

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your support to help me go on this once in a lifetime experience. This was truly life changing for me. My faith was deepened, my future ministry strengthened, and I experienced God in a way I have never before!!

This would not have been possible without your amazing contribution, to which I am so grateful for. Below is a diary of the trip and so photos!

Thank you again!

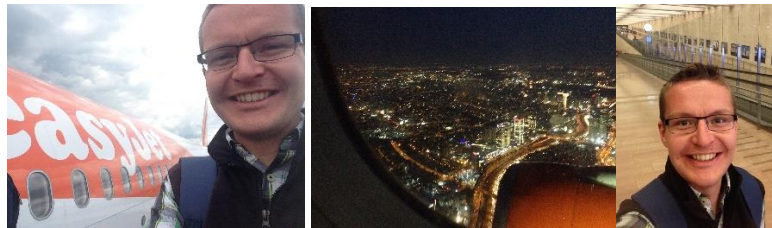
Preparation Day

Prior to going we had an orientation day, this was to help us understand the day by day of the pilgrimage and the significance of the trip but also the political climate today.

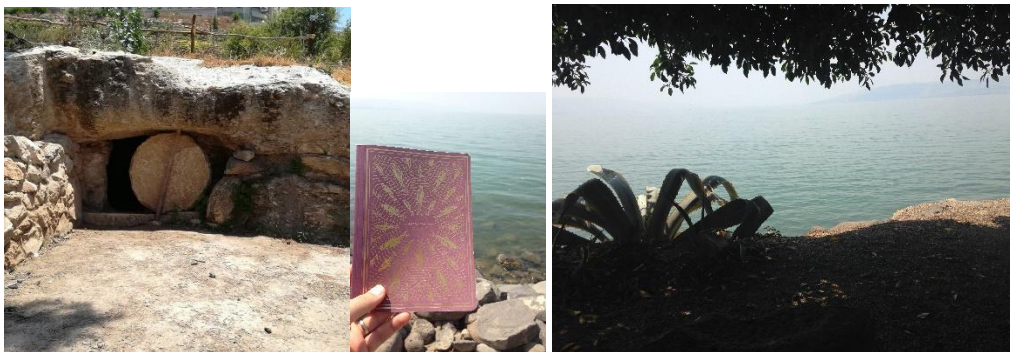


Monday 10 June TO THE HOLY LAND

We travelled from Durham to Manchester then on to Tel Aviv before driving to the sea of Galilee to stay in Tiberias.



Tuesday NAZARETH THE BACKGROUND TO JESUS' MINISTRY



We visited the site of Sepphoris, the largest and most important first-century Galilean town, and a place where Joseph is likely to have worked. Here we got a good feel for how Romans and Jews lived in the same area together. We continue to Nazareth where we were shown a reconstruction of a first-century Palestinian village and then have an authentic Palestinian lunch. We had free time to visit the Basilica of the Annunciation or the souk (market) before travelling back to Galilee and a late afternoon boat trip on the Sea of Galilee.

Wednesday GALILEE – JESUS’ LAKESIDE MINISTRY



We visited the sites associated with Jesus' life around the Sea of Galilee. We began at the Church of St Peter Primacy at Mensa Christi (where Jesus appeared to his disciples after the resurrection) and Tabgha. We then traveled to Capernaum, Jesus' Galilean base, where we visited the wonderful remains of this centre of Jesus' Galilee ministry. Before we travelled north to Banias, the site of Caesarea Philippi where we had the chance of a 90 min riverside walk through the nature reserve, ending at a stunning waterfall. We returned over the Golan Heights and stopped for a view of Mount Hermon, commonly associated with Jesus' transfiguration, before returning to Galilee.

Thursday JORDAN VALLEY & JERICHO – FOLLOWING JESUS ON THE WAY



We travelled southward to Jericho and spent the morning at the Wadi Qelt, where we had a steep walk down to the valley close to St George's Monastery, and the path where Jesus would have walked up to Jerusalem. After a service at the bottom of the valley, we had lunch at the Green Valley Restaurant in Jericho and had the chance to explore the ancient town of Jericho before making a short visit to Qumran, the site where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. We then continued our journey up to Jerusalem. Where we stayed in a hotel on the edge of the city. In the evening we headed to the western wall to experience the worship of the Jewish community.



Friday BETHLEHEM



We crossed into Palestinian territory to Bethlehem, visiting first Herodion, one of Herod's desert fortress-palaces. We then continued to the Shepherds Fields at Beit Sahour. Lunch is at the Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation in the village of Beit Jala where we heard something of their valuable work. In the afternoon, we continued to Manger Square to visit the Church of the Nativity and St Jerome's caves. We had some free time around Manger Square before returning to Jerusalem where we visited the Western Wall as Sabbath approached.

Saturday THE OLD CITY – JESUS' TRIAL, DEATH AND RESURRECTION



After an early morning visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, we began our day walking down the Mount of Olives via the Church of Dominus Flevit to the Garden of Gethsemane, recalling Jesus' last night with his disciples. We continued to the church of St Peter in Gallicantu where we recalled Jesus' last night in prison. We then walked through Jaffa Gate to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. We had lunch at Ecce Homo convent, and afterwards had time off, to enjoy the peace of the convent's terrace and explore the Roman pavement underground. We then walked through the old city and end our afternoon at the Garden Tomb where we recall the events of the first Easter Sunday.



Sunday JERUSALEM AT THE TIME OF JESUS



After an early morning visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre we joined the local congregation at St George's Cathedral. We had lunch in the Guesthouse and followed by a visit to the Ophel excavations discovering more about the Temple at the time of Jesus. We ended the afternoon at the Israel Museum. Where there is a model of ancient Jerusalem and we also see the Dead Sea Scrolls, housed within the striking Shrine of the Book, as well as a highly impressive collection of Jewish and Roman artefacts.

Monday 17 June HOMEWARD BOUND



We began with a visit to the Temple Mount to view the el-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock. We then visited the Western Steps and discover more about the Temple at the time of Jesus. Before lunch we had the chance to walk through Hezekiah's Tunnel. Before heading to the airport for our return flight.



On our return we had a reflection day. Where we shared the impact of the experience as a group and listened to personal testimonies.

I struggle to put into words how profoundly meaningful the pilgrimage was for me. I know that my future ministry especially my preaching will be enhanced from this trip. I have seen and experienced the bible come to life in a way I have never before known. I am so thankful to all who made my pilgrimage possible.

I am forever grateful

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