

YES, WE ARE LEADING ANOTHER TRIP TO ISRAEL!



Israel is our favorite place on the planet! We cannot seem to stay away. Enough people have asked us to go again that we have decided to schedule our 4th “last-ever” trip to Israel – Ed’s 35th trip altogether! It will be from March 21 through March 31 of 2018.

Israel never gets old. Every time we visit, we discover something new. In the guidebook she wrote for Imagine Tours, Gwen describes it this way:

Israel is a land of contrasts. Melting snow trickles from the mountains into the dry desert; modern skyscrapers tower over ancient ruins; donkeys share the streets with horn blowing taxicabs; the rhythm of ritual psalms is interrupted by a piercing call to pray from a minaret; the sounds of Hebrew, Arabic, English, French, and Russian mingle in the marketplaces.

Israel is a land of beauty and austerity. It is a land that promises peace, yet is inundated with war. It is a land of the past and the present – *and you will be experiencing both!*

On this trip we will be joined by three young pastors from central Florida: Timo Strawbridge, Kenny Ellis, and Drew Bennett. We are grateful for their excitement and participation.

As you can see from the above photo that Ed snapped of a couple on a recent trip, we will have a lot of fun as we explore this precious land.

We will:

- Ride camels across the same desert sands that so many of the patriarchs traversed in their journeys to and from the land of Canaan.
- Enjoy a hilarious (and relaxing) time floating in the Dead Sea.
- Visit the oasis of En Gedi where David hid from King Saul.
- Drive to the top of Mount Carmel where Elijah once defeated the prophets of Baal.
- Duck inside a shepherd’s cave overlooking what once was the “little town” of Bethlehem.
- Enjoy the thrill of a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee – the very lake that Jesus calmed for his disciples.
- Travel the winding path that Jesus’ trudged as he shouldered a heavy cross.
- And peer into an empty tomb!

Every time we visit Israel, we have friends who bombard us with questions of safety. But despite the world chaos or religious tensions that have been concurrent with many of our trips, we have always felt safe.

- We will no doubt see young men and women in army fatigues with M16 rifles slung over their shoulders at every corner and bus stop – but we’ve seen them every time we’ve been in Israel.
- We may witness combat helicopters flying across the Valley of Armageddon – but we have snapped plenty of pictures of them in the past.
- Our backpacks will be searched as we pass through the metal detectors that flank the entrance to the Temple Mount – but that makes us feel very secure.
- We may even travel far enough north to see the tiny Syrian village situated along the shores of an idyllic lake just across the border from Israel – and, if we do, we hope the little old man with the amazing stories is there to greet us. He will probably have plenty of new tales to tell.

We completely trust our Israeli guide and our Palestinian bus driver to keep us in safe territory. As a matter of fact, we are planning to take at least one of our grandchildren with us on this trip. We are convinced that one of the most important foundations in our own children’s spiritual lives was the fact that they each had the opportunity to visit Israel as a teenager.

We like to tell people that apart from going to Israel, reading your Bible is like watching an old black-and-white TV. When you return, reading the Bible becomes a hi-definition, 3-D experience!

Yes, we love this land and we would love for you to join us! If you would like another brochure, please contact us and we will send it right away. [Or you can access our website at 71-17.org.] Nothing can ground and grow your faith more than a visit to the place where it all began!

IS GOD FINISHED WITH ISRAEL?

There are many Christians who believe that God is no longer committed to Israel. Almost of all of the “mainline” denominations hold this position – in fact many actually denounce Israel’s right to their homeland. To date, the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA), United Methodist Church (UMC) and several Quaker bodies have approved divestment actions. The United Church of Christ, the Episcopal Church, and the Mennonite Church are currently considering economic sanctions designed to harm Israel, and are frequently joined by Catholic denominations. How can this be?

The roots of this movement go back to the development of Liberation Theology in the 1960’s. This false teaching promotes the idea that Jesus did not come to save us from our sin – rather His purpose is to deliver oppressed people from their oppressors. Since Israel “oppresses” the Palestinian people, the Jews are to be resisted and expelled from the “occupied territories.” They neglect the fact that God originally gave this land to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In denying the authority and reliability of Scripture, some Christians actually practice anti-Semitism and do it with great zeal.

Today, Replacement Theology (which teaches that Israel is no longer the recipient of God’s promises but has been completely replaced by the Church) is quite common among believers. Using this reasoning, they say that Christians have completely replaced Israel as God’s covenant people. Biblically, the argument often begins with Galatians 3:29.

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.

The conclusion is that the Church has taken the place of Israel - but is this the case? Consider these 4 facts:

1. Israel and the Church have different origins.

The promises to Abraham’s descendants begin in Genesis 12 with the Abrahamic Covenant.

*And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing; Genesis 12:2*

2. Israel and the Church have different Foundations.

Jesus Christ Himself is the living foundation of the Church. 1 Corinthians 3:11 says:

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.



Jesus had not yet been born on earth at the time of Israel’s foundation. Actually, the Church could not be established until after Christ died, was buried, rose again, and ascended into heaven. As Paul explained in Ephesians 2:20, Christ Himself is the “chief cornerstone.” Jesus predicted that the Church would be built at a future time. Matthew 16:18 says, . . . *upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.*

Israel was not founded on the finished work of Christ on the cross but on God’s promises to her, which are still in force and have yet to be fulfilled.

3. They have different purposes.

Israel was never given the Great Commission. She was to be the beacon of God’s faithfulness to a nation that worshiped Him and would consequently enjoy His blessings. In doing so, other nations would see the special relationship that the Jews had with God, and would want to worship Him as well.

The Church by contrast was given the promise and presence of the Holy Spirit with which to fulfill Christ’s great commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

4. Israel and the Church have different futures:

“For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion. He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.” “And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.” From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”

Romans 11:25-29

It is apparent that God is not finished with Israel. Paul explains that a partial hardening has taken place in Israel, allowing Gentiles to be included in the program of God’s redemptive work. This was prophesied in Genesis 12:3 and reiterated in Galatians 3:8. In those two verses, God says that in Abraham all the nations will be blessed. Paul quotes Genesis 12:3 in Galatians and calls it the gospel.

God in His great and sovereign plan has worked all things after the counsel of His will (Eph 1:11) so that the Gentiles would be saved. When the time of the Gentiles is over, God will move upon Israel. They will accept Jesus as the Messiah, and they will become a great and powerful nation used by God.

This is why we continue to visit Israel – as followers of Jesus who are “grafted” in to the blessings of Abraham, we are always blessed to learn more about our spiritual heritage!