

# Israelis uncover remains of two walls of ancient Jerusalem

JERUSALEM – Israeli archaeologists uncovered the remains of two distinct southern walls of ancient Jerusalem on Mount Zion, establishing the size of the city during Jesus' time as well as during the Byzantine period.

At a Sept. 3 press conference archaeologists from the Israel Antiquities Authority said locating the two city walls corroborates their theory about the southern expansion of the city during these two periods.

The two separate wall segments had been discovered and excavated at the end of the 19th century by American archaeologist Frederick Jones Bliss and British archaeologist Archibald Dickie. However, after mapping out the site they filled in the site, and the walls were covered for 150 years.

Archaeologists from the Israel Antiquities Authority, working in conjunction with the Israel Nature and National Parks Protection Authority, were able to pinpoint the location of the 19th-century excavation by using aerial photographs and digitally superimposing them on the Bliss-Dickie map.

The Byzantine-era wall was built by Empress Eudocia, who according to historical sources built the wall around the city because of a biblical verse in the Book of Psalms which, translated into Greek, used a word greatly resembling her name.

Today the walled part of Jerusalem's Old City encompasses about 2.5 miles, said Israeli archaeologist Yehiel Zelig, but during Jesus' time the city was about twice that size, stretching in the north close to where the American Consulate stands today in East Jerusalem. The Byzantine-era wall extended about 3.7 miles around the city, he said.

The newly uncovered segments – which are about 4 meters apart on the southern ridge of Mount Zion – are about 220 yards south of the Ottoman Empire wall that today surrounds the Old City of Jerusalem. The segments were preserved in perfect condition to a height of almost 10 feet and probably stood another 16.5 feet higher,

said Mr. Zelinger.

“The presentation here is wonderful,” said Mr. Zelinger, noting the difference in the style of stones used for each wall. “This is not something you find every day.”

On their eastern edge the excavated walls abut the Catholic cemetery of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The cemetery was established in the 1940s; further excavations will not be carried out in that area, said Jon Seligman, an archaeologist with the Israel Antiquities Authority.

The Ir David Foundation, dedicated to the preservation and development of the biblical city of King David, provided financial support for the excavation of the southern walls. The project was implemented as part of the master plan for a national park that will incorporate the ancient city walls in a promenade encircling the southern side of Mount Zion.