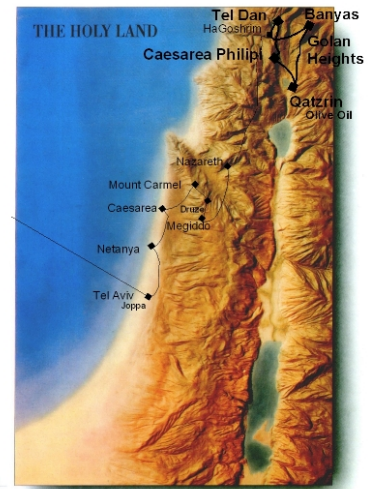




Day 4 Fri 30 Jan Tel-Dan Cont. and Caesarea Philippi



The archeology at Tel-Dan, again 'tel' is Arabic for mound, and descriptive of a conquered and reconquered heap of buried cities, revealed a tremendous Biblical history which indicated the exact truth of God's holy record keeping. Our first exposure to the dig at Caesarea and the tel at Megiddo breathed fresh air on our growing enthusiasm as we first stood at the gates of the city at Tel-Dan. The dig in the highest part of the city revealed the temple worship to the false gods which the Danites had stolen from Micah of Ephraim. But it also went on to reveal the presence of the larger worship area of the false god that Jeroboam had set up in Dan.

Influences of the pagan practices of the Cannanites caused temple worship to be done at the high points of an area and the Danites, with idols first, then with the calf that Jeroboam¹ set up in Dan for worship, continued in such practice. As we descended into the city area of Dan, there were amazing discoveries of houses and palaces in partial exposure from digs, the work of students who dig for 8 weeks per season here at Dan. The recent discovery of the palace was commendable because as our guide, an archaeological enthusiast, told us, "Archeology is 10% finding fact and artifacts



and 90% imagination." Discovery of baths, houses, city gates and even the throne in this city caused them to estimate the population of the 3,000 year old city of Dan to reach about 2,000. We examined an area where a missing stone was carried off to a museum in 1999. It announced the fall of the city to a conqueror and declared that he had killed "the family of David," thus it was a very first archaeological find that indicates there was indeed a king David of Israel. The excitement of this find caused exuberance in all of Israel. Such finds could not cause me to believe my Bible more or less, but the joy it brought these Israeli archaeologist and the grief it caused their nay-sayers could even cause a Baptist to shout Alleluia!

As we rounded the hill departing from the city of Dan the sheepish grin on our guides face should have told us there was more to this site than we had seen. The city of Laish mentioned in Judges 18 (of the land called Leshem in Josh 19) lay partially exposed in an awesome archaeological dig pavilioned just around the bend of the hill. We cannot imagine what caused anyone to start digging in this location but there before us was the awesome fortified city that was built shortly after Cush and Canaan left their Grandfather Noah's Ark, and settled into this lush beautiful land. Then in Genesis 14:14 Abraham had chased lot's captors all the way to this city. Standing here in the city of Laish changed the pages of my Bible to a familiarity I had never known. We left Tel Dan headed for the city of Caesarea Philippi.

1 1 Kings 12:32-33, 2 Kings 10:29 Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan. Cf Jeroboam's sin 1Ki 13:34 14:16 15:30,34 16:2,19,26,31 21:22 22:52, 2Ki 3:3 10:29,31 13:2,6,11 14:24 15:9,18,24,28 17:21,22 23:15

When an Israeli puts his hand to the land that God promised to him the land buds into blessing and prosperity. When Europe refused to accept oranges imported from Israel in order to shore up their own Euro and market, Israel cut down their orchards and grafted mango branches into their stumps. They completely took over a new market in Europe and prospered more than any orange orchard could. God blesses Israel. “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.” (Psalm 122:6)

The city Caesarea Philippi was first named Paneous after the pagan god pan. At Herod's death the kingdom was divided amongst his sons and Philip built this city and named it after Caesar and himself. “When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” (Matt 16:13) The word 'coasts' would not imply seacoast but the outer edge of the city. At this outer edge of the Caesarea Philippi there is a mammoth rock cliff with a large cave where the city water supply was expelled. Well we could imagine Jesus overlooking this awesome scene as he declared to his disciples “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter (*little stone*), and upon this rock (*large stone*) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matt 16:17-18) (Italic Parenthesis added) Here Jesus was declaring that his Church, “the pillar and ground of truth” via 1Tim 3, would be built on the truth that 'Jesus was the Christ', not built, as the Catholics twist this verse, on Peter, the little stone; and certainly not built on the gargantuan rock standing before him at the 'coasts of Caesarea Philippi' as modernists would hope to sway it. Jesus would build his Church upon the truth of who he was, the Messiah, the Christ.

Now a massive rock and cave spewing water did attract a large amount of pagan worship and sure enough the front of the cliff wall was littered with temple ruins of every sort. As Beverly and I explored these temple sites three things mightily moved us. First, that we stood before such a massive rock and cave that stood here 2000 years ago. Second that mankind was so very pagan in its worship of false gods, considering that before all these false temples one day stood “the truth” and their eyes were blind to His presence. And lastly, but most profoundly, by the teachings of Jesus that He was indeed “the Christ, the son of the living God.” and that He would build His Church on the truth that was expounded here on the coasts of Caesarea Philippi. Bev and I got away from the bustle in a quiet moment to read the Scriptures and pray and rejoice. We were in Israel. We were sitting on real estate that God, manifest in the flesh, used to teach his disciples his purpose, to build an 'ecclesia' and 1,978 years later this little part of it sat in awe of what He had done, despite the disobedient paganism of man's heart. Why? “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

On the bus preachers of that gospel talked and jested about the trite. I wanted to sing. I wanted to shout I wanted to read aloud the Scriptures. I wanted to weep. One after another added trite and not a word was spoken about my Lord, who on this location possibly at this very spot where we boarded a bus, had to tell Peter “thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” (Matt 16:23) Three silent tears assured me that there were a few on this tour who savored.

