

Journaling a Preacher's 2022 Pilgrimage to Israel

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Pastor Edward Rice

About the Author

Pastor Ed Rice is a retired USAF Systems Engineer surrendered to be a Baptist Preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Saved in 1960 at the age 8 he grew up tutored in the Scriptures through Tuscorora Baptist Church in Addison NY. Drafted into the military off of the dairy farm in 1972, Ed and Bev Rice raised 3 boys while serving as a Missile Technician in the USAF. After completing a USAF AECP bootstrap program he graduated from Ohio State University with a degree in electrical engineering and was commissioned in the USAF where he served until 1995 as a weapons integration, and systems engineer at Wright Patterson Air Force Base and Rome Laboratories. He finished his Masters degree in Electrical Engineering through The Air Force Institute of Technology in 1990. Pastor Rice, after serving as an independent fundamental Baptist youth/assistant pastor at each air base where he was stationed for the past twenty years, surrendered to be a Preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in June 1992. He has been pursuing his MDiv, DDiv degrees since that time, and since 1998 has been Pastoring Good Samaritan Baptist Church in Dresden New York. His staunch belief in the preserved accuracy of the inspired Scriptures, and his rich background in the history of Bible believing Baptists, makes his insights throughout this 10 day tour of Israel pointed, poignant and Biblical. If you have never visited Israel do not miss this opportunity to journal through these ten days. If you have visited, this journal will take you back, and bring you up on the many changes since your visit. If you plan on visiting Israel, do not go without first taking this ten day journaling experience.

About the Subject Matter

- Exod 19:1 In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.*
- 2 For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.*
- 3 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;*
- 4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.*
- 5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be **a peculiar treasure** unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:*
- 6 And ye shall be unto me **a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.** These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

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Pastor Edward Rice

via Solid Rock Baptist Church, Pastor Charles Clark III
420 S. Whitehorse Pike, Berlin, NJ 08009
30 October – 11 November, 2022

“If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.” (Num 14:8)

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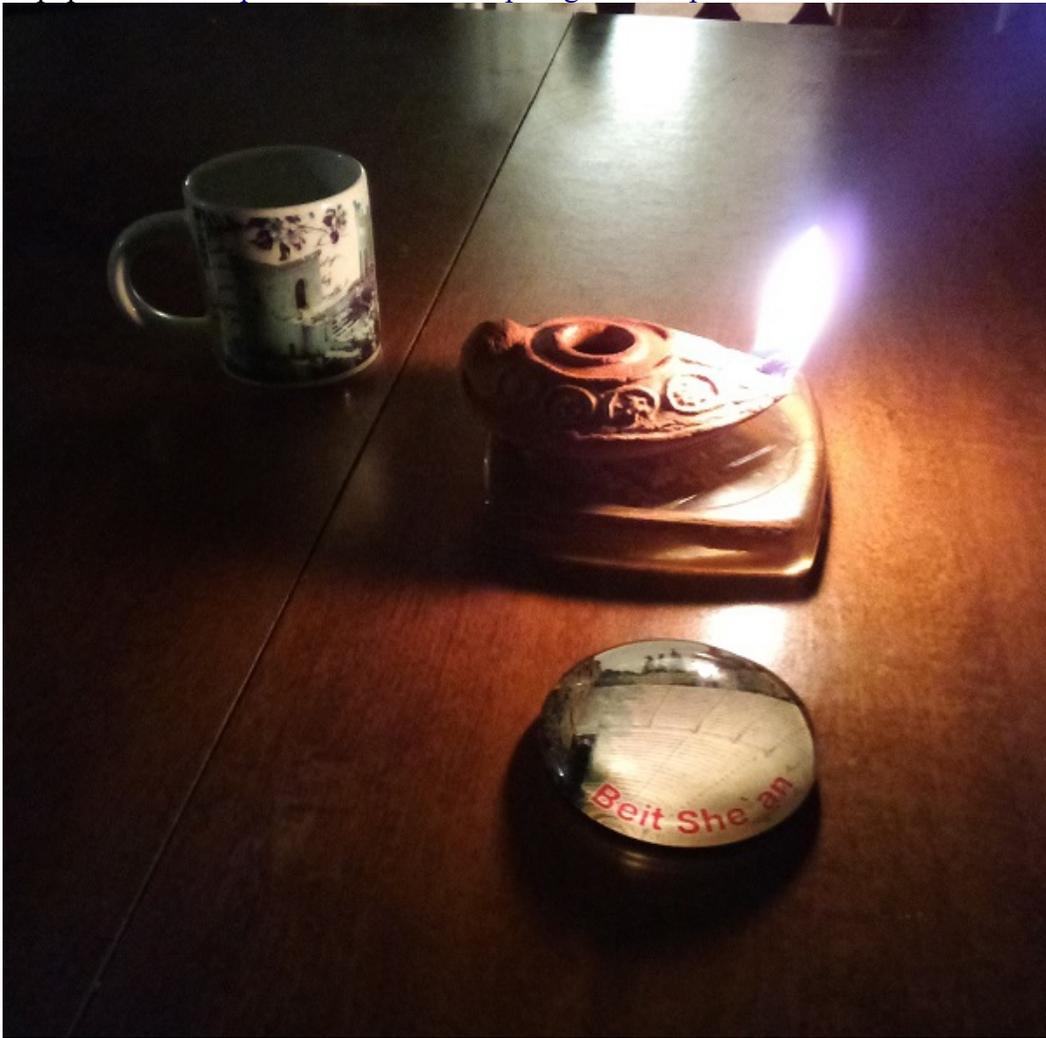
Edward G. Rice

Published by Good Samaritan Baptist Church GSBaptistChurch.com
54 Main St. Box 99, Dresden, NY 14441

Download it for free at our site:

www.GSBaptistChurch.com/israel22/half_shekel_book.pdf

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ISBN 978-1-312-07543-6

Cover Photographs by author

Book photographs by author and his son, Pastor Shane Rice

Scripture quotations, The Holy Bible, King James Bible, with
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Dedication

I wanted to go to Israel ever since 1960 when I was saved and attended Marian Clark's Sunday School class at Fellowship Baptist Church, Gang Mills NY. I listened to him talk about the places where Jesus walked as if he had been there. I do not know that he had, but the pictures that he painted in my mind's eye week after week, and God's promises that he taught in that Jr. boys class, assured me that I would one day stand with my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, on the Mount of Olives and see Jerusalem with him as the King of kings and Lord of lords. I still will, but to visit there in the flesh was a dream I inherited from my Sunday School training and my father, Levi O. Rice. Since his salvation in the same Church in 1958, my dad always wanted to go to Israel, to actually see Jerusalem, and he had tickets in hand years after his second by pass surgery. His heart was weak, but I had told him that to go and even to die in the land would be better than to forgo such a dream. I was disappointed that his doctor and others, concerned for his heart, talked him out of his 10 day trip to the Holy Land. He canceled that opportunity and died without visiting Israel.

When the opportunity came for Bev and I to go on a 10 Day Pastor Familiarization Tour it was financially impossible because we had just purchased tickets for our 10 day trip to Cajamarca, Peru, where our son Shane was ministering as a missionary. Impossible or no, the journal of that trip to the Holy Land was published. In July of 2022 another series of health and financial miracles brought us to sign up for another pilgrimage to Israel through Vision Baptist College of Solid Rock Baptist Church, Berlin NJ, where our grand children attended. They would escort us to Israel on Oct 30th through Nov 10th 2022, and our son Shane & Kathy Rice would join us. At the last minute or grandson Micah, a senior at Vision Baptist College also got to join us on this pilgrimage. God is good, all the time. This Half Shekel Journal Book is likewise dedicated to Misty, Kassandra, Rachael, Rebekah, Moriah, Micah, Alexis, Charity, Lucas, Parker and Christina Rice, our 11 grand children, with the expectation that they too, one day, will get to walk where Jesus walked, and that they too, will one day stand on the Mount of Olives with their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

God's Itinerary for Israel

Isa 35:1-10 The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. 2 It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God. 3 Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. 4 Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. 5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. 7 And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. 8 And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. 9 No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: 10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Trip Itinerary

Day 1- Sunday, October 30 Late-night departure for Israel.

Day 2 - Monday, October 31 Arrive at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, meet our guide, and transfer to our hotel in Jerusalem for dinner and a restful night's sleep.

Day 3 - Tuesday, November 1 Mount of Olives, Palm Sunday Road, Garden of Gethsemane, Pools of Bethesda, Hezekiah's Broad Wall, Temple Institute.

Day 4- Wednesday, November 2 Western Wall Tour, Temple Mount, City of David, Hezekiah's Tunnel, Pool of Siloam, Israel Museum, Southern Wall Excavation.

Day 5- Thursday, November 3 Ein Gedi, Masada, Dead Sea, Wadi Qelt.

Day 6 - Friday, November 4 Shepherd's Fields, Bethlehem, Peter in Gallicantu, Golgotha, Garden Tomb.

Day 7: Saturday, November 5 Jericho, Beth Shean, Gideon's Spring, Jezreel, Mount Arbel.

Day 8 - Sunday, November 6 Sea of Galilee, Mount of Beatitudes, Capernaum, Bethsaida.

Day 9 - Monday, November 7 Tel Dan, Caesarea Phillippi (Banias), Golan Heights-Mount Bental.

Day 10 - Tuesday, November 8 Nazareth-Mount Precipice, Megiddo, Mount Carmel, Jordan River.

Day 11- Wednesday, November 9 Caesarea, Valley of Elah, transfer to the airport and depart on an overnight flight to arrive back home on November 10.

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Trip Directory

Trip Directory - Alphabetical Names and there Churches:

Phyllis Blunkall (Malvern, AR, Gospel Light Baptist Church),
Suzanne Bolen (Menifee, CA, Milton Free Methodist Church),
Pastor Charlie and Jay Clark (Berlin, NJ, Solid Rock Baptist Church),
Melinda Clark (Berlin, NJ, Solid Rock Baptist Church),
Loretta DeHaan (Whiting, NJ, Cornerstone Baptist Church),
Mike Delquadro, Tammy Delquadro (Philadelphia, PA, Fellowship Baptist Church),
Eunice Demitriou (Notrhfield, NJ, Solid Rock Baptist Church),
Pastor Jay & Dee Dumas (Plattsburg, NY, Bible Baptist Church),
Pastor Burton and Cara Gates (Philadelphia, PA, Liberty Baptist Church),
Bob and Millie Gordon (Hudson Falls, NY, New Life Baptist Church),
Russell and Maria Hall (Berlin, NJ, Solid Rock Baptist Church),
Jay Renner and Sister Nancy Harmon (St. Mary's, WV, Calvary Baptist Church),
Pastor Jon and Kay Hawkins (Glens Falls, NY, New Life Baptist Church),
Jon and Amy Hildreth (Glens Falls, NY, New Life Baptist Church),
Bob and Matt Huttenlock (Ocean City, NJ, Solid Rock Baptist Church),
Dianne Huttenlock (Philadelphia, PA, Grace Baptist Church),
Bola Kayagba (Philadelphia, PA, Christian Life Church),
Pastor Chris and Holly Mann (Oakton, VA, Fellowship Baptist Church),
Michael and Christiana Mauro n Michael, Jr. (Berlin, NJ, Solid Rock Baptist Church),
Harrison Moore (Berlin, NJ, Solid Rock Baptist Church),
Rebecca Opawumi (Sicklerville, NJ, Solid Rock Baptist Church),
NormaJean Patterson (Lindenwold, NJ, Solid Rock Baptist Church),
Pastor Andrew and Rachel Reese (Berlin, NJ, Fellowship Bible Baptist Church),
Pastor Ed and Bev Rice (Dresden, NY, Good Samaritan Baptist Church),
Shane and Kathy Rice n Micah Rice (Massillon, OH, Anchor Baptist Church),
Elaine Roscoe (Chili, NY, Chili Baptist Church),
Dawn Ross (Pine Hill, NJ, St. Paul's),
Evelyn Sabando (Sicklerville, NJ, Solid Rock Baptist Church),
Pastor Chris and Beth Tagliarini (St. Mary's, WV, Calvary Baptist Church),
Maria Twilley (Erial, NJ Solid Rock Baptist Church),
Dianne Vara n Claudia Vara (Stamford, CT, White Oak Baptist Church),
Michael Vara (Stamford CT, White Oak Baptist Church),
Jeffrey and Vanessa Weaver (Williamstown, NJ, Solid Rock Baptist Church),
Faye Coleman and June Williams (Manchester, NJ, Crossroads Baptist Church),
William and Craig Woodruff (Hammonton, NJ, Fellowship Bible Baptist Church)

Preface

During my 60 years as a born again Christian I have visited Israel countless times through the slides and stories of others, now Bev and I would visit it in person, again. I would be remiss if I did not capture every piece of information, every sight, every thought and emotion in a journal. My slightly honed writing skills, and copious note taking experience, would be challenged beyond capability as information, sights, thoughts, and emotions poured out of every day, every hour, yeah every minute of these ten days in Israel. Alas, I pray it is but a taste of an adventure that will whet appetites for growth into the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Bible.

The journal itself is made up of twenty-five Half Shekel Journals which were sent out for review over the weeks after our November 2022 trip. Through these Half Shekel Journals each event of our adventure was captured and recorded. Much more research into every site and fact is want to be done. This journal is but a step towards the research which is to consume a Christian's life; growing in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a step that can change forever how you read your Bible, set your desire on the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, and get busy in growth and witnessing. It is a step that will cause you to long for your trip to Israel, whether it be a first, once in a lifetime visit, a revisit, or the visit where we will stand together with the Lord Jesus Christ on the Mount of Olives. Every Born-Again Christian will eventually visit Israel.

Why the Half Shekel? ... The shekel is the base unit of Israeli money like the dollar is ours. With their economy as it is, it exchanges for one of our quarters, although it is the size of a nickel. The half shekel is twice as large as a shekel but half its worth, about 12 1/2 cents or 1 US once-upon-a-time 'bit'. We called these "Half-Shekel Journals" because it is twice as large but half the worth of the real thing, OR it represents my little 'bit' of info, OR it cost me a half shekel to get it printed, OR, since a cup of Aroma Coffee over there cost 16 shekels, the half shekel is almost as worthless as our 2 cents, and the journal is my 2 cents.

If you have never asked and received the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and Lord of your soul, my prayer is that your reading this journal and exploring further the truths of His precious Word, the Holy Bible will lead you to a place where you will.

*“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might **be saved**. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ... He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. ... Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (Jhn.3:16-18, 36, 5:24).*

Journaling a Preacher's 2022 Pilgrimage to Israel

The Half Shekel Journal 2022- by Ed Rice

#00 Day 1 Monday 31 Oct 2022 Travel Day Arrive at Tel Aviv



It is a great privilege for Beverly and I to go on this pilgrimage to Israel and even greater to be accompanied by my son Shane and Kathy Rice, and grandson Micah Rice. Micah got to go at the last minute as his senior trip from Vision Baptist College of Solid Rock Baptist Church, who hosted this tour to Israel.



Pastor Charles Clark III, called herein Pastor Chalie, worked with Keshet Journeys, 33 Pierre Koenig Street, Jerusalem, KeshetJourneys.com, to secure his friend Joe Freedman to be the tour guide for this trip. The two have had a working relationship for several previous Israel tours for Vision Baptist College.

Pastor Shane and Kathy drove 330 miles from Anchor Baptist Church in Massillon Ohio, stayed overnight in Col Crane's Mansion, where we live, and

then drove us 290 miles to Solid Rock Baptist Church, Berlin NJ, on Saturday, 29 Oct. Bless their heart.



We were to spend the night with Lieutenant Colonel (Ret) Mike Bliss and his wife Cheria, dear friends from years gone by. Mike's father, Dale Bliss, was saved at Good Samaritan Baptist Church two years back, and our granddaughter, Rachel Rice, lived in a downstairs apartment of their home. This spring

Rachel and Rebekah had graduated from Vision Baptist College of Solid Rock Baptist Church, Berlin New Jersey, and Rachel moved out of the dorms, and in with the Bliss family. She is teaching third grade in the school at Solid Rock.

After a tremendous reunion, and securing a place to pillow our heads, the next order of business was, of course, some Italian food. Bev and I live on Waneta Lake outside of Dundee, New York, where we must drive for 45 minutes east to find a Walmart, an hour south-east to get to an abandoned Corning Elmira Mall, with an open for business Texas Road House, and an hour and a half north to Rochester to get to



a Chick-fil-A! We were absolutely overwhelmed to drive past so many restaurants in the quest to get Italian food. Kathy had selected a Fat Tomato¹ for the Rice contingent to gather in. Turns out we ended up in one on route 73 instead of Pasta Vinnies on route 30 because we were reuniting more than we were watching details, and who da thunk they would have so many Italian bistros in the same square mile of Berlin?



The traffic, the people, the stores, the restaurants, the Chick-fil-A's, all jammed into one place, ... Bev and I were glad we were only passengers on this great quest for food.

Granddaughters Rachel, a VBC grad, and Charity, a VBC sophomore, and grandson Micah, a VBC senior, showing great promise of being a graduate next spring, gathered with their



parents and grandparents for a festive Italian feast. As life would have it, three of their close friends, Matthew, Brandon, and Abby, in that order, all joined us. We were there to love life, love food, love family, and tell stories about college life. All that took three hours.



It was not an external clock that woke me at 4 AM. I had my normal four hours of sleep, and my sacroiliac joints needed their morning stretch. Ankylosing spondylitis², my morning alarm clock, had me sitting in the Bliss living room well before dawn. The house stirred to life before I finished my Bible reading and prayer time. It was good to be in a home that stirred early on a Sunday



morning and had an eager anticipation for a full day of worship.

More than most, Bev and I relished what went on at Solid Rock Baptist Church and were eager to attend every and any service we could here. We had spent 23 years in the military attending and working in independent fundamental KJV Bible believing churches of large or moderately large size.

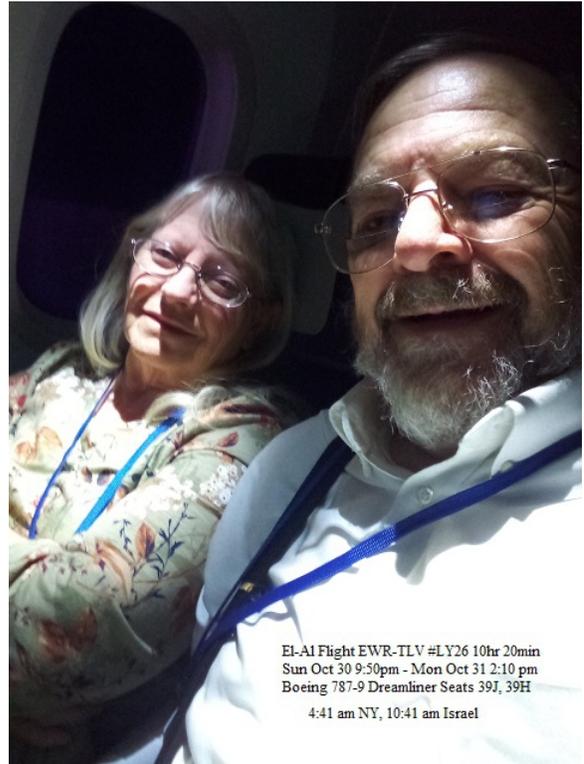
1 Text Sunday 1/15/23 8:14 am to Kathy, Rachel, Micah, Charity: "Good Morning, What is the name of that Italian Restaurant we ate at on Sat night 29 Oct 2022? Yes, I am writing a book.

2 Ankylosing spondylitis (AS) is an autoimmune disease that causes a type of inflammatory arthritis that affects the vertebrae and joints of the spine. In addition to causing pain, severe cases of AS can cause new bone growth that fuses the joints in the spine. Although AS primarily affects sacroiliac joints, it can also cause inflammation in other joints and, more rarely, organs and eyes. I was a more rarely AS.



They were set in military communities, containing very disciplined, hard-working people, who knew the value of sacrifice. When we retired and moved back home to pastor a small fledgling Baptist Church in Yates County we found ourselves thrust into a society that is exactly opposite of all those attributes, a socialist, welfare type of society. In our

27 years of labor, small shrunk to tiny, and we have not had a functioning bus route or van route, youth group or choir in 20 years. We have not had a piano player since Arlene moved to North Carolina back in the 1900s! Today we can go and sit in the middle of Solid Rock Baptist Church and just absorb all the activity, all the ministries, all the ministers, all the singing, all the special music, all the worship.... And so we did for, 3 ½ hours on this Sunday morning.



Back at the church later we stood beside our carefully packed suitcases as crowds gathered and the bus pulled up. It was so exciting to meet half of the group that we would spend the next 10 days with. The Clarks did a masterful job of providing a color brochure with everyone's names and profile pictures.



This was going to be a wonderful experience, with wonderful folks, and a superb host.

We boarded the Solid Rock Baptist Church bus which headed out for the Newark Liberty International Airport an hour and a half north.

Since we were missing Sunday evening church, we had a church service on the bus.

We sang some familiar songs and then Pastor Burton Gates, of Liberty Baptist Church, Philadelphia PA, gave his testimony and preached a five point message out of Psalm 119. This trip to Israel, and the Word of God



rehearsed there, ought to Effect us, Excite us, Enliven us, Enhance us, and Endure in us (Ps,119:10,17,18,41). Awesome. Brother Gates, while hurdling down the highway at 65 mph, had our minds going another 60, and all that, made one stop and think. At this point anticipation of a Holy Land tour was at an all time high.



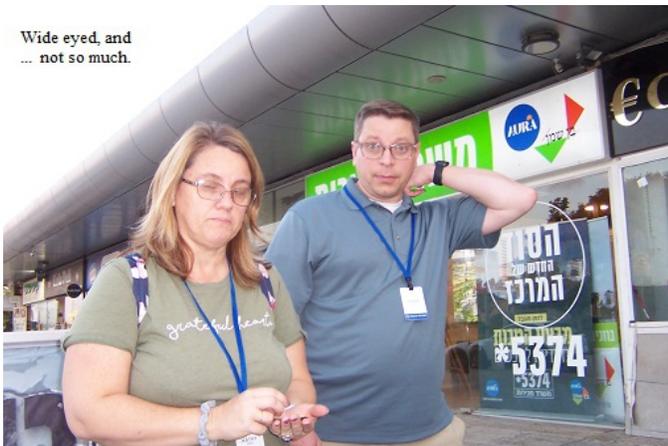
El-Al airlines is one of the best. Just the same sitting in the tiny airline seat for a 10 hour flight from Newark, New Jersey, to Tel Aviv, Israel, makes for a lot of strain on their perfected service with a smile. One of the last boarding passengers was supposed to take the window seat in our row. Bev moved to the window, I to the center, and the thankful late comer took the aisle seat. I have found that every time I fall asleep in an aisle seat, someone hurrying to the restroom would step

on my foot, kick me in the knee, and then glare at me for hanging out into the very narrow aisle. Well, at the time, I thought it would be fine letting him have the aisle seat.

The flight was packed. The Boeing 787 had nine seats in a row with two aisles. Seats were ABC DFG HJK with missing vowels (the Hebrew alphabet has no vowels). We were flying at 39,000 feet at 552 mph. I got up every two hours to walk around, step on people's feet and kick them in the knee. There was a nice exercise area in the rear, and when attendants were not preparing meals, there was room to walk circles, do deep knee bends, and toe touches, with all the coffee or juice you could want. The attendants were wonderful,... The passengers with sore



Wide eyed, and ... not so much.



knee caps, not so much.

The biggest challenge for me on this flight was eating three nice meals with my elbows stuck to my belly button, while food and coffee fell off my tiny little wobbly tray, and dribbled down past my knees. But I love a challenge. The sacrifices I made giving up an aisle seat, and surrendering the armrest as well, seemed to be met with animosity from the stranger beside me. "So, what's your name and do you fly often?"

“I am Bernard Feldman, and I fly all too often.”

“What do you do, and why are you flying to Israel today?”

“I own my own business, and I am going home after a sales meeting in Philadelphia. You?” ...

That’s the way these conversations are supposed to go on a 10 hour flight. Mr. Grumpy, sitting in my aisle seat, only mumbled some unintelligible name that I tried to pronounce back to him. He glared at me and looked back at his magazine.

When I followed up with “Why are you flying to Israel today?” Mr. grumpy said, “Because I live there! ... *you moron now leave me alone, can’t you see that I am reading!*” ... (Okay, he didn’t really say the italics part out loud, it was all contained in the glare he gave).

The only vengeance I took on Mr. Grumpy, for being grumpy, was every two hours or so I made him get up and let me into the aisle so I could go stretch my swelling sacroiliac joints.

EXPERIENCE ISRAEL
October 30–November 10 · 2022
with Pastor Charles Clark III

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- Daily breakfast buffet
- Daily dinner buffet
- Tips and gratuity

FOR THE LORD,
Br. Chalie

TRIP ITINERARY

Day 1 · Sunday, October 30
Late-night departure for Israel

Day 2 · Monday, October 31
Arrive at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, meet our guide, and transfer to our hotel in Jerusalem for dinner and a restful night's sleep.

Day 3 · Tuesday, November 1
Mount of Olives, Palm Sunday Road, Garden of Gethsemane, Pools of Bethesda, Hezekiah's Broad Wall, Temple Institute

Day 4 · Wednesday, November 2
Western Wall Tour, Temple Mount, City of David, Hezekiah's Tunnel, Pool of Siloam, Israel Museum, Southern Wall Excavation

Day 5 · Thursday, November 3
Ein Gedi, Masada, Dead Sea, Wadi Qelt

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Shepherd's Fields, Bethlehem, Peter in Gallicantu, Golgotha, Garden Tomb

Day 7 · Saturday, November 5
Jericho, Beth Shean, Gideon's Spring, Jezreel, Mount Arbel

Day 8 · Sunday, November 6
Sea of Galilee, Mount of Beatitudes, Capernaum, Bethsaida

Day 9 · Monday, November 7
Tel Dan, Caesarea Philippi (Banias), Golan Heights-Mount Bental

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Day 11 · Wednesday, November 9
Caesarea, Valley of Elah, transfer to the airport and depart on an overnight flight to arrive back home on November 10.

VACCINATION IS NOT REQUIRED.

REGISTER NOW!
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I love to visit the nation of Israel!

It is an absolutely awesome experience! Walking where Jesus walked will help to fill your heart with passion for your Savior. Traveling throughout the land of the Bible makes God's Word come even more alive in your heart. Your time in the Holy Land will give inspiration for your spirit and Bible education for your mind. Going on this trip of a lifetime is absolutely worth the expense. You will gain marvelous memories and be thrilled that you went—I guarantee it! I am praying for God to give us exactly who He wants on this trip. It would be wonderful if you are able to join us. I hope to worship God with you in Israel!

FOR THE LORD,
Br. Chalie

When Bev and I read our Monday Bible portion out loud together, Mr. Grumpy softened a little. And when Bev and I attempted some conversation with Shane and Kathy seated behind us, I told glaring Grumpy, “That is my son, we are Baptist preachers going to Israel to tour the Holy Land.” “Oh!” his glare softened some more, and he was back into his book.

Later, when I took out my Hebrew/English portion of Isaiah 53 and started reading silently, he carefully, unnoticeably, glanced over several times. He finally asked, “Do you read Hebrew?”

“Yes I do, but only on a first grade reading level, so I can sound out most of the words here in Isaiah 53.” At that, Mr. Grumpy moaned some inaudible groan, and again went back to his book, and back to character of the name I had assigned him.

It was an excellent flight, ... Well as excellent as can be when squashed into a Boeing 787 with 245 other passengers. There were probably 30 orthodox Jews on the flight. I had bumped into two reading the Torah back in my exercise room and each accepted a Hebrew copy of Isaiah 53. When I forced Mr. Grumpy to get up and let me back into my seat, I still had a handful of papers in my hand. When I offered him one, he didn’t say a word, accepted the scripture portion, tucked it into his book, and continued reading; no

eye contact. Life is good, people are strange.

The plane touched down in Tel Aviv at 2:10 PM, right on time. As soon as planes stop, anxious people stand up and cram into the aisles to stand and wait for 10 minutes before the doors open. Bev and I sat comfortably for the onslaught, but Mr. Grumpy was first in the aisle and moved a row away before he turned, and said in a pleasant demeanor, “It was very nice meeting you.”

I was taken aback. There are a lot of things I could have said, but all I managed was, “It was nice meeting you too... Welcome home.” He smiled, “Enjoy your tour.”

Life is good, people are strange.

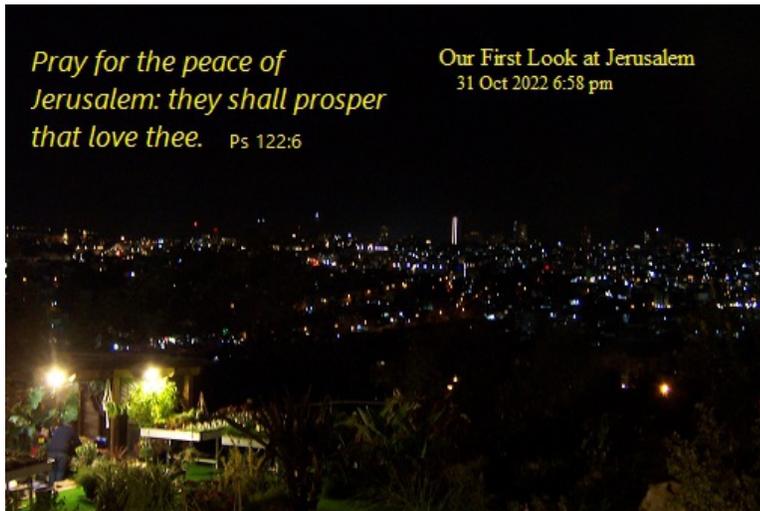
The excitement of being in Israel was not at all diminished by the hectic crowds pushing their way through the Israeli check in point. Jay Clarke organized our group as a group with ready passports and we were ushered through one line of the checkpoint with ease.

Israel is not well regarded by most of the world, so in order of that our passports were not stamped as having been there, we were given a little paper ID that said we entered the country. That was kind of curious, but we hurried off to



baggage claim and recovered our waiting bags.

All dragging suitcases, we were once again grouped together with ready papers and we were ushered to the front of the line at the customs check in. The whole group was guided through and we met a smiling Joe Freedman, our guide, on the other side. Land of the Bible Tours had greased the skids as it were, and in no time we were on the bus outside the terminal.



The second half of our group were still in the air³, so Joe, our guide, introduced us to Eiad, our bus driver, and gave us a welcome to Israel that would be more fully developed when the rest of the tour group arrived. “In the mean time, let's go shopping.” Eiad drove us to a nearby shopping plaza in Tel Aviv where we could stretch and get a bite to eat. Exhaustion was overcome by the excitement of being in Israel. We took some of our newly exchanged Shekels, bought Milka Ice Cream bars and sat in the plaza talking about all that had happened in 12 hours.

Back at the airport we picked up the other half of our group, and were excited to see that our grandson Micah, had made his last minute connections. Eiad pointed the bus towards Jerusalem, and the 48 minute ride was filled with smiles, talk, anticipation and excitement. I cannot put in words what was behind the smiles that Beverly and I exchanged.

3 American Airlines 10 hr 41 min Flight AA146 from JFK was to arrive at 5:00 pm GMT +2



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#01 Tue 1 Nov The Temple Mount & Muslim Occupation

Our day began at the City View Park atop the Mount of Olives. It was daylight now at 0730 and our recitation of Jesus' words in Matt.23:37 and the Psalmist plea in 122:6 fit superbly with the worship at the likely place where the resurrected Christ ascended into heaven with the promise of return.



O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate (Matt.23:37-38, cf Lu.13:34).⁴

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. (Ps.122:6-7)

Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. ... To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD. (Ps.102:13-17,21-22)

4 The Holy Bible

Our bus ride toward the Temple Mount did not interrupt our worship. “Lord, let the awe of being in your Jerusalem, this holy city of Zion, never lessen in me.” Eiad's miracle maneuvering of a 40 foot Irizar i6S bus through the narrow streets of Jerusalem was repeatedly interrupted with Joe's reports that on the right you can see the Kidron Valley⁵ and the walled up Eastern Gate, ... don't forget them as we will talk more of them shortly; on the left you see the tombs that line the Mount of Olives, remember them we will visit Gethsemane Today. “This traffic is not too bad today.” Joe reports on one hard break and harder bank to the right, “That's because today is Election Day in Israel.” (The Israeli Legislative Elections 2022, where “BB” Netanyahu was set for a dramatic return to power, and exit polls this morning, 0400, put him in a good lead.)

Joe again tries to catch up on the sites rapidly passing our bus windows. Much needs to be said here about the inferno of the old Valley of Hinnom⁶ that we passed, and the City of David, that we will visit. I couldn't capture all that swept by our bus windows, but alas we careened to a halt somewhere near the Dung Gate. Joe said he probably did not need to expound how this gate got its name. Here we would enter and make our way toward the temple mount.

The hatred that Muslims have for the Holy Bible, for God's chosen nation Israel, and the people of the book, i.e. Bible believing Christians, would be on full display as we entered the Muslim controlled Temple Mount. We were instructed to leave all Bibles and

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- 5 The Kidron Valley (Hebrew: נַחַל קִדְרוֹן, Naḥal Qidron, literally Qidron River Valley) is the valley originating slightly northeast of the Old City of Jerusalem, which then separates the Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives. It continues south-easterly thru the Judean desert reaching the Dead Sea. It descends 4,000 feet along its 20-mile course. The Holy Bible calls the upper course the "Valley of Josaphat". It appears in Bible eschatologic prophecies, which include the return of Elijah, followed by the arrival of the Messiah, and the War of Gog and Magog and Judgment Day's Battle of Armageddon. The upper Kidron Valley holds Jerusalem's most important cemetery from the First Temple period, with rock-cut tombs dating between the 9th and 7th centuries BC. The upper Kidron Valley segment north of the Old City was one of the main burial grounds of Jerusalem in the Second Temple period, where hundreds of tombs have survived until today, while the segment east of, and opposite the Temple Mount, boasts several excellently preserved monumental tombs from the same period. Several of the Second Temple period tombs were also used later in time, either as burial or as shelters for hermits and monks of the large monastic communities which inhabited the Kidron Valley during the Byzantine Empire period (4th-7th century).
- 6 Valley of Hinnom (Hebrew: בְּנֵי־הַיָּם, ge ben hinnom or son of Hinnom): The Valley of Hinnom is the Modern Hebrew name for the valley surrounding the Old City of Jerusalem and the adjacent Mount Zion from the west and south. It meets and merges with the Kidron Valley, the other principal valley around the Old City, near the Pool of Siloam which lies to the southeastern corner of Ancient Jerusalem. The Valley of Hinnom is first mentioned in the Holy Bible as part of the border between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (Joshua 15:8 “*And the border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom unto the south side of the Jebusite; the same is Jerusalem: and the border went up to the top of the mountain that lieth before the valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the end of the valley of the giants northward:*”). During the late First Temple period, it was the site of the Tophet (Strong's#08612 תֹּפֶת Topheth = “place of fire”), where some of the kings of Judah had sacrificed their children by fire (2Ki 23:10 “*And he (King Josiah) defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.*” also Jeremiah 7:31 “*And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.*”). God cursed the valley of the son of Hinnom (Jeremiah 19:2–6) and in the Bible, Gehinnom is associated with divine punishment and as the destination of the wicked. It is thus associated with the word Sheol (Strong's #07585 שְׁאוֹל shē'owl), the abode of the wicked dead, the place of no return. The King James Version of the Bible, and only the KJV, properly translates both the Hebrew *Sheol* (31 times) and Greek *Genna* (all 12 times) with the Anglo-Saxon word hell. See Matt.5:22, 29,30, 10:28, 18:9, 23:15, 33, Mrk.9:43, 45, 47, Lu.12:5, Jas.3:6 (Strong's #1067 γέεννα geenna) in a King James Bible.

Christian literature on the bus, and to conceal all “religious” jewelry and talk, none would be allowed in the Temple Mount area. I even left my walking stick (that the VA calls my cane) behind because it was inscribed with, “In the beginning God” in both English and Hebrew (בראשית ברא אלהים the first three words of the Hebrew Bible).

This was to be an awesome incursion into the Temple Mount area of the Mount Moriah of Bible times. It is curious that Israel hating, Jehovah hating Muslims are in control of the whole Temple Mount area. In a brief explanation Joe implied that in order to ward off

WWIII, the area was gingerly handed back⁷ to them after the whole city of Jerusalem was conquered during the Six Day War⁸.

Their repressive controls and restrictions displayed this hatred for both God's Holy Word,



Our tour guide Joe teaches just inside the Temple Mount next to the Al-Aqsa Mosque

and God's chosen people. The Israeli groups who were allowed on the Temple Mount were lead and followed by armed Muslim security teams. One Israeli “dissident” armed with a GoPro, a camera, and a handful of Hebrew flyers was being escorted out as we went in. He was capturing all the hostilities of the Muslim security team, ... I supposed.

Lots of drama unfolded at the checkpoint as they searched us to ensure we were not carrying any contraband literature, and god forbid any Holy Bibles. It was quite like Satan himself was in full control of who and what got into this temple mount area.

Fifty born-again believers, nine of them Pastors and Preachers of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ got in just the same, and looked in amazement at the unholy Muslim

7 A few hours after the Israeli flag was hoisted over the Dome of the Rock in 1967 during the Six-Day War, Israelis lowered it on the orders of Moshe Dayan (Israeli Defense Minister with a patch on his eye during the 6 day war) and invested the Muslim waqf (religious trust) with the authority to manage the Temple Mount in order to "keep the peace".

8 This summary of the 1967 war is from a note scratched in the margin of my Bible: In 1956, after continual Arab attacks on its border, Israel overruns the Gaza strip, and would advance all the way to Egypt if not stopped by action of the major powers. In 1967 Egyptian Nasser, armed to the teeth by Russia and urged ahead by them, declares total Arab war against Israel. Israel's June 6th preemptive strike totally eliminates the Egyptian Air Force, and Israel takes Jerusalem and their most holy place, the Temple Mount, vowing never to retreat again. The 1948 Armistice only gave access to the Western Wall, now they had it all! They swept to the Jordan River Valley, Jordan armies were cut to bits. They advanced against Syria and Egypt taking the Golan Heights, Syria's strong post. In only six short days Jordan demanded a cease fire, against Russian advice. Thus in six days Israel increased her area from 8,000 to 34,000 square miles. There were 1,000 Israeli fatalities, and 35,000 Arab fatalities.

mosque that stood before us. “O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps” (Ps.79:1).

Our guide Joe assembled our group of fifty in front of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. He kindly explained some history and details of the mosque, its presence here on the Temple

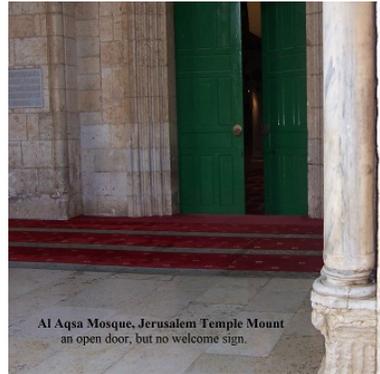


Mount, and he pointed out the open door but forbidden entry. I say, “kindly” because a tour guide must keep his explanations of the three major religions that gather here quite civil and guarded. Joe did extremely well, when you consider this group of Baptist were not part of those three major religions.⁹

The Al-Aqsa Mosque was named “The Distant Mosque” because Qur'an 17:1 gives a story line that one of Allah's servants went to a far away

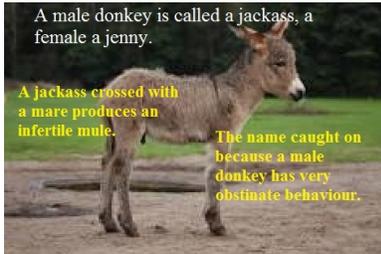
mosque and Unmayad, who built Al-Aqsa in the 8th century, wanted it to be supposed that this was the very “distant mosque” that the unspecified servant went to. He was very successful with his myth building scheme.

First consider that in the single reference in the Qur'an where Allah's servant visited a “distant mosque”, the word *mosque* at the time meant any place of worship, not just an Islamic place of worship. Thus Qur'an 17:1 has an unspecified servant going to an unspecified temple. It might have been any existing temple, synagogue, church,



Al Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem Temple Mount
an open door, but no welcome sign.

or monastery. The unspecified servant could have visited the Saint Catherine Monastery on the Sinai Peninsula, it was then in existence, or the Buddhist Monastery in Bengal, it was then in existence, but he could not have visited the so named Al-Aqsa Mosque, because it did not exist in the 7th century. It did not even exist when Muslim prophet Muhammad was alive (born 570 AD in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, died 632 AD in Medina, Saudi Arabia).



Clearly the Al-Aqsa Mosque was built to propagate a lie, and my, my, my, did it propagate. The myth is now told that the prophet Muhammad rode a mythical horse (possibly white, smaller than a horse, larger than a jackass) named Buraq (indeed we did have a former president named after Muhammad's jackass). He rode Buraq, it is

supposed, in a night journey, “Isra and Mi'raj”, through the heavens and back. The Al-Aqsa Mosque was built in the 8th century, to build the supposition that he took this 7th century night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and then off to the “seventh heaven”. It is one of the most important episodes in the life of the Muslim's prophet, and it is completely mythical, with but this one very vague verse in the Qur'an for a reference.¹⁰

9 Baptists are not part, and have no part of Catholic Christianity; Catholics burned Baptist at the stake for rejecting their infant baptisms and still would if they could. The Protestants that sprang from those persecuting Catholic roots still thought themselves to be Catholic (Universal), still thought they were the catholic replacement for Israel, and still persecuted Baptist who rejected their catholicness and infant baptisms.

10 More of this mythical imagination is more eloquently debunked in an article “The Islamic claim to Jerusalem makes no sense” by Joel Yliluoma at <https://bisqwit.iki.fi/story/apologetics/alaqsa/> accessed



The late Evangelist Loren Dawson had taught us well, “In the Old Testament God made a temple for the people; in the New Testament God makes a people for his temple.” It was sad to see the Temple Mount controlled by Muslims, but God's holy temple was not defiled. Today no less than fifty temples stood on this Temple Mount. *“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's”* (1Cor.6:19-20).

We gathered in a quiet corner where we could view the Dome of the Rock. In our minds eye we could see the mound of bedrock where Solomon's temple once stood.

Pastor Chalie spoke bluntly but softly while no Muslim security listened in. He carefully described what was just below the surface of what we saw here. He briefly described how Abraham visited the land of Moriah where we stood, and came to this very crust of

bedrock with his only begotten son, fire, wood, and a knife. God stopped that sacrifice; Abraham had spoken and said, *“My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering”* (Gen.22:8). That play on words is not captured in the Hebrew tongue, but English can easily misplace modifiers, and those fifty-seven genius linguists who took seven years to translate the Holy Bible into the Kings English sure got it right. Indeed God did provide *“the Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world”* (Jn.1:29). And it was God himself (Jn.1:14).



Pastor Chalie teaching on the Temple Mount.

That only begins to tell what all happened on this piece of real estate, and in hushed tones, as men shushed him when Muslim security guards approached, Pastor Chalie unfolded the next page of Bible history as this eager crowd of worshipers leaned in to hear every word.

More of what Pastor Chalie said on the Temple Mount is in the next journal: see www.GSBaptistChurch.com/israel22

For eighteen years I have published a weekly 1 page Penny Pulpit called “What the Bible Says.” To get these in your weekly email simply go to our web page www.GSBaptistChurch.com and click the link: “Subscribe to Weekly Penny Pulpits” I thought this weeks Penny Pulpit fit well into this Half Shekel Journal.

Msg #2246 Being Saved from the Fire

What The Bible Says

Good Samaritan's Penny Pulpit by Pastor Ed Rice

Right after God takes Jeremiah to the potters house and gives him a poignant message about his forming a nation by carefully molding it in his hands (Jer.18), he tells him to *“get a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests; and go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom ... and say, Hear ye the word of the LORD ... Then shall thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee, And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again and they shall bury them in Tophet (place of fire), till there be no place to bury”* (Jer.19:1-3,10-11).

The nation of Israel was formed, framed, and fashioned by the careful persistent hand of The Potter, cf Genesis 12 thru 2Kings 25. It was very often *“marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it”* (18:4).

After an earthen vessel is dried, fired, used, and broken it cannot be made whole again. The valley of of Hinnom, *Gehenna*, where Tophet burned as an inferno, is where Israel passed her children through the fire of Molech and incurred this wrath of God.

Twelve times Jesus used the Hebrew name of this inferno, *Gehenna*, to describe hell where the fire is never quenched. He said it would be better to gouge your eye out than to go there (Mat.5:29). God is forming you; don't end up a broken burning potter's bottle. Be sure you are saved from that fire the Bible way (Joh.3:16-18, Rom.10:9-10).

An Essay for week #46 - Nov 13, 2022

Msg in audio at www.GSBaptistChurch.com/audio/g221113.mp3

Systematic Theology Volumes at www.GSBaptistChurch.com/theology

Half Shekel Journal reads www.GSBaptistChurch.com/israel22

God Bless your studies of Him and His Word.



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#02 Tue 1 Nov Jesus Was On This Temple Mount

Being careful about who was listening in, Pastor Chalie continues. Another page of HisStory was written beneath this Temple Mount we are standing on. Solomon built the first temple on this very spot. Pastor continued to carefully expound God's documentation about Mount Moriah. King David accumulated the resources and designs for his son's miraculous construction of the temple. No chisel or hammer sounded on this site during the whole seven year construction (1Kng.6:7,38). But the Psalmists sure sounded out a lot about Solomon's Temple that stood here.

Ps 5:7 But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.

Ps 11:4 The LORD¹¹ is in his holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

Ps 18:6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.

Ps 27:4 One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

Ps 29:9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory.

Ps 48:9 We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.

Ps 65:4 Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

Ps 68:29 Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee.

Ps 138:2 I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.¹²



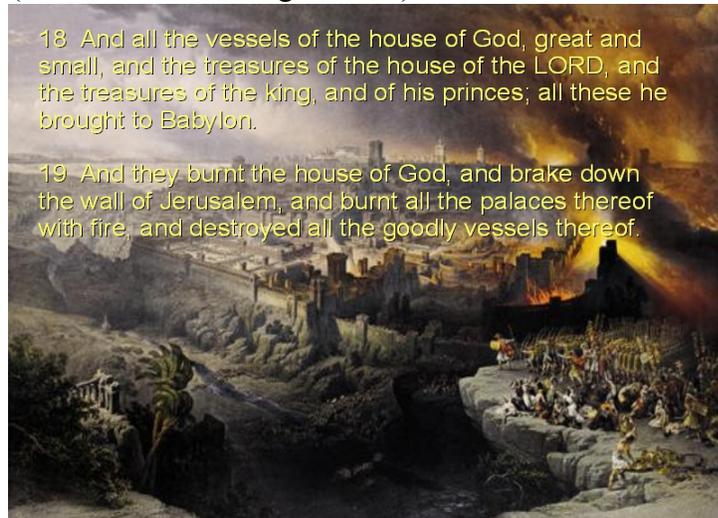
11 LORD, with all caps, is the English rendition of JEHOVAH "The Self-existent One" (Ex.3:14, 6:3). The latter name is so revered in Hebrew Scripture that it was not pronounced out loud, and is thus represented in the KJV. Hebrews might not address God by his first name, as it were, but through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ born again believers can (Isa.12:2, 26:4).

12 Online Bible Verse List: Ps 5:7, 11:4, 18:6, 27:4, 29:9,48:9,65:4, 68:29, 138:2

It is hard to envision Solomon's temple as we stand here on a huge platform built by King Herod. The foot print of Solomon's temple is dwarfed by the platform that Herod built. Solomon's temple was glorious just the same. The Bible gives the dimensions for artist to imagine the pictures shown. There are also the models seen at the Israeli Museum.

Solomon's temple was gutted when Nebuchadnezzar ransacked the city in 606 BC

(2Chr.36:6, 2Kng.24:14) and then completely destroyed when he came back in 595 BC (2Chr.36:13-21, 2Kng.25:1-17). Israel was thrust into the Babylonian captivity for 70 years as God said (2Chr,36:21, Jer.25,27,29), and, consequently, the Jews returned exactly 70 years after 606, in 536 BC (Ezra 1:1-4), and the rebuilt temple was finished twenty years later in 515 BC (Ezra 6:15)¹³. God runs a pretty exacting calendar.

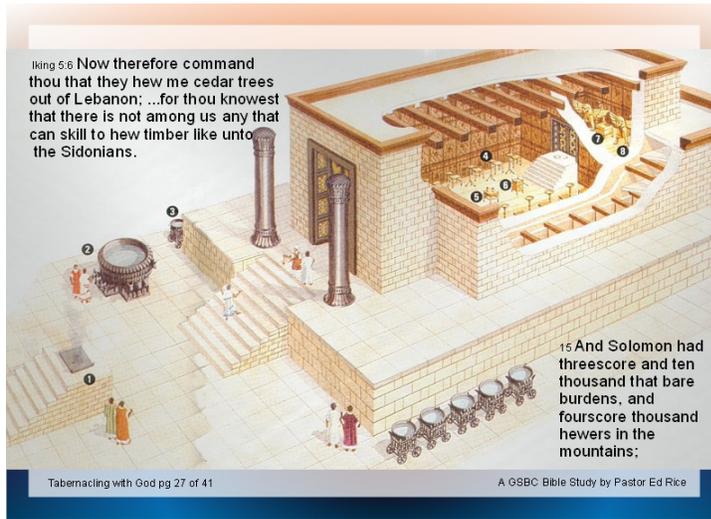


18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon.

19 And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof.

Standing on Mount Moriah and reviewing events the Bible records 2,600 years ago added a depth to our worship here. Noah Webster defines a "pilgrimage" as "a long journey, particularly a journey to someplace deemed

sacred and venerable (worthy of reverence), in order to pay devotion to relics of some deceased saint." We were not here for deceased saints, but for a living Savior. This was a pilgrimage just the same, and God said that this place where we stood was indeed sacred. The slides shown here are from a Temple History presentation assembled by the author in 2015.

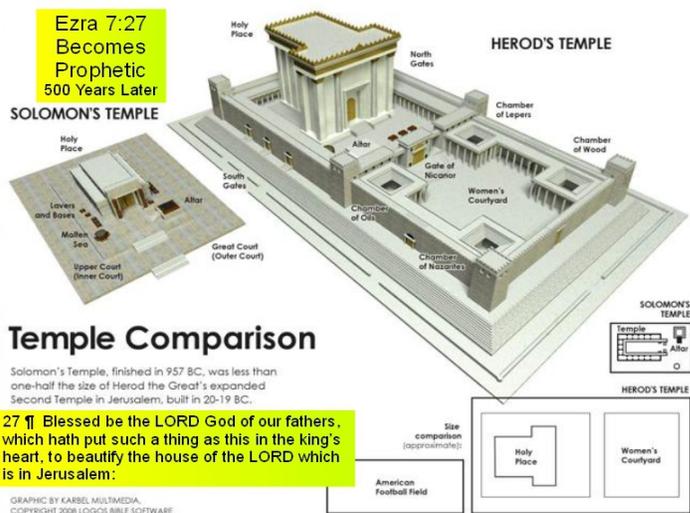


King 5:6 Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon: ...for thou knowest that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians.

15 And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains;

Tabernacling with God pg 27 of 41

A GSBG Bible Study by Pastor Ed Rice



¹³ Dates given are according to Ussher's very Biblical dating calculations which often differ from modernist "scholar" dates. James Ussher (1581-1656), Archbishop of Armagh, but genius believer.



Pastor Chalie pulled us from 600 BC back to the present, Look at this great platform that Herod built, that dome and the mosque are each laden with demonic symbols and represent Satan's presence here, but look back to visualize the temple that stood on this ground. Herod's temple, the temple where Jesus overthrew the tables of the money changers, stood right here. Pastor laid before us the very presence of Jesus in this place; and the authority he always displayed with his presence in this temple. Always? Yes always! It was as if he owned the place.

Jesus's first entry into this temple was with his mother when he was 41 days old (cf Luke 2:21-24). He was brought here with a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtle dove, for a sin offering (Lev.12:1-8). These were not brought for his purification, as written in the apostate NIV bible, but for his mothers purification as it is clearly dictated in the King James Bible. The sacrifices were brought to the door of the temple and offered to “make an atonement for *her*; and *she* shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood ” (Luke 2:21 -24, Leviticus 12:1-8).



What authority could a 41 day-old have on his entry into the temple? Well, look to the Scriptures:

And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy

Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ (Messiah). And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, ...

Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed (Luke 2:25-35).



And again,

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem (Luke 2:36-38).



Consider his second recorded entry into the temple at age 12; it is found in the very familiar Bible verses of Luke 2:41-52. The most delightful verse declaring:

And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers (Luke 2:46 -47).

For the next 18 years the Bible is silent concerning any events in Jesus's life. Some have speculated things, but when God is silent, it behooves his servants to be silent as well. So the next time Jesus was in the temple is sometimes overlooked, but he

was there with an unprecedented authority.

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil. ... And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence (Luke 4:1-2a, 9).



In the wilderness he was tempted in the worlds barrenness, on the mountain top in the worlds bountifulness, and here, in the temple, in the worlds religiosity. The answer to each temptation was, and still is, “It is written.” The devil tempted Jesus here in this temple, and his authority, even against “*principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, ...*” was again displayed here in the temple.

Pastor Chalie had portrayed for our minds eye the overturned tables and the scattering oxen, sheep, and money changers. This happened at the first Passover of his public ministry and is recorded in John chapter 2.

And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What

sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. (John 2:13-19).

When Jesus entered the temple he always wielded a profound authority, as was said, he behaved as if he owned the place. In my recollection of Scripture (and in my perusing through Vol 04 Christology, Chapter 11 The Harmony of the Life of Christ¹⁴) his next entry into the temple was at his Triumphal Entry¹⁵ into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (cf. Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19, and John 12). This Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem proceeded right on into the temple, picture the crowds. Jesus here displayed all the authority of his three year previous Passover time entry and more.



And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there (Matthew 21:12-17).

14 Rice, Edward, *A Systematic Theology for the 21st Century Vol 4 Christology*, www.GSBaptistChurch.com/theology , pg 147-160

15 Likely titled after Ps.47:1, 106:47, “O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. ... Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise.”

That was Sunday. On the morrow, Monday, after cursing a fig tree, it is recorded,

And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. And when even was come, he went out of the city.(Mark 11:15-19).

Next Pastor Chalie focused our minds eye on Jesus' teaching in the temple. Measure it out verse by verse and you find that the majority of his recorded public teachings were done in the temple after his Sunday triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The Bible says:

And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.(Luke 21:37-38).



Jesus gave testimony of it in Mark 14:49, “I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.”. The chief priests and the elders hated his authority as recorded in Matthew 21:23-24,

“And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Standing here on the temple mount, with minds racing through all the things our Lord Jesus Christ said and did here ... It was over powering!

I put my pencil and notepad in my coat pocket and clasped Beverly's hand. When our eyes met we were each welling back tears. We had talked often of what it was like to be camped right close to the throne. This was all of that and more. We dragged our feet at the rear of the crowd as brother Chalie led us off toward the Eastern Gate.



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice

#03 Tue 1 Nov Eastern Gate and Praetorium

The second day of our pilgrimage to Israel had brought us to the Temple Mount. We were in awe of being here in Israel, in awe of what we had thus far

seen, overwhelmed by entry into the Temple Mount, and now, in great awe of our Lord Jesus Christ as we had just spent an hour in worship. Turned out it was only thirty minutes, but it was intense. We had considered what Jesus had done and said on the very ground we stood on. We now gaggled from our little corner of the Mount and made our way to the Eastern



Gate. We saw the gate from City View Park on the Mount of Olives, but now we were on the inside looking out. Well, in that the gate was closed and thoroughly sealed, I guess we were looking from the inside over.

Our group gathered close, and our Incredible Guide Joe¹⁶, met us here. The reverence that Jews hold for the site of the temple, particularly the site nearest to the most holy place, where Jews were not previously allowed to enter, kept Joe from attending our previous gathering in the center of the Temple Mount.



Joe had not lost any enthusiasm during his temporary absence. He began pointing out sites and places we could see at this perch on the Temple Mount, and eventually focused on the Eastern Gate.

The revised standard name was the “Golden Gate”, but any Christian who has ever read the book of Ezekiel knows better than accepting the name change.

“Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east: And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate

16 Some of us were still hunting for the mnemonic that would label him G.I. Joe.

whose prospect is toward the east. So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house” (Ezek.43:1-5).

In no less than sixteen references the prophet Ezekiel is told by God to document something about the Eastern Gate. Ezekiel was the prophet that was shown the departed Shekinah glory of God as it left the temple and departed from Jerusalem (Ezekiel 8-11):

“And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain” (Ezek.8:3-4).



“Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.” (Ezekiel 11:22 -23).

We had just worshiped for what seemed an hour (it was just an intense 20 minutes!) because the glory of God came back into the temple in the form of God's only begotten Son, the Messiah, the Christ. The physical presence of God, the manifestation of God as it were (Jn.1:14), departed on a cross standing on the hill called Calvary, or Golgatha.

Through the Prophet Ezekiel, God is letting it be known that his glory will once again enter the temple, and as the sun rises in the eastern sky and breaks into a new day, even so, the Son will break into a new world, ... and he will enter through the Eastern Gate. There is much more to be said about this Eastern Gate.

The Bible says that the people, and the prince shall worship at the Eastern Gate and sacrifice in the new gargantuan temple that will be built during the Millennium.

“Thus saith the Lord GOD; The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened. And the prince shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate without, and shall stand by the post of the gate, and the priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate: then he shall go forth; but the gate shall not be shut until the evening. Likewise the people of the land shall

worship at the door of this gate before the LORD in the sabbaths and in the new moons” (Ezekiel 46:1-3).

Also, after the wrath of God and the battle of Armageddon have destroyed the earth, the water that heals flows out of the Eastern Gate.

“Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. Then brought he me out of the



way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles.... And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh” (Ezekiel 47:1-3,6-9).

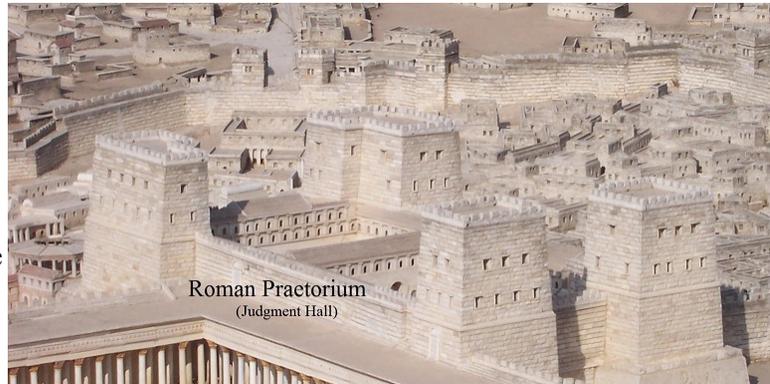
A Bible student knows some things about the Eastern Gate; things that pertain to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and God's Son sitting on the throne of David for a literal thousand year reign. It is not to be the Eastern Gate that Herod built and Muslim's desecrated, it will be the Eastern Gate outside of the truly gargantuan temple that God has built during the Millennial Reign of Christ (Ezek.40-48). Evidently Jews know something about the Eastern Gate as well; their sepulchres on the Mount of Olives are arranged so their feet are toward this gate, so that when a resurrection occurs they will be pointed in the right direction.

Satan knows somethings about this Eastern Gate as well. He can read. His servants hate Herod's Temple Mount and have disdain for the Eastern Gate that stands before us this day. Our guide, Joe, made mention of Muslims trying to desecrate and close off the gate with their tombs and their concrete. It is just speculation Joe said, but for those who know the larger picture and the effort to keep that gate sealed, it is not *idle* speculation.

When King Herod had this huge Temple Mount constructed, he was doubtless aware of the description of what might be called Ezekiel's temple. Again, it is Ezekiel's temple that will be built and operated during the millennial reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. Herod made a noble effort, but mere man cannot build the temple that God describes to Ezekiel the prophet. Its dimensions dwarf the whole city of Jerusalem. Mountains will need to be moved before such a temple could be built, and deserts would need to bloom before its described suburbs could be constructed and inhabited. We know who moves mountains. Just the same, Herod did an impressive job here, it was and is a wonder of the world, and his emphasis on this Eastern Gate is notable. God's temple and God's Eastern Gate will be greater. Having studied these things out, Beverly and I stayed a little longer at the Eastern Gate. But alas, our group had moved on to the north.

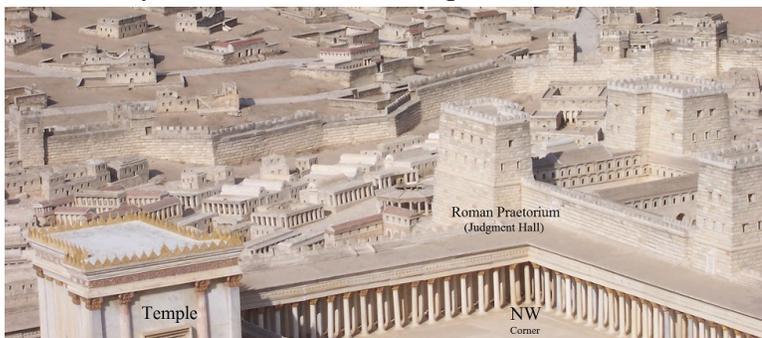
As we gathered at the north end of the Temple Mount our guide Joe, and then our guide, Pastor Chalie, addressed what was once standing in the empty lot before us.

To address Jerusalem's vulnerability from the north a citadel was placed on a rocky plateau just outside the north west corner of the Temple Area. "The fortress served as a headquarters for the Roman army in



Jerusalem... The close proximity of its high towers to the temple complex enabled Roman guards to keep watch on any disturbances that developed. Herod had built underground passage ways that allowed Roman detachments to enter the compound if deemed necessary."¹⁷

This fortress was used for the Roman's judgment hall and Mark 15:16 says of Christ on trial, "And the soldiers lead him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they called together the whole band." An old Arabic proverb says, "He that speaks well turns ears into eyes." As Pastor Chalie spoke we could see the Roman Praetorium¹⁸ standing in



the open lot before us. We could see Jesus in the hands of the mocking soldiers; we could hear Pontius Pilot say to the crowd, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ (Messiah)? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified" (Mat.27:22).

It only took a moment really; mere minutes of our time standing at the north end of the

¹⁷ see www.christianevidences.org accessed 11/22/2022

¹⁸ Pictures of the Roman Praetorium were taken by the author at the Israel Museum's most impressive display of a huge model of Jerusalem in the Second Temple period. Huge is 2,000 square meters (21,520-square-foot)! The Second Temple Jerusalem Model recreates the city of 66 AD at the height of its glory; the eve of the great revolt of the Jews against the Romans. We visited the Israel Museum on 03 Nov, Day 4 of our pilgrimage.

Temple Mount. The Muslims had made sure that we had no Bibles to open. Our guide Joe, with just a few worded brushstrokes had painted the towers of a Roman citadel, filled with soldiers, and housing a judgment hall called Praetorium. Our guide Pastor Charlie had made that hall echo with God's word, Pontius Pilot's words, and soldiers with a purple robe and crown of thorns. Our guide the Holy Spirit of God now flooded my mind with holy words:

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2Cor.5:20).

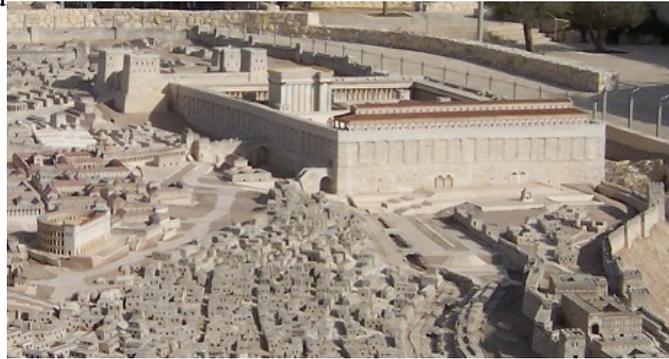
"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ... He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:17-18, 36).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

It is a horrible thing that man did in that judgment hall, that Praetorium that once stood only a few feet from where we now listened to Pastor Charlie.

The law was given in 1492 BC and for 1,500 years man was tried and tested for his ability to keep that law. He was supposed, by keeping the law, to come through the dark veil and stand in the



presence of a holy God. He failed, man was and is incapable of keeping God's law, incapable of standing in God's presence through law. In this judgment hall, the verdict for man is forever in; here man condemned the only begotten Son of God to death on a cruel cross. That guilty verdict for man cries out, *"the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked..."* (Jeremiah 17:9). ... *"As it is written there is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ... For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom.3:10-11, 23).*

Religions, every one of them, try to revisit this Judgment Hall and cast out the verdict that came in here. Whether it be Judaism (the only "religion" that God endorsed), trying to go on as if this Judgment Hall didn't count; or Catholicism where black robed priests and clergy teach people that a little more penance, a little more suffering (a little more Via Dolorosa), and a little more bead counting will suffice; or if it be any of the Roman or Orthodox Protestant offshoots that suppose a few more good works will suffice, perhaps water of baptism will wash us, or keeping the Sabbath will subdue that lost estate of man. No, the verdict is in, it was read in the judgment hall before us now standing, the gavel has sounded, the innocent is condemned that the guilty may go free. *"God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom.5:8).*

The trial whereby man must keep the law of God is past. That dispensation, or test of stewardship, is ended, that case cannot be reopened by any religion. A new dispensation is now opened and springs on the world as a new dawn. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. ... That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus”* (Eph.2:8-9, 7)

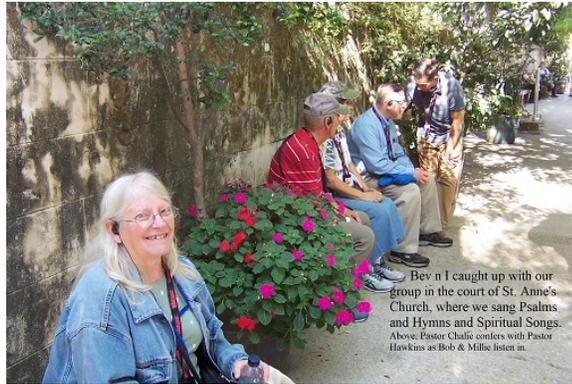
Pastor Charlie closed his Bible, ... well he stopped quoting the Bible, and he tucked his phone away, Muslims guarding the Temple Mount did not allow us to bring in a Bible. We somberly walked by the Praetorium which stood in our minds eye, and began our departure from the Temple Mount. It is a marvelous thing to be saved by grace.

*Thank you, Lord, for saving my soul.
Thank you, Lord, for making me whole.
Thank you, Lord, for giving to me,
Thy Great Salvation, So Rich and Free.*
lyrics and music: Seth and Bessie Sykes



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#04 Tue 1 Nov am Pool of Bethesda, Via Dolorosa, The Cardo
 Somehow we came down off the Temple Mount and started

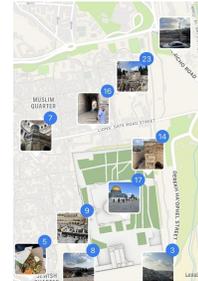
wandering on the narrow streets of Jerusalem. Bev and I thought we were hurrying pretty good for a couple in their 70s, but we were a block or more behind our guide Joe who talked on and walked on out in the lead (Joe was also in his 70s, but very spry). I really had no idea where we were or how we got there, but I saw an El-Ghazali Square sign and clicked a picture, we went out of or into the Lions Gate, and then I clicked a picture of what was promised in



Bev n I caught up with our group in the court of St. Anne's Church, where we sang Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs. Above: Pastor Chalie confers with Pastor Hawkins as Bob & Mellie listen in.

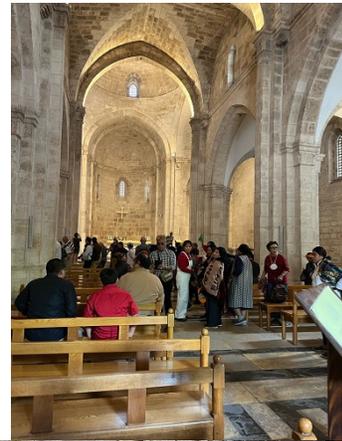


stone to be the birthplace of Mother Mary (I could not read the Latin in the Archway). Eventually we were waiting for entry into what was Saint Anne's Church, "a medieval church, with notable acoustics." Later I found that Shane, Kathy, and Micah's i-cameras had i-locators that produced i-maps showing exactly where



every i-picture was taken. That i-feature was i-amazing and in hindsight, very i-informative, Ae. And, turns out we did go both out of and in through the Lions Gate.

The acoustics were indeed commendable. The group singing when we entered Saint Annes were a blessing to my soul even though I could not understand a word they sang. Our group of fifty assembled in the center of the old church and the building swelled with words I did understand, and the harmonies that echoed and reverberated through that medieval Roman Catholic Church thrilled all our souls. Pastor Chalie and Pastor Hawkins led in several hymns we knew well. There is a name I love to hear, I love to sing its worth, ... we did, and we closed with the building resonating with Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound, and it was indeed Amazing.



We barely walked a block or so from the church before our guide, Joe, had us assembled at the recently (1888) excavated Pool of Bethesda. Pastor Chalie preached it eloquently.



After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water (Jn.5:1-3).

Before its excavation, liberal “scholars” thought this portion of scripture was fanciful storytelling, they still do, but they will soon be “smiling out of the other side of their face”, (as my mother eloquently and often put it). The modernist ecumenical bibles still rip verse 4 right out of their copyright versions¹⁹, because it, with twenty other complete verses, were ripped out of the corrupt manuscripts from Alexandria Egypt. I hold my KJV Holy Bible a little closer every time I read their omission:

For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years (Jhn.5:4-5).

Sure enough, the pool called in the Hebrew tongue *Bethesda* was found next to the sheep market, right where the Bible said. The truth that our Lord Jesus Christ said to a certain man that was there, which had an infirmity thirty-eight years, “*Rise take up thy bed, and walk ...*”, that is believed by faith. Bible believers are a strange lot, they believe the Bible. That is one deep excavated pool just inside what is now called the Lions Gate.



We made our way back to the Lions Gate Road and just outside where the Praetorium would have been located we intercepted the Via Dolorosa. Consider here the Via Dolorosa.

And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear

his cross. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. And they crucified him, (Matt.27:31-35).

“Via Dolorosa” is a Catholic Latin term meaning “the way of suffering.” Catholics greatly value “suffering” as a means of



And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Tim 2:5)

¹⁹ It is proven by scholars and accepted by liberals, cultists, modernists and now even by the popular evangelicals and fundamentalists, that Matt 17:21 is not supposed to be in my Bible. Should you take your pen knife and cut it out? Would you? You would have to also cut Matt 18:11; 23:14; Mark 7:16; 9:44, and 46; 11:26; 15:28. So too Luke 17:36; 23:17 and John 5:4. You would have to trash Acts 8:37; 15:34; 24:7; 28:29; Rom 16:24; and of course I John 5:7. You would also have to rip out most of Matt 5:44 and Luke 9:56 and in Col 1:14 cut out the phrase "Through His Blood." (Ref my Syst Theology for the 21st Cent. Vol 02 Bibliology pg 364.)

punishing themselves until they deserve forgiveness for their sin. Anyone who has been in a Roman Catholic Church probably knows that they venerate and pray through the Stations of the Cross. Here, on the streets of Jerusalem, they venerate and pray through the Stations of the Via Dolorosa.

Now I am not a Roman Catholic, but my mother, Doris Romano Rice, was. She was converted from Catholic to Christ in 1958 when a Baptist preacher named Cecil Palm was going door to door in Gang Mills, New York and knocked on the door of 40 Platt Street. I was born-again saved two years later, and I know some things about Roman Catholic error. “Via Dolorosa” is big-time error.

Rat poison is 99% good rat food and 1% deadly poison. Roman Catholicism has a much higher percent of deadly poison than that, but it always does have a portion of truth mixed in. Indeed our Lord Jesus Christ carried a cross through the narrow streets of Jerusalem. We do not know the exact route taken, or even where such streets were located 1,992 years ago, but we are very very close. That is the truth. Christians, holding a Bible, believe he carried



the cross out of the city to a hill called Golgotha. Catholics esteeming Helena, Empress of the Roman Empire and mother of Constantine I, believe he carried it down a Via Dolorosa to a venerated holy sepulcher under the cathedral she had constructed²⁰.

The Roman Catholic deadly error is in the idea that piously and patiently praying through the Stations of “The Way of Suffering”, or their fourteen Stations of the Cross, constitutes “doing penance” which therein secures forgiveness of sin.

Penance is “punishment inflicted on oneself as an outward expression of repentance for wrongdoing ... A sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church often called *sacrament of reconciliation*.”²¹ Black robed

priests taught Catholics that doing penance, with pious suffering as their punishment, is what forgives sin. Catholics step out of the confessional with an assignment of doing penance for the forgiveness of their sins. If you do not do an adequate amount of penance or suffering in this life, they suppose, you go to Purgatory until the lack is made up. That is Roman Catholic deadly rat poison.



20 After allegedly seeing a vision of a cross in the sky in 312 AD, Constantine the Great began to favor Christianity, and sent his mother, Helena, to Jerusalem to look for Christ's tomb. Three crosses were found near a tomb; one which cured people of disease, the story goes, and this was presumed to be the True Cross Jesus was crucified on. Helena had found Calvary, she supposed, and in 326 AD Constantine ordered that the temple to Jupiter/Venus be replaced by a church. After the temple was torn down and its ruins removed, the soil was removed from a cave, revealing a rock-cut tomb that Helena identified as the burial site of Jesus. A shrine was built, enclosing the rock tomb and it is venerated, prayed to and worshiped by Roman Catholics to this day. (From multiple sources researched by a Baptist Preacher of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, Feb 2009.)

21 Oxford Dictionary, MobiSystems, Inc., 2022 sv “penance”.

The Holy Bible says, “*I tell you, Nay: but, except ye **repent**, ye shall all likewise perish*” (Lu.13:3,5), but the Roman Catholic Latin Vulgate says, “except you **do penance**, you perish.” Every time God says “*repent*”, the Roman Catholic bible says “*do penance*.” Over sixty times in the Latin, or in their finally released, after 1,582 years, English Douay–Rheims Catholic bible, they miss translate “*repent*” to “*do penance*”, when the real Bible, the Holy Bible, never mentions penance! Not one time!

It is corruption, it is Roman Catholic conspiracy against God; every time he says *episcopal*, they say *priest*, and every time he says *repent*, they say *do penance*. Jesus said what he meant and meant what he said when he said, “*I am the way the truth and the life*”, when he said “*call no man father*”, and when he said from the cross, “*It is finished.*” There is no forgiveness of sins found in punishing oneself with penance, nor in any “way of suffering”, or in beads, or “hail Marys” or purgatories, or in water baptisms. His sacrifice paid the full debt, ... and it is finished. Priests prescribing self punishments via penance is feckless; it is rat poison, no matter how well Mel Gibson portrays it.

If you will be forgiven from sin it will only be via the Bible way, as portrayed in Isaiah 53:6 and Romans 10:9 -10.



All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. ... That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ... For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Isa.53:6, Rom.10:9-10,13).

So we walked the streets of Jerusalem where Jesus carried his cross, for us it was not a way of

suffering, or a way of pious penance; it was a sobering reminder of the price Jesus paid for sin, and it reminded us of the Apostle Paul's charge, “*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*”(1Tim.2:5).

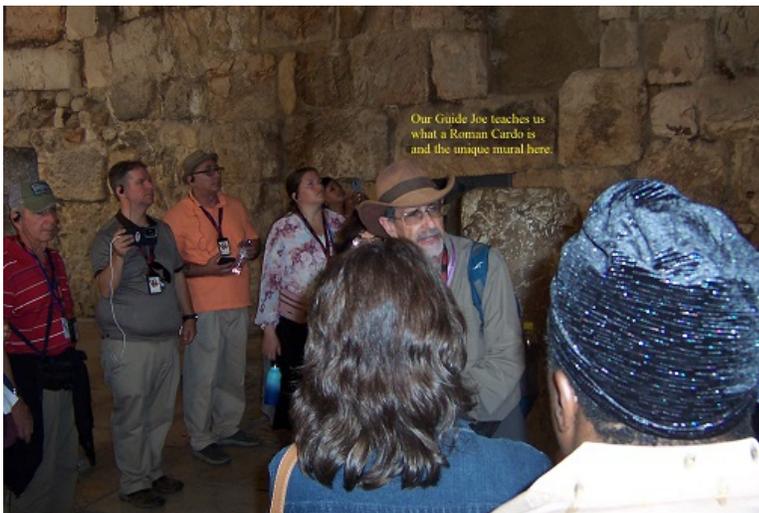


The very narrow streets of Jerusalem were very crowded with tour groups crisscrossing on main avenues lined with shops and sale barkers. Cars, motorcycles, and even miniature garbage trucks squeezed past tourists on other avenues, while some streets

stood completely naked and exposed. It was exhilarating to be here. What an awesome thing, to be making our way across the backside of Jerusalem where markets and souvenir shops selling Jewish, Muslim, and Catholic artifacts all clambered for attention. We turned a corner and, voila, we were in Alabama.

On the narrow David Street, leading from Jaffa Gate to the Western Wall, Hani Imam opened a store called “Alabama The Heart of Dixie.” Whoda thunk Nick Saban would have an autographed picture just off the Via Dolorosa? The autograph says, “To Hani, Roll Tide, Nick Saban.”

The Palestinian born Hani Imam studied engineering at the University of Alabama and lived in Tuscaloosa from 1984-1994. ... “I went to school in Alabama, and I am a big Alabama fan. My family and I love Alabama football and are very proud of Coach Saban and the program,” Imam said. “No one expects an Alabama store here, but everyone loves it. ... I have to say 'Roll Tide' quite a few times a day in the summer.”²² Imam sells T-shirts with the



University of Alabama logo along with the state’s name in Arabic and in Hebrew. University of Alabama logos are printed on mugs, plates, hats, car tags and just about everything you can think of. Jerusalem is an amazing mix of cultures. We had followed the Via Dolorosa from the Muslim Quarter to the Christian Quarter and we were now headed toward “The Cardo” in the Jewish Quarter.

Jerusalem proper, after 1860 called the Old City, is today traditionally divided into four quarters; it has been since the 19th century. The Jewish Quarter is the western hill of the historical Old City, which has been part of the pre-medieval walled city since the First Temple period in King Hezekiah's day. The Muslim Quarter is the north-west corner of the Old City, from the Temple Mount area around the Lions Gate, Herod's Gate and the Damascus Gate. The Christian Quarter is the south-west corner of the Old City; it should be called the Catholic Quarter as it contains the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and forty other Catholic holy places.

22 Shamsi-Basha, Karim, blog article, January 21, 2016, <https://alabamane.wscenter.com/2016/01/21/nick-saban-and-the-alabama-crimson-tide-found-on-the-streets-of-jerusalem/> accessed 11/22/2022



The Armenians have a quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem because Armenians have had a strong presence in the city since the fourth century. Armenia, the nation, in the mountainous Caucasus region between Asia and Europe, is among the earliest Christian civilizations; it is a former Soviet republic, and their Jerusalem quarter is its oldest living Armenian diaspora²³ community. Our guide Joe explained (on Day 5



as we passed by the quarter on our way to/from Caiaphas' Palace) that the Armenian Quarter is completely closed off with their own wall within a wall. The Armenians parallel Judaism in that they have their own language that no one else speaks, their own homeland always occupied by foreigners, they marry only their own, and they have been continually persecuted and have tasted the hatred of genocide.



After leaving Alabama-

Jerusalem with large smiles we came to “The Cardo.” Romans liked to decorate the main thoroughfare in the heart of a city with spectacular stone columns. Joe explained, the Cardo in Jerusalem was first evidenced in a mosaic map of Jerusalem found on a church floor in Jordan. A portion of the 6th century street was excavated in the 1970s and Joe enjoyed explaining the mural uniquely displaying what it might have looked like.

As we made our way toward the Zion Gate we had a relaxing lunch hour before we were to reunite with Eiad and the tour bus that would take us to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane. Oh, and Kathy found a jewelry store named after our granddaughter, Moriah, she took i-photos.



23 Oxford Dictionary, MobiSystems, Inc., 2022 sv “diaspora” people who have been dispersed from their homeland.

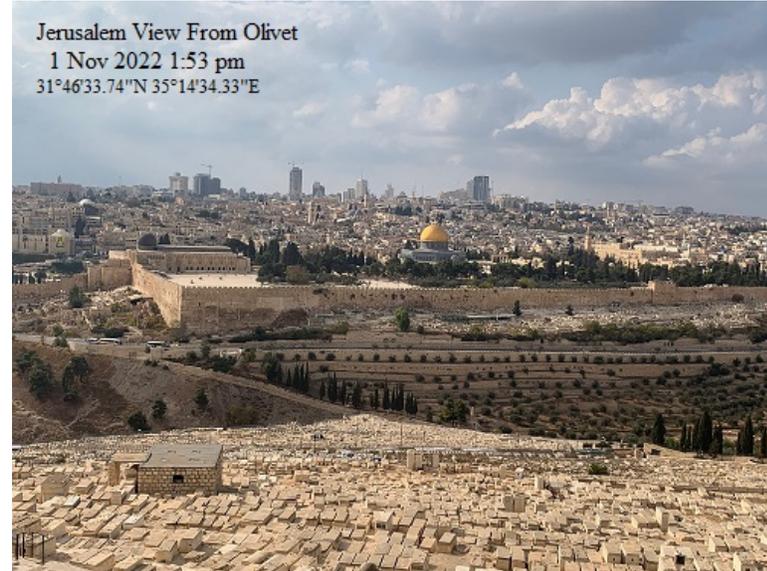


The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#05 Tue 1 Nov pm City View, Ascension Hill, Gethsemane.

Beverly and I settled into the comfortable seats of the Irizar i6S luxury tour bus, finally reunited with our Bibles, notebooks, and my walking stick. We

had, in half a day, walked twice as far as any New York day, and now my arthritic back and Bev's swollen ankle were already making us pay.

Every bus ride in and around Jerusalem was a thrill and we remained glued to our window trying to pick out the sites that Joe barked out on the speaker. There was one announced for every two blocks that Eiad navigated; the 40 foot Irizar squeezed through some impossible situations with



Jerusalem View From Olivet
1 Nov 2022 1:53 pm
31°46'33.74"N 35°14'34.33"E

amazing speed and agility. I tried to keep half an eye on the windshield, and half on the landmarks zooming by.

Between barks, Joe was maintaining an ongoing narrative of what we would be doing with the rest of our first day in Jerusalem. Gethsemane before dark, stuck in my mind.

We got off the bus at City View Park, or maybe it was



1 Nov 22 1:53pm
31°46'33.67"N
35°14'34.29"E



1 Nov 22 2:15pm
Seven Arches
31°46'32.62"N
35°14'34.37"E

Ascension Hill, I'll have to check my sons iPhoto for the exact location²⁴, but the place was loaded with ticks, leeches and other bloodsucking parasites. One of

them couldn't get a package of 20 postcards to stick to my hand so he slid them into my coat pocket and said "only 10 shekels"... And some thing about his hungry little children at home. I learned you cannot be polite to leeches. A "No thank you", must be replaced with a "No and get your hands off of me, ...", and, "If you try and put another prayer shawl on my wife, I'll break your

24 img_5303ss Shane n Kathy Olivet 1Nov22 1:53pm 31°46'33.67"N 35°14'34.29"E, img_5306ss Pastor Chalie at 7Arches 1Nov22 2:15pm 31°46'32.62"N 35°14'34.37"E, img_5312 Gethsemane prayer time1 1Nov22 3:08pm, 31°46'47.67"N 35°14'24.29"E, img_4090 Gethsemane prayer time7 1Nov22 3:28pm, 31°46'47.71"N 35°14'23.03"E ... what amazing things phone cameras can do now-a-days.

arm ..." I did however, remain civil. I pulled the now "free" postcards out of my pocket again and dropped them on the roadway, ... again. I wanted to pitch them over the barricade behind us and down the hillside, ... again. I thought that might be "unchristian." There were more subtle leeches lurking here but I didn't remember any of them.

Our group assembled in a tiny arena overlooking the city and posed for a group photo with Jerusalem in the backdrop. I personally knew only a half dozen of the fifty. We were bonded together in Spirit, and I knew that over the next ten days there would also be a bond of experience between us. Remembering one's name is a very personal thing that starts a personal bonding. We all know sharp minds that will never forget a



name or a face; the rest of us struggle along in the background. I'm a little further back than most, but I had determined that I was going to love this ten days with forty "strangers" no matter what. The Clarks knew all this and provided us with a brochure with names and pictures of each one on the tour; bless their heart.



We were just coming up on our 24th hour in Israel, the view of the city from the Mount of olives was already familiar. There is the Eastern Gate; the large Temple Mount; the Southern Steps; the City of David; the expanse of the Kidron Valley; ... all these were now familiar, and cherished.

It was good to see Pastor Chalie with his Bible opened. Man was not meant

to read an iBible from an iPhone, and certainly not to preach from one. I think that is in the Bible somewhere, seems like I saw it in Hezekiah 3:16, ... there is a lot of stuff found in that one verse. I can keep a wind from turning my Bible page when preaching on the street, but when my fat thumb barely brushes John 3:16 on a touchscreen, it jumps off to a picture of the grandkids or something, and the train of thought is derailed. Not only that, open a Bible in public and you look like a Christian, open your phone and you look like a bored nobody. Further, the Muslims controlling the Temple Mount taught us something about the power of that book when it is opened in a public space.

"Open your Bibles to Acts chapter 1." The circle of believers, all settled into the little stone arena overlooking the city of Jerusalem, opened their Bibles. The hush was holy. Earlier I mentioned the proverb about ears turned to eyes; the task was easy from this

vantage point.²⁵ We listened, spellbound, doubtless we were mere feet from the very spot where the resurrected Christ Jesus ascended up into heaven, and two men in white apparel addressed the spellbound disciples. Pastor carefully read some of the text again:



“And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:7-9).

Think of it, “you shall receive power” and “ye shall be witnesses.” How am I doing with that charge? We are doubtless right here very near to where Jesus gave his disciples that encouragement; verse 12 says they were on the Mount called Olivet.

When he ascended up into the cloud, he left us a promise:

“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye



gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11).

When he comes from heaven in the clouds in like manner as they saw him go, ... Our stewardship assignment for being witnesses will be over; this dispensation of grace will be ended. I want to hear him say, “Well done thou good and faithful servant” (Matt.25:21, 23).

After some pretty weighty teachings to his disciples Jesus once told them, “*Let these sayings sink down into your ears*” (Luke 9:44a). We had opportunity to do just that as we contemplated the remarkable views from our perch on Olivet.

25 Dictation Sent from my iPhone8, Note: Half Shekel 5 continued on pp10b... yes I did get my iPhone repaired as soon as we returned from Israel, thanks for asking.

That verse continues, “for the Son of man shall be delivered in the hands of men”(verse 44b). We left this high point, considering his ascension, to go to a most precious place where that part of the verse played out, in Gethsemane.



We had a brief time to get some more photographs and contemplate the holy ground we were standing on before the group loosely gathered and moved down the hill into the place called Gethsemane. Most of the holy sites in and around Jerusalem are remarkably Catholic, Gethsemane was remarkably garden. We walk through and around the tranquil garden and although it was laden with tour groups it was everywhere quiet and worshipful.

The seamless transitions between these sites was a huge credit to our tour guide Joe. Generally hidden from our view were all the scheduling issues that were involved in getting fifty awestruck, camera crazed, pondering believers from a seating area at Ascension Hill, to one in the garden of Gethsemane. Joe accomplished it remarkably, and as we sat comfortably in our own alcove of worship in the center of Gethsemane, the only credit alluded to for Joe was when he said, “We are not in a hurry here, We have plenty of time to pause, and worship, and pray.”



Joe also quieted the hour with a brief introduction to the park and why we were paused here. As he switched his Whisper connection to Pastor Charlie he did what the most professional tour guides do well, he kind of disappeared into the background, present and available, but quiet and respectful.

Pastor had his Bible open, but was silent for a significant moment. We all knew the Scriptures that were to be read. We knew where we were. We knew why we were here. We knew the events that transpired here almost 2000 years ago. As Pastor gained enough composure to begin reading, his somber, consecrated worship settled in on each of us, and tear laden eyes stared into open Bibles that recorded the hallowed events.

“Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. ... Then



cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee,

and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me”

(Matt.26:31, 36-38)

It would only be a few hours and *“Lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people”* (verse 47).

Christians gather together weekly for Bible study, worship and prayer; it is commanded so. Families gather around the table to read scripture aloud and pray together; it is expected, it is called family altar. But individual believers, personally and privately falling on their face before a



holy God, to seek him with the whole heart, ... that is too often overlooked and under

emphasized in our busy lives. Pastor made an impassioned plea that it not be overlooked here in the place called Gethsemane. We dispersed, for prayer was want to be made. No coincidence, it was the ninth hour, being the hour of prayer (Acts 3:1).



Darkness settled onto our first day in Jerusalem. We gathered for an exquisite supper back at the Dan Hotel. We were burdened with exhaustion, moved with emotion, aroused with worship, energized by prayer, and delirious with joy. Tomorrow would dawn another day of walking where Jesus walked. Sent from my iPhone



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#06 Wed 2 Nov am Judean Wilderness; Jericho Road

I am always up before dawn, Beverly, not so much. It was dark, and my dumb phone disagreed with my smart phone as to what time it was. The bathroom light showed my Casio watch agreeing with my Visi smart phone. I knew my watch was wrong; so it was 4:00 am in Jerusalem. I thought it ironic that my dumb phone knew to change time zones, and my smart phone did not. I turned off the Kyocera flip phone and put it in my suitcase. I would just add seven hours to my Casio and Visi phone for my time here in Israel.



When at home in upstate New York I would load my wood stove, load my pellet stove, and then hit my study at 4 am and work till dawn. Beverly would sleep till dawn, steam a serving of green leafy vegetables for me, and we would meet at 9 AM over a cup of coffee for Bible reading and prayer. I was amazed that at the Dan Hotel, here in Jerusalem, I had adapted to the seven hour time change so well, and hit my study, in the corner desk of our room, at 4 AM Israeli time. (Our 9 am

Bible and prayer time had neatly switched to 9 pm last night. We met in the hotel's luxurious foyer and read our Bibles aloud with a pianist playing classical Bach in the background. We are systematically reading our Bibles aloud, Genesis to Maps, via a chronological schedule I made and posted on our website. I think every Christian should; and know every family is commanded to. (cf Deut.6:6-9))



“Be on the bus at 7:30,... Not making your way towards



the bus,... ON the bus.” Pastor was quite emphatic. Breakfast was amazing, completely Kosher, and available in the fourth floor dining room at 0600. We eloquently dined with Shane, Kathy, Micah, Harrison, Elaine and Phyllis. I love the Kosher breakfasts in Israel. It meant that meat and dairy were not prepared together, consequently vegetables were served with everything. There was no steak n eggs, sausage or bacon. I had a cheese omelet, cinnamon roll, toast and coffee. The salad bar was loaded with vegetables and olives and hummus, cold fish parts, and hummus, fruit and hummus, and did I mention hummus? It was everywhere. We were on the bus at 0730. We all were; Praise the Lord.



Joe was excited and passionate about our day. That's what tour guides are. It was contagious and we were all in a very susceptible state, that's what tour guides do! Eiad, bus driver extraordinaire, backed the 40 foot Irizar out of the hotel lot, down the circular entryway and up a short alley before he hit first gear, and launched us into streaming traffic. Someone needs to tip this guy. Joe stood in the front gripping a microphone in one hand and a bus guide rail

in the other. "We are about to enter a tunnel that takes us out of Jerusalem and plunges us into the Judean Desert,... Be sure and watch the contrast on both sides of this tunnel." Sure enough busy streets opened into a green suburbia until the bus approached the Mount Scopus tunnel on Highway One (31°47'23"N 35°14'48"E thank you iPhone iPhotos). That tunnel plunged us into the stark Judean Wilderness which would be our topic for the whole day, day three of the adventure.



Joe was right to call out the "into-the-tunnel" versus the "out-of-the-tunnel" experience. The barren wilderness spread in every direction that one looked, and continued for the ten miles that we traveled down Highway One, until we came to the Museum of the Good Samaritan. We went another two miles on the nice highway through the barren wilderness and then turned on a winding curving narrow Road called Wadi Alquait. We had turned at

Mitzpe Yeriho (literally Jericho lookout) and entered the Al-Kelt Nature Preserve on the Prat River. We were on the Jericho Road, it was only a five mile walk to Jericho and a twelve mile drive back to Jerusalem. Our drive down the Wadi Alquait taught us what the wilderness and the Jericho Road really looked like in Jesus's day.

Pictures and topographical maps can't really capture "desert wilderness" as found on this five mile stretch of Jericho Road. Ongoing glimpses out windows on either



side of the tour bus were effective, but getting out, and making our way up a narrow craggy rock path that topped at the edge of a gorge overlooking Mar Jaris nailed it. The map showed Mar Jaris to be Saint George, and it was described by Joe as a monastery.

We stepped off the luxury bus into this hostile environment only to be accosted by an aggressive swarm of Bedouin peddlers throwing prayer shawls around our women folk. I grabbed my wife's arm, pulled her out from under two prayer shawls, and as we ran



past them and their tiny burrow we found a little path heading up the craggy mount. We only held this leadership position for a short time as folks glided past us on the narrow trail. We finally brought up the rear and joined them in an outcropping alcove at the top.

When the Bible says that Jesus left Galilee and went up to Jerusalem I never envisioned this five mile stretch of mountainous path leaving Jericho nor the twelve mile trek across this wilderness to get to Bethany. Few have. If Jesus made this trek for two or three feast days per year for his three year ministry²⁶, that puts him on this very road up to twelve or eighteen times in his public ministry.

Further, remember when David, fleeing from his son Absalom, was warned, "*Lodge not this night in the planes of the wilderness, but speedily pass over*" (2Sam.17:16), he went through this five mile rocky crag before passing over Jordan (verse 22).

Our guide Joe reminded us of the several usages of this Jericho Road in the Bible, and in its history. He actually, but kindly, addressed our ignorance of what such a wilderness trek entailed and challenged us to never forget the barrenness of this land when we read Bible accounts involving this



26 As a good harmony of the life of Christ analysis shows cf-my Systematic Theology Vol 04 page 147

Judean Wilderness. He transferred his Whisper to Pastor Chalie who began an impassioned explanation with the most unusual request.

“In order to fully capture this wilderness experience, and learn what it is like to listen



Jericho Road Monastery
2 Nov 22 31°50'38.41"N 35°24'49.05"E

to God, I want us to sit in perfect silence for a full five minutes.” Some of us were challenged to realize he was sincere, but the crowd, sitting here in an outdoor arena of stone, overlooking a great canyon wilderness that stretched towards Jericho, fell into a total silence. Some of us watched the silence fall, and tried to capture it on camera until the shutters waxed too loud. Silence is an amazing thing. Deer hunters know it, but only rarely experience it in a

public setting.

The little burrow cooperated fully. Birds sang softly, and rocks whispered. Five minutes in total silence is longer than anybody knows. It was real. It was wilderness. It invoked meditation.

Pastor broke the silence with a loud yet very hushed prayer. It was that because, for a moment, even for five moments, this group of fifty, all together, were consumed with silence. Consider, if you would, what it means to be “consumed with silence.” On this mountain side, in the Judean Wilderness, overlooking a monastery, built on the Jericho Road, we were... consumed with silence.

By definition “consumed” is, “wasted; burned up; destroyed; dissipated; squandered; expended.”²⁷

With nine preachers in attendance those five moments on a mountain side did not need to be squandered and burned up. Any one of us, indeed anyone there present, could have filled a moment with a profound observation. I'll suppose that each one of



us pondered, in the first shocking moment, what could have been said. If we but dared to break the silence. Thus the first moment was consumed in silence.

As humans, 90% of our time is consumed in pondering what we will say next. That occupation is one thing that makes us bad listeners. Silence is the enemy of ongoing

²⁷ Noah Webster 1828, sv “consumed”.

conversation, and it must be destroyed or dissipated. Consuming silence is different than being consumed with silence.

Job's three friends came to encourage him and the Bible reports, “so they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him” (Job 2:13).

Doubtless they spent the first day pondering what they should say, if they dared break the silence.

I spent the second moment on the mountain side of the Judean Wilderness observing what others were doing with this silence. I was critical of some who were obviously not



consuming it right. “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, ...” I have often started that prayer, but Jesus's story of the Pharisee who prayed it “within himself” (Luke 18), keeps me from finishing it out loud. I'd suppose that all of us

have started it, sure enough.

Through the pages of his book I once went with a young preacher into the study of an old and wise evangelist. The two came together so that the younger could observe the private effectual prayer time of the seasoned preacher. When he arrived on



schedule, the evangelist was prostrate on the study floor, forehead resting on the hardwood. The younger joined him in that position, not a word yet spoken. The young man listened to the elder's breathing for ten minutes. He glimpsed at his watch, adjusted his position slightly, and listened for another ten minutes. After the third moment of silence the old preacher stirred slightly and said with a pleading power, “Oh God...”,

there was a long pause before the elder twice repeated his utterance...

I need not rehearse more of that account for us to reflect here on what it is to be consumed with silence. In the third moment of our time on that mountain I began to pray, and my prayer began "Oh God. ...". I then listened carefully for his response.

To muse is to ponder in deep thought. To be amused is to be so taken in trivial thinking as to be without any deep thought. We humans consume

a lot of time in amusements. The rest, I suppose, is consumed in pondering what we will say next. We don't spend much time being consumed in silence.



Luke 9:18 says, "*And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him ...*". Pastor Charlie took a moment on the side of the mountain, overlooking a monastery, and the old Jericho Road, to teach what it is to be consumed with

silence. It was time well spent, it was alone time for prayer, but more so for listening for God. It is no coincidence that he reassembled the group by beginning a prayer. His prayer began, "Oh God ..."



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#07 Wed 2 Nov Good Samaritan, En Gedi

Pastor Chalie, on the summit overlooking the rugged terrain of the Jericho Road took us to the very scene of Jesus' Good Samaritan Parable. The austere loneliness of the wilderness road set the stage for how a “certain man” could be wounded and robbed and left half dead. The narrow rocky path we came up on had set us up for visualizing how tough it might be to pass by on the other side of such a misfortune. The day we spent walking Via Dolorosa streets with black robed “priests”, supposing themselves to be somebodies, helped us to see the priest pass by, and then the Levite, neither were willing, or able, to help the fallen.

All we had seen made Pastor's job pretty easy, but his impassioned handling of the Bible text moved us to revisit Luke 10, the certain lawyer, and the certain man. The certain man was for illustrative purposes but the certain lawyer was real enough. He was there to trip up the Lord Jesus Christ with words (Luke 10:25). That’s what lawyers do,



and he asked Jesus two questions.

Jesus made the Levitical lawyer answer his own first question, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus confirmed his answer to be correct, just be perfect and never sin,... “This do, and thou shalt live” (Verse 27-28). At this point in time Jesus was dealing with mankind under the dispensation, or the stewardship rules, of keeping the law. The lawyer had answered right, because if man could keep the law he



On the Jericho Road, Israel, 2 Nov 2022

could indeed stand before a holy and righteous God and live. We know now the ending of that dispensation of law, the final verdict being, “As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one; ... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:10, 23). That verdict is final, there is no going back into that dispensation and giving it another shot; no matter what Ellen White tried to teach her Seventh Day Adventists. So in that dispensation of law, Pharisees, Scribes, and Lawyers, spent their time trying to justify themselves.



On the Jericho Road, Israel
2 Nov 2022

Again, Luke 18:9-14 clarifies how one is justified in this dispensation of law; the Pharisee “trusted in himself that he was righteous” but the publican, “smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.” Of him Jesus said, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other” (verse 14).

Back to this Luke 10 lawyer, the Bible says, “but he willing to justify himself ...” asked his second question, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan who came across the certain man that thieves left half dead thoroughly addresses the lawyers second question, but, don't miss here how Jesus addresses the lawyer's first question in the parable that he gives.

Consider that mankind has fallen to thieves and is left helpless, hopeless, and half dead. The Aaronic priesthood, which



God set up so Israelites could have their sins atoned for, passes by on the other side of the road. Salvation is not found in priesthood, nor priest, nor priest craft. The Levite, like the lawyer who started this conversation, also passed by on the other side. Salvation is not found in the law. That dispensation has ended. The salvation for this certain man came from an outsider who had compassion on him. Such a story parallels John 3:16-18, Jesus being the outsider.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned

already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ... He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (Jn.3:16-18,36).



Religions promote priestcraft and Levitical law keeping, but Bible salvation is by faith, not by works of righteousness which we have done (Ephesians 2:8-9). This parable has both tremendous depth and richness. *“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”* (Rom.11:33).

We sat beside the Jericho Road. Pastor Chalie walked us through this tremendous

parable that Jesus unfolded on the same road. It makes you think deep thoughts. Does my “Neighbor” know about the saving grace of my Lord Jesus Christ? Does he know the ultimate Good Samaritan?

With a good taste of this wilderness in our mouth, we boarded the bus and headed out toward Ein Gedi. When David fled from the threatening king Saul, he dwelt in south Jeshimon, a wilderness area west of the Dead Sea.



And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood. And Jonathan Saul’s son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house (1Sam.23:15-18).



When the Ziphites agreed to deliver David over to King Saul, he moved from the woods to the plain in the south of Jeshimon, in the wilderness of Maon (verse 24–25). There Saul and his men compassed him in, and would have captured David and his men, but God intervened (Verse 27–28).

And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at Engedi. And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from

following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats (1Sam.23:29-24:2).

Ein Gedi is about 12 miles east of Maon, but every mile one moves from the mountainous wilderness of Maon, gets even more treacherous and steep until it drops off into the Dead Sea. Just after crossing the 1949 Armistice Agreement Line we turned off Highway 90, which goes down the west edge of the sea and headed up to the Ein Gedi Reserve.

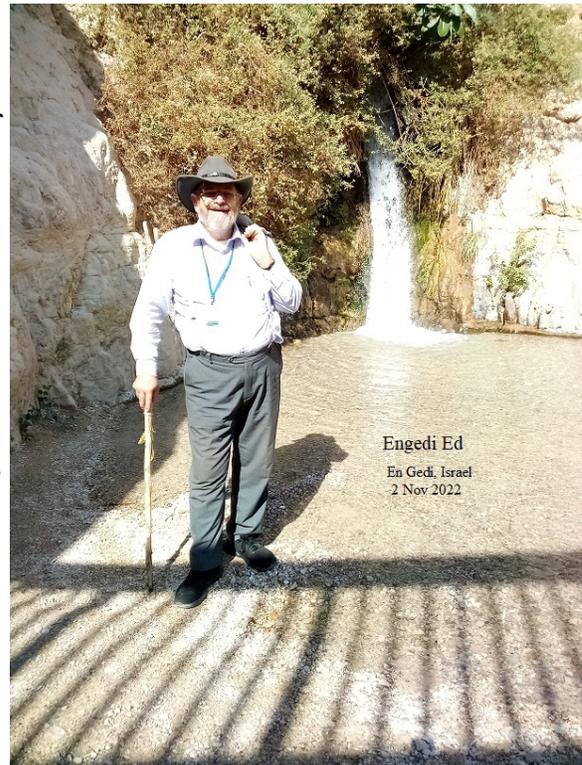
Engedi means (Strong's #05872, עֵינַי גֵּדִי 'Eyn Gedy) "fount of the kid." Here water springs from the mountains to the west, and made glamorous springs that watered a wilderness and ran down to the shores of the Dead Sea. It was a very rugged cave filled, spring fed, wilderness area, that could easily hide and support David and his 600 men.

All of us hiked up past some caves and then up to the first spring. The more able hiked past more springs, more caves, and made their way to the top of the Ein Gedi Reserve. The rugged wilderness here was vast. With the enthused instruction of our Guide Joe, and the insightful Bible accounts read and depicted by Pastor Chalie, we visualized Saul's advance into the middle of David's new found territory. David had 400 to 600 men surrounding him here, they were settling in, and getting comfortable in the area when Saul invaded with his 3,000 chosen men.

Here Saul, seeking David, pulled aside into a shepherds cave to take a nap. Lo, David and some of his men were there before him in the sides of the cave. The story unfolds in the first verses of 1Samuel 24. In these rugged, canyon laden hills, we could clearly visualize:

So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way. David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself (1Sam.24:7-8).

It was pretty easy, after being at the Ein Gedi Reserve, to see how David could address King Saul, and still be well out of his reach. For a keener insight into this wilderness use google maps' topographical view to plot the 64 km route from Arad Israel to Ein Gedi Reserve, via Route 31 and Route 90, and look at that wilderness it avoided, that is the Ein Gedi Wilderness which hid David and his men. We only explored the eastern tip of the wilderness of Ein Gedi, but our minds went deep into its recesses, and even deeper into the resources of God's Holy Bible.





The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice

#08 Wed 2 Nov Masada

Masada, in Hebrew and on modern maps called Met-Sada, but long known as Masada, in English tradition, stands as a grand monument on the shores of the Dead Sea. The mesa like rock plateau stands atop 1300 feet cliffs overlooking the Dead Sea. It is an awesome conformation and a monument to 1) man’s unnatural hatred of God’s chosen people Israel, 2) to a man’s elaborate, extravagant, and psychotic life, and 3) to a fortress of archaeological explorations and findings. This was to be a remarkable afternoon in our exploration of God’s holy land.



Our bus pulled out of the Ein Gedi Reserve parking lot and turned south for

13 mile drive on Highway 90. Sandwiched between the Dead Sea and the mountainous wilderness to the west, the drive itself was intriguing. Gorges and canyons opened into the low land desert where their rivers turned to dusty trickles and dumped into the sea. Off in the distance we can see the flat top mountain called Masada rise out of the desert floor. It was the most impressive topography.

The flat top mountain loomed before us as our group organized for the adventure. Several physically fit and stout hearted souls were intent on hiking the winding, climbing, 3 km trail that made its way up the eastern face of the mount. The “moderate” hike moved into the “difficult” range when the sun beat down on the trail, bottom to top, as it did this warm November day. There were a few ennable attempts to talk some out of such a challenging adventure, but those of us choosing to ride the cushy cable cars up the mountain face wished them well and Godspeed as they set off for their mountain climb.



Some of us were just getting to know others in the group and the nervous tension of waiting in line for a suspended driverless cable car, that would dangle us 1,000 feet above the desert floor, was an effective icebreaker for starting conversations. I'm not sure how many people were supposed to jump into one of these contraptions, but about ten more than should have

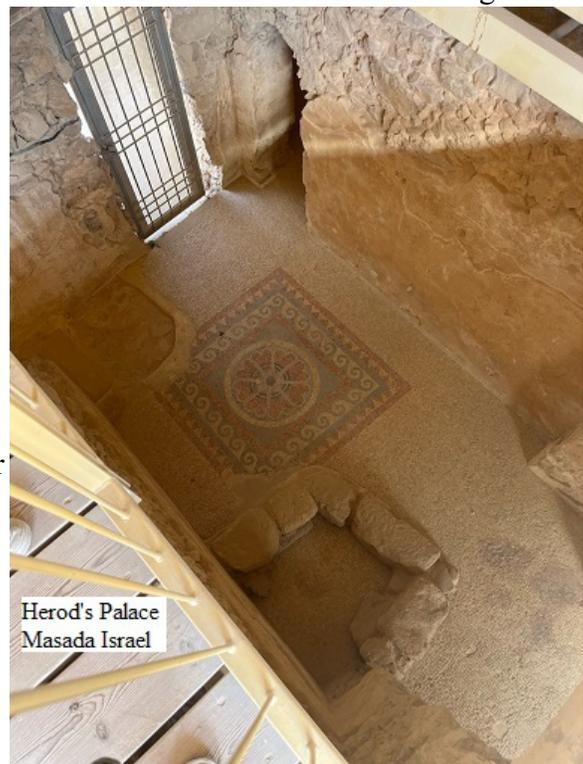


crowded in when the doors opened. The automatic doors attempted to close but were blocked by the last passengers cramming in. Attendants pushed on the overflow until the glass doors slid past them. We watch through the glass as passengers repositioned to get "comfortable" for the ascent. I was quite certain the fellow with his face all contorted and smashed tight

against the closed glass door was only doing that for a comedy effect. We stared at him as the car lurched into motion and left the station. Nobody laughed, and tension increased as we waited for the next car.

When it comes to phobias our cable car had a good majority covered. We were a large group of people, crammed into a tight area, confined there, with no control over our situation, dangling hundreds of feet in the air, and when two or three smart alicks shifted from side to side so did the whole cable car.

Those who had reasonable control over their phobias could look out and wave to our hiking team as they got tinier and tinier on the hiking trail far below us. The view we had was breathtaking. So were the phobias.



When the doors finally opened at the top of our gentle glide with the spectacular view the adventure of ascent was not quite complete. We stepped out on a narrow metal mesh gangplank that was suspended above nothing, ... and that nothing went on for three score and ten cubits straight down. I am not afraid of heights, but I am afraid of falling large distances. White knuckles gripped the gang plank hand rail, and I did not venture to look down until my feet were on solid rock on the short path to the top of Masada. Wow!



I called Masada a threefold monument, let me address the least to the greatest. The archaeological digs all over this mountain fortress are impressive. Archaeology is 10% find, 90% imagination. Wall foundations, artifacts, mosaics, and plaster fascia, bath houses, interconnected cisterns and every archaeological dig found on this mountain top have kept

“imagination” here very active. What was built here? How, why, and when was it built? What was built underneath? What did these walls see and here? Humans armed with inquiring minds are always on a quest to find out more, to uncover the past, to dig a little deeper. This first week of November, college students were back in school, but several archaeological sites were still open and being explored here in the fortress atop Masada. Who discovered what-when still intrigues some of us, and the line demarcating what was original and what was reconstructed still put good running shoes on active imaginations.

Herod the Great, who reigned from 37 BC to 4 AD was psychotic. He was probably undeserving of the “Great” title, except that he was greatly psychotic, and



quite a great builder²⁸. Here on Masada he built an elaborate Roman bathhouse to support his more elaborate, even exotic, palaces. Herod's northern palace was chiseled into the rock of the northern cliff edge and hung out with nothing but that three score and ten cubits of drop as his backyard. A paranoid recluse might have considered the rocky reef of the Mediterranean Sea a remarkable backdrop of privacy and protection but this, on Masada, had that beat hands-down.

The palaces, the Roman bathhouse, the swimming pool, the elaborate water resources found on Masada, and then all the archaeological wonder that exposed them, were amazing monuments found on this mighty fortress. But they pale in comparison to the depravity of man that was put on full display on this mountain plateau.

Mankind has an unnatural



hatred for God's chosen people Israel. A genuine believer understands that antisemitism is a manifestation of Satan's opposition to God. Masada is an important post-AD²⁹ cog in Satan's attempt to totally annihilate God's chosen people Israel by genocide. It is not unprecedented.

From Genesis 3:15 to Jeremiah 22:30³⁰ Satan does all he can to destroy the seed line of Messiah. Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Ruben, Jacob's rejected first born (cf 1Chor.5:1-2), Joseph, all the drama of Genesis, and all the lineage of kings, these record Satan's attempts to foul and destroy God's chosen seed line of Messiah. One can easily see that the seed line is a dynamic ongoing battle which ends up including harlots and a Moabite! Its outcome is cast before the foundation of the Earth, but its participants are not! God works with man, and man's free will, to accomplish his purposes. He

28 Herod built the 2nd Temple and lavish palace-fortresses at Caesarea, Masada, Jericho, and Herodium.

29 AD is a Latin abbreviation of *Anno Domini* meaning "In the year of our Lord." "Post -AD" refers to the period after the birth of our Lord.

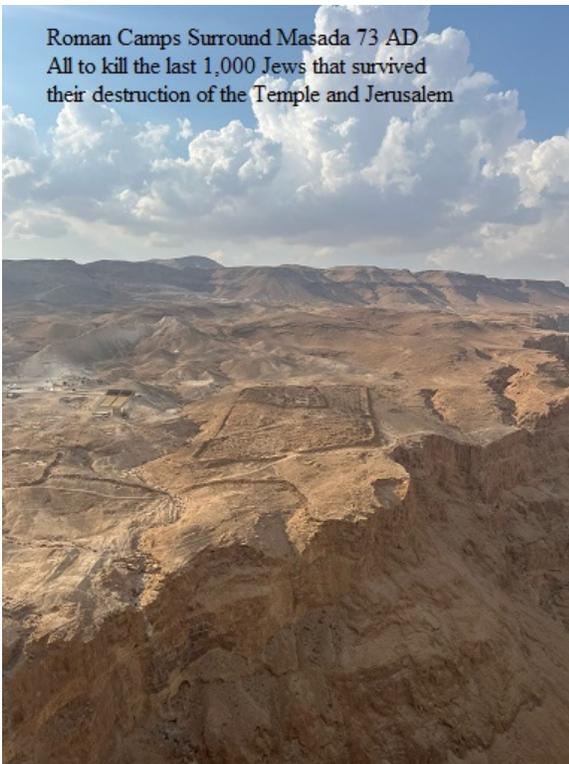
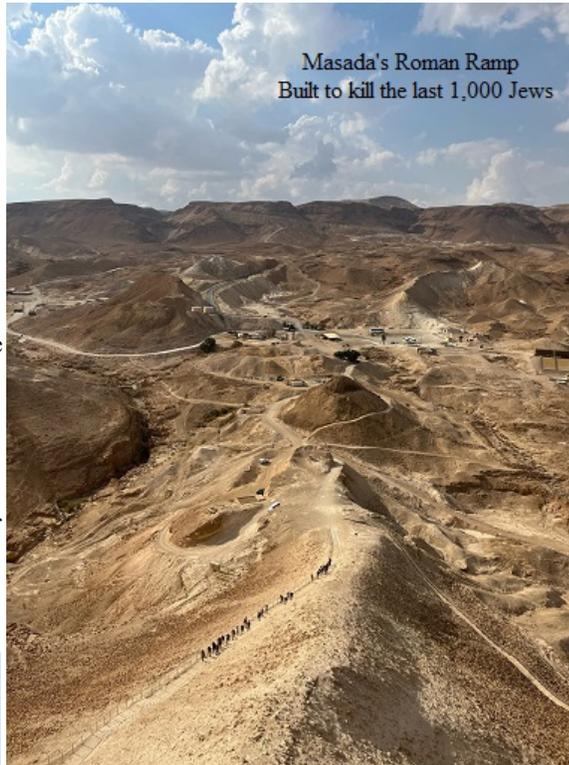
30 Genesis 3:15 "*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*" Jeremiah 22:30 "*Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.*" Jehoiakim was the last of the kings of Judah, God calls him Coniah, meaning "Jehovah will establish", and apparently God ends the kingly seed line of Judah in this verse, but according to Matthew 1:11-12, God does a righteous "bait and switch" wherein man, and more so Satan, loses track of the seed line of David which is the seed line of Messiah.

still does; John Calvin's predestination, election, and fatalism ideologies be gone! God is dynamically working with man in real time. He did then, and does now. So when God stops the clear revelation of this seed line, declaring king Jehoiakim childless, Satan has to take another tact. He chooses genocide, striving to wipe out every living Jew.

If you have read the book of Esther you know about Haman the son of the Agagite, and you see Satan's new hand; his first attempt using genocide. If you read some inter-testament man-made history books, you'll learn about the villainous Antiochus of Syria. Les Crawford, director of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry in Australia, tells us:

Antiochus Epimanes, meaning "Antiochus the Mad" or "Maniac" ... unleashed his fury on Jerusalem when he returned from Egypt. First, he killed Jason, the last of the Zadokite high priests. He also ordered the massacre of about 40,000 Jews and sold a similar number into slavery. But this was merely the beginning. His persecution of the Jewish people knew no limits.

Antiochus installed a Seleucid garrison to control Jerusalem and proceeded to stamp out the



Jewish faith using murder and torture. Toward the end of 167 BC, he issued a series of devastating decrees that included forbidding Temple offerings and installing pagan altars and images for people to offer sacrifices of pigs and other unclean animals in the Jewish sanctuary. He also outlawed circumcision and Sabbath observance, and he burned Torah scrolls and forced dietary violations. Disobedience was punishable by death—usually a gruesome one.

The climax of the attack on Judaism came when Antiochus offered a pig on the pagan altar to Zeus that had been erected in the Jerusalem Temple. The desecration foreshadows the future, prophetic "abomination of desolation" associated with the Antichrist (Dan. 11:31; 12:11).

The action provoked courageous resistance from the Jewish people, but Antiochus's garrison initially crushed it. Under the leadership of Mattathias and his son Judah, the

Jewish forces grew strong enough to defeat Antiochus's army. This victory enabled the rededication and restoration of the Temple, a remarkable moment in Jewish history celebrated annually in the festival of Hanukkah.³¹

31 <https://israelmyglory.org/article/villainous-antiochus/> Israel My Glory January/February 2023, Article "Villainous-Antiochus" by Les Crawford, pg 19.

Ergo Satan was not able to corrupt the seed line of Christ, nor annihilate the Jew's who brought us the Messiah. Christ bruised Satan's head. Now, Satan must do all he can to keep God's immutable plans from coming to pass. Satan must prevent the fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Israel.³² What happened at Masada in 74 AD is the tail end of Satan's first post-AD attempt at annihilating all Jews. It is dramatic. It is tragic. Many try to erase it from history, to refute Josephus' record of it, and even to call the Jews who died here on Masada repulsive Zealots who deserved to die.



Jerusalem was destroyed and burned by future emperor Titus until not one Jew remained in Israel. The Roman governor of Judaea, Lucius Flavius Silva, headed a Roman legion and laid siege to Masada to kill the thousand who remained. Such demonic hatred and persecution would pursue Jews to this day.

Bruce Scott writes in his article "Away With Them":

In the centuries that followed, Jewish people were expelled from cities and

kingdoms throughout medieval "Christian Europe," including Germany, Austria, Hungary, the Papal States, and Italy. One such ill-famed expulsion resulted from the edict of English King Edward I (of William Wallace [Braveheart] fame) in 1290. Thousands were evicted from their homes and forbidden to return to England for almost 400 years. In 1394, King Charles VI expelled all Jews from France.

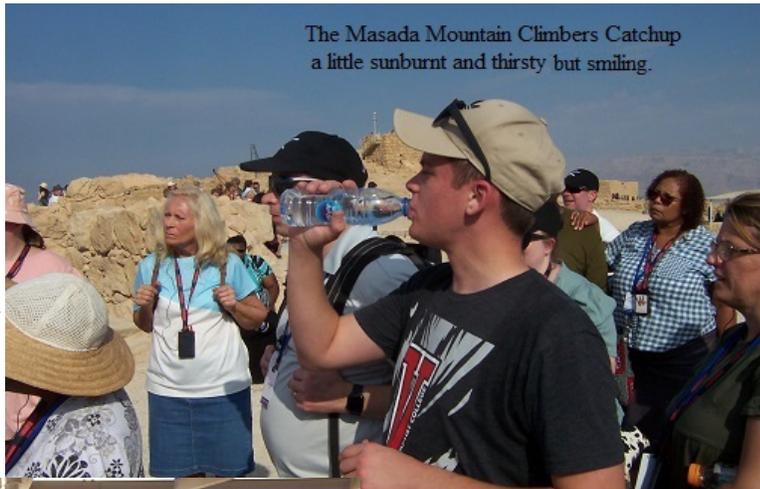
However, the most infamous expulsion occurred in Spain. On March 31, 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella signed the Alhambra Decree (Edict of Expulsion), which was not made public until May 1, shortly after they commissioned Christopher Columbus to embark on his historic voyage to the New World.

The Alhambra Decree threw the Jews out of Spain lock, stock, and barrel, adding that any who remained would "incur the penalty of death and the confiscation of all their possessions." They had until August 1 (9th of the Hebrew month Av) to comply. This expulsion dismembered the largest Jewish community in the world at the time.³³

32 <https://israelmyglory.org/article/the-never-ending-hatred/> Israel My Glory January/February 2023, Article "The Never-Ending Hatred - Why does antisemitism refuse to die? What evil fuels this illogical, never-ending hatred?" by Ty Perry, pg 14-17

33 <https://israelmyglory.org/article/away-with-them/> Israel My Glory January/February 2023, Article

The article continues to describe the “ethnic cleansing” undertaken by the Catholic Churches who perpetuated wholesale slaughter of Jews with the cruelest means. The hatred and slaughter of God's chosen people continued into Protestant ranks. Scott continues in his article:



The Masada Mountain Climbers Catchup a little sunburnt and thirsty but smiling.



It wasn't only Catholics who advocated expelling the Jews. In 1543, Martin Luther, leader of the Protestant Reformation, wrote a 13-part booklet titled “On the Jews and Their Lies”.

It spewed such vitriolic hatred of the Jewish people that it influenced the German perception of Jews for centuries to come and helped Adolf Hitler and the Nazis justify their “final solution to the Jewish question,” a euphemism for the

annihilation of European Jewry.

Toward the beginning of his ministry, Luther was more congenial toward the Jewish community, thinking Jews might believe the gospel after he restored the doctrine of justification by faith. But when they failed to accept the gospel, he began to despise them.

He wrote “On the Jews and Their Lies” three years before he died. It is a polemic against a Jewish publication in which the author debates an imaginary Christian. Luther not only challenged the Jewish author's interpretation of

Scripture but also vented his animosity toward all Jews. He held nothing back. “Next to the devil,” Luther wrote, “a Christian has no more bitter and galling foe than a Jew.”³⁴



“Away With Them” by Bruce Scott, pg 20-23.

34 Ibid. pg 22

He called Jewish people “venomous, bitter, vindictive, tricky serpents, assassins, and children of the devil who sting and work harm stealthily wherever they cannot do it openly.” He also gave credence to the commonly accepted libels of the day that Jewish people kidnapped and mutilated Christian children and deliberately poisoned wells. (This very libel led to the massacre of thousands of European Jews during the Black Death plague in the mid-14th century.)



The tail end of the Roman Empire's hatred for, and destruction of a million Jews, happened on the highland desert plateau called Masada. It is presently one of the most popular tourist attractions in Israel receiving 750,000 visitors per year. We were fifty of them. The Roman Empire, spiraling into obliteration because of the judgment of God, reached out with its evil fingers and

attempted to wipe all of God's chosen people Israel off the face of the earth. They burnt and destroyed the temple and all of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and then with one final villainous campaign they reached to the top of a fortress in a barren wilderness to kill off the thousand Jews that still defied their evil. If we learn nothing else from this tour of Masada, learn this, antisemitism is diabolical, it is a manifestation of Satan himself; Satan “*opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped*”; he will do whatever it takes to prevent the fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Israel. Masada is thus a vile taste of the great lengths that Satan would take, through the hands of evil men, to destroy the Jew.



North End of Masada
Herod's Palace Remains

In 1948 Israel was given back what God said was rightfully theirs and a slogan was born to commemorate their homecoming; the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) units are still sworn in on Masada's southern point with that powerful affirmation for the Jewish state, "Masada, shall never fall again." In that swearing in ceremony Eleazar's words are read atop that mesa:

"Since we long ago, my generous friends, resolved never to be servants to the Romans, nor to any other than to God himself, who alone is the true and just lord of mankind; the time is now come that obliges us to make that resolution true in practice...I cannot but esteem it as a favor that God hath granted us, that 'tis still in our



Masada View of Herod's Backyard



power to die bravely, and in a state of freedom. Which hath not been the case of others, who were conquered unexpectedly. 'Tis very plain that we shall be taken within a days time: but 'tis still an eligible thing to die, after a glorious manner, together with our dearest friends."³⁵

A Christian with their Bible open to the Revelation of Jesus Christ might be found in full agreement with their slogan, "Masada, shall never fall again." Our bus lumbered out of the parking lot of Masada National Park. Some of us were somber, but all of us were knowing who holds the future, and carried a better perspective which would better

enable us to fulfill Psalm 122:

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good (Ps.122:6-9).

There was one more stop for the day, the bus turned north and we headed for a salty beach on the north end of the Dead Sea.



35 <https://www.ifcj.org/news/fellowship-blog/masada-shall-never-fall-again> International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, Fellowship-blog article, 21 May 2018. (Accessed 01/02/2023)



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#09 Wed 2 Nov pm The Dead Sea.

Guide Joe told us about some Roman who described the three wonders of this land as 1) they have a temple where there is not a single graven image; 2) they have one day in the week were nobody works; and 3) they have a sea where everything floats: at about 4 PM on 2 November we pulled into Kalia Beach (38 miles north of Masada) on the north eastern tip of the Dead Sea, to experience that last wonder. It is a wonder, but the Dead Sea is so much more than that. The sea with multiple inlets and no outlet was destined to become very high in mineral content and it has the highest on earth, but it got that way in a single day, not in a million years of fictitious evolution³⁶. The high density of the water makes a body float abnormally. In my military career I have worked with some very dense individuals, and I suppose even



they might float on the Dead Sea. It was a genuine worthwhile adventure to try it, and just as adventuresome to watch others in the group experience abundant buoyancy.

Exposing bodies to the extraordinary high mineral content of the Dead Sea supposedly has a myriad of health benefits. Consequently several snake-oil salesmen have made a business of concocting various lotions, soaps, and creams, prepared by the apothecary art, that we could buy for half price that day.

My sweet wife, Beverly, who is allergic to practically every perfume known to man, fled the sales room after 12 seconds of exposure to the air around these “healing” concoctions. I caught up to her in a park outside, I hadn’t seen her run that fast since we were in our 60s! Her face was already all

³⁶ Encyclopedia Britannica says “Beginning about 2.5 million years ago, heavy streamflow into the lake deposited thick sediments of shale, clay, sandstone, rock salt, and gypsum. Later, strata of clay, marl, soft chalk, and gypsum were dropped onto layers of sand and gravel. . . . During the past 10,000 years, the lake gradually shrank to its present form. In so doing, it exposed deposits that now cover the Dead Sea valley to thicknesses of between about 1 and 4 miles.” The Bible says the four mile deep layer of mineral deposits came in one day (Gen.19) for a reason (Gen.13:13).

puffy and her sinuses well swollen with, and reacting to, the aroma of air in the “health care” sales room. We waited in the fresh air for our tour group to hear the sales pitch, but they came out another way and we missed them entirely. We had missed the directions given to get our group to the changing rooms and then to the sea, so we made our way through the scantily clad crowd until we found a long line waiting at a longer stairway that made its way to a jam packed beach of bathers. We stood on the precipice overlooking the beach, but couldn’t pick out anyone we knew. Back in the park we watched novices board and ride camels, very entertaining, until Bev’s sinus headaches were subsided a little (thanks to sudafed congestion relief). We would hear of the adventures of the floating on the Dead Sea in due time. It was well worth the stop, but it was not the pristine, quiet, Salt Sea that we were expecting.

The spiritual significance of the Dead Sea is squelched by the tourist trade, and categorically denied by our atheistic, agnostic, apostate society. When God rained down fire and brimstone³⁷, the fertile plain that surrounded Sodom and Gomorrah, described in the Bible as being like the garden of the LORD, (Gen.13:10³⁸), was turned into a brimstone laden, sulfuric, salt, and mineral laden slime which sunk so low



that it is now the lowest place on all of the LORD God's earth and its brimstone goes to depths of four miles!.

So that the generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the LORD hath laid upon it; And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom,

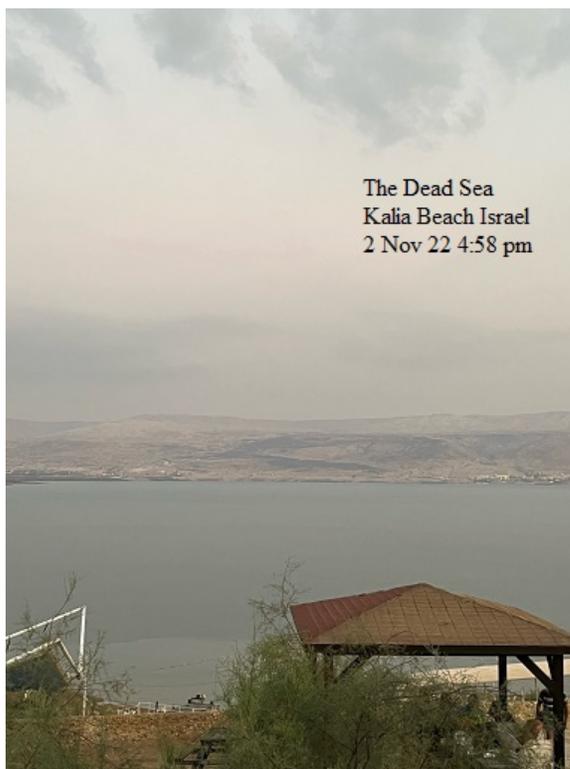
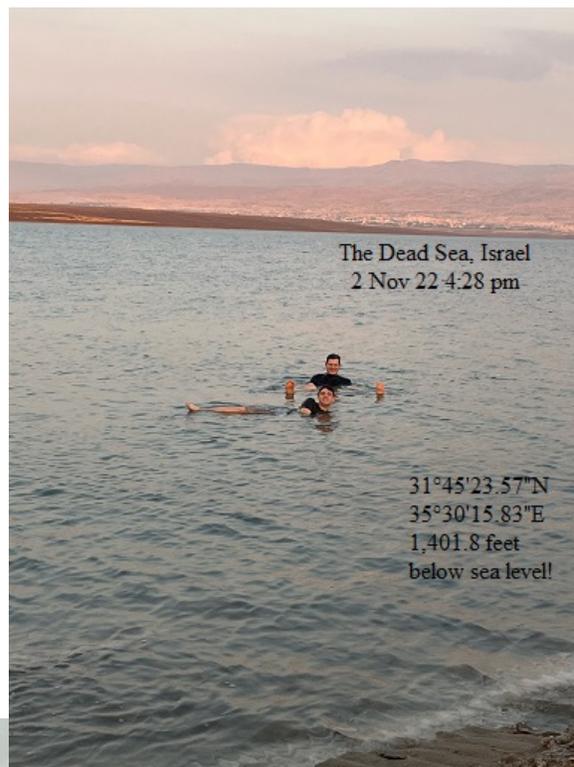
and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath: Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger? (Deut.29:22-24)

37 Noah Webster's 1828 - BRIM'STONE, n. Sulphur; a hard, brittle, inflammable substance, of a lemon yellow color, which has no smell, unless heated, and which becomes negatively electric by heat and friction. It is found, in great quantities, and sometimes pure, in the neighborhood of volcanoes. It is an ingredient in a variety of minerals and ores. The sulphur of commerce is procured from its natural beds, or artificially extracted from pyrites.

38 *Ge 13:10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.*

When God uses adjectives to describe the sin that went on in those two cities they exceed all others in the vile, disgusting, sinfulness, of all other abominations.³⁹

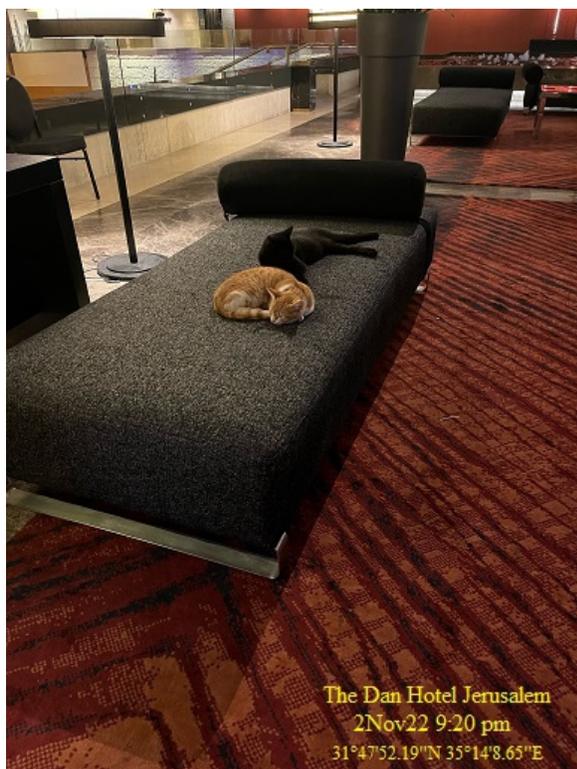
Consequently the destruction of that sinful place became a perpetual monument of what brimstone does to prime real estate when God turns his wrath upon it. That is precisely where all that mineral content came from; actual blocks of brimstone are quarried out of this place to this day! Hiroshima and Nagasaki (ref Atomic bombings of, Aug 6-9, 1945) were eventually re-populated, but this place, this Dead Sea, will remain a dead sea until the healing waters from the throne of our Lord Jesus Christ flow into it and rejuvenate the Earth during the millennial reign of Christ.



Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. ... And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be

39 “The first use of the word that pertains to what God finds disgusting, loathsome, vicious, vile and abhorred is found in Leviticus 18:22, “*Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination* <08441 תועבה tow'ebah or to-ay-baw'>” Sexual sinfulness, particularly sodomy, is again called out in the Bible as being exceedingly sinful (Genesis 13:13), very grievous (Genesis 18:20), and now as sin that God finds disgusting, loathsome, vicious, vile and abhorred. We are not here profiling any sin, we are doing word studies that examine some first use Hebrew words for sin and find that sodomy is ranked up there as the most vile sin for heathen nations.” See “A Systematic Theology for the 21st Century Volume 07 Hamartiology - Chapter 4 Etymology of Sin”, www.GSBaptistChurch.com/theology/21cent_vol07Hamartiology.pdf, pg 27-45.

consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine. (Ezek.47:8-9,12, cf Rev.22:2)



If you have not secured a place in that Kingdom of Heaven, you need to do it now. *“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven”*(Matt.18:3). You cannot enter God's Kingdom carrying the condemnation of sin, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ tells us:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ... 36 He

that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life (John 3:16-18, 36, 5:24)

Salvation from that condemnation is a free gift, *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Rom.6:23).

Christ paid your sin debt on Calvary, *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom.5:8).

It is a free gift but there is a formal acceptance policy for it, that you must take advantage of to get into the Kingdom, *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Rom.10:9-10).

Being saved from condemnation and entering the family of God to be part of the Kingdom of Heaven is just that simple, anyone can do it anywhere! Be sure you have, be sure you are “IN”. *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Rom.10:13). *“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life”* (1Jo.5:12).

The information about the Dead Sea's origin, is known to born again Bible believers, but concealed from a blinded world. It is that blinded world, led by Hell itself, who resurrects the hideous sin of sodomy, and wants it as our society's preferred lifestyle

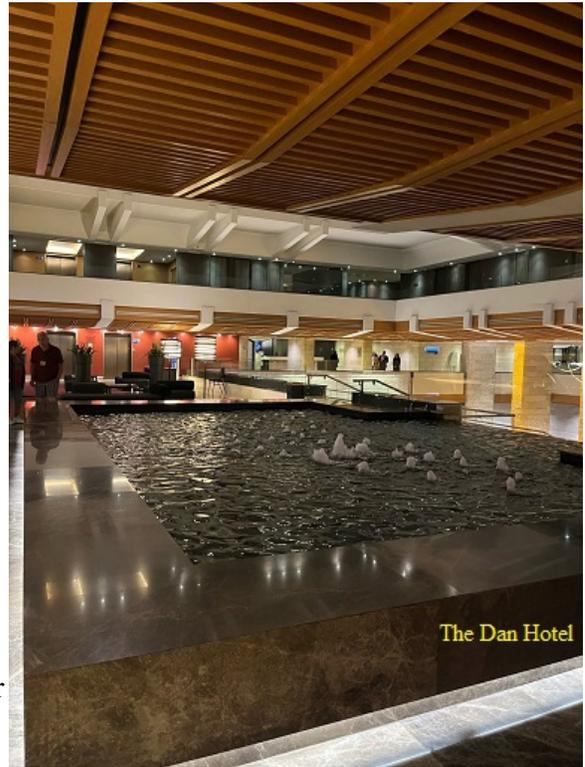
today. God help us... Oh, by the way, he will.

Everyone knows someone, or has a family member who is entangled in the queer sin of sodomy. It is the dregs of our society, but they are not: they can be reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, with prayer, and supplication with thanksgiving. You can play a part in reaching them with such a simple gospel message. God bless you as you pray, ... and try, and keep trying.

The bus loaded with exciting talk and stories about floating on the Dead Sea. Eiad pointed it back toward the Dan Hotel in Jerusalem. Joe nicely summarized what all we had seen and Pastor Charlie gave benediction to the day, and voilà⁴⁰ we were debarking at the luxurious Dan Hotel.

This was a much more relaxing day than Tuesday, but some of us had kept over some of our exhaustion since the plane flew us into Israel on Monday. A nice catnap settled me in for an exquisite meal with friends n family. Kosher buffets with overstuffed dessert counters would not be lessening my obesity this week. This was unbelievably pleasant. Bev and I again settled into the hotel's luxurious foyer and read our Bibles aloud with a pianist playing classical music in the background. We read Romans chapter 1 thru 3 as listed in our chronological Bible reading schedule⁴¹, and then Psalm 125

because we read a Psalm/Prov. each day and this was the 125th day of the second half of the year 2022. The Bible is a living book wherever you read it, but reading it here above the Mount of Olives, in Jerusalem, made it even livelier than normal. Praise our Lord Jesus Christ.



40 Voilà is essentially a French combination of two words: voir (to see/look) and là (there). So literally speaking, voilà is an instruction. When you use it, you are telling people to 'look there'. So you can use voilà to draw attention to something that you can physically see. "Wah-Lah" should probably be pronounced, "V-wah-Lah" with a "V" sound at the start. For sure it would be spelled "voila" and not "Wa-La." Be careful, however, because "Wallah" means I swear/by God it literally means "I swear to God," and it is sure to come up in conversation way more times than appropriate, given what Exod.20:7, Deut.5:11, and .Prov.30:9 say about using his name in vain.

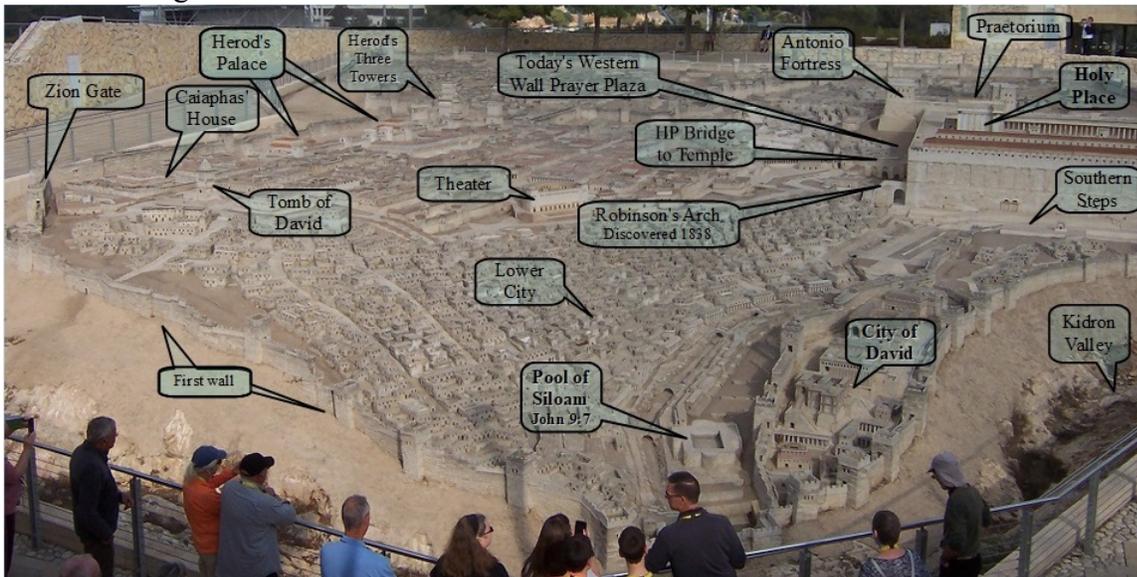
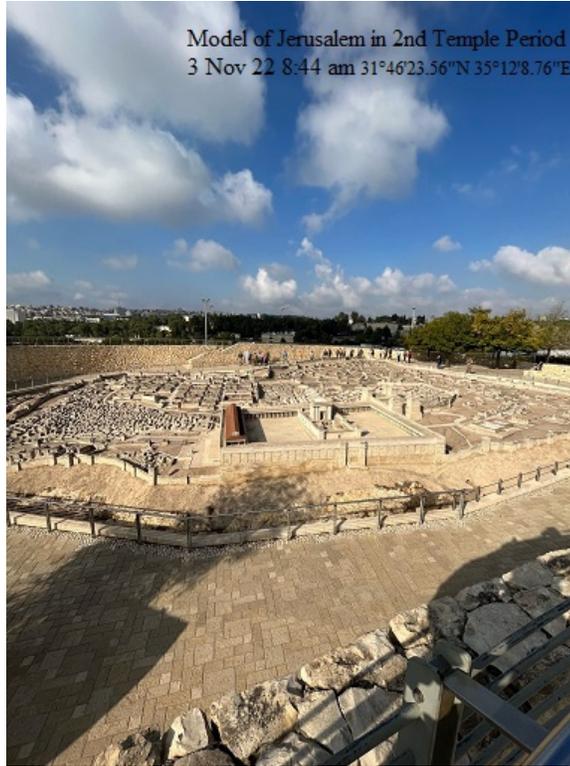
41 See www.GSBaptistChurch.com/kjv/bible_read_sched_fam20xx.pdf .



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice #10 Thur 3 Nov The Israel Museum

The Israel Museum was one of my most anticipated stops. ... well, that is to big a line, but with all the anticipations I had for this trip the Israel Museum was one of them. I had read all about the grand opening of the Dead Sea Scrolls display, and I could never forget the 1/50 scale model of Jerusalem of the 1st century. We saw it in 2009, and this time I was going to get pictures from every perspective I could.

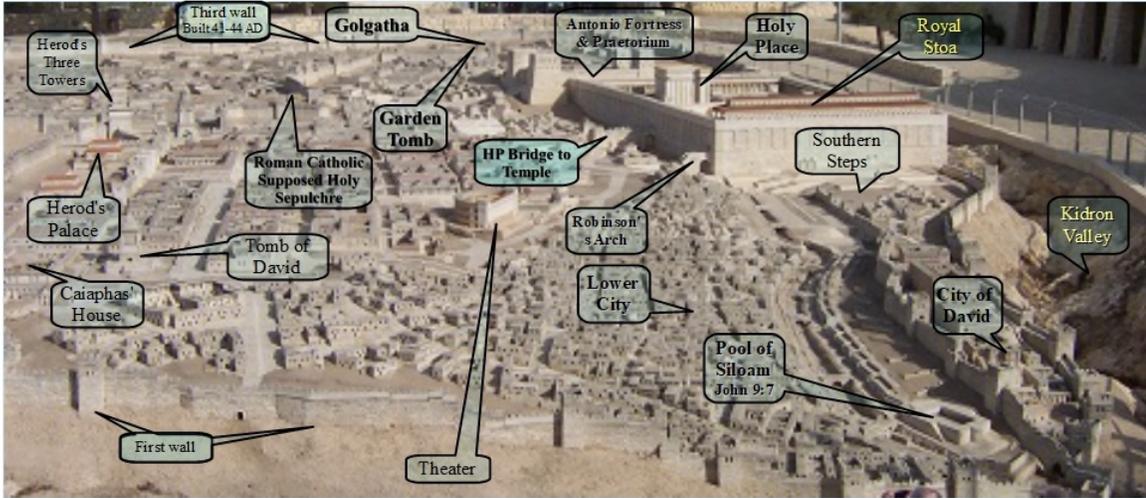
Life is three dimensional. It has been ever since the three persons of the Godhead created 3D time, space, and matter in Genesis 1. 3D time has past, present, and future. 3D space has height, length, and depth. 3D matter has solid, liquid, and gas. 3D people, in God's image and after his likeness, with body, soul, and spirit, communicate in this 3D universe and a 3D model of Jerusalem, as it was when the Only Begotten Son of God walked on his earth, is an excellent communication tool to take us back in time to that day. Viewing the model of Jerusalem in the 2nd Temple Period in The Israel Museum is hands down the very best visualization of where things were in the days when our Lord Jesus Christ walked amongst men.



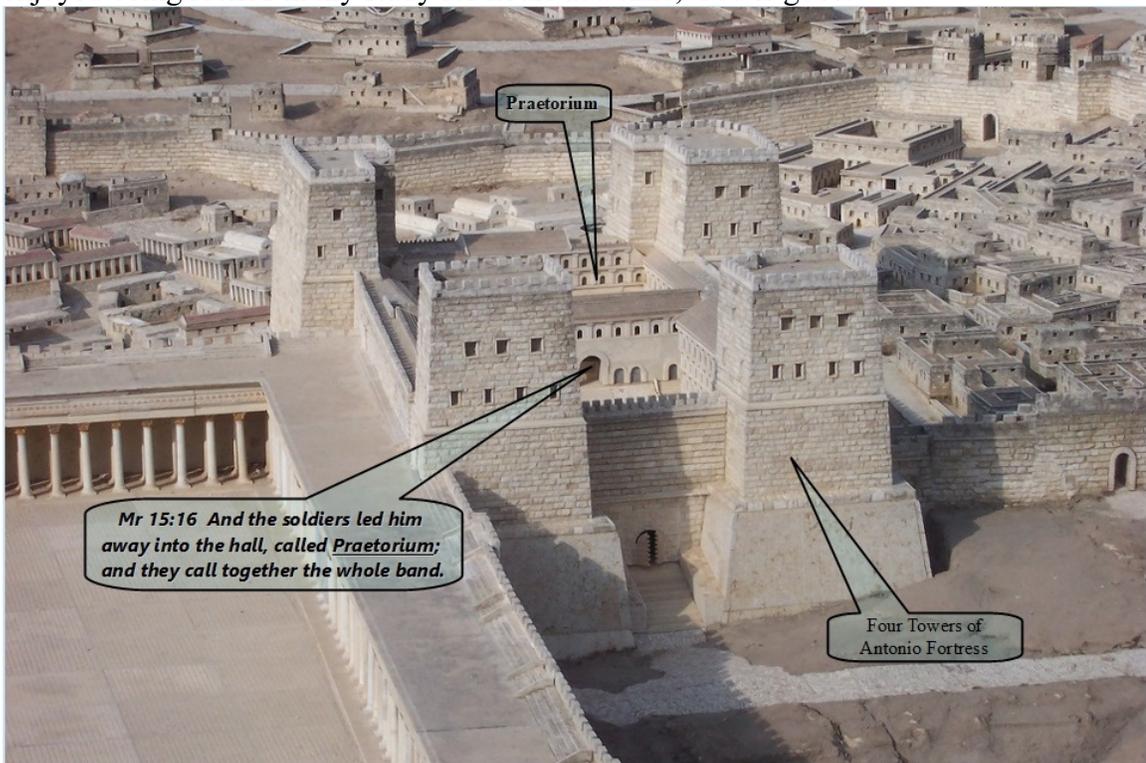
I am not a photographer. There are a lot of better pictures of this model city, taken with better cameras, with cameras hanging from hovering drones, and doctored by genuine photographers. Their pictures are always copyright; mine are not. As best I can I located everything in Jerusalem we talked about during this visit. It will take a couple

more iterations to correctly label all the gates⁴², be certain of David's tomb and find the model of Caiaphas' house.

I will send out a revision, when I get there, but I found these 2D pictures remarkably helpful for visualizing the big picture. And the hours of research and production of them



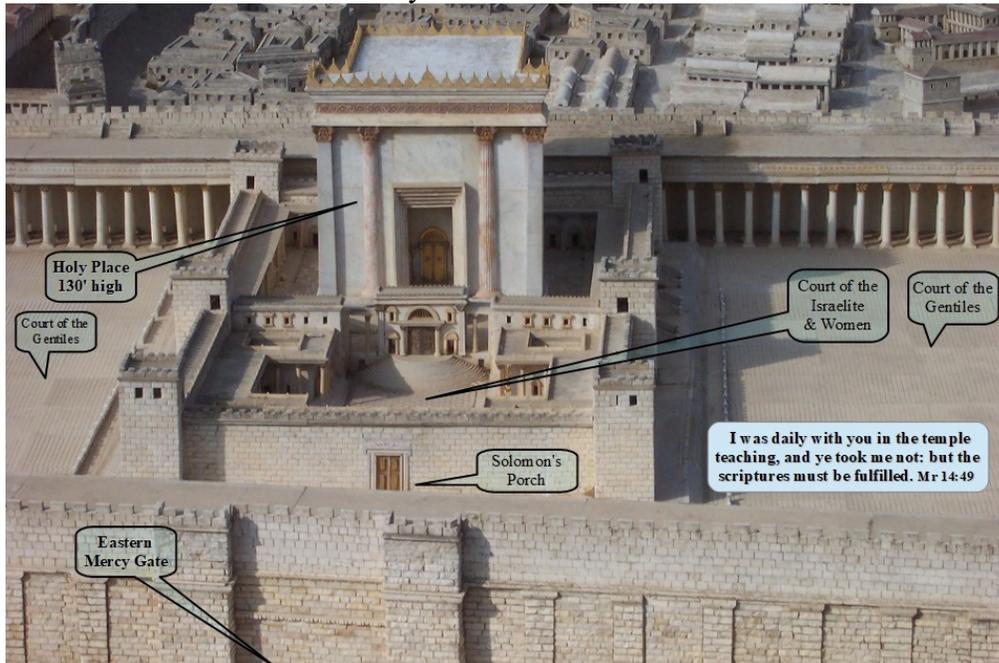
was an exceptional way to winter in NY; Friday's high being 9 degrees Fahrenheit! I loaded the wood stove five times a day, and changed Caiaphas' house location just as many times. I am still looking for the Damascus Gate, the Lions Gate and the Dung Gate, all should have been easier to find than I am making it. I have, just the same, so enjoyed being locked in my study for hours at a time; God is good.



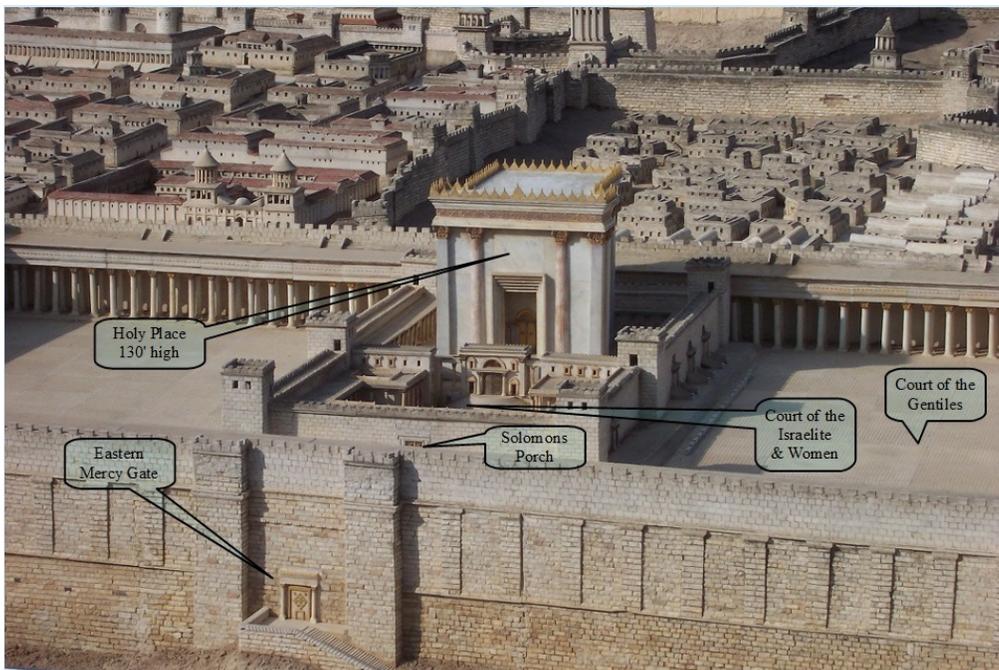
When we stood on the Temple Mount and Pastor Charlie asked us to see, in our minds eye, the Temple where Jesus cast out the money changers, we did. And when Jesus taught

⁴² Lion's Gate: This portal is named after a pair of ferocious-looking animal carvings that flank it. ... Herod's Gate: ... Damascus Gate: ... The New Gate: ... The Jaffa Gate: This was the destination of Jewish and Christian pilgrims disembarking at the Jaffa port, hence its name.

daily from early in the morning till dusk, we heard. When Pastor Charlie talked about the Eastern Gate, we stood at its sealed up doorway. When he pointed to the place where the Praetorium stood we saw it, and heard Pilots voice. When we peered off the mount and saw where the pool of Bethesda was, we marveled. In these pictures, for me, all these images took on a more concrete certainty.

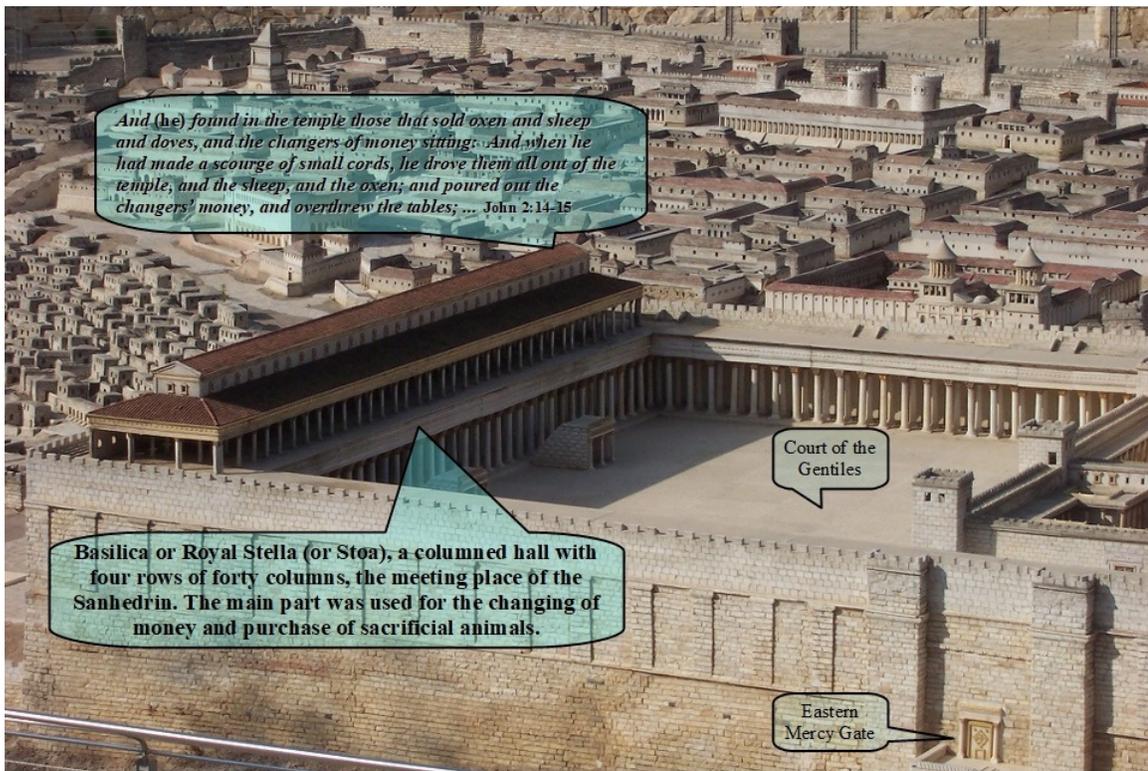


The Stoa is where the chief priests, the Sanhedrin⁴³ as it were, met, consulted, and demonstrated their insubordinate hatred for Jesus.



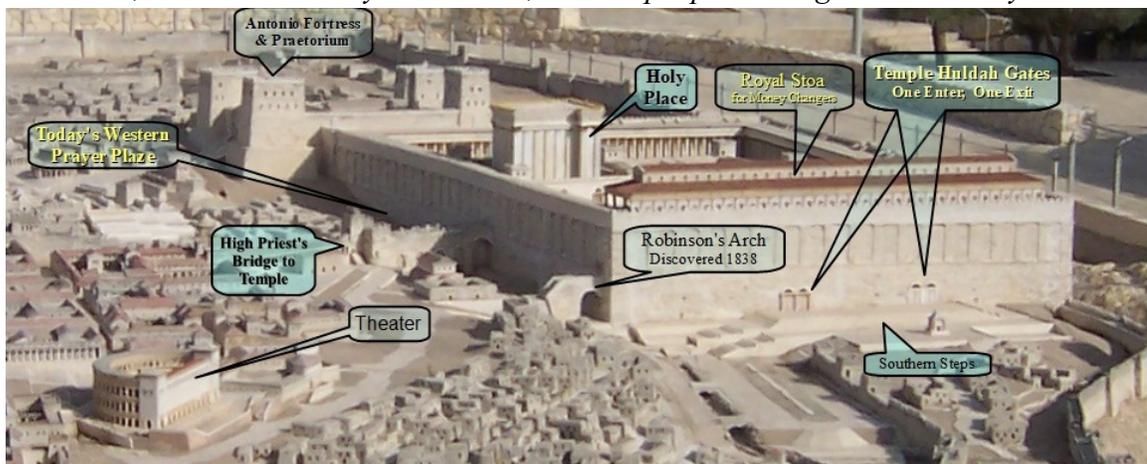
43 Sanhedrin – does not appear in the Holy Bible, but was any of several official Jewish councils in Palestine under Roman rule, to which various political, religious, and judicial functions have been attributed. The Sanhedrin was an assembly of either 23 or 71 elders, appointed to sit as a tribunal in every city in the ancient Land of Israel. There were two classes of Rabbinite Jewish courts which were called Sanhedrin, the Great Sanhedrin and the Lesser Sanhedrin.

9 Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. 10 But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; 11 Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus (John 12:9-11).



The Apostle Paul was taken while here in the Temple:

Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, ... And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they



took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. (Acts 21:26-27, 30-31).

This model of the temple puts a more clear imagery on all the temple scenes of the Bible. One could see the courts of the Gentiles, with a line that must not be crossed; the court lined with columned halls teeming with people; the inner court for only the circumcised and women; the holy place where sacrifices were slain, and priests ministered; and the most holy place, of which we cannot now speak particularly.

For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. ³ And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; ⁴ Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; ⁵ And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly (Heb.9:2-5).

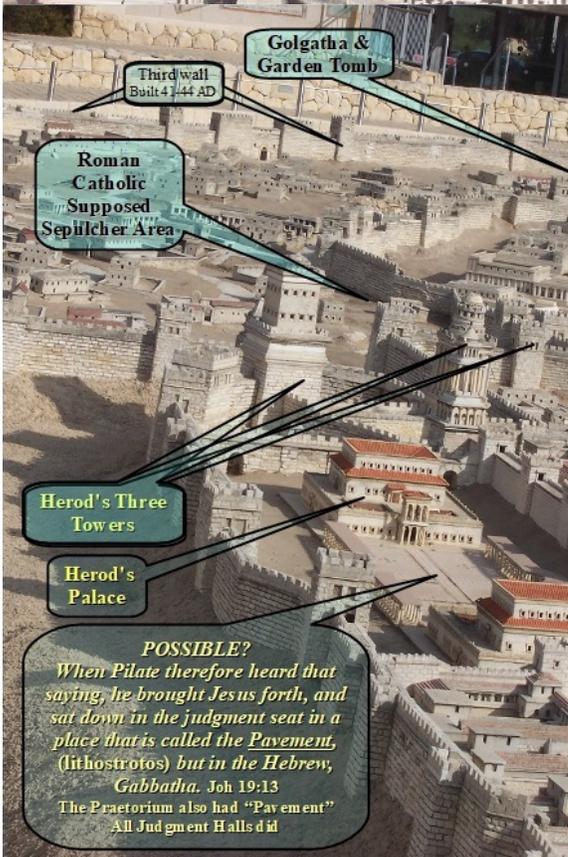
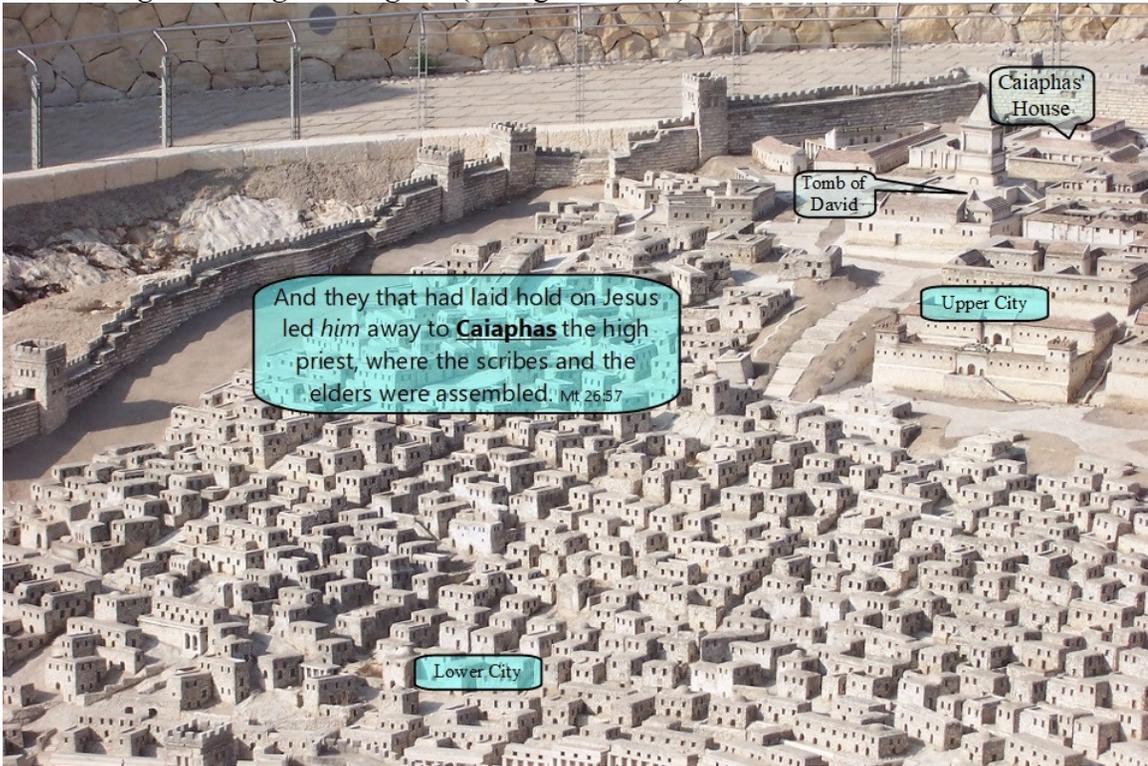
One can now visualize the city as it lay surrounding the temple. From the south-east one can see the Southern Steps where we sat and worshiped on steps that were likely present when Jesus entered the temple 1,993 years ago. The two temple gates facing south, one Entry, one Exit were called the Huldah Gates, named after the prophetess whose tomb is nearby. Huldah, you recall was the prophetess during Josiah's great revival.

So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her. ¹⁵ And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, ¹⁶ Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: ¹⁷ Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched (2Kings22:14-17, cf 2Chron. 34:22-28).

Curious that these two gates would be named after God's prophetess who foretold of the cities destruction, calling out “*even all the words of the book.*” That book was found by the eight year old King Josiah, during his temple repairs. She prophesied in 694 BC and Nebuchadnezzar came 87 years later in 607 BC. The Prophetess Huldah went on to pronounce good for this young and righteous king, though not using his name:

But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard; ¹⁹ Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also

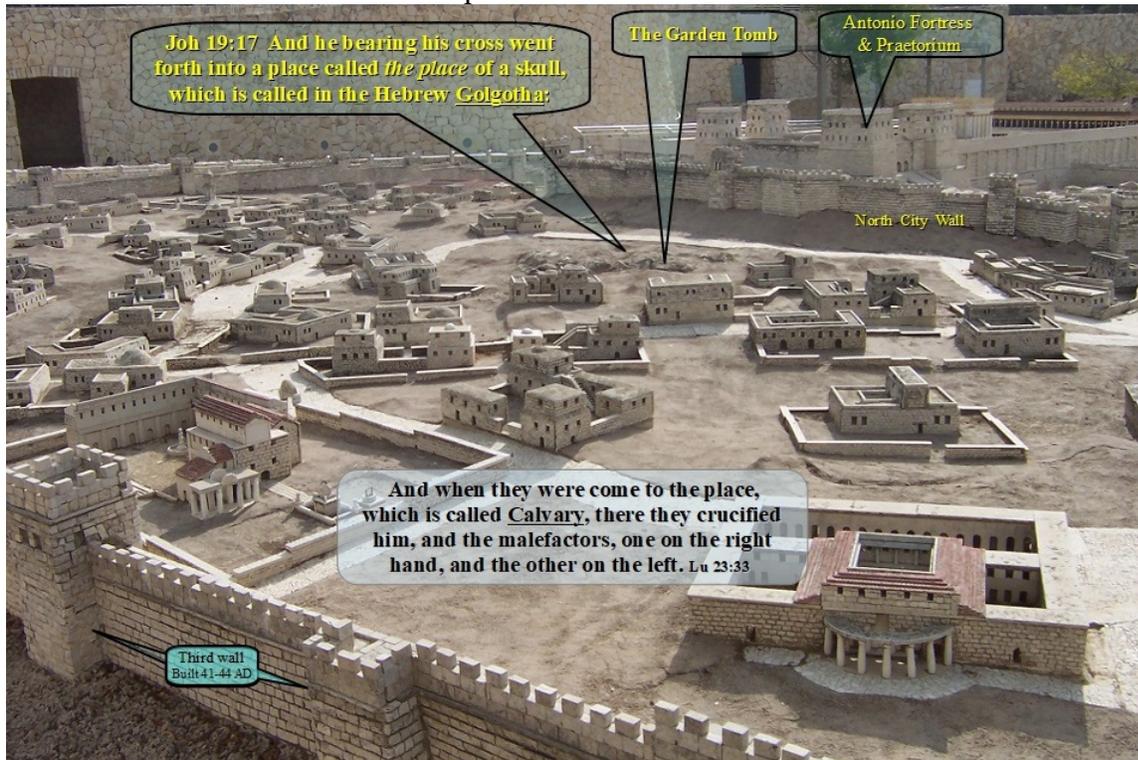
have heard thee, saith the LORD. 20 Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again. (2Kings22:18-20).



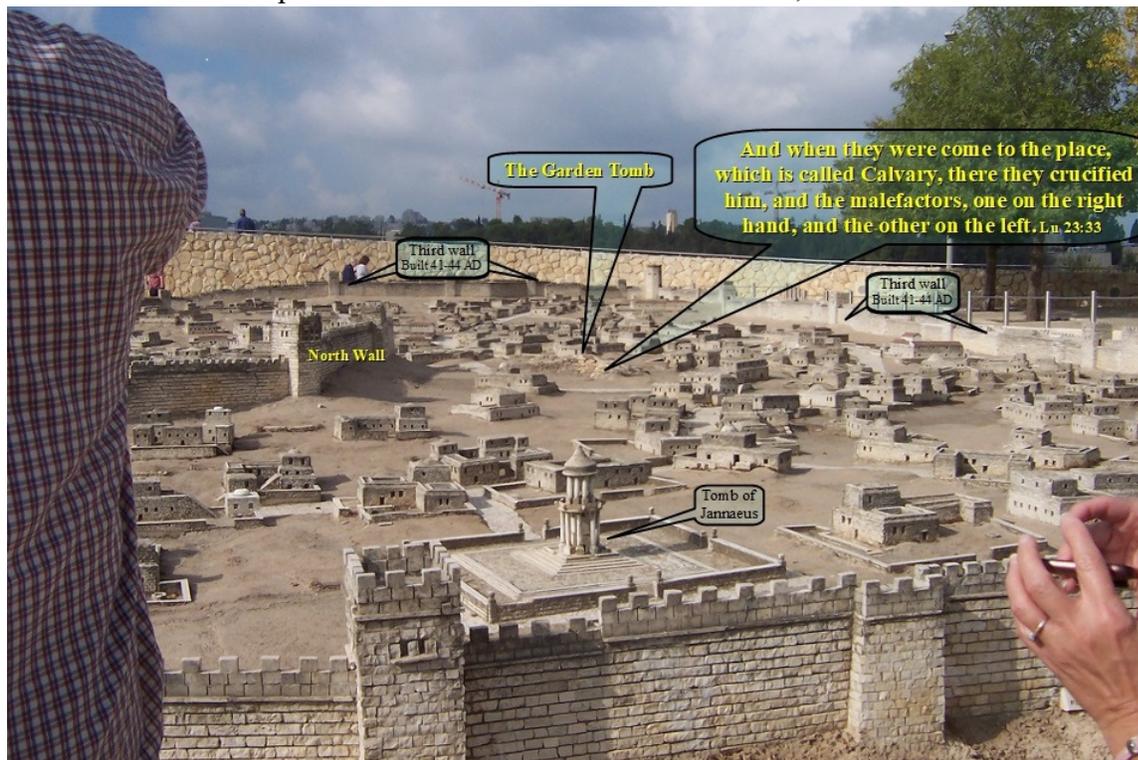
South of the temple is the City of David, and west of that the Lower City. Then one rises up Mount Zion to the Upper City. There we find the Tomb of David, and behind it Caiaphas' house, just south of Herod's Palace, and his three towers. His towers were built at the highest point in the city to protect it, and his stupendous palace. The largest tower, the Phasael Tower, named after Herod's brother, stood 145 ft high. The Hippicus Tower, named after his friend, stood 132 ft high, and the Mariamme Tower, named after Herod's Hasmonean wife, who he had murdered, stood 74 ft high. Herod was psychotic, we mentioned that previous. When Titus destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD all three towers were destroyed, and David's Tower stands on the cite today.

The Roman Catholic SUPPOSED site of Jesus' sepulcher is found just outside the city wall right next to Herod's three towers. Any Bible believer who has researched how

this site was “found” shares this skepticism.



After allegedly seeing a vision of a cross in the sky in 312 AD, Constantine the Great began to favor, and force upon all, his concept of Christianity. He sent his mother, Helena, to Jerusalem to look for Christ's tomb. Three crosses were found near a tomb; one which supposedly cured people of diseases, as the story goes, and this was **presumed** to be the True Cross Jesus was crucified on. Helena had found Calvary, ... she supposed, and in 326 AD Constantine ordered that the temple to Jupiter/Venus be replaced by a church. After the temple was torn down and its ruins removed, “soil” was removed from



a cave, revealing a rock-cut tomb that Helena identified and christened as the burial site of Jesus. A shrine was built, enclosing the rock tomb, and it is venerated, prayed to, and worshiped by Roman Catholics to this day.⁴⁴ Bible believers, not so much.



The hill recognized as Golgotha is found to the north, just outside of the city's northern wall. It is right beside two major thoroughfares where Romans normally crucified their criminals. The Garden Tomb, an empty tomb discovered in 1894, is near the Damascus Gate and stands in the shadow of Skull Hill, which the Bible calls Golgotha. Much more needs said about this Garden Tomb; we will visit it in person tomorrow.

Circling the city, the 1/50 scale model shows the location of the Pool of Bethesda.

After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2 Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. 3 In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. 4 For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.⁴⁵ 5 And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? 7 The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool ... (John 5:1-7)

You gotta get your King James Bible to read the rest of the account. It is worth it.

⁴⁴ From multiple sources researched by this Baptist Preacher of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, Feb 2009.

⁴⁵ John 5:4 is completely rip-torn out of all modernist ecumenical bibles. Use a King James Bible.

The Dead Sea Scrolls Museum had on full display The Great Isaiah Scroll, one of the original seven Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in Qumran in 1947. It is the largest, oldest, and best preserved of all the Biblical scrolls. Dated from 125 BC, the 54 columns contain all 66 chapters of the Hebrew copy of the book of Isaiah.

The Shrine of the Book Complex displays the oldest extant Biblical manuscripts in the upper galleries, and displays the Aleppo Codex, being the most accurate manuscripts of the Masoretic text in the lower galleries. The Aleppo Codex is generally in full agreement with the The Great Isaiah Scroll except for some spellings which reveal minor pronunciation differences of the Second Temple Period. That is miraculous, and exactly what the Biblical doctrine of preservation would expect. This Masoretic Hebrew text was used in the translation of the Authorized King James Bible.



The white dome of the Shrine of the Book, pictured above, is a portrayal of a lid of the ceramic jars found in the caves near the Dead Sea in 1947. The complex, dedicated and opened in 1965, is intended to be a sanctuary expressing profound spiritual meaning. We entered the Shrine through a cave-like corridor. There was no photography allowed and any audible voice was shushed in a “this-is-a-library” fashion. It was holier than a library. It was a sanctified setting, and there was a reverence that hung in the air.

I circled The Great Isaiah Scroll twice looking for anything that might point me to the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. I held a paper containing the chapter in Hebrew. On my third trip I was accompanied by our Guide Joe, who had a similar interest, and could read Hebrew. We were unsuccessful, but did find the close of the book and were working our way backward through thirteen unmarked chapters to try and find the text “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” which would look something like:

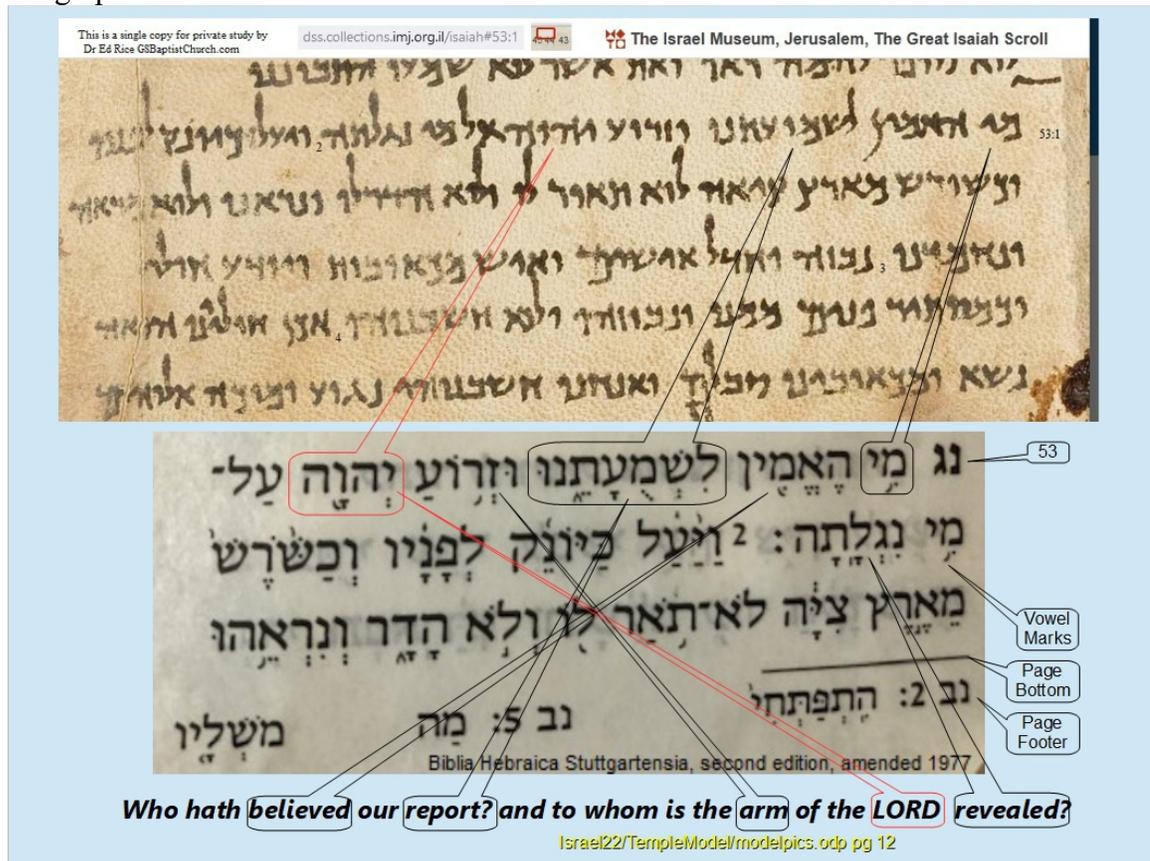
א: מִי הָאֵמִין לְשִׁמְעַתְנוּ וְרוּעַ יְהוָה עַל־מִי נִגְלָתָה

It was not futile, just unsuccessful. It was a memorable adventure, and if ever I get back to the Shrine, I will be far better prepared.

Electronic viewing of the scrolls can be done online. One can completely view The Great Isaiah Scroll at <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/isaiah>. But they are protected with a pretty stringent copyright.⁴⁶

46 Terms of Use: Website, text, and photos © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, 2011 All rights reserved. No part of this website may be downloaded, copied, or reproduced in any form, analog or digital, without the permission of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, with the exception of single copies for research or private study. Copyright in the digital images of the manuscripts, created by the Israel Museum and displayed on this site, is held by the Israel Museum. Reproducing these digital images in any manner other than for research or private study requires prior permission or licensing. For information on

I did take advantage of the copyright exception to make “a single copy for research and private study,” and that copy has indeed consumed hours of my time and private study. I can read Hebrew at a 1st grade reading level; meaning I can sound out, one at a time, a group of letters, and end up with a somewhat unrecognizable pronunciation of a word. Picking out groups of letters, is all that is really necessary for getting excited about the graphic below.



The top picture is “my single copy for private study” of The Great Isaiah Scroll, the top of the 44th column. The next is a photocopy of my Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, second edition, amended 1977, bottom right column of page 422. Some things of note from this graphic: 1) The Hebrew reads from right to left, the English at the bottom reads left to right. 2) The Biblia includes chapter numbers in Hebrew, and

א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	left to right.
Tet (T)	Chet (Ch)	Zayin (Z)	Vav (V/O/U)	He (H)	Dalet (D)	Gimel (G)	Bet (B/V)	Alef (Silent)	printed letters of the Biblia are
י	כ	ך	ל	מ	נ	ן	ס		print, the Scroll letters are hand
Yod (Y)	Kaf (K/Kh)	Khaf Final (Kh)	Lamed (L)	Mem (M)	Nun (N)	Nun Final (N)	Samech (S)		scribed. 4) The hand scribed letters
ע	פ	ף	צ	ץ	ק	ר	ש	ת	are consistent, but consistently
Ayin (Silent)	Pe (P/F)	Fe (F)	Tzade (Tz)	Tzade Final (Tz)	Qof (Q)	Resh (R)	Shin (Sh/S)	Tav (T/S)	different from the print. 5) The
									hand scribed “L”s (ל s) flag upward
									abnormally, making them easy
									marks to detect ... or flags. And,
									also, only a few people in the world
									will enjoy this exercise as much as I

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did.

When I was a teen, my Sunday School Teacher, Vern Tubbs, taught me that Psalms 119 is an acrostic octave of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet; the first eight verses start with (א) Aleph. The Oxford Press of my first Scofield Bible had put that Hebrew letter and then the English pronunciation in the header of each octet. Well glory over me, I was all weekend writing out the Hebrew alphabet and in the year I had it memorized, ... and voila (voilà), I was at a kindergarten Hebrew reading level. The Hebrew alphabet is still in Psalms 119 of your KJV Bible, but it might be easier to use the graphic below.

א	Aleph	silent	ʾ
ב	Bet	<i>b</i> as in <i>boy</i>	<i>b</i>
ג	Gimel	<i>g</i> as in <i>God</i>	<i>g</i>
ד	Dalet	<i>d</i> as in <i>day</i>	<i>d</i>
ה	He	<i>h</i> as in <i>hay</i>	<i>h</i>
ו	Waw	<i>w</i> as in <i>way</i>	<i>w</i>
ז	Zayin	<i>z</i> as in <i>Zion</i>	<i>z</i>
ח	Óet	<i>ch</i> as in <i>Bach</i>	<i>ḥ</i>
ט	Tet	<i>t</i> as in <i>toy</i>	<i>ṭ</i>
י	Yod	<i>y</i> as in <i>yes</i>	<i>y</i>
כ	Kaf	<i>k</i> as in <i>king</i>	<i>k</i>
ל	Lamed	<i>l</i> as in <i>lion</i>	<i>l</i>
מ	Mem	<i>m</i> as in <i>mother</i>	<i>m</i>
נ	Nun	<i>n</i> as in <i>now</i>	<i>n</i>
ס	Samek	<i>s</i> as in <i>sin</i>	<i>s</i>
ע	Ayin	silent	ʿ
פ	Pe	<i>p</i> as in <i>pastor</i>	<i>p</i>
צ	Tsade	<i>ts</i> as in <i>boots</i>	<i>ṣ</i>
ק	Qof	<i>k</i> as in <i>king</i>	<i>q</i>
ר	Resh	<i>r</i> as in <i>run</i>	<i>r</i>
ש	Sin	<i>s</i> as in <i>sin</i>	<i>ś</i>
שׁ	Shin	<i>sh</i> as in <i>ship</i>	<i>š</i>
ת	Taw	<i>t</i> as in <i>toy</i>	<i>t</i>

There is great value in learning Hebrew. Lamech taught it to Noah. Noah taught it to Shem, Ham, and Japhith. And it is still around after all the other languages got things all babbled up (Gen 11). Presuming then that Noah spoke Hebrew, and it was the language before the flood, it is presumable that God made the Hebrew tongue before there was a Hebrew. Consequently, or regardless, the Hebrew language is like no other.

Here is a page from my other journal:

Learning to Read Biblical Hebrew

Ed's Journal

by Pastor Edward Rice

Chapter 1 Introduction

Romans 3:1-2 What advantage then hath the

Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Learning the Hebrew language enough to read a Hebrew Bible will be a challenge. A challenge for challenge sake is great for 6 year olds, but for the more mature, there needs to be a greater purpose in taking on such a challenge. Since your reading this in English, you once learned the alphabet, the sound each letter adds, and the word it pronounced.

Hebrew is intriguing in that it is made up of letters which are very foreign to English, and that these 22 foreign letters are all consonants. Additional consternation is encountered by some when they consider that in Hebrew, letters are often given two

syllable names “Aleph – Bet – Gimel” and “Ayin- Pe – Tsade,” while in English our letters are straight forward one syllable names “A-B-C” and “Q-R-S”. The first challenge then is to learn these letters, learn their names, and learn their sounds. This is not a new challenge. We faced it previous. It was in first grade when the letters were “A-B-C”. Memorize these letters just like you did back then, it will take your mind to a new but familiar vista.

The rest of my journal on learning Hebrew is free online at www.gsbaptistchurch.com/hebrew_study_group/

The Isaiah 53 handout I made is shown below:

All we like sheep have gone astray;

ישציה נב

יג הנה ישכיל עבדי ירום ונשא וגבה מאד
 יד כאשר שממו עליך רבים כן משחת מאיש מראהו ותארו מבני אדם
 טו כן יזה גוים רבים עליו יקפצו מלכים פיהם כי אשר לא ספר להם ראו ואשר לא שמעו התבוננו
 ישציה נב

א מי האמין לשמענו וזרוע יהוה עלינו נגלתה
 ב ויעל כיוצק לפניו וכשרש מארץ ציה לא תאר לו ולא הדר ונראהו ולא מראה ונחמדהו
 ג נבזה וחדל אישים איש מכאבות וידוע חלי וכמסתר פנים ממנו נבזה ולא חשבנהו
 ד אכן חלינו הוא נשא ומכאבינו סבלם ואנחנו חשבנהו נגוע מכה אלהים ומענה
 ה והוא מחלל מפשענו מדכא מעונותינו מוסר שלומנו עליו ובחברתו נרפא לנו
 ו כלנו כצאן תעינו איש לדרך פנינו ויהוה הפגיע בו את עון כלנו
 זנגש והוא גענה ולא יפתח פיו כשה לטבח יובל וכרחל לפני גזייה נאלמה ולא יפתח פיו
 ח מעצר וממשפט לקח ואת דורו מי ישוחח כי גזר מארץ חיים מפשע עמי נגע למו
 ט ויתן את רשעים קברו ואת עשיר במתו על לא חמס עשה ולא מרמה בפיו
 יויהוה חפץ דכאל החלי אמתשים אשם נפשו יראה זרע יאריר ימים וחפץ יהוה בידו יצלח
 יא מעמל נפשו יראה ישבע בדעתו יצדיק צדיק עבדי לרבים ועונתם הוא יסבל
 יב לכן אחלק לו ברבים ואת עצומים יחלק שלל תחת אשר הערה למות נפשו ואת פשעים נמנה
 והוא חטא רבים נשא ולפשעים יפגיע

Isaiah 52:13-15

www.chabad.org

ישציה נב

Isa.52:13 ¶ Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

יג הנה ישכיל עבדי ירום ונשא וגבה
 מאד:

14 As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:

יד כאשר שממו עליך רבים כן משחת
 מאיש מראהו ותארו מבני אדם:

15 So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

טו כן יזה גוים רבים עליו יקפצו מלכים
 פיהם כי אשר לא ספר להם ראו ואשר
 לא שמעו התבוננו:

Isaiah 53:1-12

ישציה נב

1 ¶ Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

א מי האמין לשמענו וזרוע יהוה על
 מי נגלתה:

2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

ב ויעל כיוצק לפניו וכשרש מארץ ציה
 לא תאר לו ולא הדר ונראהו ולא
 מראה ונחמדהו:

3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

ג נבזה וחדל אישים איש מכאבות וידוע
 חלי וכמסתר פנים ממנו נבזה ולא
 חשבנהו:

4 ¶ Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

ד אכן חלינו הוא נשא ומכאבינו סבלם
 ואנחנו חשבנהו נגוע מכה אלהים
 ומענה:

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was

ה והוא מחלל מפשענו מדכא מעונותינו

bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 ¶ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

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The Israel Museum was perfectly intriguing. Since I was an engineer in a previous life, I love models, and the 1/50 scale model of the Old City of Jerusalem has intrigued me since I first saw it in 2009. I have been a student of the Hebrew language since my teen years, (only now getting to the 1st grade reading level makes me a SLOW-learner) and visiting the Great Isaiah Scroll display was a highlight of this Israel Journey's Day 3 morning adventure.

I know this journal entry is to long, I pared it down a lot, but its hard to tell.

מוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ עָלָיו וּבְחִבְרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא־לָנוּ:

ו כָּלֵנוּ כַצֶּאֱן תַעֲיִנוּ אִישׁ לְדַרְכּוֹ פְּנֵינוּ
:וַיְהוֶה הַפְּגִיעַ בּוֹ אֶת עֵן כָּלֵנוּ

ז נִגְשׁ וְהוּא נֶעְנֶה וְלֹא יִפְתַּח־פִּי כִשְׁה
לְטֹבַח יוֹבֵל וּכְרַחֵל לְפָנָי גְּזִיָּה נֶאֱלָמָה
:וְלֹא יִפְתַּח פִּי

ח מִמַּעַר וּמִמְשָׁפֵט לָקַח וְאֶת־דֹּרוֹ מִי
יִשׁוּחַח כִּי נִגְזַר מֵאֲרֶץ חַיִּים מִפֶּשַׁע עַמִּי
:נִגְעַע לָמוֹ

ט וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־רְשָׁעִים קִבְרוֹ וְאֶת־עֹשֵׂי
בְּמַתָּיו עַל לֹא־חַמָּס עָשָׂה וְלֹא מִרְמָה
:בְּפִי

י וַיְהִי חֶפְצַ דְּכָאוֹ הִחְלִי אִם־תִּשְׂמִי
אֲשֶׁם נִפְשׁוּ יִרְאֶה זָרַע יֶאֱרִיךְ יָמִים וְחֶפֶץ
:יְהוֶה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלַח

יא מִמַּעַמֵּל נִפְשׁוּ יִרְאֶה יִשְׁבַּע בְּדַעְתּוֹ
יִצְדִּיק צְדִיק עַבְדֵי לְרַבִּים וְעוֹנֹתָם הוּא
:יִסְבֵּל

יב לָכֵן אֶחֱלַק־לוֹ בְּרַבִּים וְאֶת־עֲצוּמִים
יִחַלַּק שְׁלֵל תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הָעֵרָה לְמֹות
נִפְשׁוּ וְאֶת־פְּשָׁעִים נִמְנָה וְהוּא חָטָא־
:רַבִּים נִשָּׂא וְלִפְשָׁעִים יִפְגִּיעַ



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice #11 Thur 3 Nov The Arch, Southern Steps, City of David

We left the Israel Museum, took a short bus ride and came to the Archaeological Park. Our guide Joe pointed down to a rubble of rocks beside a small clearing of pavement (the Bible word pavement has no asphalt attached to it, it is an arrangement of stone in a road walkway or courtyard, or even an arrangement of floor tiles in a mosaic). This pavement was obviously very old and the rubble of stones were the remains of “Robinson’s Arch“, named after American researcher Edward Robinson, who discovered it in 1838. A series of archaeological digs removed 20 feet of rubble that buried the pavement, and we saw the rubble of the fallen stones that accompanied the fallen arch.



Recall the archaeological rule, 10% find and 90% imagination, well this one might reverse those numbers. Even the upper corner stone of the temple wall was pulled from the rubble, and it had markings of where the shofar would rest as it announced the sunset opening of the Sabbath Day. Excavations of 1968–1977 showed that the arch originally reached over the paved street below, and connected to a very large vaulted stairway which led people into the

temple area from the street below. There was pressure a foot to make this south west corner of the temple wall another prayer plaza, but that would require the removal of the aged pavement, and the rock rubble that gave evidence to the fallen arch and stairways. Instead it was made an Archaeological Park, where these findings can be viewed. Praise the Lord, and imagine the huge stairway and arching bridge into the southwest corner of the temple area.

We left the archaeological archway and sat on the southern steps of the temple. In 1967 archaeologists excavated an enormous flight of steps that led up to the southern entry of the temple. They lead to the Huldah gates, named after the prophetess who clarified prophecy for a young King Josiah as detailed in 2Kings 22:14. Prophetess Huldah was “keeper of the wardrobe,” dwelt in Jerusalem in the college, and was entombed right near here.

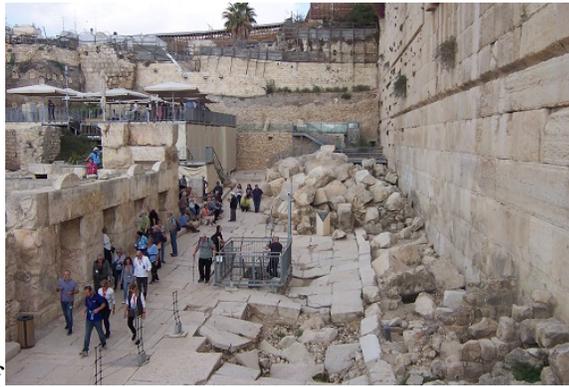


The southern steps are called the “Rabbis Stairs,” because rabbis taught their disciples on the steps. The expansive width of the steps made plenty of space for congregating. This was the main temple entry from the city of David, as well as the western city area,

where most of the people lived. On the steps Gamaliel taught a disciple named Saul; “*I (Paul) am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day*” (Acts.22:3).

Certainly the Rabbi, of all rabbis, readily taught here on these very steps. This is where The Holy Bible touches archaeologist's shovels to put Jesus on this very spot. It is reported that the famous astronaut Neil Armstrong said, “Standing here on the very place that my Lord stood, is more important to me than standing on the moon.”⁴⁷

Multitudes would come up the pilgrims road from the massive mikvah at the Pool of



Salome in the lower part of the city of David. They would sing the ascension psalms, Psalms 120–134, as they came up. There would be one way entryways to the temple for the pilgrims who just came from their ritual bath in the many purification mikvahs. As they entered the temple, they were not to touch, or be touched by, anyone after leaving the ritual bath.

These steps were a very special place to

sit and listen to a teacher. Pastor Charlie spoke again about how special it was to walk where Jesus walked, and worshiped here on the Southern Steps where he taught. We sat on the steps, listening to Pastor Charlie show again, in our minds eye, our Lord Jesus Christ teaching here on the Southern Steps of the Temple. We enjoyed a half hour of picture taking and wonder on



these 1,990 year old steps before we made our way down toward the old City of David, where we would explore Hezekiah's water tunnel.

As we made our way through the crowd it was hard to miss a couple of Bar Mitzvahs going on, in the entryway into the City of David area. A Jewish boy, reaching age 13, is celebrated into manhood, and is now ready to observe religious precepts and take part in public worship. The celebrations

47 Rice, Edward, “Journaling a Preachers Pilgrimage to Israel”, Volume XXIV, Day 8, 3 Feb 2009, The Southern Steps, Page 47-49.

were invigorating, full of Jewish singing and dancing, food and speeches and food, lots of Jewish food. We slowly made our way through the celebrating masses and came to the City of David's 3-D theater.

The city of David is one of the most excavated archaeological sites in the country. Our Guide Joe got pretty excited about our visit here, and why wouldn't he; Palestinian demagogues decry all such excavations because they deny, incredibly, that the Jews have any historical connection to the land of Israel. These infidels even deny the very existence of King David! Ergo, they hinder and prohibit as much Israeli excavation as possible, even using threats of violence from Hamas and the Palestinian authority.



Joe was animated as he described archaeological discoveries by Kathleen Kenyon (1906–1978), called one of the most influential archaeologists of the 20th century, and Eliat Mazar (1956–2021) one of Israel's top historians and archaeologists. With her Bible open Eliat surmised “Is this the palace of King David?”, and her surmisings are proving valid.

Joe went on for a time about beautifully crafted seals called “bullae” found in the city of David. These small round pieces of

clay, used to seal a scrolled document, were formed off of the signet ring of an author.

When the Babylonians came and burned the city of David, and all Jerusalem, these small clay seals were “fired”, like ceramics, and left completely intact in the ashes.

The bullae found in and around what Eliat called David's palace indicated that this was a royal governmental area of the kingdom of Judah. A seal was found with the name Gedaliah, son of Pashur, and another Jucal, son of Shelemiah⁴⁸, which corresponds to Jeremiah 38.



48 See <https://www.michaelrydelnik.org/what-a-2600-year-old-clay-seal-has-to-do-with-us/> , accessed 2/9/2023.

Then Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying, 2 Thus saith the LORD, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live.(Jer.38:1-2)

Another seal with words “belonging to Nathan – Melech, servant of the king” corresponds to 2Kings 23:11. “*And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of*



Nathanmelech the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire.” This was under the rein and reforms of Judah's King Josiah, who reigned from 640-610 BC. Excavations continue in the city of David, and archaeological shovels prove skeptics wrong and the Holy Bible right.

Guide Joe displayed a well-deserved enthusiasm for the 3-D movie about the city of David.⁴⁹ The 15 minute 3-D display animated an impressive panoramic view of

the topography of “the strong hold of Zion.” Zion was conquered early on in King David’s rule. The film explicitly depicted 2Sam.5:6–12, and 1Chron.11:4–9, and brought the history of the hill up to the present day.

And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither.⁷ Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David. ⁸ And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind, that are hated of David’s soul, he shall be chief and captain. Wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.

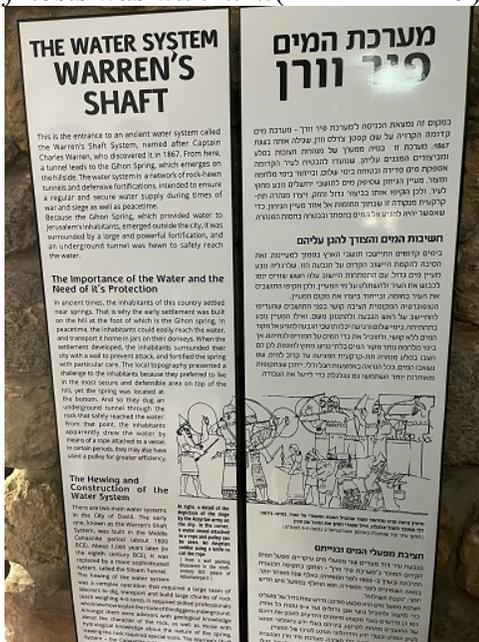
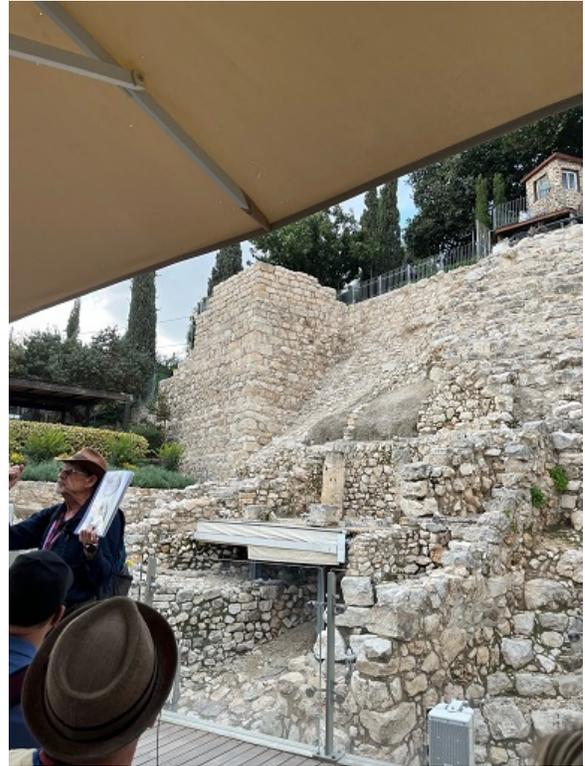


49 See <https://cityofdauid.org.il/en/product/the-city-of-david-comes-to-life-vr-tour/>, Accessed 2/9/2023

9 So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward. 10 And David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him.

11 And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house. 12 And David perceived that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake. (2Sam.5:6-12)

And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which is Jebus; where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land. 5 And the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, Thou shalt not come hither. Nevertheless David took the castle of Zion, which is the city of David. 6 And David said, Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain. So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief. 7 And David dwelt in the castle; therefore they called it the city of David. 8 And he built the city round about, even from Millo round about: and Joab repaired the rest of the city. 9 So David waxed greater and greater: for the LORD of hosts was with him. (1Chron.11:4-9)



We walked over the palace foundation, peered back through 3,000 years of His-Story, and listened to Joe try to contain his excitement. Both the Bible and the Muslims were being proven in these excavations; the Bible was proven pure factual; the Muslims were proven pure fools.

We got a bite to eat in the market area outside the entry to Hezekiah's tunnel. The day was half spent, and adventurous hikers were yet to wade through the waters of this tremendous



underground waterway. Bev and I were going to sit this one out in the comfortable Bar Mitzvah laden plaza. Very interesting, and their food was readily shared.



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#12 Thur 3 Nov Hezekiah's Tunnel, The Western Wall

The things I believe about eternity affect my daily life, and the things in my daily life affect what I believe about eternity. “I go to prepare a place for you. ... I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:2–3).

It has been thirteen weeks since Nov 2022 when we returned from Israel and in four weeks, in Mar 2023, by God’s grace, we will board an El-Al flight and return to Israel. Since returning I have spent a couple hours each week pondering what went on there, and a couple hours pouring over its pictures. It is now dawn on a Wednesday of February, and I read in Blaise Pascal’s 350 year old book, *Pascal’s Pensées*⁵⁰, where T. S. Eliot writes in the introduction:

“The majority of mankind is lazy-minded, incurious, absorbed in



vanities, and tepid in emotion, and is therefore incapable of either much doubt or much faith; and when the ordinary man calls himself a skeptic or an unbeliever, that is ordinarily a simple pose, cloaking a

disinclination to think anything out to a conclusion.” And so I dare not be lazy – minded in these matters.

We walked from the entryway of the city of David through some of the excavations that preceded the entryway into Hezekiah’s tunnel. After Rabshakeh, sent by Sennacherib king of Assyria, stood by the conduit of the upper pool and threatened to seize all of Jerusalem (2Kings 18:17–19), Hezekiah saw a flaw in the great



50 Pascal, Blaise, “*Pascal’s Pensées*”, (*Pensées DE Pascal, Avec les Notes de Mr de Fontenay Tome Premier*, A Londres, M.DCC.LXXXV.), 1662, pg xvi, via <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/18269>, [Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), one of the greatest physicists and mathematicians of all time, wrote after his conversion to our Lord Jesus Christ, “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.”].

fortress city's water supply system.

*And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rabshakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. **And when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the highway of the fuller's field. And Rabshakeh said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?** (2Kings 18:17,19)*



Sennacherib king of Assyria had already deported ten tribes of Israel into captivity, and now he came with Rabshakeh to destroy Jerusalem and take Judah into their captivity. Hezekiah, and God's prophet Isaiah, took their plight to the Lord and God said, "I will handle it." (2Kings 19 records Hezekiah's prayer and God's answer in greater detail). Hezekiah actually took Sennacherib's letter into Solomon's temple, and spread it before the Lord" (19:14). "And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and



Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD."

God's solution to the siege was that an hundred fourscore and five thousand Syrian soldiers woke up dead (19:35), and Sennacherib, king of Assyria, went home to Nineveh and was killed by his own sons while he worshiped his false god Nisroch (19:36–37).

Although one has to love, and



learn from, the drama of all this, the point we are pursuing is that at the close of Hezekiah's long and extended life (2Kings 20:20⁵¹), he “stopped the upper water course of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works” (2Chron.32:30⁵²).

A highlight of our day came in wading through the 1/3 mile underground tunnel that Hezekiah “prospered” to dig 2,700 years earlier. The wonder of this great



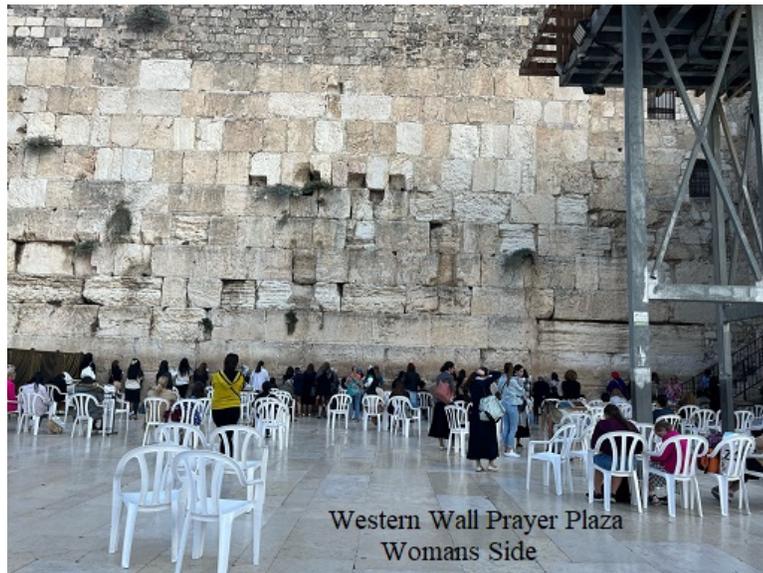
adventure was in how Hezekiah's workers, who started at the separate ends, ever came to meet in the middle. An inscription in the tunnel describes how they came to be within three cubits of



each other, after 1,200 cubits of digging, and being 100 cubits underground, and they “heard the voice of a man calling to his fellow.” It is an awesome thing, even miraculous, that in this S-shaped, carefully descending, underground, tunneled waterway, the two tunnels met perfectly. They were likely following the natural crack and contour of the rock that they chiseled through, but Hezekiah certainly had the hand of God in his life, ... and prospered. It is a wonder, just the same.

In Hezekiah's Tunnel the Inscription said:

“[...when] (the tunnel) was driven through. And this was the way in which it was cut through: While [...] (were) still [...] axe(s), each man toward his fellow, and while there



Western Wall Prayer Plaza
Womans Side

51 2King.20:20 *And the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?*

52 2Chron.32:30 *This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.*

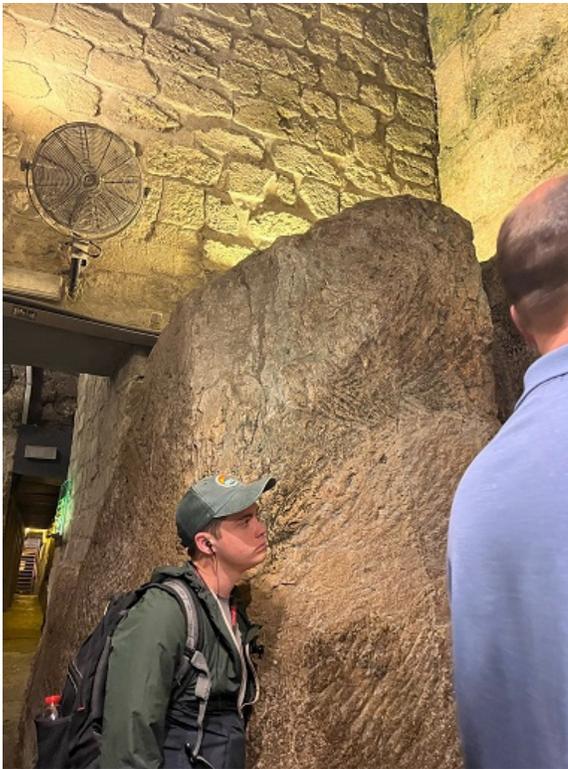
were still three cubits to be cut through, [there was heard] the voice of a man calling to his fellows, for there was an overlap in the rock on the right [and on the left]. And when the tunnel was driven through, the quarrymen hewed (the rock), each man toward his fellow, axe against axe; and the water flowed from the spring toward the reservoir for 1200 cubits, and the height of the rock above the head(s) of the quarrymen was 100 cubits.”⁵³

Sojourners waded underground through knee deep water from Gihon Spring all the way to the Shiloah Pool. Gihon is a “siphonic, Karstic spring” which is captured in the name “Gihon”, meaning *gushing forth*. It does indeed gush forth with an amazing amount of water. Our group successfully emerge from Hezekiah's tunnel, wet above the knees, near the Pool of Siloam. Bev and I sat-out this spelunking adventure and enjoyed a cup of coffee and some bar mitzvah cake as the smiling water soaked adventurers hiked the half mile up the hill through the area once known as the City of David.

After gathering in the food plaza and exchanging excitement and stories about Hezekiah's tunnel we headed out behind our guide to go to the Western Wall Prayer



Western Wall Prayer Plaza
Men's Side



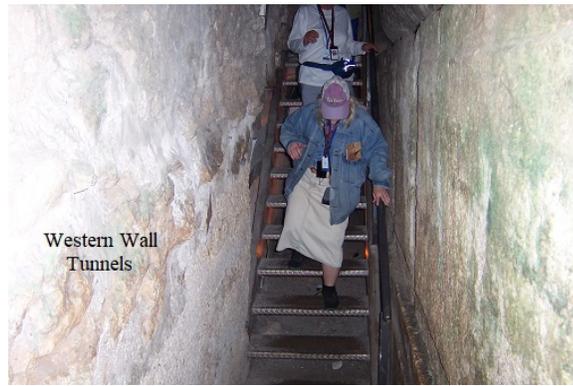
Plaza.

The Western Wall has been the center of Jewish yearning and memory for 1,950 years. It is the only fragment of the great temple that survived the Roman destruction of 70 A.D.. The temple itself was every bit as destroyed as Jesus said it would be:

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down (Matt.24:1-2).

53 From <https://www.bibleplaces.com/heztunnel/> accessed 02/16/2023.

So, the section of the foundation stone, that once held the temple, is all that is left to represent God's presence in the temple. "Built (by Herod the Great), to support the western side of the temple mount, it is known as the Western Wall (in Hebrew, *HaKotel Ha'Ma'aravi*). It is the most sacred structure of the Jewish people. Its ancient stones stand testimony to a glorious Jewish past, a proud heritage, and an extraordinary national rebirth. It is a focus of Jewish longing and prayer



for redemption and renewal.⁵⁴

It is said that the divine presence has never departed from the Western Wall. The Bible supports such a claim: "*For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually*" (2Chron.7:16 cf 1Kng.11:36,



2Kng.23:27⁵⁵).

I did not hear where our group was given any guidance for visiting the Western Wall but several rules were posted and some customs may be in need of mentioning. The no smoking, no pets, no alcohol, signs would be expected, but no candles, no drums (or musical instruments), no speakers (or boomboxes), and no immodest apparel were also posted in picture form (the immodest apparel interpretation was Bev's idea, I thought they were banning bullet proof vests).

54 From Western Wall Heritage Foundation, www.thecoldtowelkotel.org.

55 *1Kng.11:36 And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light always before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there. ... 2Kng.23:27 And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.*

On Sabbath days, no cell phones, no cameras, and no writing?, was posted. The whole area near the wall is considered a synagogue. To show reverence for Judaism, when at the wall, men should have their head covered. And, a little more obscure custom is to not turn your back on the wall, just back away with reverence.



When we came to the Western Wall Prayer Plaza there was an Israeli military swearing in ceremony being set up. It was very crowded until we worked our way towards the prayer wall. Most Christians understand their ability to call on their heavenly Father from any place that they happen to be. In Christ, we are indwelt by God, made his temple (1Cor.6:19–20), and able to call him Father.

6:8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. 9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. ... 11:27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. ... 23:9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. (Mat.6:8–9, 11:27, 23:9).



A few Christians have a reverent appreciation of this truth, and know 2Chronicles 7:14. Very few Christians, however, understand what is going on here

at this Western Wall of the Temple Mount. They have not continued reading in 2Chronicles chapter 7 to understand or appreciate 2Chronicles 7:15–16 “*Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. 16 For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.*”

Nor have we often rehearsed Solomon's whole prayer in second Chronicles chapter 6, with particular attention paid to its closing:

If they (the children of Israel) sin against thee, (for there is no man which sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, ... 38 If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul ... and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name: 39 Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, 40 Now, my God, let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and let thine ears be attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. 41 Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness. 42 O LORD God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant (2Chron.6:36–42).



On November 3, 2022, at 3 PM Israel time, 8 AM EST, I removed my hat, leaned one hand on the sanctified wall, and with an open Bible recited these verses to my Father. With prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, I mentioned by name each of our family members, and then each member of Good Samaritan Baptist Church, and then, by name and calling, each missionary we support.

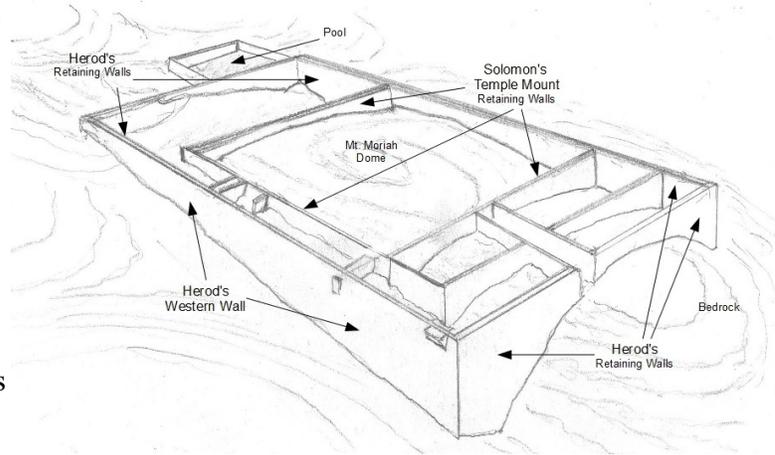
Because of our schedule, and my curiosity of all that was going on around me, it was not a “sweet hour of prayer”; it easily could have been, but it was at least sweet... and very precious. I pulled a small scroll of paper from my pocket, it had each name I had just prayed for inscribed on it by hand: I made it in a previous prayer meeting, and now tucked it into a small crack in the wall. I had been told, and did believe, that the Western Wall Heritage Foundation periodically removed all such slips of paper, and perpetually stored them somewhere here at the Western Wall Prayer Plaza. I know that that made my prayer no more pertinent or powerful, but it gave me some solace just the same. Thirteen years earlier I left an identical list... more members, fewer missionaries, with the same expectations. God is good.

North of the Western Wall Prayer Plaza, underground, in a series of tunnels, we followed the foundation stones, laid by Herod the great, all the way to the north west



corner of the Temple Mount. Herod's gargantuan foundation stones eventually gave way to the bedrock of Mount Moriah. Throughout the amazing maze of tunnels there were little libraries, reading rooms, carved out synagogues and sanctuaries, and empty cisterns.

Three things struck me as we made our way through these underground tunnels. First, as we made our way along the western wall foundation, we surely crossed a place where we stood just a very little bit west of where two cherubims, at one time, stretch out their wings across the Most Holy Place (1Kngs8:6-8). The spot was marked by a small underground synagogue.



Second, the Temple Mount, constructed just east of us, was not a solid mass of 20 foot deep backfill. The whole walled in 1,575 x 985 foot hollowed platform, tapering from 30 feet high at the south wall, to bedrock of Mount Moriah at its north end, was absolutely and perfectly riddled with cavern like rooms, interconnecting tunnels, and small storage spaces. This made up, as it were, the basement of the temple and basilica structures

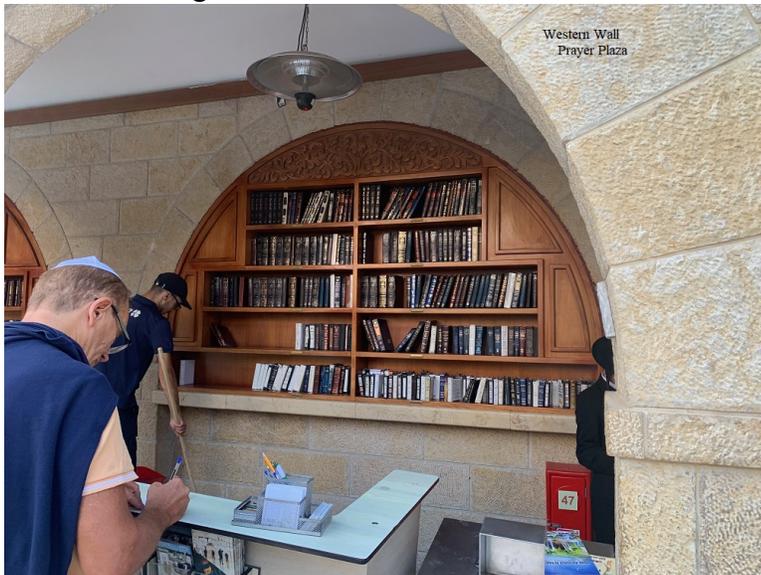


constructed above. I sketched what the landscape under the Temple Mount would likely look like, and one can imagine numerous open areas that were likely present. Notice that there would be some openings in Solomon's original temple mount area, and even more so under Herod's huge platform area.

These secret basement rooms and tunnels would be quite filled with debris from the destroyed temple, but would likely also contain all that was present when the temple was operational. In hush tones it is quietly speculated that even the original ark of the covenant may have been stored in a concealed room under the most holy place.

This area under the temple mount is very literally an archaeological gold mine. One that has very covertly been explored by Israeli researchers.

Muslims, who are today in control of the Temple Mount, have dug into these man-made caves and tunnels, and, with extreme hatred and bias, have poured many of them solid with concrete. Muslims were at one time dumping their digging refuse in the garbage, and hauling it out the Dung gate. Wise Israeli researchers set up a garbage reconciliation center outside the gate, and collected many artifacts from under the temple mount before the Palestinians got wise to their blunder.



Third, there is one particularly gargantuan stone in Herod's construction of the western wall. It is 44 x 12 x 14 feet, weighing 600 tons! It is most certainly some kind of anchor point, likely a base for an arch support that would span a large room within the temple basement. It seems, for the huge architectural finds buried in the basement of the temple, the rule, at present, is 1% find, and 99% imagination. Many are striving to change that imbalance.

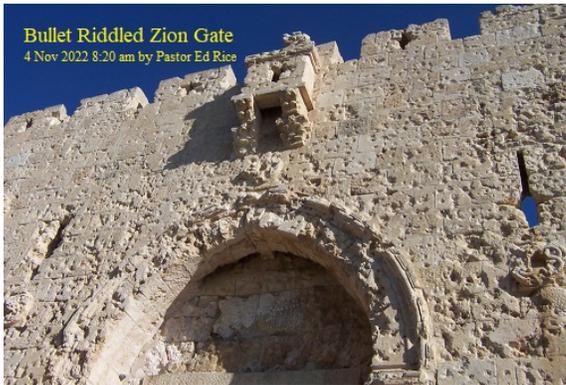
We were exhausted as Eiad, bus driver extraordinaire, turned the Irizar i6S toward the motel. Exhausted but smiling. After a spectacular buffet supper several decided to venture downtown to go shopping. Beverly and I declined, choosing rather a good Book, a relaxing lounge in the lobby, and a controlled crash into a comfortable bed. I had heard that Pastor Gates closed the day with a blast of a Shofar, but we just plain missed it.





The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#13 Fri 4 Nov Caiaphas' Palace, Golgotha, and Garden Tomb.

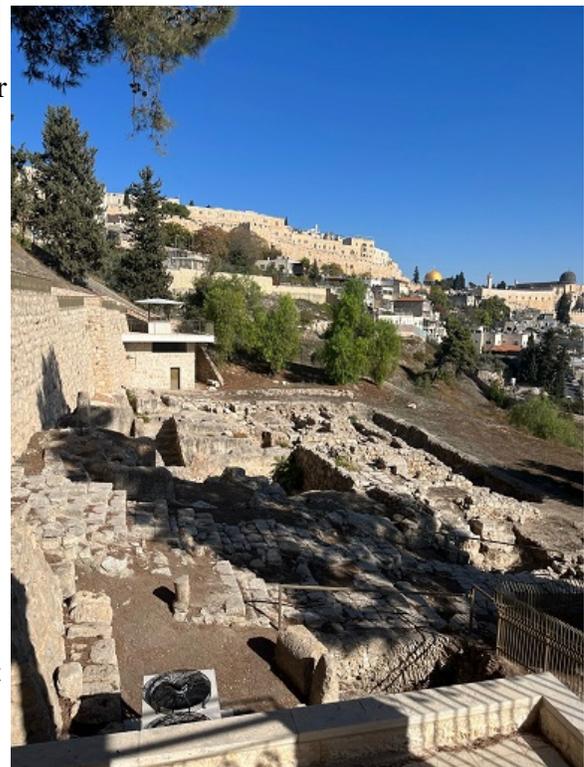
We were up at dawn on our fourth morning at the Dan hotel in Jerusalem. The highlight of the holy land tour is visiting the empty tomb and today was the highlight. The kosher buffet breakfasts each morning were superb. We enjoyed breakfast with Shane and Kathy, Micah and Harrison. We talked about the plans for the day but knew very little about our first stop at Caiaphas' palace; and no one here knew enough Latin



whizzed by, gave us a couple more Hebrew words to memorize⁵⁶, gave the translations for the Latin “Gallicantee”, and explained, with unguarded excitement, what we would be doing in the south west corner of Jerusalem. We passed by Zion's Gate, pictured here. It was a war torn stalwart, and riddled with 50 cal bullet holes. They caught my attention because a 50 cal Gatling gun was mounted in the tail of the B-52 I worked on in another life. We mounted a similar Gatling on the A-10 Warthog – Tank Killer and it blasted out such a trail of lead that the recoil actually stopped the forward progress of the airplane. It actually propelled the 14 ton aircraft backward! One does not forget things like that. I put my thumb in a hole in the old gate of Zion where a 50 cal round had chipped out a significant chunk of rock. I was sure it did not come from a Gatling gun. The thousands

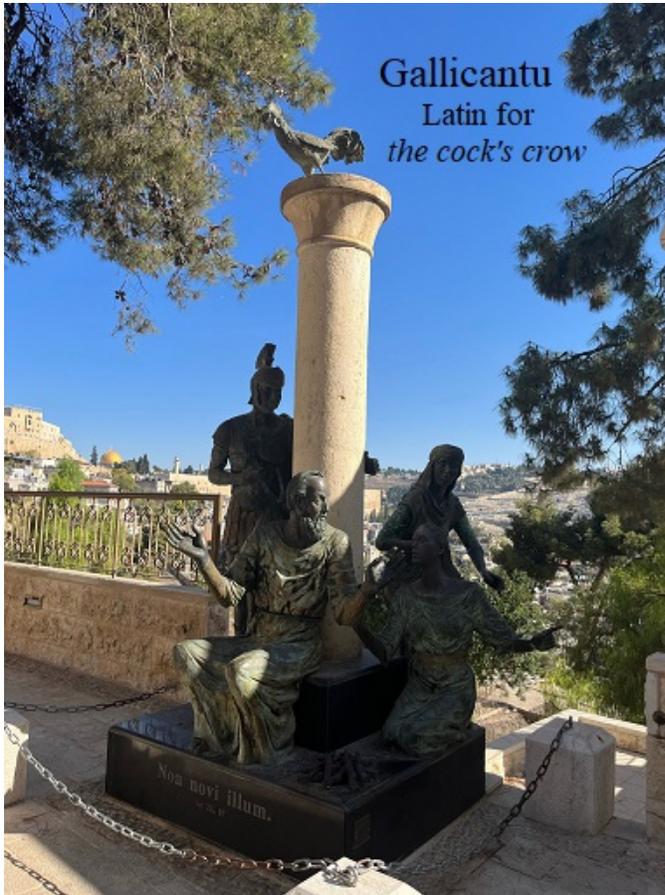
to understand what “Gallicantee” was all about.

We did not linger over breakfast; it was wise to avoid being the last on the bus. Every bus excursion through Jerusalem was a great adventure; today’s trip all the way to the Zion gate was through some new territory, as near as I could tell. Our guide Joe pointed out some places of interest that



⁵⁶ I jotted all these Hebrew words down in my notebook, but the Hebrew phonics I jotted down in a jostling, bouncing bus doing high-speed maneuvers through narrow streets, turned out quite unintelligible; in hindsight, I should have noted the English equivalent, not the Hebrew phonics, then I could have translated to Hebrew in retrospect.

of rounds that struck this gate were quite insignificant to the massive old gate of Zion. I tried to quote Palms 2: 1– 4, as I stood at Zion's war torn gate.



Gallicantu
Latin for
the cock's crow

*“Why do the heathen rage,
and the people imagine a vain
thing? 2 The kings of the earth
set themselves, and the rulers
take counsel together, against
the LORD, and against his
anointed, saying, 3 Let us
break their bands asunder,
and cast away their cords
from us. 4 He that sitteth in
the heavens shall laugh: the
Lord shall have them in
derision ... Yet have I set my
king upon my holy hill of
Zion.” (Ps.2:1-4,6)*

When I was a teen in Tuscarora Baptist Church we sang a song that said, “We’re marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion, we are marching upward to Zion the beautiful city of God.”

I asked a deacon of the church, “Where in the world is Zion, and why are we marching there?”

Mr. Sylvia said, “I have no idea, but I sure do love that song.” Today, I believe 2Timothy 2:15 is pertinent to every believer. God wrote things down so we can “know”, and “rightly divide” the word of truth.

Pastor Chalie opened his Bible in a small meeting area outside of Caiaphas' palace. There was a statue of Peter nearby, he was crouching by a fire in a crowd of hostiles. A rooster stood on a pole overhead. We are not listening for “Gallicantee”; because of what Jesus did, we are listening for a trumpet, and we’re marching to Zion.

Pastor rehearsed the scriptures that brought Jesus from Gethsemane to Caiaphas' palace. Very familiar scriptures, but they reverberated with life anew as we stood here and saw in our minds eye Caiaphas all robed up, and Peter hovering in the shadows. We descended into a dungeon beneath the palace. We all squeezed in. It was tight for 50 people, very tight. The stairs were full, the atmosphere was laden with somber worship. Pastor Chalie read some more scriptures and then he read from psalms chapter 88.



“O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee: 2 Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; 3 For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. 4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength: 5 Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand. 6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. 7 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah. 8 Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.” (Ps.88:1-6)



It became clear what happened here 1,950 years ago. Almost spontaneously the dungeon filled with singing, Blessed Assurance Jesus is Mine,... I Stand Amazed in the Presence of Jesus the Nazarene,... I love you Lord,... , and my favorite:

Alas and did my saviour bleed and did my sov'reign die; Would he devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?

Chorus: At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light, And the burden of my heart rolled away; It was there by faith, I received my sight, And now I am happy all the day.

2 Was it for crimes that I have done he groaned upon the tree? Amazing pity grace unknown and love beyond degree.

3 Well might the sun in darkness hide, And shut His glories in, When Christ, the mighty Maker, died For man, His creature's sin.

4 Thus might I hide my blushing face While His dear cross appears. Dissolve my heart in thankfulness, And melt mine eyes to tears.

5 But drops of grief can ne'er repay, The debt of love I owe; Here, Lord, I give myself away, 'Tis all that I can do.

At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light, And the burden of my heart rolled away; It was there by faith, I received my sight, And now I am happy all the day.

As we came up from the dungeon, there was a placard on the wall which said:

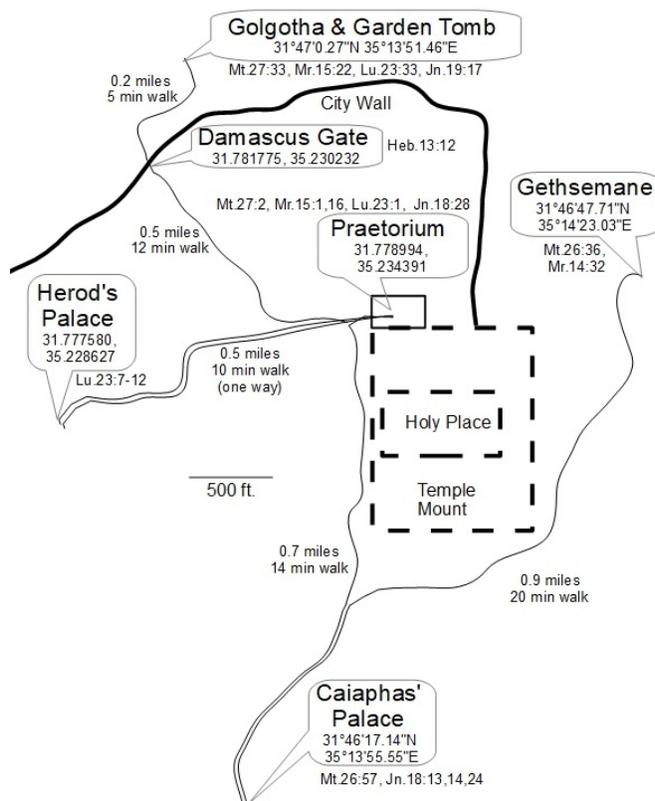
“Underground caves (Prison) When these underground caves were rediscovered in 1889, their physical characteristics, their proximity to Caiaphas palace, and their contiguity with the Sacred Pit (dungeon), all suggested the public jail where, according to a 4th- century Jerusalem tradition not recorded in the gospels, Jesus would have been scourged not only by Pilot, but also by Caiaphas, and where the apostles Peter and John would have been held and scourged for preaching the name of Jesus in the temple area after the resurrection (Acts 4:15-22).



Aided by the context, Christians traditionally recall here some of the painful sufferings endured by Jesus during his Passion, regardless of where they took place, as well as by the apostles, the first believers in his name.” (From a wall placard in excavated caves near Caiaphas' Palace)

As we came out of the dungeon, I was disturbed that in scripture, I had only vaguely visited these premises before. In all the times I had read the scriptures that Pastor Chalie rehearsed today, I never previously spent any significant time with Jesus, here in Caiaphas' house. I have never walked from Gethsemane with him, came down the Kidron valley, crossed by the southern steps of the temple, traversed the city of David, and entered this palace area.

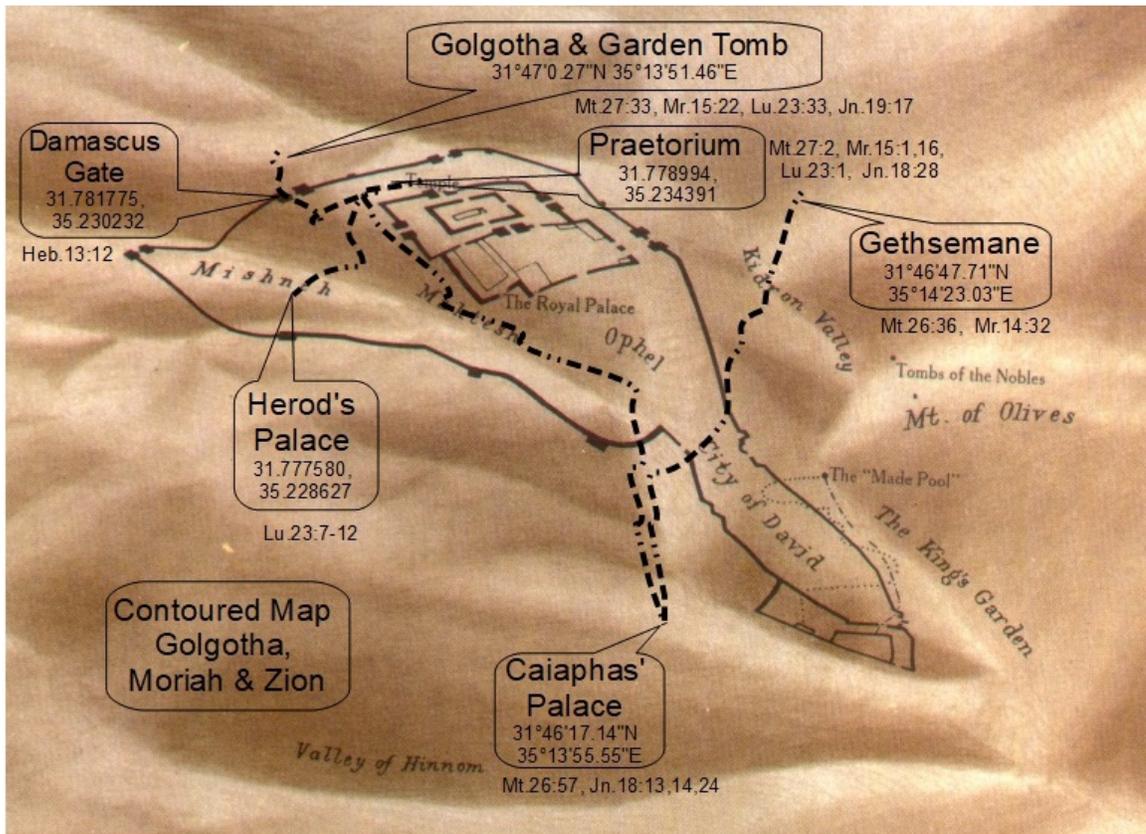
I stood outside and looked toward the temple mount. I imagined the route from Gethsemane to here, and then the route from here to Pilots judgment hall in the Praetorium, then to Herod's Palace, then back to Pilot. When Jesus left the Praetorium-



Judgment Hall, bearing his cross and escorted by Roman soldiers, he would have gone out into the streets of Jerusalem, turned north toward the Damascus Gate, and gone outside of that gate to the hill called Golgotha (Mt.27:33, Mrk.15:22, Luk.23:33, Joh.19:17).

The the Roman Catholics, armed with the authority of a Roman emperor, suppose, that conversion to Christianity can be compulsory, and they suppose that forgiveness can be obtained by following a “way of suffering.” They eloquently phrase it in Latin “Via Dolorosa”, and imagine several stations of suffering. Bible evidence, however, takes the Savior from Pilot's washed, but unclean hands, out of his judgment hall to the hill called Calvary. The route taken, according to our iPhone photos with their iPhone locations, would be out the Damascus gate to

Golgotha, right near to the garden tomb. The map I sketched out shows a scale model of this whole 3 mile journey from Gethsemane to the tomb.



The location of each point is noted at the close this journal entry, and your own google map of the route can be made by following the directions given. I have found the path our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ took from Gethsemane to Golgotha little studied, but it is the most important three mile walk in world history. Praise be to his name.

One day they led Him up Calvary's mountain,
 One day they nailed Him to die on the tree;
 Suffering anguish, despised and rejected; Bearing
 our sins, my Redeemer is He.
 Chorus
 Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me; Buried,
 He carried my sins far away;
 Rising, He justified freely forever: One day He's
 coming—O glorious day! J. Wilbur Chapman

One day they left Him alone in the garden, One
 day He rested, from suffering free;
 Angels came down o'er His tomb to keep vigil;
 Hope of the hopeless, my Savior is He.

One day the grave could conceal Him no longer,
 One day the stone rolled away from the door;

Then He arose, over death He had conquered;
 Now is ascended, my Lord evermore.



One day the trumpet will sound for His coming,
 One day the skies with His glory will shine;
 Wonderful day, my beloved ones bringing;
 Glorious Savior, this Jesus is mine!

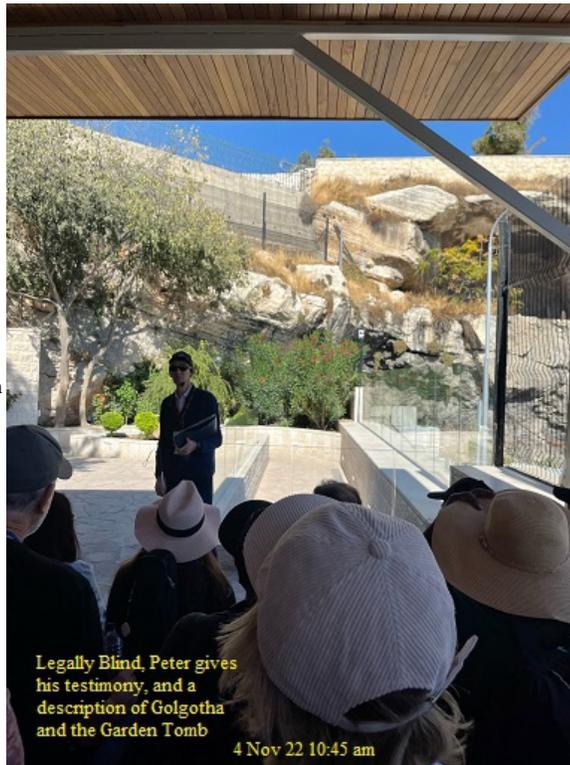
Chorus

Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;
 Buried, He carried my sins far away;
 Rising, He justified freely forever: One day
 He's coming—O glorious day!

J. Wilbur Chapman

We boarded the bus and headed to the garden tomb. Beside a hill, obviously shaped and fashioned like a human skull, just outside the Damascus gate of the city of Jerusalem, is found an empty, rock-hewn tomb in a garden area.

Listen, I do not know just what that little knob of rock, in the land of Moriah, looked like 1,872 years before the birth of Christ when Abraham took his only begotten son,



Legally Blind, Peter gives his testimony, and a description of Golgotha and the Garden Tomb



Isaac, to this mountain (Genesis 22). It is possible that this very mound of rock was shaped like a human skull on that day. It is further possible that God pointed to the skull shaped mound, and told Abraham to build an altar there and offer his only begotten son.

Listen, I don't know for sure, what this little knob of rock looked like 1,063 years before Christ got here, when the shepherd boy named

David brought the skull of one Goliath, and left it here in Jerusalem (1Sam.17:54). I think he left it on a skull shaped hill, on Mount Moriah. That skull signified victory over the Philistines, this skull shaped hill was to signify victory over death. Where Abraham offered his only begotten son, is the same hill where God offered his.

God's only begotten Son, however, shed his blood and died as the perfect lamb of God, and he became the propitiation for our sins (Rom.3:25).

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in



his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom.3:24-26)



It may have been the hand of man who took stone from this rock quarry just outside the Damascus gate of the city of Jerusalem, it may have been the hand of man, I say, that formed the shape of the skull where they found Goliath's head, and knew that Abraham offered his son, but I believe it was the hand of God, because he, more than any man, knew what would be offered there.

*“And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. 32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross. 33 And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, **a place of a skull**, 34 They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. 35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my*



garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. 36 And sitting down they watched him there” (Matt.27:31–36, Cf Mark 15: 20–25, Luke 23:33, John 19:16–18).



A legally blind guide named Peter of Oxford England, stood before us and pointed to the old rock quarry's knob that still resembled the face of a human skull. With amazing dexterity blind Peter of Oxford held up an enlarged photograph of what Golgotha looked like a hundred years ago. He pointed out the hill beside us, and its features that remained after erosion and vandalism had taken a toll. “Romans crucified their criminals outside the city and in very public locations. Right here where the Damascus Road meets the Jericho Road was a most popular crucifixion place, and since it was beside a skull shape, it was, in all probability, where they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ.”

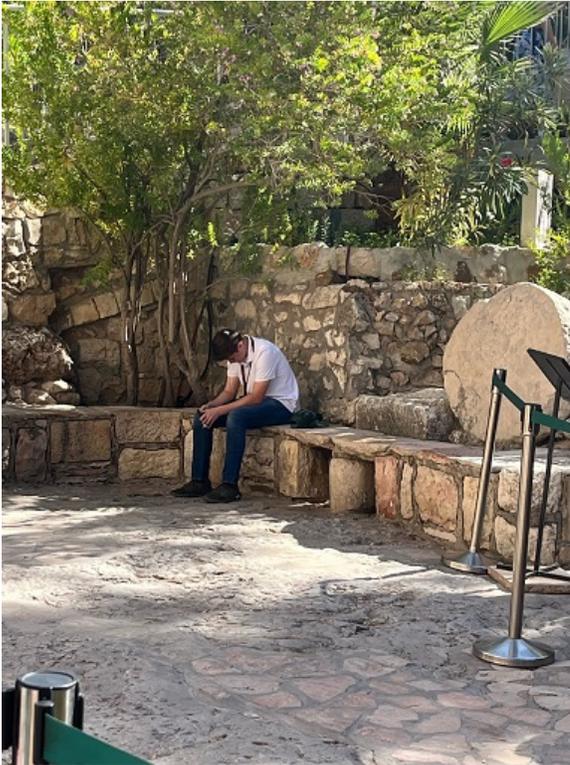
Peter of Oxford then gave his testimony, telling how he came to Christ, and called on him as his Savior. His dramatic closing



statement was “I once was blind but now I see.”

He went on to describe the 1894 Garden Tomb Association, founded to develop the site where the rock-hewn tomb was discovered in 1867. In 1883 General Charles Gordon found this outcropping of rock that came to be called “skull hill”; it fit the Bible description of Golgotha. The Garden Tomb Association has been the caretaker of the site since its founding. There are Catholic trained naysayers about its authenticity, but the 450,000 visitors annually, support the predominant belief that this is genuine. Blind Peter of Oxford explains for all, “It’s not so much about the place, as it is about the Person.”

We gathered at the worship area near the garden tomb. Pastor Chalie read some scriptures and we sang together. Then, gathered in an alcove between Golgotha and the Empty Tomb, we had a communion service together.



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 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. This little gathering of fifty believers on a guided tour to the holy land was not organized nor chartered as a Baptist church, but our having

sweet communion together, at the garden tomb, was, ... precious, and generally, I trust, understood by each participant in its larger context.



Each of us had the opportunity to visit the empty tomb. The location is right and accurate, “skull-hill” fit the title Golgotha, it was located outside the gate, it was at a public crossroads, the rock-hewn tomb was right and accurate, and the whole experience of communion here, praying here, and worshiping here was surely the highlight of a holy land tour to Jerusalem, Israel.

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. 2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from



heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. 5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. 8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. (Matt.28:1-8)



The Empty Tomb.
Photo 4 Nov 2022
31°47'2.31"N 35°13'48.85"E

The Way of the Cross, a 3 mile worthwhile walk: Start at Garden Gethsemane 31°46'47.71"N 35°14'23.03"E (Mt.26:36, Mr.14:32), walk 20 min 0.9 miles to Caiaphas' Palace 31°46'17.14"N 35°13'55.55"E (Mt.26:57, Jn.18:13,14,24), walk 14 min 0.7 miles to Praetorium site 31.778994, 35.234391 (Mt.27:2, Mr.15:1,16, Lu.23:1, Jn.18:28), walk 10 min 0.5 miles to Herod's Palace 31.777580, 35.228627 (Luke 23:7-12), walk 10 min 0.5 miles back to Praetorium 31.778994, 35.234391, walk 12 min 0.5 miles to Damascus Gate 31.781775, 35.230232 (Heb.13:12), walk 5 min 0.2 miles to Golgotha & Garden Tomb 31°47'0.27"N 35°13'51.46"E (Mt.27:33, Mr.15:22, Lu.23:33, Jn.19:17). May God bless your walk.

Google can make you a Way of the Cross walking map with these directions: In your browser search, paste "Google Maps 31°46'17.14"N 35°13'55.55"E"; Click on the map then Click Directions and the little walking icon at the top, it will ask you a starting point, paste in 31°46'47.71"N 35°14'23.03"E; It will now show a walking path from Al-Mansourieh Street (Gethsemane) to Saint Peter in Gallicantu (20 min 0.9 miles); Click the Add destination button and paste in 31.778994, 35.234391; It now shows the walking path from Caiaphas's Palace to Pilot's Praetorium, Again Add destination and paste in 31.777580, 35.228627; Again Add destination and paste in 31.778994, 35.234391; It shows the walk out to Herod's Palace and back to the Pilot's Praetorium; Again Add destination and paste in 31.781775, 35.230232; and finally Add destination and paste in 31°47'0.27"N 35°13'51.46"E which shows the path from Pilot's Praetorium to the Garden Tomb (except for the little backtrack to get to a crosswalk and across the present day four lane highway). May God bless your map making.



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#14 Fri 4 Nov pm Bethlehem.

On our way to Bethlehem it was good to stop and eat at Ruth's Restaurant right near Rachel's tomb. Recall that Ruth came to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law, and met a man named Boaz to set up a Biblical documentation about what a kinsman redeemer is all about, and to establish a lineage for the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, born in Bethlehem 1,312 years later. Also recall that Rachel died in childbirth in Bethlehem; giving it the surname Ephratah (אֶפְרַתָּה) (Micah.5:2) which means “an ash heap that brings forth fruitfulness”; a very appropriate title for the birthplace of the Messiah, the Saviour of the world.



Some of us loved the fine kosher dining we found everywhere in Israel, others, not so much. In twenty-three years of military travels, involving mess-halls all over the world, I have found that, in general, everyone has a carnal, hedonistic, complaining nature about

food they are served. There are some who have victory over this carnal nature and can say “*Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*” (That rhymes with my grandmother's line, “Eat what's put before you!”) Others are still complaining about the non-existent Israeli cheeseburger. We loved our late lunch break after a long emotional and moving morning.



In only a couple hours of walking we could have walked the six miles south from Golgotha and the Garden Tomb to Bethlehem. On clear days one can see the hills of Bethlehem from the Mount of Olives. It was moving to visit the place of our Saviour's birth right after visiting the place of his cross and his resurrection; pondering, in our mind's eye, three of this world's greatest miracles in one fell swoop.⁵⁷ God became flesh and dwelt among

57 A “fell swoop” here is an appropriate one-piece idiom used by the playwright Shakespeare to liken a hawk swooping down on defenseless prey bringing sudden cruel and ruthless death on the innocent.

us, was crucified in our place, and arose triumphant over death. Moving only begins to describe it.

Bethlehem, the Biblical birthplace of Jesus, is today three things; it is a tourist commercial hot-spot, a Roman Catholic religious quagmire, and a Palestinian tinder box. As a city in the West Bank of Palestine it falls under the Palestinian Authority and has a border crossing that is hostile to Israel and accepts no Israeli passport. Bethlehem has an inlaid silver star in a small cave under the 6th century Church of the Nativity; the cave, thought to once contain a manger, now holds the Roman Catholic claim of being the “exact spot” of Christ's birth.⁵⁸ The Basilica shares Manger Square with the 15th century Church of St. Catherine, across the square from the 1860 Mosque of Omar. And



further, Bethlehem is an outstanding tourist magnet that has more than two million visitors per year, with gift shops selling an

58 Again the Roman emperor, Constantine, and his mother, Helena, by pagan mysticism, declared this to be the 'exact spot.' “Constantine and his mother, Helena, built a magnificent and majestic church adorned with beautiful marble and mosaics. Later, during the 6th century, the Byzantine emperor Justinian built a new and even more intricate church on the same spot. During the Persian invasion in the 7th century, the church was spared destruction. By the 11th century, the Crusaders raised their flag above the Basilica of the Nativity and renovated it.” From www.bethlehem-city.org/en/churchofthenativity accessed 3/10/2023.

estimated four million hand carved olive wood manger scenes annually, and an equal number of other trinkets, I'm sure. Since "O little town of Bethlehem" is today laden with these three cumbersome burdens, we made our way to a more secluded sanctuary near Shepherds Field two miles east of Bethlehem. There, "in the same country," beside a shepherd's cave, on a very likely hillside where were "shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night," we worshiped.

Our Guide Joe, eloquently defined, described and defended the location here at Shepherds Field, and Pastor Chalie opened his Bible and taught a moving message about our Saviour's birth.



Luke 2:1 ¶ And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. 2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the



city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 ¶ And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. 12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.



13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. 16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. 17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

We left Shepherd's Field and headed out for one of several souvenir shops in the area. Guide Joe and Pastor Chalie had an ongoing discussion of just where we should end up. They stopped at one, and turned it down after a short chat, the next one was very welcoming and Pastor Chalie negotiated a group discount that was so good I'd be embarrassed to tell, in this journal, the total discount that we got on every item in the



large store. I'd tell the name of the store here, but all my receipts, and there are several, are written in Hebrew. It is amazing what all they carve out of olive wood in Israel. Amazing indeed.

Everyone clutching packages, we made our way back onto the bus. Eiad pointed her back towards Jerusalem and we got back to the Dan Hotel at dusk. That was one of the best days, but it is becoming very hard, and all too subjective, to call any one day the very best. They all stand out, they all capture the title "best day ever." And our gourmet kosher buffet supper was, how do you say, the best meal ever.



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#15 Sat 5 Nov Jericho, Beit She'an, Gideon Springs

Breakfast was complicated by the necessity of packing. A nice routine had established itself in our Tuesday through Friday, rise at dawn, mosey to an elaborate breakfast buffet, RADC⁵⁹ with family and friends, then stroll to the comfortable bus waiting with its loins girt for an early run.

Today, actually day five of our pilgrimage, all our worldly possessions needed to be packed into a bulging suitcase, (which only rarely is actually a case-for-suits anymore). The suitcases were hauled to the bus, and this morning her loins were scattered all over the adjoining sidewalk. We went for a deluxe breakfast and relaxing cup of coffee anyway.



Today was a Sabbath. Yesterday afternoon our guide Joe had excused himself and introduced an upcoming, non-Hebrew, tour guide named George, who took us to Bethlehem, and would today guide us on our quest to the Sea of Galilee on this Sabbath day. The Jewish Sabbath begins at sunset, and Joe had gone home to observe Sabbath. The observance of Sabbath in Israel is an interesting experience for Gentiles. Joe could not go

with us to Tiberias because on a Sabbath day a Hebrew was to *“abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day”* (Exod.16:29). The maximum Sabbath day's journey referenced in Acts 1:12, where the Mount of Olives was a *“sabbath day's journey”* from Jerusalem, was accepted as about ½ mile. Further, Hebrews were to do no servile work on a Sabbath day, nor were their servants. Joe would travel to Galilee after sunset Saturday which ended the Sabbath day.

We entertained ourselves at the elevators for a little bit. Many did not understand why their elevator car stopped on every floor, opened the doors to nobody, closed them, and went to the next floor. There it did the same, and proceeded on down to the lobby. It was labeled a Shabbot Elevator, and it was programmed to do that; with no one pushing any elevator button, it would stop and check for passengers on every floor, all the way to the top floor, then return, doing the same, all the way to the bottom floor.



59 RADC, in a previous USAF life, stood for Rome Air Development Center, where I worked from 1989 through 1995. There, not surprisingly, it took on the nomenclature, Relax And Drink Coffee. I so incorporated that into my daily life, that we kept the acronym.



In Israel, on each Sabbath Day, at least one elevator would be programmed as a Sabbath Elevator so that an orthodox Hebrew, striving to keep the letter of the law of the Pentateuch, could get around without even requesting a hired servant, i.e. an elevator, to do any servile work. God told them the sabbath rest for these Sabbath Days was to be *“for thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee.”* To an engineer, like myself, this programming practice seemed to be kind of a hollow work-around to what God was requiring of them. But hey, if I recall, Jesus rebuked hypocritical law keepers so well, and so



thoroughly, that it is just fine for us to just smirk a little at a Shabbot Elevator.

While I'm a little off topic, let me say that God arranged the name of our morning meal to rhyme with break-a-fast on purpose, to teach a principle. He knew our digestive track needed a half day off, a twelve hour break, every day. God arranged that amount of time in darkness, so we would not eat from 6 pm till 6 am.



Thomas Edison invented the light bulb and the principle was hindered quite a little, but then man, who's every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually, invented a tele-vision to share those imaginations with millions. Now Americans sit up all night (at least to the 2nd watch of the night) eating potato chips and drinking soda, or worse, a chemical concoction purported to be “diet-soda”! These are our amusement (A-Muse, implies a = not, muse = thinking). American obesity is now epidemic, and breakfast breaks no fast, worse yet it can have a Twinkie washed down with a chemically decaffeinated coffee. All that aside, for the past five days, breakfast was just that for Bev and I, and this Saturday morning continued this health kick. The only thing missing for a deluxe breakfast was bacon fried under my sunny side eggs.

We were checked out of the Dan Jerusalem Hotel, and we stopped to explained to several why the elevators were “acting up” as they were. All our worldly possessions were packed under the bus, the doors latched, and from comfortable seats we watch Jerusalem disappear in our rear view mirror,... Well, perhaps, in bus driver, Ian's rear view mirror. George, our stand in guide for Joe, who was off for Sabbath, did not have all the exuberance of Joe as he barked off sites which passed by our windows, but he pointed out Bethany, approaching and passing by the right side of the bus.



When Jesus came from Galilee, through Samaria, through Jericho, and then up the Jericho Road, he came to Bethany. “*Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him supper; and Martha*

served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him” (John 12:1-2, cf Bethany in 11 KJB verses; Matt.21:17, 26:6, Mrk.11:1, 11, 12, 14:3, Luke.19:29, 24:50, Jhn.11:1, 18, 12:1)

Bethany, home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, was such an interesting place in the Bible. There it smelled of ointment from Mary’s alabaster box, they fixed a large meal, and it was where Jesus sent disciples to secure a colt, the foul of an ass. Yeah now, it was only a glance out of the bus window as we turned toward Jericho and headed out of Jerusalem.

The canyon between Jerusalem and Jericho, the one that contained the Jericho Road that we visited three days ago, was circumvented when we circled south around the edge of the mountainous



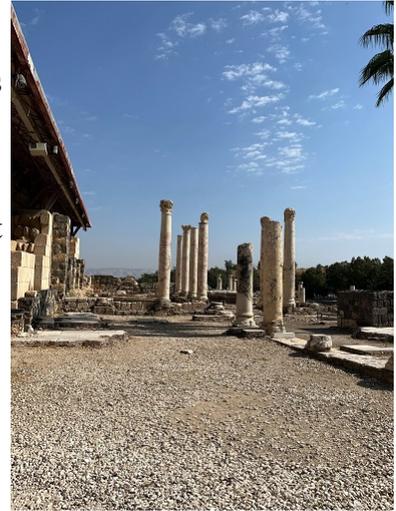
wilderness and took the four-lane highway through the low lands. Jericho was a quiet little resort town today. Many residents wintered here to avoid the bustle in Jerusalem; it wintered well. Jericho is the sight of two major miracles in the Bible. We drove past the tel of the first, and the more talked about one, and pulled into a park that holds the memorial token of the second. We had a photo shoot around an aged sycamore tree. Under the tel there was buried, a stronghold city of a defiant, amoral people that defied the Lord God for 400 years. Under the sycamore tree stood a short, defiant, amoral man, who defied the Lord God for 40 years. The one was completely destroyed, the other completely redeemed. Praise the Lord.

We left the wee little man, Zacchaeus redeemed, reformed, and rejoicing, in Jericho and Eiad headed the 46 foot tour bus up Route 90 to drive 1,000 years back in time from Zacchaeus to the Old Testament Bible city called Beit She'an.

Beit She'an (32°30'03.8"N 35°30'01.87"E), with some of the best preserved ruins of the Middle East, and as the most extensive archaeological site in Israel, might unusually detract



one from the main purpose of the holy pilgrimage to the Bible lands of Israel. The Bible student must put up a guard and make careful distinction of what the tour guides dangle before us at Beit She'an. There is only one important, and ugly place where the Bible touches it.



the Roman cardo, a three tiered theater that seated 7,000 people, an amphitheater to hold 6000 spectators for gladiator contests and for Christian martyrdom, and a huge bath and gym complex with heated swimming pools and public toilets.



The tourist attraction of Beit She'an does not touch the Bible. It begins in the fourth century and ends in the eighth century when the very pagan Roman city was destroyed by an earthquake in 749 AD. In that city, called Scythopolis, there was a well preserved pillared market street called

Unfortunately, our young guide George, who was standing in for Joe, got a little over enthralled at giving all the naked details of the bathhouse debauchery.



It was not kept in good focus that this was an extra Biblical, eighth century study of a pagan Roman time. Even when the pagan city Scythopolis was purported to be a "flourishing Christian Center with a bishop and several

churches”, it was pretended that such a 4th through 8th century, Byzantine church, which itself persecuted and murdered true believers, was a redeeming quality. It wasn't.

To define the Biblical significance (and a Biblical name) of Beit She'an one must go back 1,000 years before Christ, not forward 1,000 years after Christ. The Biblical city Beit She'an is really only important because of a few closing verses of



the Bible's book of 1 Samuel.



1 Sam.31:8-10 *“And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa. 9 And they cut off his head, and stripped off*

his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people. 10 And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Bethshan.”

This tragic close of King Saul's life requires us to face up to a couple things about Beit She'an. First what are Philistines



doing so far north in Israel's promised land? Their kingdom centered down near Ashdod, 100 miles south of here, around what is now called the troublesome Gaza strip. And here they are in



Beit She'an, near Mount Gilboa, only 8 miles south of the Sea of Galilee. A principle here is that sin, like an unrestrained Philistine, moves into our lives, fast, far, and furiously.





The second thought at Beit She'an, is found in those closing verses of 1 Samuel as stated. This marks the closing scene of a little studied three act play that unfolds in Jabeshgilead. The opening act finds the tribe of Benjamin tangled in vile lewdness and folly, and the other tribes of Israel slaughter all but 600 of the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 19–20). To get wives for those 600, Israel slew all the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead, saved 400 young virgins, and the tribe of Benjamin re-populated the town.

Act two of the Jabeshgilead, three act play

opens 300 years after the Benjamite survivors came to town. Nahash, the Ammonite, camped against Jabeshgilead, and the town had a seven day respite before Nahash was going to gouge out all their right eyes (1Sam.11:1–3). I hate it, when Ammonites act like that. Now God had chosen a Benjamite named Saul, and ordained him to be king of all of Israel. So far he had done nothing, but the spirit of God



Gideon Springs 5 Nov 1346
32°32'58.49"N 35°21'20.92"E

came upon Saul when he heard about the plight of these men of Jabeshgilead, and his anger with kindled greatly (11:6).

King Saul, in his first valiant step saves the men of Jabeshgilead. First Samuel chapter 11 is an awesome chapter in



your Bible.

Act three of the Jabeshgilead, three act play opens 39 years later. God's chosen king, out of the tribe of Benjamin, failed miserably, and he was slain on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines, the enemy of God, came and cut off his head, stripped off his armor, and sent to publish their victory in the house of their idols, and among the people. Again, 1 Samuel 31:10 says, *“And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroath: and*



they fastened his body to the wall of Bethshan.”

With that little backdrop, look at the three closing verses of 1Samuel.

1Sam.31:11–13 *“And when the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul; 12 All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Bethshan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there. 13 And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.”*



It makes me ask, if the valiant men of Jabeshgilead would do that for their dead king, what would I do for my living king?

It was told once that archaeologists at Beit She'an had uncovered a great wall that could have been where the valiant men of Jabeshgilead recovered the decapitated body of king Saul. Don't hold your breath. The valiant men of Jabeshgilead were only at Beit She'an, and the Philistines were only at Beit She'an, because the Bible says they were. I loved being at Beit She'an for three reasons. The theater

acoustics were amazing; you cannot stand on such a 1300 year old Roman Cardo anywhere in America; and I have studied out why the valiant men of Jabeshgilead went to a Philistine strong hold in the city of Beit She'an.

Several of us, older folks nodded off on the bus; it was less than an hour from Beit She'an to Gideon Springs, but that is what old folks do after gallivanting all over Jerusalem for four days. Pastor Chalie had his Bible open to Judges 6 as we gathered around a pool



bubbling out of a cave mouth called the well of Harod. He captured from the Bible that the Midianites were gathered thick as grasshoppers just north of this location. He developed that anyone could be a “mighty man of valor” when “the Lord is with thee”, and that for the saints of our day he has said, “I will never leave thee!”



That is pretty empowering. God then gives Gideon his modus operandi, *“the people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, my own hand hath saved me”* (Judg.7:2). When 22,000 soldiers left, and 10,000 remained, God said, *“the people are yet too many!”*. Pastor Chalie shared God’s criteria for selecting 300 men, and then



God's plan for defeating the Midianites! Our God is an amazing God he reigns from heaven above.

The pastors gathered for a photo op, at Gideon Springs, and several soldier wannabes demonstrated the proper way of drinking from the spring. Praise the Lord.

It was a most refreshing break and a soul stirring Bible message. We boarded the bus, once again reconnected with Route 90 N, and set our sights on the Sea of Galilee.

Cameras clicked madly as the Sea of

Galilee first came into view. In reality cameras don't click anymore, but it sounds so much better than “phones swung around wildly.” A Christian's first expression when seeing the Sea is usually, “Is that it?” Joe had warned us that in Israel creeks are called rivers, hills are called mountains, and lakes are called seas. Just the same it grabbed a Bible believer's mind with a such a flurry of Bible scenes that the body of water we saw was indeed a sea; **The Sea of Chinneroth** on map plate 3 “The Promised Land Showing the Settlement of The Twelve Tribes”, map plate 4 “The Hebrew Kingdom under David & Solomon” and map plate 5 “Kingdoms of Judah & Israel”, **The Sea of Gennesaret** on map plate 8 “Palestine Under the Maccabees”, **The Sea of Galilee** on map plate 9 “Palestine in the Time of Christ”, and all three on map plate 12 “Galilee”. I love my old Scofield Bible, and its maps.



It was approaching the 9th hour of the day when we got into Tiberias and settled into our rooms at the Gai Beach Hotel, Eliezer Kaplan Blvd, Tiberias, Israel. Some of the elders among us got an hour nap before the 1600 meeting with Pastor Chalie on the shores of Galilee. We watched the sun set in that worship service. The name of Christ was exalted, the Word of God was expounded, the Psalms of David were rehearsed, Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs were sung, and prayer was made as we overlooked the Sea of Galilee, and saw dusk ushered into Tiberias, Israel.

By the way: It should be required, for every born-again Christian who has access to an internet connection, that they go to <https://awakeamerica.org/capitol-connection/cc23/#sermons> and listen to the Wednesday, March 8, 2023 Capital Connection message "Pray, The Answer is On Its Way" by Pastor Chad Watson, Gloryland Baptist Church, Hartsville SC. This nation is well past the crossroad, and Christians, who are prayer warriors, dare not be ignorant of how we fit into Biblical Prophecy. Pastor Ed Rice.





The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#16 Sun 6 Nov On The Sea of Galilee

Beverly Cook Rice and I were



up late
anticipating
being on the
Sea of
Galilee on
November
6th. It was the
culmination
of four
months of
anticipation.
Bev had
started
collecting
little candy
wrappers that
had little
imprinted life

quips, and she had collected seven of them that said “book the flight” ... so we did, back in August.

We were teenagers when we married on November 6, 1971. I was a Bible college dropout settled into a dairy farm partnership that would provide us very well for life in Addison, New



York. We had courted for a year and a half. I had a Vietnam selective service lottery draft number of 123, and they would likely draft all those below 200. Our 4F dairy farm partnership was not yet registered. Life was not uncertain



however, so two lovers married, and I avoided being one of the 50,000 drafted for Vietnam by enlisting in the US Air Force in May 1972. The dairy farm partnership was put on hold.

We rehearsed a lot of our 51 year history on that November 5th stay in the luxurious Gai Beach Hotel in Tiberias, Israel. Tomorrow, November 6th we were to celebrate our 51st wedding anniversary, and we would be in a Sunday worship service on the Sea of Galilee. All my attempts to secure a dozen roses,... or even a single red rose, were futile, but that could not detract from the magnanimity of being in Israel for this celebration. After a blissful five hour sleep, we woke at dawn.

Several of our number were excited to get a picture of the sun rising over the Sea of Galilee. Others thought "If God wanted us to enjoy sunrise, he wouldn't have put it so early in the morning." We watched it rise, but let others click the awesome pictures, I clicked a few mediocre ones. We left the spectacular seaside and went in for our



Kosher Buffet breakfast. It was Sunday morning, November 6th and we were on the Sea of Galilee.

As the Irizar tour bus was guided by Eiad out of Tiberias, and headed north along the coast of the Sea of Galilee, our guide Joe began to rehearse some of

the background information about the sea, and about our day. The sea of Galilee is the lowest freshwater lake on earth, the second lowest lake in the world (-700 foot elevation, the Dead Sea was lower but not freshwater). It is about 13 miles long by 8 miles wide, 64 mi.² and 133 miles in circumference.



It reaches 140 feet in depth and is 84 feet average depth.⁶⁰ Joe reminded us that in Israel, a puddle, a hill, and the creek, are called a sea, a mountain, and a river. The “sea” supports native fish *Tristramella Sacra* (long jaw), and *Tristramella Simohis* (short



jaw). Hundreds of thousands of *Tilapia* (Saint Peter's fish, same genus different species⁶¹) are released into the sea of Galilee to replenish stocks hit by drought, and over fishing. Source waters of the Jordan, the Dan, and the Hasbani Rivers replenish the seas fresh water.

Off to our left is the Horns of Hattin. On July 4th, 1187 there was a battle there that marked the defeat and annihilation of the Christian Crusader armies by the Muslim forces of Saladin. It led to the Muslim reconquest of the city of Jerusalem and nullified the achievements made in the Holy Land by the leaders of the first Crusades.

To our right is the city of Magdalene (Magdala 32°49'30"N 35°30'56"E), the birthplace of Mary Magdalene. Archaeologist there recently uncovered two first century synagogues,



60 Seneca Lake NY is similar in size at 67 sq.mi., 38 mi x 2mi, but very deep and very narrow, 618 ft deep, 291 ft average. Oneida Lake where we lived previous was more like the Sea of Galilee at 80 sq.mi., 20 mi x 5 mi, very shallow, 55 ft deep, 22 ft average. Like the Sea of Galilee, Oneida was very susceptible to very fast rising ferocious storms.

61 Remember there are seven classifications of living things, Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species with a memory mnemonic Ken Plays Chess On Fridays Getting Suspended. But wait there is more, there are seven classifications of visible light, Red, orange, yellow, Green, Blue, indigo, violet, RoyGBiv for an effective memory mnemonic. The capitals, RGB are the trinity of primary colors, ingredients in all visible light. God made our eye and molecules of earth's atmosphere more sensitive to Blue so for us, the sky resonates in it. Purple, is made of infrared and ultraviolet; it is majestic because it contains the beginning and the ending of the visible color spectrum, kind like the Alpha and Omega of the Greek alphabet. Scarlet hangs out at the far edge of visible light, just before it slips into the infrared and becomes invisible to the human eye. Blue, purple, and scarlet are the colors in God's Tabernacle, he did that on purpose. Learn more via the authors upcoming book “God Tabernacles with Men” coming to an internet near you.

which is very rare for one city.

To our right is the plane of Chinnereth, where swamps were drained by pioneers who came to build a land, but the land built them instead. There is also a water pumping station. In 1964 the National Water Carrier of Israel was completed. It carries water from the sea of Galilee through pipes, canals, tunnels, and large-scale pumping stations to supply agricultural and drinking water to the south (about 19,000,000 gallons per hour). Since 2016 there have been tremendous strides in our desalination abilities, and desalinated water from the Mediterranean Sea now supplies well over 75% of Israel's drinking water. Today 90% of our waste water is reclaimed for agricultural use (The US reclaims just 4% of its waste water).



On your right is the Church of the Loaves and Fish at Tabgha, where Jesus fed the 5,000. And on your left the Church of the Beatitudes, on the hill where he likely preached the sermon on the mount, his longest sermon. Coming up on your right is Capernaum, the town of Jesus. “*And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephtholim*” (Matt.4:13). Capernaum is from the Hebrew, *kaphar* = village, *nachuw* = comfort, i.e. Village of Comfort. And here we are at the docks of the Kfar Nahum National Park, (Holyland Sailing 32°52'55.24"N 35°34'48.46"E) let's go catch the boat.

Only our guide Joe could fit all of that information into a 30 minute bus ride. So, at 10:00 am on Sunday morning, November 6th, we boarded the Jesus Boat of Holyland Sailing and went out into the sea of Galilee for a worship service.

The brochure said:

“HolyLand Sailing welcomes you to a breathtaking spiritual Galilee journey –

sailing on a wooden boat – an exact replica of the famous boats that played a key role in Jesus' life in the Galilee.

This sail provides a spiritual experience you will never forget. You will feel the power of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus miraculously walked on water.

Holyland Sailing welcomes you on board to meditate, pray, explore and relive the life of Jesus Christ where he used to preach the gospel of the kingdom.

At the end of the voyage, each pilgrim will receive a participation certificate in recognition of his





We were on the Sea of Galilee, in a small “JesusBoat”, with an awe and propensity to worship. We sang some hymns together and Pastor Chalie opened his Bible to Matthew 8.

And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. 24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but

he was asleep. 25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. 26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. 27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him! (Matt.8:23-27).

Brother Chalie continued, In a Christian's life, storms build a great dependence on God. Twice it is recorded that Jesus's disciples encountered life threatening storms here on the Sea of Galilee. Here, in Matthew 8 Jesus entered into the ship and his disciples followed him. Later, in Matthew 14 Jesus “constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side.” (14:22a) Jesus remained behind, and when he did, “He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when evening was come, he was there alone” (14:23b).



He prayed all night, or at least until the 4th watch of the night (vr.25), which is just before daybreak. Jesus needed to pray. Here he needed to be alone in prayer with his Father. Do we?

The 4th watch is the darkest hour of night, and there, there is no greater calming effect than the person of Christ when he says “Be not afraid.” When Jesus came to the boat, walking on the water, Peter got out of the boat while others looked on, ... when you get out of the boat, keep your eyes on Christ (vr.32). Pastir Chalie noted how “They walked back to the ship together.”

In Matt.8, Jesus was 1st into the ship, in Matt.14 Jesus was last into the ship. We need to be growing in our faith, we need to take the next step in faith. He is still with us, growing our faith. We follow his leading; we follow his commandments.

Pastor Andy Resse commented that the disciples life is a progression. In chapter 8 they said “What manner of man is this?”, in chapter 14 they said, “Thou art the Christ.”

Pastor Hawkins commented that chapter 8 records that they waited until the boat was full, then cried “We perish”... with Christ’s response “How is it ye have no faith?”

Pastor Gates commented, “I was the maniac of Gergesenes, and Jesus saved me.”

The worship service on the Sea of Galilee continued for some time. There were more



testimonies, Scripture quotes, and songs. Alas our captain started the engine and turned the boat back towards the dock.





The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice #17 Sun 6 Nov Capernaum



We got off the boat and onto the bus. The flavor of worship still hung in the air. It was very special to be on the “Jesus boat” of Holy Land Sailing, and to worship for an hour, while adrift on the Sea of Galilee. Like unbelievably special, but the flavor of worship, for this group, was not dependent on location, it was dependent on the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, in hearts and minds.



This Sunday was to be a day of ongoing worship,



and our next location was to be where Jesus fed the 5000. Eiad maneuvered the tour bus into the overlaid parking lot at Tabgha. There are more tour buses per square mile in Israel than there are in any other country on earth. This morning half of them were pulled up to the very Roman Catholic Church of the Loaves and Fish. When Pastor Chalie and Joe were unable to secure a secluded site away from the Romanism, Eiad maneuvered the tour bus right back out of the parking lot and pointed it toward Capernaum. Thank you Pastor Chalie and Joe, that was wisely done.

Capernaum was the town of Jesus. *“And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast,*

in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthali”

(Matt.4:13) ... *“And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. 22 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes”* (Mar.1:21–22).

Stepping into Capernaum, was like stepping back in time. Archaeologists and their students, had been very busy in the streets of the city. Rows and rows of home and building foundations were uncovered, and the size, structure, and density of the town was easily visualized. Just the same, well laden walkways were paved and garnished so that hordes of tourists could be comfortably exposed to the



ample first century findings.

We were first led into the synagogue of Capernaum, and our guide, Joe, taught us how to make the distinction between the first century synagogue, where Jesus taught, and the fourth century reconstructions. The white limestone ashlar stones used in the reconstruction, contrasted sharply with the black basalt rock of the first century synagogue.

Any good teacher throws in a pop quiz here and again, so as our group stood in the center

of the largest and grandest 1st century synagogue of Israel, found in the center of Capernaum, the town of Jesus, Joe ask us to point out the front of the synagogue, and say

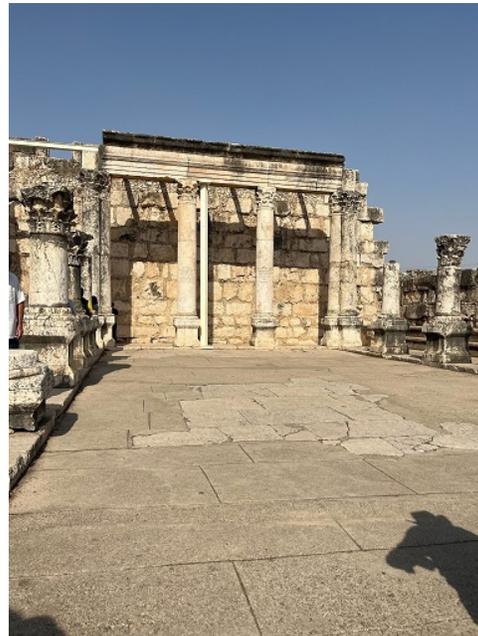
why we thought so. I was pretty sure he would have assigned that as a short answer essay, if he had the authority, but instead, he entertained several outspoken opinions from the group, then formed them into a well worded spoken essay himself.

Of course, we would expect a synagogue to face the holy Temple in the city of Jerusalem, and this one does. That simply means that the placement of the columns, the benches, and the “bema”, would point toward Jerusalem, and in the Galilean type synagogue, the Torah shrine would be constructed in the wall closest to Jerusalem. The basilica construction here put an emphasis on a Jerusalem

orientation by incorporating an apse (a domed, vaulted recess) on the wall facing Jerusalem, and an entrance, atrium, and narthex, or waiting room, on the opposite side. Thus the elements in the front of the synagogue are the *aron ha-kodesh*, or the holy arc or niche containing the Torah scrolls, the “*amund*” or prayer desk facing the arc, and the “*bema*” or reading desk, from where the Torah scroll is read.

Jesus was here in this very synagogue when he gave the controversial teaching of John 6.

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. 58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this



bread shall live for ever. 59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum (John.6:56–59).



There are only three places in the Bible, where one can find a verse reference



of 666. The third and most prominent one



says, *“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (John 6:66).* (all the 666 references are curious; it is left as an exercise of the Bible student to find the other two.)

Joe was equally excited to escort us off into another room of the synagogue and give us another pop quiz. “What does this look like to you all?” Joe pointed down into a black basalt rock structure unearthed in the corner of a room in the synagogue of Capernaum. The answers rang out from the group “It is a Jewish mikvah, a Jewish ritual bath used for purification before prayer and scripture reading.” “And from what century does it come?” “Since it is basalt, it comes from the first century”

Joe quite beamed with satisfaction and led us off towards Saint Peter's house.

And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. 15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them. 16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with [his] word, and healed all that were sick: 17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” (Matt.8:14–17).

There was not a dated placard that said, “Saint Peter slept here!” But it was pretty close to that. Over 26 years ago in one of the earliest BAR (Biblical Archaeology Review) documented discoveries, Italian excavators, working in



Capernaum, uncovered a mundane simple dwelling deduced to be a first century home. Remarkably it was found under the ruins of a octagonal Byzantine Martrium Church (a church or shrine built over the tomb or home of a Christian martyr).

As excavations continued, it was discovered that the simple home with a few small rooms clustered around an open courtyard, changed functionally into a communal meeting area with plastered floors, plastered walls, and plastered ceilings. Pottery findings also changed from household cooking pots and bowls to larger storage pots and oil lamps. The simple residence had transformed into a gathering place for the earliest Christian gatherings. The rooms old stone walls were buttressed by a new two-story arch that supported a new stone roof. Also graffiti on the walls in multiple languages, said “Lord Jesus help” and “Christ have mercy”. This simple first century home was transformed into a church that survived for more than 300 years before it was replaced in the fifth century by a well built octagonal martrium church, whose inner sanctum was built directly over the very place called Peter’s house,



which transformed into the central hall of the earlier church.

Most of us are quite satisfied that that substantiated the placard “Peter slept here”, and that is witnessed by Matt.8:14–17 to authenticate that Jesus slept here. All in all it comes to the explanation of blind guide Peter of Oxford... “It’s not the place,... It’s the person.”

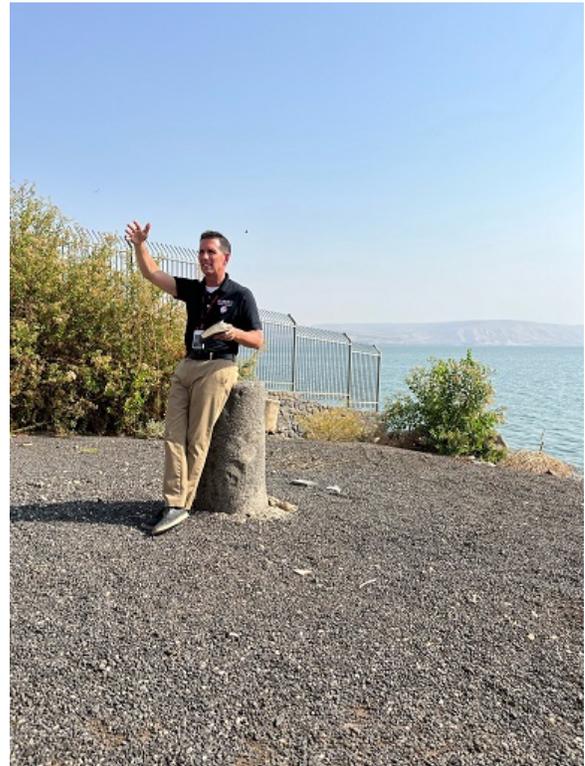
Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. 18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. 19 And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. 20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him. 21 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught (Mrk.1:16-21).



Notice in verse 18, that these fishermen “forsook their nets.” When a person receives Christ, and turns to follow him, we find, “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*” (2Cor.5:17). Notice also, in verse 21, that their first stop, upon following him on his teaching tour where they were to be “fishers of men” was right here in their hometown of Capernaum.



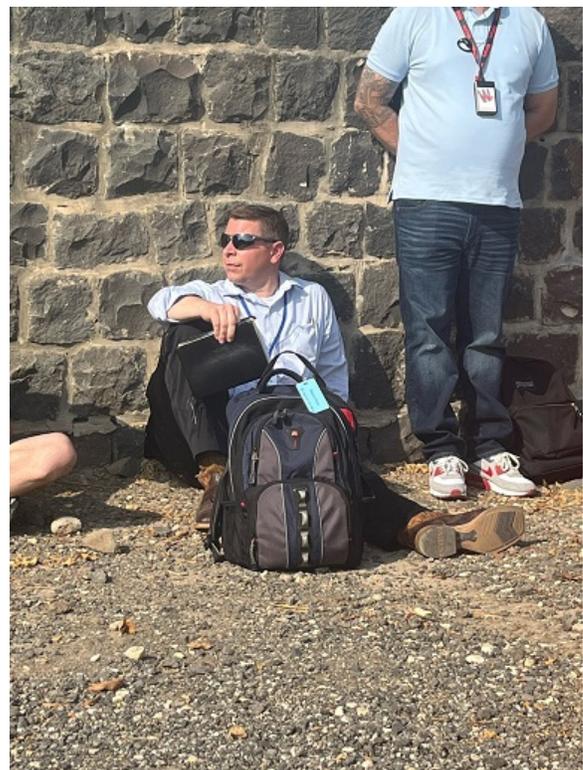
In training to be “fishers of men” the next teachable moment came from a rebel rouser from their home town.



And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 24 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. 25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. 26 And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. 27 And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him (Mrk.1:23-27).

This little “sea” we are on is only 133 miles in circumference, and yet here is where a majority of the ministry of our Lord unfolded. We just came from the house of Simon and Andrew where he stayed the night, the next morning there was a predawn prayer meeting and then they were off, “*And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee.*”

Back in Capernaum look at Mark chapter 2:





And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. 2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. (Mrk.2:1-2)

He preached the word unto them! We are all familiar with those who uncovered the roof to reach him; look at verse 13 where he taught them by the sea side; look at verse 14 where there is a “follow me” call to Levi; all this happened in Capernaum, where we stand today.

In John 6:6 it says, “*And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.*” Jesus proves his disciples, still does. Jesus knew what he would do, ... still does. From verse 17, we talked earlier about

how the storms of life prove us, and train us. In verse 59 he was back in Capernaum, he taught “*I am the bread of life*” (6:48) and “*From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him*” (John.6:66).



Follow him. You will not die. You will learn and grow, and become a fisher of men ... and he will never leave thee nor forsake

thee.

On the shore of the Sea of Galilee Pastor Charlie drove home these points better than my meager notes could capture; he had supernatural assistance. When sitting beside replica fishing boats, right where Peter James and John heard the words of the Messiah, the waves lapping on the shore asked that I pay more strict attention to his eternal Word that lie open in my lap. Our



second worship service of the day dismissed with some testimonies, and song. We had to move along to get to the site of Christ's Sermon on the Mount. There we would have a third worship service. You cannot worship too much on the Lord's Day, especially when you are right here on the Sea of Galilee.



An Israel touring blog I had read gave “10 things to see at Capernaum's Ancient Synagogue”:

- The well-preserved ruins of the synagogue, which date back to the 4th or 5th century AD
- The large stone Torah ark that housed the Torah scrolls
- The bemah, a raised platform where the Torah was read
- The House of St. Peter, believed to be the home of Peter the Apostle
- The mikveh, a Jewish ritual bath used for purification
- The synagogue's mosaic floor adorned with various Jewish symbols
- Inscriptions found in the synagogue, including one in Aramaic
- Stairs that lead down to a room below the synagogue, believed to have been used for storage
- The communal seating area divided into different sections for men and women
- The stunning lakefront views of the Sea of Galilee

Thank you Joe for deserving a huge check-mark beside each item. Thank you Pastor Charlie for opening the

pages of God's Holy Word, on the Sea of Galilee. Thank you Father for what you are still doing because we got to set on the very shores where you taught your disciples 1,993 years ago. God is good.



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice #18 Sun 6 Nov Mount of Beatitudes, Mt Arbel

Our Lords day in Israel was replete with the worship opportunities. Pastor Chalie had crowned each with scripture that resonated with what we were



seeing, thinking, and rehearsing, in our heart, mind, and eye. There was a little wonder what would be expounded as we assembled in an alcove on the Mount of Beatitudes.



We sat about halfway up the mountain that overlooks the sea, where Jesus preached his longest sermon. Our view of where Jesus stood was obscured by the Roman Catholic Church of the Beatitudes. As much as the 1938 Neo-Byzantine architecture, design by Antonio Barluzzi, blocked our view of the sea, the Roman religion, designed by Roman Emperor Constantine (272–337AD) blocks the view of

Christ's salvation by grace through faith.

I praise the Lord that in 1958 a Baptist preacher of the gospel, Cecil Palm, going door to door, knocked on the door of 40 Platte Street, and Levi and Doris Rice were marvelously converted from Roman Catholicism, to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mt.18:3). I was born-again-saved two years later.

It would have been worth the time, sitting on the Mount of Beatitudes, to read all three chapters of Christ's sermon on the mount,

but, alas, our schedule dictated what could and couldn't be covered here. Matthew, the opening book of the Bible's New Testament is, appropriately, the introduction to the new covenant, which steps us out of the dispensation of law, and into the dispensation of grace. In it the kingdom of heaven is offered to the Jews, who reject and crucify their Messiah, the son of God, who becomes the Passover Lamb of God, and the Saviour of men. Born in Matthew 1, worshiped in 2, baptized in 3, and tested in 4, his sermon on the mount in chapters 5-7 are the full details of the kingdom of heaven. His 9-Blessed “R”s of the introduction of



Photo by Cara Gates 11/6/22
Mount of Beatitudes Israel



Photo by Cara Gates 11/06/2022
Mount of Beatitudes Israel



Photo by Cara Gates

the sermon, divide into three groups of three. Three cover “getting in”, three cover “changes made to a soul”, and three cover “the world's treatment of those in the kingdom”.



Who gets in? The poor in spirit, who mourn over sin, and are meek. (Mt.5:3, 4, 5)
Ps 34:18 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.



Ps 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Isa 57:15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.



*Isa 66:2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to **him that is poor and of a contrite***



spirit, and trembleth at my word.

Isa 61:2-3 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

Ps 22:26 The meek shall eat and be

satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

Ps 25:9 The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.

Ps 37:11 But the meek shall inherit the

earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Ps 76:9 When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of

the earth. Selah.

Ps 147:6 The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.

Ps 149:4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek

with salvation.

What do they get? The kingdom of God, a comforter, and the Earth as an inheritance (Mt.5:3, 4, 5).

Joh 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and



Photo by Hamison More 11/6/22
Mount of Beatitudes Israel



Photo by Hamison More 11/6/22
Mount of Beatitudes Israel

3.mp4



A Schnitzel



he shall give you another **Comforter**, that he may abide with you for ever;

*Joh 14:26 But **the Comforter**, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

*Joh 15:26 But when **the Comforter** is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.*



Once

a soul is in the Kingdom of God, how do they change? They hunger and thirst after righteousness, are merciful, and are pure in heart, praise the Lord (Mt.5:6, 7, 8).

Our old nature did not hunger and thirst after righteousness. *Rom 3:11-12 "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.12 They are all*

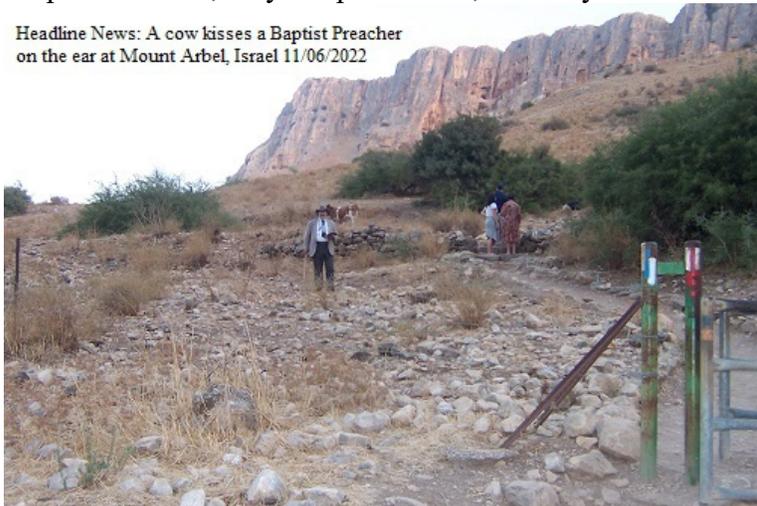
gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Our old nature was not merciful, nor pure in heart; the new nature that God enlivens and plants in a born-again-saved soul, is merciful, and is pure in heart.

So, What do they get? They get filled, they get mercy, and they get to see God (Mt.5:6, 7, 8)!

Once "in", what are they to the world? They are peacemakers, they are persecuted, and they are reviled.



Headline News: A cow kisses a Baptist Preacher on the ear at Mount Arbel, Israel 11/06/2022



And what do they got for all that? They get called "the children of God", for theirs "is the kingdom of heaven", and they can "rejoice and be exceeding glad" (5:9,10, 11).

That is a quick, deep dive into the 9-Blessed "R"s; three Rs get us in, three Rs change us up, and three Rs make us say, "This world is not my home."

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how

unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom.11:33).

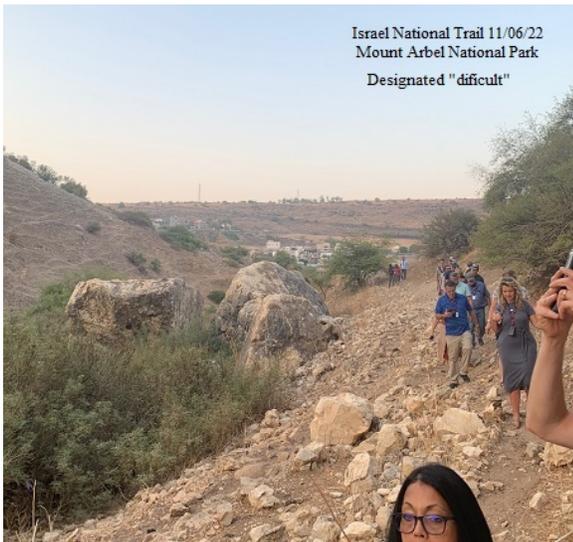
The sermon on the mount goes on for three chapters but, alas, our visit to the hill where Jesus taught it, had more time restrictions than he did. We sang a hymn together, then wandered around the beautifully maintained park surrounding the Roman Catholic

Church, some ventured in for photos, and we meandered back to the bus.

I knew that we were at Mount of Beatitudes after Capernaum (12:34 pm) and before the Israel National Trail (04:19 pm), but I found no photo evidence in all the Rice photos. So, I made the WhatsApp plea below:

WhatsApp Chat sent to 47 participants on Sat 13 May at 5am: "Micah Rice, Bev Rice, and I, remember gathering at the Mount of Beatitudes (32.880858, 35.555792) on Sunday Nov 6th, and hearing Pastor Chalie teach, then wandering around the Roman Catholic Church of the Beatitudes for a moment before departing. It is in my journal. The Rices do not seem to have a single picture verifying this. Shane's Apple iPhone XS Max documents being at Capernaum at 12:34pm and 1:23pm, being at lunch at Hilik's Junction at 2:07pm, and then being at the Israel National Trail at 4:19pm. There is a reward (like, a printed copy of my journal) for anyone providing photographic evidence that we were at (and when we were at) the Mount of Beatitudes on November 6th 2022. Thank you for participating in this quest. Pastor Ed Rice."

(Immediately, in response to this WhatsApp plea Harrison Moore sent 6 excellent videos, Chris Mann sent 4 excellent photos, and Cara Gates sent 4 excellent photos, all of the Mount of Beatitudes, but all without time stamps.)



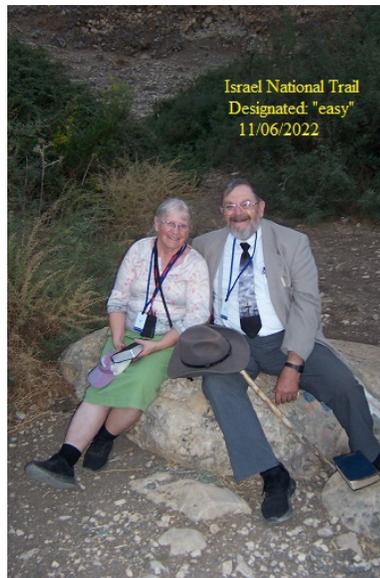
Israel National Trail 11/06/22
Mount Arbel National Park
Designated "difficult"

My Sunday 7:35 am chat said "Excellent, excellent, and Thank You. Your photos will be published in Half Shekel Journal #18 this week and I will mail a 1st draft book when published."

Our Sunday lunch stop was at 2 pm at Hilik's Junction, Migdal, Israel (32°50'13.22"N 35°30'36.28"E). I lost count of how many times we ate Schnitzel. It is a Sumac⁶² Slaw Sandwich with slaw and fried chicken

schnitzel (breaded and deep-fried). They just pack the slaw, schnitzel, and slices of bread together to enjoy what's probably the best Kosher lunch you've ever had.

Or one could try the Pastrami on Rye from *Boulder Locavore*. Pastrami (Romania: pastrama) is a food originating from Romania usually made from beef brisket. Later recipes use lamb, pork, chicken or turkey. (Corned beef is made from the leaner flat brisket. Pastrami is made with point brisket, which contains more marbling and fat. Pastrami can also be made with other cuts of beef, such as deckle (a lean shoulder cut) or navel (aka beef belly, which comes from the plate, a juicy section just below the ribs) (ref foodnetwork.com). Again this classic deli sandwich has coleslaw thrown in.



Israel National Trail
Designated: "easy"
11/06/2022



Sunset on the Israel National Trail
Mount Arbel Israel 11/06/2022

62 Sumac is any of about 35 species of flowering plants in the genus *Rhus* and related genera in the cashew family. Sumacs grow in subtropical and temperate regions throughout the world. Sumac is used as a spice, as a dye, and in medicine. Scientific name: *Rhus* Family: Anacardiaceae Kingdom: Plantae Order: Sapindales.

I'd never try their Roasted Eggplant and Pickled Beet Sandwich myself. They say, when you're going meatless, you don't have to stick to hummus and lettuce— you can try roasted eggplant and pickled veggies to keep things interesting! They just roast slices of eggplant and store it in the fridge until needed. The pickled beet salad, accented with olives, fresh herbs and scallions, is also made ahead of time.

I also avoided the Smoked Salmon Sandwich - Gravlax with Cream Cheese

(Gravlax is fresh salmon that's been cured with a combination of salt and sugar. It's arguably the ultimate easy-to-make luxury food.) and the Lox on Challah (Lox is a fillet of brined salmon, which may or may not be smoked). Lox is frequently served on a bagel with cream cheese, and often garnished with tomato, sliced onion, but here it is on Challah. Challah is *pareve* (Yiddish for containing neither dairy nor meat—important in the laws of *Kashrut*), unlike brioche and other enriched European breads, which contain butter or milk. Challah is a special bread of Ashkenazi Jewish origin, usually braided and typically eaten on ceremonial occasions such as Shabbat.



“We will just have the Schnitzel and two Coca Colas please.”

After a short but refreshing, entertaining lunch, Eiad pulled the tour bus up to the Israel National Trail, a part of the Mount Arbel National Park, at about 4 pm. Mount Arbel is not mentioned in the Bible, which

is curious, given that our Lord Jesus Christ centered his ministry in lower Galilee, and centered in lower Galilee are these high cliffs, a visible landmark from most anywhere on the sea of Galilee. It stands sharply and prominently over the sea, and its graceful stature provides a magical view of the sea, the Golan Heights, and Mount Hermon. (Mount Hermon is mentioned in scriptures in Deut.3:8–9, 4:48, Ps.89:12, 133:3).

Our guide Joe pointed out that in 161 BC “Arbela” was the site of a battle between the Jews, united with the Maccabees, and the evil Seleucid General Bacchides, who defeated and brutally killed his opponents. Josephus mentions in his “Antiquities” that the Greek general captured the many people who had taken refuge in the caves at Arabella. Recall that this Maccabean revolt would eventually overthrow the vile Seleucid Antiochus IV, Epiphanes⁶³ who desecrated the temple, and controlled all Judea.

The beautiful, well cared for, Arbel National Park was perfectly enticing. Many hiked up to the caves but us older ones stuck to the trail designated as “easy”. The sun setting on the mountain made for a relaxing close to a very busy day.

Dinner at the Gia Beach Hotel, on the Sea of Galilee, brought with it the stimulating conversation that described every adventure of the day. Followed by an evening stroll on the moonlit Sea of Galilee. That was an anniversary Bev and I will never forget.

63 “*Epiphanies*” means “god manifest” but people changed his name to “*Epimanes*”, meaning “the mad”.



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice

#19 Sun 7 Nov Mount Arbel Caves

We had already learned some things about the caves of Mount Arbel. They were strong holds for persecuted Jews



for generations. Yesterday evening our guide Joe took us back to 161 BC to meet General Bacchides, who brutally slew the Jews, which the Seleucid Empire⁶⁴ wanted annihilated. We also recalled that the Maccabean revolt that was generated eventually



overthrew the vile Seleucid Antiochus IV who desecrated the temple, and controlled all Judea. That Maccabean revolt reestablished Judaism in Judea, just in time for the Saviour to step into the world; no coincidence there.

This early morning, Joe described the Roman soldiers who were lowered down in baskets on



ropes to shoot their arrows into cave dwelling



Jews when the Romans wanted to annihilate them just 200 years later. Somehow, Pastor Chalie and Joe had conspired together to arrange time in our schedule for our group to climb down a portion of Mount Arbel, and peer right into some of those caves. No kidding. And voila we started down the Israeli National Trail⁶⁵ in the Arbel Nature Reserve, starting about where we were last night. (Start: 11/7/22 0918, 32°49'28.27"N 35°30'05.51"E, Altitude 130.3816; Middle:0955 32°49'26.75"N 35°29'48.87"E, Altitude 46.8206; End: 1018 32°49'33.22"N 35°29'24.65"E, Altitude 137.5430. Looks like they hiked down 109 feet from the peak, then back up 91 feet to the pickup point, God bless them.)

Leaving Eiad, the bus driver, smiling waving, and leaning against our 46' Irazar i6S Tour bus we made our way past the gift shop and up the trail toward the peak of Mount Arbel. The hike up was beautiful. It was on a well groomed path serpentine up the valley with relaxing photo-ops of beautiful



64 Oxford Dictionary, s.v. "Seleucid", a dynasty ruling over Syria and a great part of western Asia from 312 to 64 BC. Its capital was at Antioch.

65 We would use the Mount Arbel National Park portion of the The Israel National Trail, a hiking trail that crosses the entire length of the country of Israel, with its northern end at Kibbutz Kfar Giladi, near the Lebanese border and extending to Eilat at the southernmost tip of Israel on the Red Sea. Its total length is over 646 miles, we were to use one of them.

landscapes, plants, and flowers.

It may have been 1/4 mile up when Pastor Charlie started warning that the trail down, next to the caves, was categorized as “difficult.” As we kept going up the trail, smiling and laughing, the categorization changed a little to, “very difficult.” As we approach the end of the well groomed trail, Pastor paused the whole group and gathered us around a large rock, and began an explanation of the “very difficult” category.



“Listen, unless you are in very good physical shape, have good hiking shoes, and proper hiking apparel, you should not endeavor to take the next portion of this hike. You can turn back at this point, stroll back down this nicely groomed, trail and wait for us in the air-conditioned tour bus.”

I got the impression, as did evidently Pastor Charlie, that some people were not paying

particular attention to this escalating warnings. Like they often do in song at Solid Rock BC, Pastor Charlie raised it to a higher key and repeated the last verse and chorus.

When we humans are told that something might be more physically demanding than we are ready for, we have a tendency to overestimate



our physical stamina, and recall all the previous voices that said, “Don’t worry, you can do it, it’s not as hard as they make it out to be...”

Beverly and I, in our 70s, heard none of those voices; we knuckled under and backed out

with alternate plans as soon as we heard the “difficult” categorization. I am not proud of my obesity, but neither am I ignorant of it. We clicked no pictures all the way up the trail, knowing there would be plenty of time to do so, as we casually strolled back down to the air-conditioned gift shop and waiting tour bus.



Pastor Chalie had raised his warning key almost half an octave before we casually waved goodbye to all the stout hearted hikers who are attracted by challenge, and the opportunity to be spelunkers, i.e. “one who makes a hobby of exploring, and studying caves.” Shane and Micah Rice had promised to bring back photos so other Rices could do their spelunking remotely.



I did not take particular note of who went on the spelunking hike and who thought better of it and made the casual relaxing stroll back down the well groomed trail to the gift shop. The foyer of the gift shop was lined with exceptional framed photos of Mount Arbel, and it's caves. In lieu of the “very difficult” hike, I started clicking pictures of



my favorite pictures. Bev and Kathy were back in the gift shop, admiring things and talking; at least I saw no purses open.



I inadvertently blocked some photo shoot of a young couple and apologized. Turns out they were Christians from North Carolina on a 10 day tour with their Church of Christ

congregation. Everyone visiting Israel is excited and friendly. Some of their group

stuck their head out and called from the gift shop door, their group was leaving. I clicked a few more pictures of pictures.

It probably wasn't an hour before we gathered at the bus and Eiad headed us down to the pick up point where we would recover the trail wearied spelunkers. The bus was comfortable, the lush seats more so. When I awoke from a relaxing nap, there was some concern about some hikers that were still quite a ways back up the mountain trail.



Micah and Harrison had gone back to lend aid to the fallen, and we prayed that “the fallen” were merely fallen behind. It was a great relief to see them come around the last corner, and although they were well out of earshot, the group recited together, “Praise the Lord” and a round of applause rang out.

I’ll not record here the detail of the ordeal of some of the hikers, hikers that, perhaps unadvisedly, made the spelunking journey down the steep cliffs, except to say that, at least two claim that they owe their very lives to Micah and Harrison. “If it had not been for them, I would still be up there on that cliff overhang!”

There will be some from the spelunking contingent who read this journal and remember so well the 7



November morning that they might be compelled to write out their own first person detailed account with, or without, pictures. If such a person would send me their account, I may or may not (depending on how much humor/edification it contains) publish it as an addendum to this half shackle journal. If I publish this work in paper back through Lulu however, I’ll not give you a dime of my royalty (in the last three years of publishing 13 volumes of 3000 pages, I netted

\$7.95 of royalty⁶⁶, ... and used it all at Starbucks!).

After a lunch stop, where we regrouped from the spelunking adventure, we were prepped with anticipation to visit Tel-Dan, the northern most point in the nation of Israel. Our guide Joe gave it more flavor on the bus as Eiad turned right on route 90 and headed the bus north.

I am not sure who is still working on their journal covering this 10 day Israel Pilgrimage; I wish them well. I flip through 1,500 pictures for each Half Shekel of work; I feel bad for those who have over 40 hours of video instead of 1,500 pictures. Take a note, pictures are preferred over videos. Anyway, the challenge of assembling a journal brought to mind Mark Twain's journal entry about journalers. I will again recommend his

⁶⁶ I published 12 volumes of Systematic Theology for the 21st Century, but the need is so great that I keep giving them away for free. See all books at <https://www.lulu.com/spotlight/GSBaptistChurch>

whole Journal “Innocents Abroad”, it is public domain and available for free for your electronic devices. In any event, for those still journaling, I’ll close this Half Shekel with Mark Twain’s Journal entry on journaling.

Below is an excerpt of Mark Twain’s “*Innocents Abroad*” Chapter IV, that has his humorous insights about journaling. I thought it worth the read, as is his whole freely obtained book

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3176/3176-h/3176-h.htm>

Mark Twain writes:

After prayers the Synagogue shortly took the semblance of a writing school. The like of that picture was never seen in a ship before. Behind the long dining tables on either side of the saloon, and scattered from one end to the other of the latter, some twenty or thirty gentlemen and ladies sat them down under the swaying lamps and for two or three hours wrote diligently in their journals. Alas! that journals so voluminously begun should come to so lame and impotent a conclusion as most of them did! I doubt if there is a single pilgrim of all that host but can show a hundred fair pages of journal concerning the first twenty days’ voyaging in the Quaker City,



and I am morally

certain that not ten of the party can show twenty pages of journal for the succeeding twenty thousand miles of voyaging! At certain periods it becomes the dearest ambition of a man to keep a faithful record of his performances in a book; and he dashes at this work with an enthusiasm that imposes on him the notion that keeping a journal is the veriest pastime in the world, and the pleasantest. But if he only lives twenty-one days, he will find out that only those rare natures that are made up of pluck, endurance, devotion to duty for duty’s sake, and invincible determination may hope to venture upon so tremendous an enterprise as the keeping of a journal and not sustain a shameful defeat.

One of our favorite youths, Jack, a splendid young fellow with a head full of good sense, and a pair of legs that were a wonder to look upon in the way of length and straightness and slimness, used to report progress every

morning in the most glowing and spirited way, and say:

“Oh, I’m coming along bully!” (he was a little given to slang in his happier moods.) “I wrote ten pages in my journal last night—and you know I wrote nine the night before and twelve the night before that. Why, it’s only fun!”

“What do you find to put in it, Jack?”

“Oh, everything. Latitude and longitude, noon every day; and how many miles we made last twenty-four hours; and all the domino games I beat and horse billiards; and whales and sharks and porpoises; and the text of the sermon Sundays (because that’ll tell at home, you know); and the ships we saluted and what nation they were; and which way the wind was, and whether there was a heavy sea, and what sail we carried, though we don’t ever carry any, principally, going against a head wind always—wonder what is the reason of that?—and how many lies Moulton has told—Oh, every thing! I’ve got everything down. My father told me to keep that journal. Father wouldn’t take a



thousand dollars for it when I get it done.”

“No, Jack; it will be worth more than a thousand dollars—when you get it done.”

“Do you?—no, but do you think it will, though?”

“Yes, it will be worth at least as much as a thousand dollars—when you get it done. May be more.”

“Well, I about half think so, myself. It ain’t no slouch of a journal.”

But it shortly became a most lamentable “slouch of a journal.” One night in Paris, after a hard day’s toil in sightseeing, I said:

“Now I’ll go and stroll around the cafes awhile, Jack, and give you a chance to write up your journal, old fellow.”

His countenance lost its fire. He said:

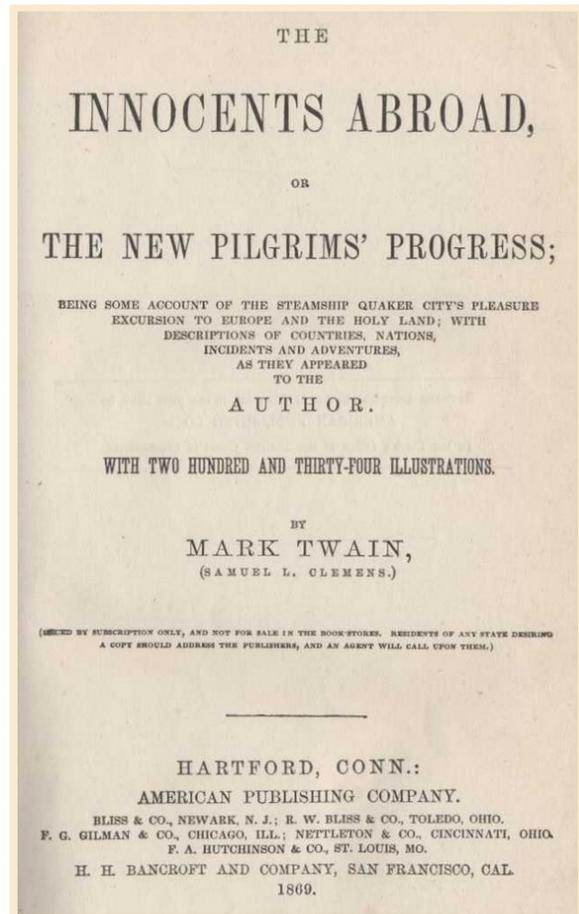
“Well, no, you needn’t mind. I think I won’t run that journal anymore. It is awful tedious. Do you know—I reckon I’m as much as four thousand pages behind hand. I haven’t got any France in it at all. First I thought I’d leave France out and start fresh. But that wouldn’t do, would it? The governor would say, ‘Hello, here—didn’t see anything in France? That cat wouldn’t fight, you know. First I thought I’d copy France out of the guide-book, like old Badger in the for’ard cabin, who’s writing a book, but there’s more than three hundred pages of it. Oh, I don’t think a journal’s any use—do you? They’re only a bother, ain’t they?”

“Yes, a journal that is incomplete isn’t of much use, but a journal properly kept is worth a thousand dollars—when you’ve got it done.”

“A thousand!—well, I should think so. I wouldn’t finish it for a million.”

His experience was only the experience of the majority of that industrious night school in the cabin. If you wish to inflict a heartless and malignant punishment upon a young person, pledge him to keep a journal a year.

A good many expedients were resorted to keep the excursionists amused and satisfied. A club was formed, of all the passengers, which met in the writing school after prayers and read aloud about the countries we were approaching and discussed the information so obtained.⁶⁷



⁶⁷ Mark Twain's "*The Innocents Abroad*" is available in full (Public Domain) at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3176/3176-h/3176-h.htm> or in multiple formats at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3176> [From an 1869—1st Edition] Accessed 4/4/2023 egr



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#20 Mon 7 Nov Tel Dan, Caesarea Philippi, Golan

Tel⁶⁸-Dan is an important site for Biblical archaeology. It is situated at the base of Mount Hermon on the headwaters of the Jordan River, at the northernmost tip of Israel. Being right close to the borders of both Lebanon and Syria, Joe, our guide, began an excited description of where we were at, even as stragglers gimped in from the bus parking lot. The short bus ride, after a pleasant lunch,

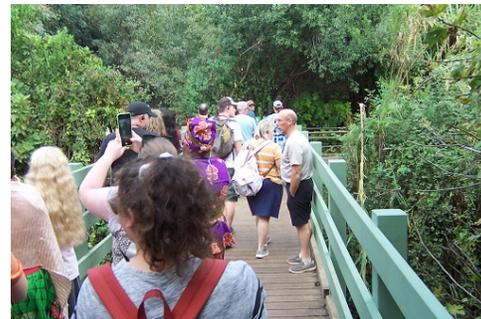


had lulled some of us into REM sleep, and brain activity, and leg movements, were dawdling a little.

Our stroll through the Tel-Dan Nature Reserve combined exploration of remarkable archaeological sites, the exquisite natural habitat areas, and bubbling streams of the Jordan headwaters. The luxurious foliage along the streams did not hide the several aqueducts that carried water off to flour mills and fields of a millennia ago.



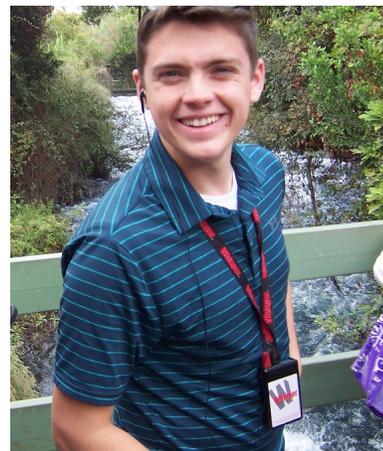
The first mention of Dan is found in Genesis 14:14, "*And when Abram heard that his brother (his Nephew Lot) was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three-hundred and eighteen, and pursued them into Dan.*" Some have speculated wildly why this northern point in the Promised Land was called Dan five-hundred years before the tribe of Dan ever headed up there⁶⁹. (1913



BC of Genesis 14, to 1406 BC of Judges 18 = 507 years). I have a good answer for that, "Just because!" Any number of etymology reasons could be explored in Hebrew, Canaanite, and Syrian. Rachel called her "first born" Dan (actually born



from her handmaid Bilhah). In Hebrew Dan means "a judge". In folklore it was "judged" that three rivers should unite and make the headwaters for the Jor-Dan river. Jordan can be shown to mean, waters that come from Dan, come from a judge, or come from judgment. Any of a number of explanations could suffice for Abram referencing Dan, and



68 Remember that "tel" is Arabic for a mound and represents a mound of civilizations, one built on top of another. If you own a Bible, there are no "prehistoric" civilizations.

69 Modernist, ecumenical "scholars", apostates and infidels contend that God did not write Genesis, they suppose man wrote it and it is not trustworthy.

I like my answer of “Just because”, or better, “Just because the Bible says so.”

Our real interest in the beautiful Tel-Dan Nature Preserve begins when the Tribe of Dan invaded the Canaanite occupied area in 1406 BC. Pastor Chalie gave an excellent review of the background of this invasion. It occurred at the close of the book of Judges when civil and religious confusion was gaining the upper hand. The record of Joshua, who divided the land out by lots has this “post it note” attached in Joshua 19:47, “*And the coasts of the*



children of Dan went out to little for them: therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father.”

The Bible then adds more detail to this rogue departure of Dan and adds Judges 1:34, “*And the Amorite forced the children of Dan into the*

mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley.” Then Judges 18 has all the detail of Dan's departure from their inheritance, and their sojourn across the map to a land in the northern end of the promised land.



As they went through Ephraim they stole some idolatry, a crooked priest, his ephod, teraphim (08655



AV image, or idol) and graven image, and off they went to capture Laish from the Zidonians (i.e. Sidonians of Sidon). It seems Dan experienced civil confusion, religious confusion, and inheritance confusion. Curiously, Dan is the only tribe left out when God seals 12,000 from each tribe in Revelation 7:4 - 8. (Ephraim, the other scallawag that hosted

Jeroboam's golden calf, is not listed in Rev.7 either, but is therein called the tribe of Joseph).

The tribe of Dan, who abandoned their inheritance, and their God, is now steeped in idolatry and when Jeroboam is possessed to set up false gods to drive his ten northern tribes from following the LORD and make them sin a great sin⁷⁰ (cf 2Kings 17:20-23), Dan fits his bill.



70 No less than twenty times the Bible calls out this sin of Jeroboam who made Israel to sin! 1Kings. OnlineBible.net User List: # 1Ki 13:34 14:16 15:30,34 16:2,19,26,31 21:22 22:52, # 2Ki 3:3 10:29,31 13:2,6,11 14:24 15:9,18,24,28 17:21,22 23:15. I have each highlighted via brown colored

Jeroboam didn't want Israel going south to worship in Jerusalem.

20 And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight. 21 For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin. 22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; 23 Until the LORD



removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day. (2Kings 17:20-23)



As Pastor Chalie leaned against the replica altar set up in Dan, yea while we stood on the very plot of ground where such vile,

national, idolatry took place, he taught of the evils of idolatry in our lives, in our homes, and in our nation.

The archaeological work done on the Canaanite city of Laish afforded a glimpse into the culture of the heathens that God wanted utterly destroyed from his land; Deut.7:1 lists them *“When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites,*



and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; ... ” (It is possible that these in Laish were Sidonians instead of Canaanites).

There are good but copyright Bible maps that indicate where these seven nations previously dwelt in God's Promised Land, and where Dan's original inheritance fell out by lot.

When the Lord God was giving his law, commandments, testimonies, and statutes to Israel he often cited *“for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you”* (Leviticus 18:24, cf 28, Deut.9:4-5, 12:30*, 1King.14:24)⁷¹. It was amazing that they discovered and excavated so much of Laish.



The bus was loading up, our next stop was to be Caesarea Philippi and we were eager to get there and also to make the Golan Heights by dark.

pencil in order to emphasize the long chain of sinfulness created by one scalawag!

Mat.16:13 *When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*

Mrk.8:27 *And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?*



Caesarea

Philippi is called by several names today: Banias and Pnias are the most common, and it turns out that Banias is just an Arab's pronunciation of Pnias, Arabs have no "P" sound in their alphabet. Joe was fluent in giving a wealth of background about what we saw as we came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi. We were at the base of Mount Hermon and looking into a cave mouth that was the

largest spring feeding the Jordan River. The cold waters of this spring, flowing out of the cave, has been a hot-bed for pagan worship of false gods. The spring, just inside the cave, was considered bottomless. In the Old Testament of the Bible it was called Baalherman (Judges 3:3, 1Chron.5:23) and Baalgad (Joshua 11:17, 12:7, 13:5), but it was later named Pnias after the Greek god Pan. That's Pan with a "P".



An open air sanctuary was built for Pan next to the cave. "Sacred niches" are still visible in the rocky cliff of the mountain. Statues of various "deities" were placed in the niches. One niche contained a sculpture of Echo, the mountain nymph⁷², and Pan's consort. Another housed the statue of Pan's father, Hermes, son of nymph Maia.

Augustus Caesar later gave the city to Herod the Great, who built a marble temple to Augustus.

When Herod the Great died, in 4 BC, the city passed to his son Philip the Tetrarch, who

71 *Le 18:24, 28 Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: ... 28 That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you. De 9:4 ... but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee. 5 Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 12:30 Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. 1Kngs.14:24 And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.*

72 Webster 1828, "nymph" a beautiful mythological goddess inhabiting rivers, woods or other locations.

rebuilt the city and changed the name to Caesarea Philippi. Philip made it his capital, and ruled the area until 33 AD. He depicted the Shrine of Pan on his coins, some of which have survived to this day.

Pastor Chalie opened his Bible to Matthew 16, and began to teach the Biblical significance of why we were here today. Jesus came to the “coast of Caesarea Philippi”, he did not enter the city, ... probably stood right here where we are meeting today. With the backdrop of this massive rock, pouring out its water, and all the pagan



idolatry and false god worship present in the background, Jesus asked his disciples, “*Whom do men say that I the son of man am?*” Then he asked “*But whom say ye that I am?*” It was Simon Peter that answered and said, “*Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.*”

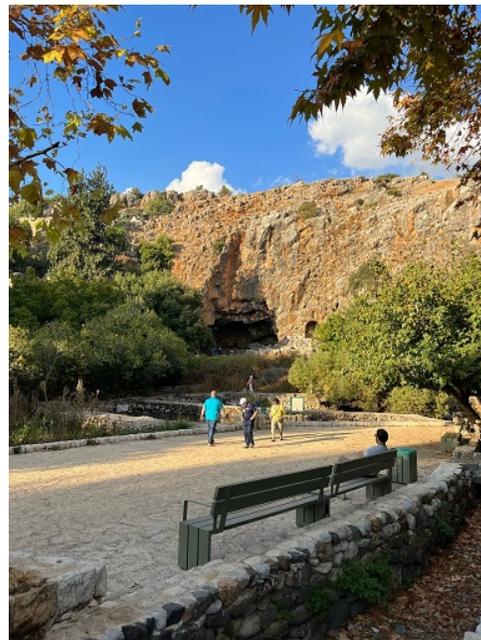
As non-Roman Bible believers, as non-catholic Bible believers, it is important to rightly divide the word of Truth in Jesus' paramount statement in verse

18. “*And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter (4074 Petros, stone) and upon this rock (4073 petra, rock, cliff or ledge) I will build my church ...*” A good paraphrase is “Peter, you're just a little stone, but on this rock, i.e. the truth that I am the Christ, the son of the living God, ... I will build my *ecclesia*, i.e. a called-out gathered together body of believers.”

But wait there's more: I can well picture the



most pragmatic teacher to ever walk on earth as he gave a full 3 second pause, then swung his arm across all the pagan worship going on behind him and said slowly and emphatically, “*and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*”⁷³



Standing in this spot, viewing that huge rock and hearing these Bible truths expounded has an impact on the mind that will not soon go away. It was good to be here in the coast of Caesarea Philippi. The bus was loading, we wanted to be on the Golan Heights

73 Some have speculated that this water springing cave was called “The Door of Hades”, or “The Gates of Hell”, previous to Jesus's arrival here, but there is no such evidence. It would seem much more likely, to this Baptist preacher, that God labeled it such in his son's declaration, and that the label stuck around after that.

by dark, and thanks to Eiad's expertise we were.

Jos 21:27 *And unto the children of Gershon, of the families of the Levites, out of the other half tribe of Manasseh they gave **Golan** in Bashan with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; ...*

Golan of Bashan was a bordertown and subjected to “captivity,” as the name means in Hebrew. Ben Haddad of Damascus was defeated by King Ahab here, and it has been a war-torn area ever since. Joe was passionate as he



described for us how from 1948 - 1967 Syria controlled the Golan Heights, and used it as a military stronghold to randomly snipe at Israeli civilians in the Hula Valley below,

forcing children to sleep in bomb shelters. In late 1966 a youth was killed by a landmine while playing football near the Lebanon border. Syria allowed Yasser Arafat's Fatah to carry out such attacks.

During the 1967 Six Day War, on June 9th Israel moved against Syrian forces on the Golan. By late afternoon on June 10th, Israel was in complete control of the Golan plateau.

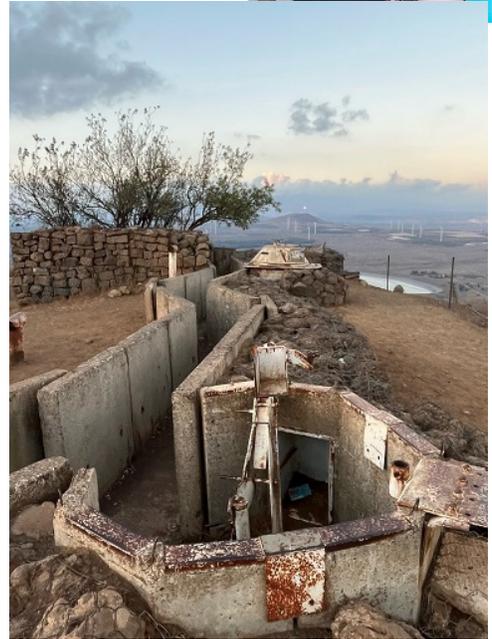


Golan Heights 11/07/2022 5pm
33° 7' 04.69" N 35° 46' 38.53" E

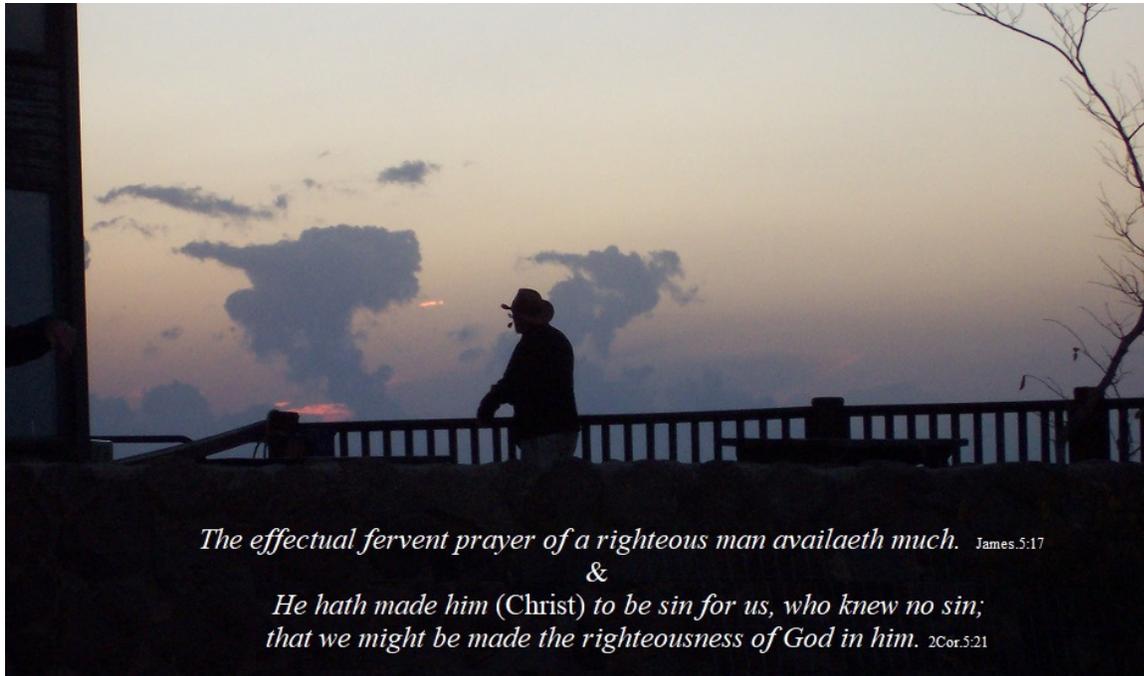
Heights. “It's time that the international community finally recognized that the Golan will remain forever under Israel's sovereignty.”

Today Israel has built thriving communities for Arabs, Drew's, Alawites⁷⁴, and Jews in the Golan, but Syria has never signed a peace agreement with Israel.

74 Oxford Dictionary, s.v. “alawites” a member of a Shiite Muslim group living mainly in Syria.



The bus is loading, we must start back, darkness is falling, and supper is ready at the hotel.



Pastor Everett & Debra Napuunooa of First Baptist Church in Parishville, NY went to Israel in January of 2023. We have been swapping adventure stories and they just posted excellent videos of their Israel Pilgrimage on youtube. There are not that many Napuunooas, so if you do a youtube.com Search for “Debra Napuunooa Israel” you will easily find several videos with excellent photography (I think “*napuunooa*” is Hawaiian for “I am related to Noah”, but don't quote me on that). Thank you Pastor Everett & Deb. Enjoy.



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#21 Tue 8 Nov Precipice, Zippori

In the predawn hours of our 8th sunrise in Israel it once again dawned on me that I was in Israel, this morning, in the Gia Beach Hotel, Tiberias, Israel, on the Sea of Galilee. The Psalmist describes the soon coming sun as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, which rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. I had an hour and a half head start on the race and spent it with a Bible, a penlight, and a prayer cloth.

It was hard to comprehend all that



The Horns of Hattin
 Two mounds of extinct volcano

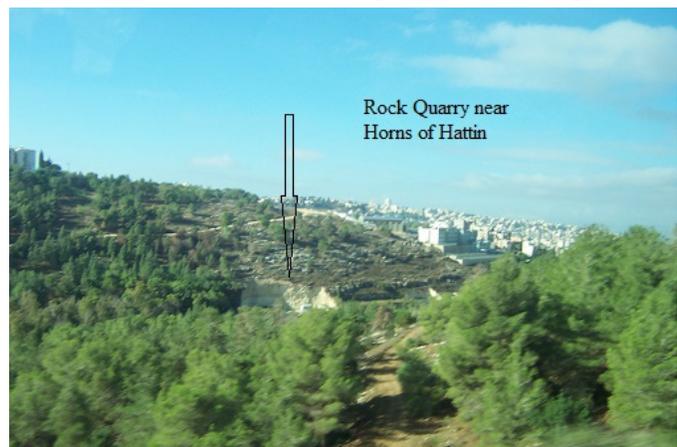
we had seen in the past eight days. It was a daily loading of God's benefits, even as the Psalmist said, "*Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah*" (Ps.68:19).

Today our plate was to be full with an early visit to Nazareth's Great Precipice, described in Luke 4:28-29, "*And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, 29 And rose up, and thrust*

him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong."

Then a visit to Zippori, name changed to Sepphoris, only 5 kilometers from nearby Nazareth. We would go up to Mt Carmel after lunch, then tour Megiddo, the stronghold city at the southern gate of the Carmel mountains. Finally we would cross the Jezreal valley and stop where the Jordan River out pours from the Sea of Galilee. It was an exciting outline of events and I wanted to pull some Bible facts out for each location.

Breakfast at the Gia Hotel dining room was exquisite this morning. Probably because I was getting used to eating the hot meatless omelet with cold fish, fruits, and vegetables that was offered at a Kosher breakfast. I think I mentioned that *breakfast* was called that because it was to break a twelve hour fast intended to give our digestive tract a healthful



Rock Quarry near
 Horns of Hattin

rest. This was working well for me this week; the “Mediterranean diet” and my carefully lowered sugar input was reducing my lower back's arthritis inflammation significantly.⁷⁵ Walking extensively and consistently, with a walking stick and arch supports was also contributing to my feeling ten years younger, ... or maybe it was just being in Israel, the land that God loved and called Beulah land.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. ² And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.



*³ Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. ⁴ Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land **Beulah**: for the*

LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married (Isa.62:1-4).

On the bus Pastor Chalie congratulated us for being on time for the start of each day, reviewed the highlights of this, our last full day in Israel, read some scriptures and prayed a special blessing on our day. Eiad guided the luxurious tour bus out of Tiberius and on to Route 77 headed west. When Joe, our superb guide, had the microphone, he echoed Pastor's congratulations for our promptness, then began a dialogue, teaching us the Hebrew word of the day (I captured many of these in my journal notes but I am remiss at

⁷⁵ Your chiropractor, doctor, or back surgeon will never tell you this... But studies consistently show inflammation and joint pain are a consequence of the foods you eat. Keep eating the wrong foods? You're stuck with joint pain for life. Start eating the right foods? Your joint discomfort fades away. Scientists say many foods can stamp out inflammation... but we've narrowed it down to the tastiest top 10. June 30, 2023 Article By Steve Hefferon. yatayata/healthandwellnesstools.com, Email me for a list of Steve's 10 best and 5 worst foods, see email addr at www.GSBaptistChurch.com.

translating the scratches into legible English, let alone Hebrew).

Joe had just began describing the events scheduled in our day when he was interrupted by a look out the bus window. “Oh, look out to your right and you can see a double hill of a large but extinct volcano. Those would be The Horns of Hattin and on the 4th of July 1187 AD the Crusader forces suffered a great defeat in the Battle of Hattin.”

Under Saladin the Muslim



armies once again became the eminent military power in the Holy Land. They recaptured Jerusalem and other crusader held cities, and the defeat prompted the third Crusade⁷⁶, which began two years after the battle of Hattin.

The pace of our trip, the knowledge of our guide, and the overwhelming flood of information available in any brief moment of this trip, was absolutely sobering. Joe took

us from an upcoming glimpse of the Precipice near Nazareth back 2,000 years ago, fast forwarded us a thousand years into the heart of the Crusades, then, before I could click a good picture of an extinct volcano, had us back to 28 AD when an angry mob tried to throw Christ off “*the brow of the hill whereon their city was built on*” (Luke 4:29).

It was too much, I knew so little about the history of the Roman crusades it was embarrassing. Even so Joe's



⁷⁶ The Crusades are often given the misnomer “Christian” Crusades, but be careful not to make that mistake. The Crusades were Roman Crusades, they were Catholic Crusades, but they were never “Christian” Crusades. There was nothing “Christian” about any of them.

talk about the rock quarry in my fleeting picture, and the Arab village that was there now, only touched the surface. There was, in Joe's coverage of Kattim, the 1909 Kibutz that settled in the area. The Kibutz had a communist, Marxist, socialist ideology that drove them, but they did settle much of the territory in the early days.

An encyclopedia of information could only capture what slid past the right hand window of the tour bus, and then, as quickly as it came, it disappeared and left a funny taste of my ignorance in my mouth, and mind,.. and camera. I could not make out a single blurry picture snapped from the bus window. I think those were two mounts of



an extinct volcano, but it was hard to say with any certainty. As the bus turned off Route 60 and climbed up the winding road towards the Precipice, I, for one, was glad that it was doing the climbing and not we ourselves.

I knew the scripture Pastor Chalie would

open to when we assembled together at the top; Luke.4:16-30. In the City of Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, he stood up and read “as his custom was” (vr.16). This time,



however, he read a portion of scripture with such power, and with such authority, people took notice. He purposefully stopped his reading and closed the book at the breakpoint between the Messiah's First Advent and his Second Advent, the large crowd that had gathered took particular notice, “*And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him*” (vr.20). As he boldly taught them that he was the very Messiah, and began to rebuke them for their unbelief, “*they were filled with wrath*” (vr.28). The Bible says, “*And (they) rose up, and thrust him out of the city,*

and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong” (vr.29).

The bus was unloading. Joe began to explain how we could not be certain that this was the very spot, the very “brow of the hill”, but if not, it was close. And besides look at all the places you can see from this vista. We gathered around Pastor Chalie



and he opened our Bibles to Luke chapter 4. I shall recommend here that you now do the same, read with insight verse 16 through 30, and see what happened on a very similar precipice in verse 30.

While your Bible is open be sure to examine Isaiah.61:1-2a, to see where Jesus “stopped reading”, and muse on the reason he stopped there. Also muse on the precipice found in Luke 4:9, same chapter, only 20 verses earlier. There is a major

player involved in wanting the Messiah thrown off of a great precipice. Satan is involved in how, and why, people hate even the reading of God's Holy Word. Think back about how they hated and feared the



Scriptures on the Temple mount, on Day Two of our time in Israel. God is so good his word so powerful, able to divide the thoughts and intents of man's heart,.. even a depraved heart (Heb.4:12).

Our guide Joe was ecstatic as he pointed out spots we could see from this amazing overlook. From this Precipice, near



Nazareth, we could see Mount Tabor across the great Jezreel Valley. In the valley we could see Afula, known as the “Capital of the Valley” because of its strategic location (It is said that Afula is the origin of the great falafel, a deep-fried ball shaped fritter of ground chickpeas that we were getting all to familiar with on this trip).

Back towards us a little, you could easily make out Jael's tentsite, where Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, hammered a nail of her tent into the temples of the fleeing Sisera, and nailed him to the ground! (Jud.4). Just beyond, one could just barely make out the infamous Megiddo, the stronghold city on a strategic pass into the Carmel mountains.

Looking toward Mt Carmel we could see Yokneam, a city at a second strategic pass into the Carmel mountains. We could just make out Muchraka, where God's prophet Elijah withstood Ahab and Jezebel's prophets of Baal. And just left of our birds-eye view of Haifa, we could overlook Nazareth, and see all the way to Mt Carmel's little Druze village of Dalijat El Karmel. From this vantage point all these Bible lands came into a focus and dimension that will forever make my Bible reading more alive and vibrant. The United Monarchy Map, Plate 4 in my Scofield reference Bible, with its 1 inch of paper being 20 miles of real estate, is more precious today than it has ever been. Alas, the bus was loading for our next stop at Zippori National Park.



Zippori, name changed to Sepphoris, is only 5 kilometers from nearby Nazareth. In the 12th century Crusaders built a small watchtower and a church on the city's hilltop. It is the Roman Catholic traditional birthplace of Mary, mother of Jesus, and the watchtower was dedicated to Anne and Joachim, traditionally the parents of Mary. According to Josephus' “Antiquities 18.27”, when Sepphoris became the administrative capital of Galilee in the lifetime of Jesus, Herod set out to make Sepphoris the “ornament of all Galilee.” Large areas of Zippori have been excavated to find public buildings and baths, residential areas, an amphitheater, market building, industrial installations, mikvah, cisterns, a complex drainage system,

mosaics, the narrowest ancient synagogue in Israel and a great deal of glass. Our visit today gave a spectacular overview of all of that, plus a birds-eye view of the Jezreel Valley. The city may get its name from the Hebrew word "*tsipor*" (bird) because the grand view from the town gives a sense of



flying.

There was quite a list of places that we were to see today and Mount Carmel and Meggiddo were on that list, right after a short lunch break. I was never eager or ready to leave any site, always scribbling journal notes and jostling them to click a couple more pictures. The bus was loading and my journal entry for Zippori was quite a quagmire.

With all the things I have included here about Mark Twain's journaling experiences, Beverly read me this article from one of her "Farm Country" magazines, and then dictated half of it into my phone: voila...

Journaling for help. University of Texas at Austin psychologist and researcher James Pendercker contends that regular journaling strengthens immune cells called team lymphocytes. Other research indicates that journaling decreases the symptoms of asthma and rheumatoid arthritis. Panda Baker believes



that writing about stressful events helps you come to terms with them, thus reducing the impact of these stressors on your physical health.

Scientific evidence supports that journaling provides other unexpected benefits. The act of writing accesses your left brain, which is analytical and rational. While your left brain is occupied, your right brain is free to create, intuit and feel. In some, writing removes mental blocks and allows you to use all of your brain power to better understand yourself, others, in the world around you. You can find 100 more reasons to journal; my mother wrote in her journal (several volumes) most every day of her life, some days only a sentence or two, but what a treasure to leave her children.

Journaling is not another insurmountable task to add to your to-do list. In fact, it's a wonderful way to tackle life with more merriment and less moping. According to a study published in advances in psychiatric treatment, journaling just 15 to 20 minutes on five occasions was enough to help participants deal

with traumatic, stressful, or otherwise emotional events.

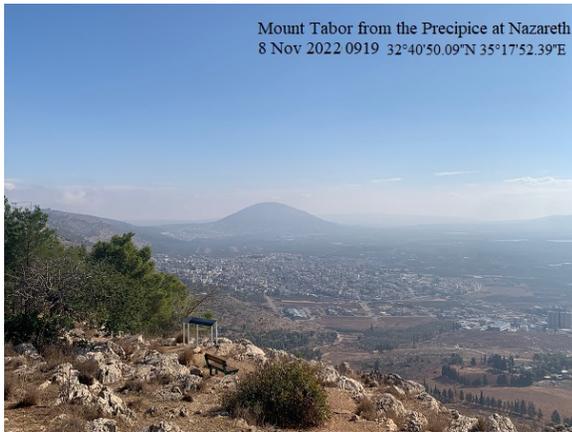
Time Index of some Photographs

img_4392.jpeg	Precipice	11/08 9:38	32°40'50.09"N 35°17'52.39"E Alt 377.38
100_4759.jpg	Zippori	11/08 1030	
img_4396.jpeg	Zippori National Park	11/08 1030	32°45'02.62"N 35°17'03.93"E Alt 277.8
img_4401.jpeg	Al-Mukhraqa Panorama	11/08 1306	32°40'21.73"N 35°05'18.25"E Alt 467.5
img_4402.jpeg	Tamer Halabi Restaurant	11/08 1308	32°40'21.48"N 35°05'18.36"E Alt 467.4
100_4784.jpg	Mount Carmel	11/08 1312	
img_4404.jpeg	Meggiddo National Park	11/08 1417	32°35'12.85"N 35°11'08.20"E Alt 160.1
img_4410.jpeg	Baptismal Site Gift Store	11/08 1651	32°42'38.32"N 35°34'13.92"E Alt 190.8
img_4413.jpeg	Gai Beach Hotel	11/08 1839	32°47'07.00"N 35°32'38.01"E Alt 206.5



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#22 Tue 8 Nov Nazareth Precipice, Zippori, Mt Carmel

I'll begin this journal by adding some findings that should have been



Mount Tabor from the Precipice at Nazareth
 8 Nov 2022 0919 32°40'50.09"N 35°17'52.39"E

in my last journal. Turns out my notes were about as organized as a novice journalist might keep. From the Precipice overlooking Nazareth our guide Joe had pointed out many places of interest, to include Cana of Galilee, 5 1/2 miles north east, where Jesus did his first miracle. As we drove past Cana (Kafar Kanna on the map) Joe talked of the Kibbutz at the site in 1909, reminding us that a Kibbutz was originally a communist/Marxist community of people who shared everything, didn't even own their own clothes, and only functioned for a

short time before it collapsed in failure. It would behoove us to keep those failures in mind as the World, America, and Israel presses toward Socialism.

As we passed Cana of Galilee, Pastor Charlie read the account of Jesus's first miracle from John chapter 2. He pointed out that this was Jesus's first miracle, that *“both Jesus was called and his disciples to the marriage”*, and that the Apostle John gave much attention to chronological details (in 2009 our tour guide Ronnie Weaver told us that all Hebrew weddings are on Tuesdays, the third day of the week, because in the Genesis account, God recorded *“and God saw that it was good”* two times on Tuesday, the third day of the week, Gen 1:10,12). It was also clarified that Jesus' changing the water into wine gives no credence to the modernist idea that drinking booze is okay with God. Jesus still said *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise”*, in Prov.20:1, also in Prov.23:31-32, *“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder”*, and again in Prov.31:4-5, *“It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.”*



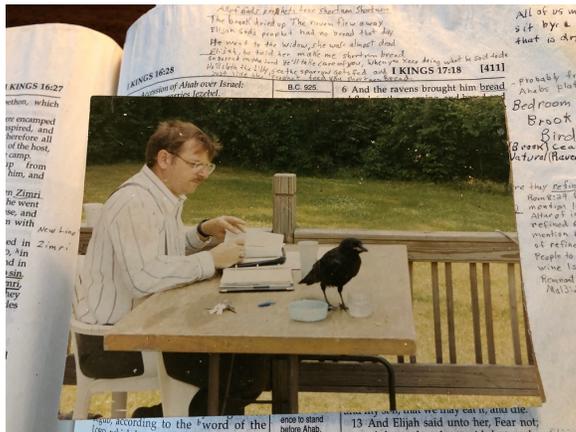
Israel Tour Guide Joe on Precipice
 8 Nov 2022 0908

From the Precipice, Joe also pointed out Mount Tabor, 5 miles to the east (which might, possibly, could have been, where Jesus was transfigured in front of Peter, James, and John). Then, on down towards the southeast he pointed out the city of Nain, about 5 miles out, which was where Jesus raised the widows son from the dead (Luke.7:11). You could also see Endor, where Saul met with the witch, a little further south. Eight miles away, you could even see Gideon Springs, and all the way around to your right was Mount Carmel. These several views across the Jezreel Valley brought much of the Bible into perspective as we saw how close together these familiar places were located. Pastor Charlie pointed out that Mary and Joseph traveled about 100 miles in four days of hard journey to get to Bethlehem, a considerable effort for a very pregnant young lady. As I

said previously, the United Monarchy map, Plate 4 in my Scofield reference Bible, with each 1 inch of paper being 20 miles of real estate, is more precious and understood today than it ever has been.

My son, Shane's notes reminded me that when Pastor Charlie preached on the Precipice from Luke 4:16–30, he clarified that Jesus was not crude or rude, causing the people of Nazareth to be angry, but he was calm, and his words were gracious, but they reacted with anger. His words were 1) Spirit filled, 2) Gracious, 3) Unwavering, and 4) Truthful words. People, even today, sometimes get very angry when hearing the Words of God.

In our short stop at Zippori, our guide Joe had pointed out that Jews of Zippori (rebuilt into Sepphoris) did not participate in the AD 66 revolt against Rome. If one is strong in their faith, they do not participate in revolt, nor do they assimilate into the society around them (I was thinking that part one of such guidance might not have been quite so applicable during our American revolution).



Pastor Charlie wisely interjected here, that Jesus, who grew up in Nazareth, only 4 miles from Zippori, “grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. ... And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke.2:40, 52). Even though Herod was building Sepphoris into the “ornament of all Galilee”, even though the powers of Hell convinced him to make the little town right next to Nazareth his administrative capital of Galilee, and despite the fact that forces afoot want to compromise Jesus' upbringing with seditions not in evidence, Pastor Charlie made it clear that the Bible is true and accurate; Jesus was sinless, and as a youth, he was found “in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers” (Luke.2:46–47). In the Holy Bible Jesus was not in Zippori, or Tzippori, or Soppchoris, but he went down with his parents to Nazareth, and was subject unto them (2:51), “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (2:52). Further, the first miracle he did was in Cana of Galilee, the Bible says so. Don’t let the world, the flesh, or the devil besmirch the youth of our Lord Jesus Christ with stories about what was going on near Nazareth (or with Roman catholic stories about show off miracles done as a

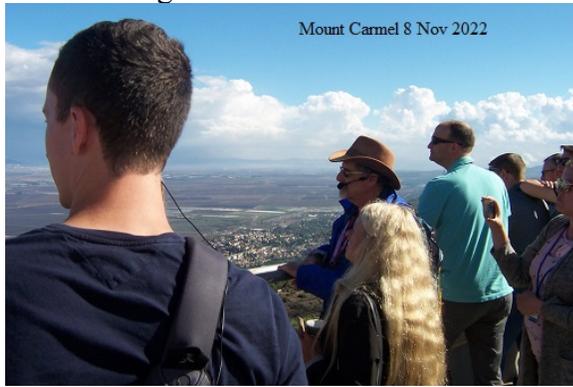
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teenager!). Thank you Pastor Chalie for being clear, Biblical, and blunt about this rumor mill astir in Zippori, changed to Sepphoris, by the evil king Herod.

The bus was loading, it was exciting to visit the Precipice overlooking Nazareth and see the whole region around it, it was an adventure to visit Zippori, and learn a little history of the region, but my anticipation was set on Mount Carmel. Someday we will sit and talk with Elijah the prophet.

The story of Elijah, yea, the contest in Israel between God and their idolatry, did not begin nor end on Mount Carmel. Three and 1/2 years earlier Elijah the Tishbite, who



was of the inhabitants of Gilead, walks on to the page of our Bible and starts the contest with Ahab, the most vile king of Israel (God called him such in 1Kings.16:25, 30, 21:25). We know almost nothing about Elijah, but can surmise some things, ... he grew up in rugged farming country and his parents named him “the LORD (Jehovah) he is God”; that tells us something. After his earthshaking, life threatening announcement to King Ahab, Elijah disappears, and anyone who has read the Bible knows “The Raven at

the Brook Cherith Account.”

In 1995, on the day we moved into our new home after my USAF retirement, and installation as a Pastor in Yates County, a raven crashed into our back door, and when I slid it open, he hopped into our lives. We raised him for two years, and never have stopped, marveling at Elijah's encounter with such a genius bird. Okay, ours was just a crow, but we knew him to be a distant cousin of Elijah's friend, and a providentially sent encouragement in our ministry.⁷⁷

After God sent Elijah the raven, the Bible reader knows about the widow with a barrel of meal and a little cruise of oil in Zarephath. Most people don't know that to get to Zarephath, Elijah had to walk 100 miles kitty-corner across a drought stricken nation, which had a royal bounty on his head. Nor do they realize that Zarephath was headquarters for Jezebel's father, who dictated all of Tyre and Sidon's outlandish and brutal, Baal worship! It is kind of Elijah's 'out of the pot and into the fire' experience that demonstrated God's sense of



⁷⁷ Ravens differ from crows in larger size, larger bill, tail shape, and flight patterns; they travel in pairs, while crows travel in larger groups. Amazingly, they also copulate in mid air, crows don't. (ref audubon.org) I lived with the ravens on Shemya, an island of the Aleutian chain, from May of 1983 until May of 1984.

humor, and careful protection of his Prophet. Anyway, now, here we stood on Mount Carmel. I, for one, was awestruck.

It certainly would have been better served if someone had built an altar of 12 stones here, rather than a Roman Catholic “Carmelite Monastery of Elijah”. In Arabic and Hebrew “*Muhraqa*” as this spot is called, means “*it burns*”, and the spot is authentic. John Butler writes in his book “*Elijah the Prophet of Confrontation*”:

Regarding Mount Carmel ... “no spot in Palestine is more beautiful, more bracing, or healthful than Carmel ... Up to the northwest, it juts as a promontory into the Mediterranean, rising to a height of 500 ft. Thence it stretches about twelve miles to the S.S.E., rising into two other peaks. The first of these, about four miles from the promontory, is not less than 1740 feet high. Still further to the southeast is a third peak 1687 feet high, which, to this day bears the name of El-Mahrasah, or 'place of burning' (sacrifice). This, there can scarcely be a doubt, was the place of Elijah's sacrifice.”



royal invitation (1Kings.18:20), the stress of the times which would greatly increase the interest in the meeting, and that Christ had crowds of 5,000 “besides women and children” (Matt.14:21) in the same land, we think the crowd was easily in the five digit category.

The outstanding feature of the crowd, which Elijah deals with at the very outset, is that they were wavering. “The assemblage on Carmel was, for the most part, wavering between the claims of Jehovah and Baal (D. Merson). The contest on Mount Carmel was to stop this wavering and to lead the people to follow Jehovah.”⁷⁸

78 John G Butler, “*Elijah the prophet of confrontation - Biblical Bible series number 3*”, LBC publications, 1994, page 115.

Our guide Joe was excited to lead us to where the prophet Elijah staged the contest with the 450 prophets of Baal (and with Jezebel's 400 prophets of the groves, who wouldn't come up the mountain). Joe gave a cursory introduction of Mount Carmel to the awestruck. Carmel means "the Garden land" and that only begins to capture the beauty that dwells on Mount Carmel, and all that can be seen from its heights (that is not to be confused with NJ "The Garden State"). It was no matter to us that the Carmelite⁷⁹



Monastery, dedicated to the Roman Catholic queen and mistress of Carmel, crowded into the site. In staunch contrast, the first Carmelite ever heard of was a precious Bible character named Abigail the Carmelites (2Sam.27:3).

Pastor Chalie opened our Bibles to 1Kings chapter 17 and 18 and flat out preached. Elijah had said,

Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount

Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel (1Kngs.18:19-20).

We were standing at the place known as the *Muhraqa*, literally meaning 'it burns'. This is surely the very site where "Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD" (1Kngs.18:31-32).

Standing on the site, Pastor Chalie gives details. First Kings 18 begins, "And it came

⁷⁹ The Carmelite Order is one of the few monastic orders, if not the only one, not to refer to a charismatic founder, but to a prophet of the Old Testament: Elijah and his disciple Elisha are considered by the Carmelites as the spiritual fathers of the order. Tradition indicates the presence on Mount Carmel of a series of Jewish and then Christian hermits who lived, prayed and taught in the caves used by Elijah and Elisha. This is how the first Christian hermits (at the origin of the founding of the order), settled in the caves of Mount Carmel to pray to God. The first chapel built within the hermitages and bringing together this community is dedicated to the Roman Catholic's version of the virgin Mary. Very quickly, the spirituality of the whole order turned to Roman Catholic Mary who became the Roman Catholic queen and mistress of Carmel. (The Order of the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel, known as the Carmelites are a Roman Catholic mendicant religious order (Mendicant orders are, primarily certain Roman Catholic religious orders that have adopted for their male members a lifestyle of poverty, traveling, and living in urban areas for purposes of preaching, evangelization, and ministry, especially to the poor.)). A Carmelite prays for the Roman Church and in union with the Roman Church. The day is divided into times of chanting the Liturgy of the Hours - a monastic tradition of marking the different parts of the day with prayer.

to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth”, but the rubber meets the road at verse 21, “And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”

In the climax of the account, Elijah prays a 63 word prayer and the fire comes down from heaven.

LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again (1Kng.18:36–37).



A Christian is strengthened and encouraged by reading this chapter. In the day in which we live it would behoove a believer to read Elijah's prayer, and pray it. The next chapter in Elijah's life finds him 112 miles south of Mount Carmel, fleeing from old Jezebel. He is in the wilderness of South Judah, right near Beersheba. Being on the mountaintop is often a picture of great victory in a Christian's life, being in a desert wilderness, not so much. Elijah heard from God in both places, and we can learn some valuable lessons from both chapters. Both circumstances teach some valuable lessons about communicating with God.



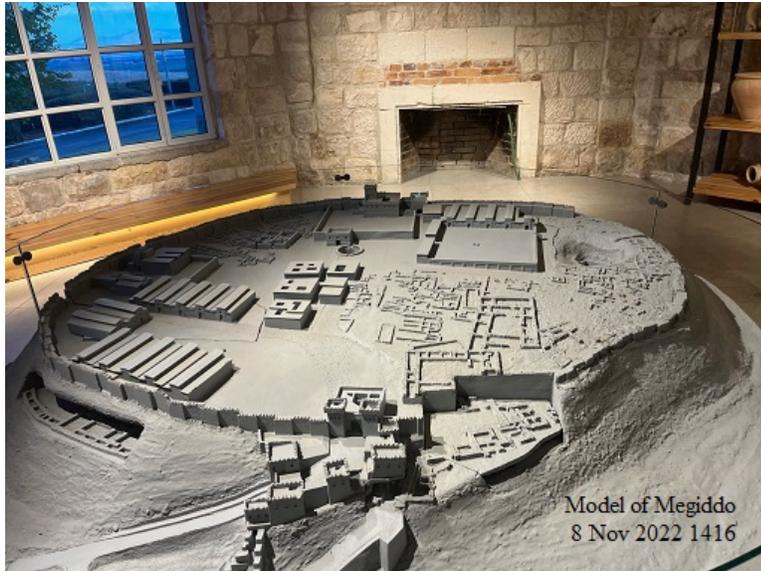
The view from Mount Carmel was spectacular. Before us was the Air Base of the Israeli Defense Force, beyond that you could pick out where Nazareth (32.704528 N. 35.288805 E.) is, about 15 miles away. Past that, about 5 miles, you could just make out Mount Tabor (32.688041 N. 35.383052 E). But most impressive was how the Jezreel valley spread out everywhere. Joe pointed out that Jezreel, Hebrew <03157> יִזְרְעֵל *yiz-reh-ale*, means “God sows” referencing the “fertile soil of God”. The valley was all of that.

In the panoramic view from Mount Carmel, following the western edge of the Jezreel Valley southward you could just barely make out where Megiddo is located. That was to be our next stop.



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 heaps⁸⁰ 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).

⁸⁰ 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 Chalie 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!⁸¹



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 cities⁸². 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

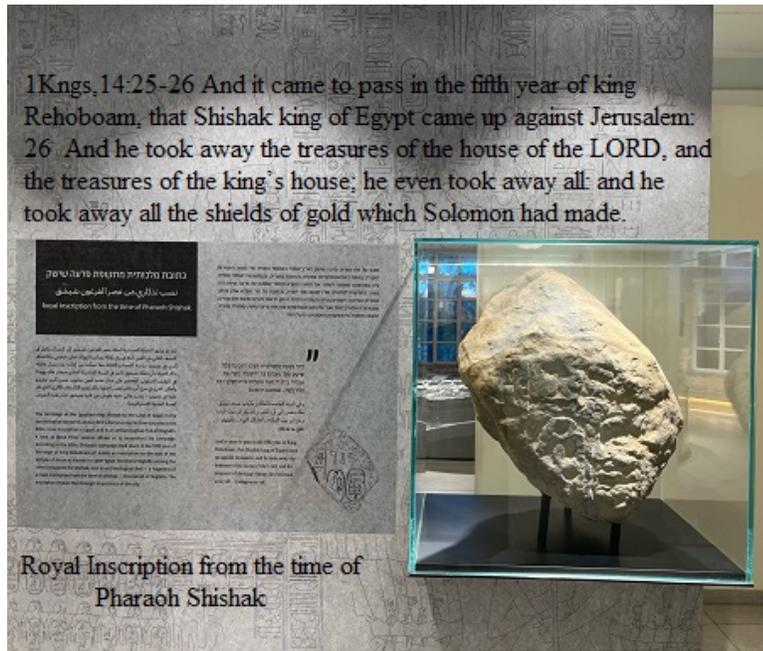
81 “*A Systematic Theology for the 21st Century – Volume 11 Eschatology*” by this author, available at www.GSBaptistChurch.com/theology .

82 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 King of Judea, Josiah, who ends up dying here by the hands of Pharaoh Necho (2Chron.35:20-22⁸³). 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

83 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.*

is 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.⁸⁴



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.

84 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/ppulpit

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 Temptation⁸⁵ area.

Baptismal 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

85 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 “Christians” 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 pedobaptism⁸⁶, no infant baptism, no baby baptisms, no “christenings”. Consequently, the Holy Bible thumping Baptists have always been at odds, with all Roman Catholic or

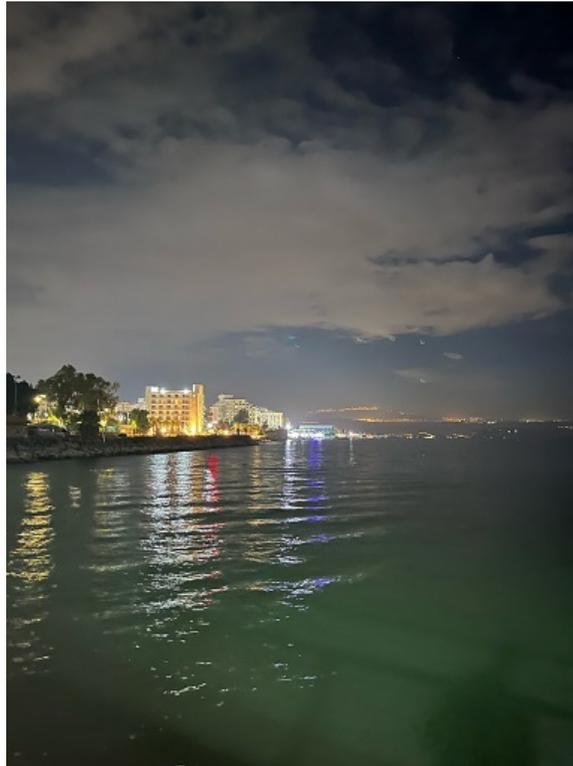
Orthodox; all Episcopalians, higher or lower, all Protestants, Presbyterian Calvinists, or Methodist Wesleyans, and all Pentecostals, Charismatic holiness or not.

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.



⁸⁶ 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 Chalie 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.



The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#24 Wed 9 Nov, The Boat Museum, Caesarea by the Sea, Elah

On Wednesday, November 9th before dawn I was studying with my penlight so as not to awaken Beverly. Our bags were pretty well packed so our last morning in the Gia Beach Hotel, indeed our last morning in Israel, would go smoothly. As dawn broke we went down to the patio overlooking the Sea of Galilee and, as our morning custom was; we read Scripture aloud together. Nov 9th on our schedule was 1Peter and Psalm 129. We mused about how fast the 10 days went, and watched birds dance over the Sea of Galilee until the breakfast hour.



Again a wonderful Mediterranean breakfast buffet was served at the Gia Beach Hotel (sometime when I have more time to write I will explain why break-fast is called that, and how God designed us, and our hours of daily darkness, called night, to give our digestive track half a day off, ... every day see pg106). We dined with Shane, Kathy and Micah, and I talked no one into trying the cold fish with me. We had time to loiter some this morning, the bus wouldn't load up

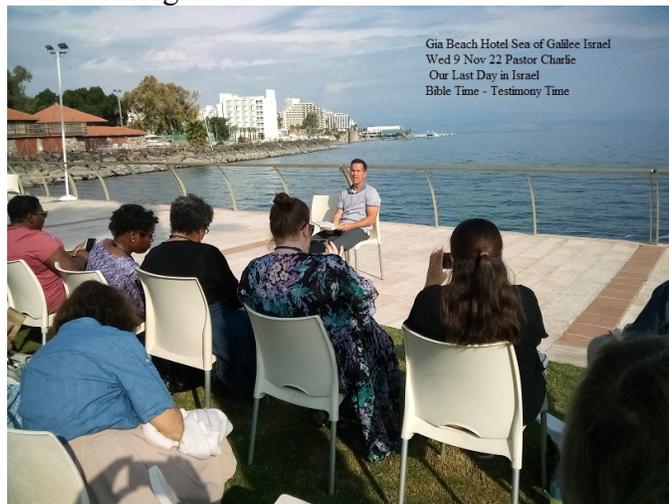
till 10, and a worship service overlooking the Sea of Galilee was to assemble at 0830. We all knew it, but were reluctant to say it out loud, this was our last day in Israel, and we would be on a plane home tonight.

We sang some hymns together before Brother Andy Reese, Pastor of Fellowship Bible Baptist Church, started out a testimony time talking of the Education we got being in Israel, the Exhortation that came from Scriptures that were read here, and Evaluations that we could make on our lives, on our priorities, and especially on our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ, after all, we just walked where Jesus walked.



Pastor Chalie broached Peter's "I go a fishing" statement, made after his three year walk with our Lord, and his three dimensional denial. Pastor drove home Jesus' three-dimensional question, "Lovest thou me more than these?" His point was poignant, and he followed up with a charge that we let this experience change us forever. As Pastor asked for others to share something about the effect this trip had on them, several stood, one after another and gave testimony of changes wrought in their outlook, in their attitude, and in their life. Seems when a testimony struck a chord of a familiar song, we joined Pastor Chalie as singing with grace in our hearts rang out in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

After an hour our Israeli Tour Guide Joe echoed Jacob's words, "Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not ...", and announced that we were not finished yet; the bus would be loading at 10 and we were to head out to see the "Jesus Boat", then to head down the coast of the Mediterranean Sea for a lunch before our amazing stop at Caesarea on the Sea. We would then have supper in Tel Aviv and then head to the airport to catch our flight home. Guide Joe Freedman solicited our questions, gave us his email address, and then reminded us that an Israel trip is made of puzzles, roller-coasters, and a smorgasbord.



Pastor Charlie relayed that the Jordan River, with head-waters in Dan, swirls through the Sea of Galilee, flows through the Jordan valley, and then stagnates in the Dead Sea; don't let the waters you have drank-in here stagnate. The Psalmist said,

When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. 2 Then was our mouth filled with

laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. 3 The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. 4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. 5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. 6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him (Psalm.126:1-6).

And the Lord said, "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John.20:21).

We were dismissed with joy in our hearts to wander one last time through the small park overlooking the Sea of Galilee. As we did, prayer of thanksgiving, joy, and surrender was want to be made. Schedule did not hurry our pace, but bags were being loaded on the bus at 10. Moods were mixed as Eiad guided the 46' Irazar i6S tour bus up Route 90 toward the



Galilee Boat Museum, Ginosar, Israel; mixed moods, yes, but joy prevailed.

The Boat Museum (32°50'40.1"N 35°31'29.8"E) houses a most marvelous, imaginative story. In 1986 after a severe drought, some lads, exploring some dried up lake bed, stumbled onto a piece of obviously very old wood. Upon further careful excavation it was found to be the hull of a very, very old fishing boat. Upon even further, very tedious, even miraculous excavations, that challenged the genius of the ablest archaeologist in Israel for 11 years, the whole 27 foot long, 7 1/2 foot wide, 4 1/3



foot high hull was removed from the mud and put in a museum. In 2000 the 15 passenger, 2,000 year old⁸⁷ fishing boat, designated “The Ancient Galilee Boat”, went on display in Yigal Allon Museum at Kibbutz Ginosar near where it was discovered. We saw it there; ... but didn’t touch it. We watched the miracle movie detailing how it went from mud to awesome display. This paragraph is only a readers – digest condensed version.

I wish I had more time⁸⁸ to describe the fisherman brothers, Moshe, and Yuval Lufan, who stumbled onto it, the mortise-and-tenon joints of its planks, the cedar

planking and oak frames plus five other woods used, the evidence of repeated repairs showing the boat was in use for nearly a century, the likely stripping and scuttling that landed the hull sunk into the muck 2000 years ago, and all the media hype about the



87 Radiocarbon dating, called carbon-14 dating, is one of the most reliable and accurate methods of dating organic materials. It is the Creationist's friend because it is extremely accurate for organic materials that existed in God's 6,000 year old Universe. It is the Evolutionist's worst nightmare because there is no way it can give them numbers greater than the ten of thousands that their reprobate science requires. The basis of Carbon-14 dating is that living plants, animals, and humans ingest carbon dioxide containing some ¹⁴C, a radioactive isotope of carbon, that, upon their death, when they quit exchanging carbon dioxide, begins a natural radioactive decay. After 5,730 years only half of the original ¹⁴C remains and, with today's very accurate bean-counters, very accurate results come from organic materials which died from 100 to 6,000 years ago.

88 On journaling in general it was well said by Mark Twain, “If you wish to inflict a heartless and malignant punishment upon a young person, pledge him to keep a journal a year.” In fact I so enjoyed Twain's journaling in his book “*The Innocents Abroad*”, that was referenced earlier in this journal, and I so feared that my readers would miss Twain's true expertise, I include here a link that gets you his book for free, Mark Twain's “THE INNOCENTS ABROAD” is available in full at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3176/3176-h/3176-h.htm> or in multiple formats at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3176> [From an 1869—1st Edition] Accessed 4/4/2023 egr

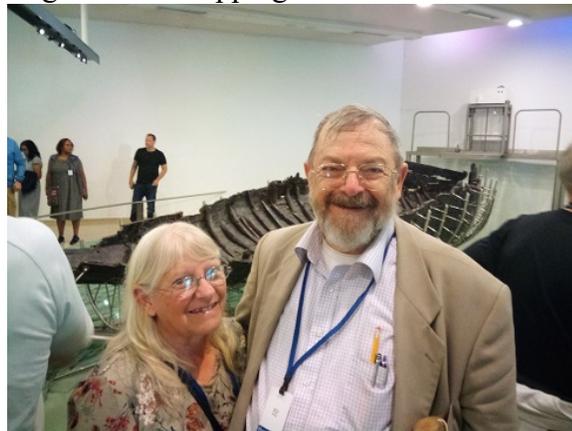
excavation (like the Ministry of Tourism's knockdown drag out fight with the ultra-Orthodox Jews of Tiberius, who thought there were already way too many “Christian” tourists showing up in Galilee!). Each of these could support a couple more paragraphs and that wouldn’t touch the huge dike that had to be built, or salvaging the ships planking that had the consistency of wet cardboard! To study more, start at seetheholyland.net/jesus-boat. Once again we boarded the bus and Eiad headed it toward the Mediterranean Sea.



On the way, while going through the pass around the now familiar Mount Arbel, it was announced that due to a storm in Florida the American Airlines flight that was to take half of our group home through Miami, was definitely canceled and other arrangements were being made. For most, a Thursday 10 Nov flight was being arranged, and a hotel reservation for the evening was also being arranged. This was cause for prayer, and prayer was made for safe and providentially blessed travels of all, but especially for those booked through American Airlines.

As we approached Caesarea we stopped at a large indoor shopping mall called “Akiva”

in order to shop and get some lunch. For days now Guide Joe and Pastor Chalie had been very careful to recommend good shopping places and warn about the rip-off artists ever present on a tour through Israel. The mall garnered a hand wavering “be smart, be careful” categorization, and off we went for an hour. Bev and I wandered through several shops, and I settled on buying a beautiful but affordable mezuzah.



In accord with Deuteronomy 6:9 *“And thou shalt write them (these words, which I command thee this day (vr.6)) upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates”*, a “mezuzah” is a small case affixed to the doorpost of each room in Jewish homes and workplaces which contains a tiny scroll of parchment inscribed with a prayer. It is customary for religious Jews to touch the mezuzah every time they pass through a door and kiss the fingers that touched it. It is attached on the door of a Hebrew residence, and it must be attached on the upper third of the right-hand side of the doorway as one enters, no less than one hand-breadth from the top. A blessing precedes the hanging.

A mezuzah is hung at an angle because of a traditional story about two rabbis who couldn't agree whether to hang the mezuzah horizontally or vertically. Eventually they reached a compromise and agreed to hang it at a slight angle, with the top facing towards the home. The rules regarding the mezuzah seemed to overwhelm its function; only men could write mezuzah scrolls, only men could hang the mezuzah, and when the scribe writes the scroll, he must be careful to shape every letter in a specific manner with adequate spacing between the words. One letter may not touch another, even slightly. The parchment should be rolled and not folded to avoid cracking letters, which would



render the mezuzah *posul* (invalid). Despite the phariseism of it all, I wanted one on my study's doorpost.

As we came to Caesarea Pastor Chalie opened our Bibles to Acts 10. An angel of God said to a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, *“Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to*

do” (Acts.10:4b-6).

Pastor was passionate as he walked us through the Bible account of the Gentiles receiving the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, passionate as he walked us through the book of Acts and Paul and Barnabas' exploits to carry the gospel to every creature, passionate about Paul at Corinth, Paul at Ephesus, Paul traveling to Rome a living sacrifice ready to be offered, and Paul before King Agrippa, but tearfully passionate when he talked of his close friend Missionary Stephen Troell, 45, who was shot on the street where he lived in Baghdad, Iraq on Monday, 8 November. Stephen was preaching that same gospel to the people of Baghdad where God had called him and placed him. People had said, “Is he trying to get himself killed?” No, he was doing what we all must do, he was being an Acts 1:8 Christian. *“Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in*



Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).



Caesarea was the city where Gentiles first received the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which made it intriguing, but it also taught much about the madman of Jesus' day, Herod the Great. Herod is called “The Great” for two reasons, as near as I can figure. First, he was greatly psychotic, as can be seen in any brief study of his life. Second, he was a great contractor, who built great things, even impossible things. Caesarea is a leading example of his latter greatness, but it also depicted some of his former psychotic greatness.

As we passed awestruck through the entryway of the massive amphitheater in Caesarea National Park, our guide Joe, the walking encyclopedia of history, told of the Battle of Actium in 31 BC where Augustus Caesar (Octavian) had a decisive victory over Mark Antony and became the undisputed master of the Roman world. So Herod, who wanted

to be very Roman at the time, builds Caesarea to show his loyalty to Octavian. Joe then rehearsed the history of Caesarea's temple that Herod built to the Roman goddess Venus which stood for 300 years before it was replaced by an Orthodox Catholic Church. Muslims tore down the church and built a mosque, crusaders tore down the mosque and built a church, Turks tore down the church and built a ... well you get the picture. Yet here somewhat standing still today are the entertainment centers built by Herod himself, this magnificent amphitheater, and the hippodrome on the other side of his palace that we will see shortly. Joe, our history baron, then began a history lesson about Herod the Great.



Herod, the Roman Jewish client king of Judea, born 72 BC, and reigning from 37 BC till his death in 4 BC, who called himself “The Great”, thought himself Jewish when he wanted to and thought it might be helpful, and thought himself Roman, when he thought that might be helpful. He was neither, he fooled no one, he did neither well, and failed in both rolls. He played the role of the persecuted persecutor, but, ... he was a great builder.

Here, at Caesarea by the sea, he built two artificial breakwaters that held 200 ships with his massive palace that overlooked the sea. When Herod the Great, built the city Caesarea, he wanted to be thoroughly Roman, and

he built with Roman philosophy of bread plus entertainment, comfort plus entertainment, amusement plus entertainment.

We sat in the massive, acoustically fine-tuned, amphitheater, a 4,000 seat theater which is a center of entertainment to this day. Joe explained the amazing acoustics of the design, pointed out the sounding wall which had once existed in the front, the stage with its hidden entry ways, and the Roman plays that were unveiled in this venue, before he directed us down through the amphitheater seats, across the stage and out through some more ruins near the sea shore.



As we went, Bev and I took a moment to pull aside and thank the Lord who brought us back to Israel, back here where we could sit and savor precious moments like these, where we could rejoice, and see what it does to the first time visiting believer,... No, I guess, what it does to every believer that steps onto this holy ground.

We gathered out on Herod's artificial breakwater, at least on the parts that remained above water after 2,023 years. God raised up a psychotic narcissist, and gave him a propensity to build unbelievable

and impossible things. God is not above using people like that, and Satan is not below using people like that. As an engineer, I have supposed that God didn't want his only begotten Son to come and manifest himself in a paltry, half asped⁸⁹ rebuilt temple that had been desecrated by Satan and a villainous psychotic narcissist named Anticus of Syria (241 BC – 187 BC). And so God raised up his own psychotic narcissist named Herod. And Herod, calling himself "The Great", made the Jerusalem temple one of the wonders of the world. That's what I suppose. Here at Caesarea, Herod was in training for building great and impossible things⁹⁰, and so he did.



89 There is actually a wood handled wood working plane called an A.S.P. And when a wood worker did not use this tool well, or he only did one side of a board, it was called "half-asped". The phrase quickly got misspelled universally. See picture of wood handled A.S.P below(see pg 175 below).

90 An approximate timeline for Herod The Great's construction projects is: Herod, born 77 BC, reigned as the Roman Jewish client king of Judea 37–4 BC, and built 15 palaces; he built a Masada Palace, 37 through 10 BC; the Jericho Wadi Qelt Palace, 35 through 4 BC; Caesarea, 22 through 10 BC; and the Rebuilt Temple, with the extended Temple Mount we see today, 20 through 10 BC, just in time for Christ, the King of Glory.

And so it was that Joe pointed out to us the ancient harbor ruins with two amazing artificial sea walls that Herod built, plus the foundations of his stupendous palace that stood in the harbor, and the unbelievable freshwater 8' deep swimming pool, built in the sea. Mentioning also that it was filled via 10 miles of aqueduct, an engineering marvel to this day, bringing in water from the springs north east of the city.



But wait, there's more. Found at the entry of Herod's Palace was a damaged block of carved limestone now called the Pilate Stone. It's inscription says that Pontius Pilate had built a "Tiberium". Evidently it was some structure honoring the Roman emperor Tiberius, who ruled from AD 14 to AD 37. Such an archaeological mention of Pontius Pilate was quite momentous to the half-infidels, trying to keep the full infidels at bay. A Bible believer might-ought-to get a little more excited about it than we do, but it is the Holy Spirit of God that confirms the authenticity and superb accuracy of God's Holy Word, not so much the archaeologist's shovel.

But wait, there's more. As we came back to shore, as it were, out of Herod's Palace foundations, We saw a recently excavated room that was very likely a prison cell. Since "that" was very likely, then Acts 23:35 very likely put the Apostle Paul in this very spot, ... yeah, in this very room!





Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. 34 And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia; 35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall⁹¹(Act.23:33-35).

As we left Herod's Palace, and headed towards Herod's hippodrome, we stopped for a photo op at the



Roman Head⁹². Who could resist the opportunity to sit on such a royal throne and get a picture when it was 2,022 years old? Evidently not very many.

En vogue with Roman philosophy, bread plus entertainment, plus entertainment, plus entertainment, Herod built a hippodrome; the gambling and Sin City equivalent of the horse track of our day. This hippodrome, at Caesarea, is the best preserved of its kind, could seat up to 20,000 spectators, and was predominantly used for chariot racing. Our society, today,

does not differ greatly from this Roman city's sin filled, entertainment centered, situation. The wickedness of man is still great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually (cf Gen.6:5). People need the Lord and we need to be witnesses (Matt.28:19-10, Mrk.16:15, Luk.24:46-48, Jn.20:21, Acts.1:8, Great Commission referenced 5 times), and we need to be soul winners (Ps.126:6, Prv.11:30, Dan.12:3). We dare not forget, people need the Lord.



91 See the extended Strong's Concordance study, "A note about the Greek word Pratorium" found in "Journaling a Preacher's 2023 Pilgrimage to Israel", "Half Shekel #2302 Sat 18 Mar Caesarea by the Sea", pg 15, at www.GSBaptistChurch.com/israel23.

92 "The Head" is a 15th century nautical term referring to the bow or fore part of a ship. The ship's toilet was typically placed at the head of the ship near the base of the bowsprit, where splashing water served to naturally clean the toilet area. It thus became a common practice to call the toilet, the head. There is a portable toilet outlet in Upstate NY called "Ed's Head". You cannot imagine how much I hate their name.

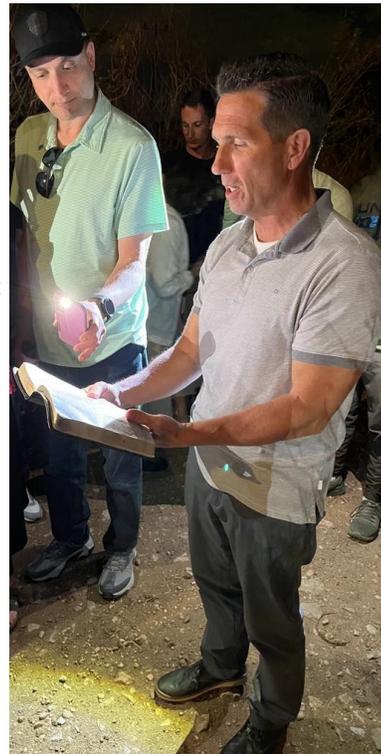
We gathered onto the bus to go 10 minutes up the Mediterranean Sea coast to where Herod's amazing aqueduct ran along the sea coast (32°30'44.98"N 34°53'48.76"E)⁹³. The pictures here attest to the fact that we spent a very relaxing hour and a half on the beach of the Mediterranean Sea, exploring this marvelous site. This aqueduct Herod “the Great” constructed, carried fresh water at 250 gallons per family per day into Caesarea. Americans average only 100 gallons per family per day of water usage. This gradually sloping suspended river of water, a world wonder of 2000 year old construction, was recently exposed in a hurricane, then unveiled by the archaeologist shovel. It now occupied a full hour and a half of our time, on our last day in Israel, on our way to the airport at Tel Aviv. A marvelous, marvelous hour and a half.



The sun would set on the Valley of Elah, Israel at 1645 today. Our El Al Airlines Flight #LY25, TLV to EWR, was to board at midnight. No one scrambled from the beach, or hurried to the bus, but Eiad guided it out of the Caesarea Beach parking lot at 1600.

The Valley of Elah, where Goliath stood against the armies of

Israel and defied their living Jehovah (LORD) God, was a two hour drive south, thirty miles inland from the Mediterranean, and an hour south of Tel Aviv Airport. But a promise is a promise, and so Eiad drove a tour bus full of excited, smiling, talking, born-again believers, marinated in nine full days of touring Israel, right past a sunset resting on the Mediterranean Sea, and then another hour south to the Valley of Elah.



For six-thousand years now, people have been lifting five smooth stones out of Elah Valley, dropping them in their pocket, and keeping them for life. In the last fifty years the best anyone has done is to find five gnarly hunks of gravel imported from the last road construction job, and pocketing them, with expectation of telling someone where they came from. I think Bev and I did just fine, it being dark as midnight at the time, and our actual location

93 If one would punch this lat, long coordinate into an internet Google search it would take them to the very beach, in the land of Israel, ... well virtually take them there anyway.

being uncertain to everyone except the Israeli Tour Guide, Joe, and our Israel seasoned Pastor Chalie.

To this day I have my five stones mounted on a little wooden placard announcing where I got them at 31°42'08.44"N 34°56'33.25"E. (31°42'08.44"N 34°56'33.25"E where the pictures were taken was found to be the corner of Route 383 and Route 38, 2.2 km from the center of the Valley of Elah, but most certainly within the valley.)

Despite the hour and the darkness Pastor Chalie could not not read the account of



David and Goliath, and so he did. While helpers held their phonelights on him and his Bible, he read all 58 verses of 1 Samuel 17. 'Amen's, 'Hallelujah's, and 'Praise the Lord's rang out in the darkness along Route 383 as he read familiar portions, and all three were



echoed through the valley while the stone was slinging through the air. The reading was kinda long, so no one could blame those of us who were still shuffling through the roadside gravel looking for the smoothest stones. And those who scooted across the road in the headlights of that oncoming truck were not really in great peril, the drivers saw us in time to brake and swerve, completely missing us.

It was going on 7 pm when we climbed back on the bus and headed toward the airport at Tel Aviv.





The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice #25 Wed 9 Nov, The Tel Aviv Airport and Flight home

In darkness we left the Valley of Elah and gathered back on the tour bus. Eiad's large smile welcomed us aboard. He and Joe were still laughing and talking in Hebrew about the night stop as he pointed the 46 foot Irizar i6S back onto Route 38 and pointed it toward the Ben Gurion Airport 48 km away.

Our El-Al Flight #LY25 TLV – EWR was to depart: Thursday, November 10 at 12:05am. Our tenth day in Israel was rapidly drawing to a close. There was little opportunity for napping on the bus. Since the American Airline flight folks would drop off the El-Al flight folks at the airport, there were many *Shaloms* to be said. Our guide Joe began a swan-song cumbered with accolades expressing the approval for and distinction of this particular group of 50 tourists. A swan-song, might not be fair title, as it is a metaphorical phrase for an eloquent final gesture which springs from an ancient belief that swans, who can't normally sing well, finally wax eloquent in a final song. Truth is Joe waxed eloquent every time he spoke. Pastor Charlie echoed Joe's resounding approval of the group, and then worded for all of us abundant laurels on Joe, the best bar-none Israeli tour guide, and then abundant laurels on Eiad, the best bar-none Israeli bus driver. We were unanimously in full



agreement.

The American Airlines flight home had a layover in Florida, and a pending hurricane had caused the cancellation of that flight until other arrangements could be made. It was a blessing to have fifty people on this tour, but El-Al airlines could not get us all on their one flight so alternate arrangements landed half of the group on an American flight. That half would stay the night in Jerusalem and make for home tomorrow.

After collecting our bags and exchanging our goodbyes at the bus, the walk through security and customs went flawlessly. Well, there was the agent with very poor English who thought my “cane” was a Ninja Warrior weapon. He kept trying to wrestle it from me, insisting that it could not go aboard the plane; evidently he thought this old soldier looked like an obese Ninja Warrior! We only subdued him when the manager, who knew the English word “cane” showed up. I exaggerated my cane-dependence a little and limped off toward our gate; Beverly barely contained her laughter, ... Ninja Warrior!

A couple hours at the airport found us reviewing all our facebook posts of the last ten days, and pondering how we might get all of our scribbled notes into a journal. We barely imagined the joy and memory that would be touched in that one year gargantuan effort. The facebook ledger is included in this last journal entry.

From	To	Class	Seat
New York EWR	Tel Aviv TLV	28A	28A
Tel Aviv TLV	New York EWR	28B	28B
Christopher		28C	28C
Beth		28D	28D
Katherine		28E	28E
Beverly		28F	28F
Edward		28G	28G
Shane		28H	28H
Jay		28I	28I
Nancy		28J	28J

A FaceBook Journal of the 10 Days in Israel

The Itinerary of this trip was regularly modified by ongoing circumstances. Here is an overview of what actually happened according to my sketchy Face Book reporting.

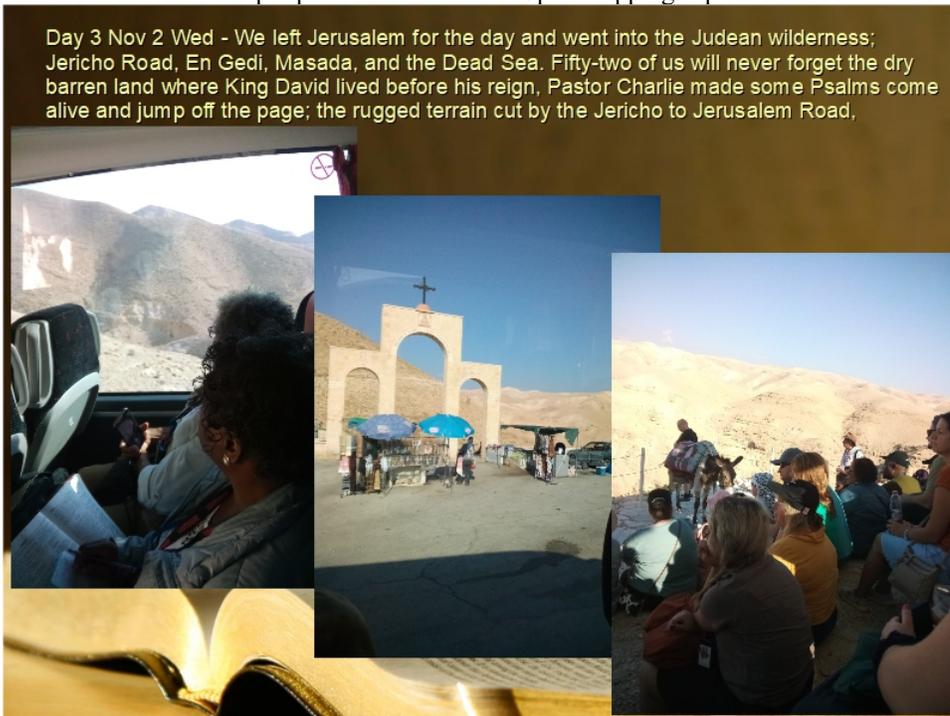


Day 1 Oct 31 Mon – Travel day. Shane and Kathy came in Friday, and Saturday they drove us to Berlin NJ where we spent the night with Lt Col Mike and Cheria Bliss. We all had dinner with Rachel (and Matthew) Charity (and Branden) and Micah (and Abbie).

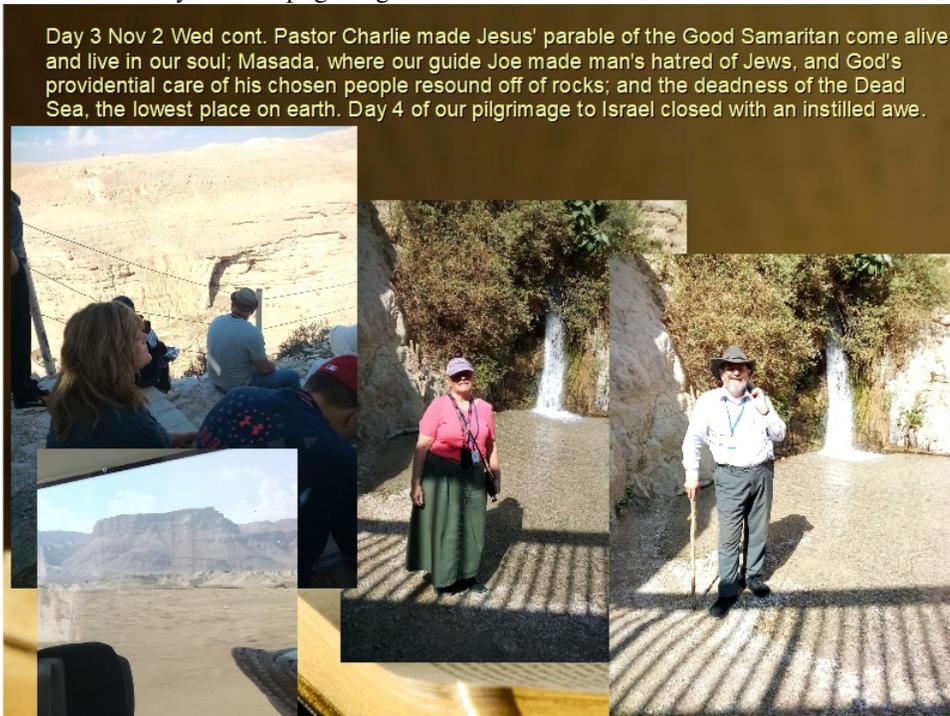


Sunday we attended SS and Church at Solid Rock Baptist Church, and jumped on their bus to the Newark Airport. Flight Information: El Al Flight: EWR (Newark) – TLV (Ben Gurion International Airport) Flight #LY26 Depart: Sunday, October 30 at 9:50pm Arrive: Monday, October 31 at 2:10pm (Approximate 10 hour 20 minute flight) Day 2 Nov 1 Tues - Mount of Olives, Temple Mount, Beautiful Gate, Pool of Bethesda, Via Delarosa, Palm Sunday Road, Zion's Gate, Garden of Gethsemane, walked 8

miles, and us old folks almost kept up... Turned down the 7pm shopping trip for a hot bath.



Day 3 Nov 2 Wed - We left Jerusalem for the day and went into the Judean wilderness; Jericho Road, En Gedi, Masada, and the Dead Sea. Fifty-two of us will never forget the dry barren land where King David lived before his reign, Pastor Charlie made some Psalms come alive and jump off the page; the rugged terrain cut by the Jericho to Jerusalem Road, Pastor Charlie made Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan come alive and live in our soul; Masada, where our guide Joe made man's hatred of Jews, and God's providential care of his chosen people resound off of rocks; and the deadness of the Dead Sea, the lowest place on earth. Day 4 of our pilgrimage to Israel closed with an instilled awe.



Day 4 Nov 3 Thur- Awesome Day 4 in Jerusalem; Israel Museum, Dead Sea Scrolls Museum, SW Temple Robinson Arch, Southern Steps, City of David, Hezekiah's Tunnel, Western Wall Prayer Plaza, and Western Wall Tunnels. Today we walked where Jesus walked, and my my my do our legs ache. Supper with Shane Rice and Kathy Smith-Rice and 5 more friends.



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Day 5 Nov 4 Fri - Today, Day 5 of our Israel pilgrimage, we surveyed the empty tomb. Christ the Lord is risen, and soon coming again. We visited Golgatha, Calvary, the place of the Skull, where they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Glory, the only begotten Son of God. *"For (God) hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."*



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through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Let's be clear and blunt, if you have not been saved the Bible way, you will spend eternity in hell paying your own condemnation. It is not the Catholic way, nor your own special way, it is the Romans 10:9 and 10 way or hell for eternity. Be saved, be saved today. It would be better to gouge your eye out and go through life blind than to miss this truth and be cast into hellfire.



Day 6 Nov 5 Sat – Day 6 of our pilgrimage to Israel was a travel day. Visiting Golgatha and the empty Garden Tomb is always the most Spiritually charged and emotionally draining day of an Israel pilgrimage and the travel day provides ample time to reflect.

We left Jerusalem pointed to Jericho, passed Bethany and the West Bank Palestinian checkpoint, the Good Samaritan Inn (he was a character in our Lord Jesus Christ's highly effective parable, but the Inn was real enough, incidentally, Jesus had no ineffective parables), and stopped in Jericho to take a picture of the oldest sycamore tree in town, Zacheus was not in it.

The bus turned north. with sites set on the Sea of Galilee, we past the tell of the Jericho ruins, stopped for a Sabbath Day lunch at an oasis, and passed through another West Bank Palestinian checkpoint to once again enter Israel, the land of the free! We crossed the tiny brook called the Jordan River and all cheered when the Sea came into view. We had church, prayer, and family alter in the setting sun on the Sea of Galilee.

.Beverly and I dressed for a formal dinner at the Gia Beach motel, it was the last day of our 51st year together in marriage, and we spent it overlooking the Sea of Galilee with family and friend. Awesome!

Day 7 Nov 6 Sunday - Fifty-one years ago 6 November 1971 I married my highschool sweetheart. We were young and now we are old and I have never been more in love with Beverly Cook Rice than I am today. God is good. So Day 7 of our pilgrimage to Israel, being on our anniversary, had even more depth and dimension that cannot be recorded in word or picture.

On 6 Nov 2022, the sun rose on the Sea of Galilee, Chinmeroth, and we were there, roomed in Gia Beach Motel in Tiberias.

The boat launched at 10 and our hour long floating worship service had an honorable mention of everything that Jesus did on or at the Sea of Galilee.

We went through the excavated Synagogue of Capernaum, and Peters house before we worshiped on the Sea shore where Peter and Andrew parked their fishing ship and mended their nets. There we gave honorable mention to everything Jesus did or said at Capernaum.

We worshiped at the location where Jesus preached his longest message, the Sermon on the Mount. We explored all three chapters.

We had a quick lunch together and then worshiped at the mountain path that led off from Capernaum

to Nazareth. We could see Jesus walking and teaching on this pathway. The sun set on our day but or worship was not yet complete, singing hymns in the darkness of the Sea shore after supper was like an afterglow for the day.



Day 8 Nov 7 Mon - The Cliffs of Arbel, Lunch, Tell Dan and Jordan's headwater, the Excavated City, Jeroboam's golden calf alter, Mt Hermon overview, and the Excavated Cannanite City of 1800 BC! Then made our way up the Golan Heights, reviewed the 6 Day War history, Lebanon and Syria, then visited the cave and false god's of Caesarea Philippi where Jesus said upon this (me the Christ) Rock I will build my church.

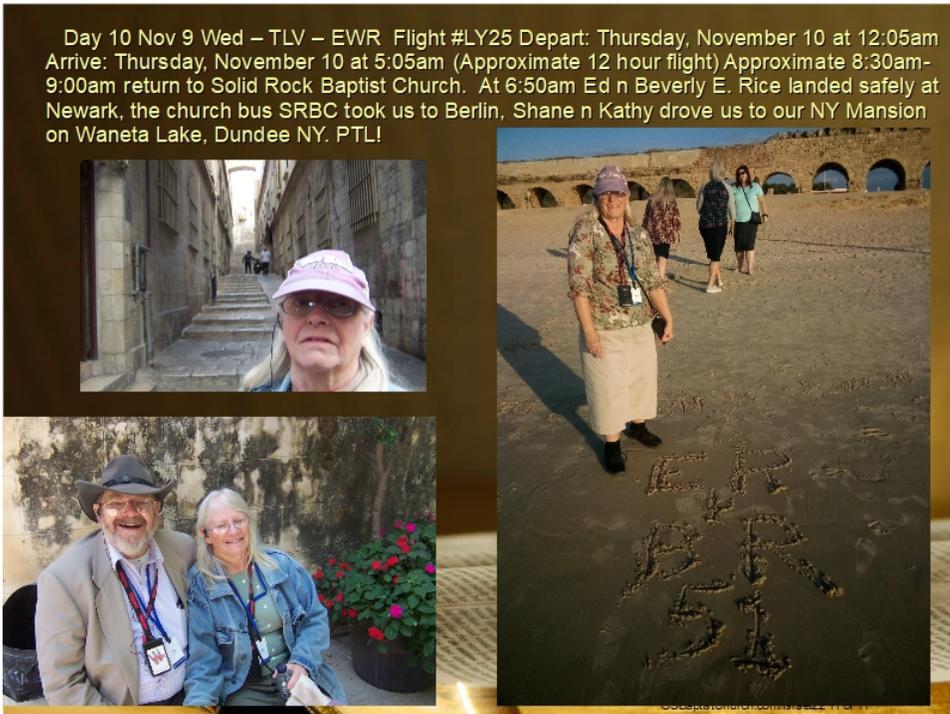


Day 9 Nov 8 Tue - We visited Nazareth's Great Precipice (Brow of a hill of Luke 4:28), the City of Sepphoris (4 miles from Nazareth where Jesus grew up), Mount Carmel where Elijah prayed a 63 word prayer and fire came down from heaven!, Tel Megiddo (the stronghold city destroyed when the King of

kings' foot touches the Mount of Olives just before Armageddon), and the outlet of the Sea of Galilee into the Jordan River. What a day of rejoicing in the Lord.

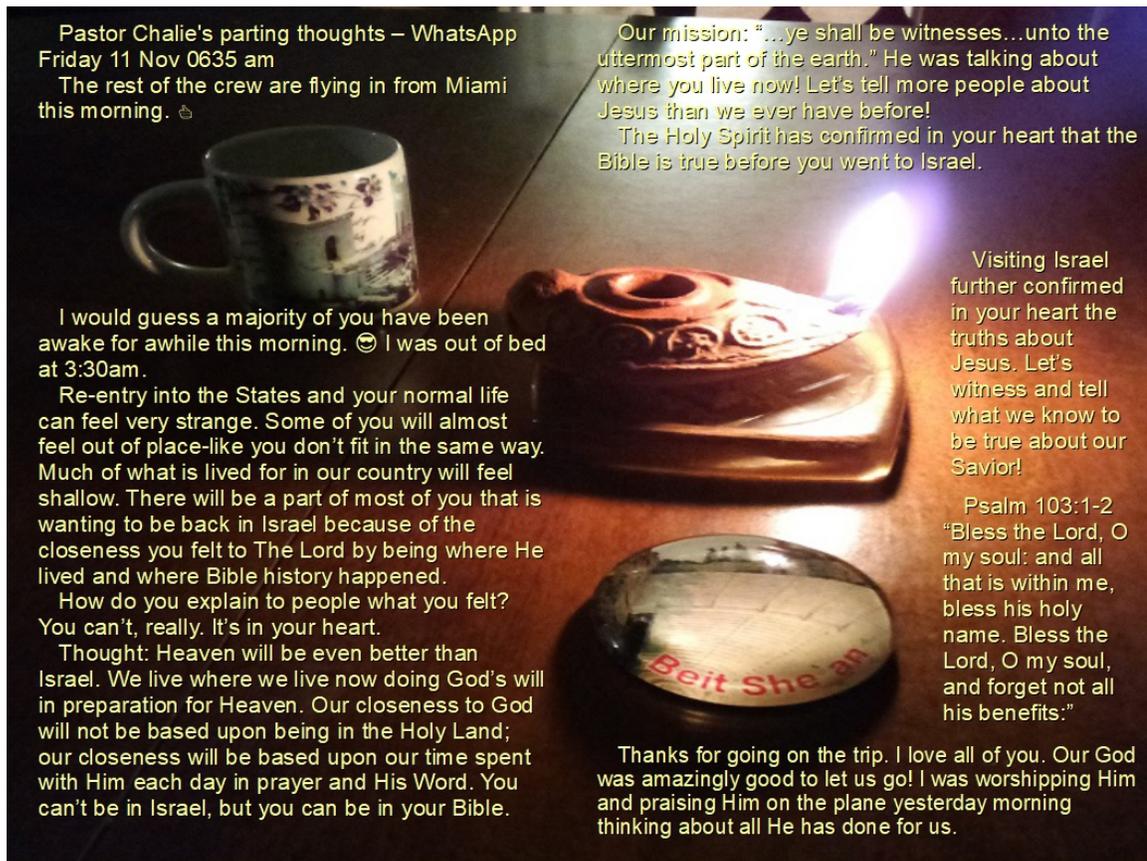


Six more sites to visit, then barring a hurricane's interference, tomorrow we will fly out of Tel Aviv at midnight, fly for 12 hours, and arrive at Newark at 5 am with our friend Jet Lag. The Solid Rock BC bus carries us to Berlin NJ, then our son Shane Rice drives us home. But sometimes God laughs when he hears our plans.



Day 10 Nov 9 Wed – TLV – EWR Flight #LY25 Depart: Thursday, November 10 at 12:05am Arrive: Thursday, November 10 at 5:05am (Approximate 12 hour flight) Approximate 8:30am-9:00am return to Solid Rock Baptist Church

At 6:50am Ed n Beverly E. Rice landed safely at Newark, the church bus SRBC took us to Berlin, Shane n Kathy drove us to our NY Mansion on Waneta Lake, Dundee NY. PTL!



Pastor Chalie's parting thoughts – WhatsApp
Friday 11 Nov 0635 am
The rest of the crew are flying in from Miami
this morning. ☺

Our mission: "...ye shall be witnesses...unto the
uttermost part of the earth." He was talking about
where you live now! Let's tell more people about
Jesus than we ever have before!
The Holy Spirit has confirmed in your heart that the
Bible is true before you went to Israel.

I would guess a majority of you have been
awake for awhile this morning. ☺ I was out of bed
at 3:30am.

Re-entry into the States and your normal life
can feel very strange. Some of you will almost
feel out of place-like you don't fit in the same way.
Much of what is lived for in our country will feel
shallow. There will be a part of most of you that is
wanting to be back in Israel because of the
closeness you felt to The Lord by being where He
lived and where Bible history happened.

How do you explain to people what you felt?
You can't, really. It's in your heart.

Thought: Heaven will be even better than
Israel. We live where we live now doing God's will
in preparation for Heaven. Our closeness to God
will not be based upon being in the Holy Land;
our closeness will be based upon our time spent
with Him each day in prayer and His Word. You
can't be in Israel, but you can be in your Bible.

Visiting Israel
further confirmed
in your heart the
truths about
Jesus. Let's
witness and tell
what we know to
be true about our
Savior!

Psalm 103:1-2
"Bless the Lord, O
my soul: and all
that is within me,
bless his holy
name. Bless the
Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all
his benefits:"

Thanks for going on the trip. I love all of you. Our God
was amazingly good to let us go! I was worshipping Him
and praising Him on the plane yesterday morning
thinking about all He has done for us.

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Our mission: "*...ye shall be witnesses...unto the uttermost part of the earth.*" He was talking about where you live now! Let's tell more people about Jesus than we ever have before! The Holy Spirit has confirmed in your heart that the Bible is true before you went to Israel. Visiting Israel further confirmed in your heart the truths about Jesus. Let's witness and tell what we know to be true about our Savior!

Thanks for going on the trip. I love all of you. Our God was amazingly good to let us go! I was worshipping Him and praising Him on the plane yesterday morning thinking about all He has done for us. "*Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:*"(Ps.103:1-2)

Pastor Chalie and Jay Clark

It would sadden me greatly if one of my loved ones read this journal and walked away without knowing that they were saved from all condemnation, not knowing for sure where they would spend eternity.

Please thoughtfully, and prayerfully review these Scripture verses one more time. Be safe, be saved.

Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the

world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Joh 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Joh 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Ro 3:10, 23 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Ro 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Ro 5:12, 18 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: ... Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

Ro 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ro 10:9,10 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Ro 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.



The Baptist Pastors on the Tour



The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. (Rom.16:24-27)