

“Journey to Jerusalem: Highlights of the Holy Land”
(Selected Texts from John)

Intro. Today’s message overviews parts of John’s Gospel & Jesus’ “Journey to Jerusalem” (slide #1). As we make our way through the text, I will point out some “Highlights of the Holy Land” so you can catch a glimpse of following in the footsteps of our Lord.

Theme: Jesus is the Messiah

Background: John, the Beloved Disciple and closest friend of Jesus, records his Gospel story toward the end of his life, sometime between AD 85-95. The earliest portion of the NT ever discovered comes from John 18 on a piece of papyrus dated around AD 125, within a few years of it being written.

- John’s singular aim is to prove Jesus is indeed the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Jesus is sent by God to give His life as the Passover sacrifice. John makes numerous references to the Passover in the first 19 chapters, every major portion of the Gospel, except for chapters 20-21, because Jesus has given His life & proven to be the final & complete sacrifice by rising from the dead.
- With this in mind, let’s read the opening verses of John (show #2, followed by #3)—John begins by focusing on the deity of Christ in His opening verses. He makes it crystal clear that Christ is fully divine. As God lit the way for Israel in the wilderness, so Christ shines through darkness to lead us.
- Christ, who is deity, took on humanity and became the God-Man. He tabernacled or pitched His tent among us to fulfill how God led His people throughout the wilderness.
- Out of the wilderness comes one we call John the Baptist. NT scholars surmise that he may very well have been part of the Essenes, a religious group of Jews who lives in the caves of Qumran (show #4). They are known for copying and living by the Scriptures, & they preserved the Scriptures in days of persecution by hiding them in clay pots within the caves of Qumran (show #5).
- A short distance from the caves of Qumran is the Jordan River. We know that John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River (show #6), not because Jesus needed to repent but to fulfill all righteousness in aligning Himself with John’s ministry, who serves as the last and greatest Old Covenant prophet, who describes Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!”
- The first followers of Christ include Andrew, Peter, Philip, & Nathaniel, to whom Jesus revealed Himself as the only way to God in heaven
- In chapter 2, Jesus travels to Cana (show #7), where He performs His first miracle of changing water into wine—John records at least 7 miracles & calls them signs, because they point to Jesus’ identity
- John records Jesus’ cleansing of the temple here in chapter 2 (show #8), probably not intended to be listed historically at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, but to highlight the significance of who Jesus is early on. The temple was by far the most impressive sight in all of Jerusalem as it towered over everything else, symbolic of God’s glory manifested among His people. The glory of God left the temple in the early 6th century, proving to Israel that God was judging them. The glory never returned, though Herod the Great built a much larger 2nd temple, because the glory of God shone through Christ. Jesus foretold of another coming destruction whenever the temple itself would be destroyed (show #9).
- In chapters 3-4, Jesus has encounters with both Nicodemus and the woman at the well in Samaria, further highlighting that He is the Christ that must be believed upon and worshipped
- In chapter 5, Jesus encounters a lame man beside the pool in Bethesda (show #10). The man could not get to the waters in time when they were stirred for healing, but Jesus healed the man even on the Sabbath, to prove He is Lord of the Sabbath.
- In chapter 6, Jesus feeds 5,000 men plus women and children with 5 loaves & 2 fish beside the Sea of Galilee (show #11). Later that night, Jesus walks on the water & instructs His disciples to trust Him. The next day He identifies Himself as the Bread of Life that has come from heaven, just as God provided manna to the Israelites in the wilderness.

- Chapter 7 shows Jesus' brothers from Nazareth (this is a picture of their home there, show #12) failing to believe in Him & as Jesus begins to identify Himself at the Feast of Booths in Jerusalem, even calling all who are thirsty to come to Him & drink, for anyone believing in Him will have rivers of living water flowing forth from his heart. Upon hearing this news, people wonder if He could be the Christ, & some say "But He is supposed to come from Bethlehem" (show #13), not realizing that He was born near those hills where the sheep graze.
 - Jesus teaches Jewish leaders and scribes that He is the light of the world, and unless people believe in Him, they will remain in darkness. As we see in chapters 8-10, the scribes were known for meticulous copying & preserving the Scriptures (show #14 & then #15), but they failed to believe in them, which testified of Jesus.
 - In chapter 11, Jesus goes to Bethany and raised Lazarus from the dead after 4 days, proving His power over death as the resurrection and the life. In that same city of Bethany, chapter 12 records Mary pouring expensive perfume (show #16) over Jesus' feet to anoint Him for His upcoming death & burial.
 - The rest of chapter 12 shows Jesus leaving Bethany to go to Jerusalem (show #17) where they sang praises to Him on His way to Jerusalem. Chapters 13-17 record Jesus washing the disciples' feet during the Last Supper & teaching them about His departure & sending of the Holy Spirit. He prays for their strength in the midst of persecution.
 - Chapter 18 shows Jesus crossing the Kidron Valley (show #18) & making His way to the Garden of Gethsemane, where He would be betrayed by Judas Iscariot (show #19).
 - After Jesus' arrest, He would be taken to the high priest Caiaphas & travel the steps shown here (show #20). He would be taken from Annas the high priest & to Caiaphas, his father-in-law, and before Pilate twice, among everything else that took place that night.
 - Ultimately, in chapter 19 Pilate delivered Jesus over to be crucified & uttered "Behold the Man" from his position of authority over the Via Dolorosa (show #21).
 - As Christ made His way down the way of suffering, they eventually placed a crown of thorns (show #22) on His head (1.5-2" spikes from the Christ-Thorn Jujibee Tree here). He would end up at Calvary, known as the Place of the Skull (show #23).
 - It was there that Jesus said, "It is finished" as He completed the sin-sacrifice & satisfied the wrath of God toward sin. Jesus was then buried in a garden tomb, owned by Joseph of Arimathea.
 - Chapter 20 tells of the women who made their way to the tomb, but the stone (show #24) had been rolled away. You can see the tomb here (show #25), even with the crack from a 1st century earthquake, as archaeologists have determined (show #26).
 - They went inside & then ran & told the disciples. John & Peter ran to the tomb to see for themselves & they found it empty (show #27), for He has risen from the dead!
 - John could have recorded much more, "but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name"—like John, many more pictures could be shown & lots more stories could be told, but I shared with you these things so that you may believe in Christ & have life in His name.
- Conc.** While the other Gospel writers end their accounts with little beyond the resurrection, John adds one final story that took place at the Sea of Galilee (show #28). Peter & several others of the disciples had gone back to their old way of life, but Jesus revealed Himself to them & singled out Peter to question him about his commitment to Christ—"do you love Me more than these?" (referring either to the other disciples, but probably to the fish)—what about you? Is Christ first in your life & have you banked everything on Him being your sacrificial Lamb to take away your sins? Will you trust Him today?