

Fall 2015

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upcoming **modules**

December 14–18, 2015

Church History I
Current Issues in Adult Ed. Ministries
Preaching Seminar I

Paul Hartog
Don Anderson
Daniel Brown

January 4–8, 2016

Advanced Eschatology
Church History II
Counseling the Suffering

Myron Houghton
Paul Hartog
Jeff Newman

February 29–March 4, 2016

Church Evangelism
Hebrew Exegesis II
Hermeneutics

Daniel Brown
Tim Little
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April 4–8, 2016

Greek Exegesis IV
Pastoral Theology
Preaching Seminar II
Theology of Missions

Douglas Brown
Daniel Brown
Ernie Schmidt
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May 9–13, 2016

Introduction to Biblical Exegesis
New Testament Seminar

Douglas Brown
Paul Hartog

online courses

January 12–March 7, 2016

Apologetics

Paul Hartog

March 15–May 9, 2016

Preaching Seminar III

Daniel Brown

May 10–June 27, 2016

Advanced Anthropology

Jeff Newman

July 5–August 22, 2016

Issues in Ethics

Paul Hartog

The Tour of a Lifetime

It's like coming to a place you have never lived and having the sense you are home. Sometimes it's referred to as the "Fifth Gospel." Others say it's worth a year of Bible college. Sometimes you hear someone say, "I have taken a lot of trips in my life, but none equals this one." What do all these statements have in common? They all refer to a tour of Israel. In this article Dr. Ernie Schmidt, former dean of Faith Baptist Theological Seminary, former interim FBBC&TS president, and a veteran guide in Israel, shares why believers should consider taking a Holy Land tour. In the second article Dr. Schmidt illustrates how a tour of Israel helps us have a clearer understanding of Luke 4:16–30.

The heart of an Israel tour is to observe the topography, geography, and culture which provide unparalleled insight into the Bible. When we are there, we do not use PowerPoint slides; we simply point and say, "That is where it took place." Such "hands- and eyes-on" experience takes your knowledge of the Bible to a whole new level in just a few days. Every day seems like a Sunday worship service as we go from site to site and learn new truths about the Bible. Here are some reasons for investing in a study tour of Israel.

Social Conditions in Israel

A visit to Israel will enable you to gain a more objective understanding of the Middle Eastern situation. In spite of innuendo and negative statements about Israel in the media, you will be able to see the situation firsthand. You will discover the fact that Jewish, Muslim, and Christian people are all citizens with equal rights and voting privileges in Israel. You will be surprised to learn that Arabs/Muslims can serve in the Knesset, the governing body of Israel. Though Israel is criticized by many as an apartheid and oppressive state, you will witness the opposite. Israel is a multicultural society. Women are free to function as in the West, and minorities are not denied any privileges.

Social Interactions with Tour Members

On the tour you will strengthen your current friendships. By the end of the trip you will be saying things like, "Now I really know them." "This is a great source of unity among diversity." "Now I have a new prayer partner." "I didn't realize how much we have in common." "This reveals what strong Christian friendship/fellowship looks like." You also will establish Christian friends among people you never knew before. Within twenty-four hours you will be talking as if you have known them for years.

Spiritual Burden for Israelis

Not only will you establish lifelong new friends and deepen present friendships, but you will also develop a burden for people you encountered on the tour. Seeing the people of Israel will give you real-life exposure to both Jewish and Arab people who need the Lord. I like to remind tour participants that in light of the immanency of the

Lord's return in the Rapture, we could be leaving a positive witness with some of the future 144,000!

Intense On-Site Class

A tour of Israel provides an intensive educational field trip. The Bible comes alive as you receive multiple perspectives. You will experience both visual and verbal instruction. The Israeli guide and the host Bible teacher will share information and instruction including the history of the site and archaeological discoveries and insights. You will take in cultural aspects of the world of the Old and New Testaments. With Bible in hand, you can read the passage and look up as you see the site or area where the passage took place. Your reading and study of the Bible will never be the same as you review your photos or mentally recall the Bible locations. This kind of teaching/learning atmosphere resulted in my wife saying, "I now read my Bible in 3-D."

Another benefit of a tour is the help you get in putting the Bible in context. You will not only view passages in light of the verses before and after (which is normally associated with context), but you will also see Bible passages in light of their topographical and geographical context. You will see the big picture of the text in a whole new dimension. Reading books about Israel is helpful, but supplementing your reading with seeing the sites pictured and described in the book gives you unequalled comprehension of the Bible.

Allow me to share an example of the insights you can glean from a visit. In Matthew 16:13–20 Christ introduced the church. (My focus here is upon the background context, not the theological implications.) Christ spoke these words in Caesarea Philippi, which is a site in the northernmost part of Israel (not be confused with Caesarea Maritima, ancient Israel's port on the Mediterranean Sea). Caesarea Philippi was a major center for false worship. In Old Testament times it was a center of Baal worship. In fact Judges 3:3 and I Chronicles 5:23 refer to the area as Baal Hermon, since it is at the southwestern foot of Mt. Hermon. One source asserts there may have been as many as 15 locations for Baal worship in the region.

As you approach the site where this passage took place, you are immediately impacted by the scene of an immense rock cliff and a cave to the left. In the cliff you note a number of niches in the rock wall. These niches formerly held idols, notably those of the god Pan. During the intertestamental period, this place was a center of Pan worship. As you progress east along the base of the cliff, you see some plaques identifying the location of several temples dedicated to various gods from the intertestamental period.

During Jesus' day worship of the Roman emperor was practiced here. Do you begin to get the impression this place has a history of religious falsehood? Remember, it was at this location that Jesus asked His disciples who people thought He was. After they responded with names of Bible characters, He asked, "who do you say that I am?" By supernatural revelation Peter responded. "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." What a place to make such a statement! In the environs of false worship and gods, Jesus is declared to be the Son of the living God.

Jesus responded "on this rock, I will build My church." This declaration was in response to Peter's statement about who Jesus is, but the impact of that statement is vividly illustrated by the immense cliff of solid rock that is the northern background of Caesarea Philippi. That huge cliff illustrated the stability of the church's foundation in Christ (I Cor. 3:11). The disciples must have stared in awe if they associated the promise of Christ with the mass of rock before them. The Lord also confirmed the enduring nature of the church by stating, "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." What is even more interesting is that the early church historian, Eusebius, indicated there was demonic activity in one of the caves in the area. Read Christ's statement again in view of that fact!

I think you get the picture. Standing in the area where Peter and Christ made significant statements makes the passage live. While not all sites have as much natural background, each place contributes to the cumulative impact of realizing you are standing on holy ground.

Spiritual Impact

Reflecting on camp, evangelistic meetings, and Bible and missions conferences brings back memories of significant spiritual decisions and growth. A tour of Israel and the related teaching will have the same spiritual impact. Even individuals who are not emotional are at times almost on the verge of tears at specific sites. I recall seeing an individual spontaneously weep at Nazareth Village (a 14-acre replica of life in Jesus' day) as crushing the oil from olives was explained. It reminded the person of the pressure the Lord went through for him.

Emotional response is not the goal for this trip, but when "reality is made real" concerning Bible truth, one of the goals for the trip is accomplished. The consistent exposure to seeing the Bible come alive, coupled with Bible teaching and application, creates an atmosphere for spiritual challenge and change. It is not unusual for people to say, "I will never be the same" after a trip to Israel.

Being in Israel creates a thirst for Bible reading and study. Exposure to the land gives a whole new dimension to comprehending Scripture. Observing ancient sites and archaeological digs whets the appetite to do more research in Biblical backgrounds. Apart from a tour of Israel, you would probably not consider the importance of such vital Biblical research. I saw this clearly on my last visit to Israel. After a site visit, a deacon chairman shared with me his desire to study the Bible more in-depth when he went back home. What pastor would not want that to be true of his deacon chairman? The same gentleman stated that the trip exceeded his expectations—and he had high expectations coming into the trip!

Apologetic Value

A tour of Israel provides moments that result in statements like, "so that is what it looked like," or "now I understand." Other people confirm the reality of what they have always believed. While we do not believe because of external evidence, it is a joy to see the reality of Bible assertions right before our eyes.

The term "spirituality" has become a catch-all for describing an individual's religion. Frequently the term is used to describe one's private mystical experiences. Individualistic therapeutic self-help practices and horoscopic hunches are given theological status. Subjectivity rules in much of what passes for spirituality. A visit to Israel brings you face-to-face with objective reality. Immediately you are impacted with the fact that God deals with mankind in time and space. This realization drives home the truth that Biblical Christianity is based on objective truth, not mysticism.

Archaeological sites confirm Bible statements and silence denials of Biblical truth. Visiting Qumran and the Shrine of the Book are great occasions to remind the tour group of the value of the Dead Sea Scrolls. You have probably heard the comment that over the years the Bible has been changed because of all the transmission or translations. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls gave opportunity to check the accuracy of that statement. Until the time of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the oldest Old Testament manuscript we possessed dated to about A.D. 800-900. The Dead Sea Scrolls are dated to approximately 200-100 B.C. Thus, about 1,000 years of hand copying occurred between the two manuscripts. The Isaiah Scroll is a good manuscript to use for comparison since it is a major target for destructive criticism. When compared, the Isaiah Scroll and the earliest manuscript possessed before the discovery revealed excellent accuracy of transmission between the two. Even the difference between the alleged two authors of chapters 1-39 and 40-66 is indirectly refuted by noting the lack of a gap between the chapters in the scroll.

Some archaeologists dispute the Bible account of David's existence and impact. Excavation at Dan in the early 1990s produced a partial stele in secondary usage that contained the words "house of David." A plaque on a wall south of the gate of Ahab (at Dan) identifies the location of the discovery. Discoveries such as this one are not unique, but they are neglected in the secular anti-Biblical media. One hundred years ago such discoveries would have made headlines in national media, but bias and political correctness leave them in obscurity. A trip to Israel brings them into focus as one visits the sites where they were discovered. Such eyewitness exposure is not used to create faith in God's Word, but it provides joyful confirmation of the facts of Scripture.

A trip to the Bible lands is not an expense but rather an investment. As you visit the locations where the Bible was written and where Bible people walked and talked, the impact and value you gain will be greater than any other investment. A trip with concentrated focus on Scripture and the Lord will provide a new Biblical perspective that will last the rest of your life.



Ernie Schmidt

Dr. Ernie Schmidt earned degrees from Pillsbury Baptist Bible College (B.A.) and Central Baptist Theological Seminary (M.Div. and D.Min). Dr. Schmidt served for forty-eight years as a pastor and Bible college/seminary teacher and administrator. He was a faculty member and dean of Faith Baptist Theological Seminary from 2002 to 2013, and he served as interim president of FBBC&TS from January 2014 to May 2015. In addition, Dr. Schmidt has led thirteen trips to Israel and has also been to Turkey and Greece three times. Dr. Schmidt and his wife, Gen, now live in Owatonna, Minnesota.

UPCOMING ISRAEL TOUR

Dr. Schmidt and Faith's president, Jim Tillotson, plan to host a trip to Israel in January or February of 2017. For more information on this trip, contact President Tillotson at president@faith.edu.

The Synagogue and the Word

Dr. Ernie Schmidt

A former graduate professor of mine made a passing statement once that grabbed my attention. He referred to two types of worship: the temple model and the synagogue model. The temple emphasized ritual and the synagogue emphasized the Word. In this companion article I want to focus on three physical aspects of the synagogue that relate to the Word of God— the ark, the platform, and Moses' Seat.

The pictures below help illustrate these three physical features. The picture on the top shows two arks, or special containers for the scrolls of Scripture, at the Western Wall in Jerusalem today. On Mondays and Thursdays young men have their bar mitzvah celebrations at the Western Wall. These arks are here in preparation for their reading from the scrolls at this turning point in their lives.



The picture on the bottom features the ancient synagogue at Chorazin. The ark (#1) contained the scrolls of Scripture. The platform (#2) is the raised stone in the foreground. This stone is considered to be the place where the reader of Scripture stood. The seat (#3) is known as Moses' Seat (Matt. 23:2) from which the teacher/preacher taught. Sitting was the position of Jewish instruction/exhortation as illustrated by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount. "And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them" (Matt. 5:1, 2).

I want to take two approaches to the synagogue and the Word. First, we will use this synagogue to illustrate what the Lord did when He was rejected at the Nazareth synagogue. Then we will consider the implications of the rejection of the Lord at Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum.

Rejection at the Nazareth Synagogue

Luke 4:16–30 recounts our Lord's attendance, reading, and sermon at the synagogue in Nazareth, which led to His rejection by his hometown. Following His consistent pattern, He attended the synagogue on the Sabbath Day. Verse 16 states He "stood up to read." The place where He stood would have been on the raised stone platform (#2). The attendant handed Him the scroll of Isaiah, having retrieved it from the ark (#1). The Lord unrolled the scroll to what is now identified as Isaiah 61:1 and 2a,

The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.

He then rerolled the scroll and handed it back to the attendant. Following the reading, He walked over and sat in Moses' Seat (#3).

In verse 21 He gave a short message. "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." His quotation revealed He was offering Himself as Messiah, the One who would establish the kingdom. The atmosphere during the reading is stressed in v. 20. "And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him." The impact of His message was powerful. "So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth."

At the same time the people were confused. The congregation asked "Is this not Joseph's son?" This question led to His response concerning His person and ministry, including favorable comments about Gentiles who had positive interaction with two key Old Testament prophets. His claim of Messiahship and sentiments

toward Gentiles caused the hometown people to be "filled with wrath" and to want to kill Him. His interpretation and application of the Word led to His rejection. "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11).

The Nazareth rejection was the prototype of the coming attitude and action of the whole nation. The Jewish rejection of the "acceptable year" led to a unique inclusion of the despised Gentiles in the Church Age. Now Jew and Gentile are united as one in Christ (Eph. 2:11—3:7). The "acceptable year" is now (2 Cor. 6:2).

Will the Messiah ever establish an earthly kingdom in Israel as the rest of Isaiah 61 teaches? Yes, but it will involve the rest of Isaiah 61:2 being fulfilled. The rest of the sentence reads "and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn." For Israel "the day of vengeance" (i.e., the Tribulation) must accomplish its purpose. It will prepare Israel to accept Jesus as their Messiah/Savior (Zech. 12:10, 11). When they accept Him, those who mourn will receive comfort and consolation, and they will receive "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isa. 61:2b, 3).

Jesus' ministry of the Word directly identified Him as Messiah. The rejection of that claim indirectly portrayed His future national rejection. Stopping where He did in His reading also indirectly implied a future for Israel in which they will receive the Messiah after He takes them through the Tribulation.

The Synagogue in Chorazin

Let's go back to the synagogue in Chorazin. Perhaps Jesus shared a similar message from Moses' Seat there. In any case He reminded the people that they had witnessed His miracles which had authenticated Him as Messiah. Matthew 11:20–24 identifies three towns in Galilee that received special condemnation from the Lord. They have frequently been identified as the "evangelical triangle." (If you draw lines from each of these towns to each other, you will make a rough right triangle.) Chorazin leads the list, followed by Bethsaida and Capernaum.

Christ announced it would be more tolerable for the pagan cities of Tyre and Sidon than for Chorazin and Bethsaida in the future day of judgment. He said it would be more tolerable for infamous Sodom on the day of judgment than for Capernaum. What would bring such a strong denunciation from the Lord Jesus?

When I sit in Moses' Seat on our tours, I remind the group of the Biblical principle the Lord was stressing. The principle is summarized in Luke 12:48 "To whom much is given, from him much will be required." One of the most serious offenses we can commit is to know truth but not respond positively. Romans 1:18 reminds us that God's wrath is revealed against those "who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." Chorazin and the other two towns not only had heard the Word, but they also witnessed miracles that authenticated Christ's person and teaching. They rejected great light; hence, they were without excuse. They enjoyed much more revelation than Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom. As a result the Lord treated them accordingly.

When we think of Chorazin and the Seat of Moses, think of the accountability we have for truth we know. As another has said, "The best thing we can say to the Lord is, 'Thy will be done' and the worst thing we can hear the Lord say to us is, 'thy will be done.'"

Christ's denunciation reflects the fact that suppressing the truth as described in Romans 1 ultimately results in God giving us up to our own ways: "God gave them up" (1:24); "God gave them up" (1:26); "God gave them over" (1:28).

The synagogue represents the teaching and preaching of the Word. The synagogue at Nazareth teaches us not to reject the Messiah. Chorazin teaches us not to reject the Messiah and His special revelation. "Then He said to them, take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Mark 4:24).