

Our Trip to Israel

October 17, 2012

Day Two

10/17/12

9:23am

Sea of Galilee

It is called the Sea of Galilee because it was translated incorrectly by the British when they were writing the King James version of the Bible. They had difficulty believing that a body of water that was so important could be a lake.



I am sitting on a boat crossing the Sea of Galilee. Around the boat I see the city of Tiberius, the Mt. Beatitude, not sure what it is called, but we saw the city Jesus was referring to when we talked about the city on a hill (is that Jerusalem? can we really see Jerusalem from here? not sure.) We also saw Mt. Tabor and many,

many other places. I bought a placemat on the boat that shows all the major sites around the Sea of Galilee, so that I can better remember what they were called and where they are. I tried as best I could to take pictures so that I can remember them more clearly.





Mt. Beatitudes as seen from the Sea of Galilee



Now we are approaching the shoreline where we will get off and go to the Church of the Beatitudes. Our boat is a deep colored redwood and as you lean against the rail, you feel like it is similar (it's wood anyway!) to an experience Jesus would have had. Leaning out over the rail, you see the water splashing against the boat and feel the wind against your face. As we are pulling up to the dock, I see the main part of the dock is held up by white pillars with stone steps going up the hill from the dock.



Capernaum

Upon disembarking from the boat, we found ourselves in the middle of a grassy area where Jesus fed the 5000. We were surrounded by grasses that were drying because of the season change. Our guide pointed out that these "dried grasses" were really wild mustard plants. Dan and I collected some mustard seed here.

Also around us were several olive trees. This was our first chance to see an olive tree up close. We



picked a couple of small olives off of this tree to show the kids when we get home.



Above: wild mustard plants
Right: A fully loaded olive tree



We took the bus around to the monastery in Capernaum. Walking up to the monastery, there was a sign that read “No Shorts” (people over here seem to be very touchy about seeing your knees or shoulders?). We went through the gate and it opened up to a beautiful walkway with flowers and stone decorations that were from the actual temple that was here in Jesus day. This is the temple where Jesus did much of his teaching during the three years of his earthly ministry.



We walked down a path with a gated garden on one side and a shop on the other. We came into a clearing where there was a statue of Peter. Peter is holding keys to symbolize that Jesus gave Peter the keys of the Church.



During the time that Jesus was here, regular houses were made of volcanic rock and stucco, special buildings – such as the synagogue – were made out of limestone.



The synagogue was made of limestone.

Volcanic rock and stucco buildings



Water at Cana was taken from the stone pots because everyone knew that Jews are the only ones to use stone pots (because the stones were here before the Fall and are not able to be made impure). They only use those pots to put water in for religious washing – they would NEVER drink out of a stone pot because the water takes on the taste of the stone. Jesus had them use this water so that everyone would know that it was water coming out of the pots.



Luke 8:42-48 – The woman healed by Jesus – she was constantly bleeding for 12 years. Women were not allowed to participate in society during that time because they were considered unclean. This woman would not have been allowed to touch anyone or anything that someone else touched for that entire time period. When Jesus healed her, he was not only healing her body, he was making it possible for her to return to society.



Luke 4:38-44 – This happened in the house underneath the church that I am standing in front of. The church itself was closed so we didn't get to go in and look down on Peter's house but we could see it all from the side.

The excavation that had taken place in this area had revealed several houses in the vicinity of Peter's house. Peter's house was very close to the Temple.



A road where Jesus walked.

There was a street that had been excavated that would have been a street that Jesus walked on frequently. What a feeling to walk in the temple where Jesus walked and taught, to look out on the street below and know looking out.



Luke 4:31-37 – This happened in the synagogue to my left. (The synagogue was rebuilt on the foundation that was here during Jesus' time – that temple was destroyed by an earthquake in about 300AD.)



The temple that was rebuilt on top of the foundation of Jesus' temple during the Byzantine Era ~300AD.



The foundation of the temple that was here during Jesus' time. This temple was destroyed in an earthquake about 70AD.

We walked past the church and went into a garden with some pretty trees and flowers that overlooked the Sea of Galilee. There was a tree in the garden that had a reference to Matthew being called as a disciple.



As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. Mark 1:16



As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. Matthew 9:9



The view of the Sea of Galilee from the garden at Capernaum.



We stopped for lunch at a café next to the Sea of Galilee. There was a guy out fishing in the lake. This café is well known for its Peter Fish. Dan and I split one for lunch. It is a tilapia fish that is cooked in the skin. It tasted very good, but it was a bit difficult to eat while it was looking at me. ☺



When we left the monastery, we got back on the bus and went to Tabgha where Jesus did the miracle of the loaves and the fish. We got off the bus and went into a courtyard where we saw a date press. Doron gave a talk in the courtyard before we went into the chapel.

Doron explained that honey in the Bible usually refers to date honey made from squeezing dates in a date press such as the one that was in this courtyard. If it is talking about bee's honey, it will specify that.



There were beautiful mosaic floors in the chapel. The rock that they believe Jesus may have been standing on when he performed this miracle is under the alter of this church. There are some beautiful mosaics on the floor up by the alter area.



The most famous of these is a mosaic with bread and fish. In the gift shop here, we purchased a cup and plate for church (to be used for communion) that had this mosaic pictured on it, a mosaic 3-D fish for Lori

and a few other things.

We took the bus over to the Mt. Beatitudes. Instead of going inside the chapel in this area, we went to the side of the manicured gardens on a dirt road to the top of a hill with a natural amphitheatre shape. Standing at the top of this hill, you can totally picture the Bible account happening here. There is a natural shape to this hill that would





lend itself to good acoustic sound. Due to the shape, you would be able to hear from the top or bottom of this hill even without a microphone. The Bible says that Jesus climbed to the top of the hill and sat down. Then he spoke to the people. There are several large rocks at the top of the hill that Jesus could have sat on when he talked to the people. There is a banana orchard right at the bottom of the hill where there would be plenty of room for a crowd. When I looked out, I could almost see Jesus at the top of the hill sitting on one

of the chair sized rocks – it wouldn't be too comfy to us, but maybe in those days their idea of comfort was a little different. If you squint your eyes, the banana trees could almost be the crowd of people waiting – anxious to hear what Jesus had to say next.



One of the many things that Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount was about prayer. Specifically, this is where he taught us the Lord's Prayer. Prayer was a new concept to the Jews. The Lord's Prayer, given in about the area where I am standing, was the first prayer of that time. The people/ disciples didn't understand it at the time, but later they came to realize its

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. (Matthew 5:1 ESV)



Dan sitting on one of several large rocks located at the top of the hill where the Sermon on the Mount took place.

Caesarea Phillipi

When we got off the bus, we gathered under a fig tree. Dan picked a leaf off the fig tree to hopefully bring home. Our guide says that Fig trees are a backyard tree, never planted commercially, etc... If you come across a fig tree, you know that it means that the spot used to be in someone's back yard.



There was an alter here that was about one arms length square. This alter has the same dimensions as the alter that the Chief Priest kept in his home. Every morning the chief priest would wake up and sacrifice a dove on this alter. The dove was so tender that he would sacrifice it by using his thumbnail to pierce the bird's throat. Then he would make the sacrifice allowing the

The Jordan River is the only river in this part of the world that runs year round.

smoke to rise to heaven symbolizing that there was peace between God and man.

We walked in past the ruins and the fig tree to sit in the shade on a line of U-shaped benches looking out to the headwaters of the Jordan River. One-third of the Jordan River originates from the spring at Caesarea Phillipi. This city used to be a Pagan City with some Jews who also lived here. There are many shrines and idols in this area. The official god of the city was the god Pan. Pan was a half man/ half goat Greek god who was the god of shepherds and also fertility. There is a temple dedicated to Pan in the city on the hillside. It was in this city that Jesus brought His disciples and asked them "Who do you say that I am?" This is where the disciples made their first public confession of faith. Here the disciples transitioned from



The headwaters of the Jordan

friends to followers by their public confessions.

I Kings 12: The golden calf – the Northern tribes rejected Rehoboam and chose Jeroboam as king instead. Jeroboam was concerned that the people would revert back to Rehoboam in time if they traveled to Jerusalem to worship at the temple, so he set up two golden calves as idols for the Northern tribes to worship. One of those golden calves was located here in Caesarea Phillipi.



Matthew 16:13-20 – Jesus revealed himself to be the Messiah here in Caesarea Phillipi.



Golan Heights – The people living here (in the Israeli part) were Syrian. They do not hold Israeli citizenship nor do they have mandatory military service. This area could potentially return to Syria someday and if they show preference to Israel, they would be killed if that happened. For that reason, the people living here are called Syrian citizens – occupied.

We went through Golan Heights and into the Valley of the Tears.

There used to be lions, bears, and cheetahs that
Golan Heights but the British killed them off during
their time of occupation.

The Valley of the Tears
This is the site of a major battle between Israel and Syria during the Yom Kippur War. There were large numbers of casualties in this battle causing this valley to be called The Valley of the Tears.



We kept driving along the border between Israel and Syria even coming to an area where our guide said, “Look there ahead! Do you see that road? We will not continue straight because we would run into that fence. But mostly we will not continue straight because if we did we would be in Syria and we do not want to be there.” We passed several mine fields that Doron said were set up by the Syrians but left there by the Israelis in case of Syrian attack. There are not mine fields next to the border, they are all about a half mile or more away from the border so

that there are not any accidental blowing up of people trying to cross the border.

The Israeli/ Syrian border



At one point, the Syrian government tried to stage a takeover of Israel by having its people illegally cross the border with the goal in mind that Israel would be full of Syrians. What actually happened was that many of the Syrians who attempted this were blown up by the land mines on the Syrian side of the border. Right now, Syria is too full of its own civil war to bother Israel too much. The Sunnis and

the Shi'ites are the two “denominations” of Muslims that are fighting one another. Doron said that this will never stop because as soon as one side gives up, the other side will kill all remaining people so this is a fight to the death with no end in sight. Every day many, many people are killed in Syria with no recourse except to keep fighting.

Still, the border between Israel and Syria is a hostile one. As we drove along the border, we saw bunkers at the tops of the hills in Israel (our guide said that they were listening to every word that we said). We continued on past more mine fields to our last stop for the day which was at an overlook point where you could look out and see Damascus about a 3 day walk away. We were about halfway up a hill with bunkers above us and nothing below us all the way to the UN camp next to the border. Right below us used to be the main road and this is about where

Saul was when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. There is not a road between Israel and Damascus any more due to the political tensions between Israel and Syria.

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UN Camp on the Israeli/
Syria border