

Master's Journey June '07



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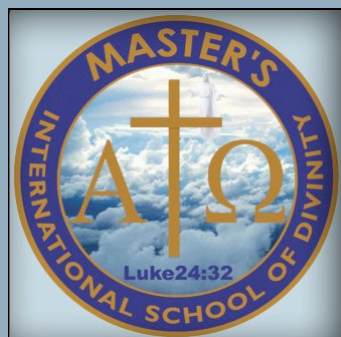
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MASTER'S FRIENDS AND STUDENTS ENJOY A 12-DAY STUDY TOUR OF ATHENS, CORINTH, ISRAEL AND PALESTINE!

As reported by Dennis D. Frey, Th.D., President, Master's International School of Divinity

Once again, after a long time away, I was privileged to return to the Holy Land with my dear friend and colleague of over twenty years, Dr. Charles Page. Under the supervision of Master's and the Jerusalem Institute for Biblical Exploration (JIBE), Dr. Page and I were honored to lead another study tour of the Land of our Faith, or as Dr. Page is fond of calling it, "The Fifth Gospel."

It had been thirteen years since my last visit. With all of the uncertainty in this perpetually troubled region of the world, I was unsure of what to expect. To paraphrase a line from an old Gospel hymn, "All of my worry was vain." From April 15-27, our Study Group experienced what may be described as the "perfect trip" to the Holy Land. My only regret is that we were not able to take each and every MISD graduate and student along with us! However, we plan to return and when we do, we hope you, the reader, will be able to join us.

As you would expect, space does not allow a detailed explanation of every wonderful aspect of the trip, so I will give you a few highlights and a few photos taken during our journey to add insight, and hopefully encourage you to be ready to join us on our return (sometime soon).

Day 1: We began our exploration journey, and departed from the U.S.A. bound for Greece on Olympic Air.

Day 2: We arrived in Athens, Greece and after checking in at our hotel, we had a tour of the city of Athens which included a visit to the Athens Museum and a stop by the Presidential Palace to see the Evzone Guards.

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Day 3: We ascended to the Acropolis and the majestic ruins there including the Parthenon. From the Acropolis we visited Mars Hill, the



Standing on Mars Hill overlooking the market place.

place of the hearing of St. Paul in Athens. Standing in the very place of Paul's majestic presentation of the Gospel, I read the actual sermon from Acts 17, and the power of that moment was like a vision from the past. I can honestly say that until that moment, I had only a superficial understanding of what Paul was really doing on Mars Hill. The entire group expressed the same thought. Then, after a brief hike, we made our way down to the famous Athenian Agora. Following our time in the Agora we continued to explore Athens by bus, visiting the Olympic Stadium, seeing the ruins of the Temple of Zeus, and other city highlights.

Day 4: This morning we departed early for the ruins of ancient Corinth. On our way we stopped at the famous Corinthian Canal. Once we arrive at Corinth we visited the museum and the ruins of Corinth. Of special importance to the Christian visitor is the Corinthian Agora with the Bema, where Paul spoke publicly to the local citizens. We stood at the very place where Paul was brought before Gallio, and acquitted. After our visit to Corinth we visited the ruins of the Cenchræa Harbor from which Paul sailed to Israel at the end of his missionary journeys in Greece. After our visit in Corinth we returned to Athens. After dinner we departed for the airport and our flight to Tel Aviv.

Day 5: Upon arrival in Tel Aviv we transferred to our hotel and after a brief rest, drove to Caesarea to the ruins of the Crusader's City, visited the Roman Theater built by Herod the great, and saw the harbor from which Paul sailed on to Rome during his final voyage.



The Mediterranean seashore in Caesarea.

A great highlight of our trip to Caesarea was the privilege of standing within the ruins of the official residence of Felix and Festus. There, at the very place where Paul preached to Agrippa, we read the actual account from Acts 26. What a moment! From Caesarea we journeyed to Mt. Carmel. There we looked out over the very place where Elijah confronted the prophets of



Statue of Elijah on Mt. Carmel.

Baal. At the Carmelite Convent, we visited a graceful little chapel built to commemorate Elijah's victory. From that location we were also able to look down into the valley of Megiddo.

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After this we journeyed to the Tel of Sepphoris (Tzippori), the capital city of Galilee and home of Herod Antipas. Both Joseph and Jesus (and the brothers of Jesus) worked as builders in the Galilean capital city found here. We concluded the day at our new hotel on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Day 6: We began the day with a visit to Nazareth to visit Mary's Well and the Church of the Annunciation, built in 1960-68 enclosing the crypt, which is one of the largest Christian sanctuaries in the Middle East. Then it was on to Hatzor (Hazor), the largest Canaanite city conquered by Joshua and the invading Israelites. We then worked our way south and stopped at the ruins of New Testament Bethsaida, the home village of Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Philip. We continued south to Capernaum and visited the site which served as the central headquarters for Jesus' public ministry.

Preserved in Capernaum are the ruins of the traditional house of Peter and the 4th century synagogue built on the foundations of the 1st century synagogue where Jesus taught and prayed. After this, we continued to Tabgha, the site of the Multiplication of Loaves and Fish. Here we rested under a beautiful little shelter and read the account of the feeding of the 5,000 from Mark chapter 6. We then drove to the top of the Mount of Beatitudes overlooking the Sea of Galilee and surrounding area, and returned to our hotel on the shores of the Sea of Galilee for dinner and overnight.

Day 7: Today we enjoyed an early morning boat ride on Lake Kinneret, known in ancient times as the Sea of Galilee, from the lakeside city of Tiberias.



On Galilee looking east toward the Golan Heights.

After returning from a peaceful boat ride, we drove to the eastern shore of the Kinneret where we visited the church and ruins at Kursi (Mark 5). Kursi is currently being excavated by Dr. Page and other archaeologists from JIBE and is the location of two of Jesus' miracles; the miracle of the swine (Mark 5) and the miracle of the fish and loaves (Mark 8).

Kursi is the more recent name of the exact place where Jesus healed the demoniac. This is an amazing place, and is actually the birthplace of the western church! The demoniac healed by Jesus became the first evangelist to the western world, and Biblical archaeologist as well as other Biblical scholars are in agreement that the 4,000 present at the second miracle of the loaves and fishes were the converts won under the preaching of the former demoniac! We hope to bring you more information about Kursi and its importance to the western church in the months to come.

From Kursi we went by bus to the Jordan River the drove past Beit Shean, an ancient city with extensive excavations. Here twenty layers of habitation have been found. The Roman Amphitheater located there is one of the best-preserved in Israel. Passing by Beth Shean, we traveled south, to visit Jericho, the world's oldest city. Here we stopped for a traditional lunch and hiked the long trail to the top of the Jericho excavations. Jericho is in the desert, and it felt like

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it! We then ascend to Jerusalem and transferred to our hotel for dinner and overnight.

Day 8: We began the day with a drive to Bethlehem for a visit to the Church of Nativity, and a drive by the Shepherd's Fields. While at the Church of the Nativity, we descended to the lower level to visit the exact spot where Christian tradition holds that Jesus was actually born. His birth spot is only yards from where Jerome translated the scripture into what is known as the Latin Vulgate. After we left Bethlehem we visited Herod's summer palace – The Herodion. Readers may be aware that at this very place, near the end of April, archaeologists from Hebrew University located the actual burial tomb of Herod. While there, we were told that this discovery was expected sometime soon, but we had no idea that it would be found only days after our departure! Following lunch in Bethlehem we visited the world renown Israel Museum, the 2nd Temple model of Jerusalem, and the wonderful Shrine of the Book which houses the Dead Sea Scrolls!

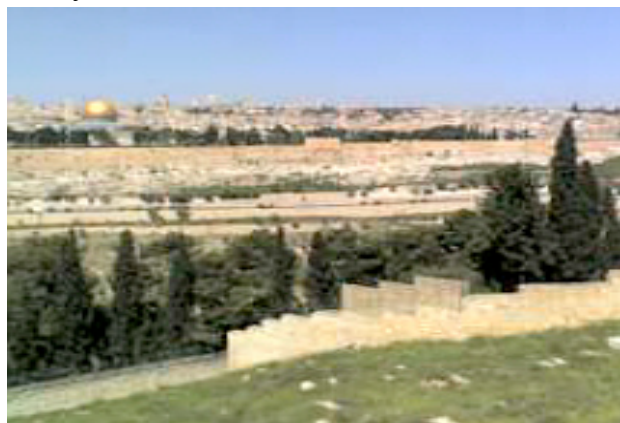
Day 9: This morning we drove to Masada where we ascended by cable car to visit the remarkable ruins of the Fortress built by Herod the Great, and where from 70 to 73 A.D., Jewish Zealots made their last stand in the Judean Revolt against the Roman Legions. On Masada we saw the remains of Herod's Palace; the apartments, baths, storehouses and cisterns - all used by the Jewish Defenders who took refuge there. After descending from Masada, we drove on a beautiful new road along the Dead Sea, which took us along the shore to Ein Gedi where a precipitous cliff, filled with caves, rises some 2,000 feet. We then continued to Qumran, the site where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in a cave by a shepherd boy.



Caves at Qumran where the Scrolls were found.

From there we continued for a visit to the Dead Sea. One of our group was brave enough to take a swim, but most of us were content to get our “feet wet!” The dead sea is 1,400 feet below sea level (the lowest point on earth), and plunges yet another 1,200 feet to its bottom. This amazing and still wild place was the “fighting grounds” of both Saul and David. Everyone had a much greater sense of the “manliness” of these great warriors after experiencing only a few hours in the land of their conquests. We then ascended to Jerusalem to our hotel for dinner and overnight.

Day 10: Early this morning drove to the Mount of Olives with its outstanding view of the city. Our first stop for the day was the Palm Sunday Church in Bethphage. We visited the Church of Pater Noster, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Church of All Nations, and viewed the Kidron Valley.



View of Old City Jerusalem from the Mt. of Olives.

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The Eastern Gate as seen from the Mt. of Olives.

In the afternoon we drove across the Kidron Vally to visit Mount Zion. Here we visited the traditional site of the Last Supper and the Dormition Abbey, a possible site for the burial of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Then we visited the Tomb of King David and the St. Peter's Church.

The great highlight of this day was the wonderful joy and heart stopping privilege of reading the account of Jesus' agony in Gethsemane in the very place where He endured so much for our salvation, and the group recitation of the



The Lord's Prayer in Aramaic.

Lord's Prayer in the Church of Pater Noster. Surrounding this church are mosaics of the Lord's Prayer in over 130 languages!

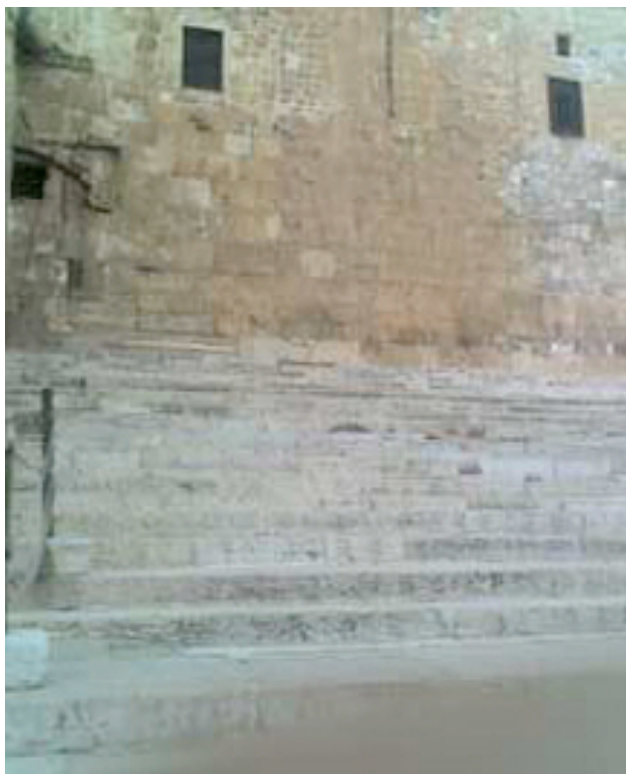


Mt. of Olives olive tree considered 2,000 years old.

Day 11: Today we proceeded towards the city walls built by Sulimanth the Magnificent enclosing the most Holy sites. We walked into the city through the Dung Gate and visit the Ophel Excavations and Rabbi's Teaching Steps at the southern end of the Temple Mount.

Here we paused to reflect on the many times that Jesus taught from these very steps. We read from the Master's teaching, and as we did so, it was not difficult to imagine what it must have been like as Jesus Himself confronted the Scribes and Pharisees. The steps here located on the southwestern side of the old city are the actual remains of the steps where He taught. We could only wonder, "Have my feet actually stood on the very step where my Savior stood?"

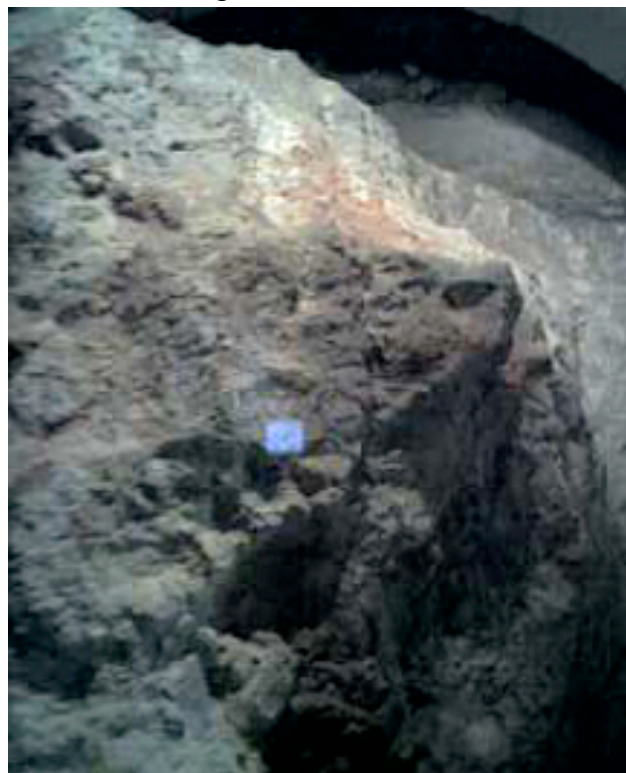
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The actual steps where Jesus taught.

We walked on toward Mount Moriah and viewed the Dome of the Rock enclosing the rock where Abraham would have offered Issac, where David bought the threshing floor and offered sacrifice for his sinful census of the people, and where Solomon built the first Temple. Of course, this is now the place where stands the Muslim Mosque of Al Aqsa, so we were not permitted to actually enter that area. Further south, we walked to the Western Wall or the Wailing Wall which is so important to Jews around the world. In the afternoon, we started at Saint Stephen's Gate and went into the Old City to visit the Church of Saint Anne, the Pool of Bethesda, the Lithostrotos, where Jesus was beaten by Roman soldiers and began his walk to the cross. We then walked through the bazaar to the Holy Sepulcher Church which is built over the site of Jesus' execution, burial and resurrection.

A double honor was afforded to our group when through the office of Dr. Page, we were allowed to first enter the Russian Orthodox Church which protects the ancient street and reconstructed gate that was the final gate out of the city of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus. Next, we were taken to an underground location that protects yet another section of the same street with a similar gate, but which has probably remained undisturbed since the time of Jesus. One thing is unquestioned, the paving stones and street upon which we walked that day were the very same upon which Jesus walked as He carried His cross to Golgotha.



Close up photo of the rock known as Golgotha housed in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

We took a few moments to walk those stones as we sang, "I walked Today Where Jesus Walked." Oh, the shame mixed with unspeakable joy we felt in those moments!

We then returned to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher where to spent time in reflection and

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prayer as we considered our own unworthiness and the wonder of our salvation. "Oh, What A Saviour!"

After that, we had lunch at a street-side café located in Old Jerusalem, lingered for a last look at the unique shops, then took the bus from the Jaffa Gate back to our hotel

Day 12: We left Jerusalem at 3:00a for the drive to Tel Aviv from where we flew back to Athens, then on to the U.S.A.

Ok, I know what you may be wondering. "Did you feel unsafe during your travels to Israel?" I am confident that you are curious about this, because since our return, everyone I've spoken with seemed more interested in that question than anything else. The answer that I have been giving is, "Yes, twice during our trip." With enlarging eyes, most want to know the details. Then, I facetiously say, "The first time was while waiting for our flight to leave New York, and the second time while we were waiting in the Newark airport for our flight back to Evansville!" The truth is, once we got underway, the thought really never crossed our minds. Everyone wants to go back, and my wife and I are excited and anxious about getting the next trip planned as soon as possible.

The next trip is in the works, and we expect to be making announcements sometime soon. Keep watching the school's web site, and start saving your money! **MJ**

Thought Provoking...

Can a divorced man serve as the minister of a Church? What do you think? Write us and share your thoughts from the Bible.

EMAIL US AT: Editor@mdivs.edu

Best Excuses if You Get Caught Sleeping At Your Desk

"They told me at the blood bank this might happen."

"This is just a 15 minute power-nap like they raved about in the last time management course you sent me to."

"Whew! Guess I left the top off the liquid paper"

"I wasn't sleeping! I was meditating on the mission statement and envisioning a new paradigm!"

"This is one of the seven habits of highly effective people."

"I was testing the keyboard for drool resistance"

"I was actually doing a "Stress Level Elimination Exercise Plan" (SLEEP) I learned at the last mandatory seminar you made me attend."

"I was doing a highly specific Yoga exercise to relieve work-related stress. Are you discriminatory towards people who practice Yoga?"

"Hey! Why did you interrupt me? I had almost figured out a solution to our biggest problem."

"Someone must've put decaf in the wrong pot."

"Boy, that cold medicine I took last night just won't wear off!"

"Ah, the unique and unpredictable circadian rhythms of the workaholic!"

"I wasn't sleeping. I was trying to pick up my contact lens without any hands."

Time Progress

A Louisiana man was overheard saying, "When the end of the world comes, I hope to be in Louisiana."

When asked why, he replied, "I'd rather be here because everything happens in Louisiana 20 years later than in the rest of the civilized world."
