

CAESAREA BY THE SEA

Caesarea Maritima (by the sea) was a garrison port of Rome on the Palestinian coast, 65 miles northwest of Jerusalem. The population of Caesarea was estimated at 100,000. The city had a theater which is still in use today, a hippodrome for chariot races, public toilets, a port with lighthouse, and a palace with a swimming pool.

Joppa was the only port on the coast of Palestine with some natural protection. It was anti-Roman so Herod chose to build a new port which became Caesarea. It took over 12 years to build and was a feat of engineering which required a 200 foot wide breakwater with blocks of limestone up to 50 x 10 x 9 feet. He built aqueducts to bring fresh water to the city from Mount Carmel.

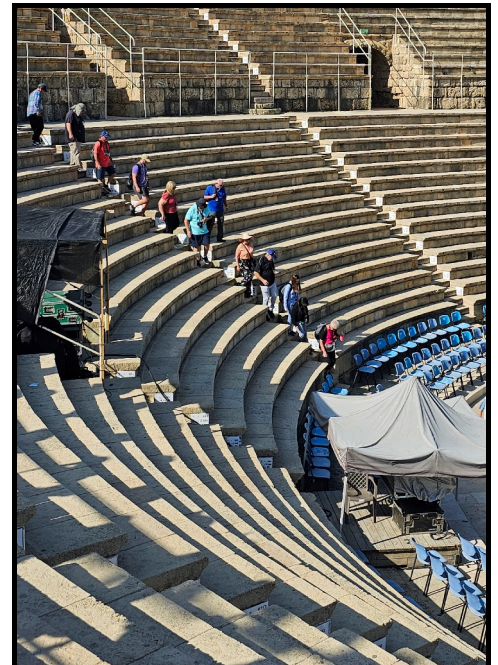


A view of the port of Caesarea



Herod's palace facing Mediterranean Sea

Herod's theater was built between 22-10 B.C. and was the first of its kind in Israel. The building went through several alterations during Roman and Byzantine periods. By the 5th c. A.D. Christian Byzantine rulers closed it due to licentious entertainment. Extensive excavation took place between 1959-64. This was the first large scale excavation in Israel. It has resumed its original purpose with outdoor concerts, ballet and opera performances.



Herod's Theater



Side entrance into the Theater



Upper level entry to Theater



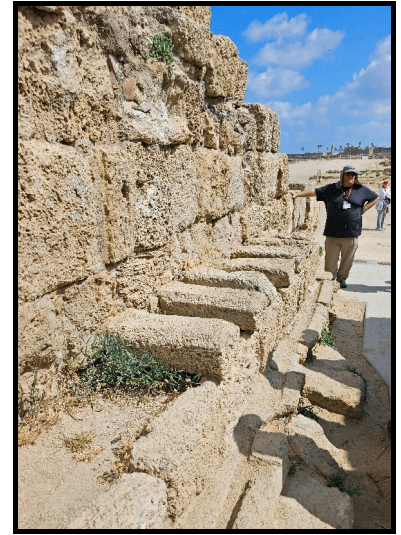
Architectural detail



The aqueduct heading north



Remains of Herod's swimming pool



Very public toilets near entrance to the Hippodrome

Cornelius, a centurion, called for Peter to come to Caesarea to explain the message foretold by God. Peter had his vision of the animals in Joppa and then went to Caesarea, Acts 10:1-48. This resulted in the confirmation that the Gospel of Jesus is not only for Jews but for Gentiles, as well.

Paul was tried and imprisoned for 2 years in Caesarea (Acts 25-26). The arena and palace were very close to Paul's cell which was recently excavated. The prison was originally a cistern. The following note written in mud was discovered, *Lord Jesus help Procopius*. Paul was close enough to hear the deadly races take place. It is believed that Paul wrote Philippians while in that dungeon cell. Consider Philippians 3:13-14, *Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*. Paul called every believer to run the race to win. The prison of Caesarea is currently being excavated and prepared for public viewing.



Excavation of Paul's cell

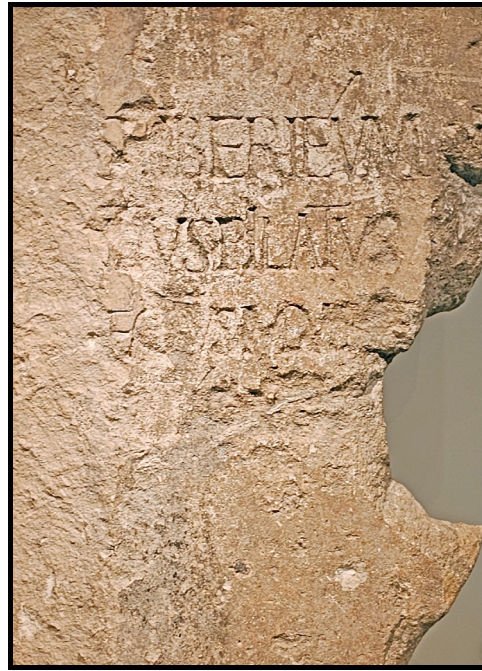


The Hippodrome facing toward the Mediterranean



The Hippodrome Track

Pontius Pilate was the Roman prefect who presided over the trial of Jesus of Nazareth, Matthew 27:24-26, *So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.* Pilate's existence was verified by an archaeological find in Caesarea. A stone dedicating the new city to the Roman emperor was discovered bearing part of Pontius Pilate's name. It had been turned over and used as a seat in the theater. A replica is on view on the Caesarea grounds. The original is on display in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.



The original Pilate Stone



The replica on display in Caesarea