



VENTURE CHURCH ISRAEL EXPEDITION

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 30, 2023

Depart USA.

THURSDAY AUGUST 31, 2023

Upon arrival to Ben Gurion Airport, our representative will meet you in the arrival hall to assist you with your luggage. You will meet your guide and bus and travel to your hotel along the Mediterranean coast. Dinner and overnight at hotel.

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 1, 2023: Kingdoms and Cultures in Conflict

Our morning begins at the port-city of **Caesarea** built by Herod the Great (Matt. 2). This was the second largest harbor in the Roman Empire during the first century. At **Caesarea**, Peter visited the gentile centurion Cornelius (Acts 10), and he and his household became the first gentile followers of Jesus. The Apostle Paul remained under house arrest in **Caesarea** for two and a half years. Here he stood before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa II (Acts 23-25). From the harbor of **Caesarea**, Paul sailed to Rome leaving Israel for the last time. While at the site, we will visit the ancient theater with its magnificent view overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. We will see Herod the Great's palace that served as the residence of the Roman officials in the land, like Pontius Pilate. We will remember Pilate's governorship of Judaea by looking at a replica of a stone inscription mentioning Pilate dedicating a temple to the Roman Emperor Tiberius. Our visit takes us through the ancient stadium and harbor and ends looking at the ancient aqueduct of Caesarea that supplied the city with its water. After departing **Caesarea**, we travel to **Mount Carmel** where Elijah challenged the prophets of Ba'al (1 Kings 18). We then journey through the **Valley of Jezreel**. Our day concludes at the boyhood home of Jesus, **Nazareth**. We visit the **Church of the Annunciation**, built over the traditional place where the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:26-37). The church is built on top of the ancient village of **Nazareth**, and we will visit a small museum that shows some of the finds and homes from the village. We will end our visit in **Nazareth** with an overlook of the **Jezreel Valley** from Mount Precipice. From this vantage point, we will see the settings for a number of biblical stories. Dinner and overnight on the **Sea of Galilee**.

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 2, 2023: "Who do men say that I am?"

Today we travel into the Golan Heights and the upper Jordan Valley. Our day begins at the nature reserve of **Dan**. The ancient city of **Dan**, which formed the northern boundary of biblical Israel, sits on the Dan Spring, one of the three tributaries of the **Jordan River**. In addition to walking through the beautiful nature reserve, we will visit the ancient site of Dan seeing its high place (1 Kings 12:29), Israelite gate, and the

Middle Bronze Age gate from the time of Abraham (Gen. 14:14). We next travel to **Banias**, ancient **Caesarea Philippi** (Matt. 16:13; Mark 8:27). Near **Caesarea Philippi**, Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do men say that I am?” From **Banias**, we drive up into the foothills of **Mount Hermon** (Ps. 133) and into the **Golan Heights**. At a high overlook on the Israel-Syrian border, we look into Syria towards Damascus. Dinner and overnight on the **Sea of Galilee**.

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 3, 2023: The Faith of Jesus

Our journey today focuses upon the ministry of Jesus around the Sea of Galilee. Our morning begins at **Yardenit**, which provides an opportunity for people to be baptized in the **Jordan River**. We then travel to **Almagor**, which overlooks the **Beitsaida Valley** where the **Jordan River** flows into the Sea of Galilee, and where Jesus fed the 5,000 (Luke 9:10-17). From there, we journey to **Chorazin** one of the three cities cursed by Jesus (Matt. 11:21; Luke 10:13). At this site, we see the ancient homes and Jewish ritual immersion pools, as well as the magnificent basalt synagogue from the fifth century AD. Inside the synagogue is a replica of a Seat of Moses (Matt. 23:2). We travel next to the ancient town of **Capernaum** where Jesus made his home around the lake (Matt. 4:13). Here he healed the centurion’s servant (Matt. 8:5). The magnificent limestone synagogue of the fourth century AD has been partly reconstructed and looms over the site. From **Capernaum**, we travel to one of the most exciting and important ongoing archaeological excavations in Israel, **Magdala**. Here we will visit one of the few, excavated, first century synagogues in the land of Israel. Its date coincides with the time of Jesus ministry in the area. We will also see wealthy homes from the village, as well as the first century harbor. We then journey to the small museum at **Kibbutz Ginnosar** that houses an ancient boat discovered in the 1980s in the Sea of Galilee. This boat dates to the first century and was a boat used by fisherman on the lake. Our day concludes with an evening boat-ride on the **Sea of Galilee**. The ancient fishermen fished the lake at night. Riding on the waters of the lake in the evening offers a unique opportunity to connect with Jesus and his disciples on the lake. Dinner and overnight at the hotel on the **Sea of Galilee**.

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 4, 2023: Desert Refuge

Today we drive from the Sea of Galilee, the lowest fresh-water lake in the world, through the Jordan River Valley, to the Dead Sea, the lowest place on earth. Our first stop is the desert palace-fortress built by Herod the Great, **Masada**. During the First Jewish Revolt (AD 66-73), Jewish rebels lived on **Masada** until they were surrounded by the Tenth Roman Legion. According to the first century Jewish historian Josephus, the rebels chose to commit suicide instead of slavery and death at the hands of the Romans. While visiting the site, we will see the palaces of Herod the Great, his bath houses and storerooms. We will also see buildings converted by the Jewish rebels for their use, like the synagogue. Evidence of the Roman siege can be seen in the siege ramp and Roman camps that surround **Masada**. We travel next to the site of **Qumran**. In caves around the site, the world-famous Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. **Qumran** was the settlement of the community that produced many of the Dead Sea Scrolls. After visiting **Qumran**, participants have the unique experience of floating in the Dead Sea. Our day ends with an overlook of the **Wadi Qilt**, the ancient road between Jerusalem and Jericho. This was the setting for Jesus’ story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). On Jesus’ final journey to Jerusalem, he used

this road as he came from Jericho to Jerusalem (Luke 19:1-11). Dinner and overnight at our hotel in *Jerusalem*.

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 5, 2023: Biblical Jerusalem

Our morning in Jerusalem begins with a visit to the *Israel Museum*. Here we will see a scale-model of Jerusalem on the eve of its destruction in AD 70. We will visit the Shrine of the Book, which houses some of the Dead Sea Scrolls, including some of the oldest copies of the Old Testament. Our tour of the museum concludes with a walk through the archeological wing to visit the two galleries dedicated to Israel in the Old and New Testament periods. We will see original artifacts found in sites we visited, as well as other artifacts that make the Bible come alive. We then journey to the *City of David*, the oldest part of Jerusalem, the city David conquered and made his capital. From David's capital, we travel to his hometown, *Bethlehem*. In *Bethlehem*, we remember the birth of Jesus and visit the *Church of Nativity*, the oldest church in the Holy Land, built over the traditional site of Jesus' birth. Dinner and overnight in *Jerusalem*.

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 6, 2023: In the Footsteps of Kings and Prophets

Today our journey takes us through the *Shephelah* (Deut. 1:7), an area of rolling hills between Israel's hill country and the Mediterranean coast. Our first stop is the ancient city of *Lachish* (2 Kings 18:14; Isa. 36:2; Jer. 34:7), which was the second most important city of the Kingdom of Judah. During the reign of King Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:14; Isa. 36:2), the king of Assyria laid siege to *Lachish* and destroyed the city. We will visit the recently restored gate of the city. Travelling north through the *Shephelah*, we enter the *Elah Valley*, the site of the famous confrontation between David and Goliath (1 Sam. 17). Here we will open the biblical story and see the landscape recorded in the Bible come alive before our eyes. Our next stop is the ancient city of *Beth Shemesh*. After the Ark of the Covenant was captured by the Philistines, it returned to Israel in the area of *Beth Shemesh* (1 Sam. 6). Across the Sorek Valley from Beth Shemesh sits Zorah, the hometown of Samson (Judges 13). Our final stop of the day is at *Nebi Samwil*. Incorrectly identified as the tomb of the prophet Samuel, from this hill we will see the northern neighborhoods of Jerusalem. We will also look over the tribal territory of Benjamin, where two-thirds of the Old Testament took place. Our vantage point offers us a view of the modern Arab village of el-Jib, biblical *Gibeon* (Josh. 10). While defending *Gibeon* against five Amorite kings, Joshua prayed for the sun to stand still. Dinner and overnight at our hotel in *Jerusalem*.

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 7, 2023: Jesus' Final Days

Our morning begins with a beautiful view of the city of Jerusalem from the *Mount of Olives*. We walk down the mountain following the modern path used by pilgrims on Palm Sunday visiting the church of *Dominus Flevit*, which remembers Jesus' weeping over the city as he rode into it, and the traditional location of the *Garden of Gethsemane*. We cross the *Kidron Valley* into the Old City and visit *St. Anne's Church* built over top of the Pools of Bethesda (John 5) where Jesus healed the lame man. We will take the opportunity to sing in the beautiful Crusader church on the site. Our journey continues at *Jaffa Gate* where in the first century Herod's palace stood. Here the story of Jesus begins (Matt. 2) with the visit of the wisemen to Herod, and here his story ended because at Herod's palace Jesus stood before

Pontius Pilate (Mark 15:16). From **Jaffa Gate**, we walk into the Jewish Quarter and visit the **Herodian Quarter**, a series of priestly homes from the first century. We then walk along the Byzantine Cardo and see the walls of Jerusalem from the eighth century BC and the first century BC. Passing the **Gennath Gate**, we follow the historic route Jesus traveled from Pilate to his place of execution at the **Church of the Holy Sepulcher**. Our day ends along the southern wall of the **Temple Mount**. On the first century street, we see the shops and markets around the Temple, a possible location for the money changers (Luke 19:45-48). We then proceed to the southern entrances of the Temple where we walk the steps ancient pilgrims took to ascend to the Temple. Our program ends stopping at the **Western Wall**, the most sacred site for Jews. After a farewell dinner, we depart Jerusalem for Ben Gurion Airport where you will return to your home country refreshed, challenged, and renewed in your faith.

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 8, 2023

Return to the USA