New Comments from our Visitors:

May 3, 2008

Dear Explorations Staff:

Your new book (about the museum reconstructions) is stunning! You need to do a cookbook of the biblical meal foods. Churches are always asking for ideas for biblical foods, what would be served, etc. This is a much needed resource.

Sue Ishell, Children’s Ministry
Knoxville, TN

Editor’s note: Such a book is announced in the Scroll!

March 13, 2009

Dear Dr. Fleming:

My (congregation) was very pleased and said the experience exceeded their expectation. I personally appreciated the staff going the extra mile to meet our requests. You have built a wonderful team!

Rev Barbara Barden
Charlotte, NC

April 29, 2009

To Dr. Fleming:

Our group of 8 girls (Veritas Classical School, World History Class) and 3 adults were absolutely captivated by your guidance through the museum on Friday last week. "Awesome, wonderful, fantastic" were some of the comments in class yesterday. One adult said, "I don't think I will ever read my Bible the same way again, because of Dr. Fleming's explanation of the Hebrew culture of looking at a thing for what it does, not how it looks on the outside." It was a wonderful experience that I want next year’s class to share in as well.

God bless you, Thank you,

David L. Birch,
Teacher, Veritas Classical High School
Faith Bible Church, Sharpsburg, GA

Winter Chill at the Explorations in Antiquity Museum

One of the nicest features about having outdoor exhibits at the Antiquity Center is that seasonal weather changes add wonderful aesthetic changes to the settings of the archaeological replicas. Please join us in viewing a few pictures during a sudden snow storm on March 1 of this year.

Here is a nice view of falling snowflakes in front of the replica of the vineyard watchtower. During the winter months ancient vine-dressers were involved with turning over the soil in order to better absorb moisture, pruning the branches from the vines, and repairing collapsed agricultural terrace walls. The watchtower itself was used only in the vintage season to guard the grapes.

This photo shows one of our 200-year-old olive trees blanketed in snow. Because the olive tree was able to survive both in extremely hot summer and cold winter temperatures, it could survive where other trees could not. The olive was one of the hardest trees in the Middle East, thriving in rocky soil, requiring little water, and able to endure drought. For the prophet Hosea (Hos 14:6) the olive tree became a symbol of ancient Israel, able to survive where other nations could not.

We maintain the hope that the ministry of the Explorations in Antiquity Center will also grow as a symbol of endurance during these times when our winter donations have almost evaporated. We realize we are not alone among non-profit charitable organizations in these challenging economic times. We do, however, feel the pressure of the passing of the sparse seasons. To date our donations are only about 10% of what they have been in previous years. Perhaps you remember we reported last year that the Callaway Foundation announced a challenge grant on our behalf to build an artifact gallery which would host a valuable ancient archaeological collection that would be on "permanent loan" to us from the Israel Government Antiquities Authority.

We close our winter photos with this picture of our almond blossoms during the snow storm. Almonds were the first trees in the Holy Land to blossom after the harsh winter months. For this reason their name meant awakening. Almonds symbol of wakefulness (Jer 1:11-12). The prophet Jeremiah preached with an almond branch in his hand, signifying the message, “Awaken, people of Judah!”

As you look through this four-page brochure we hope you will be “awakened” to the quality of our research and the new understanding that it brings to the Bible. We offer this research to our visitors, as well as people around the world through our new published materials.
Springtime Sunrise Celebration at the Explorations in Antiquity Center

Most of these folks set their alarms early and awoke while it was still dark in order to drive to LaGrange in time to attend our Easter Sunrise Celebration. Though the rose-colored morning sky was dawning, the jackets and blankets were appreciated. The museum staff and volunteers coordinated a re-enactment of the Easter early morning visit by the women of Bethany to the tomb. Several local soloists enriched the celebration with special music.

Using an archaeological replica (lower left photo) Dr. Fleming developed a sermon meditation about The Alabaster Jar. This jar was mentioned earlier in the week at the feast at Simon the Leper’s house (Jn 12 and Mat 26) when Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus’ head with expensive spikenard. The value of the perfumed ointment was given in the text as $10,000! It probably was an heirloom and probably had been previously used at the funeral of Lazarath of Bethany. The strength of the ointment’s aroma would have lingered on Mary’s hands and in Jesus’ hair for days. One would have easily known when Jesus was nearby by the wonderful aroma, which may have lingered until his tragic crucifixion and burial later that week.

For the application of this message Dr. Fleming developed the meaning of the custom of funeral doweries, which were gifts from loved ones at the funeral of the deceased. Using the backdrop of the archaeological garden, he could show the audience funeral doweries (jewelry, pottery, etc.) which were a part of the tomb replicas from the Old Testament, New Testament, and Christian catacomb exhibits. Early that Easter morning, Mary of Bethany may have brought the same alabaster jar of spikenard, planning to use the remaining ointment to further anoint the body of Jesus. But, because of the mystery of the resurrection, the women never needed to use the anointing oil! The message was concluded by reminding the audience that Mary’s gift of love and devotion was a sweet aroma that followed Jesus during the difficult last hours of his life.

In a similar fashion all of us can show our love and devotion to Jesus, by living our lives as a sort of funeral dower. We can give gifts of devotion through our work, volunteer activities, prayers, and through sacrificial giving to institutions serving his name. Just as this time of year has gone from the cold of winter to the new life of spring, so we are hoping, trusting, and working to make the Explorations in Antiquity Center a place where the sweet aroma of a gracious God follows us and all our workers through all that we do. Is there someone in your family who loved the Bible, whom we can help you honor through a memorial gift to our non-profit ministry? If so, please fill out the form accompanying this newsletter.