



# BIBLE Passages Journal



Our group of 49 on the Mount of Olives

## Dear Supporters and Friends,

After walking along the shoreline where Jesus performed many of miracles, I could have never dreamt that only a few weeks later I would be under self-quarantine writing about those places, but now from a different perspective. Prior to this recent trip, most of our work related to the Bible lands photos and data focused more on the apologetic value of the sites and places we were documenting. That aspect of the work continues still, but now, because of this worldwide pandemic, I have found myself writing about those places with the intent of helping others to see the love of God and the security that can be found in Jesus. At the writing of our last report, our world was vastly different than it is today. I don't have to explain this to anyone, for every individual soul has in some

way been affected and challenged by this ghostly virus. Nevertheless, through it all we have gained a different perspective on life and have grown so much closer to God. We have also found ourselves counseling others whose lives and marriages were being impacted by the changes in our world. Even while maintaining social distancing on our back porch in Denver, God allowed us the opportunity to minister to others in need.

Our own personal challenges began at the beginning of the month when we decided to forge ahead with our plans to lead a group of 49 to both Greece and Israel, and then a second group of 31 to Rome and Israel again. We had worked for over a year on the details and had everything planned down to the minute. However, plans were at times literally changing minute by minute as Covid-19 made its ugly appearance in the country in which our main group was to merely change planes: Italy. Italy had become the next victim of this ever-growing nemesis and

killer. Carla and I, along with Denny Petrillo, were already at the airport on our way to Greece one day ahead of the group, when Israel's Ministry of Health issued a ban on all incoming flights from Italy. News was also beginning to surface that other European countries would be next. Thus, massive changes in flight itineraries had to be made, along with a complete rearrangement of land travel. Somehow it all began to come together, but our worries and concerns continued as news outlets began to reveal that American tourists had been quarantined in Bethlehem simply because they had been at the same hotel with 6 Greek citizens who (after their return to Greece) had tested positive for Covid-19. Keeping abreast of the ever-changing world news, government mandated quarantines, and new restrictions kept us wondering at one point if we would have to terminate the trip in progress. Eventually, the second group's trip was cancelled altogether because of the world-wide spread of Covid-19, but through the grace of God, the first group completed its two weeks,

### Schedule

Like the rest of the world, our schedule is up in the air!

## Would you **please** let others know about Bible Passages?

It is humbling to ask, but could you, someone you know, or your congregation possibly help to support the work of Bible Passages? If you'd like to know more about what we do, go to our website, and click the "Work and Ministries" tab. **Thank you!**

returned home safely, and two weeks after our return have continued to be virus free.

While we rejoice in the good health and safety of the entire group, our main objective was the spiritual well-being, growth, and development of the Bear Valley Students and other participants. This was only the second time Bear Valley has offered this Bible Lands Study course, but we were very pleased with the results. Students and staff still continue to be excited as they report to us various things they saw and learned, and how those things have changed their lives. Our program isn't about simply seeing and photographing the places where the Bible stories took place (though we certainly enjoy this aspect), we also spend a heavy dose of our time both in the classroom and out in

the field discussing the interrelationship between geography, history, archaeology, and the Bible. Each day is filled with discussions about the culture and customs of both Bible and modern times, with an emphasis upon better understanding the biblical text. We also focus our attention on the abundance of both the archaeological and geographical evidence that substantiates the accuracy and reliability of the biblical record. We believe that this program not only bolsters faith, but it also serves as a means to encourage both present and future apologists; some of whom may end up becoming Bible archaeologists and full-time apologists. Of course, our greatest aim is in helping students to better understand the biblical text and, thereby, deepen their faith and love for God.

After our return from Israel, many other problematic events occurred which involved unravelling the issues of a cancelled trip. This has weighed heavily on our minds, especially given the Covid-19 world that we came home to. Refund policies, paperwork, emails and the like have occupied some of our time and thoughts. Still, we have found that the two-week home quarantine gave us some much-needed time to work on several important projects that we have had to keep on the back burner. One of those projects for me has been the writing of articles and working on the organization and labeling of photos. Over the past two weeks, I have written several articles discussing the Bible lands and faith, especially in light of the present pandemic. Lord willing, I plan to write many more over the spring and summer months. These short articles incorporate photos of the Bible Lands that help inform and illustrate aspects of the articles I am composing. The Bible lands labeling and organizing photo project involves the second volume of photographs made available to the brotherhood through World Video Bible School. These photo libraries are being used in classrooms, pulpits, and in all types of applications (e.g. church advertising, bookmarks, stock photos for PowerPoint presentations, etc.). Most importantly, the photos and their corresponding title information are serving to both document and defend the faith.

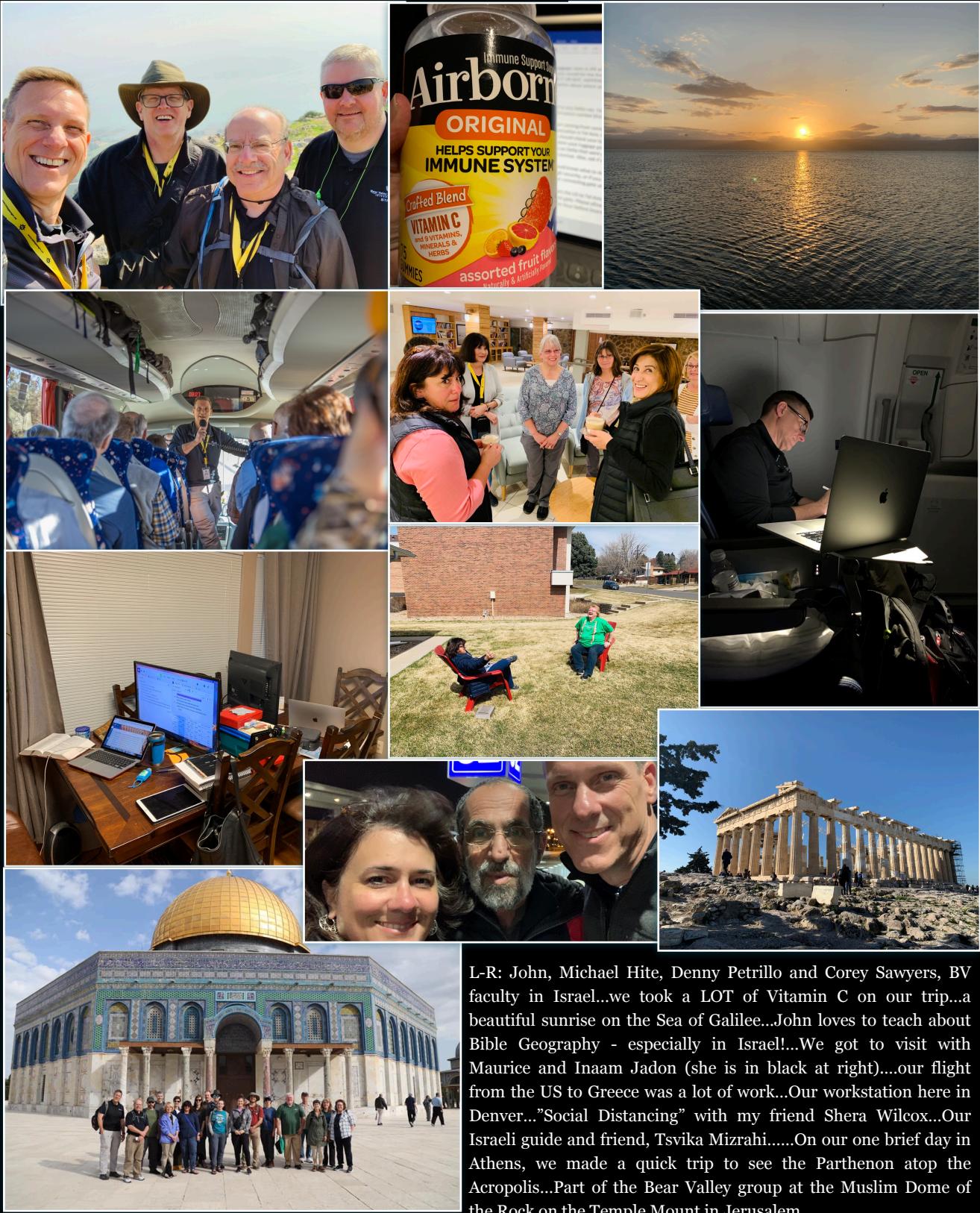
Brethren, words cannot begin to express the gratitude and appreciation we have for your continued support of Bible Passages. We marvel at your generosity and thoughtfulness. We thank God for all your love, prayers, and support. We are so honored to be in the ministry seeking to do His will, especially during these difficult times. We love and appreciate you, and thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all the sacrifices you are making on our behalf, and behalf of the Kingdom. May God bless and keep you always. May

He lift His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you! In Him, John



***Let's try this again!***

Trusting that the world will have returned somewhat to normal before too long, we've rescheduled our Israel/Rome study tour for **March 13-26, 2021**. We would love to have you join us!



L-R: John, Michael Hite, Denny Petrillo and Corey Sawyers, BV faculty in Israel...we took a LOT of Vitamin C on our trip...a beautiful sunrise on the Sea of Galilee...John loves to teach about Bible Geography - especially in Israel!...We got to visit with Maurice and Inaam Jadon (she is in black at right)....our flight from the US to Greece was a lot of work...Our workstation here in Denver..."Social Distancing" with my friend Shera Wilcox...Our Israeli guide and friend, Tsvika Mizrahi.....On our one brief day in Athens, we made a quick trip to see the Parthenon atop the Acropolis...Part of the Bear Valley group at the Muslim Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem



My two favorite little people in the whole world - we can't wait to see them!

## Carla's Comments

What words can I use to describe the month of March? Let me see....I could go with nerve-wracking, tense, uncertain, and moment-to-moment. But I think these characterize it more appropriately: blessed, faith-building, trust-affirming, and completely covered in prayer!

John mentioned the challenges in his letter. We did encounter a lot of challenges. But it seems that the more challenges that were thrown in our path, the more they highlighted the Lord's providence and His care. There are so many instances where I can't even begin to describe how specifically our prayers were answered. Here is just part : 42 of our 49 tour participants had a one hour layover in Rome on their way to Greece (and would later fly

on to Israel.) On Sunday, March 1, while John, Denny and I waited for our first flight, we received word that the Coronavirus was severely affecting Italy, and that Israel would require anyone who traveled in Italy to spend fourteen days in quarantine before entering the country. But, we questioned, did "traveled in Italy" include those who only had layovers in Italy? We checked Israel's Ministry of Health webpage, and in English, the translation read "the home quarantine decree applies to connecting flights in Italy." However, in Hebrew, it said "the home quarantine decree does **not** apply to connecting flights in Italy." Which one should we believe? Airlines were canceling flights right and left. John's father was in the hospital. Another in our close family had to be taken to an emergency clinic that morning. People were depending on us....so we had to get on that first flight. When we landed in Detroit, our Israeli agent let us know that she was able to get all 42 of those people on two separate flights, landing at approximately the same time - in Israel, bypassing Rome AND having to forego touring Greece. John and I spent all of our flight from Detroit to Athens (because we didn't have time to change the flight) matching names with new confirmation numbers, verifying passports, double checking name changes, reworking the itinerary, and staying in touch (via purchased internet access on the plane) with Corey Sawyers and Michael Hite in Denver who would pass on the flight information to the rest of the group. John, Denny and I ended up having about 24 hours in Athens (and took a quick walk to see Mars Hill, the Acropolis and the Parthenon) then met up with four others (who already had flights to Greece) and we all boarded a plane the next night bound for Israel. All of the 42 others made all of their connecting flights and landed in Israel several hours before we did. And that was all in the first 36 hours of the trip! It all seemed so overwhelming when we left Denver (and really, even before that...) but we are thankful to God that it all worked out. So many other things to be thankful for: health - during the trip and after the trip, no one was ill...wonderful people and new friends that we grew to love... everyone had overwhelmingly positive attitudes despite loads of stress and uncertainty (and we owe so much of that to Corey Sawyers, who lifted hearts and spirits over and over!)...our schedule worked out...tourists had already left so we had many sites to ourselves!...so much more showed that His hand of protection and guidance was over us.

Tonight, we are in Denver and on Thursday plan to drive back to Texas. The virus seems to hang like a cloud over all of us. So many plans are changed. We miss the physical presence of the ones we love. The constant threat of illness certainly makes us appreciate the things we took for granted. But in **all, we know that God is good, and no matter what lies ahead, He is still good.** Please continue to pray for all of our family, and John's parents in particular right now. We love and appreciate each of you so much!  
Blessings, Carla



Our first "real" snowman!