

# 6. Jesus in the Land

Sites associated with Jesus are ascertained from the Gospels themselves and from tradition as received by early pilgrims, sometimes confirmed or otherwise by modern archaeology. Important early sources, include pilgrims to the Holy Land after Constantine became sole ruler of the Roman Empire and its first Christian emperor.

- Eusebius (260/65-339/40), Bishop of Caesarea (c. 314-). Compiled *Onomasticon*, a gazetteer “On the Place-Names in the Holy Scripture,” probably before 324.
- Helena (326-28): Constantine sent his mother on pilgrimage to the Holy Land to identify sites associated with Jesus.
- Bordeaux Pilgrim (333-34): an unknown pilgrim described his journey from Bordeaux to Jerusalem and back, *Itinerarium Burdigalense*.
- Egeria (c. 381-84): wrote of her pilgrimage.

## I. Birth & Childhood

### 1. Annunciation: Nazareth

God sent Gabriel “to a town in Galilee called Nazareth” to announce to Mary that she would conceive and birth Jesus (Luke 1:26-38).

Today the *Church of the Annunciation* marks the spot.

### 2. Visitation: Ein Karem

Mary hurried “to a Judean town in the hill country” to visit her older relative Elizabeth, pregnant with John the Baptist (Luke 1:39-56). Tradition identifies Zechariah and Elizabeth with Ein Karem (עֵין כָּרֵם Spring of the Vineyard), s.w. of Jerusalem. Here are commemorated the Visitation and the Birth of John the Baptist:

- *Church of the Visitation* (Abbey Church of St John in the Woods; Franciscan, Barluzzi 1955), atop ancient church ruin.
- *Church of St John the Baptist* (Monastery of St John in the Mountains; Franciscan, 1939 Barluzzi): contains the cave in which John was supposedly born. Atop remains of a Crusader church, and two Byzantine chapels.

### 3. Birth of Jesus: Bethlehem

“Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem” (Luke 2:4). Here Jesus was born.

*Church of the Nativity*: the first basilica was built under Constantine, dedicated in 329. Justinian (r. 527-65) built a new basilica on top. The compound now includes three monasteries: Roman Catholic, Armenian Apostolic, Greek Orthodox.

UNESCO World Heritage Site: Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route, Bethlehem (2012)

#### 4. Return to Nazareth

The Holy Family fled from Herod the Great's massacre of baby boys (Slaughter of the Innocents) to Egypt (Matt 2:13-18). After Herod's death (4 BC) an angel warned Joseph not to return to Judea.

Herod's kingdom was divided among his sons:

- Herod Archelaus: Judea, Samaria, Idumea
- Herod Antipas: Galilee and Perea
- Herod Philip: Batanea, Trachonitis, Gaulanitis

Joseph took family to live in Nazareth (Ναζαρά), "that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, 'He shall be called a Nazarene (Ναζωραῖος)'" (Matt 2:23). Probably a reference to the Branch (נֶצֶךְ *netzer*, Isa 11:1), a Messianic title.

Nazareth was a small village (pop. c. 480). Today it is the largest city in north Israel.

#### 5. Sepphoris

Σέπφωρις, צִפּוּרִי (from צִפּוּר bird?), Arab. Saffuriya; now Tzipori NP.

Not mentioned in NT, but an important city. 6 km/4 mi n.w. of Nazareth.

Herod the Great's northern HQ; on his death the city rebelled, but destroyed by the Romans. Herod Antipas rebuilt as his capital, before building a new capital at Tiberias. Jesus was a τέκτων (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3), a builder, like his father. Probable that they worked on Sepphoris.

## II. Entry into Ministry

Date: 15th year of Tiberias Caesar (14-37), Pontius Pilate governor of Judea (26-36), Herod (Antipas) tetrarch of Galilee (4 BC–AD 38), Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis (4 BC–AD 34), Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene; Annas and Caiaphas high priest.

#### 1. Baptism

Baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan (Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:1-17).

John was baptizing at Bethany beyond the Jordan (Βηθανία πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, John 1:28; Bethabara בֵּית עַבְרָה House of the Ford, TR, KJV), at Aenon (Αἰνών) Spring near Salim (John 3:23).

Madaba Map: sites on both sides of Jordan:

- e:
- w: Βέθαβαρά το τού ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτίσματος (Bethabara, the place of St. John's baptising).

East side: Al-Maghtas (Arab. a site of immersion).

UNESCO World Heritage Site: *Baptism Site "Bethany Beyond the Jordan" (Al-Maghtas)* (2015)

West side: Qasr el-Yahud. Israel has built a baptismal site.

Two other Biblical events commemorated here:

- crossing into Promised Land (Josh 3).
- crossing by Elijah & Elisha, ascent of Elijah (2 Kgs 2:8-14).

#### 2. Temptation

In the wilderness (Matt 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13); trad. identified as near Jericho.

#### 3. Arrest of John the Baptist

Jesus began his ministry after Herod Antipas arrested John the Baptist, who rebuked him for marrying Herodias, wife of his brother Philip. Imprisoned in Machaerus (Josephus), then killed (Mark 6:14-29).

## 6. Jesus in the Land

### 4. Wedding at Cana

Per John, the first two of Jesus's seven signs were at Cana of Galilee (Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας), the hometown of Nathanael/Bartholomew.

- Wedding at Cana, turning water into wine (John 2:1-11)
- Remote healing of official's son, ill in Capernaum (4:46-54)

Two candidates for Cana:

- **Kafr Kanna**; כַּפְר כְּנָנָא, 32.75, 35.35. 5 km ne of Nazareth. Main tourist site. 3 churches: Catholic (Franciscan) Wedding Church, Greek Orthodox Church of St George, both commemorating wedding; Catholic (Franciscan) Chapel of the Apostle Bartholomew (Nathanael) on supposed house of the apostle.
- **Khirbet Qana** (ruins of Cana): 32.8214, 35.3033, 100 m hill on n. side of Beit Netofa Valley; 13 km n of Nazareth. Excavations 1998-.

## III. Galilee Ministry

The Synoptic Gospels present Jesus's ministry: in Galilee, journey to Jerusalem, final week.

### 1. Sea of Galilee

Size: 21 km/13 mi long, 13 km/8 mi wide; c. 53km/33mi circumference; area 166.7 km<sup>2</sup>, max. depth 43 m/141 ft; elevation -209m/686 ft. cf. Lake Tahoe 22 × 12 mi, 72 mi shoreline, 490 km<sup>2</sup>.

Divided between three territories: w. Herod Antipas; n.e. Herod Philip; s.e. Decapolis.

cf. reference to Jesus crossing to the other side (εἰς τὸ πέραν 10x: Matt 4, Mark 5, Luke 1).

Fishing: Simon & Andrew, James & John were fishermen. 20+ 1st cent. harbors discovered around lake.

**The Jesus Boat:** The Sea of Galilee/Ancient Galilee Boat. Discovered 1986 near Magdala by two Nof Ginosar fishermen. 27 ft × 7.5 ft (8.27 × 2.3 m). Submerged in chemical bath for 7 years. Now on display Yigal Allon Museum, Nof Ginosar.

### 2. Tiberias

Not mentioned in NT. Founded AD 20 by Herod Antipas as new capital replacing Sepphoris. Named in honor of emperor Tiberius. Hot springs at Hammath 1 mi s.

3rd cent. Sanhedrin moved to Tiberias; rabbinical academy founded; became the intellectual center of Judaism. Jerusalem/Palestinian Talmud compiled in Tiberias by 5th cent.

7th cent. became center for the Masoretes, whose Tiberian vocalization system became standard.

Since 16th cent. one of Judaism's four holy cities (Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed).

### 3. Magdala

Migdal מִגְדָּל, or מְגַדָּלָא. Aram. Migdal Nunayya Tower of the Fish? Arab village el-Mejdel (until 1948). nr cliff of Mt Arbel.

Assumed same as Taricheae Ταριχῆαι / Ταριχῆαι place of salted fish (τάριχος).

Assumed home of Mary Magdalene Μαρία/Μαριάμ ἡ Μαγδαληνή 12x.

After feeding of 4000 Jesus went by boat to region of Magadan (εἰς τὰ ὄρια Μαγαδάν, Matt 15:39, TR Μαγδαλά), or Dalmanutha (εἰς τὰ μέρη Δαλμανουθά, Mark 8:10). Magdala?

Recent excavations: Magdala Project. Two synagogues found.

#### 4. Tabgha

Gk Heptapegon, Heb. עֵין שֶׁבַע, *Ein Sheva* Seven Springs; abbrev to Tabgha. Warm springs.

Tradition commemorates 3 events: Sermon on the Mount; feeding of 5000/multiplication of loaves and fishes; Jesus' breakfast with disciples and commissioning of Peter (John 21).

- *Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes*. Egeria c. 380 described church; enlarged c. 480, floor mosaics added: loaves and fishes; Nilotic landscape. 614 destroyed by Persians. 1932 excavations began. Modern church built 1930s on 5th cent. floor plan. Now Benedictine daughter house of Dormition Abbey, Jerusalem.
- *Church of the Primacy of St Peter*. Franciscan church, built 1933, incorporating 4th cent. church. Rock projection: mensa Christi (Christ's Table).

Statue: Jesus commissioning Peter.

On hillside behind Tabgha:

- Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20): hillside behind Tabgha.
- *Church of the Beatitudes* (1938, Barluzzi), near ruins of 4th cent. church. Octagonal, representing the eight beatitudes.

#### 5. Capernaum

Καφαρναούμ נַחֻם כְּפָר (Nahum's village). 3 km e of Tabgha.

healing of Peter's mother-in-law, paralytic; raised daughter of Jairus, synagogue ruler.

Jesus moved from Nazareth to Capernaum (Matt 4:12-16). Home of Peter's inlaws.

Synagogue built with help of Roman centurion.

Town founded in Hellenistic period atop earlier settlement, abandoned 7th cent. (Islamic invasion 638)

Synagogue 4-5 cent. limestone, over 1st cent. basalt foundation (assumed synagogue)

House of Simon Peter: discovered 1968. Hellenistic origins. 1st cent. remodeled into house church;

remodeled again 4th cent. (seen by Egeria). 5th cent. demolished, new octagonal church built 2m above.

Site acquired by Franciscans 1894, excavated 1905, 1919-21, 1968-85.

Franciscan church over Peter's house.

Also Greek Orthodox monastery.

#### 6. Bethsaida

Βηθσαϊδά. בֵּית צִידָה house of fishing. Home town of Peter, Andrew, Philip.

In Gaulanitis on e. bank of Jordan near where it enters lake.

Herod Philip made existing village into a city, calling it Julias in honor of Augustus's daughter. At his request was buried in Bethsaida, though Caesarea Philippi was his capital.

Two contenders for site:

- Et-Tell: excavated Univ. of Nebraska, director Rami Arav.
- El-Araj: recent excavations.

#### 7. Caesarea Philippi

Καيسάρεια τῆς Φιλίππου (Matt 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-9:1). Here Peter confessed Jesus as Christ.

In 3 BC Herod Philip founded city as his capital.

Natural spring used to emerge from cave, now from below cave; source of Banias R., a main tributary of

## 6. Jesus in the Land

Jordan. Cave was Pan's Grotto (Gk Πανεύς); many niches for statues of deities.  
Town of Baneas destroyed by Israel 1967.

## 8. Transfiguration

Matt 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36: a high mountain (ὄρος ὑψηλόν). Mt Hermon or Mt Tabor?  
Mount Tabor: elev. 575m/1886 ft, c. 450m above Kfar Tavor; e. end Jezreel Valley, 18km w. of Sea of Galilee.  
Origen identified as Mount of Transfiguration. Pilgrimage site from 4th cent.  
Two monasteries at top: Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic.  
*Church of the Transfiguration* (1919-24, Barluzzi) atop ruins of 5-6th cent. Byzantine, 12th cent. Crusader churches.

Peter's confession and the transfiguration marked the end of Jesus's Galilean ministry. He set off for Jerusalem with his disciples, traveling beyond the Jordan (i.e. Perea), to Jericho, where he healed Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52), and dined with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) before the long ascent to Jerusalem.