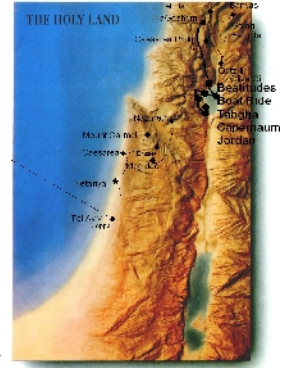




The Half Shekel Journal by Ed Rice
Vol IX Day 5, Sat, 31 Jan The Sea of Galilee



Tourism zealots have outlined thousands of places where George Washington slept. When you cross a tourism zealot with a religious zealot and give them 10 times the time to enhance their version of events it has quite an amazing result. Somewhere here on the Sea of Galilee Jesus “Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them.” (Matt 5:1-2a) We read the Sermon on the Mount Scriptures while overlooking the sea and before going to the Catholic Church where nuns were shushing everyone that entered. Beverly and I by passed the octagonally shaped ornately domed Church to see the cone shaped hollow funneling down to the sea side. It was likely just such a place where Jesus delivered the 9 Blessed 'R's that are recorded in Matthew 5. As we paced down the path that circled the vineyard which now occupied the hollow the dome of the Church suddenly erupted into 3 part male harmony as three Baptist Preachers sang several songs of the faith. The sea resounded echo blended with the amplification of the dome to cause the birds to hush. We stood in awed silence with shivers of excitement in my spine as I considered that ours, indeed is the Kingdom of heaven, not because of our meekness or our mercy, but because of the Nazarene who walked on this sea of Galilee. I wish now I had overlooked the Catholicness of the Church entry and cast my rough voice into the mix with the three singers. Indeed if a few more Baptist inhibitions had been broken the whole lot of us could have made the mountainside echo with the joyous Gospel message in song, it would have been enough to make the shushing nuns blush.

Hindsight always brings to view the things one could have done or should have done. Bringing each thought or action into conscious consideration in the present tense and making them subject to the review they will receive in hindsight is a life skill that few attain, but a journal is a most helpful tool for attaining that skill.

I scanned through Matthew 5, 6 and 7. We were at the mount of Beatitudes where Jesus taught not just the 9 Blessed 'R's but 3 chapters of practical lessons on living for God; on salt and light; on alms and prayers; on riches and trust; on judgment and A.S.K., (Asking, Seeking, Knocking); on straight gates and false prophets' on false professions of faith; and on being both a hearer and a doer. As I considered the depth of his teaching in the brevity of our stay here the shallowness of man was in constant reminder in the shrines all around me. I knew I would be here today but had not prepared in the least; even by rereading these three chapters in the quiet of my morning devotions. In hindsight, I should have. It started to rain as the bus ambled down the slope to where we were to board the boat and launch out into the deep... with no nets, (cf Luke 5:4) but an expected drought of precious memories.

The water levels on the Sea of Galilee were down about 15 feet below normal, and about 50 feet from levels when the son's of Zebedee fished here. Slippery docks lead us down across dried beach front to the Worship Tours Ltd. Fisherman's replica boat moored at the end. The rain drizzled and the engine chugged to life amid claims that this was only the second fisherman's boat owned and operated here by believers; the first was owned by those couple of son's of Zebedee. As the boat drifted to a halt centered in the norther tip of the Sea of Galilee, and as Aneil, the boat owner, sang several contemporary Christians songs and spoke of his Lord and Saviour Jesus the Messiah, I

was again struck by the smallness of the sea and¹ the greatness of our God. As Baptist voices blended with the Messianic Jews in praises to the Son of God, who had walked on and calmed this troubled sea so many years ago, the reality that God became flesh and dwelt among us gripped hearts in a way that I had not experienced in any old fashioned souther camp meetings nor stoic awestruck worship service of Yankees (or even Canadians as I suppose.) My military ventures across the face of the USA had brought me into rich contact with both Southern and Northern and also exposed the ever present hypocrisy of each. It is noted here but not developed that the sincerity of each of these two 'poles' loves the other, while the hypocrisy of these two backgrounds despises and speaks ill of the other. This tour had a strange unbalanced combination of each pole but, praise the Lord, no perceived hypocrisy. As Matthew took the microphone and Sue the keyboard and great songs of the faith rang out from this 'mixed multitude' nestled on a replica fisherman's boat adrift in the Sea of Galilee, this preacher of the Gospel of Christ flooded with an excitement and reverent awe that reached deep into my stoic Baptist upbringing which quelled any shout or run that my flesh wanted to do as my eye moistened with more than the misty rain that fell on this worship service.

As songs echoed from either shore I refreshed the Scriptures of Jesus calling Simon and Andrew to follow him and become fishers of men, of calling James the son of Zebedee and John his brother from their net mending; of his sleep and calming of the sea from Matt 8, Mark 4, and Luke 8; of his walk on this stormy Sea of Galilee in Matt 14, Mark 6 and John 6; and of Peters stepping out of the boat and walk on the water with him in Matt 14; and of the drought of fishes in broken nets that marked the beginning of his earthly ministry as well as the drought of an hundred and fifty and three great fishes in unbroken nets that marked the end of his earthly ministry and provided the epilogue of John's precious gospel. I had waited 46 years of my Christian life to sit here on a replica

fisherman's boat and read these Scriptures and sing these songs and the power and effect of this hour can be captured in life but not fully expressed in a photo or journal. As I grasped Beverly's hand on the slippery dock and we made our way to the boat museum, our eyes connected and I knew of two who knew the presence and power of worshipping a Saviour Redeemer on the very sea that he created and then walked upon.

Before heading to lunch we visited the boat museum where the 2000 year old boat was on display. The video of its recovery and transport to the museum displayed the zeal and excitement of the Israeli Archaeological Society and the students that participated in the laborious project. After years of oil treatments and care the 2000 year old water soaked wood, which would vaporize into dust if allowed to dry, was finally able to support several coats of varnish and be on display.



1 The Greek word for 'Messiah' is 'Christ'. Since he was expressed and expected in Hebrew before the Greek expression, Hebrew believers call them selves Messianic, not Christian. In the Hebrew NT Bible Acts 11:26b will say "And the disciples were called *Messianic* first in Antioch."