

PHILADELPHIA CHURCH OF GOD

Gerald Flurry
Pastor General

P.O. Box 3700, Edmond, OK 73083

Toll Free: 1-800-772-8577
E-mail: letters@pcog.org

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Dear members and co-workers with Christ,

God tells His people to focus on Jerusalem, especially as Jesus Christ's return gets closer. He gives us specific commissions to fulfill there in preparation for the Second Coming. I want to update you on our efforts to do that and ask that you pray for God to open doors for us.

In Revelation 3:7-8 God says, "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." God makes some strong statements here about finding an open door. If He opens a door, He *promises* that nobody is going to shut it!

Before she died this past May 25, we had worked for years with archaeologist Dr. Eilat Mazar in and around the City of David and had developed a very close relationship with her. (If you don't have one, we would be happy to send you a free copy of our latest *Watch Jerusalem* magazine, which we devoted entirely to Dr. Mazar and her findings.) There are some very talented archaeologists in the world, especially in Jerusalem, but I believe Dr. Mazar will be remembered as one of the greatest archaeologists of all time.

A few years ago, we reached out to Dr. Mazar to see if she could arrange a meeting for us with David Be'eri. Mr. Be'eri established the City of David Foundation and is renovating the City of David archaeological park. His foundation also purchases properties and owns a lot of real estate in the City of David. He is quite an authority over that area, and we wanted to see if we could talk with him to understand his plans for future archaeological excavations, when those would occur and who would be involved. We have always felt that excavation of the palace of David is incomplete. We wanted to help finish it, and we wanted to see if Mr. Be'eri and others were thinking the same way.

We really wanted Dr. Mazar's support, but she wasn't totally comfortable with helping us arrange a meeting and did not want to accompany us. We prayed about it and tried hard to persuade her, but she remained unmoved.

But then, in February 2019, I visited Jerusalem. We met with Dr. Mazar and talked with her for probably an hour – and we saw her totally change her mind. She was now pleased for us to meet with Mr. Be’eri and arranged the meeting for us!

We met Mr. Be’eri at his office the following day. We quickly saw that he is a mover and a shaker in Jerusalem, even more than we were expecting. He trained with the Israeli commandos in the famous 1976 raid in Entebbe, Uganda, where 100 Jewish hostages were freed. One of the other commandos, the only one who was killed, was Lt. Col. Yonatan Netanyahu, Benjamin Netanyahu’s brother. Mr. Be’eri is still close with Benjamin Netanyahu.

Mr. Be’eri has accomplished some wonderful things in the City of David archaeological park. As part of his job, he goes to wealthy people and asks them to support his work in the City of David. When they ask, *What’s in it for us?* he tells them, *I want to give you something that will give more meaning to your life.* What a beautiful and noble answer! This man sincerely seeks to bring Christians and Jews and everybody else together. He even has a working relationship with archaeologist Israel Finkelstein, who disagrees quite a bit with Dr. Mazar’s findings and has serious doubts about David and Solomon’s presence in the City of David and on the Ophel. But Mr. Be’eri is a strong man, like Zadok, who was a warrior before he became a priest. He tells it like it is, and it’s refreshing to meet somebody like that.

We showed him pictures of Herbert W. Armstrong’s involvement with Prof. Benjamin Mazar and his meetings with Israeli prime ministers and presidents. He told us he expected excavations at David’s palace to resume in two years (this was before COVID-19 brought everything to a standstill in Israel). At that time, he told us Dr. Mazar would be the one doing the digging. And since Dr. Mazar said previously that she would not dig without Herbert W. Armstrong College participation, we hoped that we would be involved in this dig at the City of David.

But things have been in a holding pattern for some time because of coronavirus lockdowns. Then when Dr. Mazar died this past spring, we wondered how that would further affect things.

Since Dr. Mazar died, however, it appears that God is opening the door even further for our work in Jerusalem!

Following Dr. Mazar’s death, her archaeological projects, which were conducted under the auspices of Hebrew University, were turned over to Prof. Yosef Garfinkel, a colleague at Hebrew University. Before she died, Dr. Mazar told Professor Garfinkel that he should work with us as he continued her excavations, and to rely on us to help him understand Eilat’s work on the Ophel and in the City of David. Right up to her final days, Dr. Mazar was honoring our decades-long partnership.

At a seminar in her honor on July 1, Professor Garfinkel approached our Jerusalem office manager, Brent Nagtegaal. Mr. Garfinkel informed him that David Be’eri is hoping to resume digging in the City of David very soon. He also arranged to meet

with Brent so they could discuss Dr. Mazar's digs in more detail. Of course, we want to be involved in this next phase of ongoing excavations in the City of David and would like to get there as soon as possible! We are working even now to visit Israel so we can meet and discuss how we can assist. But when great doors like this open, there is always great opposition. I'd like to ask that you be praying and fasting about this potential opportunity.

I believe that we are going to be moving more and more into Jerusalem to get involved in a dig very soon.

Israel is experiencing a lot of bad news these days. Many Israelis are in despair about their nation's future. But there is a message of great hope in their own archaeology – and we want to do all we can to share this great hope!

The Masoretic text, from the Jewish Publication Society of America translation, renders Isaiah 40:9 more accurately than the King James translation: "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, Get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, Lift up thy voice with strength; Lift it up, be not afraid; Say unto the cities of Judah: 'Behold your God!'"

I believe we can and must use ARCHAEOLOGY as a means of reaching the cities of Judah. Because we understand and believe the Bible, we can add incredible *meaning* to the archaeology of Jerusalem and Israel!

Already we have exhibited the seals of Jeremiah's captors and the seals of Isaiah and King Hezekiah. Seals of King Jeroboam II and Eliakim were recently publicized – both of which point to crucial end-time prophecies. Thanks to our understanding of the Bible, we are able to educate people in the profound *meaning* in those objects! The governor of Oklahoma, a U.S. senator and other important individuals have visited our exhibits in Armstrong Auditorium. For them and for anyone who has an open mind, we can give so much meaning to their lives by bringing the Bible alive in this way.

In 2019, I explained to Mr. Be'eri how we are publicizing these discoveries here in America on television and radio, and how we have received many responses from people saying how it has strengthened their faith, giving them more faith and hope in the Bible. I think that was something he was happy to hear.

During our meeting, Mr. Be'eri gave us approval to give tours of Dr. Eilat Mazar's archaeological discoveries in the City of David and on the Ophel. We explained to him that we do not intend to proselytize or preach, that we simply want to take the history as it is recorded in the Hebrew Bible and put it alongside the archaeology. To use the words of Dr. Mazar, we simply want to "let the stones speak." He agreed, and in essence supported us taking this message of Dr. Mazar to the cities of Judah.

Dr. Mazar told us that the laymen in Israel have much more appreciation for their Bible and archaeology than the elites do. AND WE PLAN TO GET THEM THIS MESSAGE!

For many years, I have talked with our Jerusalem department about the need for a new archaeological institute in Jerusalem. Based on feedback we have received from Dr. Mazar and others in the world of biblical archaeology, this field is presently in deep trouble. Biblical archaeology as a field of study is not growing – it is rapidly shrinking. Some of the great biblical archaeologists and professors, like Eilat Mazar and Hershel Shanks, the founder of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, have recently died.

Worse than this, the spirit of secularism and intellectualism so prevalent in the world has crept into the field of biblical archaeology. There are still biblical archaeologists working today, and some are very good at what they do – but some simply don't use the Bible enough. Many don't give it enough credibility or view it as a true authority in their work. In addition, the number of young people getting into the field of biblical archaeology is diminishing. Many just don't see a future in biblical archaeology.

I believe we need to take action to help solve this problem: There is a desperate need now for some sort of institute or organization to come on the scene and revive biblical archaeology! We need an institution that promotes the Bible as a credible and essential historical source in the practice of archaeology in Israel. More importantly, this institution needs to make biblical archaeology available to the largest audience possible – especially the people of Israel!

I am pleased to say, we are creating just such an institute!

We plan to call it the Armstrong-Mazar Institute of Biblical Archaeology. Right now, our Jerusalem team is creating the website for this new institute. As you are probably familiar with, we already operate *watchJerusalem.co.il*. Soon we will have two websites for Israel: one that focuses on news and prophecy, and the institute website, which will focus on archaeology.

In addition, we are planning some major changes to our print magazine *Watch Jerusalem*. Starting with the January-February issue, the magazine will be renamed *Let the Stones Speak*. This will be the magazine of the new institute, and it will focus solely on biblical archaeology.

Let me repeat this point because it's important: The purpose of this new institute is not to proselytize or convert. The goal is to connect archaeology and the Bible and to show people how much hope there is in archaeology!

Our Jerusalem department is busy working on these most-necessary projects right now, and they could really use your prayers!

Isaiah 40:9 says, "Get thee up into the high mountain" to proclaim this message. The City of David area *is* mountainous. One time we were in a vehicle trying to navigate through the cars in a parking lot. As Dr. Mazar was trying to turn, she pulled right up to a cliff where you could look down, and it was scary how far down the cliff went into the Valley of Jehoshaphat! I BELIEVE THE PLACE OF THE DIG – INCLUDING EVERYTHING

HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG WAS INVOLVED IN AND EVERYTHING WE ARE DOING NOW – IS THIS “HIGH MOUNTAIN.”

Our end-time work has been operating in Jerusalem for over 50 years. God has prophesied that the tombs of the righteous kings of Judah will be discovered (Jeremiah 8:1-2).

Even in archaeology, God is emphasized. Many of the people undertaking archaeology in Jerusalem try to diminish the Bible and God, when they ought to be emphasizing it as never before!

God Himself says, *I will yet choose Jerusalem* (Zechariah 1:17). What a most inspirational message it is!

If we are going to create an institute in Jerusalem, then we really need a building or some sort of office space. We need a space to display our exhibits and to office our staff, who will be producing the magazine and website, as well as engaging in important research. We need a space where people can come and book tours of ancient Jerusalem.

Here is another reason I believe we need some real estate in Jerusalem: This summer we purchased the combined library of Benjamin and Eilat Mazar! This is an incredible blessing for us and a huge sign from God! When a scholar dies, it's not unusual for his or her research library to be consolidated and then sold at auction. Many institutions and wealthy collectors are prepared to pay good money to own the personal library of an esteemed scholar.

Needless to say, we were thrilled when Dr. Mazar's family agreed to sell us her library – without it ever going to auction! When we first purchased the library, we believed we were receiving around 3,000 books. As it turns out, the number was closer to 4,000.

That's not all: In October, Mr. Nagtegaal was at the archaeology department at Hebrew University and noticed boxes upon boxes of books on archaeology and the Bible. We told him to inquire about these books and see if they were available for purchase. Hebrew University gave them all to us free! The number of books in this collection totaled around 4,000!

Last spring, our office in Jerusalem had maybe a hundred books on archaeology and the Bible. By August, that number had grown to 3,000, by September it was 4,000, and by the end of October it had grown to 8,000!

Do you think God wants us to start a biblical archaeology institute in Jerusalem? Owning the library of Prof. Benjamin Mazar and Dr. Eilat Mazar will provide a massive boost to our credibility! This library will be an important part of our institute.

As part of the purchase, there is a stipulation that the libraries must be accessible to the public. This will again necessitate a larger office presence for God's Work in Jerusalem.

God will have to show us how to do this. But it does seem He is telling us to put more emphasis on the archaeology message! Because maybe that is going to be at the heart of what we do from now on, in the most efficient way we possibly can.

Who knows how much God is going to open up for us? But we are looking for more open doors from God! Of course, we must make sure it *truly is* an open door, but when we find that it is, we had better walk through it, or we are going to have problems with God! When God opens a door, He expects us to walk through it!

The open door may be starting small, but God says that if He opens a door, *no MAN is going to shut it!* That is a wonderful promise from God!

Why are we doing a work in Jerusalem? “For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory” (Psalm 102:14-16). People who love God and His Bible “take pleasure in [Jerusalem’s] stones.”

First, God builds up Zion, then He appears in His glory. This is a prophecy for *right now*, and it is happening in Jerusalem. First, all of these discoveries in archaeology are made, then comes *Behold your God!* I love this quote by archaeologist Dr. Jodi Magness: “The goal of archaeology is not excavation, it’s publication.” Dr. Magness is right – and this is exactly what we seek to do!

“Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come” (verse 13). As I understand this, part one is us making amazing archaeological discoveries, and part two is *that* in itself is a *sign* that the Messiah is about to come!

We have to realize, as Mr. Armstrong said: God’s Church is a *miracle!* The PCG is a *miracle!* *You are a miracle!* Everything this Church is doing in Edmond and around the world and in Jerusalem is a *miracle of God!* How else could you and I be doing what we are doing? God *must* really be involved in this Church!

The excavations led by Prof. Benjamin Mazar and supported by Mr. Armstrong never uncovered biblically significant discoveries like those we helped Dr. Eilat Mazar uncover. Yet that work opened doors for Mr. Armstrong to meet every Israeli prime minister and every Israeli president over the course of a decade. He had meetings in Israel’s national legislative building, the Knesset. He was operating with the very highest levels of the government of the Jewish nation!

Isaiah 22 is a prophecy that directly addresses our work in Jerusalem. First it describes the wicked servant Shebna (verse 15). This man tried to exalt himself – he wanted to be buried on high in the tombs of the kings with David and Solomon and others! But God said he would be taken captive and bounced around all over the world like a ball, and that he was just hewing out an eternal tomb for himself! It appears Shebna loses his

eternal life, and 50 percent of those he leads – who were converted members of God’s one true Church – will also lose their eternal lives for following the spirit of Shebna.

Then the prophecy describes a transition of government from Shebna – a spiritual leader in God’s Church who betrayed God – to Eliakim. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah: And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and *he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.* And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open” (verses 20-22).

This Eliakim is going to be *a father to the house of Judah!* That certainly means he must do a major work there. And the implication is that it carries on from Mr. Armstrong’s work. Eliakim is the father of a work in Judah – and mainly, Jerusalem – that was *founded by Hilkiah*. There is more work that must be done. That is all explained in our free booklet on Isaiah.

If God commissions us to do a work, He has to open doors to make it possible. And notice: These verses emphasize that OPEN DOOR. God keeps opening doors! Sometimes He makes us WORK to figure out exactly what He is saying and where the open door is – but even that is an exciting journey!

“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old” (Amos 9:11). “In that day” refers to this end time. This is another prophecy that references the role that Mr. Armstrong fulfilled and our work. And it is about the tabernacle of David and the palace of David and all of that. Mr. Armstrong laid the foundation, and we are just building on that. The *Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon* says that “tabernacle” is poetic “of the habitation of God.”

We are part of God’s own tabernacle! God *lives* here, in Spirit! God *heads* this Church and directs *everything* – though we are human, and we don’t follow His direction perfectly. But God lives in us. Those who are baptized have received God’s Holy Spirit within them, and the mind of God dwells in them! As individuals, we are His habitation.

Who raises up the tabernacle of David “in that day”? It wasn’t Mr. Armstrong or any man. God said *He* would do it! He said *He* would give us the key of David! God is performing wonderful miracles in this Work because we are His Family.

This God Family education is about to spread around the world. That is the truth of God, and we need to learn it deeply and get *excited* about it! God is building ETERNAL ROYALTY in us today!

And it all points back to Jerusalem.

As we consider our options in Jerusalem, and strive to get these exciting new projects up and running, it is imperative that we understand God's will and do this exactly as He wants. For this reason, I believe it would be productive for us to hold a church-wide fast. Please plan on joining the whole Church and fasting on Sunday, November 21. (Of course, if you have plans that cannot be changed for this Sunday, or are required to work, you can do the fast another time – please counsel about this with your minister.)

Our work in Jerusalem is about to expand, I believe very soon. We need to pray about it and take it to God. He said these things are going to happen, and nothing can stop them if we do our job and do our part. So let's keep this great, wonderful vision in our minds: BEHOLD YOUR GOD!

With love, in Jesus's name,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gerald Flurry". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name below it.

Gerald Flurry