

Bless Israel - The Bible Lands (Study Tour) from 16 – 25 Sept 2016

By God's grace, Jessie and I had the opportunity to participate in a group familiarization/study tour to Israel/Jordan and walk the Bible Land – or should I say, the homeland of our forefathers? This tour was specially tailored for Chinese-speaking pastors and church leaders from various denominations from Singapore, Malaysia and Yunnan (China). It was an indescribable homecoming experience and an eye opener for most of the participants. For both us it was the fulfilment of our lifelong desire and dream to visit Israel, the Promised Land, and to see the Scripture come alive as we walked, explored and viewed the many biblical sites and museums throughout these 9 days, engaging our 6 senses, including our spiritual eye.



Here, I share briefly some snippets and photos from our visit.

Mount Nebo (Jordan)

Before entering Israel, the Promised Land, the group ascended Mt Nebo which is on the side of the Jordanian kingdom and were thrilled by the splendid view that God granted Moses before he died – a land flowing with milk and honey which He had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exodus 33: 1-3, Deut 34:1- 4). We could see the vast landscape, deserts, colourful mountain ranges and valleys in the horizon afar. The view from this mount was exhilarating and beautiful.



With our spiritual appetite whetted and stirred, we made our journey into Israel on the 4th day. We journeyed from Amman in Jordan, via King Hussein Highway (known also as King's Highway) which is linked to Allenby Bridge, on the side of Tel Aviv, the present capital of Israel. Like Singapore and Johore causeway link, there are also two separate distinct immigration/custom checkpoints manned by soldiers and police.



A snake-like sculpture in the form of the cross, representing the pole Moses held up in the wilderness, has been erected here as a memorial.



A museum and photo gallery with exhibits of archaeological findings, consisting of civilisation, cultural and religious artifacts belonging to that period.



The Promised Land – Israel in the far horizon, a land flowing with milk and honey



Greenhouses in the desert

From there, we passed the Judean Desert section of the Holy Land which stretches from the Negev along the western side of the Dead Sea up to the north of Jericho. A bone-dry and isolated area noted for its scorching heat, this strip of land is also known as the wilderness of Judah. This is probably the desolate area to which Jesus withdrew when Satan tempted Him at the beginning of His public ministry. (Mk1:12-13) The vast deserts, hills and mountain ranges along the route are all very much alive. Most prominent being the Golan Heights, a prime military hot-bed during the Israel-Jordan 7-day war. Pockets of green oasis and cultivations are very much noticeable from this side of the journey compared to the Jordanian-control side – testimony indeed of our Father's love and faithfulness unto His people.

The daily sumptuous meals and additional supply of bottled water were more



Golan Heights seen from afar



Sea of Galilee seen from afar

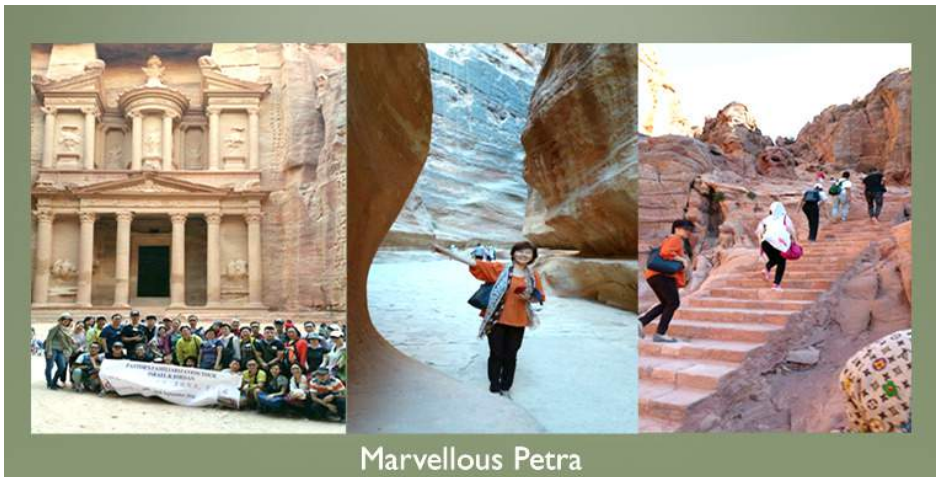


than enough to replenish our body fluid and restore our strength and energy to tackle and climb the rough flights of steps and rocky terrains as we visited and explored the many biblical and archaeological sites.

Petra (known as the rose-red city) (Jordan)

This is a UNESCO World Heritage Site which was recently voted one of the New 7 Wonders of the World.

Petra is the Greek word for “rock”, a name it gets from the wonderful colour of the rock from which many of the city’s structures were carved. It is a valley surrounded on all sides by very steep rocky cliffs, with a few narrow gorges leading inside. In this valley, the city of Petra was built. Its Biblical name was Sela. The earliest inhabitants of this area were the Horites (Hurrians). Later, Esau and his descendants, the Edomites, gradually replaced the Hurrians. The Edomites lived here when Israel came from Egypt during the Exodus about 1445 B.C. Here we visited interesting monuments such as the Treasury (a tomb of a Nabatean King), then the field of tombs, obelisks, the altar and the Al Madhbah. From this highest point, we can view the whole of the rock city.



Marvellous Petra

In summary

This trip to Israel was very educational and edifying to Jessie and me. It enabled us to make the connections between what we read in the Bible and what we get to see – the real Biblical sites and archaeological evidences. No doubt other members in our travel group must have also felt like us that our on-the-ground experiences of the ancient places in Jordan and Israel have enhanced our comprehension of the Bible and deeply impacted our faith in Christ. At other available opportunities, we can share more with our greater confidence in the Word of God.

Deacon Peter Cheong