

Churches in Jerusalem



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Naturally, Jerusalem is abundant with churches. The following presentation is not an extensive survey of them and does not pretend to include them all.

One of the main parameters to include a church in this presentation is its visual side. There is no real educational refer to which Christian division the churches belong, but a mention only. This is mainly a visual journey, and its purpose – seeing for oneself.



We will start our tour with the churches closing on the sky line of Jerusalem. And first – the **Augusta Victoria church** on Mount Olives, which bell tower is seen from every corner in Jerusalem. This church, established at 1910, was built by the German Kaiser Friedrich the 2nd after his visit in Jerusalem at 1898, and is called after his wife, who had accompanied him on that visit. In addition to the church itself, the place has a hostel for German protestant pilgrims and a rest-home for German residents. For years now, these buildings function as hospitals for the Arab population of Jerusalem and its environs.



The church structure and its bell tower.



A general view of the church's hall and its ceiling



We go to mount Zion, and on its top - the **Dormition church – “the sleep of saint Mary”. The chapel is dedicated to the ascension of Mary – mother of Jesus. This church, finished at 1906, is also an initiative of Kaiser Wilhelm the 2nd, who built it on a ground given to him as a present from the Turkish sultan Hamid, while visiting Jerusalem at 1898. It is built on the ruins of a crusaders church preceded by a Byzantine one.**



It is worth to tell, that the unusual cone roof of the church, made of tin over wood construction, had not “content” along the years. In WWI Jerusalem was attacked by Italian airplanes, and the only damage caused was a direct hit to the Dormition’s roof. It took a long time to repair it, and shortly after, late 1947, the War of Independence broke and the tin roof was pierced like a sieve of massive shooting of the Jordanian legionnaires. The reconstruction of the cone took till 1959, and held on until the first day of the Six Days War (6/6/67), when it was hit and caught fire. After the war it was repaired again and is still standing to date.

The main chapel hall and its decorations. Directly in front of the entrance, above the apsis – a big drawing of Mary and Jesus.



A painting of the sleeping Mary before her ascension



We go down to the basement, it too a beauty. Here we can find the sculpture of sleeping Mary, and above it a ceiling with paintings of famous women of the biblical history such as Eve, Esther, Ruth, Judith, and Miriam sister of Moses – all surrounding Jesus.



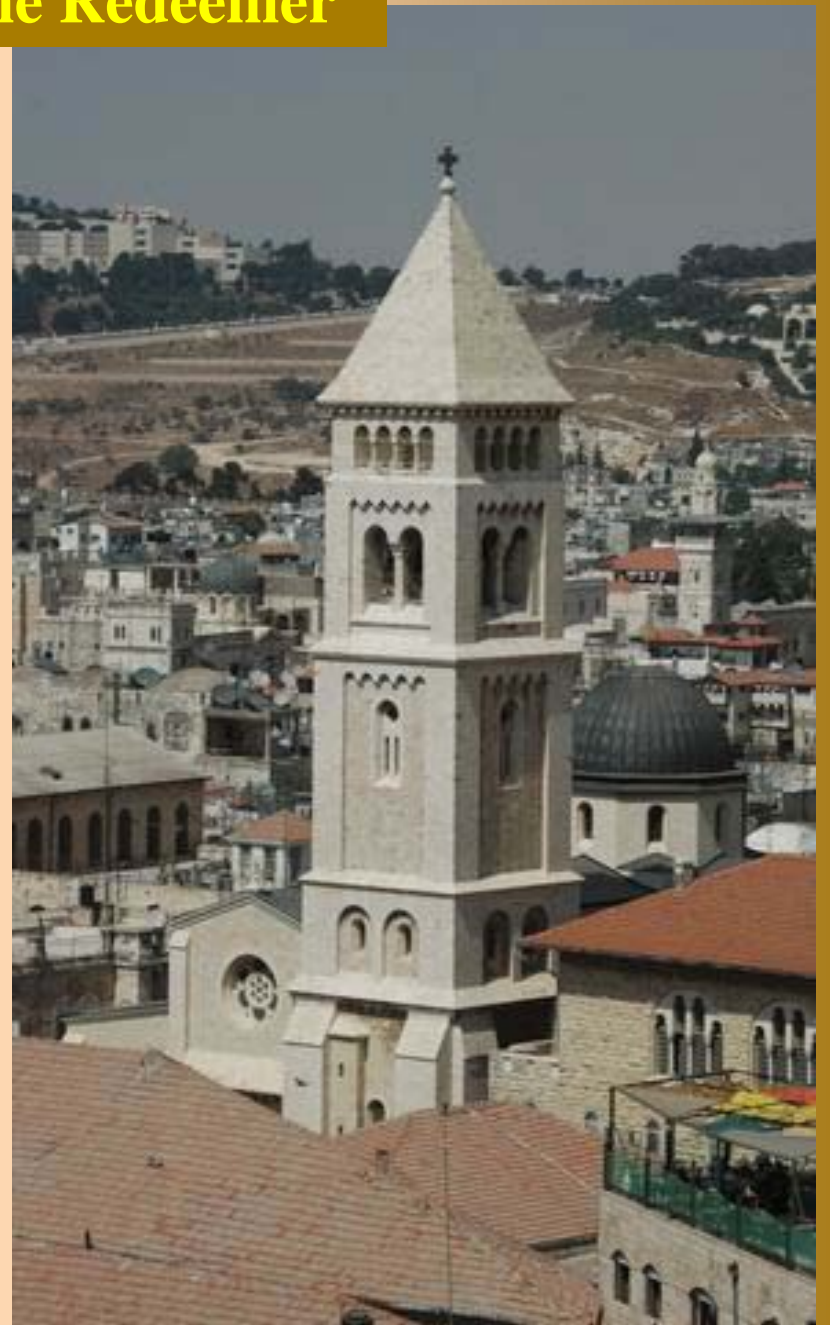
On the eastern side of mount Zion facing Kidron valley and Kfar Ha'shiloach, and a bit hidden though its might and beauty, is the Church of **Saint Peter in Gallicantu – built where traditionally stood the house of Kaipha – the head of the Judean Sanhedrin, who sentenced Jesus to death!!! Here also denied Peter the accusation of extraditing Jesus. The name Gallicantu – “call of the rooster” in Latin, symbolizes the denial of Peter three times – one after the other. The church is built of several stories, which the lower ones show ancient building remains as well as the room which Jesus was imprisoned after his extradition. The church is run by catholic monks of the French order – the Asamsonites.**



The upper chapel, the main one – its ceiling decoration



The church of the Redeemer



The church of the Redeemer is a protestant Lutheran church located in the Christian quarter of Jerusalem, near the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Its chapel is simple and graceless but it stands out with its bell tower, rising above the old city roofs, as well as its unique cloister built aside the chapel. This church is also related to former mentioned Kaiser Friedrich the 2nd, as one of the reasons for his visit in the country at 1898 was to inaugurate this church that was built with German empire money. The church is built on the ruins of saint Mary the crusader from the 12th century, as well as on some Byzantine remains.



This is the fabulous cloister of the church of the Redeemer – a remnant from the Byzantine period. The cloister is a square court surrounded on four sides with arcades, and a garden in its center.



**This is the
arcade**

Not far from there, at the beginning of the “Via Dolorosa”, adjacent to the Lion’s gate, is a huge church called **Santa Anna church**. Anna was the wife of Jehoyachin, mother of Mary, and here, according to the eastern church tradition, Mary was born. The church belongs to a French order – the catholic “white brothers”. It was built in the crusaders period (11th century) on a Byzantine church ruins.



**A sculpture of Anna and her daughter Mary in the residence cave of Anna,
and its decorations.**



We go out east through the Lion's gate and down the Mount of Olives we find a few especially impressive churches: the first – the **Church of the Agony**, also called the **Church of All Nations** – a name given to it as a result of the massive fund rising in many different countries for its construction (in the years 1919-1924). It is built on ruins of a crusaders church and there are also mosaics from an ancient Byzantine church. It is constructed on a natural rock surface that according to the tradition used Jesus for his sleep before extradited to the Sanhedrin. The place itself is called Gethsemane (or Gat Shemanim in Hebrew, meaning oil press)



Below – the impression front view of the church.



Below – the inside view off the chapel.



Inside the church – the rock Jesus spent his last hours on before being extradited



Next to the Church of All Nations is the **Mary's tomb church**. This is a vast cave, and according to the catholic tradition it was here the Mary was laid before her ascension. As recalled – the Dormition church also describes the place of Mary's sleep, and on this matter the versions differ.



A bit more up the mountain is the Russian **Church of Mary Magdalene**. It was built in 1888 according to the Russian tradition characterized with gold plated “onion” towers, shining to the distance. Unlike most of the other churches, it does not indicate on a holy place. Its name infers Mary the Magdalene (Miriam of Migdal - a resident of the town of Migdal on the Galilee sea shore) who was one of Jesus disciples, and according to the tradition also attended his burial and resurrection.



The front of the church and the main hall.



Another short climb and we are at the entrance of the **Dominus Flevit Church** (meaning “The Lord Wept” in Latin). This church commemorate the story about Jesus saying: **“When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it... they will not leave in you one stone upon another...”** (Luke 19, 41- 44). The churches dome resembles a tear, and it is also built on a Byzantine church ruins, whose mosaic’s floor is partially preserved.



We move to the area of the modern western Jerusalem, and here we find a few more beautiful churches. Beneath Israel Museum in the valley of the cross is the **Monastery of the Cross**. Here – according to the tradition – grew the olive tree which was used to make the cross on which Jesus was crucified (hence the name). And if that is not enough – the tradition claims the tree was planted by Lot as a part of his atonement. The place was first built in the 6th century A.C. and ruined, and the present building was established in the 11th century by Georgian monks. In the 18th century it was purchased by the Greek orthodox church which own many assets in Jerusalem and its surroundings.



The church's main hall



The “paintings hall” inside and the bell tower above it



We go to the Russian Compound to visit the Holy Trinity Cathedral. The whole compound was purchased by the Russians in the second half of the 19th century, when the Russian pilgrimage movement began to rise. First they built hostels to accommodate the pilgrims, and in 1872 the church was inaugurated. It was built (by the tsar's initiative) to resemble the St Vasily church in the red square in Moscow, with eight towers rising above it.





There is another area in Jerusalem abundant with churches – Ein Kerem. Lacking of space, we will show only one of the churches - **the Church of the Visitation**. Here – according to the tradition - was the summer house of Zechariah and Elizabeth – parents of John the Baptist, who were relatives of Mary mother of Jesus, and she visited here on her way to Jerusalem, in her last days of pregnancy.

The church was established in 1955 on the ruins of a crusaders church from around the 12th century, and it is a Franciscan catholic church

The inside of the chapel, and the paintings of the two relatives meeting.
And here before us, a painting showing a controversial story, telling about Herod receiving a message saying the Messiah was just born to the Judea tribe. He issues an order to execute all male infants recently born to the tribe, but when his soldiers come to Zechariah and Elizabeth's house, a miracle happens and a large rock is opened, allowing her to hide in it and save her son.



Church of the Holy Sepulchre



Church of the Holy Sepulchre

We finish with the **Church of the Holy Sepulcher**. This is the holiest site to Christianity, even holier than St Peter's basilica in the Vatican. This enormous church is built on Jesus' crucifixion site – Golgotha, and inside is the cave where Jesus was buried in, resurrected and ascended. The place was first identified by Helena – mother of Constantine, the emperor who declared Christianity as the official country's religion in 324 A.C. In 326 A.C. Helena arrived to Jerusalem to locate the place. In the site there was a Roman/pagan shrine, apparently to blur the memory of Jesus, but post factum it seems to have brought certainty to the identification of the site. The shrine was destroyed and instead Constantine and Helena established the first Church of the Holy Sepulcher, inaugurated in 333 A.C. The church was destroyed and renovated several times due to the different conquests, and the structure we know today was built in 1099 with the crusaders conquest and standing still though repeatedly renovated.

Unlike most churches in the Christian world, that belong each to its certain order, this church is jointly managed by 7 different orders, the three dominant ones being: the Greek orthodox, the Armenians and the Franciscans. On a lower rank are the Copts, the Syrians, the Ya'acobites and the Ethiopians (located on the church's roof). (And the keys for the church, believe it or not, are in the hands of a Muslim family!!!)

The joint management causes bitter disputes between the orders – when every change, renovation or small repair demands unanimous agreement and some times they quarrel for years on different executions, let alone fundamental disagreements about performing different rituals on different dates.

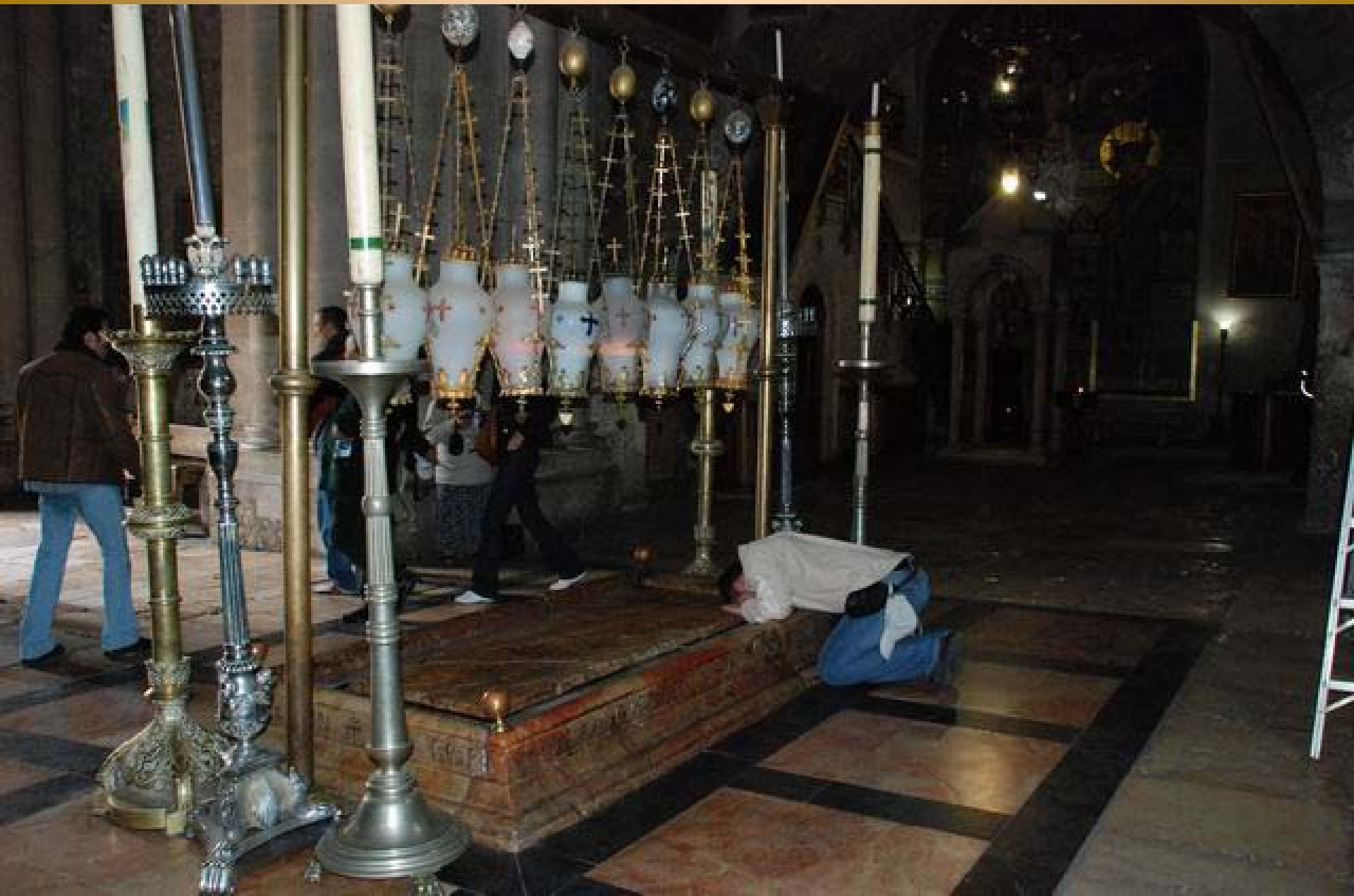
In any case – these days it is possible to see on Fridays, for instance, how all the orders perform their prayers, each in its hall, and by the end, come down one after the other, accurate to the minute, to finish the prayer in front of Jesus burial cave – the holiest spot!!!



A painting of the Golgotha – the Roman's execution site. Jesus is being crucified along with two "ordinary" criminals. On this site exist today the Church of the Holy Sepulcher



Inside, in front of the entrance, placed the Stone of the Anointing – used to purify Jesus' body and anoint it after he was taken down from the cross and brought to burial.



On the wall – a large mosaic picture, describing in three scenes how Jesus was taken down from the cross and brought to proper burial in the familial burial cave of Joseph of Arimathea.



We are in the main hall – the “rotunda”, and in its center the “aedicule” – surrounding Jesus’ burial cave, and above it a marvelous dome that was recently renovated.



Hundreds of people stand in line to enter the cave itself and be in the presence of the Christianity father



**The entrance to
the burial cave**



The anteroom to the burial cave



An inside view of the burial cave



As mentioned before – the church has several praying halls, to all the different orders, and here are some examples

Below – the Greek orthodox Golgotha chapel, and the “incense man” goes by and waves the incense device



The Greek orthodox read their prayer and the head priest goes out to them when finished



The Franciscans go out every Friday to their weekly parade along the Via Dolorosa



Before us – a few examples of the “changing of guard” of the different orders in front of the sepulcher cave.

The Armenians



The Franciscans



**The Malta
knights**

Here we finish, and as always, almost, over but not done with, and yet, we managed to bring to you a presentation of the variety of the impressive churches of Jerusalem, the city holy to Christianity, as well as to the Judaism and Islam.

Photography, editing, and the presentation creation

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