building functioned as the sacrum for the remains of St. Stephen).

Figure 10 shows the Hagia Sion Basilica as preserved in the Madaba mosaic map with the enlarged former synagogue at the right center. The latter had no windows on the north and west walls. From the view of the mosaic the two buildings seem to touch only at the rear. The

mosaic locates the synagogue from the southwest rotated away from the southern wall of the basilica (Avi-Yonah 1964).

About 670, shortly after the rise of Islam, Arculf, a Frankish bishop and pilgrim traveled to Jerusalem where he stayed nine months. He visited various churches including the Hagia Sion Basilica and made wax drawings of them. Later at the Abbey of Iona (near present-day Argyll, Scotland), he related his experiences to Adamnan (abbot, 679–704), who recorded the account of the pilgrimage including the ground plans of the churches he copied from Arculf's wax tablets (Finegan 1992:xx). Arculf referred to Hagia Sion as a "great basilica" (Wilkinson 1977:100; Finegan 1992:235). Arculf's drawing shows a northern entrance toward the rear of the basilica with the building's length measuring 2.4 times its width.

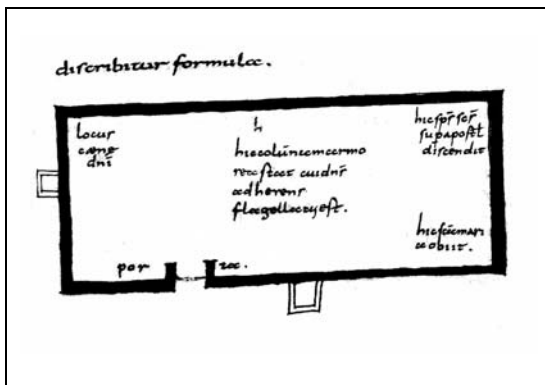


FIGURE 11. Plan of Hagia Sion according to Arculf (ca. 670).

A comparison of the wax sketch made by Arculf (Figure 11) with the Hagia Sion Basilica as shown in the Madaba Mosaic Map (Figure 10) show the buildings in a similar architectural footprint suggesting they depict the same building. The absence on Arculf's drawing of the significant remaining walls of the Judeo-Christian synagogue then in situ implies the

basilica and the synagogue were separate facilities.

Heinrich Renard, architect for the Diocese of Cologne, partially excavated Hagia Sion in 1898-1899 during the construction of the Dormition Abbey on Mt. Sion. L. H. Vincent also investigated it. Both estimated the length of the basilica at 55 meters with its width at half of its length (i.e., its length was 2.0 times its width) extending over the whole of the large area situated north and north-west of the Cenacle. Ovadia speculates that "there should have been another entrance in the north facade, since it was there that the church was reached from the direction of the city" (Ovadia 1970:89).

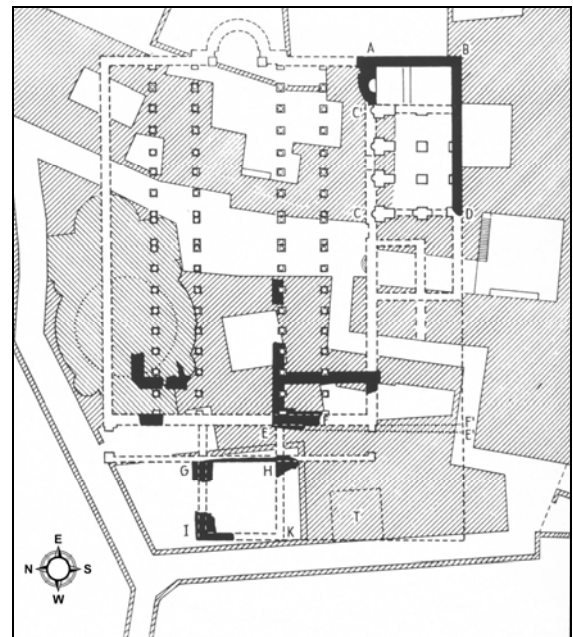


FIGURE 12. Hagia Sion after Vincent-Abel, *Jérusalem, Recherches de Topographie d'Archéologie et d'Histoire*. Fig. 154 (Vincent 1914-26:356; Ovadia 1970:Plate 77), Cenacle/Tomb of David.

In Figure 12 the south wall of Hagia Sion and the northern and southern walls of the synagogue are parallel. In the Madaba mosaic the angle between the Hagia Sion Basilica and

the synagogue measures 3.3 ± 0.1 degrees suggesting that the designers of the mosaic showed the synagogue in an exaggerated rotation probably deferring to its historic identity as the place of the Last Supper.

The only possible placement of the Octagonal Theodosian Memorial, Figure 13, consistent with its depiction in the St. Pudentiana Mosaic, is immediately to the west of the synagogue, directly in front of its entry on the west not Pixner's northern location.

With the placement of the octagon to the west of the synagogue there was a less likely physical necessity for its demolition to provide space for the Basilica of Hagia Sion. Presumably John II had the octagon razed to improve pilgrim traffic flow as part of the process of readying the old synagogue for the bones of St. Stephen and the planning of the enlarged entry. Moreover, removal of the octagon placed a focus upon the synagogue as the sanatorium of St. Stephen and upon the Basilica of Hagia Sion as the de facto mother of all churches.



FIGURE 13. The Theodosian Memorial at the west of the former Synagogue, then the mother of all churches, as shown in the apse of the Basilica of St. Pudentiana in Rome. The Eleona Church on the Mount of Olives, appears above and behind the latter.

The weight of the evidence suggests that the synagogue was not an extension of the Hagia Sion Basilica, but rather shared its northern wall,

and the Theodosian Octagonal Memorial was west of the Judeo-Christian synagogue. Therefore, this investigator rejects Research Hypothesis 9 based on these data.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS 10 – ITS RELATION TO THE CRUSADER CHURCH OF ST. MARY

In the 12th century Crusaders built a church, on the south part of the ruins of the Hagia Sion Basilica, which they named St. Mary of Mt. Sion, honoring the tradition that after the Resurrection Jesus' mother Mary both lived and died on Mt. Sion. Phocas, a Greek monk from Crete, described his 1177 (or 1195) visit to Sion in some detail in his *Concise Description* of the Holy Land (Kazhdan 1991:1667). He wrote that "In the upper chamber are the places of the Last Supper and of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles..." (Finegan 1992:210). As the ancient synagogue was below these places it would have to lie within the scope of the Crusader Church.

Muslim authorities destroyed the church in 1219 by order of al-Malik al-Mu`azzam, sultan of Damascus, resulting in the robbing of its building blocks and columns. The Cenacle (Room of the Last Supper and the adjoining Chapel of the Holy Spirit on the floor above David's tomb) escaped the general destruction and in 1335 the Franciscans took possession of it. They repaired and restored the Cenacle in the form it appears today (Finegan 1992:241).

As in the case of Hagia Sion, Heinrich Renard partially excavated St. Mary of Mt. Sion in 1898-1899 during the construction of the Dormition Abbey. In the 1920s L. H. Vincent and F. M. Abel conducted an important survey of ancient Jerusalem focusing on the topography of the city and the ancient churches and monuments. Figure 14, by Kroll (1979:420) based on the work of Renard, Gisler, and Vincent, shows the church measuring 54 by 34 meters with a bell tower to the west.

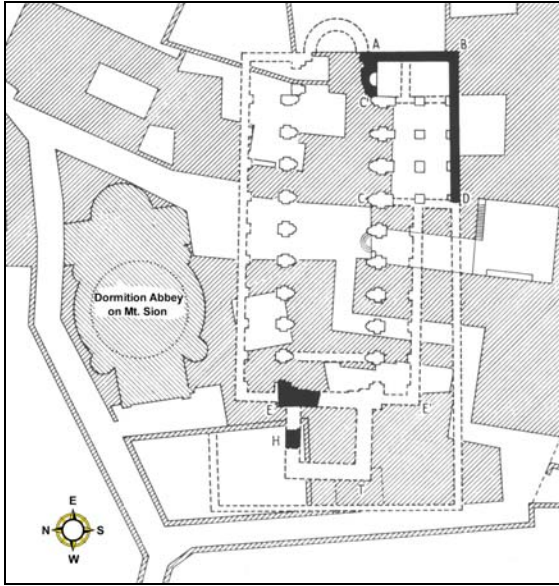


FIGURE 14. The Crusader Church of St. Mary by G. Kroll (Kroll 1979:420) based on H. Renard, M. Gisler and L.-H. Vincent). Walls C-A, A-B, and B-D are in situ remains of the ancient synagogue. E-É is reported as the west-facade of the crusader church and H a tower foundation.

In July-August 1983, E. Eisenberg conducted a trial sounding at the Church of the Dormition on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities wherein the northwestern corner of St. Mary's of Mt. Sion, was uncovered. The Dormition church financed the excavations. Exposed were nine column aisles and piers, parts of the plastered parts of the nave (the west wall was 1.5 meters wide while the foundations of the north wall reached a width of 2.2 meters), and the two north aisles sections of the church floor (paved in marble and in mosaic). The remains suggest that the church was longer and wider than originally believed: instead of measuring 54 by 34 meters, it was approximately 72.0 by 36.0 meters. Eisenberg confirms that "The Tomb of David and the Coenaculum (the site of the Last Supper) represent the southeast part of the ancient church and their measurements correspond to those of the building remains uncovered this year" (Eisenberg 1984:47; Bahat 1993:799).

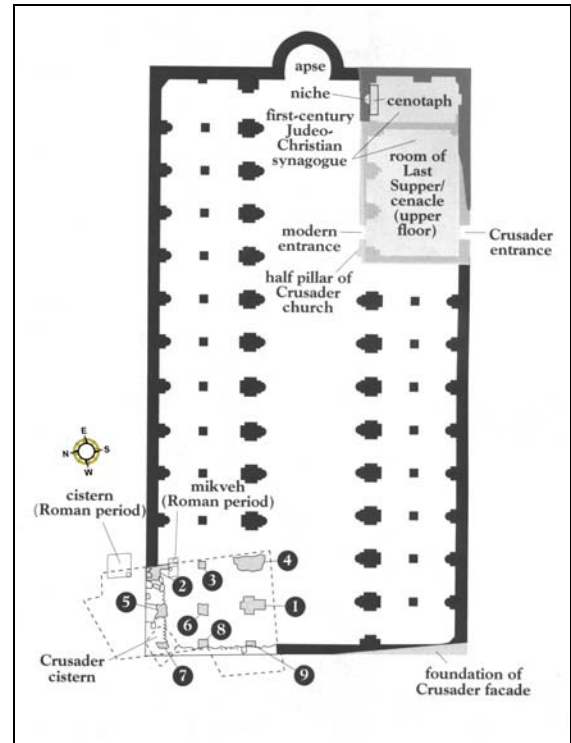


FIGURE 15. The Crusader Church of St. Mary by B. Pixner (Pixner 1990:34) following his excavation of its facade.

According to Pixner, when a sewage channel was being dug in front of the Dormition Abbey, "I took the occasion to examine the area archaeologically and was able to locate the foundation of the facade of this Crusader church" (Pixner 1990:34). Figure 15 is Pixner's drawing of the Crusader Church. Oddly, he makes no mention of the work of E. Eisenberg although he and they purportedly exposed the same northwest corner and the excavation results were published in 1984. Pixner, in an apparent memory lapse, claims this occurred in 1985, although this hardly could have been a separate event. He says "the southwest corner of the church is in an exact alignment with the southern wall of the building of the ancient Judeo-Christian synagogue" and the "bases of nine Crusader pilasters and the western section of the northern wall of the Crusader church

were also discovered and preserved” (Pixner 1990:34). In reference to the plan of the Crusader Church Pixner concluded that its:

...southwestern corner is in exact alignment with the ancient Judeo-Christian synagogue's southern wall, which is extant to a height of about 12 feet. From this alignment the full length of the southern wall of the Crusader church is projected on the plan. In the southeastern part of the basilica, upper right, then cenacle building from Crusader times still stands, as do some of the walls from the first-century Apostolic Church, which now enclose the pseudo-Tomb of David. Among the Crusader remains is the upper half of a column (shown at left and on the plan at left) that once extended from the ground floor up to the ceiling of the church; today it stands just outside the cenacle building, next to the entrance to the upper room. (Pixner 1990:31–32.)

The weight of the evidence attests to the incorporation of the Judeo-Christian synagogue into the Crusader Church of St. Mary. Therefore, this investigator cannot reject Research Hypothesis 10 based on these data and tentatively accepts the view that the Crusaders integrated the ancient synagogue into their Crusader Church on Mt. Sion.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on these data this investigator rejects Research Hypothesis 4 that, in the Late Roman period, the traditional site of the original building was thought to be the house of St. Mark and the location of the Last Supper; Research Hypothesis 5 that the niche of the original building aligns with the traditional location of the tomb of Jesus of Nazareth; Research Hypothesis 8 that the original building became known as the Church of the Apostles; and Hypothesis 9 that the original building became an extension of the Basilica of Hagia Sion.

This investigator cannot reject Research Hypothesis 1 and therefore tentatively accepts that the original building dates to the time of

the Roman occupation of Jerusalem in the 1st–4th centuries; Research Hypothesis 2 and tentatively accepts that the original building was in an area known as Mt. Zion in the Late Roman period; Research Hypothesis 3 and tentatively accepts that the original building was not known as the Tomb of David in the Late Roman period; Research Hypothesis 6 and tentatively accepts a Judeo-Christian occupancy for the original building; Research Hypothesis 7 and tentatively regards the original building as a first-century A.D. synagogue; and Research Hypothesis 10 and tentatively accepts the view that the building was incorporated into the Crusader Church on Mt. Sion.

CONCLUSIONS

By the end of the Crusader Period, the ancient synagogue on Mt. Sion had experienced only two occupancies. The first occupancy was by its Judeo-Christian builders initially as The Small Church of God and then as the expanded Holy Church of God. The second occupancy was by their orthodox successors. When the orthodox seized the building in A.D. 381 they erected an octagonal memorial to its west. With construction of the Basilica of Hagia Sion, the ancient building served as a detached side-chapel. Lastly, it became part of the Crusader Church on Sion.

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ENDNOTES

¹ In Herodian Jerusalem this was the Upper City on the city's western hill. Present-day Mt. Zion often appears in the literature as Mt. Sion. Herein Mt. Sion refers to Jerusalem's western hill and Mt. Zion to the eastern hill. The western hill became known as Mt. Zion in medieval times when erroneously identified as the Citadel of David.

² In December 415, the priest Lucian "discovered" the tomb of St. Stephen at Kfar Gamala. Bishop John II of Jerusalem decided to have the bones transferred to the new Basilica of Hagia Sion. The ancient synagogue, with an expanded entrance in the west wall to accommodate pilgrims, became the repository for the supposed remains. After removal of the relics ca. 439 to the Basilica of St. Stephen, built by Eudocia, the synagogue continued to serve as a side chapel for the Basilica of Hagia Sion (Armstrong 1996:204-205; Finegan 1992:284; Pixner 1990:34).

³ Epiphanius, born in Gaza, Palestine, founded a monastery ca. A.D. 335 near Eleutheropolis in Judea, and became bishop of Salamis in 367 (Baldwin and Talbot 1991:714).

⁴ This suggests, albeit it a bit speculative, that he was sleeping on the roof of his mother's house as many people did in ancient Jerusalem, even though the nights were still cool at the time of the Passover (Luke 22:55; John 18:18), in nothing more than a linen sheet (Mark 14:52). On hearing a commotion as the soldiers went by and seeing from the roof that Jesus was in custody, in the manner of a typical inquisitive 8–12 year old city boy, ran down and followed the entourage. This scenario would suggest that Mary's house was not too far from the home of the high priest in the Upper City.

⁵ Matthew 26:17-20, 26-30; Mark 14:12-15, 22-26; Luke 22:7-20; John 13:1-5; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

⁶ In the Herodian period the priests observed the instruction of Leviticus 23:15 by affixing Pentecost 50 days from the day after the first weekly Sabbath, always a Sunday, during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

⁷ Exegesis has always preceded translation, even in regard to the editing of the widely accepted critical texts themselves, e.g., the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Nestle 1993) and the United Bible Societies' *The Greek New Testament* (Aland 1993), in something as simple as word, sentence, and paragraph breaks, let alone in capitalization and in the discernment of proper nouns. According to Omanson, writing in the *Bible Review*, "literally thousands of decisions are made by translators" relating to the original meaning of

words in context as well as grammatical constructions and the segmentation and punctuation of the text (Omanson 1998:43). In considering these issues he points out that: "...the editors of these editions do not always agree on where breaks and punctuation marks should appear. And translators sometimes depart from the segmentation and punctuation found in these critical texts based on their own understanding of the New Testament writings. Their decisions can create real differences in meaning, as is shown by comparing several modern translations" (Omanson 1998:40).

⁸ Since the later Greek texts fail to continue the capitalization in *ἐκκλησία* today's translators do not warrant unjustified criticism. They simply follow an earlier convention. A simple explanation, the preferred one because of its simplicity, and therefore more probable, would have the scribes using the new and evolving ninth-century capitalization rules and writing the words as they heard them read aloud during the process of manufacturing more copies. A more intriguing, high drama explanation would have it reflecting a ninth century orthodox view, of the people who shifted the Greek text from majuscules to minuscules. The governance of the Greek-speaking Eastern church rested on the independence of the patriarchs. Each patriarch maintained a high degree of autonomy. The Latin-speaking Western church, with the papacy, administered itself through a more or less centralized authoritarian system of control. For a Christianity organized into two branches, although the final schism did not occur until A.D. 1054, the use of *ἐκκλησία του Θεου*, church of God, was consistent with the realities of Greco-Roman Christianity of that day. In today's world, the phrase "church of God" permits many diverse forms of Christianity, often competing, to be categorized as part of a greater church. To translate EKKLHSIATOUQEOU as church of God accommodates a Christianity decentralized into denominations, fellowships, independent ministries, unstructured groups, and the unaffiliated-the so-called 'invisible' church-with, lamentably, a loss of its eschatological connotation.

⁹ Previous to this usage *ἐκκλησία* was a secular word and did not suggest a specific religious group. For example, the writer of Acts uses *ἐκκλησία* to describe the ancient nation of Israel (Acts 7:38) and a riotous crowd assaulting the apostle Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 19:32).

¹⁰ Bargil Pixner (March 23, 1921–April 5, 2002), ordained a Benedictine priest in 1946 and clothed a monk 1972, lived in Israel for 35 years. Residing at the Dormition Abbey on Christian Sion he actively investigated the Christian archaeology of Jerusalem's western hill. He spent about half of his career in Israel at Tabgha on the Sea of Galilee.

¹¹ There is no reason to doubt that a line of Judeo-Christian bishops continued to serve the local Judeo-Christian community well into the fourth century. Why did Eusebius not list any Judeo-Christian bishops after the founding of Aelia Capitolina? The sense of his writing is that the ardent Nicene saw Judeo-Christian bishops as true Christians only through Judas (the last name on the Hebrew list) but not thereafter. For his orthodox mind the episcopal throne of James throne passed to the Gentile bishops of Jerusalem and that is the history he proceeded to develop.

¹² The site of the Olympian Temple of Jupiter was that of the later Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

¹³ It is highly improbable that any Judeo-Christians were in attendance in the first place. By that time the Judeo-Christian and Pharistic communities were far apart in their basic teachings. The *birkat ha-minim* was a prophylactic measure to insulate and protect emerging Pharistic Judaism. The Talmud records that it was Samuel the Lessor who composed the *birkat ha-minim* (Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 29a). Some believe that Pharistic Jews added the *birkat ha-minim* to the Eighteen Benedictions of the Amidah to curse and anathematize Judeo-Christians to drive these minim (heretics) from the synagogue in an effort to save Judaism (Manns 1988:26). It appears more likely, in light of the established Pharistic practice of legislating to guard against even minor transgressions of the Torah, that the *birkat ha-minim* was to serve as a barrier, or fence, of sorts to keep observant Pharistic Jews within the fold rather than to keep minim out. If any Jew became a Judeo-Christian he or she then became minim and subject to the daily curse by rabbinical Jews. The underlying policy was to produce a chilling effect on conversions to Judeo-Christianity by anathematizing converts in the eyes of other Jews and by creating conflict and division with the convert's immediate family.

¹⁴ Pritz argues that: it was the "endorsement of a false messiah (and for Jewish Christians a rival messiah)" by rabbi Akiva "which was the last straw..." breaking the ties with rabbinic Judaism (Pritz 1992:59).

¹⁵ By the middle of the third century Jews had Roman permission to go to the Mount of Olives to mourn the Temple from afar and later they secured leave to mourn on the 9th of Ab, the anniversary date of the Temple's destruction, upon the Temple Mount itself (Armstrong 1996:169-170 cf. Avi-Yonah 1976:80-81, Wilkin 1993:106). During the regime of emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363) the Jews once again gained legal access to Jerusalem along with permission to rebuild their Temple.