

Unit Four: A World Church

Lesson 2

Jerusalem



Pray Together

Hanoon Hor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyn Srpo, Amen.

Lord, we pray for the Holy City of Jerusalem, for its people, its ancient walkways and churches, the Armenian Patriarch and Patriarchate, and all the holy sites which commemorate the events of your earthly life. May Jerusalem forever remain a place of Christian pilgrimage and continuing authority of the Armenian Church, a place to which we too may come some day, seeking to breathe the air you breathed and walk the paths you walked. Amen.

Prayer of St. Nersess Shnorhali, No. 10

Quick Quiz

Mark the correct answer.

1. An old name for the city of Etchmiadzin is

- a Pompeii b Vartkesavan c Constantinople d Varag

2. _____ had a vision that told him where to build a church.

- a St. Nersess Shnorhali b King Drtad
c Gomidas Vartabed d St. Gregory the Illuminator

3. In that vision, Jesus struck the ground with a

- a thunderbolt b golden hammer
c cross d shepherd's staff

4. _____ is one of the cities where our Holy See has moved at various times.

- a Ani b Rome
c Tarsus d Damascus

5. In I Kings 6:2-10, God gave _____ specific instructions for the construction of the temple.

- a Moses b Jesus c Solomon d Adam

The Spiritual Epicenter

This approximately fifty square-mile city is perhaps the most hotly disputed piece of ground in the entire world! Three major religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all claim it as their spiritual center. Even in Old Testament times, Jerusalem was a frequent target of attack.

What makes it so special? To Christians, of course, it is the city where Jesus died and rose again, thereby securing our salvation. And the surrounding Holy Land contains all the sites from his birth to his ascension and the early years of the emerging church. To Jews, it is where the Temple was located and eventually destroyed (c.70 AD) as well as being the site of many other Biblical events. To Muslims, it is the place where the prophet Mohammed is believed to have ascended into heaven. All three religions make claims on Jerusalem, and the supervision of the holy sites continues to incite dispute and conflict.



The Armenian Church and Jerusalem

The (relatively) tiny Armenian Church occupies one full quarter of the Old City in Jerusalem. The Armenian Quarter, the Christian Quarter, the Jewish Quarter and the Muslim Quarter make up what is called the Old City, which is surrounded by 2.5 miles of a thick stone wall erected in the 16th century by order of the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. The wall includes 8 gates, seven of which are still used. Up until the late 19th century, the gates would be closed at sunset and opened again at sunrise.

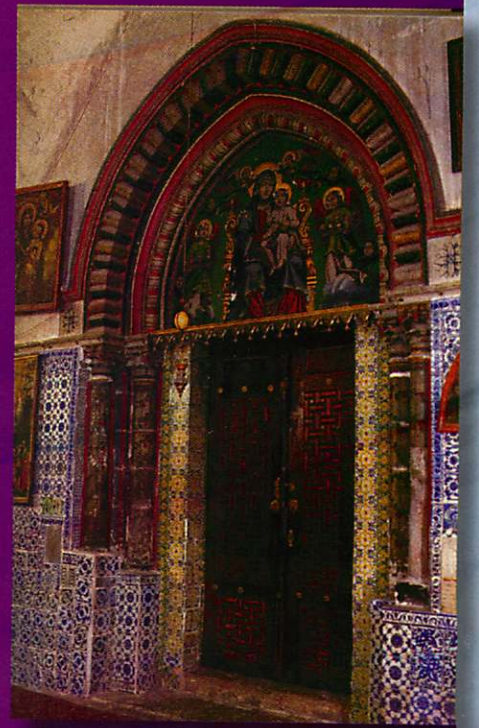
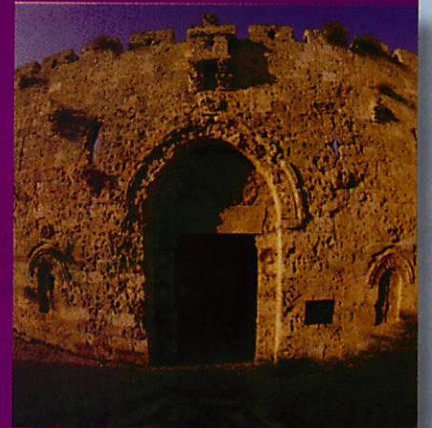
The massive Zion Gate, on Jerusalem's south side, opens into the Armenian Quarter, which is also accessed via the Jaffa Gate, on Jerusalem's west.

Although it was not officially recognized as a Patriarchate until the 14th century, the Armenian Monastery of St. James was the administrative center of religious activity for Jerusalem's Armenians from at least the 6th century. The presence of Armenians in Jerusalem, however, is much older than that. In fact, Jerusalem is the oldest Armenian community outside Armenia.

Armenians began to visit Jerusalem even before the Armenian kingdom officially converted to Christianity in 301. It is from the original complex of 4th and 5th century chapels that the Armenian cathedral and monastery in Jerusalem gradually grew; the monastery's growth continued through the 19th century. Royal patronage at this time also expanded the community's numbers, and the Quarter is still partly populated by descendants of Armenians who entered the community then.

In the early 20th century, the population of the Armenian Quarter was swollen by refugees who fled the 1915 Genocide, peaking at around 20,000. After that time, improved economic conditions made it possible for Armenians to begin leaving the monastery compound for more spacious areas. Today, the population has returned to something near its medieval level.

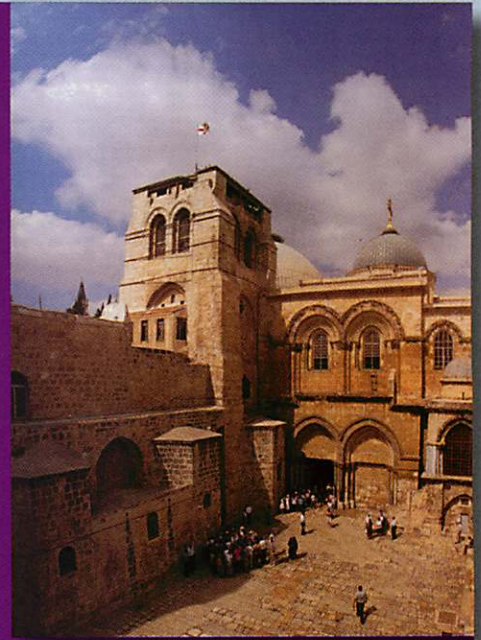
The Armenian Church is one of three major guardians of the Christian places in the Holy Land (the other two being the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholics, which together occupy Jerusalem's Christian Quarter). Liturgies are held daily by all three of the major denominations. Here are some important facts about the Armenian presence in the main holy places:



The Holy Sepulchre Church

The most important focus of Christian pilgrimage, the Holy Sepulchre complex encloses the sites of Jesus' crucifixion, burial and resurrection. Planned and funded by the Emperor Constantine, it was dedicated in 335 A.D. Over the seventeen centuries of its existence, the complex has been wholly or partially destroyed several times, by enemy attack, fires and earthquakes. A major restoration at the time of the Crusaders in the 11th – 12th centuries completely changed the character of the Church. Its most recent restoration, undertaken jointly by the three main custodians of the site, the Armenians, Greeks, and Roman Catholics, began in the 1940's and has yet to be completed.

In addition to several small chapels within the Holy Sepulchre complex, an upper gallery known as "Second Golgotha" is exclusively owned by the Armenians. The subterranean chapel of St Gregory the Illuminator, whose staircase walls are covered with engraved pilgrim crosses, is also Armenian. From the St. Gregory chapel, a flight of stairs leads farther down to the chapel of St. Helen, the mother of Constantine who discovered the cross of Christ. In both the gallery and the St. Gregory chapel, paintings and mosaics depict major events in Armenia's life of faith.



The Tomb of the Virgin Mary

Mary's tomb is marked by one of the oldest and most imposing edifices in Jerusalem – a two-story church dating from Byzantine times. It is overseen jointly by the Armenians and the Greeks, with lesser participation by the Syrians and Copts as well. Surrounded by the Garden of Gethsemane with its ancient olive trees – an impressive and inspiring sight – Mary's Tomb is the site for daily celebrations of the Divine Liturgy by both Armenians and Greeks.



The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem

One of the oldest sites of worship in the Holy Land, its walls and floors were once entirely covered by mosaics, including scenes of the Nativity; only a few are still visible. The Church is overseen by all three denominations — Armenians, Greeks and Roman Catholics. In addition to a chapel in the ground floor of the church and a monastery adjacent to the church, one portion of the actual grotto where Jesus was said to have been born — marked on the floor by a world-famous silver star — is held by the Armenians, who have there an altar adorned with lamps and paintings. Badarak is celebrated every morning by the Armenians.



The Armenian Patriarchate and St. James Cathedral

The Armenian cathedral, like the monastery around it, is called the Cathedral of the Saints James after Jesus' two disciples of that name. The remains of St. James "the Great" (sometimes called Jesus' "brother") are interred beneath the main altar. The head of St. James "the Less," who was martyred around 44 A.D, is buried in a side chapel. In its present form, the Cathedral reflects a major expansion that took place in the 12th century, partly thanks to a major donation by the Armenian king of Cilicia. The many silver lamps (ganteghs) that light the cathedral, the beautiful tiles and paintings that cover its walls, and the gilded wood of its many altars, are an awe-inspiring sight.



The cathedral is the heart of the St. James monastery. A huge, 17th-century iron door leading from the city road into the Patriarchate is closed at night (in earlier times at 8 pm, currently at 10 pm), in keeping with monastery rules, and is opened again at the ringing of the church bell in early morning. Immediately inside the gate is a vaulted stone passageway along which thousands of pilgrims through the centuries have passed; the white stone path is worn as smooth as a mirror. The passageway leads to the small courtyard of the St. James Cathedral, and beyond it to the great courtyard of the monastery. Among the many institutions housed in this impressive complex surrounded by high stone walls are two churches, one dedicated to St. Toros and one to the Holy Archangels; the glorious St. James Cathedral; the Gulbenkian Library; the Mardigian Museum, and the Holy Translators School (Srpotz Tarkmanchatz) for pupils from nursery school through grade twelve. There are also more than 300 rooms once used by pilgrims, which now serve as living quarters for members of the Armenian community, as well as the residential buildings of the St. James Brotherhood, and the offices of the Patriarchate.

Words to Live By

The beautiful ceramic street signs all over the Old City of Jerusalem are all designed and made by Armenian artisans. These were ordered by the Jerusalem municipality in the mid-1950's with a further request in 1967 for the addition of Hebrew to the Arabic and English already inscribed on the signs.



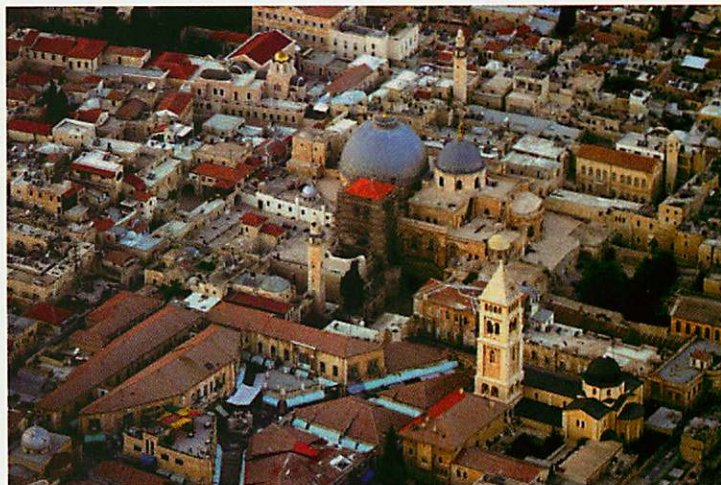
Did You Know?

An old Armenian tradition holds that between Easter and Ascension, women should not do any sewing in the evenings – otherwise they might become “chicken-blind” or unable to see while looking into the light!

O Jerusalem

Several Bible readings appear below, followed by an equal number of statements. In the space provided, write the letter of the statement that best describes what is going on in each reading.

1. Matthew 23:37-39 - “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say ‘Blessed is he who comes in the Lord.’” _____
2. Zechariah 14:8 - “On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea, and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter.” _____
3. Joel 3:17 - “Then you will know that I, the Lord your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill; never again will foreigners invade her.” _____
4. Psalm 122:6-9 - “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: ‘May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.’ For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, ‘Peace be within you.’ For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your prosperity.” _____
5. Isaiah 65:18-19 - “But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and crying will be no more.” _____
6. Zechariah 2:3-5 - “Then the angel who was speaking to me left, and another angel came to meet him and said to him, ‘Run, tell that young man, Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of men and livestock in it. And I myself will be a wall of fire around it,’ declares the Lord, ‘and I will be its glory within.’” _____
7. Psalm 125: 2 - “As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people both now and evermore.” _____



- 8.** Isaiah 40:9 - “You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’” _____
- a.** When he is born, the good news of Jesus will go out in all directions.
 - b.** God’s people will be so numerous that walls can’t contain them, so God himself will guard them.
 - c.** Jesus is very sad because he really wants the Jews to believe in him, so they won’t suffer harm.
 - d.** Be happy for what I do, because one day I will be happy with my people, and they will not be unhappy ever again.
 - e.** Spread the news of Jesus good and loud, because you are telling them about their God!
 - f.** God always has and always will surround his people with an encompassing love.
 - g.** Once my people realize I am their God, they will be safe from attacks of all kinds.
 - h.** King David pledges to do his best to bring good things to the people of Jerusalem, and he asks others to keep Jerusalem in their prayers.

Our Armenian Way



Armenian ceramicists are world-renowned for their hand-painted tiles and pottery. Ceramic workshops belonging to the Antreassian, Balian, Karakashian, Davidian and Sandrouni families became famous Armenian landmarks of the Old City. Tiles made by present day members of those families supply not only local architecture but design needs the world over, and have been featured in museum exhibits. The Balian, for example, played a major role in renovating the ceramic tile for the Dome of the Rock mosque.

Though there is an ancient pottery tradition in Armenia, these Armenian ceramicists of Jerusalem descend not from Armenia but from the Armenian artisans working in Kutahya in Ottoman Turkey. You may have heard of the famous ceramic tiles of Kutahya. There, the art of ceramic tile-making and pottery flourished as early as the 14th century but peaked in the 17th and 18th with famous Armenian artisans as the principle producers. In Kutahya, Armenians were influenced by Turkish and Muslim motifs in addition to designs with origins in China and Persia. Fleeing Turkey during the years of the Genocide, ceramicists set up shop in the Old City and were able to make free use of local Christian imagery and Armenian illustrated manuscript motifs. Armenian ceramics today reflect the journeys Armenian immigrants took from their hometowns through the Ottoman Empire and finally to Jerusalem – their combination of influences are unique and makes for the most beautiful ceramic work in all of Israel.