

*Our visit
to
Israel*



by Olive Borland

Let me tell you of my Sojourn.

Let me tell you of my sojourn
To the birthplace of my Lord
I can barely believe I visited
Where Jesus Christ was born!

When I went to the city of Bethlehem
Where He was laid on a bed of straw
I thought! Were the wise men who visited
Surprised at what they saw?

These three men with gifts of note
Had been searching for a king
I'm sure they didn't expect to find him
laid where animals had been.

I wondered did his mother question
How His life on earth begun
Since she was led to believe
He would rule over everyone.

She knew her child was special
She was told He was the Son of God
I'm sure she had questions in mind
About the birthplace of our Lord!

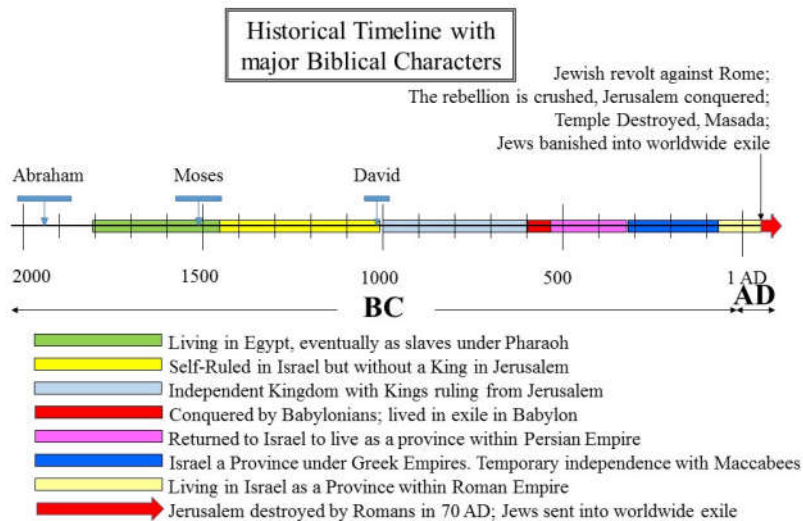
Sometimes we too have questions
About God's leading day by day
But like Mary we too must trust Him
Because He alone knows the way!

Our Visit to Israel

My husband Eric and I left home in Donegal on the 18th March 2014 and headed to Dublin Airport before flying to London on the 20th where we met up with the Aldor group, Eschol Tours, and our wonderful guide Ronnie McCracken and his wife Pat to begin our much anticipated holiday in Israel.

We had a great flight from Heathrow to Ben Gurion Airport; Tel-Aviv where from the minute we got on the bus with David Abadi, our lovely Jewish driver and Ronnie our guide who with the aid of Ronnie's good friend Roy from Guernsey we started what was to be an almost continuous report on everything we saw around us, and almost everything we ever heard of, or read of in scripture until our departure on the 31st March.

Ben Gurion Airport was named after the first President of Israel who was appointed after the return of the Jews to their homeland in 1948 after their exile 70 years after the death Lord Jesus. The Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans at that time.



Picture taken from a website

In the first book in the Bible, Genesis ch.12; we are told that God choose a man called Abram, later known as Abraham, 2000 years before the birth of Jesus and said to him, ***“Leave your own country, your people and your father’s household and go to a land that I will show you.” “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you,***

and whoever curses you I will curse, and all the earth will be blessed through you.” Genesis 12: 1-3

Abraham obeyed God; he left his homeland and was led to the land of Canaan, now known as Israel. When Abraham arrived in Israel God told him, ***“To your offspring, I will give this land.” Genesis 12:7***

Through Abraham’s descendant Moses; God gave his people commandments to live by and He warned them that there would be consequences if His Laws were disobeyed. But the people chose to live by their own standards and broke God’s Laws and as a consequence were exiled on two occasions as recorded above. However, God prophesied that He would bring them back to their land and we were told that on their return in 1948 many people were massacred as they travelled towards Jerusalem.

They had to build a road through a mountain during the night to bring food to their people.
Vehicles that were destroyed at that time still lie beside the road as a reminder of the atrocity.

At that time one airplane landed at Ben-Gurion Airport with 1008 passengers on board and fulfilled scripture that had been written over 600 years earlier, because 7 babies were born en-route.

Jeremiah 31 v 8 See, I will bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth. Among them will be the blind, and the lame, expectant mothers and women in labour.

That flight carried the largest number of people ever known to have flown on an aeroplane.

At the time of our visit in 2014, the Jews were back in residence in Israel for just 67 years and we were amazed at the incredible amount of work they have done to reclaim and redeem their land but apparently the Muslims are now demanding half their cities. In recent times the Jewish-run state in Israel allowed the Palestinian authorities to take control of Gaza which is situated to the south of Tel Aviv, as part of a peace settlement, however, now the Israeli’s get rockets shot at them almost on a daily basis.

Apparently, many years ago as the American author Mark Twain flew over this area he said, “This place stinks; who would want this God-forsaken place?”

As we travelled to Jerusalem we were 2500 ft. above sea level. To put that in context, Muckish Mountain in County Donegal is 2,185 ft. and Knockalla Mountain, behind my home village of Kerrykeel, is 1,000 ft above sea level.

We arrived at the great Mt. Zion Hotel, in Jerusalem around 10pm and we enjoyed some food and a good night's sleep.

From the hotel bedroom, we could look up to Mount Zion on our left and down into the Kedron Valley on our right, where we are told the Lord Jesus rode a donkey on his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Genesis ch. 21 ***“Say to the daughter of Zion. “See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”***



The view of the Kedron Valley from our bedroom window

DAY 2

After breakfast we viewed Jerusalem, the City of Gold from the Mount of Olives. We then walked down the road where Jesus rode the donkey on the Sunday prior to His death while the crowds waved palm branches. We feel so privileged to be able to visit this land where our Lord and Saviour gave his life as a sacrifice for us.

We went to the Shepherds Field where the angel appeared to the shepherds prior to Jesus birth and said, ***“Do not be afraid, for I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.”***

Luke 2 v 10-11.

We were shown a cave in this field where the shepherd’s kept their sheep at night.

Shepherds still herd their sheep on the hillsides in Israel.

I think it is worth noting, Jesus told the shepherds not to be afraid, He told Mary not to be afraid, and He told His hearers on other occasions not to be afraid.

Apparently, “Do not be afraid.” is written 366 times in scripture, once for every day of the year including the leap year.

I think Jesus would want us to take note as well.

As we head towards Bethlehem, the birthplace of the Lord Jesus, we go through a crossroads where we were told traders from north, south, east and west have travelled for many centuries.

Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem at the time of Jesus birth because Bethlehem was the birthplace of King David, an ancestor of Joseph, and Joseph and Mary had come to complete the census as Caesar Augustus, the Roman ruler required during the reign of King Herod. Matthew ch.2

My query is, how did Mary who was due to give birth to a baby travel from her home in Nazareth to Bethlehem on a donkey, a three-day journey over very rocky terrain in a mountainous area. I’m sure the road structure in their day would not have been up to today’s standard.

We had lunch at a Kibbutz, Kibbutz, were compounds where the Jewish people lived and worked together when they returned to their homeland because they had little or nothing of financial worth and nowhere to live. In the Kibbutz they worked to earn their keep as they began to develop their beloved Israel. Their dwellings were tiny wooden structures like garden sheds.

We then had the wonderful privilege of visiting Bethlehem, the birthplace of our Lord Jesus. As you can see from the pictures Bethlehem is now a modern town, I’m sure it was very different at the time of Jesus birth but it is still the place of his birth none the less.



Bethlehem



This building was built over the place where Jesus was born



The Door of Humility

The Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem was built by the Roman Catholic Church to mark the birthplace of Jesus and we had to enter through the Door of Humility. This entrance was lowered in the 17th century to prevent Muslims from entering while riding on their horses.

Because Bethlehem is now under Muslim control the information regarding the birthplace of the Lord Jesus had to be given to us by a Muslim rather than Ronnie.

As you can see from the next picture the Basilica is an amazing old building, with a mosaic floor and numerous towering columns.



After we visited Bethlehem we travelled along the road nearby and we saw shepherds with small flocks of sheep and goats. It was in this area that God chose David, a shepherd boy, to become King of Israel.

We now know that Jesus Christ the “Good Shepherd” was born of David’s family line as prophesied by Isaiah and recorded in Isaiah ch.9, 740 years before his birth.

Jesus death was also prophesied and written about in Isaiah ch.53

Lambs without blemish were carried from this area to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem to be sacrificed for the sins of the Jews as a forerunner to the Lord Jesus Christ the spotless Lamb of God, who would come from this place to be sacrificed on a cross at Calvary for you and for me.

We must allow Christ to Rule

When visiting the town of Bethlehem
Where Jesus Christ was born
People are casually walking about
The streets on this beautiful morn
God made this town special
It became the birthplace of our Lord
There is nothing beyond the control
Of our Divine, Almighty, God.

Our Saviour wasn't born in a palace
On the top of a mountain high
He was born in a lowly stable
There Shepherds from the east drew nigh
I believe God wanted to show us
That if we want to be born again
We must be willing to humble ourselves
And give all praise and glory to Him.

Mary and Joseph resided in Nazareth
Beyond the mountains of Bethlehem
Yet they had to flee to Egypt
Herod's spies were searching for them
Because Jesus life was in danger
Mary and Joseph had to leave their land
Herod feared this child who was born
Would take power and control from him!

I think God our Father is saying
We who love and trust His Son
Should expect to meet opposition
Many don't recognize their need of Him
Many people don't want to accept
That they too must bow the knee
And allow our Heavenly Father to rule
Their lives for now and all eternity

I Wonder?

Were the residents in Bethlehem excited
on that first Christmas morn?
Did they realize that our Lord and Saviour
Jesus Christ, the Son of God was born?

Did they too see the star in the sky
when it stopped over the place where He lay?
Did they scratch their heads and wonder
what on earth is happening to-day?

Or, were they upset and frustrated
at all the fuss in their town
Did they think they were busy enough
without more visitors swarming around?

When shepherds arrived did the people say,
“They should not have left their sheep?”
On realizing the Wise Men had travelled far
did they offer them a place to sleep?

Or were they so busy doing their thing
that they just looked the other way?
Thinking, “What has this got to do with us?”
Did they miss the significance completely?

I wonder what happened this Christmas
Did many give thanks that Jesus was born?
Or did the majority continue to deny
He was born to save all on that Christmas morn?

Day 3: Saturday -The Jewish Shabbat

This morning we travelled through Jerusalem via the underpass towards Mt. Scopus, by the Damascus Gate and the road to the Garden of Gethsemane.

We visited the pool of Bethesda where the man who had been an invalid for thirty eight years was healed by Jesus.

We now drive down into the Kedron Valley towards the Mount of Olives. It was here that Jesus told the disciples to go and find the colt on which He would ride into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday prior to his death.

Matthew 21v 1 - 4. Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell them that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

This too was a fulfilment of prophesy recorded 538 years before the birth of Jesus Christ.

Zechariah 9 v9; 538 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.



A Mosque now stands where the Temple once stood



What a wonderful view of the walled city of Jerusalem and Golden Gates we see from the Mount of Olives.

The people went up singing Psalms and waving Palm Branches as Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem through the Golden Gates before his crucifixion. (John 12 v 2-19) It is prophesied that Jesus is going to go through these gates again when He returns to earth.

The Muslims have deliberately buried 3000 people in front of these gates because they think that Jesus will consider this area unclean, so will not enter as Messiah!

We saw where the devil took Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple and told Him to throw himself down during the 40 days of His temptation. ***Matthew 4 v 5-7 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." Jesus answered him, "It is written; "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."***

We saw Bethany where Jesus ate with Mary and Martha and where He raised their brother Lazarus from the dead. John ch11.
After the resurrection Jesus was taken to heaven from this area. We are told in Acts 1 v 9-11 ***...he was taken up before their very eyes and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."***

Apparently in December 1917 the British army flew over this area for the first time and dropped leaflets from GLIDERS asking the Turks to surrender, and they did so without a shot being fired.

The leader of the British army was called Allenby.

We were told what happened was prophesied by God.

How Exciting, How Inspirational!

How exciting, how inspirational
I can barely believe it is true
But I am now walking the roads
Where the disciples walked with you
I can almost hear what you had to say
As you taught the disciples along the way
I'm so glad we have Your Word today
It speaks so clearly and distinctly
I can fully sympathize and comprehend
How the disciples found it difficult to understand
The spiritual truth of what you had to say
They were not as privileged as we are today.

We now know that you are the Son of God
Your life you gave to dispel sins heavy load
When your blood was shed on Calvary's tree
You suffered there for sinners like me
I am thankful Your Word goes on to say
That although you died you rose triumphantly
What a privilege it is to be able to say
We visited the empty tomb in the garden today
I am glad you are now enthroned on high
You intercede for all whom to God draw nigh
Unlike the disciples we are without excuse
Because you sent Your Spirit to lead us to all truth!

The disciples were simple unlearned men
But you had a purpose and plan for them
You choose them to lead many in their day
To New Life with You by trusting and obeying
I'm so glad you are the God who is still able to save
You now want us to tell others to come with simple faith
Because you are still able to forgive all who repent of sin
You want Your Holy Spirit to dwell every life within
Sadly many are so well educated in our day
They think they don't need to trust and pray
But Your Word tells us there is no other way
If we want to escape punishment on judgement day!

As we leave Jerusalem 2,600 ft above sea level we travel through the wilderness of Judea towards the Dead Sea. As you can see this area is barren, almost no trees, no hedges, no grass, nothing only rocks and sand.



Suddenly it is as if a line was drawn in the sand, now we see hundreds and hundreds of acres of beautiful flowers, trees and fruit bearing bushes. All praise to Almighty God! He said this area would blossom like a rose and He has kept His promise as He always does.



When exiled Jews returned to this area they desalinated water taken from the Mediterranean Sea and irrigated this land that had been nothing but dessert.

We pass through a check point where armed security guards are on duty as we re-enter an area under Jewish control. There are many check points as we move between Muslim and Jewish jurisdictions.

All Jewish boys must serve for 3 years in the army and all girls serve for 2 years but they remain in the reserve until they are 56 years of age.

We drove through the area where Abraham walked his sheep. As we keep driving, we enter Jericho through another check point. We see a very young female soldier with a huge gun.

We read in Exodus and in Hebrews 11 of how the Jews left Egypt, crossed the Jordan on dry ground and they arrived at the city of Jericho where they were refused admission and the Lord told Joshua, the leader of the Israelites to march around the city once a day for six days and on the seventh day they were told to march around the city seven times with the priests blowing the trumpets. When they did as they were told the walls of the city collapsed.

Jericho is situated at the northern end of the Dead Sea and we are told people walked from Jerusalem to the river Jordan beyond Jericho to be baptised by John the Baptist. What a walk!!!

As we pass the Inn of the Good Samaritan that we read of in Luke 10 v 25-37 we are now back to barren hill after barren hill.

We climb the rocky, barren mountain where Jesus fasted for 40 days and 40 nights and was tempted by the devil. It was here the devil suggested that Jesus should tell the stones to become bread. Matt. Ch. 4.

We passed the area where King David wrote the 23rd Psalm. I think David was hungry when he wrote the words, ***“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul.”*** This area is so, so barren, but a small stream flows on the bottom of the valley.



We see Bedouin people living in tiny tents in a few places in the desert. The nomadic Bedouin are traditionally wandering herdsman, reminiscent of the children of Israel in the Bible. The Bedouin are divided into tribes, each with a chief known as “the Sheikh” elected by adult males to oversee their tribal interests.

Ronnie told us he stayed with a Bedouin family and the head of the family stayed awake and kept guard all night while Ronnie was his guest. This reminds us of what God says in **Psalm 121 v 4 *He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.***

We have now reached sea level 2600ft below Jerusalem, and we have to go down another 1401ft before we reach the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is said to be the lowest spot on the earth. We were told there are 40 earthquakes at this lower level every day. Apparently a rift reaches from the Mount of Olives all the way to Africa. God’s Word tells us that the Mount of Olives will split in two on Christ’s return. Zechariah 14 ***On that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.***

Now we see the Dead Sea before us. Apparently the Dead Sea is full of chemicals. It is said to contain enough Potash to do the entire world for 2000 years.

We pass the rocks on Qumran where the Dead Sea scrolls were found by a young Bedouin shepherd boy in 1947 when he had been looking for a lost goat.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are a collection of more than 900 pieces of parchment upon which manuscripts from every book of the Hebrew Bible with the exception of the book of Esther were recorded and preserved. The most complete of these scrolls is the entire book of Isaiah. These scrolls confirm that the Word of God can be trusted.

We read in the book of Ruth ch.1 of a widow called Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth who travelled from Moab on the other side of the Dead Sea through this barren desert all the way to Bethlehem after Naomi's husband and two sons died, and when she arrived in Bethlehem the people asked, ***“Can this be Naomi?” She said “Don't call me Naomi?”, “Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty.”***

“Like Naomi we too may question the Lord's plan for our lives.”

As we travel towards Sodom we were told the Amorites and the Moabites fought each other in this area.

On the right is the very high mountain called Masada. Masada is 1300 ft above the Dead Sea and towers over the very flat plain that stretches over a vast area. We took a cable car to the top of the mountain where the Jews made their last stand against the Romans 73 years after the birth of Jesus.

King Herod had magnificent constructions on this 20 acre plateau, with vast stores, a synagogue, hanging gardens, a swimming pool, an elaborate bath-house, under – floor heating etc. The ruins are to be seen to this day.

After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., 960 Jewish zealots – men, women and children barricaded themselves on Masada and held out for 3 years. When it became obvious they were going to be defeated by the Romans each man was told to kill his family. They then chose ten men out of all the rest...and when these ten had slain their compatriots they made the same rule casting lots for themselves.



The Dead Sea can be seen on the horizon



Herod's constructions on Masada



The pictures above show the underground heating system and the patterned walls that are still visible after 2000 years

“Four hundred and sixty two tour busses visited this site on the day of our visit.”

When we reached the Dead Sea some of us floated in the salty water where we were told it is impossible to sink. It was an enjoyable experience but the sea bed is very stony and difficult to walk on without suitable footwear.

We were taken to Ein Gedi Nature Reserve where we were told David hid from King Saul and his three thousand men upon the rocks of the wild goats. 1 Samuel 24 v1.

In the days of King Solomon; Ein Gedi was famed for its fragrant camphor.

The thermal mineral waters of the Dead Sea have unique chemical properties. The Spa at the Kibbutz is well known by sufferers of psoriasis, arthritis, rheumatism and muscle ailments as many have been relieved of their aches and pains by the use of products produced here.

My husband Eric and I are Business Owners with a Network Marketing Company called Forever Living Products, Forever produce and sell Natural Health Products and one of those products is Bath Salts taken from the Dead Sea, so it was very interesting for us to visit this place.

The river Jordan flows from Northern Israel into the Sea of Galilee, through the Jordan Valley and into the Dead Sea, it is said Galilee gives all and keeps producing; fish etc. while the Dead Sea keeps all and is dead.

I think there is a great message here for us all!

Day 4

En route to the Emmaus Road we passed the Knesset; apparently the Jewish Parliament in Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East.

We now drive to Nebi Samwil to visit the grave of Samuel the Prophet. The Jews erected a Synagogue here and the Muslims built a Mosque on top, now the Jews have to visit Samuel's burial place in a tiny room under the mosque.



We walked on the Emmaus Road, where after His resurrection Jesus walked with two of his followers who were talking to each other about his death. We are told in Luke ch.24 that Jesus came and walked with them but they were kept from recognizing him. Jesus asked them what they were talking about and they said, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who doesn't know what had happened." They told him that the One who they thought was going to redeem Israel was crucified. They said, "It is now the third day and some of the women amazed us by saying they went to the tomb this morning but didn't find his body. Jesus said, "How foolish you are and slow of heart to believe but he didn't reveal himself to them until he broke bread with them.

I believe many people in our day still do not recognize who Jesus is because of unbelief.

We then drove through the Valley of Elah; where David slew Goliath.
1 Samuel 17

The wilderness is now behind us and we have come to a 20 year old town with beautiful gardens and a lake. All this transformation has taken place from what was once nothing but desert.

In the 1890's a visionary; Mr Theodor Herzl said, "In 50 years we will have a new state in Israel," and it came to pass.



The city of Tel Aviv to the north of Jaffa is what is described as a vast metropolis. One hundred years ago Tel Aviv didn't exist. This city was built on sand dunes after 60 exiled Jewish families who returned to Israel set to work. One of those Jews was a Polish atheist boy called David Ben-Gurion. David who had been brought up under Russian rule came to believe in God and seek His direction. He became a great Zionist leader and the first Prime Minister of Israel in 1948.

We visited Rabin Square where Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, was assassinated by an 18 year old boy.

We proceed to Joppa; this city now known as "Jaffa" is situated on the Mediterranean coast.

We had lunch in Jaffa – Joppa. This is where Jaffa oranges come from! It is interesting to know that many modern day inventions come from Israel, including the Mobile Phone and the Computer!

In this area we were told of how God told a man called Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh but Jonah disobeyed and was swallowed by a great fish.
Jonah ch's.1 - 3

This is also where God showed Peter a vision of foods, foods that as a Jew, Peter considered unclean. When Peter questioned God he was told that when He, God made something clean, it was clean. Then the Spirit of God brought a Gentile to visit Peter and he helped Peter to understand that Gentiles were now to be accepted and considered clean when they trusted in Him, God by faith. Acts 10

“Hallelujah! Thank you Lord.”

Blessed Lord Jesus

As I visit this land where you lived and died
I give thanks that you now live my heart inside
What a privilege to commune with you day after day
Regardless of where in the world I live or stay.

I thank you for the gift of your blessed Holy Spirit
He dwells in my life as you our God intended
I recall that while on earth you were heard to say
The Holy Spirit would come when you went away.

Your mercy is not bound by denomination or tribe
You offer salvation to sinners where ere they abide
All you ask of us is that we repent and believe
This wonderful gift of salvation to receive!

Although you claim the Jewish people as your own
I'm thankful you also died my sin to atone
I'm so unworthy of your divine loving care
Help me with love your blessed holy name to bear.

I praise you Lord that you were willing to die
For a poor wretched sinner such as I
Please accept my thanks and accept my love
As I dedicate my life to you my God above.

We head back to Jerusalem; again across the Kedron Valley where Jesus rode on the donkey the week prior to His death. John 12: 12-19



The Garden of Gethsemane

The Garden of Gethsemane is where prior to His death Jesus asked the disciples, Peter, James and John to wait while He went to pray and He told them, ***“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”*** ***Going a little further, he fell with His face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me; yet not as I will, but as you will.”*** Matt. 26 v 38&39

In Luke’s gospel we are told in chapter 22 v 44 ***And being in anguish, he (Jesus) prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.***

“Father Forgive Them!”

When Jesus travailed with His Father
In Gethsemane’s garden that day
He said, “May not my will but Thine be done,”
He was determined my debt to pay.

I didn’t deserve His love and mercy
I didn’t deserve His amazing grace
It was my sin and my selfishness
That sent my Lord to that awful place.

I can never, ever repay Him!
For the sacrifice He made that day,
What pain, anguish and suffering it cost
To bear the scourge of my sin away!

Soldiers stripped flesh from off His back
And they spat saliva in His face
Yet He said, “Father forgive them.”
As He was dying there in their place!

When soldiers placed the crown of thorns
Upon my dear Saviour’s blood stained brow
They mockingly said, “Hail King of the Jews.”
But it is He who is victorious now.

Matthew 26 v 36 - 46

“May Thy will be done”

Do we have the right to question
Why God’s own beloved Son
Was tempted for a moment
From His Father’s will to run?

The path ahead looked painful,
The way looked bleak indeed.
I too would have cringed
At going there with speed!

Yet Jesus our loving Saviour
Soon replaced the thought
With “May Thy will be done,”
He knew salvation must be bought.

We too may tread the pathway
That may look bleak and drear
But if we seek His council
The Saviour will meet us here.

Indeed the path that’s difficult
May help to lead us on
Closer to the Saviour, who said,
“May Thy will be done.”

You may remember Jesus said to the disciples, ***“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” v 41.***

Although Jesus was in a distressed state knowing His death was imminent, it is evident He knew the disciples better than they knew themselves; because shortly after Jesus asked them to keep watch, they fell asleep.

This was also evident in the conversation Jesus had with Peter a short time earlier when Peter said, ***“Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.” “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “This very night, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times.”***

God’s Word clearly tells us that Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself because Jesus went on to say ***“I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “this very night, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times.” But Peter declared, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.”***

Peter did deny that he knew Jesus three times before Jesus was arrested, exactly as Jesus had prophesied. Matthew 26 v 31-75

We saw where the guards who arrested Jesus brutally threw Him into a deep pit from which there was no escape.

In this place of anguish we sang the hymns; My Jesus I love Thee, and King of my Life I crown Thee now.



We were then taken to the place of scourging which was near the Garden of Gethsemane. “What a terrible experience this must have been for our Lord, as his flesh was stripped off his back as He was lashed by two soldiers who whipped Him with leather thongs that had lead or bone attached to the end of each whiplash!”

Why do those men beat Jesus so?

Why do those men beat Jesus so?
My heart cried out with every blow
Just then I heard the victim say
“It is for you this debt I pay.”

“I don’t deserve your loving care
My heart cried out in deep despair,
‘tis I who should be standing there
Why Jesus should you such pains bear?”

“It is because I love you so
I knew you couldn’t sin o’er throw”
“So I agreed to take your place
Because God demands sin is erased.”

Now my old heart, it filled with praise
As I remembered God’s Word says
He sent His one and only Son
To save sinners who trust in Him!

Then bitter tears began to flow
As I realized God loves me so
And my heart once filled with dread
Accepted what my Saviour said.

In Isaiah 53 v 4 & 5 we are told; ***“Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him.”***

1 Peter 2 v 24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His stripes you have been healed.*

“How can I ever thank You Lord?”

We saw the pavement where Jesus walked when he was taken prisoner. Looking at the beautifully built arches above our heads made me think of how the ceiling and arches were held in place and I was reminded of the capstone spoken of 7 times in scripture. *Acts 4 v 10 –11 It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He (Jesus) is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.*

This great truth reminds that we who have trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour are built together in Him; He is the One who hold us all together.



Day 5.

Today we go walking in the old city of Jerusalem which was built on the top of three mountain peaks, the names of which we were told spell God's name.

Deuteronomy 12 v 11 The place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for His name.

First we climb the Temple Mount, and visit the area where the temple once stood.

A Mosque now stands in this place. See picture on page 12.

We then witness the Bar Mitzvah ceremonies at the Western Wall known as the “Wailing Wall”. Many, many Jewish families are gathered here today. The men and boys meet to the left and the women meet to the right. The Bar Mitzvah is a ceremony that takes place when boys are 13 years of age. It is a coming of age ceremony. Bar Mitzvah means ‘sons of the commandment’. After Bar Mitzvah boys are expected to take responsibility for their lives before God. The girls apparently have a ceremony when they are 12 years of age called Bat Mitzvah, ‘daughters of the commandment.’



The Wailing Wall

From 1948 – 1967 the Jews weren’t allowed to pray at the Western Wall, known as the Wailing Wall. At that time the Muslims broke headstones, and paved the streets with them.

Questions?

When I look at Jewish boys in Israel
I think of Jesus Christ my Lord
And wonder do these boys resemble Him
In looks, in thought, in word?

I wonder would I have recognized Him
If had lived here in His day
Or would I too have ignored Him
And walked the other way?

Would I have been too prejudiced
To listen to what He had to say
Or would I have opened my heart to Him
Who is the Life, the Truth and the Way?

We are now walking through a tunnel that runs all the way underneath the Western Wall of the old city of Jerusalem. What an amazing place. One of the stones used to build this wall weighs 600 tons; this massive 14 meters long stone is still in place after 2000 years.



There were no diggers around to do the lifting in those days. We were shown a video that re-enacted how this massive stone was rolled into place.

Now we make our way through the Jewish Quarter and what is known as the Oriental Souk, the very narrow streets which are lined on every side with tiny shops etc. Passageways and stairs lead in every direction. There are no footpaths and when the occasional vehicle drives through; pedestrians must stand to the side.

This area is known as the Via Dolorosa, (the Way of the Cross) where Jesus walked on His way to Golgotha to be crucified.



Via Dolorosa

Golgotha otherwise known as Calvary was not as we expected, it had been a rubbish dump at the time of Jesus death, now it is a bus station.



The rock face behind the bus station shows why it was called Golgotha, which means, “the place of the Skull.” It was here that our Lord was hung on a cross and before he died he uttered the greatest words ever.



The place of the Skull

Jesus said, “It is finished.” In other words He had completed the task that God, his Father had sent Him to earth to do. He had allowed His sinless blood to be shed for sinners like you and me because he knew we did not have the ability to save ourselves.

Now God can and will forgive all who trust in the finished work of His beloved Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, “It is Finished!”

The greatest words ever uttered on earth
Were said by Jesus ere He drew His last breath
“It is finished” He was then heard to say
As his sinless lifeblood flowed fast away!

The law demanded sinless blood be shed,
Sinful man to redeem if he repented ere death
That’s why Jesus was able these words to say
As His sinless blood was shed for man that day!

Jesus had paid the price that man couldn’t pay
God accepted His Son’s sacrifice on Calvary
All man needs to do is turn from sin and believe
God’s forgiveness and salvation to receive!

God then promises all who trust in His Son
Forgiveness of sin and eternal life with Him
Where no sickness, sorrow, parting or pain
Will ever be experienced, no never again!

My Debt was placed on Him

It was on the cross of Calvary
That Jesus died for you and me
It was there He paid the price for sin
The debt I owed God placed on Him.

Within my heart I'll sing His praise
I'll glorify Him all my days
I owed a debt I could not pay
With thanks to Him my voice I'll raise.

My Saviour bore my sin and shame
I now will praise His holy name
I thank Him for His cleansing power
I'll love and praise Him hour by hour.

He loosed the curse of sin and death
He gave me life, He gave me breath
He gave me joy, He gave me peace
My praise will never, ever cease.

Saved by Grace

We are not saved by works
Or anything that we have done
We are saved by placing our faith
In Jesus, God's Almighty Son!

We are saved by the sacrifice
Of Jesus life on Calvary's tree
There His precious blood was shed
Because of His love for you and me!

His blood alone was spotless
Unlike your blood and mine
His sacrifice alone was acceptable
To the Judge of all mankind!

How we ought to thank Him
We ought to praise Him day by day
For His tender love and mercy
That was undeserved in every way.

We had the privilege of accompanying Ronnie to the Ministry for Tourism where Ronnie was honoured and given an award because this was his 80th trip as tour guide to Jerusalem. Because we were part of this trip we were also honoured and given gifts as JP's, Jerusalem Pilgrims.



After spending a very memorable time in this ancient, historical city we pass out of the Old City by Damascus Gate and head back to Mount Zion Hotel, a short distance outside the city walls.

Day 6.

As we leave the great Mount Zion Hotel, Jerusalem, and the Kidron Valley we need to give thanks and tell you about the abundance of lovely food that met our eyes every time we entered the dining-room of this and the other hotels we stayed in during our visit to Israel. Table, after table of fruits, cereals, juices, savouries, meat, fish, bread and deserts were strewn before us at every mealtime, and the staff couldn't have been more helpful. If anyone went home hungry it was their own fault.

We were taken to The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a church that is maintained by the Roman Catholics, the Greek Orthodox and the Armenians. This church was built on what they think was the spot Jesus was buried and resurrected.

We then moved to the Garden where many believe was the more likely place where Christ's body was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea just outside the Damascus Gate.

We had a very emotional visit to this lovely garden; we were able to enter the empty tomb that had been cut out of the rock. This was a very special visit indeed. We had a wonderful time of worship, praise and communion as we remembered our debt and gave thanks for the sacrifice the Lord Jesus paid for us. I think it is more important to know that our Saviour's body is no longer in the grave, but that He has risen, and is now seated at the right hand of God and is presently interceding for all of us who have put our trust in Him than it is to worry about which spot His body was laid upon.



The Garden Tomb

We now travelled through a Palestinian area on the top of the Mount of Olives we were shown the home of a Jewish family who have to keep their doors and windows barred. We were told this house has to be constantly guarded and the family cannot move about freely, whereas that is not the case in the Jewish areas where everyone is allowed to live in peace.

On Mount Scopus we see the Hebrew University and the hospital. Both the university and hospital had to have separate campuses either side of the peace wall when troubles were at their height.



We are again travelling through the desert where the Bedouin live in shacks in the area of Ephraim and again we see prophecy being fulfilled as we see the desert blossom with date palms, vines, vegetables, and fruits. We pass acres of banana plantations all covered with mesh and vast areas of tunnel where fruits etc are growing in abundance.

We are now more than 2000 feet below Jerusalem and the city of Jordan is on our right. Through another check point and we are back into Jewish territory. We travel the region where King Saul perused David and we also saw where King Saul and David's son Jonathan were killed.

We visit Gideon's Spring, at Ein Harod to remember the victory of Gideon and his army over the Midianites.

We are told in Judges 7 that God cut down an army of 32,000 men to 300, choosing the 300 men who lapped the water from this spring with their hands to their mouths, rather than those who lapped the water like dogs.



Yehoshua Hankin, an employee of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) bought land for Israel with money from Baron Rothschild when the people returned to Israel. This land that had been a mosquito and malaria infested area was bought from Arabs who thought they would never be able to do anything with it. Yehoshua worked very hard, and with the help of other returnees they brought irrigation to what we now see as a vast area of thousands of acres of fertile land.

We visited the graves of Yehoshua (known as Joshua) and his wife Olga at the top of the mountain.

The Palestinians now want to claim this land back.

Beside Gideon's Spring; there is a fish farm and a village called Gidona. Apparently the fish farms were set up to drain this swamp area.

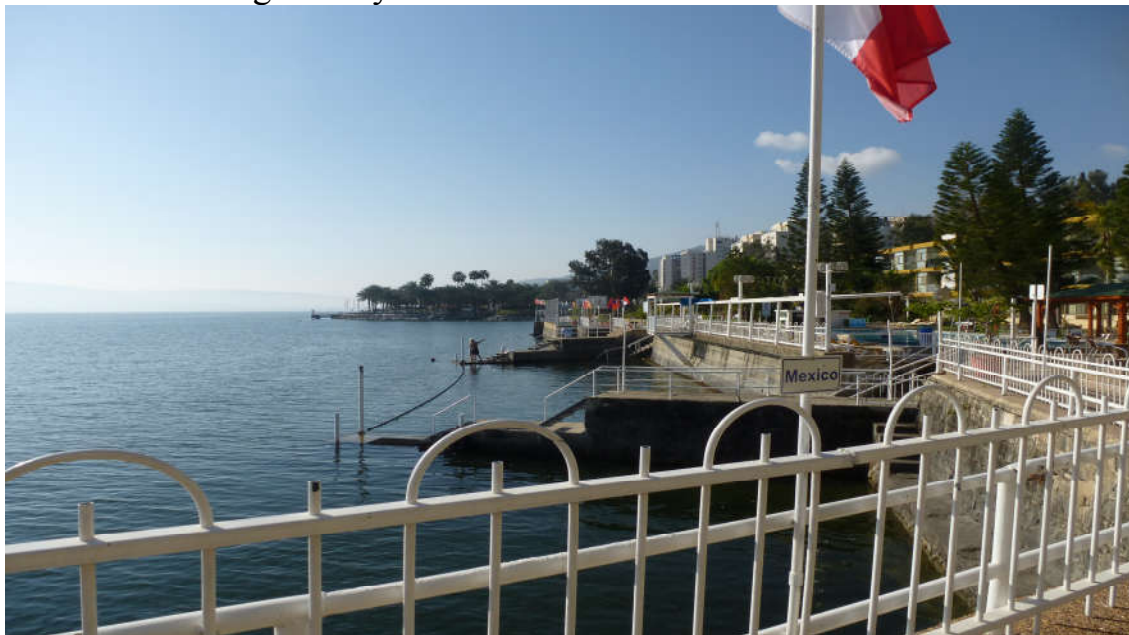
As we move on we pass beautiful Mango plantations with their lovely red blossoms, and we also see orange and banana plantations. Fruit from Israel is exported all over the world.

On the right we see Mt. Gilead with its Olive Trees and avocados.

Now we approach the Sea of Galilee; beautiful! We enter the city of Tiberius and drive towards The Ron Beach Hotel, situated on the shore-front. We have a lovely view from our bedroom balcony of the beautiful gardens with the sun setting over Galilee! The view is not unlike the view from our own home where we overlook beautiful Mulroy Bay in Co Donegal, Ireland.



We now go to rest after a great dinner in the company with many lovely people who are becoming good friends and again we can give thanks to God for another great day.



Day 7 After breakfast we went to view the Sea of Galilee and its environs. Galilee is 160 ft deep and 32 miles in circumference, it is also called the Sea of Tiberius. Jesus performed most of his miracles around here but he never preached in Tiberius because there is a burial place outside the town and if He entered He would have been classified as unclean.

We went to see the Mount of the Beatitudes where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew 5 v 3-10

Jesus said:

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are those who hunger
and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.*

*Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.*

*Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.*

*Blessed are those who are persecuted
because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

So many of the places we have read of in scripture are situated around this area near to where Jesus lived during His time of ministry.

We then had the privilege of sailing on the Sea of Galilee where the disciples had been fishing all night on one occasion after the resurrection of Jesus and had caught nothing. Early in the morning a figure appeared on the shore and told them to throw out the net on the right side of the boat. This was something that was never done, the net was always put out on the left side, but after the disciples did as they were told they caught 153 fish. Only then did John realize the person on the shore was the resurrected Lord Jesus. John ch.21

Those who can decipher numbers say, the number 153 means, I am God. This shows us that nothing happens with God by chance.



We had a lovely time of worship and the owner of the boat we sailed in gave his testimony.

He told us he was the illegitimate son of a 16 year old Jewish girl. He said he was taken from his mother after he was born and fostered by good people. When he was old enough to work the only work available was on the Sea of Galilee. There he heard the gospel and he came to know and trust in Jesus Christ as his Saviour, but after he became a Christian he found it difficult to share his faith with his friends. After a time the Lord led him to a ministry on Galilee after he was offered a boat free of charge! Now he testifies and sings for the Lord on Galilee.

What a lovely experience it was to spend time in this man's presence!



As I gave thanks to God for Daniel, thoughts came to mind as to why God should choose to use someone like me in His service.

My Heart Felt Prayer

Lord, who am I that you should love me
I know I'm not all that I should be
Yet you know I love you with all my heart
I pray that from you I will never depart.

Lord, I'm humbled that you should use me
There are more intelligent people surely
People who have greater ability to do
Work to bring glory and honour to you.

We went to Capernaum where Jesus lived and worked, it is amazing to think that He, the King of all creation never had a home of His own.

After Jesus healed Peter's wife's mother in Capernaum she immediately got up and fed 13 men. Jesus healed many people in this area, the blind, the halt, the lame etc. etc. For many years people came to this area because of the bubbling springs of water. It was here that Jesus healed the man with the withered arm on the Sabbath.

We are told in Mark 5 that Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue came and fell at Jesus feet pleading that He would heal his daughter who was dying. A large crowd were thronging around Jesus at that time and a woman who was subject to bleeding for twelve years touched His cloak and was healed immediately.

When Jesus felt power go from His body He asked, ***"Who touched my clothes?"*** and when the woman fell at His feet trembling He said to her, ***"Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."***

In V 35 we are told; ***While Jesus was still speaking some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?" v36 Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe." v 39 He went in (to Jairus house) and said to them, "Why all this wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at Him. V41 He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!") v 42 Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old)***

Apparently a more accurate translation of the words Jesus said was "Little darling"

We went to see the remains of an old synagogue in Capernaum on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.



The remains of Peter's mother's house are just beside the remains of the old synagogue spoken of in Mark 9 v 33-37 Here, Jesus knew the disciples had been arguing about who was the greatest. And He told them ***"If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."***

We visited the place where a beautiful Roman Catholic Church was built over the remains of Peter's mother's house.

It was here that the men brought their friend to Jesus and lowered him down through the roof. Luke 5: 17-26.
Ronnie's comment was, "This man's head was on his bed, then his bed was on his head."

I say, "Hallelujah! What a Saviour."

Jesus cooked breakfast for the disciples on this shore and after breakfast Jesus spoke to Peter who had denied Him three times prior to the crucifixion and asked ***"Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, Simon son of John do you truly love me." He answered, "Yes, Lord you know that I love you." Jesus said "Take care of my sheep," The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you***

know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said “Feed my sheep.” John 21.

Some time earlier when Jesus had been speaking about himself to the disciples in Caesarea Philippi, north of Galilee as recorded in Matthew 16 v 13 – 19 *Jesus asked, “Who do the people say the Son of Man is? v14 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others; Jeremiah or one of the prophets. V15 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”*

v16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

V17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. V18 And, I tell you that you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. v19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”



When Jesus said, *“you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church,”* Jesus was speaking of the rock on which Peter’s faith was placed and that Rock was himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. He, Jesus is spoken of as “The Rock” several times in scripture. e.g. **Isaiah 26v4** *Trust in the Lord for ever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal.*

The name Peter means a stone.

We had a lovely time at the place where Jesus had compassion on the multitude who gathered, he did a miracle and fed 5000 men, plus women and children with a boy's lunch of 5 small loaves and 2 fish. As we look around us we can only imagine people gathering from all directions to this great location just north of Tiberius and the Sea of Galilee.

There is spectacular Roman Catholic Church and beautiful gardens at this location.



He may say yes or He may say no!

The disciples, Mathew, Mark, Luke and John
Recorded how Jesus could be relied upon
To meet the needs of people in their day
Within Israel and particularly around Galilee!

He healed the sick and He raised the dead
And by Him five thousand hungry men were fed
As were hungry women, girls and boys
With the meagre lunch of a poor shepherd boy!

This food Jesus took in His hands and blessed
The multitudes were then by the disciples fed
“Gather what remains,” Jesus was heard to say
And twelve full baskets were gathered that day.

Thoughts of these miracles now filled my mind
While standing by Galilee seeking answers to find
Physical, mental and spiritual needs were met
By this One who can meet every need yet.

What appeared impossible on that day
Was overcome by Jesus miraculously
All He now asks is that we in Him believe
Then from His hand we will miracles receive.

He may sometimes say yes, He may sometimes say no
Because He knows what is best as we onward go
But I know if we trust Him we too will see
His blessing throughout life and eternity!

As we travel onward we see Stafford, the city on the hill that cannot be hidden that Jesus was probably looking at when He said to the disciples while the crowds listened ***“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*** Matt. 5:14-16

In 1948, Safed was surrounded by the enemy and the defenders made a mortar called a “Davidka” because they said they were like David in front of Goliath. (1 Samuel 2 v 2 -29) When the Jews fired the mortar it made a loud noise but did little damage. When the mortar was fired rain began to fall and deposited a sandstorm at Wadi Rum in Jordan and a rumour spread that the Jews had exploded an Atomic Bomb. The Arabs took to their heels and fled in terror.

Now we go to Ein Gev Kibbutz, from this place the Jews were not allowed to travel anywhere in days gone by, the Syrian shot at them. On one day each year they were allowed to travel to a music festival where many famous musicians performed.

When Ein Gev was established in 1937 the people who lived and worked here were under siege on many occasions from Syria. This Kibbutz, we were told was put together in 1 day with stone taken from the Sea of Galilee. Fishing became their main occupation. On one occasion the Syrians attacked the Kibbutz for 3 days from a height but didn’t succeed.

Immigrants came here from many countries and many became Christian’s by trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Ostriches were reared here. Apparently an ostrich egg can feed 12 men and their meat is very low calorie. Ostrich skin was used to make purses, cases etc.



Water pipes run through plantations where vegetables, bananas etc are grown. Eighty acres of ground can produce 230 tons of bananas annually. All across this area we saw very large areas of banana plantations covered with nets, apparently less water is needed because of the nets. A string around the banana plants tells the date when the crop is ready for harvesting. The plants grow for 30 – 40 years. Green fully grown bananas are put into a room with a special gas to ripen and sweeten.

Cows on the dairy farm in this Kibbutz have computer chips on their legs.

We are now on the road to Damascus, travelling towards Syria. It was on this road that Saul met Jesus in a dramatic way. We are told in Acts 9 ***that Saul (Paul) was breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He had gone to the high priest and asked for letters to the synagogues in Damascus so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light, from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked," he replied. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."***

We know that Saul who from this time on was called Paul recognized that Jesus was the Son of God and from that moment on he lived a life of service, preaching and telling everyone in his day that they too needed to trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Acts 9.

The Golan Heights are in front of us and on the left we see the home place of Phillip, the apostle who met with the Ethiopian eunuch as recorded in Acts 8.

We pass the place where the demon-possessed man came from the tombs to meet Jesus. This poor man, who had been tortured for a very long time with evil spirits, came and fell on his knees in front of Jesus and shouted, ***"What do you want with me Jesus, Son of the Most High God. Swear to God that you won't torture me!"*** Mark 5:7 The demons within this man pleaded with Jesus to send them into the pigs.

We saw the steep area where the pigs ran to their death in the lake. Read the whole account of what happened in. Mark 5.

Day 8

Now as we start our journey towards the Golan Heights we hear all about the Six day war and the Yom Kippur war.

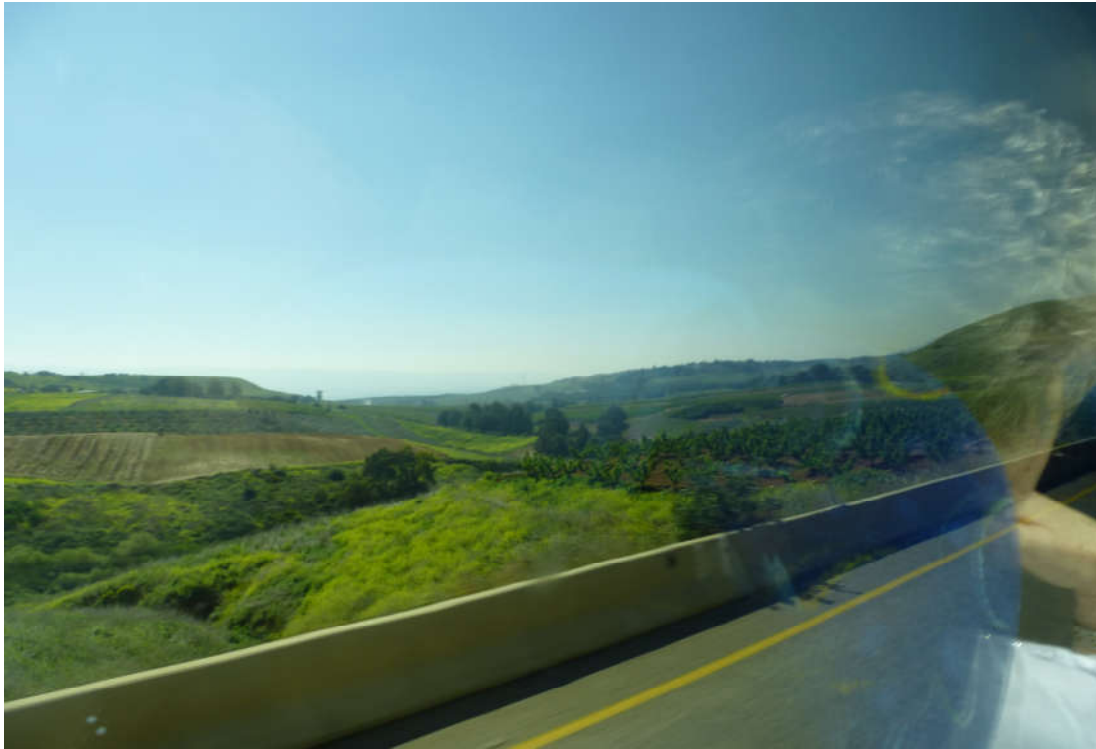


The Syrians were based here and continually bombarded Israel for 19 years. They controlled all of this area down to Galilee and in 1967 the Jews hit back and overcame armies from 3 countries in the 6 day war.

On one side Mt Hermon is Jewish, on one side Syrian and Lebanese.

When the Syrians were in control there was nothing here but bunkers and bombs. When the Jews took over they planted the hillsides and as we climb hill after hill in this rock strewn area it is very evident much hard work has taken place to make this land fertile.

We pass farm after farm where plums, nectarines, peaches, apples etc. are growing in areas that were once barren wastelands.



The Lord prophesied that this land that had nothing growing but its cemeteries would shoot forth its branches, now this is happening for all to see. Isaiah 4



Apparently there is about 440,000 acres of land in the Hula Valley. Around Lake Hulla used to be under water but in the 1950's around 150,000 acres was reclaimed from swamp and it is now some of the most

fertile land in Israel. The Hula Valley is now full of bird life; it is a major stopover for birds migrating along the Syrian – African Rift Valley.



Mount Hermon

The country of Syria is situated beyond this mountain range. Thankfully all is quiet today as we enjoy the sights and see the snow on Mount Hermon.

As we start climbing again towards Northern Israel, we were told this area was bombarded by Lebanon under the Palestinian leader; Yasser Arafat.

As we move to Kiryat Shemona we were told that this area was also under continuous bombardment from Syria. Now the Syrians have long range missiles that can reach every part of Israel, but thankfully the Israelis now have the means of shooting these missiles down while they are flying through the air and many lives have been and are being saved. Syrians attacked a couple of weeks before we visited but they were overcome.

If a person carries an Israeli stamp they cannot enter Muslim areas, yet the Israeli's let Christians who were persecuted in Lebanon come, work and live in this area without papers. People who live here have to constantly run to bomb shelters.

Ronnie was in this area a short time before our trip when hundreds of rounds of ammunition were fired.

“We thank God for safety as we travel!”

En-route we were told of the Druze, a people who are connected to the Jews but they live apart. The Druze still wait for the Messiah to be born and believe He will be born of a man, so the men wear baggy trousers with a pouch in front in case they should be the person who will carry the baby.

We pass a Kibbutz that is named after the son of Isaiah the prophet, the boys name meant. “A remnant shall return.” We now know the Jews or the Israelites, as they were then known, returned to Israel in the year 1948 and yet the son of Isaiah would have lived about 750 B.C.

What a faithful God we have.

We now walk in an area where the Syrian army camped and bombarded the Israelis for 19 years. The Israelite’s wanted to free this area but the Syrians were camped above them so the Israel’s dropped people from the air above who spoke and sang in Arabic and they took back this area in 3 days without loss of life. It was in this area in 1967 that the Jews hit back and overcame armies from 3 countries in the 6 day war.

Ronnie reminded us that God created the earth in 6 days so all things are possible with Him.

Day 9.

Again an early start, on the bus at 8.15am and we set off to Kibbutz Lavi for a tour of this religious settlement on reclaimed land that was once in desolation. The families cleared the stones and rocks by hand; planted crops and the Syrians uprooted them over and over again. We had a very good time at this kibbutz.

The guide, a Jew from Dublin returned to Israel in 1948. He showed us the tiny wooden hut where he and his family lived on their return. The children slept in a compound in the centre of the Kibbutz at night in the hope they would be kept safe because they were continually attacked.



As we go to Mt. Tabor which overlooks the plain of Jezreel and we see Nazareth to the west, Samaria to the south and Galilee to the North.

Mount Tabor was the scene of Christ's Transfiguration, it was here Moses and Elijah who had been dead for hundreds of years appeared with Jesus. Jesus appearance changed before the eyes of Peter, James and John and Peter asked if he should build alters to Jesus, Moses and Elijah. While Peter was speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, ***"This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am pleased. Listen to Him."***

The entire event is recorded in Matthew 17.

We now leave our coach and ascend the Mount Tabor to be thrilled by the amazing panoramic view of the flat plain of Megiddo all around. It is prophesied the last war will be fought here. Revelation ch.16. The name Armageddon we are told was derived from Har Mageddon, “the mountain of Slaughter.



Megiddo



The Basilica of the Transfiguration is an amazing building.



We had such a wonderful time and experience at the top Megiddo where we heard an amazing choir of 150 Africans praise the Lord in song!



There is an Arab town near here with beautiful houses, the Arabs live here as Israeli citizens with no discrimination but they want to take the land from the Jews.



Descending we pass Nain where Jesus raised the widow's son from the dead and we move on to Nazareth where Jesus lived as a boy. We are told in scripture that Jesus began to read and teach in the synagogue saying ***Luke 4 v18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, He sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."*** You can read how when Jesus went on to tell the people, ***"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*** They questioned what he was saying, ***"Isn't this Joseph's son."*** When Jesus went on to say He was speaking the truth, the people were furious, they drove Him out of the town, and took Him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. But He walked right through the crowd and went on His way.

We visit a reconstruction of the ancient village that depicts life as it was in ancient times complete with houses, shops, synagogue, carpentry, oil press, vegetable terrace and much more.



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On the return journey towards Tiberius we visited Gath Hopher, the former home of Jonah.

Again another great day was enjoyed by all.

Day 10.

We now went walking in Caesarea Philippi. There was once a large city here with opulent residences, colonnaded streets and gigantic temples, where pagan worship was practised.

It was in this area that ***Jesus asked “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Matt. 16***

Jesus revealed who He was in this pagan place and they told Him to leave and Jesus never returned.

Ronnie reminded us that in many places Jesus was unwanted and unrecognized and he warned all of us who listened that we either accept Christ as Saviour and Friend or we will meet Him as Judge!”

We went to see the amazing Banias Waterfall which is one of the sources of the River Jordan where lovely clear water flows from below the rock. The name of a Greek god is Pan but because the Arabs can't say the letter P they called this place Ban.

The city of Banyas is situated at the foot of Mt Hermon, North Israel.



Hermon River Springs

We are presently driving through a Palestinian town where it can be clearly seen conditions are very good.



We have just had lunch at a Druze restaurant at the top of the Golan Heights. We sang “How Great Thou Art” Our praise was very well received. Here at Banyias the Crater lake was formed in the remains of an old volcano.



The Druze now live on what had been Syrian territory and when asked if they wanted to go back under Syrian rule they said, “No, No! because they knew they would be massacred.

As we travelled along we saw where army bunkers had been taken out from several places. The Syrian's had antenna on the top of one mountain in this area where they surveyed and monitored this entire area and the Israeli's who lived on the lower ground were powerless to defend themselves. Then the Jews flew over with helicopters and hooked chains onto the antenna, dismantled the antenna and as a result they overcame their enemy.

When we visited Bashan we were told that in 1973 the Egyptians and Syrians launched a surprise attack in what was the Yom Kippur War. The Syrian's drove tanks over Israeli tanks. We were told the Russians and the Syrians knocked out more Israeli tanks at that time than was knocked out in the World War. Apparently the Russians thought one of the Syrians had gone mad, but the person they thought was Syrian was in fact one of the Jew who had survived and he went on to take out the enemy.

There is a story called, "Three on the heights." The Israelis pushed the Syrians back again, again and again and the Russians intervened and demanded a cease fire with Syria. Apparently there was a book written about this battle called, "Our man in Damascus."

At the Golan Archaeological Museum we visit a restored Jewish Village from the Talmudic Era with a synagogue, an olive press and a furnished family house where people were dressed in the style of the period.





We now start out descent towards Tiberius and the Sea of Galilee. What an amazing and beautiful place. So much hard work has evidently been done in this land.



The Sea of Galilee lies 620 ft below the Mediterranean Sea.

Day11. After another great breakfast we are on the road again and pass the hot springs where people from ancient times came for healing. Many people are camping beside the Sea of Galilee. What a sight on this beautiful morning.



We have reached the river Jordan where two of our party are going to be baptized.



What a beautiful place, time, and experience. Kenia from Cuba, who now lives in Guernsey and Sarah from Mullingar, Ireland were baptised by immersion in the river, where Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist.

After experiencing this very moving and memorable event we now drive on and pass the place where Jesus cast seven evil spirits out of Mary Magdalene.

We passed where King Solomon had his headquarters. We passed by what we were told was once the worst malarial swamp in the world and it is now flourishing with mile after mile of orchards from which fruit is exported all over the world.

We then enjoyed a picnic lunch and had a lovely walk at Huleh Nature Reserve where we saw rhinos, cat fish etc. This area is preserved to let people see how this entire area was prior to reclamation. When this reserve was created pelicans hadn't been seen in this land for many years, now the pelicans have returned.



The surrounding area is now a place of abundance with orange and lemon plantations, etc. etc.

Ronnie told us that God put the Canaanites out of this area because they sacrificed their children to false God's.

We again return to Tiberius and enjoy another lovely dinner before setting out again with Daniel on his lovely boat where we enjoy another great time of praise as we admire the night lights around the shore's of Galilee.

Day 11

It is now time to leave the lovely Ron Beach Hotel in Tiberius after a very enjoyable stay and we drive through an area where the hills are covered with bushes. There is a little rain this morning.

We arrive in Karmiel and see the monuments where the Jews who died during the holocaust in Germany and those who returned after their awful ordeal are remembered. These monuments clearly depict the trauma and stress that was experienced.



We drive through the new town of Karmiel where thousands of Russians live. This is a great place with beautiful parks, trees, flowers and fine houses that now house people who came from abject poverty. Ethiopian's came here from areas where they lived in shacks and now here the buildings go on and on and new roads are being built everywhere. Many roads are being cut through high rocky, mountainous areas.



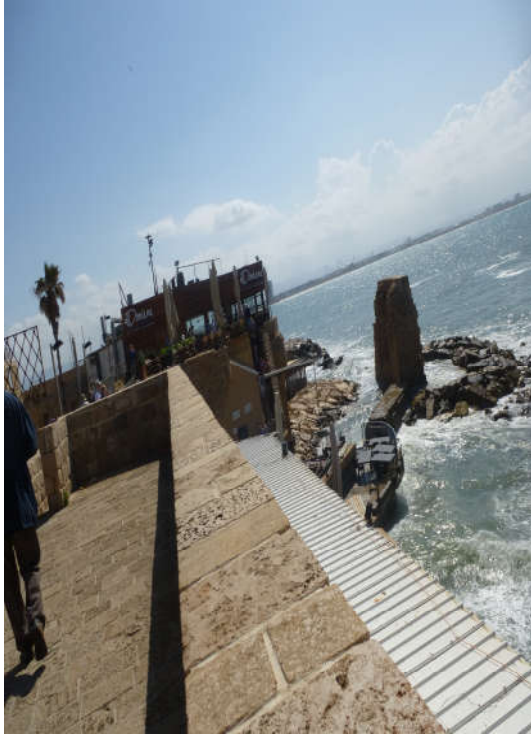
When Ronnie visited David, our bus driver's home on one occasion during the reign of Saddam Husain; missiles were shot over their building. There was a bomb shelter in the area but the key couldn't be found as God had it, because the bomb hit the shelter and everybody would have been killed had they been in the bunker, instead they ran onto a sports field and all were saved. Praise God!

We approach the town of Acre where Napoleon Bonaparte burnt everything in this area and he fought on to Russia but in time the British defeated him.

When the Israeli's made peace with Russia, Golda Meir, the 4th Prime Minister of Israel told the Russians at the Wailing Wall, whatever you want just write it on a piece of paper and put it in the wall.

The Russian's asked for Israel back, and she told them to talk to the wall.

As we approach Acre we see 5 large ships on the Mediterranean Sea. Most of the city of Acre is underground.



A chemist from this area made an explosive that helped the British during the war and when the British asked how they could repay him he asked for a permanent home for his Jewish people.

Acre is a fortified, walled city with small restaurants etc on top and between the high walled narrow streets. Many buildings here were built by the British and the British told the Israeli's they would never survive here and they handed Acre over to the Arabs.



There is a large industrial area outside Acre.

We head to Haifa, a beautiful sea port where many cruise ships drop anchor.

Many Jews who returned to Israel were slaughtered by Muslims in this region.

As we enter Haifa we pass the apartment blocks on Mt. Carmel and we see a double-decker train pass by. Haifa is a very large city.



The Bahia, who are very rich have now taken over Haifa. The Bahia were persecuted by Muslims but the Jews allow the Bahia to live here in peace.

As we travel through the streets we see the beautiful Bahia Gardens on the hillside and when we drive to the top of the gardens we are rewarded with a wonderful view over the city and the Mediterranean. This is where the gardens of Baal were got rid of; now the Bahia gardens are here.



As we viewed the amazing sights of this beautiful sea port city from above the Bahia gardens we met some lovely young people from Cambodia who wanted to have their pictures taken with us at this scenic spot. As we travelled on and reached the summit above where these pictures were taken we were surprised to find skyscrapers 20 stories high.



During the British Mandate the Jews returning to Israel along this coastline were turned back by the British. One ship that came from Germany was sent back to Germany and it sank on the way. We visited Herod's Palace and the outdoor Coliseum where plays etc were performed before thousands.

The Coliseum is a great construction where someone speaking from the ground can be heard by thousands without the aid of microphones while sitting around the semi circle stone seating area that stand several stories high.





We then went to the arena where chariots were raced and where wild animals were let loose among prisoners who had to fight for their lives. It was here that Paul was held prisoner and appeared before Agrippa and gave testimony of his meeting with Jesus Christ on the Emmaus Road.

We drove alongside the aqueduct that King Herod had built to carry water. The aqueduct was split in two on top to ease the pressure caused by the weight of water flowing on top. The water was carried from the Carmel Springs to Caesarea; 40 miles away. This aqueduct is still standing after 2 thousand years.



We now head towards Dan Panorama Hotel in Tel Aviv to spend our last night in Israel.

Along the way we passed a monument to the memory of Theodor Herzl who had the vision in Germany that brought the Jews back to Israel.

Day 12

We give thanks to God for a wonderful time spent in this special land and for the good time spent in the Dan Panorama Hotel even though we had to get up at 5.30am on the last day of our visit.

Before we leave for the airport Ronnie pointed to the ruins of a building that could be seen from our bedroom window, this building was blown up by a suicide bomber. Several young people who were attending a disco were killed.



Eric and I are very thankful to Almighty God for a wonderful time spent in this amazing country where our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was not only born but where He willingly allowed His precious sinless blood to be shed so that we could be forgiven and have eternal life and the assurance that one day we will dwell with Him in that place He has now gone to prepare.

I also want to express to our bus driver David, our tour guide Ronnie and his helper Roy for all they did to make our visit to Israel so enjoyable and worthwhile and to the pilots that transported us safely to London and then back to Dublin.

Trusting in Jesus
is
the Only Way

As I leave this land of Israel
I want of Jesus Christ, to tell
Just who He is and what He has done
How He gave His life for everyone.

I now want to lift His name on high
I now want His praise to fill the sky
I also want everyone to know
That Jesus my Saviour loves them so.

Jesus Christ, the blessed Son of God
Lived a sinless life upon earth's sod
God accepted His death on Calvary
To redeem sinners like you and me!

Because He rose up from that grave
He now can repentant sinners save
He can give peace and He can give joy
To every man, woman, girl and boy!

When Jesus died on that cruel tree
His sinless blood bought victory
Now He who walked this blessed land
Intercedes for us at God's right hand!

What He did for me He can do for you
If you are wise you will trust Him too
Because trusting in Him is the only way
We will dwell with Him eternally.

Other books & CD's by this author:

Books of Christian Poetry

Whispers of Love 1

Whispers of Love 2

Whispers of Love 3

Whispers of Love 4

Whispers of Love 5

Whispers of Love 6

Give God the Glory

The Jigsaw Puzzle

A personal testimony of how God revealed himself through times of illness

“Kerrykeel”

A Place Worth Remembering

Memories of childhood spent in Kerrykeel, Co Donegal

The Life and Labours of Tom Anderson

My Uncles testimony and my recollections of his life

Testimony Time, Saved by Grace

A book of Christian testimonials

I Thank God for His Healing Touch

My thanks to God for healing a Trapped Sciatic Nerve

CD's Whispers of Love 1 & 2

Olive reading poetry backed by Gospel Music by Jas. Strange

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For more than 40 years I led groups on tour to The Holy Land. During these years we learned a great deal about Israel and it's people. Every time we landed at Ben Gurion airport and took the trip up to Jerusalem I felt the same sense of anticipation. Every time we approached Jerusalem and sang "The Holy City," I could feel the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. This is where it all happened, where our Saviour bled and died for us and where He rose again from the dead. This is where He is returning to once again! It was wonderful to have Eric and Olive Boreland on one of our trips and I know they felt the same sense of wonder and shared in the joy of being in The Land. Olive has tried to capture the feeling in her little book so that others can feel as if they are right there. I know you will enjoy reading her account of their trip.

Ronnie McCracken