Israel Prepares for 2000th Anniversary of Jesus' Baptism in 2030, Expecting 'Millions of Christian Pilgrims'

The Foreign Ministry announced Wednesday that it is preparing for the 2,000th anniversary of Jesus' baptism in 2030, establishing a dedicated group headed by its Special Envoy to the Christian World.

Describing the anniversary as "a milestone of profound spiritual significance for more than two billion Christians worldwide," Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar established a dedicated working group, headed by Ambassador George Deek.

In a post to , the ministry said Sa'ar established a working group to "deepen dialogue with churches and Christian leaders worldwide and prepare for the arrival of millions of Christian pilgrims."

> *The countdown to 2030 begins.*
>
> *Israel is launching preparations for the 2,000th anniversary of the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River – a milestone of profound spiritual significance for more than two billion Christians worldwide.*
>
> *Minister of Foreign Affairs Gideon Sa'ar has…*
>
> *– Israel Foreign Ministry (@IsraelMFA) July 15, 2026*

While Israel's Jordan River baptism sites attract thousands of Christian pilgrims each year, the initiative appears to mark a

broader effort led by Ambassador George Deek, Israel's Special Envoy to the Christian World.

At the same time, the move comes as neighboring Jordan has already begun a series of improvements and preparations for the 2030 anniversary on its side of the traditional baptism site.

Earlier this year, King Abdullah II hosted a meeting of leaders from the Catholic and Orthodox churches, including Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, at the site traditionally known as Al-Maghtas, or Bethany Beyond the Jordan, which sits directly opposite the Israeli site, known today as Qasr el-Yahud.

At the meeting in May, King Abdullah announced that Jordan will support and oversee preparations for the 2030 jubilee celebration, which will include infrastructure improvements and expanded services for pilgrims.

Order Jonathan Cahn's New Book, "The Altar of Pergamon" on !

Cardinal Pizzaballa spoke of the enduring significance of Jesus' baptism for Christians.

"The baptism of Christ is not merely a historical memory but an eternal event that continues to speak to every believer," Pizzaballa said.

Jordanian authorities have insisted their infrastructure improvements will respect the sacred nature of the site. Samir Murad, who heads the non-profit foundation established by the Jordanian government to oversee the project, told the BBC, "Let's remember this is the third-holiest site in Christianity. This is the site where Jesus got his calling and so it would be highly inappropriate, if you will, to corrupt it or violate in any way."

It is not yet clear what preparations the Israeli government is planning for the site on the western side of the Jordan River. The site has only been open for about 15 years.

Qasr el-Yahud, which means “Castle of the Jews” in Arabic, a likely reference to the site of the crossing of the Jordan River by Israelites, was only opened for pilgrims in 2011, after an extensive demining effort by the Israeli government, which was later joined by the HALO Trust, an international demining organization.

The mines had been placed during the conflict between Israel and Jordan during the 1967 Six Day War.

At the same time, the Israeli government is hoping that the significant anniversary of Jesus’ baptism, expected to draw millions of Christian pilgrims to the region, will provide an opportunity to improve ties with the traditional Christian denominations, especially the Catholic and Orthodox churches.

The appointment of Ambassador George Deek, Israel’s Special Envoy to the Christian World, himself an Orthodox Christian, is one step in that direction.

According to a press release from the Foreign Ministry, the working group will maintain “an ongoing dialogue with churches, Christian communities, and religious leaders worldwide,” during the lead up to 2030.

The group will also “launch an inter-ministerial process with relevant government agencies to coordinate Israel’s national preparations for hosting the millions of Christian pilgrims expected to arrive in the Holy Land.”

“The year 2030 will be a unique milestone for the Christian world, and Israel is beginning its preparations now,” Minister Sa’ar said. “Strengthening our relationship with the Christian world and ensuring that the Holy Land remains accessible to the millions of believers who wish to visit are among Israel’s

highest priorities.”

“Israel will continue to safeguard freedom of worship and access to holy sites for members of all faiths,” he added.

This article originally appeared on ALL ISRAEL NEWS and is reposted with permission.