

The Holy Monastery of Sarantarion Mountain or Temptation

The monastery is built on Sarantarion Mountain west of Jericho. It is comprised of the main Church dedicated to the Annunciation and the Chapel-Shrine, a natural cave with a long narrow corridor with chambers on either side. The mountain is full of caves which once hosted numerous anchorites; one cave on the west part of the mountain with a different entrance shape from the rest of the caves is thought to have been the exact location of the Temptation. According to the tradition, here in the desert, Jesus Christ fasted for forty days and was tempted by the devil. The mountain is named after this incident. At the foot of the mountain we see the ruins of a small fortress named Doc, built by Ptolemy, Simon the Maccabee's son-in-law. In 340 A.D. Saint Chariton founded a Lavra there which he named Lavra Doca after the top of the mountain. The monastery was destroyed by the Persian army and rebuilt in the 12th century.

Jericho

Jericho is the most ancient city of the Holy Land. It is a city of Jordan on the west side of the valley of river Jordan. One of the most ancient unceasingly populated cities in the world, Jericho has been the most fortified city of the Canaanites. It has a significant strategic position from which one can easily gain access to the interior of the Holy Land.

Its strategic position served as an attraction pole for all people. Christ often went through Jericho each time he travelled to Jerusalem from his home town Galilee. This is witnessed by the incidents with Zacchaeus the publican, His meeting with the born-blind man and His last entrance in

Jerusalem.

In the 4th century Jericho was proclaimed Archdiocese, while in the 5th and 6th centuries it had become a significant Shrine and monastic centre. Many churches were built in Jericho during the Byzantine era. Notably, Elisha's spring, Prophet Elijah's cave and Zacchaeus' sycamore tree were congested shrines.

The Holy Monastery of Elisha from Jericho

In Jericho there is the monastery of Prophet Elisha who turned the salty waters of the area into drinking waters. The spring with abundant and crystal clear waters is called "Elisha's waters" by the Greeks, while the Arabs call it "Ayn el – Sultan". When Prophet Elisha went to Jericho, "the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren. And he said, bring me a new cruse and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake" (4 Kings 2:19-22). The aforementioned spring is the one of which the waters were healed. The citizens of Jericho drink water from the same spring to this day. On the courtyard of the monastery there is the Zacchaeus' sycamore tree. It is the sycamore tree on which the publican Zacchaeus climbed to see Jesus passing by. The tree was kept intact until the time of Antony of Placentia in the 6th century. It was surrounded by a chapel with an open roof which left an outlet to the tree branches. That chapel was located in Jericho on the main road leading to Jerusalem, where today's Holy Monastery of Prophet Elisha stands.

The Holy Monastery of Saint John the Baptist

The monastery is located on the east side of Jericho at a short distance from the west bank of the river Jordan. According to the scriptures, that was the passage of the Israel tribes to the river Jordan to occupy the Promised Land. According to the tradition of that time, the monastery was built near the place of Christ's baptism and above Saint John the Baptist's cave. Prokopios the historian mentions that Justinian, who built the Monastery of Saint Panteleimon in the desert of the river Jordan, also constructed a water fountain at the already existing monastery of Saint John the Baptist. All travellers after Prokopios describe the monastery as "massive and all-powerful". During the 6th century it was known for its guesthouses which accommodated pilgrims and enlighteners, namely those monks whose sole mission was to baptize pilgrims in the river Jordan. Ioannis Phokas writes that the monastery was destroyed by an earthquake in the 12th century, but was reconstructed by Manuel Porphyrogenitos and had been inhabited by monks until the beginning of the 15th century. Since then, the monks abandoned the place due to the ongoing Arab raids, the monastery was turned into a bandits' cavern and the government was forced to demolish it. On a wall nearby the church there is an ancient icon with the inscription "Behold the Lamb of God" and "We have found whom we wished for". Today's building of the monastery was reconstructed by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in the 19th century.