

## ZION FULL GOSPEL CHURCH – JORDAN/ISRAEL TRIP REPORT

### MARCH 11- 21, 2010

Thirty people, both young and old, gathered together with their luggage, backpacks, jackets and coats at Terminal 3 Row 5 Qatar Airlines at 11.30pm on **March 10, 2010**. What were they doing at such a late hour of the night? Aren't they supposed to be in bed? One senior uncle was just too happy about his presence at the airport because this was the first time he ever boarded a plane. One senior aunty aged 83, was likewise smiling because, together with the rest of the people, they are all ready for the inaugural trip to the Holy land organized by Zion Full Gospel Church.

Departing from Singapore at 0240 hours, the team arrived at Doha airport at 0550 hours and waiting for 6 hours for our next connecting flight to Amman at 1300 hours. Arriving in Amman on **March 11** at 1505 hours, the team was greeted by Ms Chang, the official guide for the tour. After a long drive of more than an hour, the team arrived at the Day Inn Hotel where we had our accommodation for the night. Weary after the long travel, the team, exhausted as they are, were still full of enthusiasm. To ensure that everyone on the team understood the importance of punctuality, Pastor Alfred reminded the team to bear in mind the numbers 6, 7 and 8. (They were the timings for waking up (6.00am) breakfast (7.00am) and 8.00am (departure for the day's tour.)

Accommodation: Day Inn Hotel

Summary of the Places that the team visited:

#### **March 12**

1. **Amman**, the capital of Jordan: travelling down the desert road along the Wade Mouse highway, we visited the modern capital of Jordan; Amman which is the longest continuously inhabited community in the Near East. It was the capital of the ancient Ammonites in the bible times and was known as Rabbath-Ammon. This place was also known as Philadelphia, one of the 10 city federation called "Decapolis" which was set up to promote Greek and Roman culture.
2. **Petra**, the capital city of ancient Edom, about 50 miles south of the Dead Sea. It was a notable fortress and stronghold. Petra is striking even in ruins because many of its structures are rose red. Among the exciting remains is the Khazneh (often called the Treasury) with a facade of 92 feet wide and 130 feet high. Apart from the awesome structures of Petra, there was the Roman theatre, and other ancients' tombs in the area. Some bible scholars believed that during the Great Tribulation, these regions will be the only place of refuge for the Jews.

After spending two long days in Jordan, the team checked out of the hotel and continued their tour by crossing the border via the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge into the land of Israel on **March 13**.

#### **March 13**

3. Prior to the visit to Jericho, the oldest city on the earth, the team visited **the Sycamore tree**, where Zaccheus, the short man in the bible, was spotted by Jesus and was told to come down from the tree to join him.

4. **The Mount of Temptation:** The team also visited the Mount of Temptation where Jesus was tempted by Satan for three days and three nights.
5. **Jericho** is the oldest, continuously inhabited city in the world. One of the main attractions here is the Elisha's fountain, on which Elisha cast a handful of salt and the stream was healed and remained pure till this day (2Kings 2:4-22). The fountain waters still flow through the city making it an oasis surrounded by lots of palm trees (Deut 34:3).
6. **BethShean**, an ancient city with a glorious past. During the Greco-Roman period it was known as Scythopolis and at its zenith during the Roman period, it was one of the 10 major cities known as the Decapolis, in the area. The bodies of King Saul and his sons said to be hung from its city walls after they were defeated and killed by the Philistines near Mount Gilboa.
7. **Tiberias** which is the largest city along the Sea of Galilee. Tiberias was founded by Herod Antipas in AD18. After the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed in AD70, this city became the most important centre of Jewish learning.
8. **Jordan River.** Perhaps the most famous river in the world, it started at the snow capped height of Mount Hermon and ends up at the depths of the Dead Sea. Although it is only 65 miles in a straight line, it curves and twists for 158 miles. Jordan River is called "Yarden". It is the only river in the world that flows mostly below sea level. Jordan brings precious memories of the baptism of Naaman the Syrian general dipping himself into the river and healed of leprosy and the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ, by John the Baptist.

Accommodation: Tiberias/Bali hotel.

#### March 14

9. **Sea of Galilee:** Measuring 13 miles x 7.5 miles, the fresh water sea is also known as the Gennesarett. One of the exciting events on this boat ride was the singing of our national anthem Majulah Singapura as the boat man hoists our national flag welcoming the Singapore team. A short service was conducted on board, and Pastor spoke of Jesus calming the storm as they travel across the Sea of Galilee.
10. **Capernaum**, one of the cities cursed by Jesus (Luke 10:13-14). Now laying in ruins, she still has the most impressive structures. It is located about two miles west of where the Jordan River feeds into the Sea of Galilee.
11. **St Peter's Primacy**, built over a massive rock, believed to be where the Risen Lord prepared breakfast for His disciples (John 21:9-14) and where Christ commanded the disciples to "feed my sheep". (John 21:15-17).
12. **Church of Multiplication** where the ancient mosaic of the loaves and fishes was preserved. Believed to be the traditional site for the feeding of the 5000 (Matthew 14:14-21, Luke 9:11-16).
13. **Tabgha**, means "seven springs". Five springs are still present. One tradition says that Job was healed of his sickness in these therapeutic springs. Located on the north western side of the lake of Tiberias about 3kms south of Capernaum. Christian traditions has localized three important events here – the Sermon on the Mount, the multiplication of loaves of bread and fish and the third apparition of the Risen Lord where he commissioned Peter "feed my lambs... look after my sheep."

14. **Golan Heights (Bashan)** was known for its cattle and oak trees. A strategically significant area closely guarded by Israel and its neighbours Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.
15. **Springs of Barnias (Caesarea Philippi)** overlooking the majestic Mount Hermon, a mountain sacred to worshippers of Canaanite gods and centre of Baalism.
16. **Mount of Beatitudes** where the Sermon on the Mount is remembered. Located on the west side of the Sea of Galilee, there is a beautiful eight sided chapel of the Beatitudes whose structures represented the 8 Beatitudes. Inside the church are themes from the Beatitudes. From the outside, one gets one of the most spectacular views of the Sea of Galilee and Palestine. At this place the scriptures from Matthew 5 was read and meditated upon by the team.

### March 15

17. **Nazareth**, the place where Jesus spend his childhood days for 30 years. When Jesus started preaching, his townsmen rejected him. Nathaniel questioned if anything good could come out of Nazareth.
  18. **The Church of Annunciation** was believed to be the traditional site where the angel Gabriel announced to Mary about the birth of Jesus.
  19. **Mary's well** according to tradition was where Mary drew water from this well.
  20. **Nazareth village** brought the team back to the good "old days". This is an excavated village dating from around 1 AD. The excavations have carefully renovated the synagogue and houses to give us a unique insight into the Galilean village life and agriculture, as it would have been at the times of Jesus, 2000 years ago.
  21. **Cana in Galilee** is traditionally taken to be the site of Jesus first and second miracle, the changing of water into wine (John 2:1-11) and the healing of the son of the nobleman living in Capernaum (John 4:43-54). The site is located on the road that leads from Nazareth to Tiberias.
- If there been any good memories on this trip, it is the renewal of the marriage vows for couples and prayers for everyone on the team conducted by Pastor at Cana of Galilee.

### March 16

22. **Haifa** – the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city in Israel today. She has a modern harbour and the city has 3 levels ascending. The top level is Mount Carmel.
23. **Mount Carmel** mean "vineyard of the Lord." It contains Israel's largest national park today. It is an outcropping of mountains extending about 10 miles south east from the sea, separating the plains of Sharon from the Plain of Esdraelon. Because of its height and beauty, ancient people often worshipped their strange gods here.
24. **Murharka/Mount Carmel** - Worship of Baal was most prominent and is the place where Prophet Elijah challenged the 450 false prophets of Baal.
25. **Stella Maris monastery**
26. **Megiddo** is the valley of Jezreel or valley of Esraelon. About 14 x 20 miles, it extends from Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan valley. In the form of a rough triangle, separating the mountains of Carmel and Samaria from those of Galilee. Known as the "Gibraltar of Palestine" Megiddon guarded the crucial ancient highway between Egypt and Asia. Megiddo experienced almost continuous warfare from 4000 BC to 400BC. Excavations have

uncovered 20 cities built on top of each other, as wars left cities ruined. We see 20 layers of civilization, one on top of the other. Megiddo is said to be the last site for the last world war according to Bible prophecy.

Accommodations: Jerusalem/Rimmonim Hotel

## March 17

### 27. Jerusalem – the old city

- A. **The Temple area:** The Jerusalem temple area is the most contested piece of property in the world.
- To the Jews, it is the site of Abraham willingness to sacrifice Isaac and site of the temple of Solomon
  - To the Muslims, it is according to legend, where Mohammed ascended to heaven from her.
  - To the Christians, it is the prominent place in the life of Christ especially his crucifixion.
  - First temple built by Solomon and was destroyed by Babylonians
  - Second temple built by Zerubabel and rebuilt by King Herod and was destroyed in AD70 under the Roman general Titus (only Wailing Wall remains till today).
  - (Third temple to be built before tribulation and will be destroyed by Antichrist (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; II Thessalonians 2:3, 4.)
- B. **Walking through the Old city Christian Quarter, Armenian and Jewish Quarter.**
- C. **Mount Moriah**
- D. **The Wailing Wall-** it is the 2<sup>nd</sup> temple retaining wall. During the Roman Empire era, Jews were banned from Jerusalem. But during the Byzantine period, Jews could come here once a year. From 1948-67, Jews were not allowed to visit the Wall since it was in Jordanian territory. After the 6 Day war, the wall is simple known as the “Western Wall”, a place of joy for God’s people. Visitors to the Wall would write prayers on tiny strips of paper, rolled them up and slipped them into the cracks.
- The team had a good time here experiencing prayers. The man on the left side of the wall and the women on the right side of the wall.
- E. **Dome of the Rock.** This is the oldest and most exquisite Muslim mosque in the world. In 639AD Jerusalem was captured by the Muslims and Mount Moriah became an Islamic holy place. Due to some tension within the city grounds on that day, the team was not able to enter and visit this place. But the sight of it from the Mount of Olives was breathtaking.
- F. **Via Dolorosa** is the way of the Cross within the city identified as the route that Jesus took carrying the Cross starting from Pilate’s judgement hall to Calvary. There are altogether 14 commemorative stations, 9 related to the Gospels and the rest in tradition. The first 2 stations are inside the fortress Antonia. 7 are in the streets and the last 5 are inside the church of the Holy Sepulchre.
- Station 1 – Antonio fortress where Pilate condemns Jesus  
Station 2 – Jesus takes up the Cross  
Station 3 – Jesus falls under the Cross for the first time  
Station 4 - Jesus meets his mother  
Station 5 - Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the Cross  
Station 6 – A Jerusalem woman wipes Jesus face  
Station 7 – Jesus falls for the second time

Station 8 – Jesus consoles the women of Jerusalem

Station 9 – Jesus falls for the third time

Station 10 – Jesus is stripped of his garments

Station 11 – Jesus is nailed to the Cross

Station 12 – Jesus expires on the Cross

Station 13 – Jesus body is taken from the Cross and washed

Station 14 – Jesus body is laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea

- G. **Bethesda Pool** is the pool located near Stephen's Gate inside Jerusalem. Here Christ healed the man crippled for 38 years. The Byzantine emperors built a huge basilica here. The Persians destroyed it in 614AD. The Crusaders built a chapel over the ruins. This chapel had been identified as one of the unique buildings with good sound effects. The team praised the Lord with the song "Amazing Grace."
- H. **Golgotha**. Inside the church of the Holy Sepulchre is "Golgotha". It was originally outside the city wall. After the crucifixion, Golgotha was included within a new wall build by Herod Agrippa in 44 AD. It now has two chapels, one allegedly the site of the crucifixion and the other believed to be where Jesus was stripped of His garments and nailed to the cross. Under the altar of one the chapels can be seen the top of the rocky outcrop, with a silver marker where the Cross allegedly stood.
- I. **The Garden tomb** .This is the popular optional site of Jesus crucifixion and burial. It is just north of the traditional site. The tomb of Jesus was a new tomb that was never used, hewn out of rock and adjacent to other tombs. In contrast with the church of Sepulchre, this garden tomb beautiful and natural. This site reflects accurately what the original site was like. A short communion service was conducted here both in Mandarin and English.

## March 18

28. **Mount of Olives** –the most prominent building on this site is the Russian tower of the Ascension. It is six stories high and is often used to identify Jerusalem at a distance. According to Russian orthodox tradition, here is where Mary the mother of Jesus stood as she watched Jesus ascended.
- Nearby is another structure – **Chapel of the Ascension**. Tradition places this as the exact spot where Jesus ascended. There is even the outline 'footprint' supposedly Jesus last step on earth. The Crusaders originally built this polygon shaped chapel with open roof. But the Muslims later added a ceiling to make it look like a mosque.
29. **Paster Noster Church** – this is the traditional site where Jesus taught his disciples the Lord's Prayer. In this church, the Lord's Prayer is inscribed on 62 tiles, each in different language. Here the team recited the Lord's Prayer together.
30. **Gethsemane** – the olive press. This is the garden Jesus came for his final prayer where he underwent much pain and sorrow, choosing to die on the Cross. The garden contains 8 gnarled ancient olive trees which were probably young striplings in Jesus day.
31. **Church of all Nations** that was built and funded by 16 nations. At the centre is a huge rock reportedly the site where Jesus prayed in agony. A short devotion reflecting the "Gethsemane experience" was shared by Pastor on this site.
32. **St Peter Gallicantu** was built over the traditional site of the High priest Caiaphas house. From Gethsemane, this was the first place where Jesus was brought. Here Jesus looked at

Peter went out to weep bitterly at the crowing of the cock. Before the cock crowed twice, Peter had denied the Lord three times.

33. **Mount Zion**- visiting King's David tomb and the Upper Room of the Last Supper

34. **Bethlehem** translated as the "House of Bread" is a city in the West Bank where many significant events in the Bible took place. Believed to be the birthplace of Jesus, Bethlehem is also where David was born and where the tomb of Isaac's beloved wife Rebecca can be found. The city is home to one of the largest Palestinian Christian communities in the Middle East.

35. **The Shepherd's Field** – the place where the angels appeared to the shepherds in the field and announced the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:8-10)

### March 19

36. **Bethany** – Located about two miles over Mount Olives it is the hometown of Mary, Martha and Lazarus where Jesus was always a welcome guest.

37. **Bethphage**, here are the cave where Lazarus is buried and location of the Bethphage church. Here Jesus restored Lazarus back to life after 4 days.

- Lazarus tomb was sealed by the Muslims and built a mosque there but the Franciscans have opened a new passage to the traditional site and build a church there. Above the church is a ruined tower, considered the home of Simon the leper.

38. **Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls)**. The place where the Dead Sea scrolls were found in jars by the Bedouin shepherds while looking for their lost goats in 1947. They threw stones inside a cave to scare out any goats but heard broken jars sound and discovered the Dead Sea scrolls. These were copies of Scriptures written on leather, wrapped up in linen and kept in clay jars by the Essenes, a super Pharisees legalistic group. Dated between 200BC to 100AD, the manuscripts on which our Bible translations are based.

39. **Masada** – this famous rock fortress rises to 1300 feet above the Dead Sea and then is topped by 20 acre plateau. Herod the Great rebuilt it as a pleasure place with hanging gardens, swimming pool, bath houses and grain storehouses. It was also strongly fortified.

- After the fall of Jerusalem in AD70, a group of 960 Jewish patriots fled to Masada and hid there for three years. Finally, Flavius Silva, the Roman general with the famed 10<sup>th</sup> legion, blockaded Masada with an encircling wall, established 8 military camps and built a ramp next to the mountains. On the eve of the Roman attack, the Jewish leader Eleader Ben Yair exhorted the zealots to commit suicide. A final 10 men were selected by lot to slay the rest, including themselves. The Roman victory became a hollow one. Masada is the one site with the most dramatic event in Jewish history and has today become a shrine for the Jews.

40. **Ein Gedi** – a beautiful oasis, believed to be the place where David hid when pursued by Saul.

41. **Dead Sea**. The lowest place on earth located 420 meters or 1260 feet below sea level. It is also the saltiest body of water on earth with over eight times more salt than the ocean. Team members had a good time floating over the sea and behaving like little children enjoying themselves.

### March 20

After breakfast the team cross the Allenby Bridge and visited Mt Nebo.

42. **Mount Nebo** – the mountain of Moses where he saw the Promised Land and on it he was buried by God. (Deut 32:48-52 and 3:23-27). It is the most revered holy site in Jordan. When you stand at the top of this mountain, you can see, as Moses did, the vast panorama that encompasses the Jordan River valley, the Dead Sea, Jericho and Jerusalem. It was a place of pilgrimage for early Christians and Mt Nebo first church was built in late fourth century to mark the site of Moses death.

- **The Serpentine Cross** which stands outside the sanctuary is symbolic of the brass serpents taken by Moses into the desert and the cross upon which Jesus was crucified.

43. **Madaba** - where one will be attracted with amazement the mosaic map of the Holy land. This splendid map is housed in the Greek Orthodox church of St George which was built in 1884 over the remains of the Byzantine church. The map which dates to around 560AD was made to cover the front section of the floor of the Byzantine church.

Cleared customs and board plane back to Doha and back to Singapore on **March 21**.

**Reported by as recalled by memory.**

**Pastoral leader**

**Rev Alfred Yeo**

**NB. My appreciation to all participants for their support and patience and I trust this little report will help refresh the good memories of the Holy Land trip we had together.**

**Shalom!**



