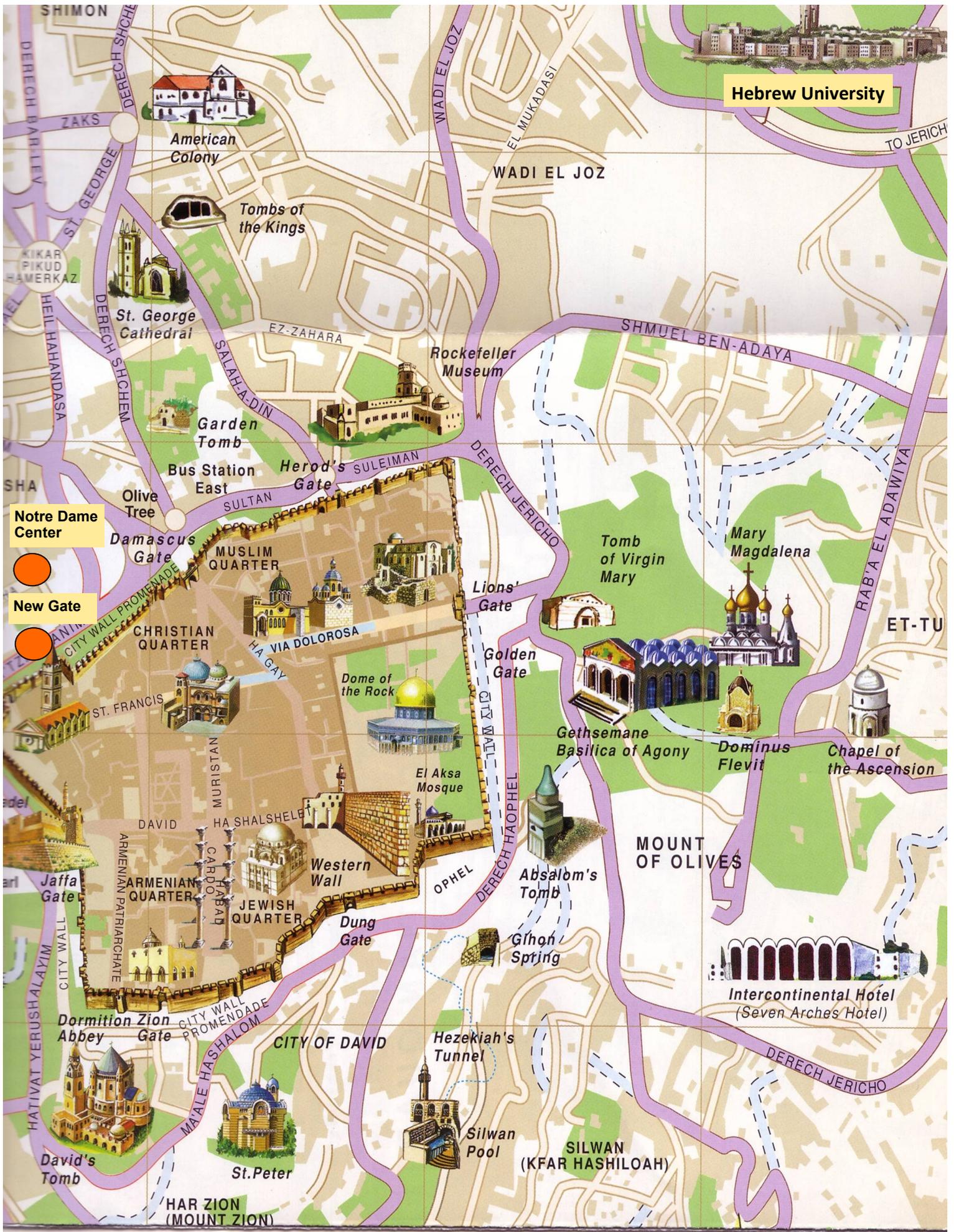


Archaeological Guide

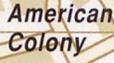
2026 Holy Land Pilgrimage

By Fr. Dave Heney





Hebrew University



American Colony

Tombs of the Kings



St. George Cathedral



Garden Tomb



Rockefeller Museum

Olive Tree

Damascus Gate

MUSLIM QUARTER

CHRISTIAN QUARTER



Dome of the Rock



El Aksa Mosque

Western Wall

Dung Gate

CITY OF DAVID



Hezekiah's Tunnel

Silwan Pool

SILWAN (KFAR HASHILOAH)

MOUNT OF OLIVES



Absalom's Tomb

Gihon Spring

Gethsemane Basilica of Agony

Dominus Flevit

Chapel of the Ascension

Intercontinental Hotel (Seven Arches Hotel)

David's Tomb

St. Peter

HAR ZION (MOUNT ZION)

Notre Dame Center

New Gate



TO JERICH

ET-TU

SHIMON

WADI EL JOZ

WADI EL JOZ

SHMUEL BEN-ADAYA

DERECH JERICHO

DERECH JERICHO

DERECH HAOPHEL

DERECH JERICHO

DERECH DANIEL

ZAKS

ST. GEORGE

HEIL HAHANDASA

DERECH SHCHEM

SHAH

HA ANIN

HA GAY

HA SHALSHELET

SHIMON

Jerusalem Map

Our Hotel area: The Notre Dame Center is in the middle left side of the map. It is across the street from the New Gate, the entrance to the Christian Quarter of the Old City, and then a 1/4 mile walk to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The last page has an easy to follow map for you to walk there. Our final farewell banquet will also be at the Christmas Hotel.

The Old City & Temple Mount: In the brown shaded left center is the “*Old City*.” This is the central landmark of Jerusalem and is divided into Four Quarters: *Christian, Muslim, Armenian, and Jewish*. To the right is the Islamic *Golden Dome of the Rock*, which was built over what was once the Jerusalem Temple. The Temple was built to contain the Ten Commandment Tablets given to Moses on Mt Sinai after their exodus from Egypt 1400 years earlier, and as a place to offer sacrifices to God. It was the largest structure in the ancient world, and the whole area is called the *Temple Mount*. The Tablets were lost when the Babylonian Army invaded about 600 years before Jesus. The Temple was rebuilt by Herod the Great, and just finished at the time of Jesus. He spoke to the crowds every day in the Temple area.

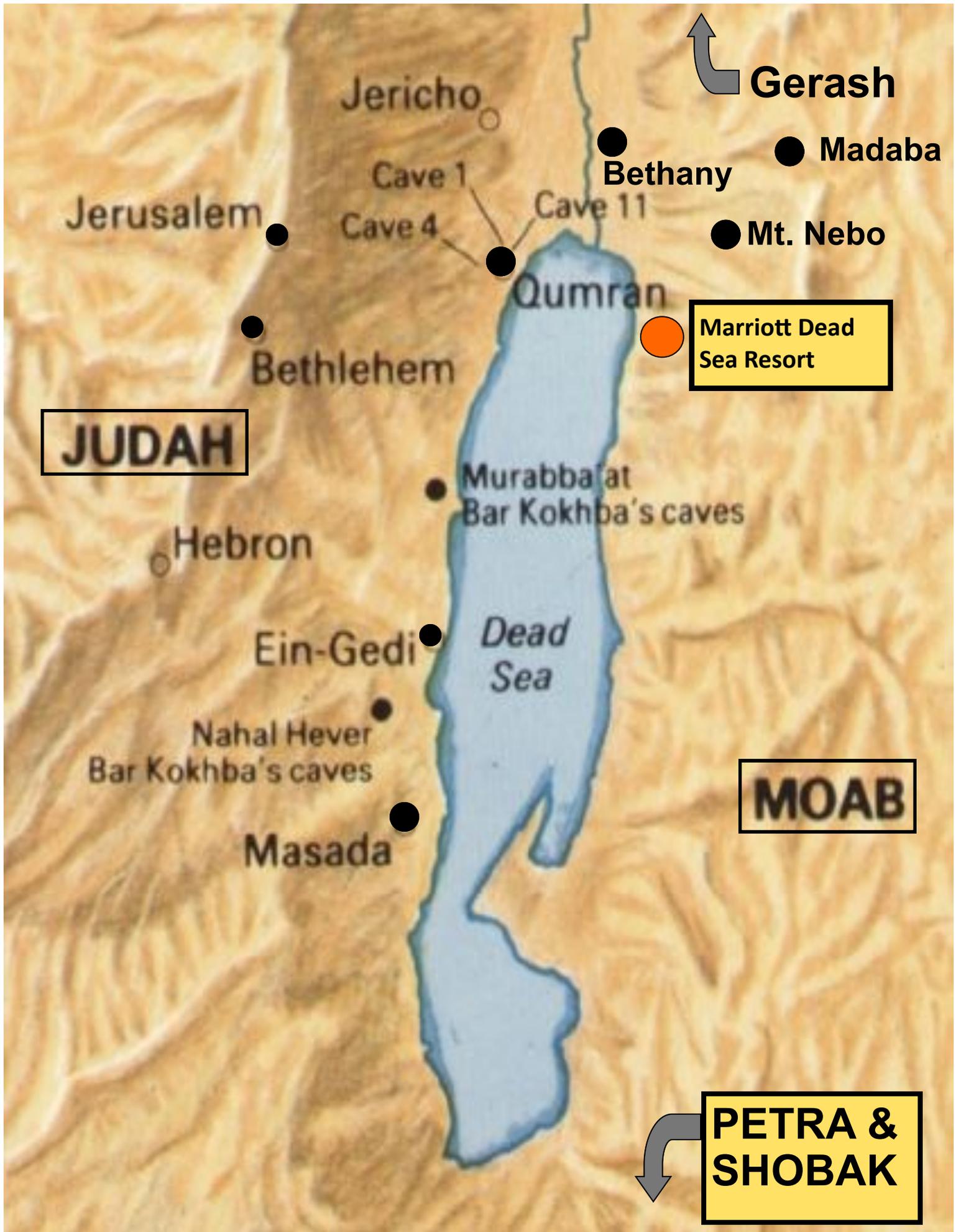
Mt. of Olives: On the right middle overlooking the Temple Mount is the Mt. of Olives, where Jesus ascended into heaven. Just below is the olive tree garden of Gethsemane. Nearby is a cave where the olive press (“*gat-shemanim*” in Hebrew) was used, A cave is warm in winter and cool in summer and so the likely place where Jesus met with His disciples to begin and end each day. (Luke 22:39, John 18:2) We will celebrate our first Mass there.

Way of the Cross: Just left of the Garden is the “Lion’s Gate” entrance and the road which becomes the Way of the Cross or “Via Dolorosa” (way of sorrow). Rome later straightened the more meandering Jewish roads so it now only loosely follows the general path from the trial to the crucifixion site.

Church of the Holy Sepulchre: The Via Dolorosa leads to this twin-domed Church built by Roman Emperor Constantine around 325 AD and rebuilt by Crusaders around 1100 AD. The Church covers both crucifixion and burial sites of Jesus that all archaeologists today affirm are authentic. The church is divided into areas run by Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Armenian Orthodox leaders under a system called the *Status Quo*. This system arose from the Turks who conquered the area around 1300 AD. In Turkish culture, to repair something, or even move furniture, gave you a kind of ownership over it. However, the Orthodox religions could not afford repairs ...but did not want to lose ownership of their area by having repairs done by others. Therefore, even the smallest repairs in the Church did not happen, which is why it is in such bad shape. *Everything stays the same, and so is formally called the Status Quo* and is precisely maintained. Fortunately, recent agreements allowed important safety renovations, and which unexpectedly uncovered even further confirmation of the burial tomb of Jesus.

The Last Supper Room and “Jesus Steps”: In the lower left of the Old City near the Zion Gate is the Crusader era building that is over the spot of the Last Supper. Just outside the gate is the Church of St. Peter that is over the house of Caiaphas, the High Priest, where Jesus spent the night after his arrest. The area is very steep so the ancient road turns to steps. These steps were recently uncovered and are universally recognized as the steps Jesus walked to and from the Garden of Gethsemane. There is a small section where you can walk on those same steps.

Ancient politics and religion: The Roman Empire conquered the area about 70 years before Christ. It was a humiliation for Jews. Four groups responded. Each hoped that strict obedience would bring God’s favor and Roman defeat. The Pharisees were teachers and kept every Jewish law in fine detail. The Sadducees were Temple priests and precisely performed sacrifices. The Essenes lived in isolated communities with strict kosher rules. The Zealots promoted full military revolt. It is possible there were disciples of Jesus from all four groups. Romans were paranoid about these groups and deeply suspicious of any group activity. This was the situation when Jesus was born in Bethlehem.



Gerash

Madaba

Bethany

Mt. Nebo

Marriott Dead Sea Resort

JUDAH

MOAB

PETRA & SHOBAK

Jericho

Jerusalem

Cave 1

Cave 4

Cave 11

Bethlehem

Hebron

Ein-Gedi

Nahal Hever
Bar Kokhba's caves

Masada

Qumran

Murabba'at
Bar Kokhba's caves

Dead Sea

Dead Sea Region & Jordan Sites

DEAS SEA REGION: Divided into Judah and Moab, this geological area is in the thousand mile long African Rift Valley that drops to 1400 feet below sea level at the Dead Sea. Jordan River water flows in but cannot flow out. It evaporates leaving high salt levels which prevent any fish or plant life but also make it the most buoyant water anywhere. Ironically, Dead Sea mud is famous as an anti-aging skin treatment. We will stay overnight at a luxurious Marriott Hotel spa resort built for these treatments and the exotic experience of swimming in these highly buoyant waters.

MASADA: King Herod built a palace on this flat topped mountain along the south shore about 30 BC. About 70 AD, the Jews revolted in a four year war against Roman rule. The Romans won but about 1000 revolutionaries (*Zealots*) escaped to Masada. The Romans built a huge ramp up to the walls, only to find all were dead. The Jewish historian, Josephus, indicates the Zealots chose death at their own hand rather than Roman slavery. While evidence certainly affirms the battle, there is no evidence of how they died.

QUMRAN & the DEAD SEA SCROLLS: As the Roman Army approached Jerusalem and Qumran in 70 AD, people hid their libraries in caves along the northern shore in the Qumran area. They died in the invasion and so the scrolls were lost, until 1947, when two Bedouin shepherds looking for archaeological artifacts to sell found jars with scrolls in a cave near the Qumran ruins. Eventually 11 caves revealed over 200 biblical scrolls. Another 600 scrolls and over 15,000 fragments tell the story of the Essenes, a Jewish fundamentalist sect that followed rigid Jewish law. Prior to this discovery, the earliest Old Testament text dated to about 900 AD. The main result of scroll analysis reveals that the Old Testament we have today is very faithful to the text at the time of Jesus. One question now is whether the ruins at Qumran were an Essene settlement, pottery factory, or not connected at all with the scrolls.

MT. NEBO & BETHANY BAPTISM SITE & MADABA. Moses led the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan from the east side of the river. From Mt. Nebo he saw the land, but was disqualified from entering as the leader because he had once doubted God. Joshua took his place and came across the Jordan river near where it meets the Dead Sea. Most archeologists affirm this is the area of the Baptism of Jesus. (*Joshua* is *Jesus* in Hebrew.) Also near here, in Madaba in 1896, workers repairing a Church floor discovered a large 6th century mosaic map of the world with Jerusalem in the center and in high detail. Archeologists use this map today to locate sites and guide excavations in Jerusalem.

JERICHO: Did Joshua cause the “*walls of Jericho to come tumbling down?*” Debate continues today about the evidence. Although fire ash has been found, the dating is unclear about when Joshua and the Israelites arrived.

SHOBAK CRUSADER CASTLE: After more than *four centuries* of relatively peaceful Christian pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the whole region was conquered by Seljuk Turks who shut down all pilgrimages and trade, leading to the first Crusade in 1095 AD. Victorious Crusader armies built a series of forts to protect pilgrims as they travelled throughout the Holy Land. This fort was originally in the middle of a huge forest that was completely cut down by the Turkish army for railroad ties before the First World War.

PETRA: This city was a crossroads of thousands of ancient caravans and so became very prosperous from taxes and fees. Its location within a narrow canyon kept it safe from Roman conquest as well. It is famous for its magnificent one and a half mile canyon entrance and the many temples carved directly into the beautiful rock faces and cliffs. You have the options of walking, riding a horse or camel, or riding a small carriage to visit the site. Some archaeologists believe the Magi (the three Wise Men at Christmas) came from here.

GERASH: This is the largest and best preserved Roman archeological ruin in the world. All Roman cities, from England to Tunisia had the same design and features, such as large entry gates, baths, temples, arenas, amphitheaters, and grand main streets. This was the Roman way of affirming that Roman culture dominates, no matter where it is. Gerash visibly reveals the power of Rome that the early Church faced.



Galilean Ministry of Jesus

Galilee Map

MOUNT BEATITUDES: This the traditional site of the *Sermon on the Mount*, and the small *Eremos* cave Jesus often used for quiet prayer. Eremos means isolated. It has the same beautiful and unchanged view of the whole region that Jesus saw. The site is verified by pilgrim reports from the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D.

GALILEE: After Rome conquered the Middle East about 70 years before Jesus, they set up local Kings, like Herod the Great. Later, four regional rulers governed Galilee, Samaria, Gaulanitas, and the Decapolis. Herod's son, Herod Antipas, ruled Galilee. Both father and son had massive building programs to honor the Romans. Herod Antipas built the city of Tiberias, (named after the Emperor) and rebuilt the beautiful city of Sepphoris, near Nazareth.

SAMARIA: When the Babylonian Empire captured this region about 500 years before Jesus, not all Jews were carried off into slavery. The Samaritans stayed behind and developed a new strain of Judaism. When the Jews returned they shunned this group as heretical and would not even walk there. The many times Jesus talked to Samaritans was a shock to Jews, and a sign of His universal mission to all people.

DECAPOLIS: The Greek King, Alexander the Great, conquered the Middle East about 300 years before Jesus, and established Greek culture everywhere. This was a huge humiliation for the Jews who resented their secular values that included theatres, public baths, excessive drinking, and pagan religion. To *Hellenize* the area, (*Hellas* is the Greek name for Greece) Greco-Roman rulers established ten cities (Deca-polis) in the Greek style. Jews would usually avoid them, but Jesus often travelled there.

MAGDALA: Ongoing excavations here at the town of Mary Magdalene on the shore of the Sea of Galilee reveal a pristine First Century Synagogue, and wealthy fishing town, where it is most certain Jesus visited. A large carved square stone still intrigues scholars and is unique in all of Israel. We will have Mass in the beautiful new church there.

NAZARETH & SEPPHORIS: Nazareth was a small village of about 100 families. The name might refer to "*Netzerim*" (*seeds or roots*) meaning a clan of Jews from whom it was thought the Messiah would come. Sepphoris was once a very beautiful, wealthy, government center of 20,000 people located four miles from Nazareth. Joseph's occupation was actually *general contractor* rather than carpenter, so Joseph and Jesus would have walked to Sepphoris every day to work in the large building projects of King Herod Antipas. Therefore, many archaeologists believe Jesus had some knowledge of Greek and Latin, as well as his own Hebrew and Aramaic. He might have learned acoustics and public speaking techniques from the outdoor theater there. (Mt. Beatitude has hillsides with natural theater features that Jesus could use to speak to huge crowds.) Hebrew was used for religious services and Aramaic, an older language, for everyday life. We will visit an amazingly accurate recreation of village life at the Nazareth Ancient Village Museum.

CANA: This town near Nazareth has the ruins of a Synagogue over which is built a Catholic Church. Weddings were normally conducted in the outer porticoes or patios of Synagogues. We will offer the chance for couples to renew their own wedding vows while there.

CAPERNAUM: This highly verified archaeological village site on the shoreline reveals a First Century Synagogue foundation as well standard First Century Jewish *four room houses*, one of which had been turned into a Church shortly after the time of Jesus. Pilgrim graffiti indicates it was the house where Jesus stayed with Peter's family. This house has wide archaeological support as the place where Jesus stayed while in Capernaum. There is a new remarkable Church built on pillars about ten feet above the site. Since the Church is built over the site, it allows continued archaeological investigations.

Archaeological Methods

EXCAVATIONS: Ancient villages were frequently destroyed and then rebuilt many times right on top of the old village, leading to the gradual elevation of the site. An abandoned site would eventually be covered with dirt, appearing then as a small hill or “Tel” in Hebrew. Underneath, the different village levels would sit in layers like the layers in a cake with the oldest buildings at the bottom and more recent on top.

Trench method: Workers would simply dig a deep trench that would slice through all the layers at once making it easy to see how many layers there are and how deep the villages go.

Layering method: workers would gradually remove dirt from one entire layer starting at the top and slowly dig down. This would completely uncover each layer, but each layer would be somewhat destroyed as the dig went deeper. All items at any given level would be photographed, mapped, and cataloged. Items can be better understood by what lies nearby, i.e. pottery items next to an oven indicate a kitchen, or arrowheads next to a burnt wall indicate an armed invasion.

Provenance & Publishing: Archeologists later write a very formal report that fully reveals everything that can possibly be said about the site and all items found there. This establishes the official “provenance” or origin of each artifact and verifies its authenticity as opposed to forgeries.

DATING: Archeologists use as many methods as possible to date items, the more the better!

Stratigraphy is the analysis of layers or “strata” in a Tel; upper is more recent and lower is older

Pottery styles change frequently and vary according to region and so are fairly accurate dating tools

Coins often commemorate someone or event and so have that datable name or event indicated.

Inscriptions & Handwriting also have styles that frequently change and vary according to region

Radiography measures changes at atomic levels of artifacts that indicate a reliable date range

CONTROVERSIES

Antiquities market & forgeries: Artifacts that are sold and resold on the market lose their provenance data and so are difficult to authenticate. Treasure hunters know that artifacts can be worth millions and so will dig without using the careful methods of archeologists, or they might simply make a fake copy.

Jewish-Moslem Politics: Fundamentalist Jews claim a biblical and historical right to the Holy Land and so fundamentalist Moslems resist any archeological digging that might verify those claims, e.g. no digging on the Temple Mount area that is controlled by Islamic authorities.

Minimalists and Maximalists: Those who use archeology to “prove” the Bible are called “*Maximalists*” and consider everything in the Bible as authentic while those who consider little in the Bible is archeologically true are called “*Minimalists*.” Obviously, Catholics have neither agenda and only authenticate finds on a case by case basis, going wherever the data takes us.

ARCHAEOLOGY & THE BIBLE

So far, all archaeological finds have either affirmed biblical events or provided the historical context from which to understand the culture in which biblical events occurred. Archaeology affirms our faith is rooted in actual historical cultures and events. New Testament events are easier to authenticate than Old Testament because of the greater amount of corroborating evidence from the Greco-Roman world. Archeological technology is now enhanced by satellite imagery, ground penetrating radar, more accurate dating, vigilant anti-forging programs, and other high-tech methods. Accurate and reliable knowledge of First Century culture opens the scriptures to a deeper and more profound understanding of Our Lord.