

Footsteps of Jesus Update From Israel #5A Wednesday April 1

Dear Friends and Supporters - Masada

King Herod was one of the greatest builders of all time. He was very paranoid and had fortress-palaces built all through the land. His most impressive was at Masada. Although Jesus never went to Masada, it does play a very significant role in Jewish history.

Jehuda of Gamla launched the Zealot movement quoting Elijah the prophet "Whoever is zealous for the Lord let him stand with me." Judah (Acts 5) was killed by Herod Antipas, but his sons and grandsons continued the struggle. Jehuda's grandson ambushed the Roman soldiers at Masada and stole their weapons. This launched the Roman-Jewish war. He entered Jerusalem as Messiah, but was such a rascal they killed him. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed during this uprising. Another grandson led the last stand of the zealots on Masada.

In light of this important history, I wanted to go to Masada and film the dramatic entry from the land (versus the usual approach from the Dead Sea by cable car).



Looking toward Masada from a higher vantage point

Masada was basically an impregnable fortress with a tremendous supply of food and water, but the Roman army was determined to crush the uprising. Here you can see the tremendous ramp they built giving access to the walls and gates of the fortress.



Filming the ramp the Romans built to conquer Masada

Herod's engineers were very wise. Although it is in one of the hottest, most humid places on the earth, they located his personal palace down the north face of the cliff where it is always shady and has the predominate summer breeze.



Herod's Palace on the northern (shaded side) of Masada

These columns, plaster and colors give a little hint of the glory of the past.



Inside of Herod's Northern Palace at Masada

Masada was the last stronghold of the Jewish resistance. The Romans came, built their camps around the base of the fortress, constructed a wall six feet wide and seven miles long around the fortress and waited. Ultimately the fortress fell. The mass suicide of the zealots has been questioned by some scholars. The first fortress to fall was Gamla where Jehuda began the zealot movement. Everyone in Gamla committed suicide with the exception of two women who lived to tell what happened. This was repeated at Masada (mass suicide with two surviving women) leading some to scholars to conclude that Josephus was trying to blame the war on the zealots.



One of eight Roman camps surrounding Masada

While zeal is important, it can often be misdirected as it was at Masada. Zealous Zealots ultimately led to the destruction of the nation. Oh Lord, give us zeal that is submitted to your will each and every day I pray.

Shalom from the Land