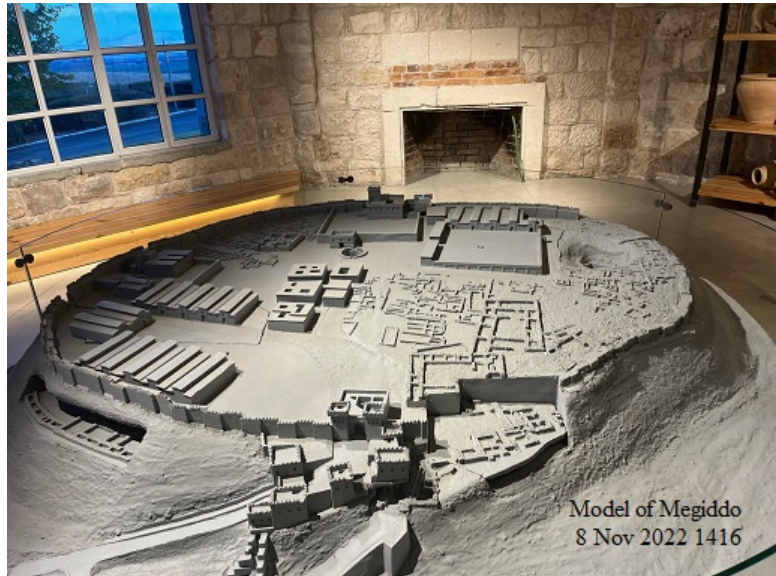




The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#23 Tue 8 Nov Tel Megiddo, Jordan River

On Tuesday, November 8th a little after 1400 we came to Megiddo National Park (32°35'12.85"N 35°11'08.20"E), where our Israeli Tour Guide, Joe, once again explained that a “tel” (borrowed into English from Arabic “tall” meaning “small hill”) is an artificial mound that accumulates over thousands of years where conquered cities are destroyed and rebuilt, one on top of another, until, in time, and in very strategic locations, a hill of debris forms in layer upon layer of destroyed and burned ruinous heaps. The twenty layers of ruinous heaps¹ in this “tel” of Megiddo gives testimony of its strategic location, but so does the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Jesus names Megiddo as the place for the final conquest of Satan and mankind shaking their fist at God's authority, and his ownership of the planet. The Apostle John conveys it in the Revelation of Jesus Christ:



And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the

kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. 15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. 16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. (Rev.16:13-16).

¹ Elsewhere is described the heavy-handed tactics of the infamous “archaeologists” who unearthed the 20 layers of this “tel” by driving a bulldozer right through the middle of it!

As we looked across the long expanse of the Jezreel Valley, Pastor Charlie stood on Megiddo with his Bible opened to this Scripture, and with God's power and his finesse detailed the Spiritual importance and strategic significance of where we were now standing. In short, all the nations of the world gather to wipe God's chosen people, the nation Israel, off the face of the Earth; the King of kings, and Lord of



lords, who has opened the Seven Sealed Book, the title deed of the Earth, comes on a white horse “*And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations*” (Rev.19:15). Faithful and True, whose name is called “The Word of God” then rules them with a rod of iron for 1,000 years. The Bible says, to those who believe the Bible, that his foot touches down on the Mount of Olives and mountains move aside,... “*tels*” as well, to make a valley reaching from Jerusalem, all the way to Megiddo! Spilled blood in this valley reaches all the way to the horses bridle!²



The apostate catholic churches, have taught their “Christians” to deny these facts, calling them, allegorical and figurative. But the genuine believer, armed with a factual, non-ecumenical, and non-copyright, authorized Bible, holds these truths to be literal and self-evident.

Megiddo, from the Hebrew <04023> מִגִּדּוֹ *megid-do*, meaning “place of crowds”, comes from a Hebrew root, <014137> גָּדַד *gadad*, meaning “to attack or invade.” That’s an apt description of this ancient city of Canaan, on the southern rim of the plane of Jezreel, 6 miles from Mount Carmel, 11 miles from Nazareth, and 80 miles from Jerusalem.

Joe reveled in giving us the history of Megiddo, but especially in walking us through the gate structure that marked each of Solomon's four stronghold cities³. As he pointed out the various aspects of the gate's compartments our minds eye could see the guards in attendance and the clerk collecting tolls in the first alcove of the massive rock walls. “The

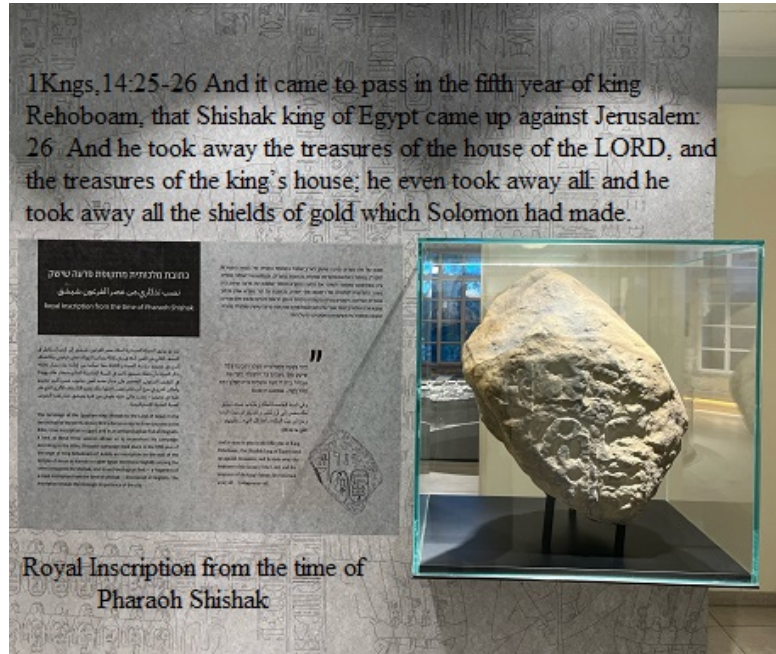
2 “*A Systematic Theology for the 21st Century – Volume 11 Eschatology*” by this author, available at www.GSBaptistChurch.com/theology .

3 1King.9:15 “*And this is the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised; for to build the house of the LORD, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer.*”

gate of a city was also the place where business deals were transacted.” In my minds eye I saw one of these alcoves with a law firm shingle labeled “Doowe-Stickum-and-Howe” from the 1990s jesting radio talk show “Car-Talk.” Joe reminded us that these *tels* were found in strategic locations because of SWEAT. Which he had explained a couple times now, stood for the essentials for a good city location, which had Security, Water, Eat (food), Aesthetically pleasing view, and Transportation. This land, that God gave to Israel, was at the hub of three continents; as a stronghold city, Megiddo overlooked the main transportation link through the middle of it.

Joe went on to describe three battles fought here. First, Pharaoh has a sneak attack, and conquers this city built up as the Canaanite’s stronghold. Then in 609 BC, there was a the King of Judea, Josiah, who ends up dying here by the hands of Pharaoh Necho (2Chron.35:20-22⁴). And then there was the battle between the British and the Turks, in 1918. The Turks were soundly defeated here.

Megiddo was the stronghold city at the southern gate of the Carmel mountains. Solomon built this stronghold, but was not careful to remove others. That message is captured in a 300 word thoughtful essay I preached after returning home from Megiddo.



The “hill of Megiddo”, Armageddon in the Hebrew tongue, (Rev.16:16) is a stronghold city overlooking the crossroad that connects empires, in the center of a country, Israel, that connects three continents. Biblical prophecy tells us that God has his eye on that stronghold, and will make it the place of the final showdown when

all nations gather to wipe Israel off the face of God's earth. The Revelation of Jesus Christ details how that works out for the dragon, that old serpent, which is

4 2Chron.35:20 After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. 21 But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not. 22 Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo.

the Devil, and Satan, ... and his cronies (Rev.16,19-20). King Solomon rebuilt Megiddo into an impressive stronghold city for Israel (1Kings.9:15), and we can today view his signature three gate design, horse stalls and chariot parking lot in its “tel”(mound of destructions). Although Solomon conquered and rebuilt physical stronghold cities he neglected to take down Satan's spiritual strongholds in his life.

The Apostle Paul details how that can be done in 2Cor.10. *“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; 6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled”* (2Cor.10:5-6). Two major ingredients here, first captivating every thought and bringing it into obedience. This is called “renewing of your mind” in Romans 12, and “think on these things” in Phil.4:8. Second, “revenge all disobedience.” Disobedience comes in two flavors, sins of commission, like smoking, drinking, and cussing, and sins of omission, like not praying, not Bible studying, and not witnessing. Take revenge on these sins. Every cuss word, gets an hour of Bible study and prayer. When I miss an hour of Thursday soul-winning, I'll go two hours on Friday n Saturday. That's what revenging disobedience looks like. Satan hates that.⁵



It was very moving to be at Megiddo, to comprehend what went on here, and what would soon befall this very place. I could have stayed longer, taking time to meditate and ponder, but alas there was not a lot of alone-time in a ten day tour. We were back in the bus, and Eiad was skillfully driving us to Yardenit ("little Jordan") (32°42'38.32"N 35°34'13.92"E). Yardenit is a popular Baptism site, where the water flows

from the Sea of Galilee into the Jordan river. This site is believed by some traditions, which ignore Bible evidence, to be the site where Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.

5 What The Bible Says, Good Samaritan's Penny Pulpit by Pastor Ed Rice, Msg #2316 Defeating Satan's Strongholds, An Essay for week #16 - Apr 16, 2023. Sign up to receive these weekly Penny Pulpits at www.GSBaptistChurch.com

There are two tourist sites used for baptisms in the Jordan River, one called “Betheny Beyond The Jordan” near Jericho, and this site near the Sea of Galilee. Matthew 3 clarifies that, “*In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,*” and there, in his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, is where he was baptizing those who came to him from Jerusalem, and all Judaea,



and all the region round about Jordan. “*Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him*” (vr.13). So, Jesus was likely baptized nearer to Jericho than up here near the sea, but the Betheny site is a muddy little trickle of water today, and this



one is more pristine. The Betheny site is also nearer to the Mount of Temptation⁶ area.

Baptism in the Jordan River is a full blown tourist attraction and displays just about every error about baptism, and none of its Biblical truths. A genuine convert to Christ is to follow the Lord in public believers baptism, and then regularly be present at the Lord's table to publicly observe communion. These are two ordinances of the local church. They are not sacraments, there is no magical or mystical aspect to these ordinances. Baptism by immersion is a convert's initial public admission, before God and everybody, that they are born–again, blood–bought, justified and redeemed to God through Christ, converts. And the Lord’s table observance that Baptists call communion, is a public testimony declaring, I am still in perfect communion with my Lord and Savior, and in sweet communion with

6 The Mount of Temptation is believed to be the mountain in the Judean Desert where Jesus was tempted by the devil for 40 days and 40 nights. The mountain is approximately 1,200 feet high in a location 11km North West of the West Bank town of Jericho. Entry to the top of the mountain is via a 1300m long cable car ride which takes visitors over the top of the remains of the old city of Jericho, where the walls came tumbling down. Recent archaeological digs have uncovered the remains of the ancient city proving the Biblical narrative to be true, yet again! At the top of the mountain is the Greek Orthodox Monastery (Monastery of the Temptation) which can be accessed by a stone stairway built into the mountainside. The Panoramic view is breathtaking from the top of the mountain – but not a ride for the faint hearted. From <https://holy-land-tours.com/mount-of-temptation/> accessed 6/9/2023

these believers, in this local church. Both baptism and communion are ordinances administered by the local Bible believing church. These are basic Bible doctrines. By them Baptists are named, and for them no little Baptist blood has been spilled. Consequently, many of us are passionate about guarding their authenticity and practice within the local, autonomous, independent, Biblical, New Testament church. Understandably so.

When hordes of “Christian's” rush to the Jordan river to get baptized in “holy water” and gather some of it in a carry home bottle, a Baptist, who knows about the convictions of a Baptist, will be concerned about all the false teaching that is on display at the Jordan River Baptismal site.

Baptist were once called anti-baptists, and re-baptizers, by those who were burning us at the stake for our Bible beliefs. Baptist have always held to believers baptism with



no pedobaptism⁷, no infant baptism, no baby baptisms, no “christenings”. Consequently, the Holy Bible thumping Baptists have always been at odds, with all Roman Catholic or

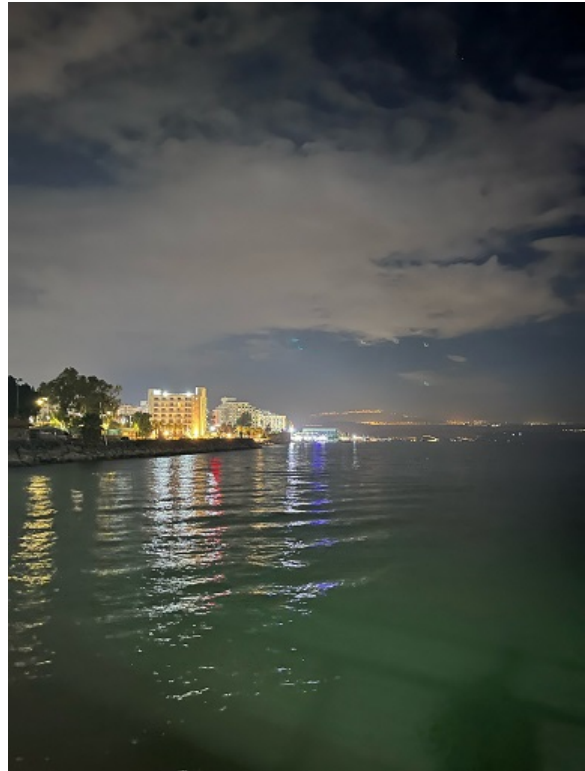
Orthodox; all Episcopalians, higher or lower, all Protestants, Presbyterian Calvinists, or Methodist Wesleyans, and all Pentecostals, Charismatic holiness or not.

Further, Baptist and New Testament Bible believing churches have never been denominational, i.e. no one church, or leader, usurps authority over any group or association of churches. Each church is a local, independent, and autonomous body of believers. Further Baptists do not divide congregations into Clergy and Laity, Pastors are male, are not Clergy, and do not wear black dresses. Such Baptist distinctives are found in the Holy Bible, and Baptists have the Holy Bible as their sole authority. Any church contending with these Baptist truths would do us a service by taking “Baptist” off of their church signs.



7 Pedobaptism is the practice of baptizing infants or young children; infant baptism is also called christening by some “faith traditions”; still today Wikipedia supposes most Christians belong to denominations that practice infant baptism.

So, bless his righteous heart, Pastor Charlie tried to squeeze all of that into a “short” baptismal message as we approached Yardenit. He clarified that those of our group being baptized in the Jordan River today were not “observing” or “practicing” the ordinance of the local new testament church, but were merely “commemorating” that ordinance, in much the same way that renewing ones marriage vows, was not the establishing of a marriage, but the “commemorating” that one was previously established. Several were baptized in the Jordan River. For all the observing public, especially those holding vials of “Holy Water from the Jordan River”, I am not sure that the “commemorating” aspect was as salient during these baptismals as it could have been.



Before supper back at the Gai Beach Hotel, I mentally rehearsed our day: we did a driveby of The Horns of Hattin, a visit to the Precipice outside of Nazareth, a visit to Zippori, name changed to Sepphoris and only 5 kilometers from nearby Nazareth, we ventured up to Mount Carmel after lunch, then a tour of Megiddo, the stronghold city at the southern gate of the Carmel mountains, and finally we traveled across the Jezreal valley and stopped where the Jordan River out pours from the Sea of Galilee. It was an exciting day and I still wanted to pull out some more Bible facts to round out the ton of information gleaned at each location.



Our tour of Israel was growing to a close. Tomorrow was to be a pack your bags day. We were to stop by the Boat Museum in the morning, tour Caesarea by the Sea, and then stop in the David and Goliath Valley of Elah on our way to the airport. What a blessing it has been to be in Israel, no one was eager to board the plane on the morrow and depart.