

Holy Land Bible Study Tour (1st – 10th Dec 2014)

Silent Witness of the Stones

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“And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out” (Luke 19:40).

Indeed, the stones did ‘cry out’ unto us, like witnesses, when we visited the Holy Land from 1st to 10th Dec 2014. There were stones galore at the southern part of the Holy Land. No wonder stones featured prominently throughout the Bible. In Bethel, Jacob used them as his pillows to sleep (Genesis 28:11), whereupon he dreamt of the ladder reaching to heaven and heard God promising to give him the land. Throughout the Old Testament, stones were heaped together to bear witness to commemorate important events (Genesis 31:46; Joshua 4:7; 1 Samuel 7:12). Furthermore, those who are “biblically instructed” were also grimly reminded that stoning to death was a way of punishment. The land was dry and thirsty, full of stones and difficult to tread upon. In that kind of environment, we armed ourselves with hats/caps/umbrellas, shoes with good grip and kept drinking to hydrate ourselves. If we had been travelling with Moses then, wearing robes and sandals, having no food or drink

in that dry, stony terrain, we would for sure have murmured and complained like the Israelites over food and creature comforts. Really, the stones literally cried out against us as we pondered over what the Israelites had to go through and how we could have easily sinned like them!

The Bible says there is “a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together” (Ecclesiastes 3:5). The building of the great temple and the destruction of it, the building of strong cities and the destruction and ruins of them, cry out to us too. While we admired the magnificent remains of Jerash and Capernaum, and the intricate carvings on each piece of the remains, fear and awe of God struck us because these are reminders and evidence that He alone has the power to set up and put down “whom he would” (Daniel 5:19; Matthew 11:23). The stones are warning us – which side are we on? Better be safe – choose the LORD’s side!

Thank God for making us “as lively stones, ...built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices” through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5).

This is an apt description of our group when we worshipped and prayed together, edified and took care of one another. Love, unity and patience were displayed abundantly throughout the trip. We, like little children, curiously explored the sights, sounds and smells of the Land of the Bible, and learnt geography together. Every difficulty was conquered by faith and love the Christian way, no less. We have enjoyed the trip very much, and this sentiment was shared by many others, including those who have travelled to the Holy Land several times before.

This trip has created new meanings for us when we now read the Bible. We pray that we shall be steadfast and unmoveable in our faith, lest we should be a “castaway” (1 Corinthians 9:27b). We pray that we can be “lively stones”, to be a good testimony for our Lord Jesus Christ. ■

