

The Backgrounds of Jesus' World

Day 1 – Depart U.S. (flight details to be announced)

Day 2 – Tel Aviv - Arrival and transfer to our hotel on the Mediterranean Coast

Day 3 – *CROSSROADS AND CONFLICTS*

COASTAL PLAINS: After an Israeli-styled breakfast, we will follow one of the main land passages along the Eastern Mediterranean, which connected the super powers of the ancient world. Our study themes will include trade and commerce from the days of Herod the Great and his seaport project at Caesarea. Here we will discuss some of the conflicts between Gentiles and Jews during the first centuries B.C. and A.D. We will reflect on the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10) and the subsequent emergence of Christianity into the non-Jewish communities. Later we will travel to Mt. Carmel to consider Elijah and the dramatic Baal confrontation (I Kings 18) and through the Jezreel Valley and to Nazareth, the boyhood home of Jesus. Our day will end with a scenic overview of the Sea of Galilee. First of three nights on the Sea of Galilee

Day 4 - *TO THE SOURCES OF THE JORDAN RIVER*

UPPER GALILEE AND GOLAN: This morning we will journey to Israel's border with Lebanon at the base of Mt. Hermon to enjoy the nature along the bountiful springs that form the upper Jordan River. We will consider the extent of Jesus' ministry in this northern part of the country. Sites will include: Tel Hazor, Tel Dan Nature Reserve, Banyas Falls and Banyas (Caesarea Philippi, *Matt.* 16), overviews of Lebanon and Syria (to contemplate Paul's 'Road to Damascus' experience) and we will finish this day in the area of Bethesda. Evening lecture: *The Rabbis and Torah Entertainment.*

Day 5 - *STRINGING PEARLS WITH JESUS*

AROUND THE SEA OF GALILEE: Today we will explore the deeper teachings of Jesus as he ministered in the Sea of Galilee region. In this beautiful setting we will give attention to various texts and traditions from his day, including the curious rabbinical technique of 'pearl stringing.' Sites will include: Capernaum, Chorazim, the traditional area of the Mt. of Beatitudes, Tabgha (John 21), an ancient boat museum a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee and more.

Day 6 - *OBSTACLES FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN*

JORDAN VALLEY: After breakfast we will leave the Galilee and journey down the Jordan Valley towards the Dead Sea. Along the way we will view the principle city of the Decapolis, Scythopolis (or Beit Shean) where we will experience an impressive Greco-Roman metropolis. Here we will give some thought to some of the major impediments that interrupt the Gospel message from penetrating the Gentile world. Time and weather permitting we will take time for a swim at Sachne at the base of Mt Gilboa, one of the most beautiful oases in the Middle East. At Qumran we will consider the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 and the impact they have had on biblical scholarship and our understanding of the Jewish world during the 2nd Temple period. Overnight on the Dead Sea

Day 7 - *THE JUDEAN WILDERNESS: MASADA, EN GEDI and the MT OF OLIVES*

JUDEAN WILDERNESS: We will begin our day at Masada; the imposing fortress palace built by Herod the Great. Here in the southern Judean wilderness we will consider one of the greatest disasters of the Zealot Revolt against Rome during the final moments at Masada. We will also visit the area of En Gedi, the region where David hid from Saul (I Sam. 24), and take time for a float in the most unique waters at the Dead Sea. This afternoon we will follow several key passages and a famous ridge route which connects Jericho to Jerusalem and here we will begin our ascent both physically and scripturally up to the Holy City. We will finish this day with an impressive overview of Jerusalem from the Mt of Olives.

Day 8 - THE ENVIRONS OF JERUSALEM

Today we will journey along some of the scenic heights of the Judean hill country to gain perspectives of important approaches to Jerusalem during biblical times. We will view the Central Benjamin Plateau to the north and the area of Bethlehem to the south. In the Shphelah region (lower Judean foothills) we will see important battle sites such as between David and Goliath in the Elah Valley (I Sam. 17) and the region of Samson (Beit Shemesh). Other possible sites this day: Yad ve Shem (Holocaust Memorial) and a Model of Jerusalem from the Second Temple period (New Testament times) and the City of David area.

Day 9 - JERUSALEM THE HOLY

Today we will consider some of the most important historic and religious sites to Jews, Muslims and Christians. We will begin our day at the famous Western Wall, which is an open-air synagogue for the modern Jewish community. Afterwards we will ascend the nearby Temple Mount of Herod the Great, now also a sacred site for Muslims. From here we will walk along the traditional Via Dolorosa to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the prize of orthodox Christianity. Sites along this way will include the pools of Beit Zaita (John 5), and some existing portions of the Antonio fortress of Herod the Great. Our afternoon will conclude with a time of reflection in the beautiful Garden Tomb.

Day 10 - FREE DAY FOR REST AND SHOPPING

Day 11 - JERUSALEM THAT JESUS KNEW

During our journey today inside the walled Old City and its enchanting quarters we will inspect several important archaeological sites from Jesus' day. One of these will be a wealthy high priest's home (possible house of Caiaphas). We will conclude our day at the exciting Southern Wall Excavations (or Ophel Gardens), where some key New Testament passages are easily reconstructed.

Day 12 - DEPARTURE

The material content and order of sites in this itinerary are subject to change and sometimes this is due to circumstances beyond our control. Not all sites or study themes in the scheduled program are listed above. The price is subject to change according the flux of the U.S. Dollar.

Price includes round trip airfare to Tel Aviv, airport assistance upon arrival, 2 airport bus transfers, 3 and 4 star hotel accommodations (with 2 meals daily), luxury coach throughout, driver, JCF guide and study materials, all entrance fees (except where mentioned otherwise), all tips and hotel portorage.

Price does not include lunches, extra drinks at meals or travel insurance (trip cancellation and travel health recommended).

Optional day - JERUSALEM THE CAPITOL CITY

We will begin our morning at Yad ve Shem (Is. 56) the Holocaust memorial to remember the human tragedy and pain which preceded the birth of the modern nation of Israel. We will also view the Knesset and the famous Menorah. From here we will take time for the Israel Museum and the Shrine of the Book, where many Dead Sea Scrolls are on display. Here we will also view a model of Jerusalem from the Second Temple period. This afternoon we will take an overview of the City of David, and consider some of the archaeological remains from period of the Davidic monarchy (time permitting we will cool ourselves in the 'gentle flowing waters of the Shiloah' (Is 8) also known as Hezekiah's Tunnel (bring water shoes and a flashlight).