# Abroad S.S. Athos II,March 31, 1928

# The Holy Land

Dear Friends:

World-Travel-Letter No.5.

Toot! Toot! The whistle of the locomotive and the rumble of the train suddenly penetrate your sleepiness and you realize it is morning and you are in a sleeping car instead of someplace in dreamland. Quickly it comes to your mind that you expected to wake up in the Holy Land this morning and you lose no time in getting a first look out thru the car window. What a wonderful panorama of broad level fields! Most of the land looks freshly plowed and prepared for some kind of crop. Many of the fields have growing wheat or barley about half knee high; some of it higher and beginning to head out. But how strange it seems that there are no farm houses or buildings of any kind in sight! Where are all the farmers? Presently you begin to see natives, many of them clothed in the long dress-like costume of the Arabs, trekking along the roads and trails on their way to the fields; some walking, some riding little donkeys or camels and some driving cows.

The people do not live on the farms as they do in our country, but every few miles there is a small village where many little huts are crowded together and the farmers of the neighborhood all live in this central place. This method would not suit me, nor any one else who was raised on a Kansas farm. Neighbors are often too close together when their farm houses are a half mile apart, for the chickens, turkeys and hogs get mixed or destroy the neighbor’s garden, and what would it be if twenty or fifty families should try to keep their fowls and animals together? Possibly each family does not have as much stock and poultry as the average Kansas farmer.

On this Plain of Sharon, you seldom see a horse. Most of the plowing is done with cows and the old fashion plow make from a forked pole, with a metal point attached with does the digging. Often one small cow and a little donkey are hitched together and occasionally you see a camal pulling a plow. The camels are used mostly as beasts of burden, carrying large loads of every conceivable kind of things from heavy stones for building purposes to large loads of green food that look like a small hay stack coming down the road. Camels are used quite generally for carrying oranges to market and often we saw caravans of camels loaded, each camel with eight boxes of oranges tied on, four boxes on either side, and the animal swinging along the trail taking long stops and apparently feeling no fatigue. By the way, the Palestine oranges are good ones; some people claim them to be the best in the world. However, thru loyalty to California (not prejudice), no and I would be disqualified from entering into the argument.

At 7 o’clock that morning, March 23rd, we arrived at Ludd (the old city of Lydda) ,where the local guide met us and took us over to Jaffa (the old city of Joppa) in time for breakfast. After breakfast we were, of course, anxious to see the traditional spot where “Simon the Tanner” is supposed to have lived and the old stone buildings there by the sea side. At Joppa we also visited the tomb of Dorcas (or Tabitha), who was “full of good works and almsdeeds”, whom the Apostle Peter raised from the dead. On the site where she was supposed to have lived, on a small hill near Joppa, a church has been built and visitors are permitted to climb the winding stairs to the tower, from which they enjoy a wonderful view of Koppa, the rich agricultural districts and the fine orange groves nearby. The guide point-ed out Mt. Carmel to the north, the Plain of Sharon to the south, the “hills of Judea” to the east toward Jerusalem, and of course we knew the water on the west was the Mediterranean.

Joppa is the seaport for Jerusalem and is quite an important town. Oranges are exported in quite large quantities from this port. It has a population of about 50,000, mostly Mohammedans and Christians. The Jewish city of Tel Avivi is nearby, adjoining on the north, and it has about 40,000 people. Joppa is one of the oldest towns in the world and has been connected with several important events in ancient and medieval times. You will remember it was in Joppa that Peter saw in a trance an inspiring vision which was interpreted that in the sight of God, Jew and Gentile are equal provided they believed in Christ, and that God created all people of the earth of one blood. Here, Peter also received the ambassadors of Cornelius, the Roman Centurion of Caesarea.

Later in the the day we traveled by automobile up out of the Plain of Sharon, thru valleys and over barren rocky hills to Jerusalem. These hills once were covered with trees, but in more recent times the trees have all been cut down, and you can see flocks of sheep for considerable distance on the hills. There is so much to say about Jerusalem and its surroundings that I hardly know where to begin. First, I think I should give a brief outline of where we went in Palestine, then come back to Jerusalem and each of the places and write a paragraph covering the important points of interest. Od course, most of our time was spent in and around Jerusalem, visiting Mt. Zion, Mt. Moriah, Mt. of Olives, Gethsemane, Mary’s Tomb, Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Garden Tomb, etc., and then Bethlehem, modern Jericho, and the ruins of old Jericho, the Dead Sea, the Jordan river (where I got out in a row boat and had a Kodak picture taken), then the Plain of Esdraelon, Nazareth, Cana of Galilee, and other places.

Many people who visit the “Holy Land” are disappoint, because the expect too much. I was not disappointed for I did not expect to wee any kind of a strange, or heavenly sort of place entirely different from other worldly domains. The fact that our Lord came to earth in this particular country and this land was the scene of activities recorded in the Bible, should not make the ground or the vegetation or the hills look any different from any other country. IT is the “Holy Land” only in the sense that it happened to be the place where God chose to become “manifest in the flesh” in the person of Christ, and this selection was made because of the people who lived there, and not because of any peculiar characteristics of the land. Therefore, when we visit Palestine, a country which for many centuries has been in the hands of unbelievers in Christ, the Turks and Arabs, we should expect to see anything materially different to other countries adjoining it. The various spots made sacred by out Lord and His followers have been located as accurately as possible, and suitable structures erected in memory of what transpired there, however, many such places are in the hands of the Moslems who will not sell the ground to Christians. OF course, this land has been under the mandate of Great Britain since the World War, but Britain does not interfere with the religious activities of the Moslems or the private property held by individuals or churches.

If you wish to the get the greatest possible amount of information out of this letter, I would suggest that you get your map of Palestine and locate the different places already mentioned and others which I shall mention. You have noticed Palestine is comparatively a rather small country, lying north and south along the east end of the Mediterranean. Along the west side there is a level strop of land extending from the sea to the hills of Judea. South of Mt. Carmel this level country is called the Plain of Sharon for about 50 miles, and then father south it is the Plain of the Philistines. This country is N. Latitude about 31 ½ to 33 ½ degrees, and Jerusalem is about on a line with San Diego, Calif., Jackson Miss. And Savannah, Ha. The average temperature is 76 degrees and the average rainfall is 48 inches. The country abounds in Olive trees, Syrian Oaks, and Carob trees. The latter grows a large pod filled with a kind of beans, which are fed to hogs and on which the prodigal son was living when he came to himself. I secured some samples of the pods of beans, from a Carob tree. There is a few sycamore trees, and in some places grapes, figs, pomegranates, and bananas grow.

Going further east from the level plains along the west coast hills rise higher until the “backbone” of the country is reached and Jerusalem is right up in the tops of the hills, about 2500 ht. high. Then further east is the valley of the Jordan, the dead sea and the sea of Galilee. Extending cross-wise in the northern part of the country and dividing Samaria and Galilee, is the Plain of Esdraelon, called the battle ground of the nation, which I shall describe later. Since the British control Palestine and conditions have been made safe and comfortable for tourists, the travel is very heavy Last year 42,000 people visited Jerusalem, and our guide said about 90% of them were Americans. Just now there is a World Conference of Missionaries going on in Jerusalem, which is being attended by delegates from almost every country in the world. I met delegates at our hotel from South America, Australia, India, Ceylon, Japan, England, and America. The meetings were for delegates only, so of course I could not attend.

Now, to get back to Jerusalem and the things we saw there. Jerusalem has been destroyed and rebuilt so many times during its tumultuous history that is is hard for anyone to identify any certain spot with definite certainty, altho they are reasonably sure of accuracy in a few locations, such as the base-stones of Solomon’s Temple, which now stand as a part of the foundation of the wall around the great Moslem Mosque on Mt. Moriah. The city, as stated before, is located on the hill tops, and has been wrecked and destroyed so many times that the little valleys between are nearly leveled over and the present city built upon the top of all the ruins. Excavations 50 to 70 ft. deep have uncovered old arches and relics that have been identified as belonging to Herod’s day, and earlier. The streets are narrow and crooked, usually only about six or seven ft. wide and partly filled with the wares of the shop keepers on either side who have stores usually small enough so they can sit on a box in the center and reach nearly everything they have for sale without getting up. Of course, more room is required for certain kinds of goods. Water is delivered in the native quarters in goat-skin bottles or tanks, the same size and shape the animal was, carried on the back of a man or little donkey. When the little donkey with packs on their backs come down these streets (which is the usual way of transporting goods), the pedestrians have to crowd to one side to pass. This condition prevails only within the old district inside the city walls. Possibly half the population is outside the walls, where have streets and modern buildings similar to to other modern cities in that part of the world. No automobiles can get inside the walls except at the Joppa gate, where the street is wide enough to permit them for a short half block, where two or three of the hotels are located. That is one city where there is no danger of being run over by automobiles. I prefer wider streets and more traffic dangers.

Right near the Joppa gate in the Jerusalem city wall stands the Tower of David, or rather a series of towers, from which observations were made centuries ago. Just south of this tower, also on Mt. Zion, is the chapel of St. James, on the spot which is the traditional place of his beheading. On farther south, outside the David gate of the city wall, I walked with the guide of the “house of Caiphas” where Peter denied Jesus three times during the night of the betrayal. A little father from the gate is an old stone building with the “upper room” where Jesus is said to have been with the disciples on the occasion of the last supper. This may not be the same old building, but it answers the purpose just as well as tho there was definite proof of its identity, and one cannot help but have a feeling of solemnity and reverence when climbing or descending the old stone steps to the upper room. The judgment hall of Gov. Pulate, or part of the old walls and arches, have been identified with a reasonable degree of certainty, in the north east part of the city underneath the present level of the streets. A chapel has been built over the spot and excavations made so visitors may so down and see the old arches that are still intact.

From the site of the judgment hall of Pilate there is now a narrow street lending over the route, the Via Dolorosa, which was then outside the city walls and is supposed to the the way over which Jesus carried the cross to Calvary. On the way there are several station; one is over the arch where Pilate said to the Jews “Behold the man’; another place is marked where Christ fell under the weight of the cross; another slab in the wall marks the place where Mary met Jesus on his way to Calvary; the next station is where Simon the Cyrene took over and carried the cross; at another place there is a black cross in the Wall which marks the place where Christ spoke to the daughters of Jerusalem asking them not to weep for Him, but to weep for the lost sons of Jerusalem; at another place they have marked the spot where the Parting of Christ’s Raiment rook place. There are other stations, 14 in all, marking the incidents that occurred along the Via Dolorosa. The place of the crucifixion is marked by the Great Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which is a collection of chapels covering a space of 28- x 350 ft. I spent considerable time looking at several department or sections of this place.

The place which was thot to be the top of Mt. Calvary where the cross stood is marked by a large stone in which is a socket lined with silver, indicating a place or the cross to stand. Nearby on either side are the sockets for the crosses on which the thieves were crucified. From this point we passed under the dome of the main structure to the sepulcher itself. The sepulcher has been reconstructed a nearly as possible on the order of the original. It is built of white marble, carved and decorated very elaborately, and surmounted by a crown-shaped cupola. It has two small chambers; the first called the “chapel of the angels”, and is supposed to be the exact same location where the angel sat after he rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulcher. From this point we passed thru a very low door and entered into the supposed burying place of our Lord. Only two or three people can get in at a time. The vault is only six or seven ft. square, along half the space is occupied by the tomb, which is possibly three ft. high and covered with a slab of white marble. Over the tomb hangs thirty or forty lamps, which are kept burning day and night.

There is some dispute regarding the exact location of Mt. Calvary. Many claim that another hill two or three hundred yards farther north, outside the present walls, is the place and various plausible reason are given. Just under the edge of the hill a tomb was discovered about fifty years ago which is claimed to correspond more accurately than any other to the description of the “new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea”. However, more people are satisfied that the former location is correct, and it is claimed that St. Helens, the mother of Constatine, in 325 A.D. , after careful research determined this to be the place that formerly was called Calvary, and she built a beautiful church on the site. Even during the first three centuries it is claimed that the site of Christ’s Tomb was not lost, because Hadrian, wishing to wipt out Judaism and Christianity, built an altar for the worship of the Syrian love-goddess Astarte, on Calvary, and thus the place was marked and preserved for posterity.

The church which St. Helen built stood until 614 A.D., when it was destroyed by the Persians and who carried away the Holy Cross, but in 622 Emperor Heraclius defeated the Persians and regained the Cross. The Church was rebuilt in 626 by Abbot Mouestus. In 937 the burch was burned by the Moslems, and in 969 the sulten of Egypt burned all the churches in Jerusalem, but at a later date ordered them rebuilt. In 1244 the Carizmians destroyed the buildings again, but they were rebuilt before the close of that century. In 1808 the church of Mt. Calvary was burned again, but in 1810 the Chrisitian, Creeke, and Armenian secured the rights to the site and erected a new church enclosing the Holy Sepulchre, and in 1863it was remodeled by France. There are some big gaps in this history, and I do not think anyone can be definetly certain just where Mt. Calvary was. At any rate, the particular spot is not as important to us as the fact of the cricification and the resurrection of Christ form the dead and the meaning they had for all generations that were to follow.

The history of Jerusalem reveals quite a stormy career. As far back as 1050 B.C., David wrested it from the Canannites, who were presumabily the ancestors of the present day Syrians. David made it his capital and abolished the Cannantish name of Salem, and it was called the City of David, which afterward was beautified by Solomon who built his great temple on Mt. Moriah in what is now the eastern part of the city. I mentioned previously that the great Moselem Mosque now stands at that site. Long before David’s time, about the 18th or 19th century B.C., Abram immigrated from Chalden to the land of Canaan, and you will remember that in the disputre between his men and Lot’s men, Abram allowed Lot to keep the fertile valley f the Jordan, while he went to the less desirable country to the west. Then when Lot was captured by the native kings, Abram rescued him. Upon Abram’s return he met Melchizedek, King of Salem, who blessed Abram. We do not know how long before that time the City of Salem existed. In the 15th century B.C. the city was spoken of as Urusalem, in Tell-el-Amara letters which were written in cuneiform or Bablyonian on clay tablets which were found in 1887 A.D. in upper Egypt, and which are now kept in the museums of Cairo, London and Berlin.

The temple of Solomon stood only a comparticly short ime. In 970 B.C. it was sacked by Pharaoh. On later dates it withstood other attackes and sieges, and eventually the treasues of the temple were carried away to Bablyon. About 586 B.C. The Kingdom of Israel was destroyed and the Jews carried into captivity to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. About 536 B.C., Cyprus King of Persia, overthrew the Babylonian Empire and permitted the Jews to return, and Palestine passed under the control of the Medo-Persian government. In 332 B.C. Alexander the Great gained dominion over Palestine. Antiochus, Ephiphanes, King od Syria, in 168 B.C. entered Jerusalem with his men, destroyed the city and desecrated the temple. The Jews revolted and under the leadership of Judas Macabaeus defeated the Syrian army in 154 b.C. Jerusalem was again besieged in 135 B.C. by the Syrians. The government of the Maccabees was under Pompey, interfered and Jerusalem passed under the control of Rome, at which time 12,000 Jews were killed by the Romans. In 37 B.C., Herod who was appointed King of Judea by the Romans, captured Jerusalem with the help of Roman legionaries, and Herod still reigned at the time of the birth of Christ.

During the unprecendent advancement which Jerusalem enjoued under the reign of Herod the Great, the Child Jersus, the promised Messiah and redeemer of mankind, was born in the town of Bethlehem, only six miles awat from Jerusalem. Everything in the world’s history before that time happened in the period “B.C.” or before the coming of God in the flesh. Everything that has happened since that ime has been dated A.D., and we are now living in the year of our Lord, 1928”. Jesus was brought into the world in the humblest of circumstnaces, but His Virgin Mother, Mary; and thus by a miracle came the author of the new Christian religious, which advocated peace and loce instead of might and force. Without the assistance of the cultured class, but by the efforts o people like the poort fishermen of Galilee who were endowed with the divine spirit and “power fromon High”, Christianity swept ahead of all other religious of the earth and has brot to the world the excellent state of civilization which we enjoy today I nthe most enlightened nations. I often marvel at the rapidity with which Chrisitianty spread over the world, even in the face of severe opposition.

The first opposition was the attempt of Herod to kill the Child Jesus, then the persecution and imprisonment of His followers after He began to proclaim the Kingdom of HisFather, and finally His condemnation and crucifixation on Calvary. During the first htree centuried many attempts were made to stamp out all faith in Christ, during which time many thousands of Chrisitans were imprisoned, persecuted, or killed by the Romans, but in spite of the persecution it continued to flourish until it was finally adopted as the religious on the Roman Empire by Constatine. Such persecurtion and physical opposition seems terrible but was not as effective as the tactics used by Old Nick in these days, that is, the spirit of indifference. Today there are not many people, in our country at least, who openly oppose Christiansty either by argument or phusical force, but by their indifference to it they hinder its preogress and nullify its effects. The Savious said “he that is not with me is against me” and “he that gaterath not with me seatttereth abroad”. That is the case today with many of well meaning people put the ordinary affairs of everyday life agead of their spiritual duty. They like to enjoy the fruits of a civilization and a nation which could not have been built without Christianity, but they feel no duty toward, and take no pleasure in advancing the Cause which made our country what it is today, and which is the only agency theat one can preserve it in the future.

I must finish the brief history of Jerusalem which I started, some of which has been taken from the Bible and some of from the profane history. Since the time of Christ the most important events, as related profane history, are quite commonly known. Jesus told the people that Jerusalem would be destroyed so completely that there should not one stone remain upon another, and history tells us that about 65 AD the Jews of Palestine revolted against the Romans. Nero the Emperor sent Verspasian who spent two years subjugating Palestine, and then, at the death of Nero, Vespasian was recalled to Rome and made Emperor, and Titus his son, who later became Emperor was given the task of conducting the war on Palestine. Titus besieged Jerusalem so effectively that the famine which resulted drove the people to each each other, especially the little children were eaten.

When Titus entered Jerusalem with his legions in 70 AD, he burned the temple and completely destroyed the entire city. The inhabitants fled and many were killed while many thousands were sold as slaves. In 132 A.D. the Jews revolted again and after 3 ½ years war the inhabitants of JErisalem were banished its limits and were no more allowed to approach near it on pain of death. Later, a new city was erected and the name Jerusalem was abolished by Hadrian who called the new Aelia Capitolina. Before the destructoion of the city by Titus, the Christian community retired to Pella, across the Jordan. Later they returned to the new city, Aelia Apitolina, and lived there and grew in number. Later on the old name of Jerusalem was revived by the Christtians and in 330 A.D. when Christianity was made the religion of the Roman Empire, Constantine and his mother, St. Helena, built the church of the Holy Sepulchre on the site of the cricifixtion, as mentioned in the previous paragraph. (I think in Letter No. 3, I gate the date, by error, as 381 in which Chrisitanity was made the religion of the Roman Empire”.

In 350 AD, Emperor Julian permitted the Jews to return and rebuild their temple. The work was begun and then abandoned. During the excavation of the debris of the old temple, underground gases caused an explosion. This frightened the Jews and taken bythem as a warning to stop. In 451 AD, a Patriarchate was established in Jerusalem which became the center of Christendom, and many pilgrimages were made to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In 614 AD, the Persians, instigated by the Jews, took Jerusalem, destroyed the Christian churches and massacred 90,000 of the Christian inhabitants. The Jews took an active part in the invasion, but in 628 Emperor Heraclius regained Jerusalem, however, the Chrisitains hold on Jerusalem and the Holy Land did not last very long. In 637 AD the Moslem hordes overran Palestine and Jerusalem fell. In 691 the Mosque of Omar was built on Mt. Moriah.

From that time until about 1096 AD the Moslems and Turks held full sway in Palestine and the Christians were badly treated and persecutred. The great passacres of native Christians and those who flocked to the Holy Land in great numbers, gave rise to the call of Crusades. There were eight crusades in all by Christians from various Eirpoean countries who fought together from 1096 to 1291 AD at different intervals, in an attempt to take Palestine from the Turks. The history of the Crusades is entirely too long to relate here. Hundreds of thousands of lives were lost during that period. In the furst crusade 300,000 crusaders entered Palestine, killed 70,000 Turks and took Jerusalem. In 1291 AD< the eight crusade lost 60,000 and the Turks won a decisive battle. In 1517 the Turks wested Syria from MAmluks and the Turks have ruled Palestine and Syria eversince, until 1918 when the British under Gen. Allenby, took Jerusalem.

A FAMILIAR OBJECT IN STRANGE SURROUNDINGS

One day in Jerusalem, after visiting several places of interest on Mt. Zion, we started toward the eastern part of the city. Our way thru narrow streets where you could almost touch the walls on both sides at the same time. When meeting a little donkey with a bulky load on his back it was necessary to stand close to one wall in order from him to pass. Presently we came to an open place where excavations had revealed the arches and part of the roof of an ancient building which in ages past was covered up with debris. Suddenly I noticed something familiary and yet entirely out of harmony with the surroudnings, and I pointed it out to the guide. There admist the scene of ancient arches, possibly thousands of years old, lay in desolate solitude this pathetic object. It looked strange in such surroundings and yet familiar to all modern eyes. The unostentatious character of its final resting place, deserted in ancient ruins, bespoke the forgetfulness of an unappreciative world. What was the object, anyway?

Its presence in such a place would make a profound impression upon anyone. It was pitiful in its loneliness and pathetic in its helplessness, yet serene in its exclusiveness. It was resting peacefully after unnumbered years of faithful service to mankind, altho its resting place was I ancient ruins and year the throngs of narrow crowded streets where surge the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, and even the blind, the maimed and the beggars. Its very presence in such a place could not help but bring a thrill to any western mind, knowing that its kind had adorned millions of objects of human affection. You may what in the world was it anyway? And that was just what I asked myself at first. IT was old and yet it was new as compared with the surroundings. It had “seen better days” and yet it was intact and recognizable. Listen silently, while I whisper softly the secret! IT WAS AN OLD BENT AND BATTERED FENDER OF A FORD CAR. You must realize that no Ford or any other car could have driven within many blocks of this place. How this piece of an American “idol” ever got into such a place is more than I can tell. It is just one more proof of the statement that “Fords go everywhere”.

In the next letter I shall tell you something about the town of Bethlehem, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives, the city of Jericho and Nazareth, the Dead Sea, the Sea of Galilee, and other places which I visited.

Goodbye everyone, for this time.

Sincerely,

GEO. PEPPERDINE