

The Manna Family Pilgrimage to Israel

May 1-11, 2010



AN EVANGELICAL PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND: THE PURPOSE AND PLAN FOR A DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY

Introduction

What is a Pilgrimage?

The definition of a pilgrimage is “a journey, especially a religious trek to a site at which God has revealed Himself in the past” (Brand & Draper, 2003, p. 1299). Many people have not considered whether there is a difference between a pilgrimage and a religious tour I would like to propose that there is a difference. Tourism has at its focus rest or adventure. The definition of tourism is “the practice of traveling for pleasure” (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 2004). Thousands of evangelicals tour the Holy Land every year without calling their trip a pilgrimage. Some of these trips may only be tourism to religious sites, yet others may be a study tour in which the traveler is unaware that his trip could be compared to a pilgrimage. A true pilgrimage should have the goal and plan for a spiritual awakening in the heart and mind of the traveler.

The Purpose for an Evangelical Pilgrimage

Biblical Basis for Pilgrimage

The concept of being a stranger in a foreign land is a foundational belief to all evangelicals. A Southern gospel sung in churches in the 1980s was entitled “This World is not my Home.”

This world is not my home I'm just passing through
my treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue
the angels beckon me from Heaven's open door
and I can't feel at home in this world anymore
O Lord you know I have no friend like you
if Heaven's not my home then Lord what will I do?
the angels beckon me from Heaven's open door
and I can't feel at home in this world anymore
(Burton & Graham, 2006, para. 1-2)

This song is based on the scripture passage in Hebrews 11 which states that men of faith are exiles on the earth and died without completely receiving their promise. The reason given by God is that “they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city” (Heb. 11:16, English Standard Version). Thus, the Christian, in some sense of the word, is always on a pilgrimage.

In the Old Testament, there are many examples of pilgrimages to special sites such as Abraham’s visit to Mt. Moriah. By the time of Christ, the Jewish tradition, set forth in scripture, to travel to Jerusalem for the Passover was assumed. “Journeys to the statutory feasts at Jerusalem, where the Temple enjoyed exclusive prestige, were well established by NT times (cf. notably Luke 2:41ff.). Each of them was a ‘pilgrimage-festival’” (Wood & Marshall, 1996, p. 930).

Psalm 84 is a song written for the pilgrim to Mt. Zion. “Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.... They go from strength to strength; each one appears be-

fore God in Zion....For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere” (Ps. 84:5, 7, 10a, ESV). The Israelite was not only encouraged to journey to Jerusalem, but was occasionally required. In Deuteronomy 16:16, young men must go the place which God appoints three times a year. From scripture, pilgrimage is an assumed a part of the Christian’s life.

Brian Kinzel is a Hebrew professor at Irpin Theological Seminary in Kiev, Ukraine and a personal friend. He recently was a participant in a study tour to Israel. Brian said, “From my standpoint, as I teach my students to be exegetical teachers, a visit to the sites where the Biblical events happened is invaluable. Most of the original readers of the Bible were Jewish and had visible associations to the locations mentioned in scripture. We don’t have that advantage” (B. Kinzel, personal communication, April 23, 2010).

Church and Missions Historical Basis for Pilgrimage

“Christians have had pilgrimages almost from the beginning, going to where Christ was born and where He died, where He may have spoken and walked, where His family lived, where the apostles spoke, where they died, where other key leaders bore their witness and where their work ceased due to martyrdom” (Longman, 2008, par. 2).

One of the key early church writings was written by a traveler on a pilgrimage. Egeria was a nun from Spain who lived at the end of the fourth century. Her diary is invaluable to us as a source of early church information and the function of pilgrimages in that time period. (Coakley & Sterk, 2004, p. 159) From her writings we see the liturgy which was used on a pilgrimage to help the traveler learn from God.

Crossing the river we came to a city called Livias, which is in the plain where the children of Israel encamped at that time, for the foundations of the camp of the children of Israel and of their dwellings where they abode appear there to this day. The plain is a very great one, lying under the mountains of Arabia above the Jordan; ... Here holy Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel one by one, in order, before his death. So when we had arrived at this plain, we went to the very spot, and prayer was made; here, too, a certain part of Deuteronomy was read, as well as his song, with the blessings which he pronounced over the children of Israel; after the reading, prayer was made a second time, and giving thanks to God, we moved on thence. For it was always customary with us that, whenever we succeeded in reaching the places we desired to visit, prayer should first be made there, then the lection should be read from the book, then one appropriate psalm should be said, then prayer should be made again. At God's bidding we always kept to this custom, whenever we were able to come to the places we desired. (Egeria, 384/1919, par. 19-20)

Her practice was simple yet helpful. They first discuss the historical and physical evidence which confirms the validity of each location. Then, the pilgrims begin with prayer, the scripture was read which related to the location, and then they closed with prayer. It is assumed that the pilgrims discussed among each other their feelings and thoughts of being present in the location where God had worked so many years ago. This plan would be effective for the modern evangelical pilgrim as well.

At the time when pilgrimages were becoming common in the early church, some church fathers chose to warn the people that these journeys did not bring a special blessing. St. Gregory of Nyssa, a church leader in Turkey during the fourth century, wrote that God’s presence could be found everywhere and that the Holy Spirit was not in greater portion in Jerusalem. He spoke from experience since he had also taken a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

We confessed that the Christ who was manifested is very God, as much before as after our sojourn at Jerusalem; our faith in Him was not increased afterwards any more than it was diminished. Before we saw Bethlehem we knew His being made man by means of the Virgin; before we saw His Grave we believed in His Resurrection from the dead; apart from seeing the Mount of Olives, we confessed that His Ascension into heaven was real. We derived only thus much of profit from our travelling there, namely that we came to know by being able to compare them, that our own places are far holier than those abroad. Wherefore, O you who fear the Lord, praise Him in the places where ye now are. Change of place does not affect any drawing nearer unto God, but wherever you may be, God will come to you, if the chambers of your soul be found of such a sort that He can dwell in you and walk in you. (St. Gregory of Nyssa, 380/1893, par. 1)

It appears that an unhealthy focus of the pilgrimage may have been in the church in St. Gregory's time and he wrote this treatise on pilgrimages to remove some of the mysticism associated with these journeys. His statements are biblically sound and accurate. The "change of place does not affect any drawing nearer to God" and we must recognize that the pilgrimage is only a tool to assist us in our own personal walk with God.

Role of Discipleship and Pilgrimage

As evangelicals seek to model Christ's earthly ministry, discipleship and mentorship are an appropriate focus. The modern evangelical church in America does not talk about sacred places, but it speaks more about the mission of God to reach the world. The great commission of Matthew 28:19-20, and the pastoral purpose to "equip the saints" (Ephesians 4:12, ESV) are central to my own personal ministry. These passages form the basis for the youth ministry training I do at Kiev Theological Seminary in Ukraine. Yet I have often told myself, I will have failed as a person if I disciple the world and I fail to disciple my own children. When I first considered taking my two oldest children to Israel, the discipleship aspect came to the forefront of my mind. I have been discipling my children formally and informally for the past several years. Helping them understand the reality of scripture by visiting the Holy Land will assist in my mentorship process.

The opportunities for learning in a pilgrimage are immense. I learned so much on my first trip to Israel in 2008 when Dan Spader, Director of the Global Youth Initiative, invited our ministry to an International Youth Ministry Summit in Jerusalem. Following this trip, I began to consider how I could help prepare my children for life and ministry by taking them to Israel. I felt that an evangelical pilgrimage would enhance the discipleship process. The gospel writers talk about discipleship as a time of growth, especially the apostle John. "John pictures discipleship as a learning process: after all the time Peter has spent with Jesus, after his denials and his forgiveness, he is still bidden, 'Follow me' (John 21:19)" (Edwards R., 2003, p. 144). Many times Jesus spoke about the cost of discipleship as He trained his followers. My desire is that through this pilgrimage that my disciples, specifically my children, will sense the plan of God in their lives clearly as they see the Bible come alive in Israel.

The Plan for an Evangelical Pilgrimage

This plan is not simply research, but an actual living and breathing plan for my family to journey to the Biblical sites in Israel. Many factors have been considered into this plan. Time is always an issue. I determined that an 11-day schedule would fit our pilgrimage needs and that each of our family members could be missing from our work or school for this period. The trip is planned for May 1-11, 2010.

Another factor is limited financial resources. This has been common for pilgrims throughout history. I determined to avoid hotels and stay at modern hostels and religious guesthouses. This should also contribute to the pilgrimage atmosphere versus the tourist atmosphere. An additional factor is flexibility; thus, we want to avoid tour groups when possible, rent a car for the entire trip, and only hire a guide when it is necessary to give us the historical, geographical and religious background. In order to help anyone reading this planned pilgrimage, I have included website addresses when applicable. An American who is an expert on Israel travel, Douglas Duckett (Email address: Labatt@fuse.net), wrote a free, personal travel guide for the tourist that was also very helpful for my research. He provides this guide for anyone who asks him by email.

Several tourist sites and good places to visit are not included in this travel plan because they did not fit our goals of our pilgrimage, yet other pilgrims may want to include them. For example, we are not visiting the Holocaust museum, Yad Vashem, due to time constraints and the fact that we have toured Auschwitz in Poland recently.

Our pilgrimage is divided up into four specific regions with four themes: a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the passion week of Christ; a pilgrimage to Ein Gedi and the Psalms of David; a pilgrimage to the Sea of Galilee and the ministry center of Christ; and finally, a pilgrimage to Caesarea and the public testimony of Paul. I considered travel times as I developed the following plan so that we could make the best use of our time.

Our Family's Pilgrimage Schedule

Pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Passion Week of Christ

The purpose of Saturday, May 1st day is to sense the uniqueness of the Old City of Jerusalem. Many people who have visited Jerusalem never forget the first time they see the Western Wall and the Temple Mount. I believe it is especially awe-inspiring when the pilgrim is lost within the narrow streets of the Armenian Quarter and then suddenly sees the Temple Mount in front of him. The purpose of the first day is to arrive and sense the “awe” of God’s presence in this place. My family’s first day’s schedule is the following:

3:00 pm	Arrival at Airport
4:30 pm	Drive to Jerusalem
5:30 pm	Damascus Gate Parking
6:00 pm	Check into Hashimi Hotel on the Via Delorosa
7:00 pm	Supper in Old City / Visit Western Wall area

The purpose of Sunday, May 2nd is to understand the difference between the earthly king, Herod the Great, and the King of Kings, Jesus. Christ’s humble beginnings underneath the earthly glory of the Herodion should cause us to worship Him. The day will be spent journeying through the West Bank, specifically Bethlehem and the Herodion Fortress. Bethlehem is under Palestinian control, and for that reason no Israeli tour guide or Jewish taxi driver can take anyone into this area. Rental cars are also not allowed. We will be having a Palestinian guide who grew up in Bethlehem and works for the United Nations. The guide we discovered through tripadvisor.com, Sam Salem, will take our family to the different sites in the West Bank on this day. (Onkel, R. M., 2008). My wife purchased an olive wood nativity set made in Bethlehem on our last trip, and will be purchasing additional figures to add to her

nativity set on this trip. This object, even though is not sacred to us, helps us to remember our pilgrimage to Bethlehem. My family's second day of the pilgrimage includes the following schedule which will be dictated by our guide:

7:00 am	Breakfast
8:30 am	Palestinian Guide Pick-up at hotel for day touring sites in Bethlehem and the West Bank. We will visit the Church of Nativity, the Herodion fortress and the St. Saba Monastery
6:00 pm	Mt. of Olives view of Jerusalem
7:00 pm	Supper

The purpose of Monday, May 3rd is to walk in the steps Jesus took during His last week on earth and understand his sacrificial atonement for each one of us personally. I believe that a chronological tour will help us emotionally take part in the steps of Christ during his last days. There are differences of opinions in the actual locations of the passion week of Jesus. The goal of our pilgrimage will be to give all scenarios which are possible, and to attempt to understand the path of Jesus' last days on earth. The schedule for our third day of our pilgrimage includes:

7:00 am	Breakfast
8:00 am	Check out Hashimi Hotel
8:30 am	Church of Holy Sepulchre
10:00 am	Jewish Archaeological Park / Southern Temple Mount Steps
12:00 pm	Move to Ecce Home Convent on Via Delarosa
1:00 pm	Lunch
2:00 pm	Follow in steps of Jesus' last weekend - Mt. Zion - Last Supper Room and Tomb of David - Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu - Caiphas' House - Garden of Gethsemane - Garden Tomb
5:30 pm	Pool of Bethesda
7:00 pm	Supper

The purpose of Tuesday, May 4th is to understand the importance of the temple in God's plan to show His holiness and our need for atonement. The day will begin with tours underground to the closest place a pilgrim may get to the original location of the Holy of Holies. We will then visit the courtyard of the Temple Mount where the present day Dome of the Rock is standing. In the afternoon, we have a tour through the excavations of the City of David and Hezekiah's tunnel. Each of these guided tours needed to be booked online one month in advance of the trip. By visiting the Temple Mount, above ground and underground, we are stepping foot on one of the holiest sites in the world to three of the world's major religions.

7:00 am	Breakfast
9:20 am	Generations Center Tour
11:10 am	Western Wall Underground Tour
12:30 pm	Temple Mount
2:00 pm	Lunch
4:00 pm	City of David tour with Hezekiah's tunnel
8:00 pm	Supper

The purpose of the morning of Wednesday, May 5th is to conclude our pilgrimage to Jerusalem with an overview of the Holy City. We will accomplish this by visiting the Israel Museum to see the historically accurate model of Jerusalem during the Second Temple period. Our family will also spend time at the Shrine of the Book which houses the Dead Sea Scrolls. We will use our rental car to drive out of Jerusalem and through the Southern part of Israel.

7:00 am	Breakfast
9:30 am	Check out of Ecce Home Convent
10:00 am	Israel National Museum: Dead Sea Scrolls & First Century Model of Jerusalem

Pilgrimage to Ein Gedi and the Psalms of David

The purpose of the second half of the day is to become acquainted with the life of King David and the royal line of the King which gives birth to the Messiah Jesus. After leaving Jerusalem, we will drive to the Valley of Elah to see the location of the battle which took place against Goliath and the Philistines in 1000 BC. Our family will conclude our driving excursion by arriving at our destination in Ein Gedi.

12:00 pm	Drive to Valley of Elah: David & Goliath
1:00 pm	Arrival at Valley of Elah
2:00 pm	Drive to Dead Sea
4:00 pm	Check in to Ein Gedi Youth Hostel
5:00 pm	Dead Sea Float
7:00 pm	Supper at hostel or Botanical Gardens Restaurant

The purpose of Thursday, May 6th is to experience the desert life which shaped David for his calling as King and as God-inspired song writer for the Jewish nation. My family will walk through the oasis of Ein Gedi as well as float on the waters of the Dead Sea. The afternoon will be spent at the Masada fortress and reliving the struggles of the Jewish people against the Roman occupation force of the first century.

7:30 am	Breakfast
9:00 am	Hike up Ein Gedi
11:00 am	Dead Sea Float
1:00 pm	Travel to Masada
1:30 pm	Lunch at Masada
2:00 pm	Masada Tour
7:00 pm	Supper

The purpose of the first half of Friday, May 7th is to conclude our desert experience with a better understanding of the value of scripture. Our family will visit the Qumran caves, the site where the Dead Sea scrolls were found. Following this tour, we will drive up the Jordan River to Northern Israel and the Galilee region to begin the next phase of our pilgrimage.

7:30 am	Breakfast
8:30 am	Check out of Ein Gedi Youth Hostel
9:00 am	Visit Qumran Caves

Pilgrimage to the Sea of Galilee and the Ministry Center of Christ

The purpose of the second half of the day is to learn from the life of Christ and the beginning of his public ministry. The focus on the first day in region of Galilee is to visit modern day Nazareth and Cana. Our family will check into the YMCA Youth Hostel on the Sea of Galilee and enjoy an evening boat ride. We will read passages from the gospels concerning the miracles Jesus performed on the Sea of Galilee including the storm passage and when Peter attempted to walk on water.

10:30 am	Drive up the Jordan River
12:00 pm	Lunch on the road
1:00 pm	Start Jesus' Life
	- Mt. Precipice outside of Nazareth
	- Drive through Nazareth
	- Visit Cana (Kafr Kanna)
	- View of Galilee from Arbel Cliff
4:00 pm	Check into YMCA Sea of Galilee
6:00 pm	Supper
7:00 pm	Evening Sea of Galilee Boat Ride

The purpose of Saturday, May 8th is to focus on Jesus' calling of the disciples and the establishment of his ministry center in Capernaum. The day will begin with a visit to a museum which contains the remains of a first century that may have possibly carried Jesus and his disciples. Later sites include the location of the feeding of the 5000, the Beatitudes sermon, the Capernaum synagogue and the home of Peter's mother-in-law. In the afternoon, we will visit the archeological site which includes the gate at Dan which Abraham passed through 3000 years ago. The day will conclude with some devotions at the exact location in Caesarea Philippi where Jesus commissioned Peter. "Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, '...And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'" (Matt. 16:16-18, ESV). These words were probably spoken only 100 meters in front of the Temple of Pan in Caesarea Philippi.

8:00 am	Breakfast
9:00 am	Continue Jesus' Life
	- Jesus Boat Museum at Nof Ginnosar
	- Tabgha
	- Mount of Beatitudes
	- Capernaum
12:00 pm	Lunch on the road
12:30 pm	Travel to Dan
1:30 pm	Tour Dan Archaeological site
3:30 pm	Tour Caesarea Philippi (at Banias Nature Reserve)
7:00 pm	Supper

The purpose of Sunday, May 9th is to understand the strategic importance of the Valley of Jezreel, also known as the Valley of Megiddo, and to recognize God's control of history past, present and future. The focus will not be centered on New Testament stories, but on the Old Testament. The day will begin with a visit to the archaeological park of Bet Shean, also known as Scythopolis. Our tour will continue to Gideon's spring and the Tel at Megiddo. The conclusion of the day will be a special supper on the Eastern shore of Galilee enjoying St. Peter's fish.

8:00 am	Breakfast
9:00 am	Travel to Bet Shean
9:30 am	Tour Bet Shean archaeological site
11:30 am	Visit Ma'ayan Harod (Gideon's Spring) and Mt. Gilboa
12:30 pm	Picnic Lunch at Gideon's Spring
1:30 pm	Drive by Mt. Tabor
2:00 pm	Tour Tel Megiddo
6:00 pm	Supper – St. Peter's Fish, Kibbutz Ein Gev

Pilgrimage to Caesarea and the Public Testimony of Paul

The purpose of Monday, May 10th is to understand the influence of other religions from Israel's past to present day. We will visit Mt. Carmel and remember Elijah's fiery competition with the priests of Baal. We will also spend some time discussing the false teachings of Baha'i at their beautiful garden headquarters. At the conclusion of the day, our family will check in to Dor Kibbutz. At the kibbutz, each of us will take time to get alone with our Bibles, a journal, and God. This will function as a debriefing time and a way to think through our past 10 days.

8:00 am	Breakfast
10:00 am	Check out of YMCA Galilee
11:00 am	Visit Mt. Carmel and the city of Haifa
12:00 pm	Visit Baha'i Shrine and Gardens
1:00 pm	Lunch in Haifa
2:00 pm	Check into Dor Kibbutz
5:00 pm	Private time with God
7:00 pm	Supper at Caesarea

The purpose of Tuesday, May 11th is to see the need to live our Christian faith and be a testimony to our world's leaders and to those whom we come in contact with in our daily life. Since this is the last day of the pilgrimage, the focus will also be application. The morning will be spent touring the remains of the Roman port city of Caesarea. As we fly back to our homes, the desire would be that we would be like the apostle Paul when he was in Caesarea. "And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?" And Paul said, "Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains" (Acts 26:28-29, ESV).

8:00 am	Breakfast
8:30 am	Check out of Dor Kibbutz
9:00 am	Tour Caesarea
11:30 am	Leave for Airport
13:00 pm	Arrival at Airport
4:00 pm	Departure from Airport

