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Conversion in Late Antiquity: Christianity, Islam, and Beyond
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"A Christian city with a major Muslim shrine: Jerusalem in the Umayyad period"

Abstract

Jerusalem, a city that was completely Christian in the Byzantine period, came under Muslim rule around 638 A.D. and in the course of the following Umayyad period up to 750 the city acquired an increasingly Muslim character. With the construction of the Dome of the Rock, the al-Aqsa Mosque and other buildings in the renovated Masjid al-Aqsa compound, along with a complex of palatial buildings to the south, the Umayyads undertook in Jerusalem the largest long-term building project anywhere in the caliphate, which endowed the city with a new added layer of exceptional religious significance. Yet Jerusalem remained a predominantly Christian city, with the fuller Islamization of the city taking centuries longer. In the Umayyad period the Muslims concentrated their building efforts in the eastern part of the city on and around the former temple mount that the Christians had deliberately left derelict, and left the Christian majority undisturbed in the western part of the city. Only in later centuries, as the Muslim presence grew, did the Muslims begin to intrude into the western part of the city.