BIBLICAL STUDY TOUR TO TURKEY & GREECE

with Dr. Jeffrey A.D. Weima  January 3-17, 2017

Dr. Jeffrey Weima is Professor of New Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary, where he has taught for the past 24 years. He is a sought-after speaker who is able to communicate well the truths of the Bible in an interesting, contemporary and practical manner. Jeff has published four books, recently completing a major commentary on 1 and 2 Thessalonians (Baker Books: 2014). His fifth book, *Paul the Ancient Letter Writer: An Introduction to Epistolary Analysis*, will appear in the fall of this year (Baker Books: 2016). Jeff is also the author of numerous scholarly articles, academic essays and book reviews. He has taught courses all over the world: Hungary, Greece, Italy, South Korea, Kenya, Taiwan, The Philippines, and South Africa. Jeff is an active member of several academic societies, lectures overseas, leads biblical study tours to Greece, Turkey, Israel/Jordan, and Italy, conducts intensive preaching seminars for pastors, and preaches widely in the Christian Reformed Church as well as many other churches in both the USA and Canada.

Jeff and his wife, Bernice, have been married for 33 years. They have four grown children and four very cute grandkids.

weimje@calvinseminary.edu
www.jeffweima.com

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Email questions to: dot@gtitours.org.
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Tuesday, Jan. 3

Before it is possible to follow in the steps of Paul and John, we must first travel to the biblical lands where they ministered. We’ll take a shuttle bus from Grand Rapids to the Chicago O’Hare International Airport to check in for our evening flight to Turkey. Our inspirational tour begins!

Iv Calvin Seminary
Charter Bus
3:30p

ar Chicago O’Hare
6:15p

Iv Chicago O’Hare
Turkish Air 006
9:15p

Wednesday, Jan. 4

ar Istanbul
3:55p

Iv Istanbul
Turkish Air 2420
6:25p

ar Antalya
7:45p

After changing planes in Istanbul, we arrive in the evening in Antalya. The prospect of exciting and exotic places to visit gives our tired body new energy. We board our waiting bus and transfer to the hotel for dinner and a well-deserved rest. Tomorrow the adventure finally begins!

Overnight: Best Western Khan Hotel - Antalya (www.khanhotel.com)

Thursday, Jan. 5

Perge, Aspendos, Antalya (Atatılla)

Located ten miles east of Antalya is the ancient city of Perge, where Paul, Barnabas and John Mark landed after sailing from the island of Cyprus during the first missionary journey (Acts 14:13-14). That Perge was a wealthy city is still easily seen today from its 15,000-seat theatre, 12,000-seat stadium, Hellenistic gate with its “Twin Towers,” baths with under-floor heating, colonnaded marketplace, water fountains, and impressive colonnaded street with a flowing water channel in the middle. A little further east is Aspendos, impressive for both its magnificent theatre and its 20,000-seat theatre, the best preserved in the whole of Turkey. We then return to Antalya, which in Paul’s day was known as Atalía and was the place from where the apostle sailed home at the end of his first missionary journey (Acts 14:25). In the heart of the old town we will visit St. Paul Cultural Center, a “coffee shop” run by Christians that more importantly also serves as home to two churches: one Turkish and the other international. Here we hope to visit with a Turkish pastor who will share with us what it is like to live as a Christian in a country where 99.9% of its citizens are Muslim. We also hope to meet some Dr. Mike, an American evangelical NT scholar, who lives full-time in Turkey and who has written the best guide to Jewish and Christian sites in Asia Minor. Return to the hotel for our first evening study session and dinner.

Dinner & Overnight: Best Western Khan Hotel - Antalya

Friday, Jan. 6

Colossae, Laodicea, Pamukkale

This morning enjoy the scenic drive north over the Taurus Mountains to the Lycus Valley where three important biblical cities are to be found: Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. Our first stop in Colossae will be brief, since this site has unfortunately not yet been excavated. Nevertheless, this is an important site for Christians to visit, since Paul sent here two letters: one to the church of Colossae and one to the rich Christian slave-owner Philemon, who hosted the Colossian church in his home. Our second stop is Laodicea. Although the excavation work is still in its early stages, Laodicea was a major city in Roman times, as is clear from not only the size of the ancient site but also its two theatres, stadium, aqueduct and major street lined with shops. Laodicea is not only the last of the seven churches to whom John directed the book of Revelation (Rev. 3:14-22), but it also had a close relationship with the nearby cities of Colossae and Hierapolis (Col. 4:13-15) and was the recipient of one of Paul’s now lost letters (Col. 4:16). Overnight in one of the nearby modern resort of Pamukkale where thermal baths are sure to revive your tired body!

Dinner & Overnight: Lycus River Thermal Hotel - Pamukkale (www.lycusriver.com)

Saturday, Jan. 7

Hierapolis, Aphrodisias, Kusadasi

We start the day by visiting the third of the three key biblical cities in the Lycus Valley: Hierapolis. With its hot thermal springs well-known already in the ancient world for its medicinal qualities as well as its spectacular white travertine terraces, Hierapolis remains just as popular with travelers today as it was in biblical times. Equally impressive, however, are the remains of the ancient city: the Arch of Domitian, a colonnaded street and market-place, ancient baths, a 20,000-seat theatre built in 200 BC, the largest ancient graveyard in Anatolia containing over 1,200 tombs, tumuli and sarcophagi, and the Martyrium of St. Philip, a 5th century AD structure on the site where Philip—either the apostle or the evangelist (Acts 6:1-7, 21:8-9, Acts of Philip)—was believed to have been killed in AD 80. We then travel to Aphrodisias, a beautifully preserved Roman city complete with a 30,000-seat stadium, baths, bouleterion (city hall), 7000 seat theatre, two agoras, and the temple of Aphrodite, after whom the city is named. Perhaps most important of the surviving buildings, though, is the Sebasteion—the building devoted to the Roman Empire and its emperors. The parallelled porticoes facing each other and separated by a paved processional way was three stories high and contained some 200 life-sized reliefs that were intended to celebrate Roman power and victory over the east. It was one of the more than 80 of these reliefs that have survived recently opened at the site museum. We overnight on the edge of the Aegean Sea in the port city of Kusadasi.

Dinner & Overnight: Korumar Hotel - Kusadasi (www.korumar.com.tr)

Tuesday, Jan. 10

Pergamum, Assos, Alexander Troas, Canakkale

Travel north to Pergamum which is one of the most impressive archaeological sites in all of Turkey. Its attractions are hard to surpass: a 10,000-seat theatre on the side of a hillside acropolis which is the steepest in the ancient world; the magnificently restored temple of Trajan; a library of 200,000 volumes second in size only to that in Alexandria; the base of the Alter of Zeus (now removed and reassembled in the Pergamum Museum in Berlin); the temple of Dionysus; and the medical center of Asclepius with its own theatre, library, underground tunnel and other buildings. John warned the church here that they were “hot as an oven” and had “an evil eye” (Rev. 2:12-13). Their influence has survived to this day, as a museum of significant importance. We will visit the ancient agora, with its two-storied stoa, basilica, and crypto-porticos, all situated in the heart of this modern city, reveals glimpses of Smyrna’s glorious past. Our evening study session will focus on John’s letter to the church in this ancient city (Rev. 2:8-11).


Monday, Jan. 9

Miletus, Didyma, Sardis, Smyrna (Izmir)

A short drive south brings us to Miletus which, due to its four harbors and strategic location on the Aegean coast of Asia Minor, became one of the great cities of commerce in the ancient world. Of the surviving buildings, the finest is the 15,000-seat theatre originally built in the Hellenistic period and expanded in Roman times. Other buildings include the council hall, the agora, and the theatre. Miletus served as the home base for the apostle John’s ministry from where he wrote a number of letters (1, 2 & 3 John) and to which he sent the Book of Revelation. In addition to the ancient city, we will also visit the “slope houses” (the wealthiest homes in Ephesus that have been marvelously reconstructed), the Ephesus Museum, which houses several impressive items from this site, and the Basilica of St. John. We spend another night in Kusadasi where we will have our evening worship service.

Dinner & Overnight: Korumar Hotel - Kusadasi

Tuesday, Jan. 8

Ephesus, Kusadasi

Today will likely be the high note of the tour for most people, as we visit the most impressive biblical site of our trip: Ephesus. The former glory of this city can still today be easily appreciated from its well-preserved streets, temples, fountains, public baths, terraced houses and theatres. Ephesus was also the site of the Artemis temple—one of seven wonders of the ancient world. There is the same theatre where some 24,000 citizens of Ephesus gathered shouting “Great is Artemis!” in a riot started in response to Paul’s ministry there. The apostle visited this city only briefly during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18-21) but returned during his third missionary journey for a much longer period of two years and three months (Acts 19:1-20:1). Timothy later served as pastor in this city during which time Paul wrote him two letters (1 & 2 Timothy). Some years later Ephesus served as the home base for the apostle John’s ministry from where he wrote a number of letters (1, 2, 3 John) and to which he sent the Book of Revelation. In addition to the ancient city, we will also visit the “slope houses” (the wealthiest homes in Ephesus that have been marvelously reconstructed), the Ephesus Museum, which houses several impressive items from this site, and the Basilica of St. John. We spend another night in Kusadasi where we will have our evening worship service.

Dinner & Overnight: Best Western Khan Hotel - Antalya (www.khanhotel.com)
Wednesday, Jan. 11 Canakkale; Greek border; Philippi; Neapolis (Kavala)

After receiving a vision of the “Macedonian man” (Acts 16:9-10), Paul traveled by boat from Alexander Troas to Neapolis (modern Kavala), the port city of Philippi (Acts 16:11). We follow the same itinerary of the apostle, but do so over land instead. After taking the ferry across Dardanelles, we drive north for two plus hours to the Greek border town of Kipou where we will transfer to a different bus, driver and guide. Then we drive another hour and half along the Aegean Sea to Kavala (ancient Neapolis), where Paul landed by boat on his 2nd Missionary Journey and thus first brought the gospel to Europe. We travel inland through the Macedonian Plain the short distance from Neapolis to Philippi, named after Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great. We follow the Via Egnatia, the same ancient Roman road that the apostle took into the city. Here at Philippi Paul preached his first sermon in Europe (Acts 16:13-15) and baptized the first Christian convert in the continent, a “certain woman named Lydia.” The Philippian church became one of Paul’s favorite congregations and many years later, while under house arrest in Rome, he wrote them a letter (Philippians) expressing his gratitude for their faithful support of his missionary activity. Extensive Roman and Byzantine ruins have been uncovered and there is a crypt where it is believed Paul and Silas were imprisoned. We then head to our hotel in Kavala to rest up for tomorrow’s adventures.


Thursday, Jan. 12 Neapolis (Kavala), Amphipolis, Thessaloniki

We leave the port city of Kavala and continue to follow the Via Egnatia to Amphipolis (Acts 17:1) to view the famous Lion Monument that Paul would have seen as he traveled into this city. We pass by Apollonia (Acts 17:1) and on to the historic city of Thessaloniki, named after the sister of Alexander the Great. The apostle spent a number of weeks here during his 2nd Missionary Journey establishing a church (Acts 17:2-9) to whom he would a short time later write two letters (1 & 2 Thessalonians). Visit the Roman agora or marketplace, where a mob was formed against Paul and an ensuing riot started in the city (Acts 17:5). Other impressive sights include the triumphal Arch of Galerius (AD 305-311), remnants of two beautiful Byzantine churches (Hagia Sophia & Saint Dimitrius), the ancient ramparts of the city, and the White Tower—the symbol of the city.

Dinner & Overnight: Hotel Luxembourg – Thessaloniki (www.hotelluxembourg.gr)

Friday, Jan. 13 Thessaloniki, Berea, Vergina, Kalamabaka

We begin with a visit to the archaeological museum in Thessaloniki where we learn more about the history and ancient culture of this important NT city. We then head west for a brief visit to Berea (modern Veria), the place whose Jewish citizens “received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17:11). After viewing the IEMA—the spot where tradition has Paul teaching the Bereans—and the beautiful monument dedicated to the apostle, we’ll travel the short distance to Vergina (ancient Aigai), the original capital of the ancient Macedonian empire. Archaeological excavations begun in 1977 have uncovered spectacular tombs and funerary objects that are housed in an impressive, modern museum on sight. One tomb with a beautiful façade almost certainly contained the body of Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great, who died in 336 BC. Two other well-preserved tombs include the so-called “Tomb of the Prince” and the “Tomb of Persephone” that also contained impressive amounts of silver and gold artifacts. After visiting these tombs, we travel two and half hours south to Kalamabaka where we visit the spectacular Meteorae. Here are the famous Cenobitic Monasteries that are perched precariously on top of huge and precipitous columns of rock that rise up out of the ground, thereby giving rise to the name “Meteorae,” which means “in the air.” It was in the 11th century that the first hermits sought refuge in the caves of Meteorae where the solitude and spectacular vistas enhanced the mystic way of life. Eventually the hermits began to group together in monasteries whose buildings were decorated with frescoes and icons by the great artists of the day. We overnight in the town of Kalamabaka.

Dinner & Overnight: Meteoritis Boutique Hotel – Kalamabka (www.meteoritis.com)

Saturday, Jan. 14 Meteora, Athens

We drive four hours south to the magnificent city of Athens where Paul visited during his 2nd Missionary Journey (Acts 17:15-34). Along the way we stop briefly at Thermopylae—the location of the famous battle in 480 BC where 300 Spartans valiantly held off Xerxes and his massive Persian army. Once in Athens we visit the new Acropolis Museum which helpfully explains the history of this world-famous place. Then we’ll go up to the Acropolis, which towers over the city of Athens and which houses the Parthenon, a building so masterfully created that it has been the subject of architectural study since its creation. This magnificent Doric temple was built to honor Athena, the goddess and patroness of Athens. Equally impressive buildings on the Acropolis include the Erechtheion, with its Porch of Maidens, and the Temple of Athena Nike, the goddess of “Victory.” The area surrounding the Acropolis houses a number of other striking archaeological sites: the Stoa of Attalos, the Theatre of Dionysus, the Odeion of Herodes Atticus, the Temple of Hephaestus, the Arch of Hadrian and the Temple of Olympian Zeus. We’ll also visit the Agora (“Marketplace”) of ancient Athens where the apostle dialogued with the Athenian citizens and philosophers.

Dinner, Overnight: Parthenon Hotel – Athens (www.airotel.gr/en/Parthenon-Hotel-795.html)

Sunday, Jan. 15 Athens

This morning we are privileged to join the 2nd Greek Evangelical Church of Athens for their Sunday morning worship service (English translation will be provided). This small congregation will graciously provide refreshments for us following the service, after which we will hear its pastor, Rev. George Adam, describe the challenges that evangelical Christians face living in a country where over 99% of citizens belong to the Greek Orthodox Church. This afternoon we visit the Archaeological Museum which contains the most famous finds from all over Greece, including some of the places that we have visited on this trip. There should be some free time late in the day to wander around the Plaka—the oldest part of the city with its quaint shops and narrow streets. Other free time options include hiking up Mt. Lykabettos for a panoramic view of the city, visiting the Temple of Olympian Zeus or other impressive sites—both ancient and modern—found within Athens.

Dinner & Overnight: Parthenon Hotel – Athens

Monday, Jan. 16 Corinth, Corinthian Canal, Cenchrea, Athens

We drive to ancient Corinth where Paul ministered for 1½ years (Acts 18:1-18) and would later write at least four letters, two of which have survived (1 & 2 Corinthians). On our way we will stop briefly at the impressive Corinthian canal. The Peloponnese is linked to the mainland of Greece by a narrow isthmus that is only 3.5 miles wide. The city of Corinth in Paul’s day controlled all the traffic crossing this narrow isthmus and contributed to this ancient city’s power and wealth. Nero began digging a canal across this narrow piece of land in AD 66 but the task was so difficult that it was not completed until the modern era (1881-1893). The ancient city of Corinth is located on the slopes of the Acrocorinth, a towering mountain rising 1,886 feet above the sea and crowned in ancient times by the temple of Aphrodite. From the bus park at the top, we hike up to the highest part of the Acrocorinth where we enjoy a spectacular panoramic view of the Corinthian canal, Isthmia, Gulf of Corinth and surrounding region. Extensive ruins of Corinth are visible today, including temples, water fountains, shops, various public buildings, the largest Agora (“Marketplace”) in the ancient world, and the Bema, where Paul likely met before the governor Gallio (Acts 18:12-17). The Corinthian Museum contains many significant artifacts, several of which have a direct link to events, items and people mentioned in the New Testament. Before returning to Athens, we stop briefly at nearby Cenchrea, one of the two harbors of ancient Corinth. Cenchrea is not only the place from which Paul sailed on more than one occasion (Acts 18:18) but was also the home of both another early church and an influential Christian woman briefly mentioned by the apostle (Rom. 16:1). We also pass through Isthmia which housed an impressive temple to Poseidon and the Isthmian Games which were celebrated bi-annually in Paul’s day and were second in importance only to the Olympic.

Dinner & Overnight: Parthenon Hotel – Athens

Tuesday, Jan. 17

Early morning flight from Athens to Istanbul and then across the Atlantic to Chicago and finally a shuttle bus back to Grand Rapids.

Tour Options:

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Pricing: Based on a minimum of 30 paid participants.
- $3799.00 per person double occupancy
- $630.00 Single Supplement
- $100.00 early booking discount for registrations received prior to July 1, 2016

NOTE: Air fare is subject to additional Fuel Surcharges as may be assessed by Turkish Airlines prior to ticketing.

Tour Price Includes:
- Charter Bus to/from Chicago O’Hare
- Round Trip economy class air from Chicago
- Deluxe hotels
- Buffet dinner and breakfast daily
- Deluxe Motor coach Touring
- All transfers, porterage, entrance fees and taxes
- Guide and Driver tips

Payment schedule:
- $400 per person deposit on confirmation
- $600 due September 24, 2016
- $1200 due October 24, 2016
- Total balance due November 24, 2016

Refund Cancellation Policy:
- Full refund less $200 administrative fee for written cancellations received on or before September 24, 2016
- Full refund less $800 for written cancellations received on or before October 24, 2016
- Full refund less $1800 for written cancellations received on or November 24, 2016
- No refund for cancellations received after November 24, 2016

Insurance:
GTI recommends “Travel Guard” trip insurance. Please contact them for rates and information at www.TravelGuard.com or by calling them toll free at 1-800-826-1300. Please note our agency identification number 23666252 which will link any policy to our agency.

For more information, contact: http://www.gtitours.org or call 800-829-8234 or 616-396-1234.
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