

28th Sept 2021

From the desk of Rajan Nainar...

I was looking for a tour in the lines of St.Paul's missionary journey's in Greece. I found one that was jointly hosted by Kultour (Switzerland) and State-Independent Theological Seminary, Basel. I could say that this tour was tailor-made for me covering Philippi, Thessaloniki, Corinth, Athens and Delphi.

I am interested in the history of the world between 400 BC and 600 AD and focussing mainly on the history that happened in the Mediterranean regions (Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Israel, Egypt, Jordan) as well as Persia and India. I am also equally interested in the Greek civilisation and especially the Roman Empire in the "Hellenized World".

I am inspired by the journeys that Paul took in order to bring the good news to the Gentiles in Asia Minor (part of modern-day Turkey), Macedonia and Achaia. West Asia (Israel, Syria) was the birth place of Christianity and this religion was brought to Europe by Paul.

I had the pleasure of joining this tour with STH (State-Independent Theological Seminary) Basel and Prof Dr Jacob Thiessen between 10th September and 17th September. We had the pleasure of having Prof Dr Jacob Thiessen's on-site lectures on the context of Greek civilization at the time of Paul's writings and the pleasure of having Nikolas as our local tour guide in Greece who was providing us with interesting mythological stories from the Greek culture. In Corinth for example we completely lost track of time by listening to Prof Thiessen's lecture on Corinth & the cult of Dionysos at the time of Paul's time – the lecture was precisely 52 minutes at the site of Corinth. One would be able to hear such a rich lecture probably within the walls of Seminary. For lay people like me, it was a "treat" to my ears to hear Prof Thiessen speaking on various topics that Paul mentions in his letters to the Macedonians or the Achaians.

The tour was very enriching in several aspects – first understanding the context why Paul wrote what he wrote to Philippians or Thessalonians or Corinthians. Secondly understanding the Greek culture from a Greek perspective and from a Greek person. The organisation of the tour was impeccable. Right from the check-in at the Zurich Airport to the transfer to hotel in Thessaloniki and the hotel arrangements in Greece (multiple places – Thessaloniki, Delphi, Athens and Corinth) as well as the transport arrangements on each day was impeccable. The day started with a meditation and a small prayer led by Prof Dr Jacob Thiessen or by one of the members who took part in the tour. Each day we would get up at 6am, have our breakfast at 7am and then be at the bus by 8am so that the bus can leave at 08.05am precisely and the timing was accurately according to CET and not according to GST (Greek standard time, which is CET in combination with Greek punctuality).

I probably was one of the very few who did not have a direct connection with STH Basel, but most of the tour participants either had a strong connection with STH Basel, such as the CEO of STH Basel or the President of STH Basel or Pastors of various churches including Chrischona Gemeinde. Many of the tour participants were from the Evangelical Free Church.

Good food at the hotels, ideal weather and ideal water temperature added to our tour experience. Kultour & STH Basel ensured that all the tour participants arrive Zurich safely. Despite the Corona times, despite uncertainties, the tour took place and I for one, enjoyed the tour immensely and look forward to such tours in the future with STH Basel

- Rajan Nainar
(one of the participants of the tour)
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