



With **President Heath Thomas**

JOURNEY TO THE LANDS OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY:

Greece, Turkey, and the World of the Apostle Paul

May 13 - 24, 2025



The Monastery of Apostle John the Divine in Patmos dominates the town of Chora.

traveling BISON

Dear Alumni and Friends,

During the month of May, a group of alumni and friends of Oklahoma Baptist University, will be traveling through the heart of the Classical World in Greece, the Greek Islands, and Turkey, focusing on sites that played a crucial role in the development of early Christianity. We invite you to be among us.

We are delighted to have as our hosts, OBU President, **Dr. Heath Thomas** and First Lady Jill Thomas. Dr. Thomas will share his experience and expertise in a series of lectures and discussions throughout the journey.

In the shadow of the Athenian Acropolis, we will explore the ancient Agora, one of many places we will visit where Apostle Paul preached the gospel—among them Corinth, where Paul spent 18 months working as a tentmaker, and Ephesus, where we will stand in the very amphitheater where he spoke and faced down the jeers of pagan hecklers. In Thessaloniki and Philippi, both of which Paul also visited, we will discover many early Christian churches, some of which became important centers of worship and learning under the Byzantine Empire. And on the sacred island of Patmos, we will see the cave to which Apostle John was exiled in AD 95, and where he received his visions of the Apocalypse.

Throughout our journey, we will be surrounded by glorious architectural achievements of the Greek, Roman, and Byzantine civilizations, including the incomparable Parthenon in Athens, the stunning Library of Celsus in Ephesus, and the massive 11th-century Monastery of Apostle John on Patmos. We will take time to appreciate the natural beauty of Greece and the Greek Islands, particularly the lush vegetation of the island of Samos, and we will enjoy the cuisine for which this part of the Mediterranean is famous.

This unique tour is curated specially for Oklahoma Baptist University alumni and friends. Please look over the enclosed brochure and make plans to join Dr. Heath Thomas on a remarkable *Journey to the Lands of Early Christianity*.

Sincerely,



Lea Ann Fannin Quirk '02
Director, OBU Alumni Association

FACULTY

DR. HEATH A. THOMAS



Dr. Heath A. Thomas became the 16th President of Oklahoma Baptist University on Jan. 1, 2020. He joined the OBU faculty in 2015, serving as dean of the Hobbs College of Theology and Ministry and the associate vice president for church relations. Thomas also served as interim dean of the Divisions of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Language and Literature, and the Floyd K. Clark Chair of Christian Leadership. Before coming to OBU, he served as director of Ph.D. studies and associate professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

A 1998 OBU graduate, he earned a Bachelor of Arts in English literature with a religion minor. He then earned a Master of Arts in Theology from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. in Old Testament from the University of Gloucestershire (UK). He also earned a certificate for leadership in higher education from Baylor University in 2016.

He is the author of numerous books, including, "The Minor Prophets: A Theological Introduction" with Craig G. Bartholomew, "Habakkuk: A Commentary" (Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary Series) and co-author of "The Gospel of Our King: Bible, Worldview, and the Mission of Every Christian." Passionate about opening up the Scriptures for today, he preaches and teaches regularly, and he has served on staff at churches in Oklahoma, Texas, North Carolina and the United Kingdom.

Dr. Thomas is married to Jill and they have four children: Harrison, Isabelle, Simon and Sophia. They reside in the Shawnee area.

View of the Acropolis from the Areopagus hill where Apostle Paul preached.



ITINERARY



Tuesday, May 13, 2025

DEPART THE USA

Wednesday, May 14

ATHENS, GREECE

Arrive at Athens International Airport, where you will be met and transferred to the *Athens Sofitel Airport Hotel*. Join fellow travelers this evening for a welcome dinner. (D)

Thursday, May 15

ATHENS/SAMOS

After breakfast at the hotel, depart on a flight to Samos, one of the most powerful city-states of ancient Greece, enjoying its greatest prosperity in the 6th century BC, through trade with communities stretching from Egypt to Spain. On arrival, tour the island's most important monuments, including an enormous shrine (the Heraion)



The ancient theater of Ephesus, Turkey

dedicated to the Mother Goddess and the Tunnel of Eupalinos, one of the great engineering feats of antiquity. Following lunch, check in to the lovely *Hotel Doryssa Seaside Resort*, your home for the next three nights. (B,L)

Friday, May 16

SAMOS/KUSADASI/EPHESUS, TURKEY/SAMOS

Eph 4:21-23 Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him, in keeping with the truth that is in Jesus, to put off your former way of life, your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be renewed in the spirit of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

This morning, sail across the narrow channel to Turkey's port of Kusadasi, and continue to nearby Ephesus, one of the most prominent cities of antiquity, now a magnificent World Heritage Site. Founded by Greeks around 1100 BC, Ephesus flourished between 600 BC and AD 500, becoming one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire and an early center of Christianity. Paul lived here from AD 52-54. Our exploration of the site will include the Street of Kuretes, the same street Paul walked on during his stay, the theater that was site of the famous riot against his preaching, the monuments, secular and sacred, that line the street, the Church of the Councils, and the house of the Virgin Mary. Return to Samos in the late afternoon. (B,L,D)

Saturday, May 17

SAMOS/PATMOS/SAMOS

Rev 1:9 I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance that are in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and my testimony about Jesus...

Today, we travel to Patmos, the island to which John was exiled from Ephesus in AD 95 by the Roman Emperor Domitian, and the place where he received visions of the Apocalypse, which were later recorded in the last book of the *New Testament*. We will visit the small cave where, according to tradition, John received visions, and we will tour the imposing fortress-like Monastery of John, built in 1088 on a ridge above the main town. In addition to the church of Apostle John,



The restored palace of King Philip II, Vergina, Greece

Photo: Greek Ministry of Culture.



Picturesque Kavala, the ancient Neapolis, where Apostle Paul landed in AD 49 on his way to Philippi.

the monastery consists of a library and several chapels that house a marvelous collection of Byzantine art, including countless frescoes, icons, gold and silver liturgical objects, and rare manuscripts. After the monastery, enjoy some time in charming Chora, the island's main town, where we have lunch before returning to Samos and our hotel. (B,L,D)

Sunday, May 18

SAMOS/THESSALONIKI

1 Thess 2:13 And we continually thank God because, when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as the true word of God—the word which is now at work in you who believe.

After breakfast, fly from Samos to Thessaloniki, the biblical Thessalonica. Paul founded a Christian community here in AD 49-50 and addressed two of his epistles to the Thessalonians. The city is renowned for its early Christian churches, including the Vlatadon Monastery, where Paul preached; the church of Aghios Georgios, built on a Roman rotunda; the Aghia Sophia, believed to be older than its namesake in Istanbul; the Cathedral of Aghios Dimitrios, the guardian of the city; and the church of Holy Apostles, with striking 14th-century mosaics. Following our visits to these churches, check

in to the *Hotel Macedonia Palace*, our home for the next three nights. (B,L,D)

Monday, May 19

THESSALONIKI/VEROIA/VERGINA/THESSALONIKI

Acts 16:11-12 ...from Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

Today, a full-day excursion takes us west to the ancient towns of Veroia and Vergina. According to the *Book of Acts*, after Paul received a vision to spread the gospel in Macedonia, he stopped in Thessalonica, where his message was not well received, and then continued to Veroia (Berea), where the local Jews "received the word with great eagerness." The memory of Paul's visit here led to the building of more than 70 churches in the town, 48 of which are still preserved. After visiting this "Little Jerusalem," we travel to the World Heritage Site of Vergina, an early Macedonian royal capital and the burial place of kings. In 1977, archaeologists discovered sumptuous royal tombs here, including that of Philip II, father of Alexander the Great. Philip's tomb yielded incredible treasures in gold, which are housed in the local Archaeological Museum. (B,L)



Interior view of the Rotunda, Thessaloniki, Greece



Street of Kuretes, the same street Apostle Paul walked on during his stay in Ephesus, Turkey

Tuesday, May 20

THESSALONIKI/KAVALA/PHILIPPI/THESSALONIKI

After breakfast at the hotel, we drive to Philippi, founded in the 4th century BC by Philip II. It is believed that this is where Paul delivered his first sermon on European soil and baptized his first convert, Lydia (AD 49). He addressed one of his epistles to the people of Philippi. After exploring the ancient city, including the remains of several early basilicas, drive to nearby Kavala, the ancient port town of Neapolis, where Paul landed in Macedonia in AD 49. Enjoy lunch and time at leisure to explore picturesque Kavala on your own, before returning to Thessaloniki for our final evening here. (B,L,D)

Wednesday, May 21

THESSALONIKI/ATHENS

This morning, we fly to Athens and transfer to the *Hotel Plaza*, located on Constitution Square, the center of the city, and within walking distance of many of its attractions. This afternoon, tour the Agora, the heart of the public life of ancient Athens. Here, Socrates conversed with his fellow citizens questioning their assumptions, and much later, Paul preached Christianity to Athenians. (B)

Thursday, May 22

ATHENS/CORINTH

1 Co 15:3-4 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. Acts 18:9-11 One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking; do not be silent. For I am with you and no one will lay a hand on you, because I have many people in this city." So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching the word of God among the Corinthians.

Leave Athens this morning for Old Corinth, one of the most prominent and powerful cities of ancient Greece. During the Roman period, Corinth achieved its greatest prosperity—it is estimated that the city had a population of 300,000. Paul spent 18 months here (AD 51-52) practicing his trade as a tentmaker (Acts XVIII) and preaching against the luxurious lifestyle of the Corinthians. We explore the ancient site and visit the museum. We also see the Corinth Canal, the narrow waterway that separates the Peloponnese from the Greek mainland, connecting the Gulf of Corinth with the Saronic Gulf in the

Aegean Sea. After lunch in Corinth, return to Athens for an afternoon at leisure. (B)

Friday, May 23

ATHENS

Acts 17:16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply disturbed in his spirit to see that the city was full of idols. Acts 17:22-23 Then Paul stood up before the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and examined your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore what you worship as something unknown, I now proclaim to you.

Our final day in Athens begins with a morning at leisure, followed by lunch at a local restaurant and a tour of the Acropolis, site of the incomparable Parthenon, representing, along with the other temples on site, the highest achievement of Classical architecture and art. We will also visit the splendid Acropolis Museum before gathering in the evening for a festive farewell dinner. (B,L,D)

Saturday, May 24

ATHENS/HOMEWARD

After breakfast at the hotel, transfer to the airport for the flight homeward. (B)



Golden wreath found in the grave of King Philip II, Vergina, Greece

RATE PER PERSON

\$6,490 per person, double occupancy

Single room supplement: \$1,490

PROGRAM INCLUSIONS

The price includes the following arrangements and services:

- Fine hotel accommodations throughout: One night at the *Athens Sofitel Airport Hotel*, Athens; three nights at the *Hotel Doryssa Seaside Resort*, Samos; three nights at the *Hotel Macedonia Palace*, Thessaloniki; and three nights at the *Hotel Plaza*, Athens.
- Full breakfast each morning at the hotels.
- Seven lunches and six dinners at local restaurants.
- Lectures and discussions with President Heath Thomas.
- Full day excursions to Ephesus and Patmos by boat.
- Airport/hotel/pier transfers and handling of luggage on the program arrival and departure dates.
- All tours and excursions as described in the itinerary with a professional English-speaking guide.
- Entrance fees to museums, archaeological and historic sites.
- The services of an experienced Thalassa Journeys Trip Director.
- Gratuities to guides, drivers and porters.
- All local taxes and service charges.
- Complete pre-departure material.

NOT INCLUDED: International airfare; travel insurance; expenses of a personal nature; any items not mentioned in the itinerary and the program inclusions.

NOTE: Thalassa Journeys is providing the three domestic flights within Greece for which the total cost is estimated at \$550, which will be reflected on your final invoice.



Archaeological site Heraion, Samos, Greece



Corinth Canal, Greece

GENERAL INFORMATION

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PAYMENT SCHEDULE: A deposit of \$1,000 per person is required to reserve your space on the tour. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure. Payment can be made by personal check or charged to a credit card.

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS: All cancellations are subject to a \$300 per person administrative fee. Cancellations received 61-90 days prior to departure will be assessed a penalty equal to 50% of the total program cost per person. Cancellations received within 60 days of departure are subject to 100% cancellation penalties. Requests for cancellations must be made in writing. No refunds will be made for any part of this program in which you choose not to participate.

INSURANCE: We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance, which is available for coverage of expenses in conjunction with cancellation due to illness or accident. Baggage insurance is also recommended. In the event that you must cancel your participation in a travel program, trip cancellation insurance may be the only source of reimbursement.

ITINERARY: The itinerary, accommodations and arrangements are subject to change at the discretion of Thalassa Journeys.

RESPONSIBILITY: Please read carefully the following terms and conditions, which constitute the sole, legally enforceable agreements between the traveler and Thalassa Journeys. Thalassa Journeys acts solely as agents for the traveler with respect to all transportation, hotel and other tour arrangements. In that capacity, we exercise all reasonable care possible to ensure the traveler's safety and satisfaction, but, we neither assume nor bear any responsibility or liability for any injury, death, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity arising in connection with the services of any ship, airplane, train, automobile, motor coach, carriage or other conveyance, or the actions of any third-party, involved in carrying the traveler or in affecting these tours. We are not responsible for damages, additional expenses, or any other losses due to cancellation, delay or other changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, civil disturbances, acts or threats of terrorism, travel warnings or bans, termination or suspension of war risks or other carrier insurance, quarantine, acts of God or other causes beyond our control. All such losses must be borne by the traveler, and tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. In the event of cancellation, delay or rescheduling mandated by any of the aforesaid causes beyond our control, the traveler shall have the option of accepting in lieu of the original tour such rescheduled tour or other substituted tour(s) as may be offered by us, or else, receiving a refund of as much of such advance tour expenditures as we are able to recover on the traveler's behalf from carriers, third-party tour vendors, etc., but, we shall not have any obligation or liability to the traveler beyond the foregoing. We reserve the right to make alterations to the tour's itinerary and to substitute hotels, transportation methods, or lecturers if this is required. We reserve the right to cancel, delay, or reschedule any tour prior to departure, and, so long as this is not due to any of the aforesaid causes beyond our control, the traveler shall be entitled to a full refund of all monies paid to that point if he/she so desires. No refund shall be made for any unused portion of any tour. By forwarding their deposit(s), the traveler certifies that he/she and/or their dependents, minors or others covered thereby do not have any mental, physical or other condition of disability that could create a hazard for them or other travelers. We reserve the right to decline to accept or to decline to retain any person as a member of any tour should such person's health, condition or actions adversely affect or threaten the welfare or safety of other travelers or impede the tour. Baggage or valuables brought on the tour shall be transported, handled or stored at the traveler's risk entirely, and, we shall bear no liability or responsibility for any damage or other loss thereto. Resolution of any disputes arising hereunder shall be affected exclusively in the state or federal courts presiding in Florida, pursuant to applicable Florida law.

RATES: Tour costs are based upon current airfares, tariffs, and currency values. While we do everything possible to maintain the listed prices, they are subject to change.

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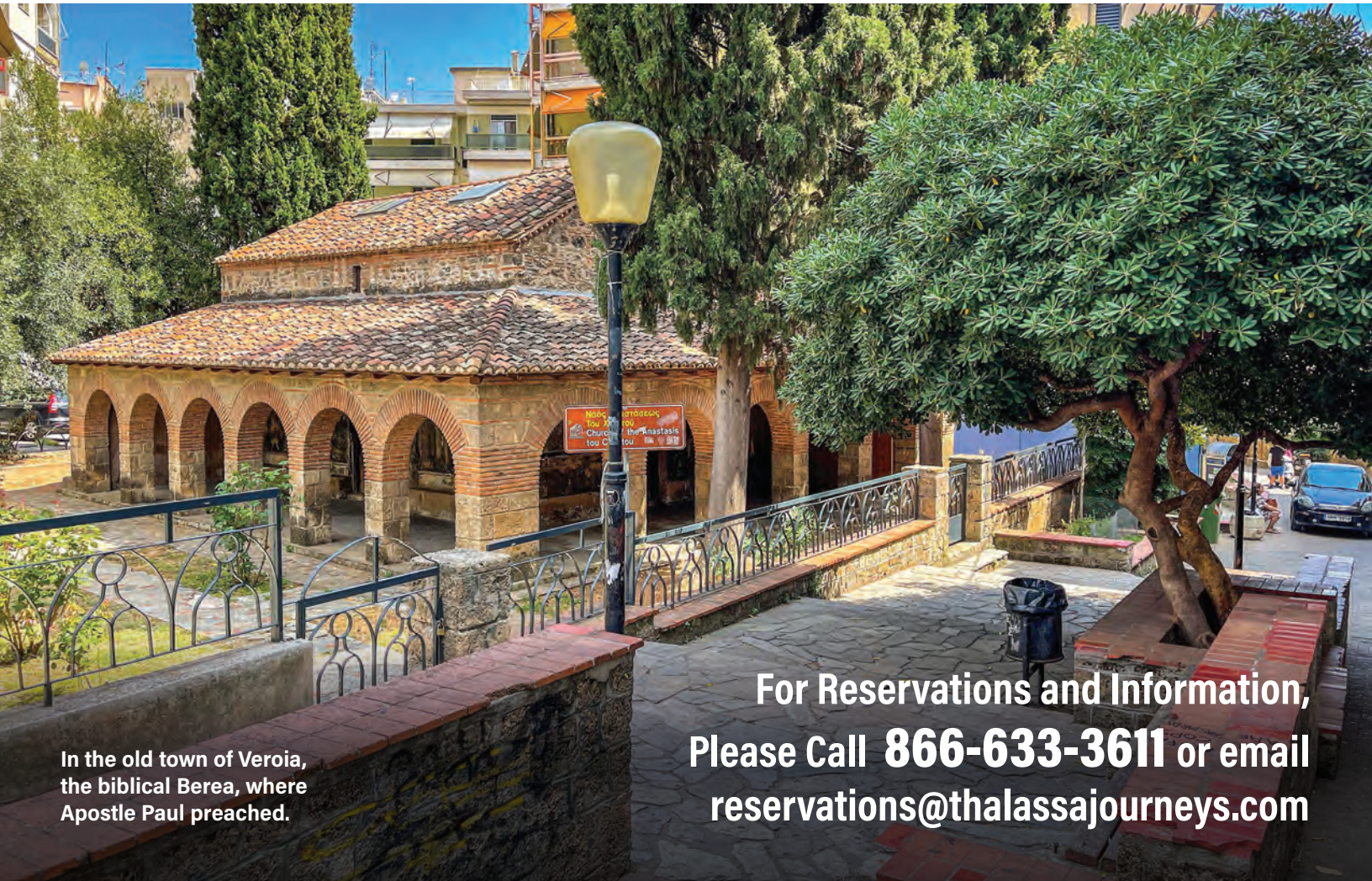


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Join Dr. Heath Thomas, on JOURNEY TO THE LANDS OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY



In the old town of Veroia,
the biblical Berea, where
Apostle Paul preached.

For Reservations and Information,
Please Call **866-633-3611** or email
reservations@thalassajourneys.com