

Tour of the Holy Lands - Caesarea (Part 2)

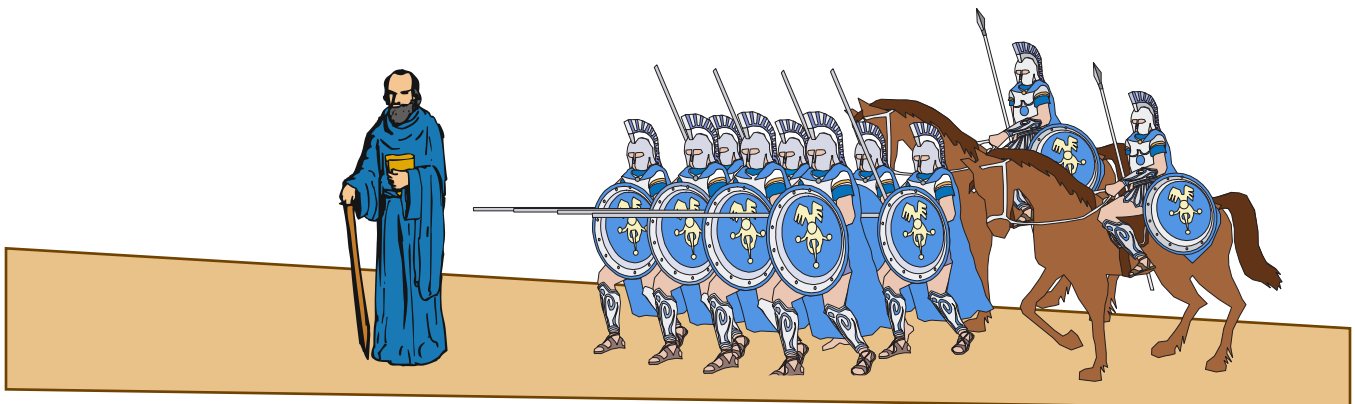


We're getting close to the Herod's palace. We hope it will be as beautiful as his silvery robes. People who work at ancient places, digging up and studying the ruins and artifacts, are called "archaeologists." Based on what they find, they are able to determine what the palace might have looked like 2000 years ago. They draw pictures for us or they reconstruct a building or site. For instance, when they find pillars under the sea, they stand them up again. Sometimes they make a few new pillars.



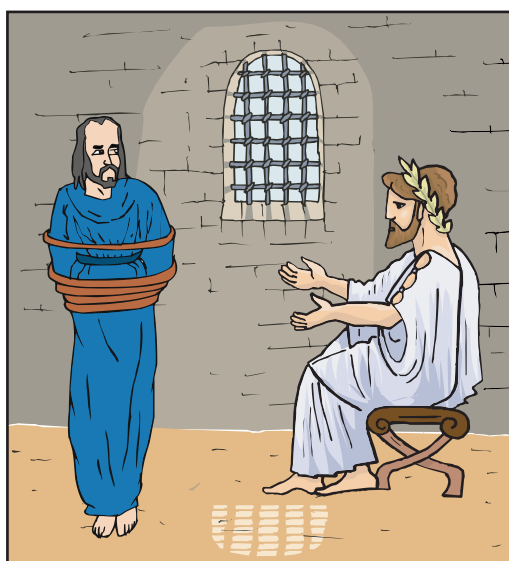


We try to use our imaginations and rebuild the palace in our thoughts. Some say that Paul was in prison in the basement of Herod's palace for two years. How did that happen? The Bible tells us how Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, just as Agabus had said. The long story is found in Acts 21:15 - Acts 23:25. He hadn't done anything wrong, but the Romans made up a false story and arrested him anyway. They wanted him out of the way. After his arrest, the Romans took very good care of Paul. They ordered 200 soldiers, 200 spearmen and 70 horsemen to travel at 9 o'clock at night with this important prisoner from Jerusalem back here to Caesarea.





Paul came before three judges while he was in prison. The first was the Roman Governor, Felix. That trial can be found in Acts 24:1-26. Paul was accused of bringing an unclean person into the Temple. Remember that an unclean person was probably a Gentile, a person who didn't believe in one God. That was against the Jewish law. Paul replied that this man belonged to a group of people who obeyed the law and called themselves "The Way." They worshiped the same God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Felix could not decide if Paul was guilty or innocent. Later Felix was called back to Rome, leaving Paul in prison.

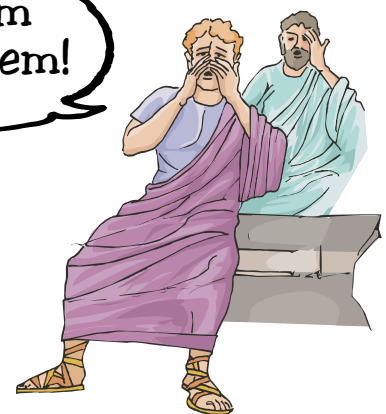
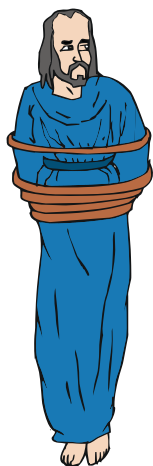




CAESAREA WALL

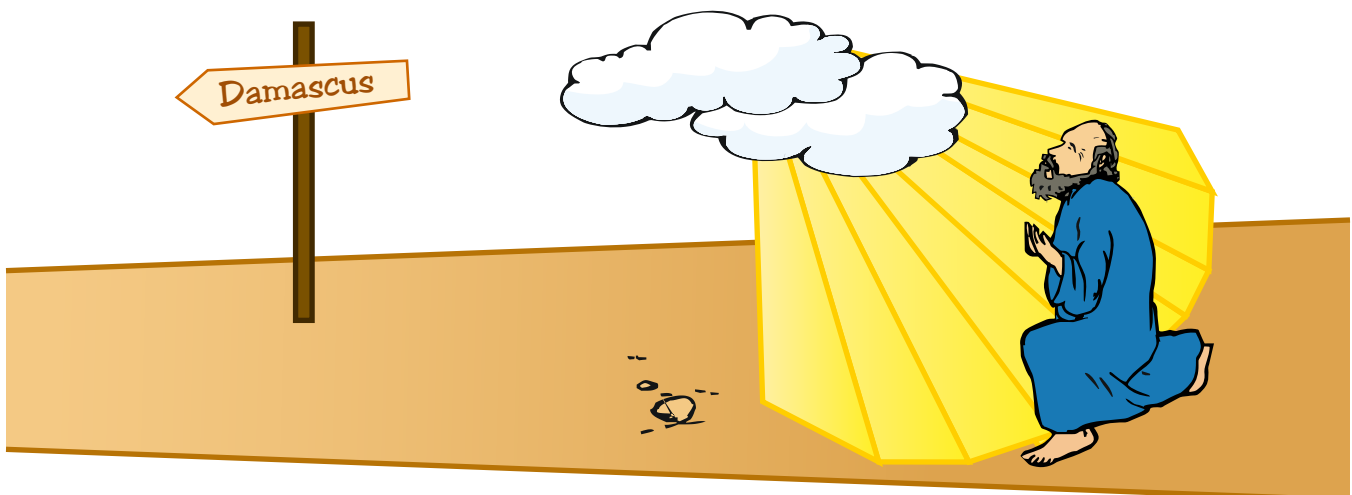
The second trial was before the new Roman Governor, Festus (Acts 24:27-Acts 25:12). Paul's enemies begged Festus to send Paul back to Jerusalem. They planned to kill him on the way. Festus refused. Instead, he asked Paul if he wanted to go to Jerusalem.

"No way!" Paul knew he couldn't have a fair trial there. He said to Festus, "I'm a Roman citizen. I appeal to Caesar." Festus replied, "Very well, you have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go." "Caesar" was the name of the leader of the whole Roman Empire. That meant that Paul would have to go to Rome, which made him happy. He had a vision that he must preach in Rome and he knew that he could preach wearing chains or not wearing chains.





The third trial was before King Agrippa II (Acts 25:13 - Acts 27:2). Earlier, we heard about his father, King Agrippa I, who collapsed in the theater and died in this palace right here. Now his son King Agrippa II asked Paul to come to court. Paul was chained to a soldier, but he still was able to tell everyone in court how his life was changed by Jesus Christ. Paul explained how he was on his way to arrest Christians in Damascus when he was blinded by a light brighter than the sun. (We love this story.) A voice came out of the sky asking him why he was out to get him. (We all know whose voice that was: Jesus Christ.) He told Paul to stand up - he had a job for him to do. And that's when Paul knew how he would spend the rest of his life. He would stop hurting Christians and instead, he would help them. He would share with others the story of Jesus and the power of the Christ. Jesus sent Paul to open the eyes of people everywhere to the blessings of life as a follower of Jesus Christ. Then he said, "O King Agrippa, I could not disobey the heavenly vision."





Paul then told the king and Governor Festus all the places he had been traveling to teach and to preach and to heal as he had been instructed. He told them about Jesus, about his death and his resurrection. Festus didn't understand and told Paul that he was crazy. Paul said that he wasn't crazy, that he spoke the truth. Then the king said, "You almost persuaded me to become a Christian."





After listening to Paul tell his story, Festus and the king decided that he had done nothing wrong. They wished they could set him free, but they couldn't. Paul had asked to go and stand before Caesar.



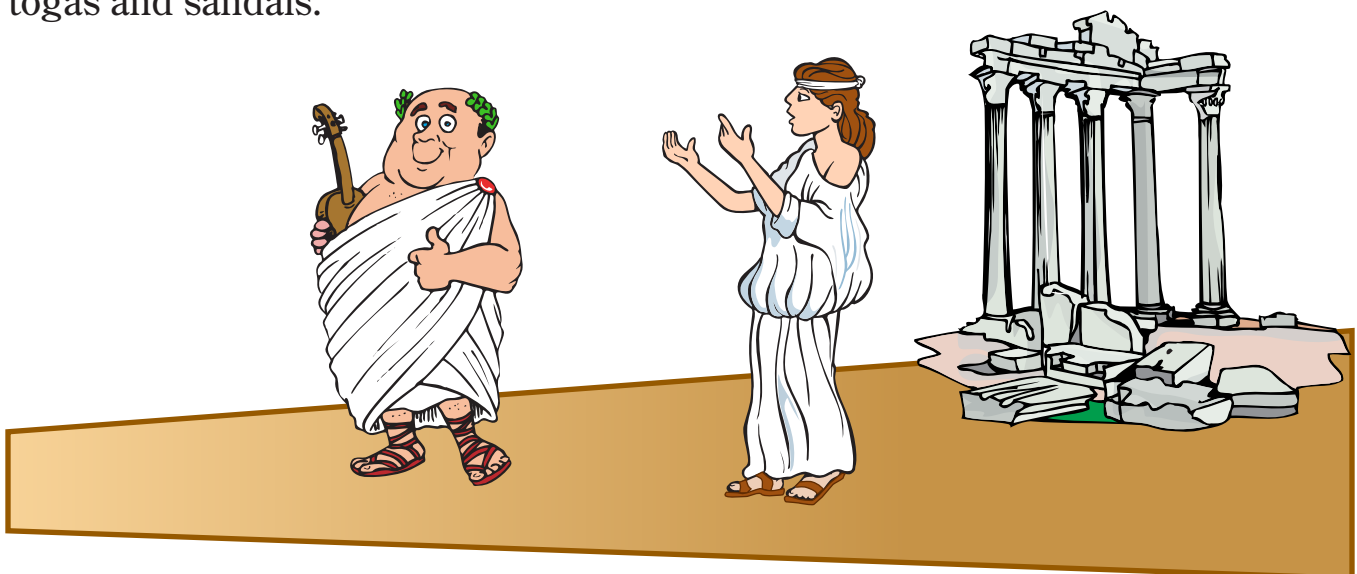


The beach is just as inviting today as it was then. Let's get our feet wet.





We imagined we were back in Roman times with all the beautiful Roman buildings around us. We imagined different kinds of carved capitals on top of each of the columns. And we envisioned Romans walking around in their togas and sandals.





As we turned to leave, there, in front of us, was part of a hippodrome.



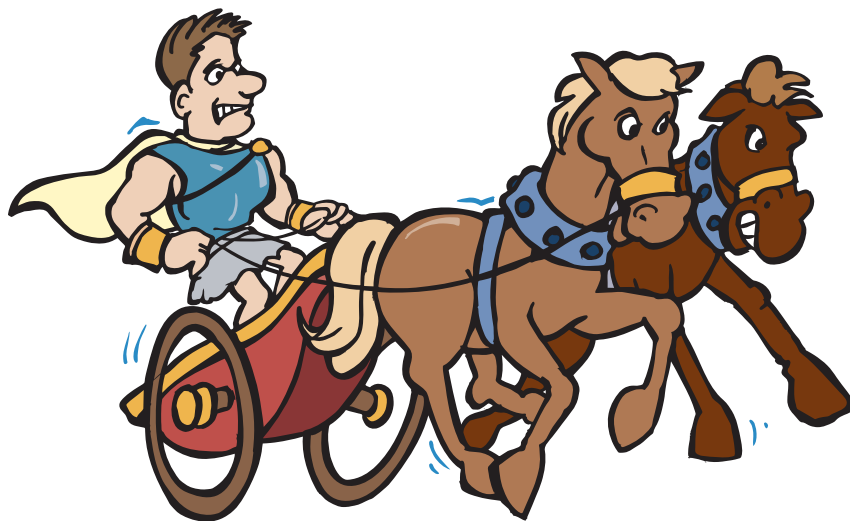


A hippodrome has seats like a theater, but it's shaped more like an oval.





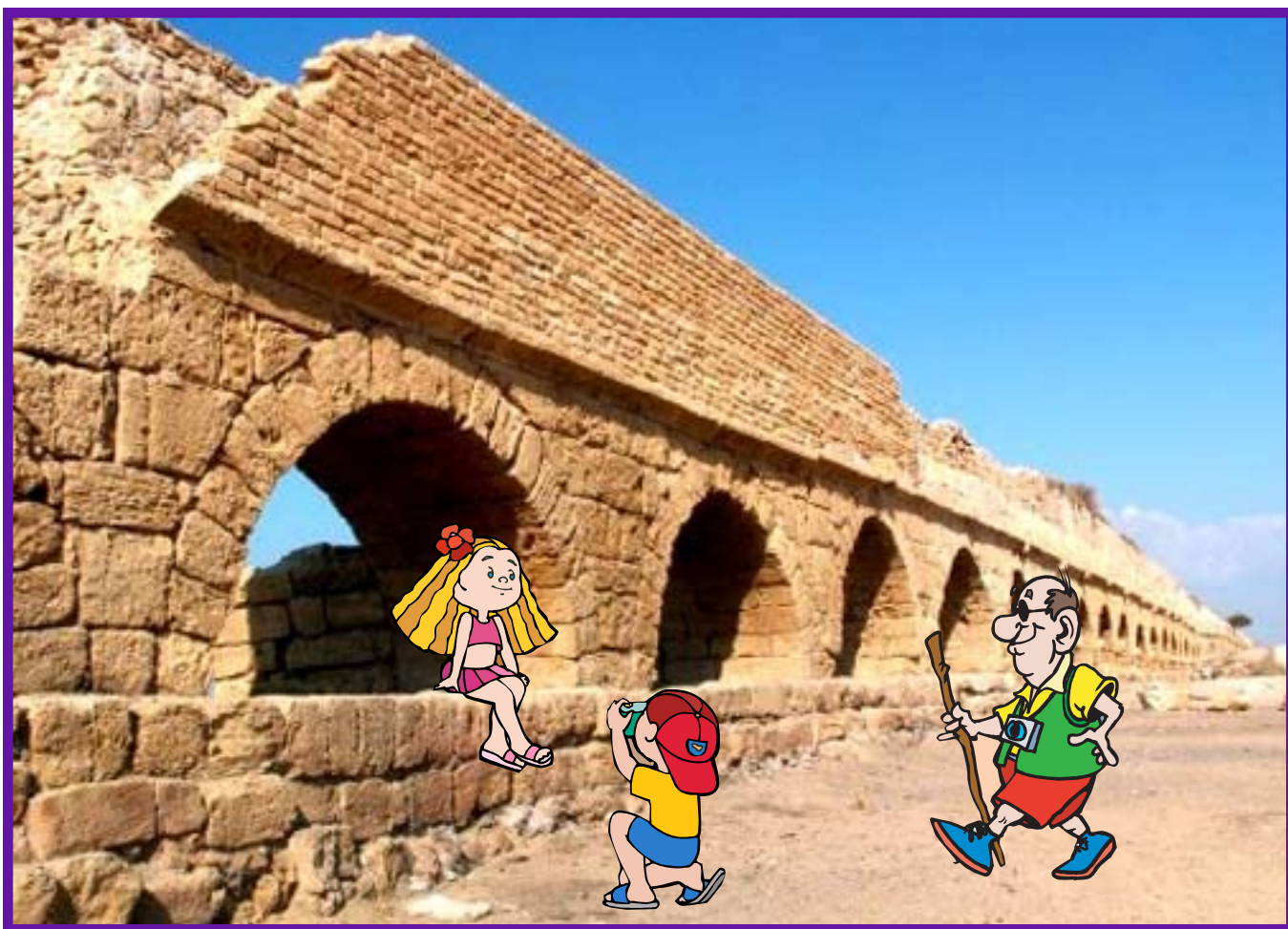
Romans loved to sit and watch horse races or chariot races in a hippodrome. In Greek, the word "hippo" means "horse" and "dromo" means "race course." It's time to go to the bus. There's more to see in Caesarea, but it's too far to walk.





Here we are at the beach again, but this time there's a huge structure between us and the beach.





They call it an "aqueduct." The word this time is from Latin, "aqua" meaning water and "ductus" meaning "leading." An aqueduct carries water from someplace else.



Several of us run up the steps to find out how it works. Sure enough, we see the path the water took as it flowed from fresh springs in the northern part of the country, and looking carefully, we could see that it slopes downhill. Our Bible friends in Caesarea by the Sea - Cornelius and Philip, even the governors and the king, and let's not forget Paul in prison - must have all gotten their drinking water from this aqueduct. Amazing!





Now, it's back to the bus!

