

Christ in Prophecy Israel 23: Pilgrimage 8 - The Dead Sea

© 2014 Lamb & Lion Ministries. All Rights Reserved.

For a video of this show, please visit <http://www.lamblion.com>.

Opening

Dr. Reagan: The Dead Sea area is one of the most fascinating places in all of Israel. It is the site of King Herod's incredible fortress of Masada, and it is where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. It is a barren and arid place, and yet it is the site of the most famous oasis mentioned in the Bible. For a visit to this area, which is the lowest point on planet earth, stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Well here we are about to begin the sixth day of our pilgrimage. We are still in Jerusalem and today we are going to head to the Dead Sea and people are going to have a lot of fun. This is kind of a fun day compared to the other days where we do a lot of walking and do some serious contemplating about Jesus and the Word. Today we go out to the Dead Sea and people get a chance to get their toes in the water. Some of them just go plum silly and put black mud all of them. Black mud you know has sulfur in it.

Gary Fisher: Right.

Dr. Reagan: And so it can help with arthritis and a lot of things. But we are going to go first to a remarkable site called Masada. When King Herod was in this land he had these fortresses all over the land where he could flee to, the man was absolutely paranoid. And some people like him were justifiably paranoid because he killed so many people he knew that they were after him.

Gary Fisher: Some of them are still around today.

Dr. Reagan: So anyway, he had this great fortress at Masada it is just unbelievable up on a mountain in the middle of nowhere with swimming pools and all the luxuries of life, and we will be going out there to see that. After that we are going to head back up toward Jerusalem and we'll stop at Ein Gedi, a spring out in the middle of the desert where David often hid, and we'll talk a little bit there about an incident that occurred out in that area. And from there we will go to Qumran where we will have lunch. And Qumran is where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.

Gary Fisher: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: And we're going to be letting our guide today, Ilan Barkay to give you some explanations from the Jewish viewpoint of Masada and Qumran. And then we're going to go take that swim and everybody is going to jump into the Dead Sea and act plum silly and float. You know you can float on the Dead Sea and read a newspaper at the same time so it's going to be quite a day. When we are at Masada we are going to be focusing on one main thing and that is the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the horrible things that occurred at that time. And the Zealots who fled out there and were finally killed, they killed themselves in fact.

And I want to read to you a Scripture I am going to share with the people this morning and it was written after the destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah who survived that was walking through the streets of Jerusalem, he was lamenting, just lamenting the destruction of his city, weeping over it. And suddenly he makes this statement right in the middle of it, one of the greatest statements of hope in the Bible. "This I recall to mind and therefore I still have hope, through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed because His compassions fail not they are new every morning. Great is Your faithfulness, the Lord is my portion says my soul therefore I will hope in Him." Even in the midst of all the destruction he could hope in the Lord. Any comments Gary?

Gary Fisher: Well Qumran is of course is special to anybody that owns a Bible because it verified and legitimized the Bible that we have today. We'll get into that probably later. But the overwhelming sense that I get down there is at Masada, there is a question that arose down there that day that still reverberates today, "Why can't the Jews have 70 miles wide, 280 miles long while the rest of the world has all the other real estate?" But the Romans didn't want them to have it. The world doesn't want them to have it today. And that site down there is a testimonial that the Jewish people cannot have one little bitty country all of their own. So when we go down there to see it I will think of that day.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, for 2,000 years the Jewish people were told, "You cannot live in our land." And they were expelled from nation after nation. Then suddenly they get their land and then the world says "No, you can't live in your own land."

Gary Fisher: They don't want them on the map.

Dr. Reagan: The Israeli army soldiers today take what is called the Masada Oath and that oath is "Masada will never fall again and Israel means it."

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: Herod's fortress of Masada is located on the top of a barren mesa located near the south end of the Dead Sea. Riding a cable car to the top of the mountain is quite a thrilling experience. Some find it frightening, but it sure beats the old fashioned method of walking up the snake path, something that the strong of heart and legs still do.

Ilan Barkay: Remember Masada was under a siege between 71-73 AD. When the Romans first came over here they tried to run out to the fortress with a sword and they got to the wall of Masada on the west side of the fortress and over there the Zealots rolled down big stones that prevented the Roman soldiers to get close to the wall. The Romans tried to conquer this mountain several times and they fell again and again. Then Flavius Silva that was the general of the Roman army he decided to build here a ramp on the other side of the mountain. He built the ramp on the western side of Masada. How did he build the ramp? Herod had Jewish slaves that he brought from the city of Jerusalem after they conquered Jerusalem. And the Jewish slaves built the ramp on the west side of the fortress. Why choose Jewish slaves? He knew that the Zealots were very religious people. He knew that the rebels won't kill their own brothers. So, after almost two years of construction the Romans finished the ramp on the west side of Masada. And then they put on top of the ramp the battering ram and they started to knock down the wall. When the Zealots saw that the Romans built the battering ram on top of the ramp, they

built a wooden wall and they filled it up with sand to be like a shock absorber. But the Romans were not stupid. When the Romans saw that the Zealots built a wooden wall they started to shoot the fortress with the flame arrows. And the historian Josephus Flavius' he described how the wind changed direction. First they burned out the wooden wall, then the battering ram was on fire, and then both were on fire. So, when the Zealots saw that the wooden wall was on fire they realized that was the end of Masada. They realized that in a short time after the Romans are going to conquer this place. The Romans have a very important rule, they never fought at night. And that's why they went back to their camp and made the preparation for the attack in the morning after. And that night, Eleazar Ben Yair that was the leader of the Zealots here in Masada he gathered his people in the synagogue that we are going to see later on. In one of the oldest synagogues in Judea Eleazar in his famous speech he persuaded the Zealots to die as a free, to die and not to be slaves of the Romans. So, each one of the men, each one of the rebels here in Masada killed his own wife and children. Then they choose ten men, he found a little piece of the lottery shard that they choose ten men to kill all the others. And then among those ten they choose one man to kill the other nine, he was the only one who killed himself. So in the morning after when the Roman army entered the fortress from the area of the ramp here in Masada it was sad, there was no worse, because the people of Masada were dead.

Dr. Reagan: Here we are on the top of the incredible fortress of Masada that King Herod built out here on top of one of these tall mountains. And we are overlooking here the Dead Sea, at this part the Dead Sea has almost completely evaporated. Its evaporating at the rate of three feet a year, it still has a long way to go because it is very, very deep but the southern end was shallow and the southern end has almost completely evaporated. The reason for that is because very little water ever reaches the Dead Sea anymore. When the rains come in the winter and the Sea of Galilee fills up and it starts flowing down the Jordan, Israel and Jordan are pulling irrigation water out of both sides of the river until finally when it gets to the Dead Sea there is just not any water left in it unless it is flood conditions. So, the Dead Sea has been evaporated.

Now, as Ilan said a few moments ago this is where the Zealots retreated to and the Roman army surrounded this place and kept it under siege for over two years before they finally were able to conquer it. It's amazing to think of Roman soldiers living out here in this wilderness with all of their armor on and all, but that's what they did. And the Zealots would look down at them and laugh at them and throw things at them. And the Zealots had a swimming pool up here and they would go swimming in the swimming pool and make fun of the Romans and it just enraged the Romans and made them more determined to conquer them. One of the things that Ilan told about that really touched me, was he said when this whole place was rediscovered in the 19th Century before they actually did all the excavations one of the things they discovered up here I think in the synagogue itself was a part of the Scriptures that were opened to Ezekiel 37, and that really touched me. That vision of the Valley of the Dry Bones was given to Ezekiel and he was just taken out into this big valley with dry bones and the Lord said, "Prophesize, preach to them." I've been in a few congregations that felt like I was preaching to the Valley of the Dry Bones. You been there Brother?

Gary Fisher: I've been there.

Dr. Reagan: OK, but anyway he started preaching and these dry bones started moving Brother, and they started coming together and stood and he had no idea what was going on. So the Lord told him. Turn it over to you Gary, go for it.

Gary Fisher: I'm reading Ezekiel 37:11, "Then He said to me, 'Son of man these bones are the whole house of Israel; they indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost we ourselves are cut off.' Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God, behold O my people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I'm the Lord when I have opened your graves, O my people and brought you up from your graves. And I will pour out my spirit in you and you shall live and I will place you into your own land. Then you shall know that I the Lord have spoken it and performed it says the Lord.'" One of the first things that grabs me here is the Bible says here that He would bring them into their own land. Not somebody else's land, into your own land. One of the greatest political contingences today is that the people of Israel have come back and they are occupying someone else's land, but God says they are in their own land. And they were in their own land the day the Romans were here but the Romans didn't like them being here they wanted to conquer them. The Romans wanted to conquer everything. The Romans are a reminder of a Scripture to me, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." It reminds me of something else God promised to anybody that picked on His kids in Joel 3 that He would retaliate. And so both of those Scriptures remind us.

Dr. Reagan: You know Gary, when you said they are going to bring them back to their own land in that regard verse 11 I believe it is, yes, says that no in verse 12 says, "O, my people I will open up your graves and cause you to come up from your graves and bring you into the land of--

Gary Fisher: Israel.

Dr. Reagan: Not the land of Canaan, not the land of Palestine--

Gary Fisher: Amen

Dr. Reagan: Not the land of Zion.

Gary Fisher: That's right.

Dr. Reagan: And what did they decide to call this land when they established it?

Gary Fisher: Israel.

Dr. Reagan: Prophecy fulfilled before our very eyes.

Gary Fisher: Hallelujah, Brother.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: Our next stop was at the famous oasis of Ein Gedi, located in a canyon along the rim of the Dead Sea. The water you see is coming from the oasis which is located about a mile further up the canyon.

Alright, I want to begin by first of all just saying that we are here at the oversight of the Oasis of Ein Gedi which is way back up in this canyon here about a mile. And this is one of the few oasis out here at the Dead Sea. It has been there forever and it's a place where David used to come

and hide from King Saul. David had a lot of hide outs in the desert and this one of them. And when you're in a place like this all you can think of is water because if you don't have water you will not exist very long out here at all. I remember a number of years ago there was a very, very famous Episcopal Bishop who came over here and he came down into the Judean wilderness and decided to go out and walk around and he got lost. And they found his body a couple weeks later and he had simply just died from heat exhaustion, it can happen very quickly you have to have water.

So when you are in this area you think about water all the time and from now on when you read these psalms I hope you will remember this place. Let's take for example Psalm 63 here is David and the superscription to the psalm says, "A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah." That is where we are. And look what he says, "O God, you are my God; early I will seek you. My soul thirsts for you as in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water." That's his passion for God. His passion for God is the same as a man in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water who is passionately desiring and yearning for water. He says, "Because your loving kindness is better than life my lips shall praise you. Thus I will bless you while I live. I will lift up my hands in your name." Another example is to be found in Psalm 42 and here we have a psalm of the sons of Korah who were trained by David. And in Psalm 42 we have this comment, "As a deer pants for water brooks, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for you, O God, I thirst for the living God." All through the Scriptures you find these allusions to thirst because in this land water is everything.

I want to share with you a story from the life of David that really has impacted my life over the years. The story is told twice in the Scriptures, it is told once in 2 Samuel, and it is told again in the Chronicles. And it is story about David hiding out in the wilderness when Saul was trying to kill him. He was hiding at one of his hideouts it was not Ein Gedi at that time it was closer to Bethlehem but he was at this hideout and he was there with his mighty warriors. And this was actually after he had become king but it was early in his kingship and the Philistines had come and just flat run him out of Bethlehem. You know his original headquarters was in Bethlehem before he moved it to Jerusalem and they had run him out.

So, he was a king with very little power at that time and he was hiding out there in the wilderness. And they are sitting around a campfire. And as they are sitting around the campfire at night he suddenly makes an offhand comment, just an offhand comment he says, "You know what I would like right now more than anything else in the world, a taste of the water of my hometown of Bethlehem." And he stretched and yawned and crawled back up in a cave and went to sleep. And those men who loved him with their lives said, "If that is what David wants, that's what David is going to get." So that night three of those men spent the entire night traveling back to Bethlehem. Sneaking through the Philistine lines at the risk of their lives. Getting a bucket of water out of the well at Bethlehem. Sneaking back through the Philistine lines. And walking all the way back. You ever carried five gallons of gasoline? It's heavy. It's heavy. It's heavy. Water can be very heavy. And they carried it all the way back and I just in my mind's eye can see that they put that bucket of water right in front of his cave and then the three of them sat down and grinned like Cheshire cats waiting for him to come out. And I can imagine him coming out you know and stretching and looking out over the Dead Sea, and then looking down and seeing that bucket of water and seeing those three guys sitting there grinning. And he says, "What is this?" And they said, "David, you said last night what you wanted most in all the world was a bucket of the water of Bethlehem. There it is." He said, "You mean you went to

Bethlehem and you snuck through the Philistine lines at the risk of your lives two times to get this bucket?" They said, "That's right David, we love you. We wanted to honor you." Just like that he did something that must of just astounded them, without even thinking he just reached down and picked up the bucket of water and said, "This water is too valuable for me to drink it. There is only one thing that can be done with it must be given to God as a sacrifice." And he poured the water out on the ground.

That was the kind of man David was he had a passion for God like nobody had a passion for God. He said in the Scriptures he is a man after God's own heart. He did things like that all the time, just spontaneously. When he became king of all of Israel the first thing he said was, "I will not sleep in a bed until the Ark of the Covenant has a proper resting place. I will sleep on the ground as the King of Israel until the Ark has a proper resting place." And he went to Kiriath-Jearim, he got the Ark and he danced before it all the way to Jerusalem; danced with his underwear, took off his outer robes. And as he came to Jerusalem dancing before the Ark his wife was astonished and embarrassed. And she reprimanded him and he said, "Honey, you ain't seen nothing yet." And she was struck barren by God because she had the audacity to criticize his worship. Yes, he was a sinner, he committed murder, he lied, he was a human being like all of us. But he had this overwhelming passion for God and when he sinned he always came back to God in repentance and cried out that God would forgive him. So he is presented as a model for us as a man after God's own heart.

Our next stop was at a place called Qumran, also located on the shore of the Dead Sea. This is where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in caves like this one.

Ilan Barkay: 1947 a Bedouin boy that was here with his flock of goats and sheep came to the caves of Qumran. And he took a stone that they throw into the cave. The stone broke one of the jars in the cave. He wanted to see what made this noise, he went in. He then found the jars. He opened the jars and in the jars were the scrolls. Of course the Bedouin boy couldn't read the scrolls the scrolls were in Ancient Hebrew and Aramaic he couldn't read the scrolls. So he took it to his father, so his father would make him a pair of sandals from the scrolls. His father thought that maybe the scrolls were worth more than a pair of sandals and he took it to Bethlehem. And that's how the archaeologists found out about the scrolls that were here. And then they came back and started to look in other caves around Qumran and for several years they checked all the caves around Qumran and they found them in more than 11 caves. Now, the scrolls that were found over here are considered as one of the most important archaeological discovery because here they found the oldest copy of the Bible that we have today. The oldest copy of the Old Testament that we have today. Before that the oldest copy was 1,000 years old, and here we have scrolls that are 2,000 years old. Think how excited were the scholars all over the world to read the Old Testament as it was in the First Century before the Jews went to the exile. And this was the best present that the State of Israel could get in 1947 because you remember in 15th of May 1948 the State of Israel was born, and that was the birth, the best present that we could get.

Dr. Reagan: We ended our day by taking a dip in the Dead Sea. They keep having to move the swimming area farther and farther out as the Dead Sea evaporates. One of the things the swimmers delight in doing is covering themselves with mud from the bottom of the Sea. The mud is full of sulfur so it has medicinal qualities. It is really not possible to swim in the Sea because it is too buoyant, all you can do is float.

Closing

Dr. Reagan: Well, folks, that's our program for this week. I hope it's been a blessing to you. This has been the eighth program in a series we have been presenting about the Holy Land. Previous programs have featured Tel Aviv, the Roman city of Caesarea Maritime, the Crusader city of Akko, the Sea of Galilee, the town of Nazareth, the fortress of Megiddo, the archaeological site of Beit Shean, and the Old City of Jerusalem. If you have missed any these programs you can find them on our website at lambion.com. Next week, the Lord willing, we will focus on the Mt. Herzl Cemetery and the Garden Tomb, both of which are located in Jerusalem. I think you will be fascinated by the sites. Until next week, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries' saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our Redemption is drawing near."

End of Program