

Israel Trip Reflection

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“Maranatha! Maranatha! Come quickly, Lord Jesus!” These were the words my mother and I (Emily) would proclaim excitedly each evening when we would pray together throughout my early childhood years. I had learned to pray “Maranatha” from one of my favorite books, *Jesus is Coming Again*, written by Dr. David Reagan. I absolutely loved the book and read it often. I wanted all my friends to read it too, and many of them did, thanks to my mom who always had a supply of them ready to gift to anyone at any time.

I was blessed to be raised in a home where the gospel, eschatology, prophecy, and the importance of Israel in God’s grand plan were all topics discussed often. Matter of fact, both my father and uncle largely attribute their salvation to reading Dr. David Reagan’s book, *The Master Plan* (* now available as *God’s Plan for the Ages*). God used this book to open their eyes to who God is, the truth of the gospel, and God’s ultimate plan. So, even as a small child, I was eager for the return of Christ. The more I studied God’s Word, the more in awe of God I was, and the more passionate I became to learn more about Jesus and to share the gospel.

Like many Christians, I have always dreamed of going on a pilgrimage to Israel—to walk where Jesus walked, to gain a greater understanding of the context of the Bible, and to see where future eschatological events will take place. I never thought I would actually have the opportunity to do so, especially as a financially struggling college student.

You can imagine my absolute shock and immediate tears of joy when I learned that both my pastoral ministry-major boyfriend (now my husband) and I were both nominated for Millennial Kingdom Scholarships in 2019. Even then, we knew there was no guarantee that both—or even one—of us, would be chosen for the scholarship. We entered the application process trusting the Lord and humbly knowing that His will would be done, no matter the outcome.

Learning that both of us had been chosen as scholarship recipients was a moment we will never forget. We are deeply humbled and abundantly grateful to God and Lamb & Lion supporters for the opportunity to experience this transformative and deeply impactful pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Unfortunately, our trip was canceled three times, twice due to COVID and once due to unrest in the Middle East. As disappointing as this was, we are grateful for God's perfect timing, because on Saturday, June 17, 2023, we embarked on the trip of a lifetime! In His providence, God allowed us to travel four years later as a newly married couple who had recently entered ministry together. We were also blessed with the most wonderful travel companions! We joined Tim Moore and over 40 other pilgrims to travel to several different sites throughout Israel for ten incredible days! We were blessed to hear devotional messages from many in our group, including our tour guide Erez bar David, Tim Moore, Pastors Terry and Chad Cooper of Nineveh Christian Church in Kentucky, all of whom shared from the Word and from the heart. We were blessed to try different foods and to take in a vibrant culture, while also learning the heritage of the people of Israel.

When we reflect on this wonderful trip, we cannot help but think of what the apostle John wrote in his gospel: "And the Word [the Lord Jesus Christ] became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14, ESV). This same Word taught His followers the life of the Kingdom, and preached the message of salvation in Capernaum, one of many sites we visited. This same Word powerfully displayed His dominion over creation when He walked on the Sea of Galilee, where we sailed and felt the Holy Spirit's presence. He prayed to His Father in the same Garden of Gethsemane we visited on our tour. This same Jesus, because He died on the Cross, was buried for three days, then rose and ascended to His Father, will return at the end of the Tribulation to vanquish His enemies in the Jezreel Valley—another location we were blessed to see. Each site we visited was significance in terms of the Good News of Jesus Christ, in Bible history and prophecy, and in modern times.

It was incredible to meditate on prophetic fulfillments of God's Word we can clearly see as believers. We've now been to the Mount of Olives and the Eastern Gate mentioned in passages such as Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Revelation 19-21, and understand more fully the promises of His Second Coming.

Modern Israel already represents the Jewish regathering from The Dispersion as described in Ezekiel 37:

Thus says Lord Yahweh, "Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms. They also will no longer defile themselves with their idols or with their

detestable things or with any of their transgressions; but I will save them from all their places of habitation in which they have sinned, and I will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God.” (Ezekiel 37:21-23 LSB).

We look forward to the final promise of that prophecy being fulfilled even as we pray for the peace of Jerusalem today (Psalm 122:6). As we write this article (October 10, 2023), we have been burdened by the recent attacks from Hamas on Israel at the border near Gaza. Right now, several nations despise Israel’s existence. But Ezekiel prophetically says the promised Messiah, the only perfect King, will deliver and rule Israel. In the End Times, all Israel will repent of their sins and trust in Jesus, the Son of David (2 Sam. 7:16) and Son of Man (Daniel 7:13-14). It will be glorious when Israel and the Church both worship the Lord Jesus Christ in the Millennium.

I (Isaac) grew up in a church that strongly adhered to Covenant theology. Many of the passages Emily and I just referenced would’ve been interpreted “allegorically” or “symbolically” or “spiritually” if I still adhered to Covenant hermeneutics. However, I now see these with physical/literal, prophetic, and spiritual/symbolic implications.

Israel’s prophetic “resurrection” in our modern history reflects our spiritual testimony of Christ’s resurrection power that causes every believer to be born again. Christ now reigns at His Father’s side, and He will reign in His Messianic Kingdom to come. Since coming out of the Covenant theological framework, my love and appreciation for studying Scripture and learning more about Bible prophecy, the Millennial Kingdom, and the significance of Israel has grown. On top of that, embarking on the pilgrimage to Israel further confirms and solidifies my fruitful beliefs in biblical theology and eschatology. And it has further confirmed my newfound desire to delight in praying for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6) and for the Messianic Kingdom to come.

The Millennial Kingdom Scholarship made it possible for us to go on this pilgrimage, an experience that will truly enrich our ministry. Additionally, we were able to do it expense-free, which was an immense blessing. We are grateful to God and Prophecy Partners who want to equip the saints and reach the lost by sharing God’s prophetic Word.

If you feel led to donate to Lamb & Lion Ministries’ Millennial Kingdom Scholarship program to bless young pilgrims with the opportunity to visit the holy land, please do so! Your contribution is a worthwhile investment that God can use to impact young people like us, equipping the next generation for Kingdom ministry. We hope to see many future pilgrims enjoy the blessing we received and grow in their knowledge and love of biblical prophecy!

With our hearts yearning for the Blessed Hope, we proclaim, “Maranatha! Lord, come quickly!”