

AMY WENT TO ISRAEL



NOVEMBER 2018



TIBERIUS: At the Aqueducts of Caesarea, which run from the east for 5 miles bringing water from the Shuni springs down to Caesarea. As Caesarea grew, they kept adding aqueducts until there were 4. Built first by the 1st century Romans, then by Hadrian and then by Byzantine era Caesareans. They've been built and rebuilt over time.



Tel Aviv and the Mediterranean Sea our first night of arrival. #calseverywhere



TIBERIUS: The view of the valley under Mt. Carmel, home to Druze citizens and a messianic Jewish community... and at the top is Muhraga, where I'm standing, the Carmelite monastery commemorating Elijah's contest with the prophets of Ba'al.



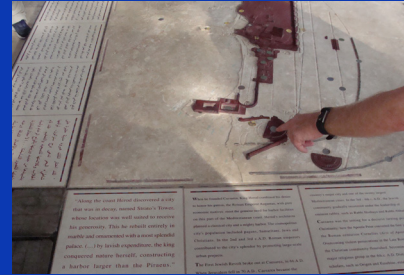
TIBERIUS: The entire group on top of Mt. Arbel viewing the Sea of Galilee in the background.



Mt. Arbel, lower Galilee and the 100 caves within its slope. This mountain is the scene of many bloody battles during the Maccabean (161 BCE) and Herodian (38 BCE) wars, as well as the first Jewish revolt (66-70 CE).



TIBERIUS: Qesaria Amphitheater at Caesarea. The lady at the bottom literally got up and started singing opera. Not kidding.



TIBERIUS: Qesaria Amphitheater at Caesarea.



TIBERIUS: Just outside the Qesaria Amphitheater at Caesarea.

DAY 1 & 2

Consisted of getting to Tel Aviv and losing 7 hours in the process.

DAY 3

Was. Amazing. We went from Tel Aviv to Caesarea by the Sea, dedicated to Caesar Augustus by Herod the Great (the dude who killed all the Hebrew babies trying to get rid of this Jesus fella). Herod (and Pontious Pilate) resided in the palace there, and Herod built a huge man-made harbor by filling boats with rocks until they sunk.

Next stop was Mount Carmel, the site of the showdown between the Prophet Elijah and the 450 Prophets of Ba'al and 400 prophets of Asherah. (1 Kings 18) This site was a little easier for me to close my eyes and imagine being there... VERY cool.

Then it was off to Mount Arbel. Omg talk about a view. We could see almost the entirety of Jesus's ministry in Galilee from him walking on the waters of the Sea of Galilee to lower Galilee where he traveled and preached quite often.

And Finally we landed in Tiberius, the city founded by Herod the Great's son, Herod Antipas. Even though Jesus never went to Tiberius specifically, it's 20 minutes by car from where he did that feeding the 5,000 and walking on water trick, so he was close. (John 6)

Tune in tomorrow for Magdala, Capernaum, the Mount of Beatitudes, Nazareth, Mary's Well (mother of Jesus) and the Church of the Annunciation.



MOUNT CARMEL: These signs are on top of Mount Carmel pointing to all the significant locations that can be seen from here.



TIBERIUS: Herod's Harbor



MAGDALA: The synagogue in Magdala... one of the six first century synagogues ever found. First century is important because that was during the time of Christ.

DAY 4

First off.... HAPPY THANKSGIVING from across the world!

Wow, today was a big day. So much information and so many places I think my head is spinning. I'll try to be brief...ish.

Day 4 started out at the ancient city of Magdala. Bet you know where this is going! Yep, Mary Magdalene lived in this very important fish processing town. She was the woman for whom Jesus cast out 7 demons, (Mark 16:9). Magdala is also where one of only 6 first century synagogues (the only one on the Sea of Galilee) have been discovered. There is a very good chance Jesus stood in this very spot.



NAZARETH: Basilica of the Annunciation, the largest Roman Catholic Church in the entire Middle East. Inside the Basilica is the cave of Mary. This is the site of Mary's home in Nazareth and where it's believed that the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary.

Then it was off to Capernaum. This was thought to be where Jesus did most of his public ministry. 5 of the 12 disciples were from here (Peter, Andrew, James, John and Matthew) and this is the site (excavated) of Peter's house where Jesus healed his mother in law (Matthew 8:14-15). Capernaum is also where Jesus performed many other miracles.

After Capernaum, we left for the Mount of Beatitudes where the famous Sermon on the Mount took place. (Matthew 5:1) Blessed are the guys who sold me a tiny coffee for 22 shekles. #coffeelife #itwasworthit

Finally it was off to Nazareth where the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to tell her she would have a son (Luke 1:26-38), where Mary and Joseph eventually settled, and where Jesus grew up.

DAY 5

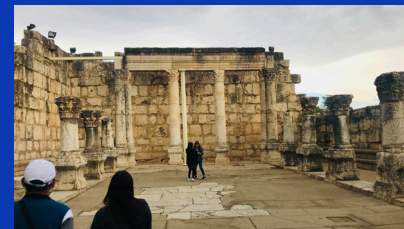
Day 5 was all about the northern region of Israel as we started our day with an hour drive from Tiberius up to the ancient city of Tel Dan (previously named Laish in Judges 18:7 or Leshem in Joshua 19:47) at the base of Mt. Hermon. The ancient Israelites conquered the city after entering the Promised Land and renamed it Dan. For those who don't know what a Tel is, it's an artificial mound formed from the accumulated refuse (or artifacts) of people living on the same site for hundreds or thousands of years. The site has a temple with a holy place and a most holy place still visible. The adobe "castle like" gate was probably the coolest and strangest thing discovered there!



MAGDALA: A beautiful painting of the bleeding woman reaching for Jesus's cloak for healing. (Mark 5:25)



GALILEE: The church on the Mount of Beatitudes



CAPERNAUM: The Byzantine era (4th century) white temple built on top of the earlier synagogue that was built from basalt, more native to Capernaum.



CAPERNAUM: The actual site of Peter's house.



NAZARETH: Upstairs in the Basilica of the Annunciation is a functioning church holding mass every Sunday.



TEL DAN: On the right you can see a steel structure that represents the size of the altar. The burnt calls and other burnt sacrifices were offered here in the temple courtyard. The "Most holy place" is at the top behind those people.



PANIAS: The cave, or the Mouth (Gates) of Hades



TEL DAN: THIS, my friends, is a crazy awesome discovery. This was a gate to the city of Tel Dan that dates back to 1850 BCE. Some are convinced that Abram (Abraham) could have walked these steps as he pursued Lot's captors all the way to Dan. (Genesis 14:14)



TEL DAN: This was an elevated spot at the city gates where a King would hear the cases and pass judgement. (Such as Ruth 4:1-2)



PANIAS: Drawing of ancient Panias, with the temple (left) jutting out of the mouth of the cave above.



JORDAN RIVER: Group photo with our first sighting of the Jordan River!



PRIMACY OF PETER: The Mensa Christi (Table of Christ) thought to be the table of rock used when Jesus had breakfast with his disciples after his resurrection.



SEA OF GALILEE: Walking distance from the Primacy of Peter, the Sea of Galilee's north side.

The Danites had grown tired of fighting for the land God allocated them and so took over and settled in Laish. Of the twelve tribes, only Dan never pushed down into its God-promised inheritance. This tribe is known for its perpetual struggle with idolatry

Then it was off to Panias/Caesarea Philippi in the Golan Heights. Panias, the "birthplace of the Jordan River" was a pagan religious site in ancient times named for Pan, the Greek Goat God. Here, Herod the Great built a temple right into the mouth of the cave where they sacrificed goats and threw them into the water that used to rush out of the cave. If the cave spit out the goats, Pan did not accept the sacrifice. His son Herod Philip inherited the area, renamed it Caesarea Philippi. Here, Jesus asked Peter "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:13)

Consequently, the mouth of that cave was also referred to the Mouth of Hades. After a Druze (ethnic group) lunch which was really good, it was back down to the Galilee area. First we stopped at an old military bridge to get a quick glimpse at the Jordan River (which we will be IN tomorrow) and then we stopped at a place called The Primacy of Peter. My Catholic homies will appreciate that this Roman Catholic place is dedicated to their First Pope and celebrates Peter's forgiveness and elevation of status by Jesus (John 21:15-25). At this site, we were able to walk down to the shore and get in the waters of the Sea of Galilee.

Our final thing for the day was to board a boat for a sail out to the middle of the Sea of Galilee. It was pretty emotional to think Jesus was actually there at one point. I was just closing my eyes and imaging the disciples in the boat and Jesus just walking out to them. Incredible.

Stay tuned. Tomorrow we will have some baptisms happening in the Jordan, and we'll be visiting Jericho, Qumran, and then as we arrive in Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane.

Thanks for sticking with me!



PRIMACY OF PETER: This church commemorates, and allegedly marks the spot, of Jesus' reinstatement of Peter as chief among the Apostles.



SEA OF GALILEE: The "rowdy bunch" sailing across the Sea of Galilee.



TIBERIUS: An after-dinner devotional with New Lifers on our final night in Tiberius.



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KASER EL YEHUD (AT THE JORDAN RIVER): The river is not wide at all. You can see the border between Israel and Jordan clearly marked with floaties in the water.



Me with our guide Mark Ziese, Dean of the school of Bible and Theology at Johnson University. He is SO knowledgeable and tells the BEST stories. I wish I could have put a recording device on him.



QUMRAN: The keyhole cave right in front here is cave #4 of 11 found to have scrolls inside. This one was purposely dug rather than created naturally.



KASER EL YEHUD (AT THE JORDAN RIVER): Israel is on the closer side and Jordan is on the far side of the river.



JERICHO: A beautiful tile mosaic in one of the eateries in Jericho.

DAY 6

Day 6 is big, guys, and it's taking me a long time to get it together because my sister, Jen is keeping me VERY updated on the OSU Michigan game right now. GO BLUE!

Okay, so today started out with a long drive from Tiberius south where we stopped at a site along the Jordan River (Kaser El Yehud) set up specifically for baptism. There were 5 people in our group who wanted to get baptized and what better place than in the same river John the Baptist baptized Jesus! (Matthew 16:13-17)

After drying off, we entered Palestine to visit Jericho! The excavation of Jericho shows a portion of a wall dating to 8,000 BCE and a tower, 10,000 BCE. Jericho is the oldest city on earth! While still in Jericho, we stopped at this wonderful glass shop and met the nicest friendliest group of people and spent a lot of time there just talking. (Apparently my eyes look like the sky, so the young man in the picture with me had to give me a cross charm made of blue stone from the Holy land, and I will never live that down if Joe, Joel, Tess and Todd have anything to do with it!)



JERICHO: Making friends in the glass shop!

Next, a surprise stop included a view of a winter palace built by Herod the Great. This is the same palace where Herod died a miserable awful slow death. (Matthew 2:19-20) it was so neat to be able to touch one of the walls! we are going to visit Herodian this week which is where Herod was buried.



OUTSIDE OF JERICHO: See that Tel way over there??? That's Herod's winter palace! The palace extended to where we were standing.

We then continued south to the top of the Dead Sea in Qumran. This is probably the coolest stop of the day for me. Here the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the caves above and along the length of the Dead Sea. (400 caves had evidence of past life in them, and 11 had scrolls or scroll fragments). The site excavated here was the home of the Essenes, a Jewish sect that existed in Palestine during the time of Christ and were dedicated to studying the scriptures. It has a room that was used for writing (or scribes). It is believed to be the very place a lot or most of the Dead Sea scrolls were originally written. And we stood inside it. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrates the incredible accuracy of transmission over a thousand year period, making it reasonable to say that the current Old Testament texts are reliable copies of the original works.



QUMRAN: Our group standing in the room of the scribes where most of the Dead Sea Scrolls were transcribed.



MOUNT OF OLIVES: The view of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives across the Kidron Valley.

The daylight was quickly becoming twilight as we drove from Qumran to Jerusalem with a stop at the Mount of Olives. The MoO is frequently mentioned in the Old and New Testament and overlooks the Temple Mount inside the Old City. As a group we had a communion service here which was really amazing. As we were leaving, we encountered our second camel of the day. Friendly little beast.

DAY 7

Happy Sabbath!

Day 7 started out with a visit to the Temple Mount. You all know that the Temple Mount is holy to Jews, Christians and Muslims, but the current TM is controlled by the Muslims as the Dome of the Rock sits on the site of original Jewish Temples, one built by Solomon (2 Chronicles 3:1), and after the Babylonians destroyed it, a second built by Zerubbabel (Ezra 3:7-13) So both the women and men in our group dressed very modestly and the women covered our heads out of respect. There are no Bibles or Christian jewelry or anything remotely Christian allowed up on the Temple Mount area so we brought none of that with us so it wouldn't be confiscated. The TM holds the Dome of the Rock as well as the El-Aksa Mosque (Masjid El-Aksa means "the furthest sanctuary, or the furthest Muhammad got in his dream). The Dome of the Rock is a mosque built over a large flat rock that was probably the threshing floor of Araunah, on which David built an altar and offered sacrifice. (2 Samuel 24).

Then we swung down to the Western Wall, built by none other than our friend King Herod in 20 BCE. where we were able to go up and observe the prayers going on, touch the wall and even put a prayer in the wall if we wanted to.

As we continued walking all over the Old City, we came upon the original ancient Roman Cardo, built in the Byzantine period, in the 6th century AD, it was the Main Street that ran from the Damascus Gate to the Zion Gate. A Cardo was lined with columns and shops in between them. It was a very busy place.

Then we went to the archaeological park outside the walls of the Temple Mount where many excavations have been made. The BEST thing there was a stone step made of bedrock (which is how they determined it was original) which used to lead up into Solomon's temple and where Jesus spent a lot of his time teaching and going and coming from the temple. That's right, Jesus stood on that stone, and so did I.

Then we walked outside the Dung Gate and over a short distance to the excavation of the City of David. Here, we got to see a stepped stone structure that some believe could have been the support for David's palace walls, while others think it was part of the foundation of Canaanite "Jebusite" stronghold of Zion. Within the City of David lies a Canaanite water tunnel which we were able to walk through, that allowed protected access for the women fetching water to the fortified pool that held the water coming from the Gihon Spring outside the city. Later, David's soldiers probably used this tunnel to sneak into the city and capture the Jebusites.



JERUSALEM: A view of the Western Wall as we were walking up the curved bridge.



JERUSALEM: The Dome of the Rock



JERUSALEM: The step where Jesus walked.



JERUSALEM: Warren's Shaft (or also called "the gutter" through which David's soldiers probably attacked the Jebusites)



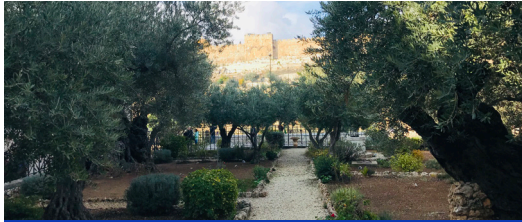
JERUSALEM: Heeere is the famous Pool of Siloam where Jesus told the blind man to go wash after he put mud on his eyes. I was blind... and now I see!



JERUSALEM: The view from the Garden of Gethsemane of the Golden Gate/Eastern Gate. Notice the Muslim cemetery directly beneath the gate?



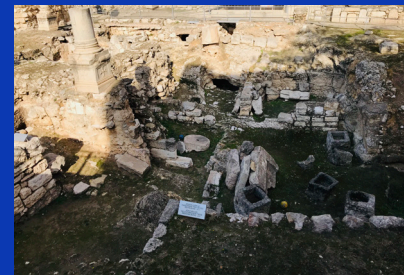
Inside the Church of All Nations and the rock thought to be Jesus's rock where he prayed for his Father to take his cup of suffering away.



The Garden of Gethsemane olive trees and Jesus's view of the Eastern Gate.



JERUSALEM: Walking through the Lion's Gate or Sheep Gate toward the Pool of Bethesda.



JERUSALEM: The Pool of Bethesda where Jesus healed the invalid.



JERUSALEM: The Pool of Bethesda where Jesus healed the invalid. The pool was extremely deep and stretched much farther than this photo shows.



JERUSALEM: The start of the Via Dolorosa required a selfie.

DAY 8

The Garden of Gethsemane, Old Jerusalem, The Via Dolorosa and Herod's Palace.

We saw SO much more than I'm going to post about because I had to pair down in order to give you guys more photos inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is WORTH it... that church is so beautiful inside I'm almost considering getting up and going down there at 5:30 am to see it without the crowds. Almost.

Okay, starting from the beginning... this morning we went first to the Garden of Gethsemane. "Gethsemane" is a Greek word for "olive press." The Church of All Nations stands on the site where it is thought that Jesus used the rock here for his prayer of agony. (Father take this cup from me...) (Matthew 26:36-56). Yes, I touched the rock, but the more powerful spot for me was the olive trees, the root systems of which could go back two thousand years, since it's nearly impossible to kill an olive tree! I could imagine Jesus right there amongst those trees, watching the Eastern Gate as torches from the Roman soldiers came toward him on the night he was betrayed.

I mentioned the Eastern Gate... fun fact, the Eastern Gate of Jesus's time was discovered not too long ago directly underneath the one you see in the photos, and the current one, was sealed by the Ottoman Sultan, Sulaiman the Magnificent in 1541 because in Jewish tradition, this is the gate through which the Messiah will come. It is suggested he sealed off the Eastern Gate, also called the Golden Gate, to prevent a false Messiah or "Antichrist" coming through entrance. The Ottomans also built a Muslim cemetery in front of the gate, to prevent a false precursor to the Anointed One, Elijah, from passing through the gate. There is a Christian cemetery directly below that.

We then climbed up the hill to the Lion's Gate (also called St. Stephen's Gate and Sheep Gate) which leads to the start of the Via Dolorosa, or "Way of Suffering." First we stopped at the Pool of Bethesda and the church of St. Anne, the mother of Mary. The pool of Bethesda is where Jesus healed a man who could not walk. (John 5:1-15). It was really cool to know for sure that Jesus was actually here... healing people.

Next we really got started with the first two stations of the cross. Some of the 14 stations are historically and archaeologically accurate, and some are connected to a memory (such as Jesus stumbling). The locations of some of the stations have changed several times, but



JERUSALEM: The Ecce Homo arch begins in this church along the start of the Via Dolorosa...



...and extends outside over the Via Dolorosa and into a house.

there are a few that are pretty sound. We started with the church of the Condemnation and the Church of the Flagellation where Jesus was condemned (Matthew 27:1-2) and beaten (John 19:1-16) and given his crown of thorns. The site of these churches is actually across the street from where these things actually happened because the Praetorium, or Roman Garrison where Pontius Pilate was, is now a Muslim boys school.

Just off from here is an odd little chapel with an arch for an apse. This arch is one of 3 arches that extends out of the church, across the street and then into somebody's house probably! It is Hadrian's Triumphal Arch, the "Ecce Homo" arch, built in 135 CE and traditionally marks the place where Pilate presented Jesus with the words: "Ecce Homo" or "Behold the Man!"

We walked the entire Via Dolorosa.... and if it weren't JUST like Mardi Gras, I would have been able to appreciate it more. But it's like the running of the bulls but with hoards of people and tiny narrow streets. It's crazy.

At the end of the Via, is the best and most amazing part. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre. I want to start out by saying that there are 6 ancient Christian denominations that have governance over this place, and they CANNOT get along. So much so that they could not agree on who should hold the key to the front door. So guess who has it and who comes to unlock it every morning? Two Muslim families who have carried this responsibility for 800 years. Omg. I have no words.

Outside the city walls In Jesus's time, the Holy Sepulchre has a sordid history of destruction and rebuilding but the current version we get to view was rebuilt in 1012-1170 CE. (The first was built in 326 CE) The site marks the spot where Jesus was crucified and buried and is the holiest spot in Christendom. Archaeologists have uncovered evidence that supports the theory that this is the location, and the limestone underneath was definitely used for executions and burials because it was not good for anything else! The photos below will have more info!

Our final stop of the day was Herod's palace and The Tower of David. In Luke 23:6-12, Jesus is brought in front of Herod Antipas and says nothing as Herod grills him for information. That was probably right here in this palace-fortress. Herod erected three huge towers, as an additional protection and last refuge in case of danger. These he called after people close to him - Hippius after a friend, Phasael after his brother, and Mariamne after his favourite wife, the lower half of Hippius being the only part that remains. During the Byzantine period, the tower was renamed - the Tower of David - after the Byzantines, mistakenly identifying the hill as Mount Zion, presumed it to be David's palace. (Nope! It's not....)

I am really grateful that our guide, Mark, is an Archaeologist and has worked on excavation sites (including the one at Tel Dan). He gives us a very accurate assessment of the history, the proof and the memory attachment which legitimizes so much of this trip for me. I'm truly loving every minute of it!



JERUSALEM: The Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Please note the ladder underneath the window on the right. Please google "the Immovable Ladder". It is worth the extra reading. So ridiculous.



JERUSALEM: A rock thought to be THE rock of the crucifixion. (12th Station of the Cross) There is a hole in the glass where you can reach your hand through and touch it. Yes, I did. Underneath that altar on the left is the hole.



JERUSALEM: Under the tombs upstairs is a lower area with other tombs cut into the limestone. This area back in Jesus's time was a graveyard and the limestone made it fairly easy to carve tombs into it. Joseph of Arimathea, who gave his tomb up for the body of Jesus had his tomb in this general location.



JERUSALEM: The remains of Herod's Palace where Jesus was brought in front of him for questioning. This is now called the Tower of David.



BETHLEHEM: The Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Our Palestinian guide is explaining that the door is so small. The Mamluks and the Ottoman Turks abused the building, allowing in animals, carts and looting. So they decreased the door size (see the original arch?)

DAY 9

“As for you, Bethlehem of Ephrathah, though you are the least significant of Judea’s forces, one who is to be a ruler in Israel on my behalf will come out from you. His origin is from remote times, from ancient days.” (Micah 5:2)

Day 9 was a pretty special day with the Christmas holidays approaching, it got me with all the feels. We hopped on the bus and headed back into Palestine to Bethlehem.

In Bethlehem there is the Church of the Nativity with the cave of Mary and Joseph located under the apse. Archaeologically speaking, the cave (yes cave, not a wooden structure depicted in all the pictures) where Mary had baby Jesus and where the manger sat are very accurate. People used to use caves in this region for their animals and for lots of other reasons. The site was marked almost immediately after his birth because it was such a big deal, and was kept marked until Constantine’s Mother, Helena came and built a church here in 339 CE.

Also in the Church of the Nativity is the cave where the Angel appeared to Joseph while he was sleeping and told him to get himself and Mary and Baby Jesus out of Bethlehem because Herod was coming. (Matthew 2:19-20) Joseph wouldn’t have slept in the same cave as Mary and the baby. Also in the same cave system, is the cave of St. Jerome who translated the Bible into Latin while living there in Bethlehem. They say he also died in the cave, but this part of the story has little historical foundation.

We also drove over to the shepherd’s field (not far away) where the general area is known to have been where the angels appeared to the shepherds. The cave in the photos below is not necessarily their cave, but it is very representative of the type of place they would have been when the angels appeared. Notice the black ceilings from lots of fires.

How do we know when Jesus was born? Herod died in 4 CE so we know that Jesus was born some time shortly before Herod died, because hello, Herod tried to kill Jesus by ordering all Jewish boys 2 and younger in Bethlehem to be killed. (Matthew 2:16) It could have been even up to 9 or 10 years BCE when Jesus was born based on how long it took them to take a census back then. Mind. Blown.



BETHLEHEM: The cave below The Church of the Nativity. The star marks the spot where Mary had the baby.



BETHLEHEM: This is the Shepherd's Field Chapel. It sits on the general site of where the shepherd were when the angels appeared. The caves are down the hill to the left.



BETHLEHEM: This is the black ceiling'd cave in the location of the Shepherd's field. If this wasn't their cave, the real one is a stones throw.. Very cool in there. The blackened ceilings were from the many fires they built to keep warm.



BETHLEHEM: 1 of 3 awesome paintings depicting the Nativity inside the Shepherd's Church



HERODIAN: A panoramic view from the top of Herodian, Herod's Palace and eventual burial site. No wonder Herod wanted a higher view. He could see Bethlehem, Jerusalem, the Dead Sea and off in the distance the furthest range to the right is Jordan.

Inside the Shepherds church our group sang Angels We Have Heard on High, and inside the Shepherds cave, we sang Oh Little Town of Bethlehem, and Hark the Herald Angels Sing, and I'm not gonna lie, this girl got choked up and could barely get the words out. I'll never sing those songs the same way again. It was awesome to be able to actually picture what they are singing about... to see it with my own eyes.

Fun fact, adjacent to Bethlehem is Bayt Jala where there's a cave and a church built over the cave that we could see while driving out of Bethlehem. Guess who lived in that cave? St. Nicholas. Yep! Santa and Jesus, hanging out together if not in reality, possibly in spirit. Ha!

Then it was off to Herodian. I have been so excited about this spot all week because it's a tangible example of mountains literally being moved. (Matthew 2:19-20) When we got there I wondered why Herod chose this spot for his tomb. Herod's mother's chariot overturned when they fled Jerusalem during one of the many conflicts in his time on that spot. I believe she lived, but it stayed with Herod and that is why he chose it. Discovered and excavated by Israeli architect Ehud Netzer in 2007, Netzer fell to his death here while standing above the theater during the dig. He leaned against a board on a scaffold that was not secured. He spent his whole life looking for Herod's tomb and died just a few feet from it right after the discovery. (At one point during his excavation, Netzer came within inches of the tomb of Herod before he turned around and started digging elsewhere. Can you believe it!?)

Sorry I love the stories about Herod..... such a crazy creep of a dude. Herod received this land and power from Rome because of his military savvy as a young man in pushing back the Iranians. His kingdom became the Eastern front between the Iranians and Rome. Herod was Rome's "trip wire". The Iranians were a threat that had Magi who held all the political power. Magi are king makers and king breakers. That's why when they came to Herod and asked where is the king of the Jews that was just born, Herod was disturbed! (Matthew 2:1-3) 600 years after Jesus, the Iranians/Persians took the entire land again. They got to Bethlehem and saw the men making the mosaic of the Magi bringing gifts to Jesus, they spared the Church of the Nativity (because they were like, "Hey! That's us!") This is



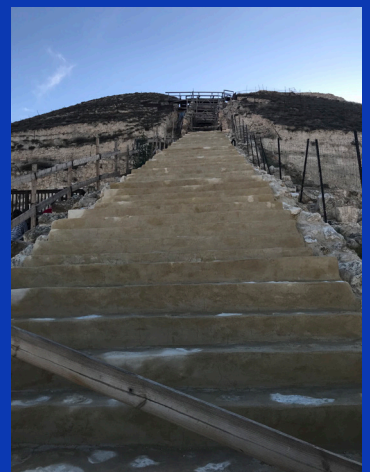
HERODIAN: A view from atop Herodian toward the Dead Sea and the dry hills of the desert. It would have been in these hills where Saul chased King David all over. This was where David, as a boy, would have herded his sheep.



HERODIAN: A model of what Herod's Tomb may have looked like.



HERODIAN: Herodian was a place of luxury, with bath houses, a feast hall and a courtyard.



HERODIAN: Herodian's grand staircase is being restored



JERUSALEM: As soon as we got back to the Old City, we walked down to the Western Wall to see it at night.

why The Church of the Nativity is the longest standing Christian Church in the entire Holy Land.

Today was a perfect entryway into the Christmas season and I'm a really grateful and blessed to have been able to see these places with my own eyes. Oh... and also, I got my first (and last) tattoo.

DAY 10

Today was our last day in Israel. I can't believe it is over already. I hope you all have enjoyed the journey!

About 6 of us decided we just HAD to get up early and go back to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre when it was quieter and more peaceful. We had hoped to be able to get in to see the tomb of Jesus since we didn't get to see it the other day, but lo and behold, at 6 am, being held was a Catholic Mass on one side of the tomb and a Greek Orthodox Mass on the other side of the Tomb. In the same room. Feet from each other. It went on for so long, and they were trying to out sing each other, so much so that we had to get going.

The highlight of the day was a few hours at the Israel museum. I could not WAIT to lay eyes on the Dead Sea Scrolls. They did not disappoint. We were not allowed to take any photos in that area... boo.

Then we stopped at a place called Saint Peter in Gallicantu (or St. Peter at the Cock's Crow). It is a GORGEOUS French Catholic Church dedicated to the narrative of Jesus's trial before the High Priest Caiaphas and Peter's denial of him outside. (Mark 14:53-65) There are conflicting reasons for and against the location of Caiaphas's house, but archaeologists believe it made more sense for a rich high priest to be located in the "wealthy" section of the city where high priestly family homes have been uncovered, and not so far outside the city. Either way, it was a great view of the Temple Mount and the 3 valleys that meet at the south edge of the Old City, and a great place to end our trip.

Thank you all for being with me while I visit this Holy place. I've really enjoyed writing for you, and for me. Good night, and see you back in the states tomorrow! Xoxo



JERUSALEM: After dinner, I went to a 700 year old family-owned tattoo shop for my very first ever tattoo. The family started in Egypt tattooing and has passed on the tradition for 700 years. I'm glad I chose a short word. I got the word "Jesus" but written in Hebrew. Or Yeshua.



JERUSALEM: At the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at 6 am you can actually find a bit of peace.



JERUSALEM: At the Israel museum, there was an INCREDIBLE small scale model of Jerusalem back during the time of Zerubbabel's temple.



JERUSALEM: A view from St. Peter...see the Temple Mount?



JERUSALEM: To end our night, we went to a light show at the Tower of David (Herod's Palace)