

HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

DEPARTMENT OF ANTIQUITIES

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OFFICIAL GUIDE  
TO  
**JERASH**  
WITH PLAN

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PRICE 50 FILS OR ONE SHILLING

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To visit the whole of the ruins and monuments a complete day is required. Entrance fee 50 fils (1/-).

TO  
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## JERASH.

The ruins of Jerash have, since their rediscovery by the German traveller Seetzen in 1806, attracted an ever increasing number of visitors, scholars and travellers, and indeed they represent the best preserved example of a small Roman Colonial town in this part of the world. Archaeologically speaking, they are quite recent: there are no visible remains that date to before the Christian era. But the history and occupation of the site can be traced back to the dim prehistoric ages, as is only to be expected of a place with such a fine permanent water supply. The surprising thing is that there have been blank periods, or at any rate periods when the occupation was not on a sufficient scale to leave any traces.

It is to the last of these blank periods, from about the 13th. century to 1873 when the modern village was founded, that the ruins owe their good preservation, in that the absence of a settlement anywhere near meant that the ancient buildings were not used as convenient stone quarries. The modern village is too small, and has not been there long enough, to do any serious damage, and was fortunately sited on the eastern section of the old town, where there do not appear to have been any important public buildings.

The source of Jerash's wealth and the reason for its growth are not very clear for it is not on any particular trade route nor is it very well situated strategically. Perhaps the iron mines in the hills near Ajlun may have had something to do with it.

Since 1920 there has been a good deal of excavation and conservation done in the ruins: many of the buildings through which we can now walk were, before that date, represented by a few stones and column stumps sticking up above ground. The main street of columns and the Forum were completely buried, the gateway to the Artemis Temple was dilapidated and tottering, most of the churches were unknown. Today you can get a good general idea of the layout of the town, though indeed very much still remains to be done, both in the way of excavation and of preservation of the already visible monuments.

Tickets to visit the ruins cost 50 fils (one shilling) for each person, and are obtainable at the entrance lodge, by the South Gate of the city. Guards will, if so desired, accompany visitors around the site, but this service is not compulsory.

Visitors are free to take any photographs they wish. Cars should be left in the Forum, as there are no roads in the ruins suitable for their passage.

### HISTORY OF JERASH.

On the slopes to the east of the Triumphal Arch can be found a number of chipped flints: their presence shows that here was the site of neolithic Jerash, and it is probable that the caves overlooking the stream were inhabited at this period, as they are today. To the North East of the city walls there are remains of an Early Bronze Age settlement, of about 2500 B.C., and further up the valley to North was an Iron Age village at about 1000 B.C.

Exactly when the shift was made to the present position cannot now be determined: any remains which may exist prior to the Christian era are still buried, though it is more probable that they swept away when the great town planning scheme was put into operation. The town was at one time called "Antioch on the Chrysorhoas" (the early form of its present name was Gerasa), the latter being the somewhat grandiose name of the little stream which still separates the eastern from the western section. But the name Antioch is significant and strongly suggests that it was one of the Seleucid kings with the name Antiochus who was responsible for raising a little village to the status of a great town, probably Antiochus IV in the early second century B.C. Inscriptions found in the ruins, however show that there were many traditions current as to the founding of the city, some attributing it to Alexander the Great, some to the general Perdiccas in the 4th. century B.C. It could also have been accomplished by Ptolemy II (285-246 B.C.) when he changed Amman into the Hellenistic city of Philadelphia. It is possible and probable that each and every one of these had a "finger in the pie" and that the emergence of Jerash from the chrysalis village of mud huts to the brightly coloured butterfly of an Hellenistic town was due rather to the increasing general prosperity and security than to the efforts of any one ruler.

At the end of the second or nearly first century B.C. we have the first historical reference to Jerash. It is mentioned by Josephus the Jewish historian, as the place to which Theodorus the "Tyrant" of Philadelphia removed his treasure for safe keeping in the temple of Zeus, then an inviolable sanctuary, when he had been turned out of Gadara. But soon after that he lost

Jerash to Alexander Jannaeus, the Jewish high priest and ruler (102-76 B.C.), and it seems to have remained in Jewish hands until the coming of Pompey. It no doubt suffered its share of the bickering and quarrelling which went on almost continuously among the petty Jewish rulers of the time.

In the year 63 B.C. Pompey, having overrun the near east, divided it up into provinces, and Jerash and its lands was attached to the province of Syria.

This was the great turning point in the history of the town, and was recognised as such in his calendar to the very end of its life as an outpost of western civilisation, for all dates are given in the Pompeian era. The Hellenistic cities had enjoyed certain rights of self government, and these rights were continued under the new arrangements. Jerash enjoyed these rights, and early in the Roman period of its history it joined the league of free cities known as the Decapolis. From now until the middle of the first century A.D. Jerash seems to have had a quiet and peaceful time. It had a flourishing trade with the Nabataeans at this period, and many coins of their king Aretas IV have been found. But even before this date Nabataean influence had played its part in Jerash: stones carved in the typical Nabataean "crowstep" pattern testify that their type of architecture was known and used there. There is a bilingual inscription, almost illegible, in Nabataean and Greek, and other inscriptions refer to a temple of the "holy god" Pakidas and the "Arabian God". It can be deduced that this later is Dushares, the Nabataean deity, and it is significant that the inscriptions referring to him and the "crowstep" stones, are all found in the same area, i.e. the Cathedral and fountain court. There are known to be remains of an earlier temple beneath the cathedral, in all probability that of the "Arabian God" later identified with Dionysios.

Other inscriptions found in the neighbourhood of the Forum and Zeus Temple show us that in the first and probably the second centuries B.C. the town extended at least from the Zeus Temple to the Cathedral area: yet others suggest that it may even have included the area of the Artemis Temple. But until further excavation is undertaken, nothing more can be said about the town of the pre-Christian era.

All this time Jerash must have been accumulating wealth, for somewhere in the middle of the first century A.D. we find the city launching out on a complete rebuilding programme. A comprehensive town plan was drawn up, the basis of which

was the street of columns and the two streets crossing it at the North and South Tetracylons. No substantial changes in this plan were made to the end of its days. An inscription on the North West Gate shows that the enclosing city wall was completed in 75/76 A.D., thus setting the limits for the city's growth. A new temple of Zeus was begun about 22/23 A.D. and was still under construction in 69/70, aided by gifts from wealthy citizens, who seem to have taken a pride in contributing to the embellishment of their town. The South Theatre next to the temple was springing up at the same time, the older temple of Artemis was being beautified with a portico and provided with a pool, and somewhere a shrine to the Emperor Tiberius had been erected. In fact, the place must have been a hive of industry, and have been attaining a degree of wealth, such as had not been seen before and has certainly not been repeated since.

This unlike activity continued, and even increased, in the second century, when the Emperor Trajan about 106 A.D. extended the frontiers, annexed the Nabataean kingdom, and built a fine series of roads. More trade came to the town, greater wealth was accumulated, and some of the buildings considered as the last word in the first century, were pulled down and more elaborate and ornate structures replaced them. Such a one was the North Gate, rebuilt in 115 A.D. Annual festivals and contests were inaugurated, and inscriptions tell of the munificence of one Titus Flavius Quirina who gave banquets for both victors and vanquished. Two huge Thermae or baths were built, without which no decent minded Roman citizen would contemplate existence for a moment. Their functions were much more than those of a mere Turkish baths: they represented the exclusive club life of the period, were not infrequently used to steam away unwanted relatives, and provided an admirable setting for gay parties given by wealthy or merely ambitious citizens.

The Emperor Hadrian paid a personal visit to the city, staying there for part of the winter of 129/130. His coming was the signal for a fresh outburst of building activity, and the Triumphal Arch was erected to celebrate his visit. It seems probable that the intention was to extend the area of the city as far as this arch, as the ends are left rough to bond into a wall. But the project was abandoned after Hadrian's departure, and attention returned to the centre of the city.

This second century A.D. saw the golden age of Jerash, when most of the great buildings one admires to-day were erected. A huge programme of expansion and building was undertaken, involving the widening of the main street from the Forum to the Artemis Temple, and the replacing of Ionic columns lining the street with Corinthian models. The Artemis Temple with its great approach from the East and its great Gateway, was dedicated in 150. The Temple of Zeus was erected in about 163, the Nymphaeum in 191, a Temple of Nemesis, now vanished, was built just outside the North Gate, and another to Zeus Epicarpus further up the valley was built by a centurion. There are many inscriptions of this period which record the dedication by citizens of altars, pedestals, statues and stelae, and the erection of buildings now unidentifiable. Others show that there were many priests for the cult of the living emperor, and there were shrines to Zeus Helios Serapis, Zeus Poseidon, Isis, Appollo and Diana. Still others give the names of several provincial governors, procurators, and other officials, and mention the presence of soldiers of the III Cyrenaica and a tribune of the X Gemina legions.

The peak was reached and passed early in the third century A.D. when Jerash was promoted to the rank of colony, and the grade is steadily downhill after that, with an occasional level stretch or even a little rise, but the best was over. It was a gradual descent, closely connected with the fortunes of the Roman Empire, and for Jerash there were no precipices on the road. No more buildings were erected in the grand style, and already by the end of the century we find carved and even inscribed blocks being carelessly reused in building, always a bad sign. The destruction of Palmyra and the growth of the Sassanian kingdom in Iraq effectively put a stop to big scale commerce, and shifted trade routes away from the east. Cities like Jerash, almost on the Eastern border, must have felt the effect at once, and with the weakening of Roman force the old predatory instincts of the Arab tribes came to the surface again, and security become doubtful. But under Diocletian (c.300 A.D.) the Sassanians were defeated, and there was a short level stretch, during which some building, such as the circular plaza and the shops round the south Tetracylon, was carried out. The work, however, was slipshod, though not quite so bad as late Byzantine building, and many of the inscriptions of the period are cut on earlier pedestals or columns or even on top of partly defaced earlier inscriptions.

By the middle of the fourth century there was a large Christian community in Jerash, and the Cathedral and the fountain court were functioning, for the fourth century writer Epiphanius states that some of his contemporaries had drunk from the fountain at Gerasa whose waters turned to wine each year at the anniversary of the miracle of Cana. But from the town itself there is little history to be gleaned in the fourth century: inscriptions are conspicuous by their absence, and the only outside reference tells that the Christians were represented at the Council of Seleucia in 359 A.D. by the Bishop Exeresius. Bishop Placcus represented them at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, by which time Christianity must have become the ruling religion of the town. In 440-442 some repairs to the fortifications were carried out; the church of Prophets Apostles and Martyrs was built in 454-5, and that of St. Theodore in 464-6, when the Fountain Court was also remodelled.

Under Justinian 531-65, there was a rise in prosperity and no fewer than seven churches are known to have been built in this period. Inscriptions record the erections of other public building of an unidentifiable nature, and even the revival of the pagan Maïumas water festival in 535. Many of the churches have been excavated, and from the objects found in them and in related buildings we can get a good idea of the life of the time. Low though the standard might be in comparison with former splendours, there was none the less a fair degree of rather cheap luxury. Appearances were all that mattered, and beauty was only just skin deep. Gleaming marble and brightly coloured glass mosaics on the walls of the churches concealed a type of construction than which it would be hard to imagine worse. As life in this period centered mainly around the churches, it naturally reflected their style. The gaily dressed women who crowded the shops and drifted in and out of the churches were adorned with magnificent strings of stone beads and gold earrings and ornaments, which on close inspection turned out to be glass imitations and thinly gilded bronze. Still, it was all very pretty on the surface, and life was by no means unpleasant or difficult. There were baths constructed by the Bishop Placcus next door to St. Theodore's church for the use of parishioners, perhaps the earliest example of "cleanliness being next to Godliness". The choristers had a club room just across the road from the church, and the clergy were provided with extensive and comfortable quarters adjoining the forecourt.

All this external beauty and comfort was only achieved at the cost of the earlier buildings, particularly temples. An orgy

of destruction of the pagan shrines must have gone on, and it seems as though scarcely one new stone was cut for the construction of any of the churches. The beautiful courtyard of the Artemis Temple was desecrated by the building there of potters' kilns.

The last church of which we know at present is that built by Bishop Genesius in 611 A.D., and the Persian invasion of 614 was the beginning of the end for Jerash. The only remains of this invasion are goal posts erected in the Hippodrome just outside the South Gate for playing polo. The Muslim conquest in about 633 completed the decline of the city, which, though it continued to be occupied, gradually shrank to about a quarter of its original size. A series of bad earthquakes destroyed many of the churches and buildings, and as no one could afford to rebuild or even clear them, they were left exactly as they fell. The church of St. Theodore is an excellent example of this. None the less the abandonment and shrinkage was gradual, and some of the churches were still in use in 720, when the Caliph Yazid II issued a decree ordering that "all images and likenesses in his dominions, of bronze and of wood and of stone and of pigments, should be destroyed". The result of this edict is seen in the destruction of mosaic floors in such churches at St. John the Baptist; apparently the adjoining church of SS. Cosmos and Damianus was already a partially buried ruin, for the mosaic fortunately escaped.

This is almost the last thing we know of Jerash. Excavations show that the area of the Forum and the South Tetrastylon was still occupied in the late 8th. century, but in the 12th. century comes the last known reference to the town. A Crusader, William of Tyre, speaks of it as having been long uninhabited: a garrison of 40 men stationed here by the Atabey of Damascus converted the Artemis Temple into a fortress. It was captured by Baldwin II King of Jerusalem, 1118-31, and utterly destroyed. The inner faces of the Temple walls show clearly the effect of the burning which was apparently his method of destruction. Yaqut, a 13th. century Arab Geographer, says that the place was described to him as a field of ruins, completely uninhabited.

So it happily remained until the settlement there of the Circassian colony by the Turks in 1878. To this day, Arabs as far afield as Southern Palestine, when they wish to speak of something as extremely ruinous, say "it is like the ruins of Jerash".

## THE RUINS.

The ancient city lies in the Wadi Jerash, or ed Deir, and is enclosed by the ruins of the town wall. This is in the greater part preserved, following the slopes and contours of the valley on both sides. The east side is in the best condition. The wall has the particular interest of supplying evidence of the growth and development of the city as it gradually increased in size. On the West bank it is extremely irregular in lay out, not in consequence of the inequalities of the site, but in order to contain and protect an area already covered with buildings. On the east bank the construction is in long straight lines. The whole work seems to belong to one period, as no variety can be seen in the building except repairs of later periods. In design it consists of solid bastions set at regular intervals of about fifty meters, square in plan, joined together by a curtain wall two and a half meters thick, built of well-cut large-drafted masonry on both faces, filled in with rubble and with earth thrown in. In intention it is an enclosure wall to ward off raids or a sudden attack, not to withstand a regular siege with engines, as there is no ditch.

Above the village the valley is shallow, deepening as it passes through it to the water-fall below, and it continues its course to the Zerqa, the ancient Jabbok, fringed by oleanders; out of it rise many ancient flour mills, now obsolete, as power mills supply their places. The gardens below the village, flanking the stream, planted with fruit and walnut trees and many poplars, are always pleasantly green in the surrounding aridity of the long, hot summer days.

From a distance the village and ruins of Jerash are invisible, though the valley may be seen from Suweileh, the Circassian village on the Amman-Jerusalem road. The Amman road runs for some distance on the site of the ancient one, still marked with its old milestones for the last three miles. The first monument passed on arrival is the *Triumphal Arch*, a triple gateway to the west of the road, still standing to about half its original height. The central arch is 39 ft. high, 21 ft. wide, and 22 ft. in depth, whilst the whole width is 85 ft. It was a gate of honour, facing the principal entrance to the town, opened to admit great personages whom the city fathers wished especially to welcome. It was built in honour of the visit of the Emperor Hadrian, and dates from the middle of the second century A.D. The semi-detached columns on both faces have

wreaths of acanthus leaves above the bases. The large hollow on the left, almost joining and stretching beyond it, is a Hippodrome with a semicircular end to the north. This was once wholly surrounded, except on the south, by seats, of which two or three tiers remain on the west. At a later date the Hippodrome was reduced in size by the addition of another semicircular end at half its length, facing north; in the area, thus shortened, stones, in pairs, have been found at either end, with sockets cut in them to hold what must have been goal posts, dating from the Persian invasion of 614 A.D. when it was used as a polo ground. The road now runs alongside it leading to the south gate.

The South Gate, much destroyed and partly excavated on the west side, was a triple arch, similar to the Triumphal Arch, though much smaller in size. In the excavation may be seen the door of the gate keeper's room; on either side are bastions of the town wall. To the right is the lodge of the present gate keeper where entrance tickets are bought.

The following are two suggestions for tours of the ruins, the first taking about 1—1½ hours, the second an hour or so longer; these times are only very approximate, for so much depends on factors as how interested you are, and how fast you walk. (See plan).

**Tour I.** Starting from the Forum, up to the South Theatre, the Temple of Zeus, back to the Forum, straight down the street of columns past the south Tetrapylon, the Cathedral steps, the Nymphaeum, to the Great Gate of the Artemis Temple, up the steps to the Artemis Temple, on to the churches of St. George, St. John, Saints Cosmos and Damianus, back to the Forum via the broad track leading south from the churches.

**Tour II.** The same as (I) up to the Great Gate of the Artemis Temple, then to the Viaduct Church, the West Baths, North Tetrapylon, up the little steps to the North Theatre, Artemis Temple, Synagogue Church, churches of St. John, St. George, and Sts. Cosmos and Damianus, church of St. Theodore, Fountain Court, Museum of Inscriptions, back to the Fountain Court, the Cathedral, down the steps to the main street and back to the Forum.

In looking at the ruins, a few points should be remembered which will help the mind's eye to reconstruct and vivify the remains, such as the temples all had pent roofs covered with red tiles; the elaborate carving of the capitals, architraves, etc. was painted in vivid colours, the churches were nearly all roofed in

the clerestory style; all the main buildings were profusely adorned with marble statues. No doubt many other points will occur to the enquiring mind, but these will suffice for a general impression. All the building materials are found locally in considerable variety, though granite columns and sawn marble slabs were imported for greater magnificence.

**The Forum.** The first thing to notice about the Forum is its peculiar shape, corresponding to no known geometrical or other figure. Evidently when it was built it had to be accommodated to some pre-existing constructional or natural peculiarity not now visible. The foundation wall on which the eastern colonnade stands is over 36 ft. deep at the southern end. The capitals of the columns are Ionic, whereas those of the main street are Corinthian; but the Ionic order is found again in the main street north of the Artemis gate. The two columns at the north end of the east colonnade are much closer together than any others, having been moved to make room for an arch across the entrance to the main street. This, together with the Ionic capitals, shows that the Forum precedes the present main street in date. The bosses left on the column drums were for holding the ropes when they were swung into place. It is probable that the Forum was constructed early in the first century A.D. The purpose of the stone chairs now in the centre is not known; they were found built into a very late wall near their present position. Near the chairs can be seen the remains of a square podium, on which may have stood a statue. In Byzantine and Arab times small houses were built over the Forum, which had ceased by then to be used as a market and place of assembly.

**The South Theatre.** This was built in the first century A.D., and a long inscription in Greek on the wall below the bottom row of seats tells of a statue of Victory offered by a non-commissioned officer who had served in the army of Titus during the Jewish war in 70 A.D. It cost 3000 drachmae and was put up in the reign of Domitian (81-96 A.D.). Some rough column drums, remains of an earlier building, are incorporated in the foundations of the stage. The back of the stage, or scena, was originally two storeys high, decorated with columns and niches containing statues; anyone who can remember the drop curtains of Victorian music halls will know exactly what it looked like. There were 32 tiers of seats, accommodating between four and five thousand spectators; the lower tiers are numbered and could presumably be reserved. The acoustics are remarkably good, even today.

**The Temple of Zeus.** The present building was completed towards the end of the second century (161-166 A.D.) but the site seems to have been a holy one from early times. Columns originally stood all round the cella (the temple building), but these have, with one exception, been thrown over by earthquakes. Two on the north side lie on the ground complete from base to capital. The temple was approached by a great flight of steps, all of which have disappeared. A remarkable feature are the huge vaults which were erected to raise the level of the courtyard and to carry these steps. A fairly complete example about 100 ft. long, can be seen on the lowest terrace approached from the road.

**The Street of Columns** runs the whole length of the town from the Forum to the North Gate, a distance some 600 meters. At the north Tetrapylon the order of the columns changes from Corinthian to Ionic, and just beyond the Artemis propylea the street itself narrows slightly. The Ionic is the earlier work, and was probably set up between 39 and 70 A.D. The Corinthian section represents an expansion and rebuilding in the last half of the second century. Many of the square bases of the columns are unfinished (notice particularly those on the left shortly after leaving the Forum), and some of the larger columns are of uneven heights, necessitating an adjustment of the architraves (notice again the columns just mentioned). Wherever a large public building occurs the height of the columns in front of it is raised in proportion to the height of the facade, as can be seen from those in front of the Nymphaeum and Artemis propylea. The street still retains its original paving stones along practically the whole length, and ruts made by chariot wheels can be clearly seen in some places, particularly near the South Tetrapylon. It is probable that the raised sidewalk, between the columns and the shops, was roofed in some way. There are some good shops to be seen around the South Tetrapylon and between the Cathedral steps and the Artemis propylea. One near the propylea had a wide and elaborate frontage, with two columns supporting the architrave.

At the intersection of the main street by the two principal side streets tetrapyla were erected, the **South Tetrapylon** consisting of four square piers each supporting four columns on top of which was a stepped pyramid probably surmounted by a statue. The south east pier has been reconstructed as far as the bases of the columns; the inscription on the south face is a later Byzantine addition. **The North Tetrapylon** also has



four piers, but they were joined by arches and the whole surmounted by a dome, giving an effect somewhat similar or the doomed room of the baths adjoining. This Tetracylon was dedicated in honour of Julia Domna, the Syrian wife of the Emperor Septimus Severus, 193-211 A.D.; on the north and south faces were free-standing columns, and from the lion's heads on the bases water spouted into basins below.

There were tanks and fountains at frequent intervals along the street, the greatest of which, of course, was the Nyphaeum. Holes can be seen in the curb for taking the rain water into the large drain which runs down the center of the main and side streets. The junction of this drain can be seen in the centre of the South Tetracylon, and there are circular manhole covers at intervals in the main street. The raised portion of the sidewalks near this Tetracylon is Byzantine work, and in some parts completely hides the square column bases. The eastward continuation of the cross road leads steeply down to the **Roman bridge** which spanned the valley at this point. It is now in a very ruinous and rather a dangerous condition, and walking on it is not recommended. It was probably built in the second or third century.

The **Nymphaeum** was completed in 191 A.D., and functioned both as temple of the Nymphs (who dwelt in water), and as the chief ornamental fountain of the city. It is built in two storeys, the lower of which was covered in marble and the upper plastered and painted. In the upper part of the left hand niche can be seen remains of this painting, green and orange triangles. There was a half dome or conch over the top, possibly with a mosaic decoration, but only a few fragments remain of the light volcanic ash of which it was constructed. In the niches of the lower storey stood statues, probably holding vessels from which water flowed into the great tank below. The holes of the water channels can still be seen. Surplus water from the tank flowed out through lions' heads into drains on the side walk, one of which is decorated with dolphins. At some later period a huge stone basin was inserted in the middle, but what purpose it served other than to take up room is not clear. The carving on this building is the most ornate of any in Jerash.

The **Propylea and Temple of Artemis**. Artemis was the patron goddess of the city, and her temple was the finest and most prominent building. It still stands majestically above everything else in the ruins, with its massive but beautifully proportioned columns which have survived so many earthquakes.

But the temple itself is only the central feature of a grandly conceived and executed plan of courtyards, monumental gates and approaches. The date of its building was in the middle of the second century A.D., the Propylea being completed in 150. The plan began on the eastern side of the stream, where a sloping roadway crossed the valley on a bridge, now disappeared. A part of the bridge was seen and photographed by a traveller in the last century. What is now called the Viaduct church is a continuation of this road, which was spanned by a triple gate standing where is now the church apse. The voussiors, or arch stones, have been used to form the apse, and can be seen lying between the remains of the outer piers of the arch. From here there is a row of columns on either side of the paved road, and behind them was a blank wall, the space between which was roofed forming a sidewalk. Then came a courtyard of curious shape, its western opening much wider than the eastern. The object of this was that a full view of the magnificent propylea across the street could be obtained, the main street itself being too narrow to allow its beauties to be properly appreciated. Crossing the street and passing through the Great Gate, a flight of steps leads up to a platform. Here one was faced by the facade of the structure enclosing the temple courtyard, a row of columns with a blank wall behind them, pierced by one gate in the centre. This wall was 120 meters long, and another flight of steps stretching the whole of its length led from the platform to the portico. A few remains of these steps can be seen in an excavation at the south end of the platform, which latter is now, of course, several meters higher than originally.

The courtyard itself was surrounded on all four sides by a wall and a portico of columns, those on the east and west being 161 meters long and on the North and South 120 meters. There was one entrance on each of the north and south sides, and the space between the portico and the blank wall was filled with rooms and recesses. The temple itself was approached by another flight of steps, now unfortunately disappeared, and there was a large altar in the courtyard in line with the axis of the temple. One corner of this altar can be seen under the Byzantine buildings, near the pottery kilns.

The cella, or temple proper, was built on vaults in order to give it extra height, and the great platform on which it was built is forty meters long, 22 and a half wide and four and a half high. The beautiful columns are  $13\frac{1}{4}$  meters, nearly 54 ft. high, and a row originally stood all round the cella. Only those

of the portico are now standing, and some of them are tilted quite a lot out of the true. A final flight of four steps led up to the entrance of the cella, which is now blocked. The interior, like the outside, is perfectly plain, except for rectangular niches in the walls, which were originally faced with marble. Note the holes in the upper courses of stone, which were for the wooden roofing beams. The statue of the goddess stood on a raised platform under the arches at the west end. The Byzantines built their hovels and kilns in the courtyard when the temple ceased to function, and stones carved and plain were dragged off to build churches. Finally in the 12th. century the Arabs blocked the main doorway, and built walls between the columns, and turned the temple into a fort. This was captured and destroyed by the Crusader Baldwin II and no doubt much of the damage we see now was done at that time. Excavation here has been confined to a few trial trenches and pits, but they show how magnificent a monument it will be if ever the rubbish of the courtyard is cleared away and some restoration of the building carried out. Access to the interior can be found through a little door in the South face of the cella.

**The West Baths.** Constructed probably sometime in the second century, these baths contain one of the earliest examples of what is technically known as a dome on pendentives, that is to say, a circular dome put on to a square room. There were originally three such domes, one on the large room to the west, and one on each of the small rooms to the North and South; only the one in the small north room now survives. On the West, the side nearest the road, was a fine courtyard with a double row of columns. But as no excavation has yet been undertaken in this building, and owing to its tumbled condition, it is difficult to be sure of the plan.

**The North Theatre** is still unexcavated, but it is considerably smaller than the Southern one. From the North Tetrapylon a street runs west, flanked by columns of the Ionic order. The tops of three of these can be seen sticking up out of the fields. At the back of the Theatre a plaza in the Corinthian order was later constructed with fine large columns and enormous architraves. The road continued on the North West Gate.

**The North Gate,** as now seen, was built in 115 A.D. under Claudius Severus, a legate of the Emperor Trajan who rebuilt the road from Pella to Jerash; it replaced an earlier and less elaborate structure. A curious feature is that it is much wider

on the West than on the East, due to the fact that the main street and the Pella road meet at an obtuse angle, and the architect wished to present a facade at right angles to each road.

**The Museum of Inscriptions.** The great vault in which this is housed is part of the substructures of the courtyard of the Artemis Temple, and is in a very good state of preservation. A number of the inscriptions found in the ruins are kept here, together with fragments of sculpture, and some pieces of mosaic. The key is with the guard.

**Birketein.** About a kilometer and a quarter north of the North Gate lies a spring which supplied the Western half of the city with water. This spring is called Birketein, the two cisterns, from the great masonry pool, divided in half by a cross wall, which was constructed round the spring. Adjoining these on the west is small theatre. A sixth century inscription says that the notorious Maïumas water festival was held here, a festival frowned on by the Christian element as it involved, among other things, mixed bathing. Indeed it is surprising to find that it was celebrated here so late, and at a time when Christianity must have been very strong.

There was originally a colonnade round the pool, which must also have enjoyed a more sylvan setting than is at present the case. Even when Burchkardt visited the site in 1812, he described it as "a most romantic spot", where "large oak and walnut trees overshadowed the stream". The pool was built in the early third century, and the theatre somewhat later.

A little further up the valley are the remains of a fine tomb of the second century, built as an inscription tell us, for one Germanus.

The hills on every side of the city are honeycombed with rock-cut tombs, many of them used as dwellings today.

**Ain Garawan** is the name of the chief spring, which was within the city. It can be seen today on the east side of the stream near the prison and provides a never failing flow of some of the best water in the country. A few courses of very fine second century masonry, part of a large pool, could be seen until recently but have now been obliterated by the Municipal waterworks.

## THE CHURCHES

At present there can be seen the remains of thirteen churches in Jerash, and it is highly probable that others are still

buried, as towns far smaller than Jerash had more than this number. With one exception, they are closely dated, and there has been no repair or restoration of the fabric since they were abandoned in the eighth or ninth century (some even earlier). They therefore represent material of first class importance for the study of early Christian architecture, being of known date and in their original unaltered plan.

The imagination must clothe the interior of all the churches with their casing of marble, coloured lime-stone slabs, painted plaster and sometimes glass mosaics. Little but the holes into which the slabs were pegged now remain to tell of the ways in which the church was adorned and the poor quality of building concealed at one and the same time.

**The Cathedral** is the earliest Christian building so far known at Jerash, and dated from about 350-375 A.D.: it is the only church which cannot be definitely dated. The evidence for its date is the presence of a Bishop of Gerasa at the Council of Seleucia in 359 and the record of one Epiphanius who writing in 375, says that there was a fountain at Gerasa at which was enacted yearly the miracle of the changing of water into wine. This could only be the fountain in the courtyard west of the Cathedral. This is further confirmed by the fact that the Cathedral is built on a site of a temple of the Infant Dionysius, and the wine episode in no doubt the transference of some Dionysiac rite to the rites of conquering Christianity.

The gate leading from the street of columns is part of the original temple, and beneath the present flight of steps are remains of an earlier one. At the top of the steps, against the back wall of the Cathedral, are pieces of a small shrine dedicated to Michael, Holy Mary and Gabriel, whose names are painted in red on the band just below the shell. The columns and Ionic capitals lying here formed a colonnade round the upper part of the stair well.

The Cathedral can be entered from either the North or South, and in plan was of the usual basilica type, that is, a nave with North and South aisles, and an apse in which stood the altar, a chancel enclosed by a marble screen, and a pulpit at the South West corner of the chancel. The columns and capitals, and indeed every stone in the building, were taken from earlier structures, the Dionysius temple no doubt contributing largely. In a trench in the middle of the nave can be seen a section of the podium on which the temple stood. The

lines of columns across the church at this point show the size to which it was reduced after an earthquake in some later period.

The chief feature is the fountain Court on the West referred to above. Originally this was a square courtyard with the fountain in the middle, but when St. Theodore was built, its apse and east wall jutted out into the court, and the whole of the western side and half the north and south sides of the colonnade were demolished. But the fountain remained, and the throne for the Bishop or officiating priest is still in position on the west. The water which came from the Birketain, was conducted to the fountain in lead pipes, which were still in position when first excavated but have since been stolen by visitors.

On the North side of the court is a flight of steps leading to a passage which opens to the road running up beside the Artemis courtyard from the Nymphæum. A room to the right of these stairs was in the sixth century used as a factory for mosaic glass, specimens of which can be seen in the Museum.

On the South side is a small chapel and "memorial of the repose of those who have contributed and of Mary" as the mosaic inscription tells us. It was probably built in the sixth century.

The two stairs on the west lead us to the **Church of St. Theodore**, built between 494 and 496 A.D. These dates are given in the inscriptions, one of which was set over the main west door of the church and another over the outer gate. They can be seen in the atrium, or western courtyard of the church. The inscriptions which stood over the outer gate says: —

"I have been made a wonder and a marvel at once to passers by. For all the cloud of unseemliness is dispelled, and instead of the former eyesore the Grace of God surrounds me on every side. And once the baleful stench of fourfooted beasts that toiling died and were here cast forth was spread abroad; and oft one going by held his nose and checked the passage of breath, shunning the foul odour. But now travellers passing o'er the scented plain bring their right hand to their forehead, making straightway the sign of the precious cross. And if thou with learn this also, that you may know it well, 'twas Aeneas that gave me this lovely beauty, the all wise chief priest, practised in piety".

The floor of this church was paved with slabs of coloured limestone and marble, laid in patterns, but not much of it has

The floor of this church was paved with slabs of coloured limestone and marble, laid in patterns, but not much of it has survived. At the south west there is a baptistery with the font let into the floor, and on the south East is a small chapel with a mosaic floor.

The atrium had a calonnade on three sides, and various small rooms, most of which had mosaic pavements. The complex of rooms on the north represents the clergy house, and on the south is a small chapel.

The columns of the nave lie exactly as they fell after some great earthquake, complete from base to capital with only the base in position. The destruction apparently was so complete that no attempt was made at salvage or restoration. Note the Greek letters on the fallen drums: these were masons' marks to facilitate the assembly of the columns. As in the Cathedral and every other church here, all the stones come from some earlier building.

A passage on the North East has a mosaic floor of red and white squares, and through a gap in the North wall can be seen part of the heating apparatus for the **Baths of Placcus** which adjoin. They seem at one time to have been stoked from this passage. The entrance to these baths is in the street near to the museum of Inscriptions. They were erected by Bishop Placcus in 454-5 and restored in 584, as recorded in an inscription. Whether the good Bishop built them out of charity or as a commercial proposition we are not told. At any rate he followed the tradition established by the church builders and borrowed all his materials from earlier structures. It is difficult to make much out of the present ruinous remains.

**The Synagogue Church** is so called because the church itself was intruded into a Synagogue, in 530-31 A.D. This involved, of course, entire rearrangement of the plan, as a Synagogue east of the Jordan is oriented to the west, whereas a church is oriented East. Nothing can now be seen of the Synagogue except the columns, which anyhow are probably not in their original position. There are some mosaics belonging to it, with scenes of the flood, and an inscription in Hebrew, but these are still buried pending proper conservation. The church itself is undistinguished, but the complex is interesting displaying in a nutshell the effect of militant religions on each other.

**Churches of St. John, St. George, and SS. Cosmos and Damianus**, were all erected between 529 and 533 and funds for the latter at least were contributed very largely by one Theodore and his wife Georgia. They have their reward, for their portraits are there in the mosaic pavements to this day for all the world to see and admire.

The arrangement of these churches side by side, each opening into the other, arises from the custom of the Orthodox Eastern Church which did not allow the celebration of the liturgy more than once a day on any altar. In plan, the two outer buildings are of the usual basilica type, but the central one, dedicated to St. John, is a circle inside a square, with a square lantern in the center of the circle. The lantern was supported on four large columns, and the plan is an abridged edition of the cathedral at Bosra in Syria, built a few years earlier.

The southern church dedicated to St. George, was in use as late as the eighth century, and is the only one of the three which still has the seats in the apse. It also has two reliquaries and remains of two screens, which looks as though things had been salvaged from one of the other churches already fallen into disuse. This may explain the preservation of the mosaics in St. Cosmos, and a portion of them in St. John. If the former was already a complete and the latter a partial ruin, those who mutilated the St. George mosaics would not bother to dig out the others from the debris, and perhaps would not even be aware of their existence. The pavement of St. George is not particularly interesting (it is still buried), but St. John had a very fine floor with pictures of various cities, including Alexandria and Memphis. There was a wide scroll border with figures of animals and men of which some pieces can be seen in the Museum.

More than two thirds of the Cosmos and Damianus mosaics are still intact, and they were lifted, repaired and relaid in a firm bed by Bernard Gauer, working for the Department of Antiquities, in 1937-38. The figures are very fine, particularly those of Theodore and Georgia, though the former's head is a restoration. The inscriptions give the dedication and the date (533 A.D.) and below are portraits of other donors, John son of Astricius on the left, Calcoenistus on the right, and an inscription of the tribune Dagistheus (a general of the Emperor Justinian) in the diamond next to John. The remainder of the nave is filled with panels containing a great variety of motifs, including geometrical and interlacing designs, swastikas, birds and animals of

all kinds. The space between the square columns contained geometric designs and birds and fishes. The aisles had a plain carpet pattern, and the northern was very badly damaged and repaired anciently.

The three churches open on to a common atrium, which had a row of very miscellaneous columns along its east side. The space between the columns and churches was paved with mosaics, the remainder with stone slabs. A stoup for holy water seems to have stood originally outside each church.

Of the rooms at the east end of the churches, that between St. Cosmos and St. John was originally a chapel, later converted into a baptistry. Note how the font cuts through the floor decoration of a cross within a circle. Over the doorway in the west wall, leading to St. John's, can be seen a large block carved with a lion's head and other motifs. This is a fragment from the outer moulding of the Temple of Artemis, the lion's head being a water spout or gargoyle. Built into the floor of St. John's was a building inscription of the Temple of Zeus. The other rooms seem to have served as sacristies.

The quality of constructional work of these churches is very bad, can be seen particularly in some of the tumbled walls of St. George's. These consist of an inner and outer skin of stone, with the space in between filled with loose earth and pebbles. In the apse of St. Cosmos can be seen the chips and fragments of stone left by the workmen who prepared the cubes for the mosaic floor.

**The Viaduct church** is the only one so far observed which actually intrudes in a classical structure. A date of May 565 is given on the mosaic floor of the circular room on the North side of the atrium: the mosaic is still buried. Very little actual building had to be done to convert the structure into a church: the colonnades and outer walls were mostly in position, and the fallen arch of the gate on the east made the beginnings of an excellent apse when laid out on the ground. The floor was already paved, and it was merely a matter of making the entrance narrower and roofing the nave. An unusual feature for Jerash is the thalassa, a receptacle for the water used in washing the sacred vessels and the hands of the celebrants. It consists of a deep basin cut in a stone, and the altar may have originally stood over it.

**The remaining churches** contain little of interest to the visitor. That dedicated to **SS. Peter and Paul**, south of the St. John complex, was constructed about 540, and like St. John's had mosaics of towns, though of poorer quality. A little further south is the small **Mortuary Church**, built by an unnamed founder in honour of his parents, also unnamed. An arch on the south opens into a cave which was used as burial place probably a family vault. The church is largely excavated out of the hillside: it is undated, but probably is late sixth century.

An interesting church was that dedicated to the **Prophets Apostles and Martyrs** in 461-5, but at present the prison is built over part of it and the motor road covers the other part, so there is nothing to be seen. This is a pity, for it was unique in Jerash. It had good mosaics, and an inscription giving the date, last seen about 1860. It is on the east side of the stream, near the spring. Another church on the east was built in 526-7 by an officer named **Procopius**: remains of the columns can be seen from the Western side, above the village of the South East. It contained some of the finest mosaics yet found at Jerash, but they were badly mutilated and are still buried.

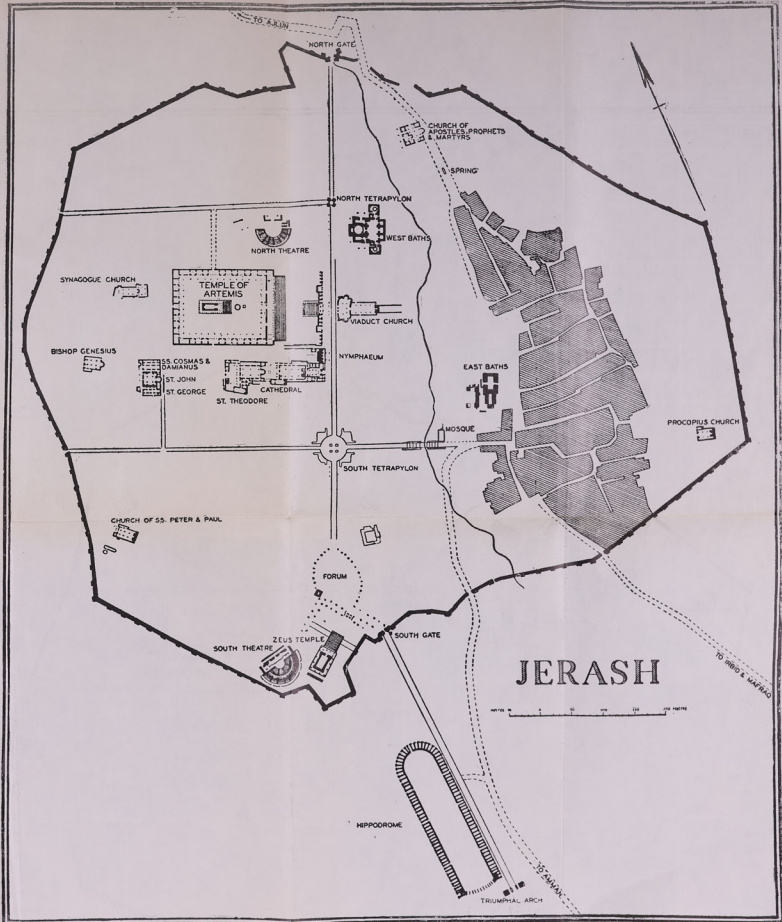
**The Church of Bishop Genesius** has the latest date so far found here, September 611. It is otherwise undistinguished, and has not been completely excavated. It lies to the west of St. John complex.

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For those who wish to go into more detail, the book "Gerasa, City of the Decapolis", published by the American School of Oriental Research, presents **the fullest and most up to date** information.

*Department of Antiquities  
Amman.*

*G. Lankester Harding  
September, 1955.*



# JERASH

The remaining churches contain little of interest to the visitor. The notable of these are the Church of the Propriets, the Church of St. Peter & Paul, and the Church of St. John. The Church of the Propriets is a fine example of the architecture of the 6th century. It is a cross-in-square church with a dome. The Church of St. Peter & Paul is a simple rectangular church. The Church of St. John is a large church with a dome. The Church of St. George is a small church. The Church of St. Theodor is a small church. The Church of St. Cosmas & Damianos is a small church. The Church of St. John is a large church with a dome. The Church of St. Peter & Paul is a simple rectangular church. The Church of St. George is a small church. The Church of St. Theodor is a small church. The Church of St. Cosmas & Damianos is a small church.