

Kim White  
Journal

1/06/2023

Today began with an amazing buffet breakfast. One of my favorite things to do when travelling is to eat and taste the food of the local culture. What I found this morning was that things they eat are not so different, but the people of Israel seem very generous. If you couldn't find something to your liking on the ten-foot buffet, you are too picky.

I do not want to downplay visiting the sites of Beersheba or Arad but there is something surreal about seeing anything that old yet preserved so beautifully. I have heard people say we do not need archeology to prove the Bible but to see the physical evidence supporting the story is remarkable and can only be by the grace of God. What is as impressive as the preservation is the fact God once again used faulty human beings. We are often consumed with things of much less importance but that is obviously not true of everyone.

It is obvious there is much scholarship on the bus and because of the proximity when we are on the bus, I cannot help but overhear conversations. Since I am an online student, I am loving this. I long to listen to and engage in discussions regarding everyday issues that we face as Christians.

I love how we can come together – total strangers – but not strangers as we have a common Spirit. While I traveled to Tel Aviv alone, immediately when we were together, we were friends, and it has been so much fun getting to know each other. That is a gift God gives us for support and pleasure.

When I prepared my presentation on Megiddo, I struggled to put it together. There was a lack of reality. As I toured Beersheba and listened to the presentations, things began to fit together. Even tonight as I presented, my comfort level with this information increased. I am sure it is because I have spent a good bit of time with it but also because I can better imagine what Megiddo may look like.

1/07/23

We started the day at Caesarea. I was unprepared for the scale of the remains. We know so much more about the history of that time and about the players. I asked Ethan where the labor came from to build the massive palace and port. I thought it had to be the Jews and he agreed. It is impossible to know the number of lives given to build Caesarea.

Next, we went to Megiddo. Pulling up the drive I finally got what was meant by a mound. The view from Megiddo is spectacular all around. By going down into the massive “well” and down into the channel, you begin to imagine the massive undertaking but the necessity to survive.

The mosaic work in Sepphoris is beautiful and gave me a good idea of the wealth of the area but obviously, this was the one percent.

Nazareth was a complete surprise. We drove into this major city, and I kept looking for a site like the ones we had already viewed. I know Nazareth was a small city but did not realize that what we would be seeing was a church on the site of that small city. The church was beautiful. The portrayals of Mary and Jesus from around the world were beautiful and I loved just thinking about how people around the world identify with Jesus as their own.

Once again, the time on the bus was a time of fellowship and the day ended with most of the Alliance students getting together and sharing. We are a group of wide age range, but we have so much in common as we love the Lord and love learning about the Lord and finding out what he wants us to do for him. I crave this fellowship and it brings me such joy. Listening to the younger crowd and seeing their passion gives me hope and I anticipate each of them doing great things for the Lord.

01/09/23

Yesterday was amazing and I was exhausted last night. Tel Dan was so unexpected. What must have it been like for the Jews to see such a beautiful land promised to them by God. Walking through the lush forest was a sweet surprise and reprieve from the mud and dust. It was another world. Your testimony broke my heart. We serve a merciful God.

I looked back on the pictures I took of the gate and the magnificent engineering that took place. The scale of that discovery is so grand. Before coming here, I thought the pyramids are a feat of engineering and they are BUT what I have seen the last few days is just as amazing.

Today started out with a sweet breakfast with friends. I woke up anticipating the fellowship. While I am enjoying every minute, I know it is a call to action. I need to work on fellowship at home.

I knew that I was witnessing history at Bethsaida and to be up close and personal feels like the Lord is blessing me again by joining me with people who love the Lord and only want to seek his will. While I knew I wanted to come to Israel with Nyack, when I heard it was Winter break, I was not sure I could get ready in time. I just kept praying but wondered why the timing was causing so much stress. Despite my resistance, He just kept making the way. What a gift to be here and now with such a wonderful group and three educated and dedicated guides. This is more than I could have ever expected and in line with so many other times when God has wanted so much more for me than I did for myself. I will never be able to comprehend his love for us.

I don't know if I will get a chance to share what happened at Capernaum, so I will share now. Twenty years ago, I helped lead the first women's trip for Adventures in Missions. In the Spring of that same year, I co-lead a mission's trip for college students in the mountains of Jamaica. On that trip, the other leader and I purposed to see to fruition a women's missions' trip. That trip happened in the Fall when we took a group of women to Uganda to minister in an orphanage. I was forty-seven and was experiencing a time of transition as I thought God was preparing me to move out of Law and toward an MBA so I could help operate a missions organization. The other leader and I landed two days early to insure everything would be ready. The first night I held a tiny baby boy who was to become my son. He was three pounds and had not been doing well but I thought he was precious and while I do not think he was the first baby in my arms, once I held

him, I did not put him down the rest of the evening. We picked up the team a day later and took them back to the orphanage. Now I need to digress. Just two months before this trip, my English Labrador retriever fell ill. He was my dog, and I knew right away that it was fatal. The weekend before Uganda, I struggled believing that I would return to find my Max gone but the Lord impressed upon me that this was a commitment I needed to keep. On the night we returned to the orphanage with the team, I picked up my baby boy and was told to call home where I got the very sad news that Max was gone. I held the baby who was to become my son and cried and cried. I spent most of the night in tears as my heart was broken. The next day we were taking one of the little boys who was at the orphanage back to his village just for a day visit but he was returning to the orphanage as his family was unable to care for him. Encouraged by one of the women on the trip, I decided to go along. I was exhausted and spent from the long night. As we got out of the van, there was a group of women across the parking lot, and they began to move together toward us bowing and shouting with joy at the reunion with one of their own. The sound they made was like nothing I had ever heard but it was very clear to me that they were truly overjoyed to have one of their own home again. That sound was the same sound made by a group not far from us at Capernaum as they were finishing their time together. I doubt you heard it as you were instructing us at "Peter's house." I thought I was okay but then felt a flood of emotion as that beautiful memory fell on me. I walked away trying to get composed but once I saw Jeanette, I could not hold back the damn. While I often think of that trip as it ended with my son in my arms headed home to Pennsylvania after God opened doors and hearts in a most miraculous way, I have not had such an emotional reunion with that memory in a long time. Like your experience, my son is a miracle and should never have survived his birth let alone the eight weeks until God put him in my arms. God brought me to Israel for so many reasons.

We finished the day at Magdala. The ruins were amazing, but they were rivaled by listening to a Catholic priest talk about Jesus. We all have out prejudice' and that might be one of mine that I try to keep in check. It was sweet to see your reunion and even sweeter having him share and pray with us. That site is a treasure.

I finished the day sharing more time with new friends over a good meal and more fellowship. I will not want to leave Israel but a good part of that will be because I will be saying goodbye to the sweet men and women that I have grown so close to so quickly. We share the same Spirit, and it is a powerful and blessed bond. It is just another gift He has given me, especially when I needed it.

I have never been part of a church ministry other than volunteering for the nursery or as youth worker, but I did spend ten years volunteering for a mission's organization before the birth of my son. I don't know even now where I am headed but this time has reminded me of how much I loved and still yearn to be part of the body of Christ in active ministry. I am supposed to be of retirement age, but I have watched my mother retire and just like I have heard from others, there can be a restlessness and a loss of sense of purpose and community. My mother is 89 and if I am blessed to live that long there must be something more to do for Him in those many years. I sense another life transition coming.

1/10/23

The drive down from the Sea of Galilee to Masada was educational. On one side you had plantations and on the other desert like hills. I had no idea once we got to the Dead Sea that it would take another half an hour to get to Masada because the Dead Sea is so long. However, the scenery including the animals was delightful. Coming past Qumran, I got the first glimpse of the size of the hills.

Masada is an engineering feat. Once again, I could only think of how many gave their lives for so few to live in luxury let alone the many who served to keep Masada going daily. The story of Masada is sad and the thought of killing your own child to keep them from becoming a slave is unthinkable. That just tells you how brutal that life must have been.

I can't help but wonder why God allowed the Dead Sea Scrolls to survive and be discovered at just that time in history. The support their discovery gave Scripture is truly divine. For Him to allow us to experience this time in history and support our understanding with these artifacts is generous.

Just being by the Dead Sea was enough for me but it was lots of fun to see others float. All the sights today were pinch me moments and I look forward to learning more OT and NT and putting together what I have seen and heard here.

1/11/23

In the afternoon, four of us headed out to shop. One had remembered the shop of the Jewish man that was willing to talk with us. What a kind and gentle man, full of wisdom. Matthew had several questions, and I was blessed to hear the dialogue. When asked about the point of salvation, he told us if we are seeking God, either the Jews are right, and God will remove the blinders from the Christians, or he will remove the blinders from the Jews. When?? Also, we discussed Proverbs 31 and he wisely said that this was not what a woman is but what she is to work toward. It still feels like a very high bar, and I need to study it more with the tools I am developing. It is easy to be resentful when the church uses this to box in a woman. We were also talking about marriage, and he made a point of saying we should be partners. That blessed me.

We went back to the shop of the brothers looking for scarves. When one scarf was requested, one of the brothers honestly told us that this one was not quality and not made in Israel. He did not have to be honest and could have been more interested in making a sale. Why does God care about these things – because it is part of his incomprehensible love? Not only does he try to protect us from being foolish with our money, but he allows us to make friends with loving, kind people. I described a kind of stool that I purchased years ago in Peru and hoped that it was something made in this country. One of the brothers is looking in storage as he knew just what I was talking about – again such kindness.

There was so much in the morning but the discussion of where is the “temple mount” caught my attention. Nothing seems stagnant here and new discoveries seem to be happening everyday and I really want to pay attention for my education but also to share.

1/12/23

Today was just wow after wow.

The burnt house story was very well done and seemed very real. We think we are invisible, and we get comfortable and maybe arrogant.

I loved listening to Moshe. He is such a kind man and so learned. I have questions – if Jesus is not the Messiah who is he? If Jesus is the Messiah and the Jews do not accept them, what happens to them and so many others? I know he answered a similar question, but I want to ask it again. If you define sin as a verb with the responsibility to change your behavior isn't that earning your way to heaven and what is the bar? Isn't that the reason God sent Jesus – we weren't hitting the bar? Jews seem to spend so much time in ritual – how does that translate into good deeds or does it? What do some of the rituals mean? What does it mean for a Jew to love God and how is that different for a Christian? And on and on..... This man I could learn from not very easily because there is so much to think about. It made me think of the movie with Barbara Streisand where they argue over Torah. In our spare time we have not been arguing but lots of deep discussion over Scripture and reveling over being a part of this trip and Alliance.

When Michael talked about the beggar at the gate, not only does that story emphasize the miracle but the beauty of waiting on God. He has so much more than we expect or ask. Did the beggar expect to be healed? Did his belief in the possibility heal him? I know that it was Jesus who did the healing but what part if any did this man's faith play – or did he have faith? Such compassion shown by the disciples.

The city of David was another Masada – an engineering feat. You know by the descriptions in the OT that the people worked hard but you get a new dimension by understanding the lay of the land. Thank you, Shimshon, for that lovely bus ride after many, many steps. It was good to see his face.

1/13/23

My soul has been yearning to worship with my new friends and this morning was so beautiful. I was surrounded by several men who had especially good voices and listening to them lift them up worshipping our God was precious. Saint Anne's church is lovely and felt like home.

Though I grumbled (just saying☺) about the preparation for this trip, I am thankful now. It was hard making time over the holiday with so many other things vying for my attention. Over and over when you were talking, I had a reference and a better understanding than I would have had without that preparation.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was crowded not just with people but with ornamentation. It was a good representation of how we honor God in different ways. I wonder what God thinks of that. I know he looks at our hearts and if they are in the right place, he is pleased. May he be pleased at our attempts to honor him.

I never understood the full story of the man that went back to bury his father. Now, once again, understanding the history puts a whole new light on the message. Have I done that? No Lord, I must do this or that before I follow you. Open my heart to see the things that are a priority over you.

Mealtime has become a wonderful time and sharing. We are getting to know each other intimately. It will not be easy to say goodbye and some of us will see each other through school. Some I expect I will never see again.

1/14/23

We went back to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It still seemed chaotic to me, but I am glad we took the time to stand in line. The possibility that this is the site where Jesus was laid was too much to take in so quickly and overwhelming. He lives and that is what is important. Touching the rock where the cross may have been was equally surreal. I wonder having been raised in a simple Lutheran Church is why I struggled to feel the presence of the Lord.

We moved on to the garden and it was a beautiful site. I went inside the tomb and although that does not seem to be the site, I got an idea of what it must looked like. You could only imagine the women weeping outside the tomb.

We spent the rest of the day taking in the culture and visiting the shops you recommended. Matthew led the way as he has formed many friendships. It was just fun!