

Israeli Museum Recreates the 'Jerusalem Jesus Knew'

Have you ever wondered what Jerusalem looked like 2,000 years ago when Jesus walked the Earth?

Now, thousands of Christians who visit biblical sites in Israel each year can enjoy an exciting new tour at Jerusalem's Israel Museum that uses artifacts and examples to bring more details to life from the time of Jesus.

One of the unique exhibits is a giant model of Jerusalem showing the city in the Second Jewish Temple period. It's the first stop in the new "Cradle of Christianity" tour in which visitors see artifacts that enhance the biblical narrative.

"This is Jerusalem that Jesus knew. This is Jerusalem that Herod the Great built," says David Mevorach, senior curator of Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Archaeology at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

Mevorach said the model will give Christians a better perspective of specific areas mentioned in Scripture.

Prominent in the giant model is the Temple, the largest monument in the city at that time.

"The model, built in a scale of 1 to 50, shows these important sites that Jesus goes through, for instance, the pools of Bethesda where Jesus performs one of His miracles of healing," Mevorach told *CBN News*. "It's all in the surrounding of this city, which has only one Temple for one God."

The next stop on the new tour is the famous Shrine of the Book housing the Dead Sea Scrolls. The scrolls include the oldest copies of the books of the Hebrew Bible.

And then there are rare and important artifacts from the Temple Mount itself.

"We still have the supporting walls of the Temple Mount, the Wailing Wall is the Western Wall of the support of this huge project, but only very few finds were left from the buildings itself," Mevorach says.

Two important artifacts from the ancient Temple Mount during the time of Jesus are part of the tour.

"One of them is an inscription in Hebrew, a sign for the priest to stand and blow the horn for the entrance of Saturday—meaning the time to cease work—and again at the exit of Saturday, when you can resume work," Mevorach says.

"The other sign is in Greek. It is [from] the parameter that surrounded the Temple itself in the Temple Mount, signs in Greek and Latin forbidding gentiles to enter the Temple itself," he said.

According to Mevorach it's rare to find artifacts that directly relate to historical figures.

"In the case of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, we've been extremely lucky," he said. Three finds relate directly to the story and to the details and two of them relate directly to the most important people in these final days of Jesus."

One is an ossuary—a burial bone box—inscribed with "Joseph, son of Caiaphas the high priest."

"We are almost 100 percent sure that this is the Caiaphas that we know from stories in the New Testament, the high priest that arrests Jesus and turns him into the Romans for his trial," he says.

The second is a stone bearing the name of Pontius Pilate. It was found in the Mediterranean port city of Caesarea, the capital of Judea at the time, in secondary use as the step of

a theater.

And perhaps the most interesting artifact for Christians is evidence of the Roman practice of crucifixion found in an ossuary.

“This heel bone that you see right here has a huge iron nail driven through it. This is the only find in the whole world of actual crucifixion,” he says.

And what do visitors have to say?

“Just seeing the artifacts made it come alive and to see what I’ve read about made it come alive in my life,” says Terry Herndon from Birmingham, Alabama.

“To see so many artifacts of world history and of our Christian faith in one place so quickly and to be able to comprehend it so quickly is just really amazing and it really confirms our faith, it confirms what the Bible teaches us and teaches us the place of our Christian faith in world history, context, it’s outstanding,” another visitor. {eo}

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