

Harding University in Greece (HUG): Spring 2014

Report #1

Dale W. Manor, professor of Archaeology and Bible

Quite a bit of time has lapsed since we arrived. Departure from the USA was January 15, arriving in Athens on the 16th. The flight was relatively uneventful except the anxiety of one student who missed a connection to Little Rock and another who almost missed the connection in Atlanta, but we all arrived safely under the auspices of Mike and Beth James who serve as the directors of the site that we affectionately refer to as “The Artemis.” The facility was formerly a hotel, which Harding purchased and has transformed into our home base as we venture into new and exciting places. We chose to keep the name of the hotel facility even though it reflects Greek mythologies. Rest assured, however, that our faculty, staff, and students are dedicated Christians and seek to minister as our Lord’s servants. This is a great group of students and it is an honor to be with them.

We hit the ground running with classes commencing the day after we arrived. Because of the need to arrange our classes around the various excursions, it is often necessary to have classes on Saturday (and sometimes even Sunday, although we always give appropriate time to worship). The Saturday after our arrival we toured the Acropolis of Athens, the Areopagus, and the Agora, which in one way or another were part of Paul’s experiences in Acts 17.

The Acropolis preserves the remains of a number of major architectural highlights of the Greeks, most notably the Parthenon and the Erechtheion. Both structures were built in the 5th century BC. The Erechtheion was a peculiar structure designed to pay homage to a number of deities, among them Athena, Poseidon, and Hephaestus. The name of the building comes from the foster-child of Athena who was also worshipped there.¹ The photograph shows the structure from the southeast with the Porch of the Maidens the main point that you can see. In the foreground you might note the foundation remains of what was an earlier temple dedicated to Athena dating from the 6th century BC and destroyed ca. 510 BC.



The Parthenon (meaning basically “virgin”) was dedicated to the matron deity of the city—Athena. She and Poseidon had vied for the role of chief god of the city with Athena gaining the victory. The current building rests above the ruins of an earlier temple, which was destroyed by the Persians in a sack of the city in 480 BC. The construction of the Parthenon as we know it was initiated about 450 BC under the rule of Pericles. Pericles and his friends became the subjects of a number of legal disputes among which was embezzlement. Interestingly ostraca pertaining to some kind of trial involving Pericles are preserved in the Agora Museum; it is presumed that he was

acquitted of the charges. (The terms “ostrakon” [singular form] and “ostraca” [plural form] are now used in archaeology of the ancient Near East to refer to pieces of pottery with writing on them.)



¹ Christopher Mee and Antony Spawforth, *Greece*. Oxford Archaeological Guides (NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 52. Cf. Emily Kearns, “Erechtheus,” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd ed. Eds. S. Hornblower and A.



A visit to the Areopagus is always part of a Christian's tour. It is exhilarating to be in a location where Paul gave a formalized defense of his faith. Paul noted that the Athenians were "very religious" and alluded to their "objects of worship" (Acts 17:22-23). Camp notes that among the deities worshiped in the area of the Acropolis and its surroundings were: Athena, Artemis, Asclepius, Dionysus, Aglaurus, Dioscuri, Theseus, Aphrodite, Eros, Pan, Apollo, Demeter, Persephone, Hephaestus, the "Twelve Gods," Zeus, Caesar Augustus and Roma.²

While there is some discussion of exactly where the Areopagus was in Paul's day,³ there is no question that he gave his defense/explanation before at least part of this august body. Regretfully, the intellectuals among them scoffed at his teaching and largely discarded him as a "seedpicker" ("babbler" in ESV)---using a disparaging word of someone who "makes his living by picking up scraps."⁴ Paul soon departed to Corinth only after establishing a few believers in Athens (cf. Acts 17:32-34).

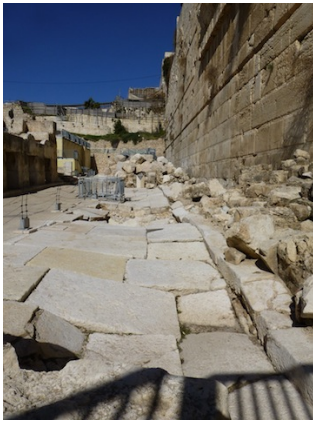
A week later we visited the National Archaeological Museum, which houses many of the most significant archaeological artifacts from all over Greece. Because of Greece's severe budget constraints, many parts of the museum were closed, but there was still much to see. One of the most profound and still mystifying discoveries is the so-called "Antikythera Mechanism." This is an elaborate, yet small machine from the 2nd century BC, consisting of sophisticated gears and levers by which people could calculate past and future placements of the heavenly bodies. It even has instructions written on it in ancient Greek! In many ways it is an early version of "computer" minus the electricity! Scholars are still mystified by its design and sophistication. It is an excellent example to help answer the argument that some proffer that we are so advanced today that we don't need the Bible. The technological sophistication and advancement of the people of antiquity continues to baffle us in many ways.



²Ibid.

³Ibid.; cf. John McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 309.

⁴W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 2d ed. rev. by F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), 762.



After another week, we finally embarked our first extended trip for the semester. We left for Israel on Sunday, February 2; however, our departure was at 10:30 p.m. with a scheduled landing at 12:30 a.m. and an eventual bedtime at minimum of 3:00 a.m. Our touring day started at the Mt. of Olives and a sample of Jesus' panoramic view of the city of Jerusalem. It would have been a first-century version of this view when Jesus sat on the Mt. of Olives and told his disciples of the destruction of the city (Matt 24:1-14). Later we would see vivid evidence of that destruction. The archaeologists left a pile of the stones of the Temple compound in place to help us



visualize the extent of the havoc. Note as well the impact that the destruction of the upper walls had on the pavement leaving craters where the stones had fallen (in the foreground). We also walked through the drainage tunnel that ran along the eastern edge of the valley skirting the Temple. Josephus mentioned attempts by some in Jerusalem to escape through the sewers, but the Romans stopped them (see *Wars* 6.373-80). It was indeed sobering to tunnel our way through these sewers and connect so vividly with that destruction.

Our tour included a visit to the water system that allowed David access to capture the city (2 Sam 5); but more exciting for most students was the walk through the water channel sponsored by Hezekiah by which he sought to secure Jerusalem's water supply from Assyrian sabotage. I did not go through the system this time since it was cold and I had not brought appropriate attire to do so; instead I went through the water channel that Hezekiah's tunnel replaced. It is the channel associated with the "waters of Shiloah that flow gently" to which Isaiah alludes in his indictment of Ahaz's lack of faith (Isa. 8:5). This was a watering system that transported water southward from the Gihon spring and apparently watered gardens in the Kidron Valley (cf. 2 Kgs 25:4). As we passed along the way we could see where the horizontal channels leading to the valley below had been blocked. In addition, the roof of the channel was blocked with stones, probably to deny the Assyrians access to the water either for use or sabotage (cf. 2 Chron 32:4).



We took the group to the Valley of Elah where we "re-enacted" the battle between David and Goliath. This visit always brings to life the story from 1 Samuel. The geographic setting lends itself to understanding the narrative so much better. It is also neat to pick up a stone from the brook realizing this was David's weapon of choice with which to take down the giant. (The arrow points to Kristin Scanlon's rock "in flight.")

Shemesh; Jdg 13-14) as well as the episode when the Philistines returned the Ark of the Covenant to the Israelites (1 Sam 6:10-18).

Since most of the students are also taking a class in Biblical Archaeology, they could not escape my discussion of elements of our work at the site. We have uncovered part of a Late Bronze Age palace (ca. 1350 BC) as well as part of shrine dating from approximately the time of Samson (ca. 1100 BC; photo next page). I received news while in Jerusalem that the vessels that we found in the shrine corroborate our inference that it was a structure





used for some significant ceremonial purpose. We have not identified the deity who was the object of adoration there, but that might come with additional work! Come help us!!!

During our visit to Jerusalem, we witnessed a rare event---the induction into the Israeli Army of a brigade of recent military recruits. This event occurred at the Western Wall in Jerusalem---Israel's most sacred religious site. Peculiarly, there was hardly anyone at the wall itself, they were instead in the courtyard outside the worship area. This gave us an opportunity to visit the Wall with minimal distraction of throngs of people. The Western Wall (also known as the "Wailing Wall") is the western retaining wall of the Herodian platform on which the Temple stood. For centuries this was the closest Jews could get to the ancient Temple area and only in recent years have excavations exposed the length of the western wall to permit a closer access, but the traditional Western Wall is still the



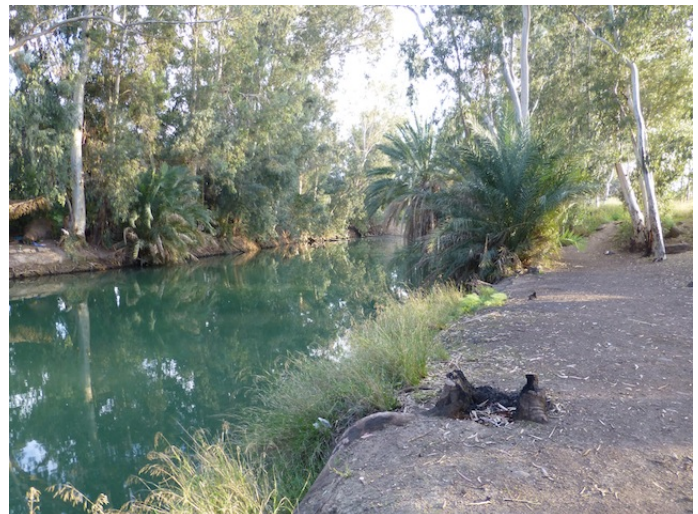
most sacred for most Jewish worshipers. The worshipers will often write their requests on small pieces of paper and crimp them into the crevices between the stones.



The next day we had a quick visit to the Dead Sea where the students floated in the waters. This is one of the most unique water experiences one can have. It is essentially impossible to sink in the mineral-rich waters of the Sea. Salt encrustation envelops the stones along the shores and makes for some rugged walking in bare feet which some of the students quickly discovered.

We eventually migrated northward toward the Galilee and along the way stopped to ride some camels---another very unique experience as the camels scissor their way up from their crouching positions.

The move to Galilee brought vivid changes in the richness of the vegetation. The Dead Sea and Judean wilderness was generally bereft of green, but wild vegetation became more and more prominent as we migrated northward. We stopped briefly at Beth-Shean and then made our way to part of the Jordan River where we had a brief devotional and a period of reflection beside the tranquil waters (in stark contrast to the traditionally expressed "On Jordan's Stormy Banks..." [although I have some photos from the 1920s during Jordan's flood season and it is indeed stormy!]).



The next day saw us visit various sites in the northern Galilee.

After the death of Solomon, there was a challenge to the throne and Jeroboam, son of Nebat wrested the northern tribes from the Davidic line.



The Bible narrates that Jeroboam set up worship sites with golden calves at Bethel and Dan deliberately in part to secure the kingdom around his rule (1 Kgs 12:25-33). Dan is a delightful area with copious water resources. It is easy to understand how a pagan mindset would see it in a site to



worship in some fashion. We visited Jeroboam's high place (the students are sitting on the steps leading to the high place platform; the aluminum frame on the right reflects the approximate shape and size of the altar that Jeroboam and his successors built at the site).

Part of Dan's earlier stratification preserves the remains of a mudbrick city gate dating from the time of the Patriarchs! It is fascinating to think that perhaps Abraham was familiar with this gate as he passed Dan on his way to rescue Lot from the invading Mesopotamian kings (Gen 14)! The gate likely dates from a little after him though, and it more likely connected with the life of Jacob (we had discussed elements of this gate in class just before leaving to go to Israel).



Later in the day, we visited the palace of Agrippa II at Caesarea Philippi. Here lived, part of the time at least, Herod Agrippa II and Bernice (his sister) who lived apparently as husband/wife (cf. Paul's encounter with them in Acts 25:13-26:32). Herodias was the daughter of Bernice by Aristobulus, a son of Herod the Great, and she is the one who engineered through her daughter's dancing the execution and beheading of John the Baptist (Matt 14:1-12). It is tantalizing to consider that perhaps Herodias had grown up with her mother in this palace. (Photo is of Brittany Firquain as she is about to descend into the

basement area of the palace. The base of a round tower is to the left.)

On Sunday, we worshiped with the brethren in Nazareth. There is a small congregation of Arab believers there. The work is difficult since they are a minority (Christians) within a minority (Greek Orthodox & Catholic), within a minority (Islam), in the larger Israeli matrix! The pressure comes from all sides, but their spirit is good and they have a fairly wide representation of ages in the congregation. They always enjoy visits from others who help encourage them in their work. It was an honor to share the table with them.

Visit in the afternoon took us to Capernaum where we saw the foundations of the synagogue that was sponsored and financed by the centurion whose servant Jesus healed (Lk 7:1-10). This is the centurion who recognized Jesus' power and authority and deferred to Jesus' authority declaring that he was an unworthy person for Jesus to come into his house. Jesus lauded his faith as exemplary for all (Lk 7:9).

Immediately in front of the synagogue are the remains of a house that dates to the first century and that very early was considered to be Peter's house. The early date of the identification (predating Constantine's mother) and some evidence on the plaster of the house provide reasonable evidence to infer this identification



(although it is certainly still open for discussion). If this was Peter's house, it would be where Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law of her fever (Matt 8:14-17). This fever was probably more severe than a simply cold-oriented fever. Malaria was apparently pervasive in the area and it is likely that she had malaria and hence was in serious condition. The visit here was pleasant and lended itself to a reasonable mental reconstruction and its proximity to the Sea of Galilee certainly evoked images of Jesus' life.



Our last day took us to Megiddo, the site that has served as the reference point for battles throughout recorded history. John used that fact to convey the locale as the scene for the final combat between Christ and Satan (cf. Rev 16:16). Whether that engagement is literal or not, the metaphor is a powerful one given the history of conflict in the region. Our visit addressed, in addition, the chronological controversy that has emerged from the recent excavations of the site. These are likely more agenda driven than data driven, but this is neither the time nor place to address those. (Photo is of the Late Bronze Age gate.)



Our day ended with a visit to Caesarea Maritima—a site that Herod the Great developed and where Paul was imprisoned for over two years and from which he was shipped to Rome to stand trial for Jesus (photo is of the aqueduct built by Herod to provide water for his

new town). Paul declared to the Romans that his desire was to preach to them (Rom 1:11-15), but he apparently did not anticipate the convoluted and circuitous path by which he would eventually end up in Rome (cf. Acts 23:11). Paul's arrest in Jerusalem took him eventually to Caesarea where he had hearings before Felix, Festus and Agrippa (with Bernice present). We saw the likely setting where that hearing took place (see photo on right) and certainly were in the palace area associated with the Herodian and Roman rulers.



This report is only a fraction of the items we saw and discussed. We did a lot more and we returned rather exhausted. There were no classes today (Feb 11) to permit the students to recuperate. I have taken advantage of the quiet and down time to write this report. I pray you find it of some value.

As Yossi, our guide says, and quoting from Psalms: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Ps 122:6a)