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Where
JESUS
Walked



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"Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way." Hebrews 12:2



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“Guide our feet into
the way of peace.”

(NIV Luke 1:78–79)

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Cover Credit: Adam Hester

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Where Jesus Walked

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The vast extent of the Roman Empire around Jesus' time. Its western borders were on the Spanish Atlantic coast and it extended eastward beyond Palestine to what is now Syria.



The Geography of Jesus

Where
Jesus
Walked

A quick-start orientation guide to Jesus' journeys.

A portion of the sixth-century Madaba Mosaic Map showing the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. Like many medieval maps, it doesn't show the area from an aerial perspective and it orients east-west rather than north-south.



Did You Know



The area where Jesus walked is about the size of the state of New Jersey.

How far is a walk from...

- Nazareth to the city of Sepphoris, where Jesus likely worked as a tekton (builder) in his teens and twenties: **4 miles.**
- Nazareth to Cana, where he changed water to wine: **10 miles.**
- Nazareth to the seaside town of Capernaum, where Jesus did much of his ministry: **40 miles.**
- Capernaum to Jerusalem: **90 miles** (traveling through Samaria).
- Jerusalem to Jericho: **15 miles** (over rough terrain).
- Capernaum to Caesarea Philippi (Decapolis town): **About 30 miles.**
- Capernaum to Mount Hermon: **About 40 miles.**
- Jerusalem to Bethany: **1½ miles.**
- Jerusalem to Emmaus: **7 miles.**



The region today.



Where Jesus walked...viewed from space. The big body of water on the left is the Mediterranean Sea. The body of water in the middle is the Dead Sea, and the Sea of Galilee "Lake Tiberias" is the smaller body of water above it, nestled in greener terrain.

Jesus & His People: **The Other 97%**



WIKIPEDIA

PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK



Rich Roman occupiers lived large in first-century Palestine.

BY WILLIAM BONIN

“**WHERE JESUS WALKED...**” For some of us, that phrase conjures up an image of worn-out sandals, treading along the dusty path of some out-of-the-way village.

The aqueduct at Caesarea.



Herod the Great



Did You Know?

Herod the Great is thought to have implemented a secret police force to eliminate any fomentation of disdain or protest.

The rustic image is accurate. Jesus the Nazarene took his earliest steps in an insignificant rural town. He was a Jewish person during a time when most Jews in the region had no money or power.

Also accurate, however, is the image of Jesus in fancy urban places, among the palatial houses of wealthy people steeped in Greco-Roman culture. By the time Jesus was born, the region had been occupied by powerful empires for the better part of 700 years and the current imperial occupier was Rome.

LEFT: As part of his effort to emulate Roman culture, Herod brought previously unknown attractions and innovations to Palestine. He built theaters, a hippodrome for horse and chariot races, an amphitheater for battles between wild beasts and gladiators.



Gladiators

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK (2); WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

BUSY CROSSROADS

Palestine, situated between Egypt, Arabia and Syria, was a longtime intersection of religion, culture and commerce. Over previous centuries, the area had been controlled by the Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks and others.

In 63 BC, the Roman general, Pompey, conquered Palestine. The area became a Roman tributary, an arrangement whereby the conquered nation now paid a “tribute” to Rome. Palestine was to be “client kingdom,” ruled by a quasi-independent king, but by the time Jesus lived, the Jewish influence over Palestine had waned and the Romans had begun to flex their muscle and exert more direct control.

Did You Know

The gladiator game fad reached its peak in the Greco-Roman world from the first century BCE through the first century CE. Some gladiators were volunteers. Most were slaves.

Raucous Roman entertainment: Chariot racing, gladiator games, theater, sports.

Roman soldiers “do not sit with folded hands in peace time only to put them in motion in the hour of need. On the contrary, as though they had been born with weapons in hand, they never have a truce from training, never wait for emergencies to arise... Each soldier daily throws all his energy into his drill, as though he were in action.” First-century Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, on the Roman occupiers' military might





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Gynasium

GRECO-ROMAN CULTURE TAKES HOLD

The quasi-independent king, Herod the Great, ruled the land from 37BC to 4BC in a reign that was both ostentatious and cruel. Herod's reign oversaw the transition to direct Roman administration and the creation of the province of Judea. Herod had to both curry the favor of his Roman masters and he worked hard to quell any signs of dissent or discontent.

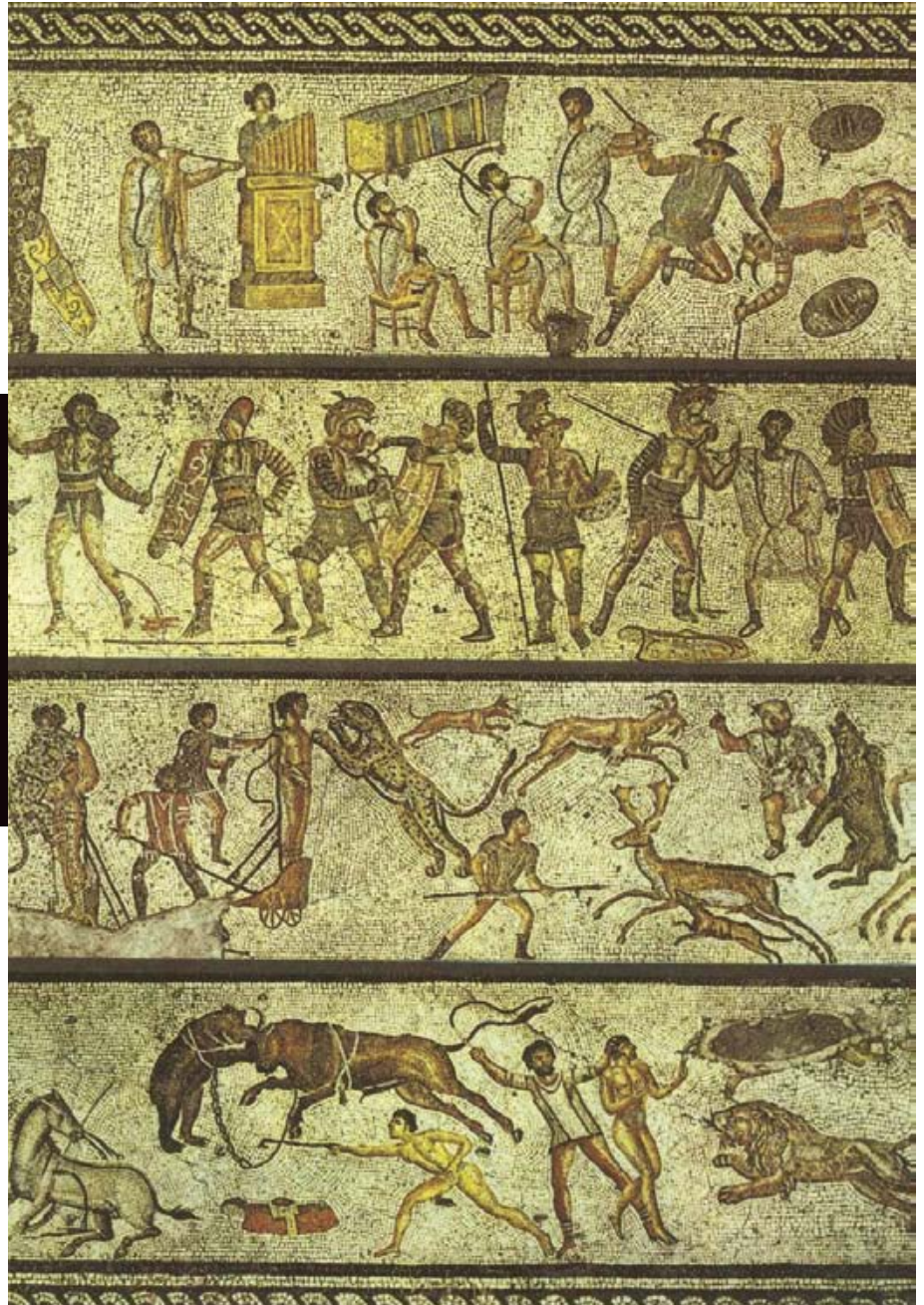
Zealots in Galilee

Ruled by Herod the Great's son, Herod Antipas, during Jesus' time, Galilee was more than a day's ride for Calvary in the centers of Roman power like Caesarea and the Decapolis, and a four- or five-day walk. Galileans were less tolerant of Roman rule than those in the cities, and the ruling class regarded the region where Jesus spent most of his life and ministry as a sea of malcontents and troublemakers.

"Its nature is wonderful as well as its beauty; its soil is so fruitful that all sorts of trees can grow upon it ..."

First-century Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, on the region of Galilee.

Gladiators



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS; WIKIPEDIA

Gynasium



In his tale of the persistent widow, Jesus exposed the widespread corruption and social injustice in first-century Palestine.

Jesus said, “There was once a judge in some city who never gave God a thought and cared nothing for people. A widow in that city kept after him: ‘My rights are being violated. Protect me!’

He never gave her the time of day. But after this went on and on he said to himself, ‘I care nothing what God thinks, even less what people think. But because this widow won’t quit badgering me, I’d better do something and see that she gets justice—otherwise I’m going to end up beaten black-and-blue by her pounding.’

Then [Jesus] said, ‘Do you hear what that judge, corrupt as he is, is saying? So what makes you think God won’t step in and work justice for his chosen people, who continue to cry out for help? Won’t he stick up for them? I assure you, he will. He will not drag his feet.’” (Luke 18:1-7)



Just 30 miles from Nazareth

In Herod's seaside city of Caesarea, the Roman occupiers and their collaborators enjoyed the urban good life.



ABOVE: Herod the Great named his gem of a Mediterranean city after the Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus.

LEFT: Some in the Greco-Roman world reckoned Caesar Augustus as a god among other classical gods. (Augustus presides over the center of this first-century cameo). That notion would not have set well with monotheistic Jews of Jesus' time, who believed in one God only.

The amphitheater at Caesarea. Still a performance venue today, it has hosted Deep Purple, Bjork and an annual three-day international jazz festival.



Did You Know

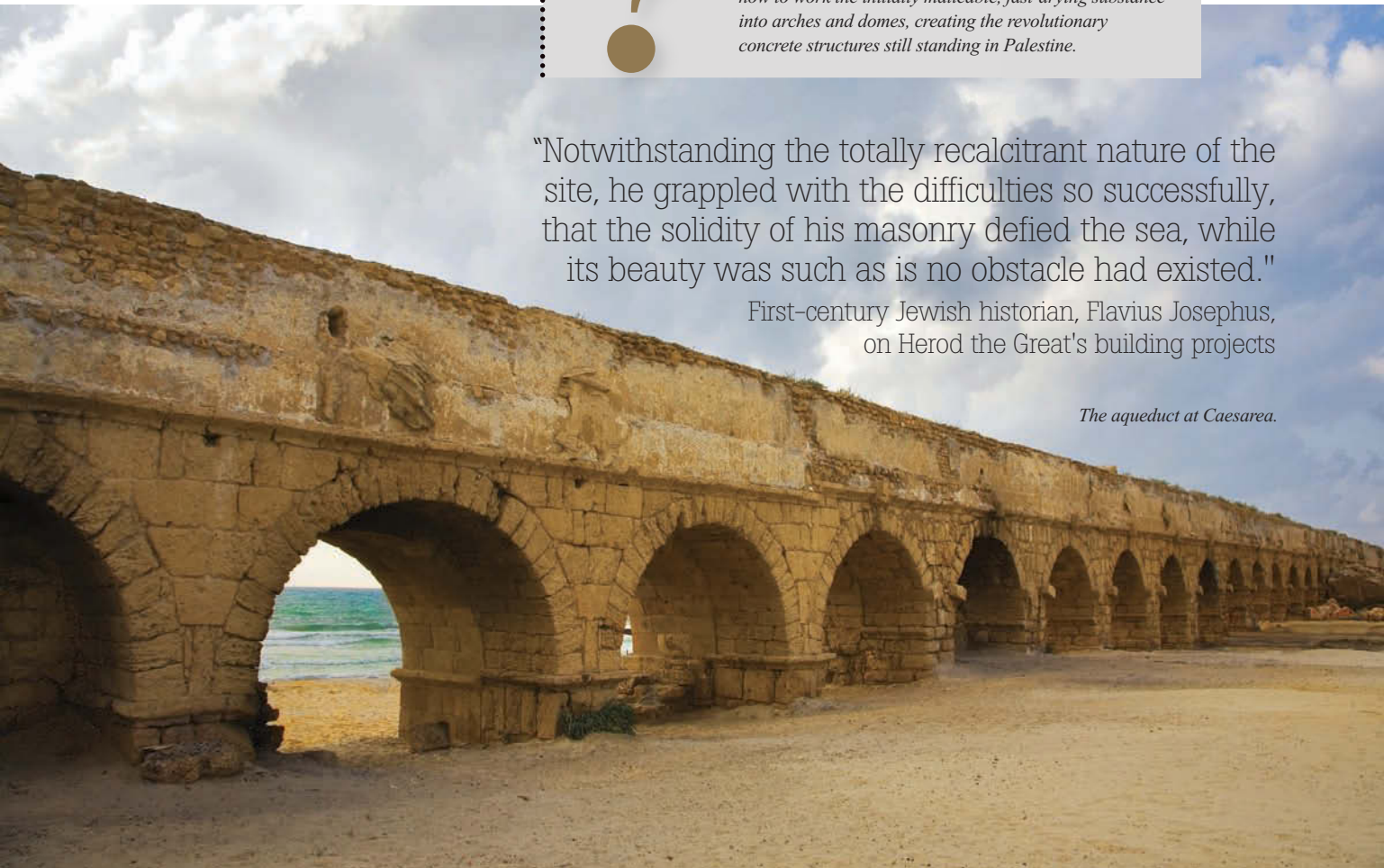


Although other ancient cultures had built with concrete, Roman builders were concrete masters. They learned how to work the initially malleable, fast-drying substance into arches and domes, creating the revolutionary concrete structures still standing in Palestine.

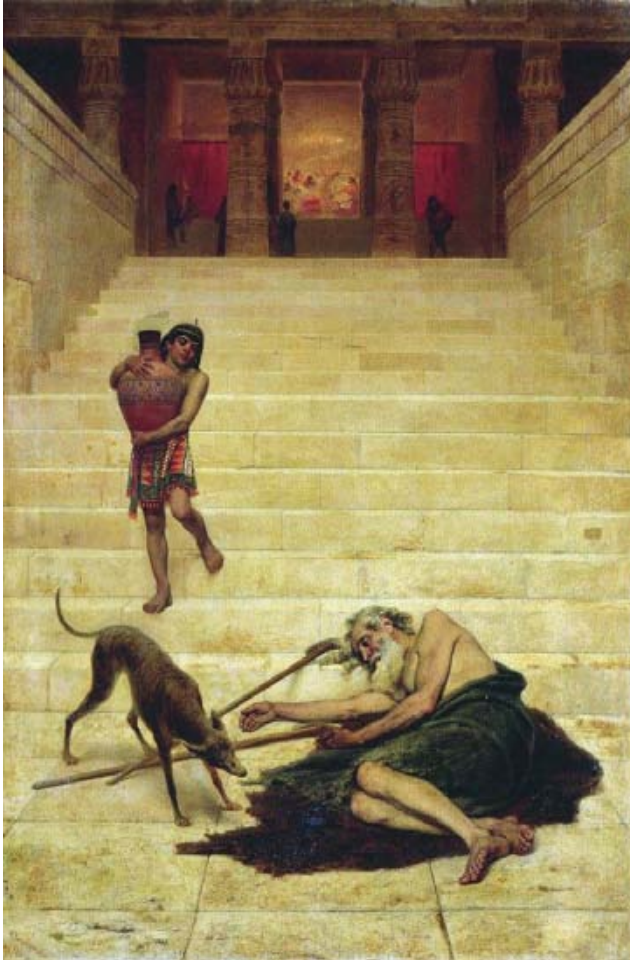
"Notwithstanding the totally recalcitrant nature of the site, he grappled with the difficulties so successfully, that the solidity of his masonry defied the sea, while its beauty was such as is no obstacle had existed."

First-century Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, on Herod the Great's building projects

The aqueduct at Caesarea.



Lazarus at the rich man's gate.



BIG MONEY GRIP

With Roman rule also came the Roman venture capitalists who scoured the fringes of the empire looking to expand their business interests. Products from the East—minerals such as gold, silver, and iron, foods and beverages such as corn and wine, textiles, and an assortment of luxury items—were transported westward. With the advent of roads and Palestine's strategic location, the area became a commercial hub through which goods were transported and traded.

A corresponding boom in productivity occurred with the introduction of improved agricultural techniques. As the burgeoning economy grew, a class system developed. There were the very rich, who were often members of royalty and their various attendants: bankers, merchants, and the large land owners. A small middle class of tradesmen and craftsmen also emerged.



Roman bauble:

This first-century brooch of Cupid, which was excavated from first-century Jerusalem, points to the beliefs, tastes and wealth of the Greco-Romans living there.



Herod's Greco-Roman Swimming Pool

Caesarea had no natural harbor, so Herod's builders developed a new underwater concrete pouring technique to create a protected swimming pool area. Archeologists believe this architectural marvel was destroyed by a tsunami during the medieval period. These are the ruins of Herod's amusement.

Christ and the rich, young ruler.




BUT THE RISING TIDE DID NOT LIFT ALL BOATS...

The poor accounted for a significant portion of the population and could be divided into two separate groups. There were the working poor, which consisted largely of slaves and day laborers on the hustle for a day's work or the peasant farmers squeezed by the large landowners and "the unfortunates"—the sick, blind, lepers, widows and orphans.

The disparities between the haves and the have-nots was shocking, in a place where "a rich man, expensively dressed in the latest fashions, wasting his days in conspicuous consumption" could wake to discover "a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, had been dumped on his doorstep. All he lived for was to get a meal from scraps off the rich man's table. His best friends were the dogs who came and licked his sores." (Luke 16:19-21)

TAX MEN

The imposed "tribute" was a further source of hardship and discontent. The tribute from foreign countries was Rome's largest source of public revenue and was, as one might expect, exploitative and burdensome. There were produce taxes, sales taxes, taxes on occupations, transit taxes and temple taxes. The heavy tax burden on the tributaries resulted in a great divide between the economic elite and the 97-percent that lived in some degree of poverty.

After the reign of Herod the Great, Judea became a province and a military governor (aka Prefect or Procurator) was installed. Pontius Pilate is one of the first governors hired. With military governorship came an increased military presence in the land, which caused further inflammation. The firestorm of rising instability begins to spread during Jesus' life with the flames fanned by rising poverty, violence and banditry. Against this social and cultural backdrop, many of Jesus' parables reflect the growing discontent and contain stark images of starving beggars, slavery, and rampant. 



In Luke 12:16-21, Jesus cautions against greed with the story of the successful farmer: "What can I do? My barn isn't big enough for this harvest. I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll gather in all my grain and goods, and I'll say to myself, Self, you've done well...Just then God showed up and said, 'Fool! Tonight you die. And your barnful of goods—who gets it?' That's what happens when you fill your barn with Self and not with God."

In the end, Jesus' use of everyday occurrences and characters in his teachings may have led to his downfall, for his message proclaimed that there was a kingdom greater than that of Rome and that in God's kingdom, the poorest would be provided for and justice would be restored. His messages proved popular but were also quite revolutionary and threatened to undermine the status quo and years of social tradition that the Romans worked so hard to establish.



First steps *in* Nazareth

The tiny hamlet that shaped Jesus' early years.

BY ERIN HATFIELD

THE NEW TESTAMENT OFTEN REFERS TO JESUS IN ASSOCIATION WITH HIS HOMETOWN OF NAZARETH. The Nazareth of Jesus' time was a small, predominantly Jewish village in lower Galilee, home to an estimated 100 to 500 inhabitants. While a few hundred inhabitants seems like a small number by modern measures, Nazareth was likely overcrowded and relatively poor, especially when compared to neighboring towns.



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK; WILLIAM HOLMAN HUNT, NAZARETH

Christ in the House of His Parents
(John Everett Millais 1859)



ABOVE: *Christ in the House of His Parents*, by John Everett Millais. Given the region Jesus came from, he likely did not have red hair. People in that region had dark hair, brown eyes, and olive skin.

BELOW: The gospels mention that Jesus grew up with several unnamed sisters and brothers named James, Joseph, Simon and Judas. This ossuary (burial box) is thought to contain the remains of Jesus' brother, "James the Just" who (as an adult and after Jesus' crucifixion) was among the earliest leaders of the Christian community in Jerusalem.



Nazareth was located within walking distance of larger Gentile settlements such as Sepphoris and Tiberius. Recent archaeological discoveries provide evidence that Nazareth was an out-of-the-way hamlet during Jesus' time. The area spanned around four acres and contained about 50 homes, as well as camouflaged grottos for hiding from Roman invaders. Archaeologists suggest these grottos saw little action, as Nazareth wasn't a strategic asset for the Romans.

HOME SWEET HOME

Family homes of the time were one-room stone structures with flat, wood-thatched roofs and stone floors. Scientists have uncovered evidence that homes also contained a water collection system that gathered water from the roofs and supplied it to the home. Animals such as goats and chickens were housed in an adjoining building, along with a mill used for grinding grain.

Furnishings were kept simple and most often consisted of low stone tables, small stools and straw mats for sleeping. While there was wooden furniture such as seating in some homes, most people reclined on pillows to eat and socialize.

The family home was the setting of most social interactions within the village. Gathering to discuss politics, religion and social issues usually took place during mealtime within the home. Meals were prepared and served in stone and earthenware dishes and pots. Archaeological evidence also points to chalk vessels that Jews used to help ensure the purity of the contents, both food and water.

LIFE EXPECTANCY AND DIET

Nazareth lacked a wealth of natural resources such as fresh water and fertile soil, making the area susceptible to disease and illness. Malnutrition was rampant among Nazarenes and Jews from other villages. Three of every ten Jewish children died before they reached 18, which archaeologists estimate was middle age during Jesus' time. Most people lived to the age of 40 to 45 and it wasn't uncommon for men to outlive their wives by as much as 10 years.

Diets of Jesus' era included wheat or barley bread, supplemented with fish, goat cheese, olives and wine. These foods were highly portable and enabled people to take meals to work. There were typically only two meals a day—one midmorning or midday and another in the evening. The evening meal typically consisted of similar items augmented with lentil stew, fruit and eggs. Red meat was only consumed on special occasions.

READING, WRITING AND BUILDING

The Jewish faith placed a huge emphasis on learning. Jesus, like his contemporaries, was well educated. In Jesus' time, children were taught to read and write in the home, but they also studied under rabbis, which at the time was a general term for teachers. Jesus likely learned to write and speak Aramaic, the local language that was a mix of Hebrew and Babylonian, and Hebrew, the language of the Bible. Greek was also a dominant language of

ROAD TRIP TO JERUSALEM

"Every year Jesus' parents traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up as they always did for the Feast. When it was over and they left for home, the child Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents didn't know it. Thinking he was somewhere in the company of pilgrims, they journeyed for a whole day and then began looking for him among relatives and neighbors. When they didn't find him, they went back to Jerusalem looking for him.

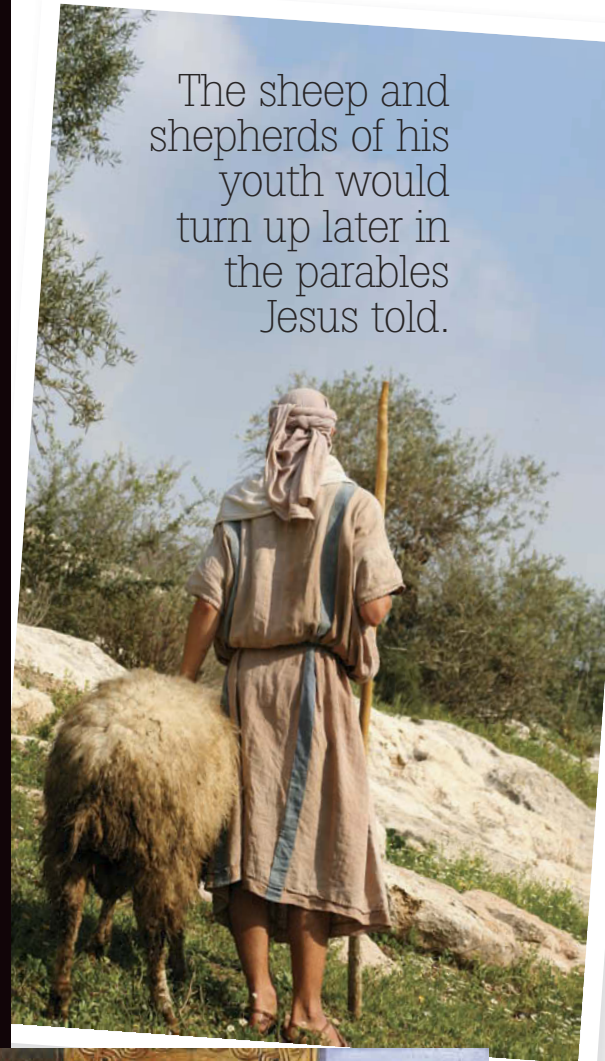
The next day they found him in the Temple seated among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. The teachers were all quite taken with him, impressed with the sharpness of his answers. But his parents were not impressed; they were upset and hurt.

His mother said, "Young man, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been half out of our minds looking for you."

He said, "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I had to be here, dealing with the things of my Father?" But they had no idea what he was talking about.

So he went back to Nazareth with them, and lived obediently with them." (Luke 2:41-52)

The sheep and shepherds of his youth would turn up later in the parables Jesus told.



The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple (William Holman Hunt, 1860)

Tween Jesus at Jerusalem.



Dome at the Church of Annunciation in Nazareth.

The Church of Annunciation in Nazareth, located at the spot where the angel is said to have visited Mary during her pregnancy.



You Can't Go Home Again

At the height of his popularity, Jesus spent years away from Nazareth preaching and administering to the public in the area surrounding the Sea of Galilee. In a passage from the gospel of Mark, chapter 6, Jesus famously returned to Nazareth and was greeted with less than open arms:

"On the Sabbath, he gave a lecture in the meeting place. He made a real hit, impressing everyone. 'We had no idea he was this good!' they said. 'How did he get so wise all of a sudden, get such ability?'"

But in the next breath they were cutting him down: 'He's just a carpenter—Mary's boy. We've known him since he was a kid. We know his brothers, James, Justus, Jude, and Simon, and his sisters. Who does he think he is?' They tripped over what little they knew about him and fell, sprawling. And they never got any further.

Jesus told them, 'A prophet has little honor in his hometown, among his relatives, on the streets he played in as a child.' Jesus wasn't able to do much of anything there—he laid hands on a few sick

people and healed them, that's all. He couldn't get over their stubbornness. He left and made a circuit of the other villages, teaching."

(Mark 6:2-6)

the time, as the surrounding Roman territories conducted business and politics in Greek.


Nazareth's citizens worked labor-intensive jobs as fishermen, craftsmen or builders, such as Jesus' father Joseph. Others were shepherds, the most traditional job of Israel that was often mentioned throughout the Bible. Once he was old enough, Jesus studied his father's trade, likely traveling to nearby Sepphoris to aid in rebuilding the city for its ruler, Herod's son Antipas.

Despite the lack of natural resources and access to high-paying jobs, Nazareth was not considered a destitute village. Craftsmen and builders of the time such as Joseph were able to provide a reasonable living for their families and were neither poor nor wealthy.

MODERN DAY NAZARETH

In stark contrast to its Jewish beginnings at the start of the Common Era, modern day Nazareth is predominantly Muslim and Christian. With a population of more than 81,000, Nazareth is the largest city in Northern Israel, often called the "Arab capital of Israel" due to its large Arab population.

The city contains a number of religious sites sacred to both Christians and Muslims. Key among them is the Church of the Annunciation, which marks the site where the Archangel Gabriel announced the future birth of Jesus to the Virgin Mary. Muslim attractions include the White Mosque, located in the center of Nazareth's Old Market.

Centuries of conflict and changing rule have helped Nazareth evolve from the tiny, out-of-the-way hamlet of Jesus' time into a bustling modern city. 





The City on the **Hill**

A short walk from Nazareth, Sepphoris exposed the twenty-something Jesus to affluent Greco-Roman culture.

BY ERIN HATFIELD

THE CITY OF SEPPHORIS ISN'T MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE, but archeologists and scholars think the Greco-Roman city likely played a vital role in Jesus' formative years as he came of age in Nazareth.



"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill."
(Matthew 5:14-15)



A CITY ON THE RISE

As one of Galilee's capital cities and center of commerce, Sepphoris was often referred to as the "jewel of Galilee." Ruled by King Herod's son Antipas at the time of Jesus' birth, the city was on the cusp of a rebirth that some scholars say helped shape Jesus' upbringing.

Sepphoris was an affluent Roman city located almost in the center of Galilee, just a short 3-4 mile walk from Nazareth. Also known as "Zippori" in Hebrew, Sepphoris was established around the 7th century Before Common Era (BCE) by the ancient Assyrians, and it survived the Babylonian, Persian and Hellenistic empires.

In stark contrast to nearby Nazareth, which was a small, poor, working class settlement, the Sepphoris of Jesus' time was becoming a very affluent city. The settlement had been destroyed around 4 BCE—following Herod the Great's death. There had been a Jewish rebellion against Roman rule in the area, during which time the Romans recaptured the city, burnt it to the ground, and sold the rebellious Jewish residents into slavery. When Herod the Great's son, Herod Antipas, rose to power, he set about rebuilding the ruined city of Sepphoris into a strategic military, commercial and political center.

Archaeological discoveries have unearthed a modern city built in the Greco-Roman style, with fine architecture and ornate mosaic flooring. The city contained marketplaces, synagogues, churches and a theater that could seat 15,000 carved into a hillside. Laid out in a grid pattern, Sepphoris was connected to other major Roman cities by colonnaded streets paved with crushed limestone, indicating it was a key commercial center for the entire area of Galilee. These roads not only made the city more accessible for travelers and citizens; they also enabled the Romans to better control the country and move among the major cities.

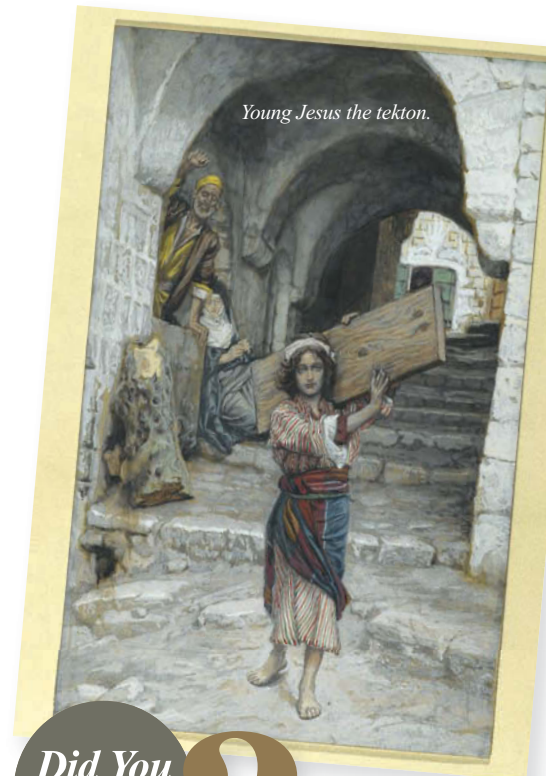
A TEKTON FINDS WORK

Jews in Sepphoris would have lived an upper-class lifestyle, similar to those living in Jerusalem. Villas where Jews and priests lived dotted the city, as did a number of ritual baths designed for total immersion, as Jews placed great emphasis on both physical and spiritual cleanliness. Many homes of the time also had private baths, which would have been an extravagance due to the labor involved in getting water into a private home.

Creating all of the buildings required an influx of local builders, or "tektons." This term can refer to those working in wood, stone or other materials. Contrary to popular belief, Jesus' father Joseph—and Jesus himself—likely worked in stone rather than wood, as there were more opportunities to make a decent living in that medium.

Living less than four miles away, an easy walk for a healthy person, Joseph likely practiced his trade in Sepphoris, which would have enabled him to make a better living as builder than relying solely on work in Nazareth. As was tradition in Jewish homes during his childhood, Jesus is thought to have

accompanied his father to work in the city and learned by his side starting around 12 years old. This would have given Jesus the opportunity to interact with patrons and fellow artisans, as well as exposed him to various political and religious viewpoints within the city.



Young Jesus the tekton.

Did You Know

Historians say Mary and Jesus' sisters likely made cloth to sell to the wealthy in Sepphoris, as did the other female residents of Nazareth.



Joseph the tekton.



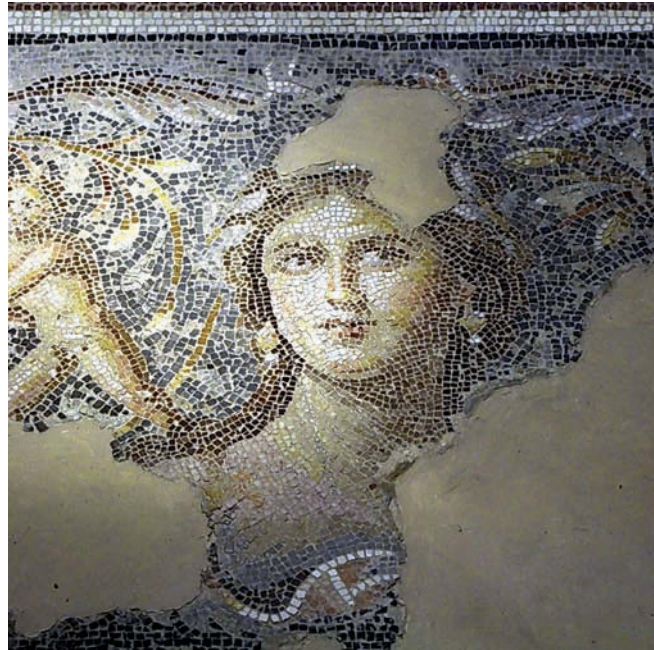
A NEARBY CULTURAL CENTER

Sepphoris provided a cultural center for Nazarenes, giving them access to theater, art and architecture of the Roman Empire. The city would have also been home to larger schools, advanced learning and religious viewpoints. Working in a city so much more advanced than his hometown would have helped shape Jesus' views and potentially put him in contact with military, political and religious leaders of the time.

There is much speculation about whether or not Jesus would have attended the theater. As a pious Jew, Jesus and his father likely worked six-day work weeks and observed the Sabbath on the seventh day, leading many to believe his exposure to cultural events was severely limited.

However, Jesus' use of the word "hypocrite" when referring to religious leaders leads many scholars to believe he was familiar with the theater; at the time, "hypocrite" was a synonym for actor.

"But the Lord answered him and said, 'You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him?'" (Luke 13:15, NAS)



In that same home, archaeologists also uncovered a mosaic known as the "Mona Lisa of Galilee." The well-preserved tile work contains a level of artistry rivaling modern painters, and has led some scholars to believe the woman depicted was a real woman and real figure of the time. Despite her time of origin, thought to be around 300 AD, the Mona Lisa of Galilee is one of the most recognizable visuals associated with ancient Sepphoris.

THE "MONA LISA" OF SEPPHORIS

Sepphoris is home to some of the most well preserved floor mosaics in ancient Roman culture. As sign of the city's affluence, many homes and government buildings featured incredibly ornate mosaics depicting scenes from Greek mythology and local history. A

building thought to serve as City Hall contains a mosaic scene depicting the Nile, the city gate of Alexandria, and the Alexandrian lighthouse, one of the ancient wonders of the world. Mosaics even decorated the floor of local synagogues. One such installation features the chariot of the Greek god Helios and the 12 signs of the zodiac.



One of the most breath-taking displays of artistry in ancient Sepphoris is showcased in a home called the Villa of Dionysus, inspired by the many scenes of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, and other characters of Greek mythology.



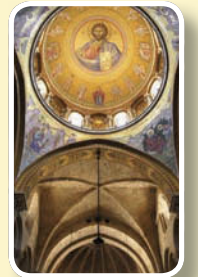
Discovery of these mosaics has opened up new schools of thought about Judaism at the start of the Common Era. Pictorial decorations in homes and religious buildings could mean that Jews of the time were a lot more liberal and flexible than initially thought, particularly with respect to artistic representation.

Sepphoris' role as a major capital in Galilee during Jesus' time provides strong evidence that the young scholar and burgeoning religious leader would have been familiar with the city and likely learned a great deal from exposure to its architecture, artistry, schools and spiritualism. ✚

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the Journey to Jordan River

The Baptism of Jesus.

BY ANDREW M. LUTHER

FROM ITS START IN MODERN-DAY SYRIA TO ITS TERMINUS IN THE DEAD SEA, THE 223 MILES OF THE JORDAN RIVER HAVE BEEN SOME OF HISTORY'S HOLIEST—AND MOST CONTENTIOUS—WATERS.



FAR LEFT: PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK



“Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. The moment he came out of the water, he saw the sky split open and God’s Spirit, looking like a dove, come down on him. Along with the Spirit, a voice: ‘You are my Son, chosen and marked by my love, pride of my life.’” (Mark 1:9-11)

Disappearing Waters

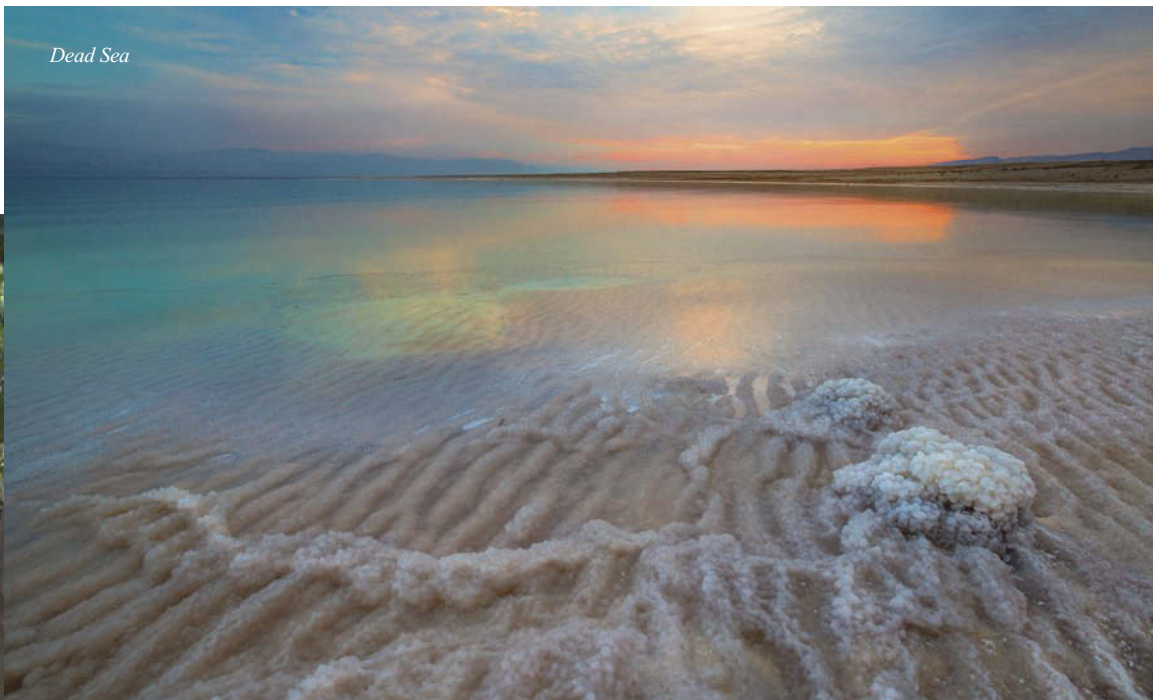
Today, Syria, Jordan, and Israel heavily use the waters of the River Jordan for industry, farming and drinking. This has caused a drastic drop in the water level of the river, as well as severe pollution problems that have rendered some of the famous baptismal spots unusable. Should a solution to its overuse not be found, the River Jordan as well as the Dead Sea could disappear altogether within decades.

The Jordan River begins its journey south in the slopes of Mount Hermon in the Golan Heights. Meandering south, the river empties into the northern waters of the Sea of Galilee.

At the southern end of the Sea of Galilee, joined by the Yarmouk River, its waters continue south, forming in modern times the heavily contentious border between the Kingdom of Jordan and the Israeli-occupied West Bank.



Dead Sea



Near its end, it passes through the Judean Desert and alongside Jericho before ending in the salty waters of the Dead Sea—making it the river with the lowest elevation in the world.

The Jordan River is an important location in both the Old and New Testaments. First seen when Lot chooses to settle there, the Jordan River is mentioned approximately 175 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and 15 times in the New Testament.

“Lot looked. He saw the whole plain of the Jordan spread out, well watered (this was before God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah), like God’s garden, like Egypt, and stretching all the way to Zoar. Lot took the whole plain of the Jordan. Lot set out to the east. That’s how they came to part company, uncle and nephew. Abram settled in Canaan; Lot settled in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent near Sodom.”

(Genesis 13:10-12)

...and finally with perhaps its most famous moment: the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist.



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK; BAPTISM OF CHRIST (CAMILLE CAROT, 1847)



John the Baptist was well known among people in his region long before the baptism of Jesus. Said to have lived in the wilderness dressed in camel skins and consuming only what the desert provided him, John the Baptist was the leader of a popular Messianic form of Judaism that view the coming of the savior as imminent.

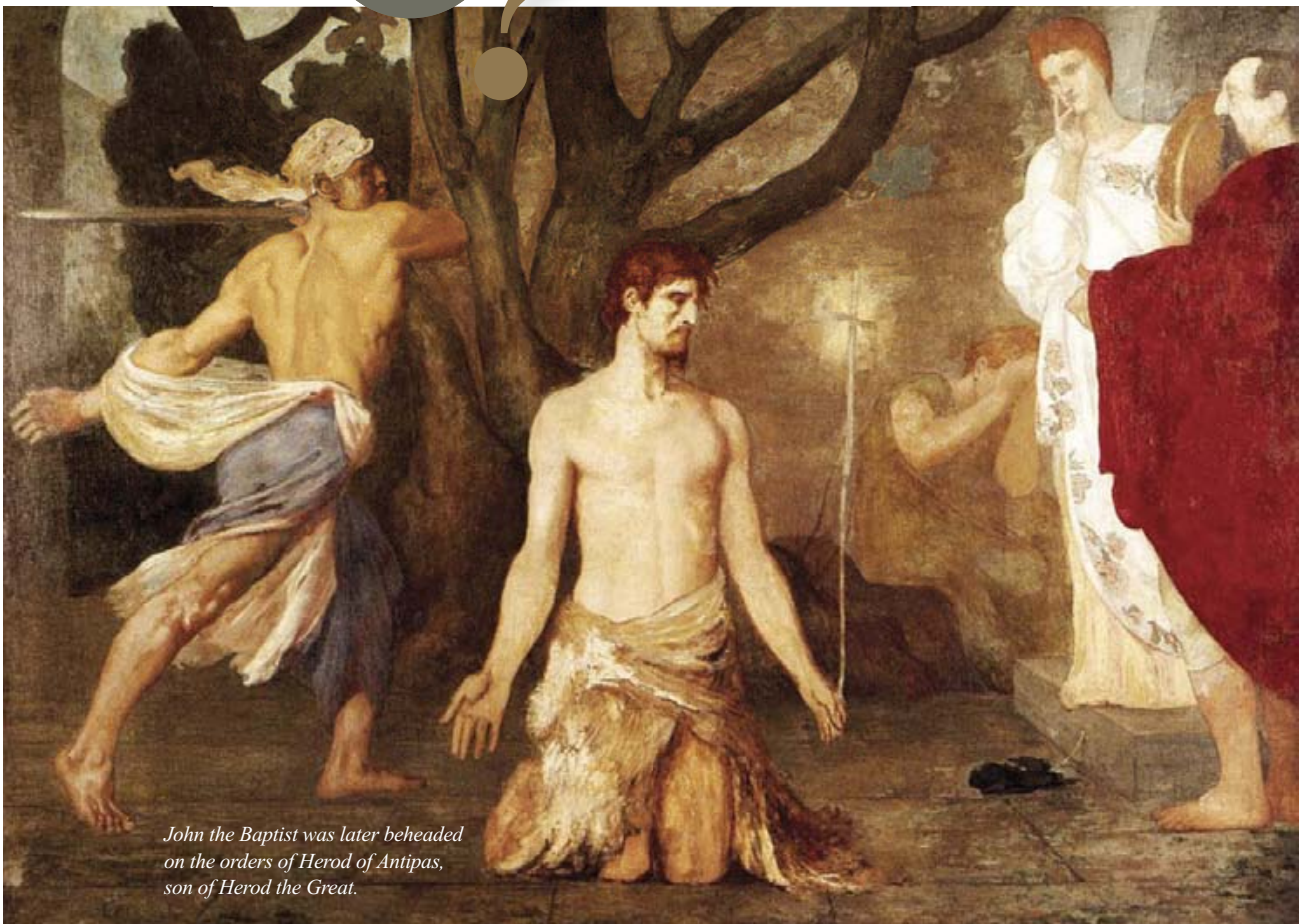
John dressed in a camel-hair habit tied at the waist by a leather strap. He lived on a diet of locusts and wild field honey. People poured out of Jerusalem, Judea, and the Jordanian countryside to hear and see him in action. There at the Jordan River those who came to confess their sins were baptized into a changed life. (Matthew 3:4-6)

Very little is known about his early life, other than his birth sometime before Jesus in Jerusalem. Seemingly with far more followers than Jesus in his day, John the Baptist appears again late in the New Testament as the leader of a movement said to shake the very foundations of the religious and political establishment in Israel. Though asked by his followers if he is the foretold return of the prophet Elijah, John the Baptist repeatedly denies this, claiming there is one far greater than he to come.

Claiming instead to be merely a vessel for God's will, John the Baptist offered a cleansing ritual different from the contemporary Jewish rite of Mikveh. Mikveh, unlike baptism, was a ritual in ancient Judaism to achieve ritual purity after acts seen as impure, such as menstruation or the touching of a corpse. The ritual John the Baptist offered was different. Using the waters of the River Jordan, John the Baptist asked followers to renounce their adherence to the old Judaic laws and put full faith in the message of the Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth. α

Did You Know

Some scholars believe that some of Jesus' early followers and even possibly Jesus himself may have been followers of John the Baptist.



John the Baptist was later beheaded on the orders of Herod of Antipas, son of Herod the Great.



The Bible's Great Historian

Much of what we know about John the Baptist (aside from the gospels) comes from the writing the Roman-Jewish Historian, Josephus. Originally a soldier against Rome in First Jewish-Roman War, Josephus defected to the Roman side after being captured by Vespasian. Josephus's texts, such as *The Jewish War* and *Antiquities of the Jews*, remain some of the most important works we have today in defining the historical Bible.

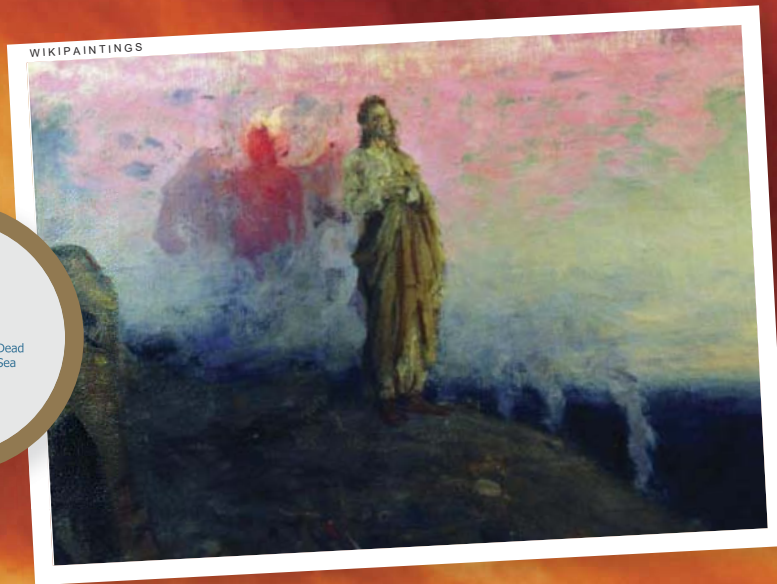
Josephus Writes About John the Baptist
 "Herod had him killed, although [John the Baptist] was a good man and had urged the Jews to exert themselves to virtue, both as to justice toward one another and reverence towards God, and having done so join together in washing."

—*Antiquities of the Jews*, a 21-volume history Josephus wrote around 93 CE

A River of Cleansing in the Present

As it was in ancient times, the waters of the River Jordan are to this day the favored choice for baptizing royals—water from the river was used for the christening of Prince George, the royal son of Prince William and Kate Middleton.






Walking *the* **Wilderness**

Jesus in the Judean Desert.

BY ANDREW M. LUTHER



THE JUDEAN DESERT IS SMALL IN SCALE WHEN COMPARED TO OTHERS IN THE WORLD. However, it is likely no desert has ever held as important a place in history. From its place as a refuge for Jesus' ancestors to a last stronghold of the Jewish people following his death, the Judean Desert played a vital role as a place of reflection and refuge throughout biblical times.

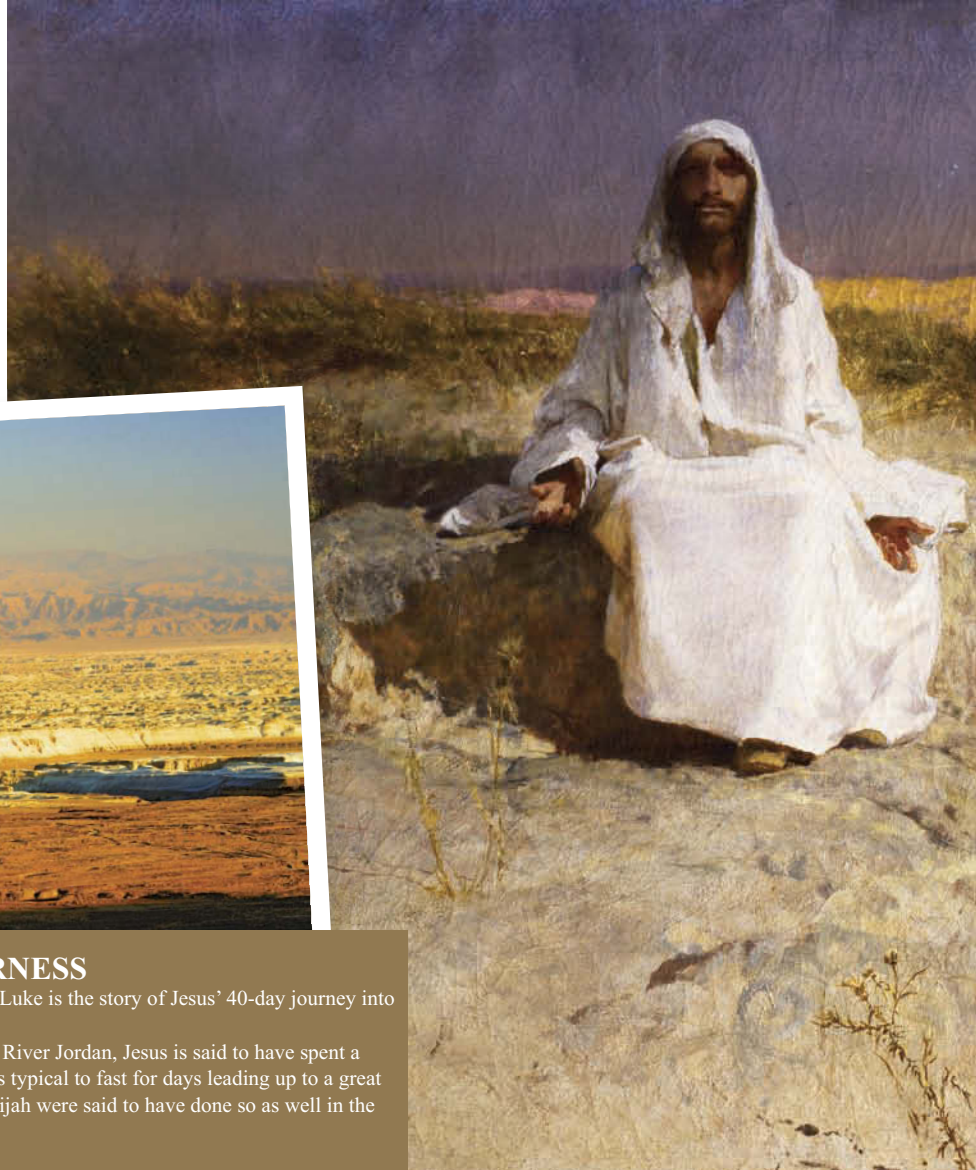
The Judean Desert stretches over a mere 930 square miles, which is a little bigger than the District of Columbia, considerably smaller than Rhode Island. It lies between Jerusalem's eastern edge and the Dead Sea.

From the soaring peaks of the Judean Mountains to plunging cliffs and canyons near the Dead Sea (the shores of which are the lowest dry spot on Earth), the terrain of the Judean Desert is as varied and beautiful as it is harsh.

During the day, temperatures can reach well over 100 degrees. This, coupled with less than two inches of rainfall a year, makes it difficult for much of anything to grow in the area. Even when it does rain, the “wadis,” or dry riverbeds that cross much of the terrain, can lead to dangerous flooding.

Though humans have occupied the Judean Desert since long before Jesus’ time, it has remained sparsely populated due to the harsh climate. Most settlements in the area are located on the edges of the desert, where rainfall from the mountains refills aquifers that allow for small communities to develop around the area’s numerous oases.

PHOTO BY DEAGOSTINI/GETTY IMAGES



Dead Sea cliffs



JESUS ENTERS THE WILDERNESS

Recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke is the story of Jesus’ 40-day journey into the wilderness—most likely the Judean Desert.

Following his baptism by John the Baptist in the River Jordan, Jesus is said to have spent a period of time fasting. In the Jewish tradition, it was typical to fast for days leading up to a great personal or spiritual struggle; indeed, Moses and Elijah were said to have done so as well in the days leading up to their own struggles.

JUDEAN DESERT ANIMALS



Deathstalker scorpion



Ibex



Rock Hyrax

PHOTOS BY THINKSTOCK

“Wild animals were his companions, and angels took care of him.” (Mark 1:13)



Angels minister to Jesus.



Reem Lavan



Golden Jackal



Striped hyena

“Now Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wild. For forty wilderness days and nights he was tested by the Devil.” (Luke 4:1)

“40 DAYS”

While the number “40” is given as the length of days Jesus spent in the desert (and is commemorated as such in the 40 days of the Lenten season leading up to Easter), Biblical scholars agree it is likely this number was used representatively in the bible for “a long time” (such as when Moses went into the mountains for 40 days, or the length of the rains Noah endured in the Ark).

Indeed, whether 40 or “40” days, Jesus would have endured a great deal of hardship during his trials in the desert.

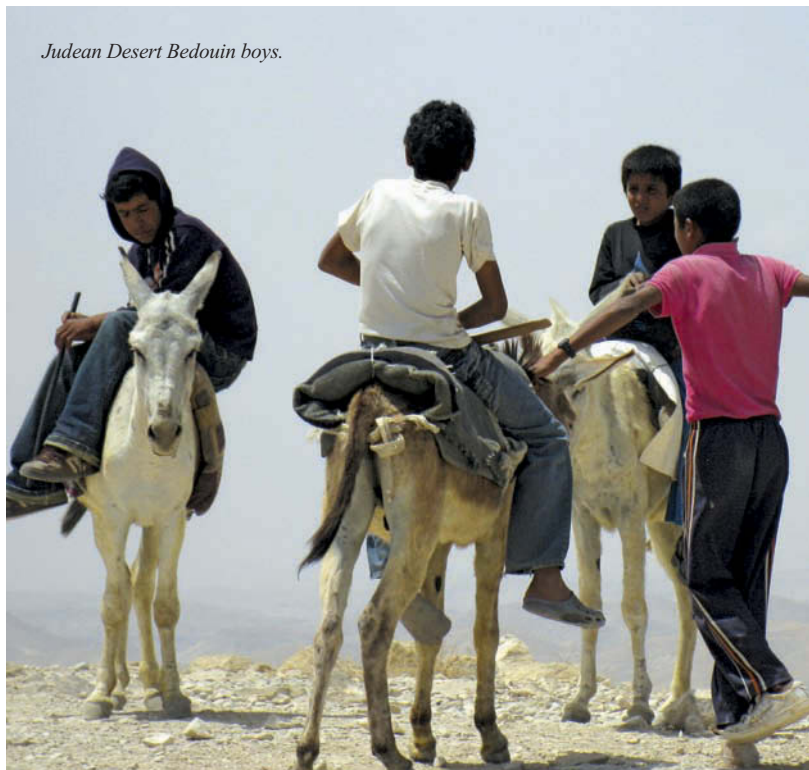


Ruins of fort at Masada



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS; PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK


Judean Desert Bedouin boys.



A PLACE OF REFLECTION AND REFUGE

Since long before Jesus' time, the Judean Desert has served as a place of refuge, reflection and retreat. In spite of the harsh environments, numerous religious sects have established themselves in the area, favoring it for its isolation and peacefulness. Indeed, many monasteries and other religious retreats continue to operate today.

Throughout the Old Testament and into the early years of the Christian faith, the Judean Desert served as a place of refuge for those facing persecution. For the very same reasons it is such a difficult environment to live in, the maze-like canyons and mountains of the area provided excellent hiding places for those who rather not be found—it was here, for example, that a young King David fled to when he learned of Saul's plot against him in the Old Testament.

Today, the desert remains a relatively unpopulated place. Aside from a handful of Bedouin nomads who live much as they have for thousands of years, most of the desert's permanent residents are members of religious orders and monasteries, seeking in a way what many have sought in there for millennia: refuge and retreat from the modern world. 



The Qumran region, where Dead Sea Scrolls were found.



PHOTOS BY THINKSTOCK

Siege of Masada

From 66-74 CE (about 30 years after Jesus' crucifixion), the Roman Empire and Jewish people were engaged in a brutal war. At the beginning of the conflict, Sicarii rebels managed to capture a Roman fort located at Masada, a soaring plateau that was seen as almost unconquerable due to its height, isolation, and difficult terrain.

Following the Siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Second Temple, many Sicarii rebels and their families fled to the perceived safety of the fort. Gathering a large force of Roman soldiers and allies, the governor of Judaea, Lucius Flavia Silva, surrounded the 960 rebels inside and began to lay siege to the fort. After a three-month siege and the construction of a massive siege ramp were completed, the Romans were finally able to breach the walls with a massive battering ram. What they found inside shocked them. Preferring death to slavery, but unwilling to violate Jewish law and commit suicide, the fort's inhabitants had killed each other until there was only one man left.

The Siege of Masada was one of the last major conflicts of the First Jewish-Roman War, a war that would have a profound impact on the development of both the Jewish fate and the early Christian church.

Dead Sea Scrolls

Discovered in 1946, in the Qumran region of the Judean Desert by Bedouin shepherds, the nearly thousand texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls represent the greatest biblical discovery in millennia. Predating other existing copies of the Hebrew Bible by more than a thousand years, the Dead Sea Scrolls have proven themselves invaluable in helping us to better understand both the modern Bible and how people lived around the time of Jesus.



A New Kind of **Fisherman**

What an Amazing Archeological Discovery Reveals About Jesus' Disciples

BY SEAN COOPER

“COME WITH ME. I’LL MAKE A NEW KIND OF FISHERMAN OUT OF YOU,” Jesus said early in his ministry to two men casting their nets along the beach into the Sea of Galilee. “I’ll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass.”

Simon (later called Peter) and Andrew didn’t ask questions, the Bible reports. They “simply dropped their nets and followed.” Shortly afterwards, Jesus found James and John mending fishnets in a boat with their father, Zebedee. “He made the same offer to them, and they were just as quick to follow, abandoning boat and father.” (Matthew 4:18-24)

Boat on Sea of Galilee, also called Kinneret and Lake Tiberias.



Dear God,
be good to me;
The sea is so wide,
And my boat is so small.

-Breton Fisherman's Prayer



“They simply dropped their nets and followed.”

We might marvel that these four disciples so quickly abandoned their jobs to follow a stranger, but closer examination tells us that Galilean fishermen like Peter, Andrew, James and John led rough, risky lives. Night after night, they took their makeshift little boats into the dark sea to earn their living. Perhaps those long nights in the dark somehow girded them with the faith to open themselves to Jesus’ teachings.

Capernaum

Jesus found his four fishermen recruits on the northern side of the Sea of Galilee in Capernaum, a fishing village of 1,500 residents dating back to the 2nd century BC. The town was a place for nearby Roman soldiers to garrison, a fishing village, and a busy trading hub. Caravans would regularly stop by to stock up on essentials, such as produce and fish.

Made of durable mortar, Capernaum houses were able to withstand the toughest of weather. The houses lacked drainage and lavatories, and families shared common areas such as courtyards and internal hallways. Fish hooks, weights, weaving bobbins, and clay pots are among the archeological discoveries from Jesus’ time. Capernaum had a synagogue, a place for Jews to gather and discuss the scriptures, and Jesus is said to have preached there.


How They Fished

Life as a fisherman was anything but easy. Fishermen would head out into the dark waters after sunset in hopes of bringing a big haul home the next morning. Whether the catch was good or bad, it was heavily taxed by the Romans. Many fishermen were poor, young, single men, scholars say, too poor to marry or have families.



When Peter and Andrew dropped their nets to follow Jesus, they were likely wading in the shallows with round casting nets measuring 12 feet wide with weights around the corners to hold them underwater.

Fishermen would also go out into the sea with boats dragging seine measuring up to 900 feet long, 13 feet high at the ends and 26 feet high at the center. They would spread the net approximately 1,000 feet from the shore. Two boats manned by as many as eight fishermen would then pull the net towards the shore via towlines. They had to tow at a steady pace; otherwise the fish would escape.

Another fishing method still in use to this day is gill nets. These nets had weights on the underside and on top. They were lowered in a zigzag pattern just trailing boats offshore. The fishermen would make loud noises to scare the fish into the net. After about 10 minutes, the fishermen would drag the net into the boat and find a new location to start over again. 

What They Caught



1 | Sardines.



2 | Barbel, or carp.



3 | Tilapia, also called musht or St. Peter’s fish.

PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BY THINKSTOCK; BROOKLYNMUSEUM; JAMES TISSOT; PHOTOS BY THINKSTOCK (3)



LEFT: Jesus' strong connection to sea and to fishermen meant that fish were a Christian symbol from very early on. These fish appear on a Christian monument in Rome about 100 years after Jesus' death.

The Jesus Boat

Miraculous archeological find reveals first-century fishermen made due with whatever materials they could.

In 1986, there was a drought in Israel that dried up the northern portions of the Sea of Galilee. Two brothers, Moshe and Yuval Lufan, went fishing into deeper waters than where they'd usually go. They spotted some wood sticking out of the sediment and ended up discovering a first-century fishing boat that gives us a clear picture of the vessels Jesus and his disciples fished from.

Measuring 27 feet long, 7.5 feet wide and 4.3 feet in height, the boat is mostly made of cedar planks fastened by joints, nails and pegged mortise. Among the cedar planks, however, is up to 12 different kinds of wood, indicating that a fisherman eager not to waste resources, turned to salvaged wood or repaired the boat many, many times. The boat's structure included a mast for easy navigation and would have allowed up to four fishermen to row at a time.

The boat has a flat bottom, which permitted the fishermen within to closely approach the shores. Jesus likely used a very similar boat to preach to people standing on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

The boat was most likely in use for several decades until it was beyond repair. A fisherman from Jesus' time probably stripped the boat of all useful parts before letting it sink to the bottom of the sea.



LEFT: Fishing remained essentially unchanged on the Sea of Galilee for centuries. Nets in the 1920s.



Did You Know

It took 12 days and nights of back-breaking labor to extract the boat from the sea, and seven years to preserve the boat before it could go on exhibit at the Yigal Allon Museum.

Jesus sleeping in the boat



Walking Around & On the Sea of **Galilee**

Explore the water that was Jesus' pulpit and background for miracles.

BY GARRETT KIM



Did You Know

The Sea of Galilee—also known as The Kinneret and Lake Tiberias—is the region’s largest source of fresh drinking water, and is now a popular tourist attraction due to its role in the history of Christianity.

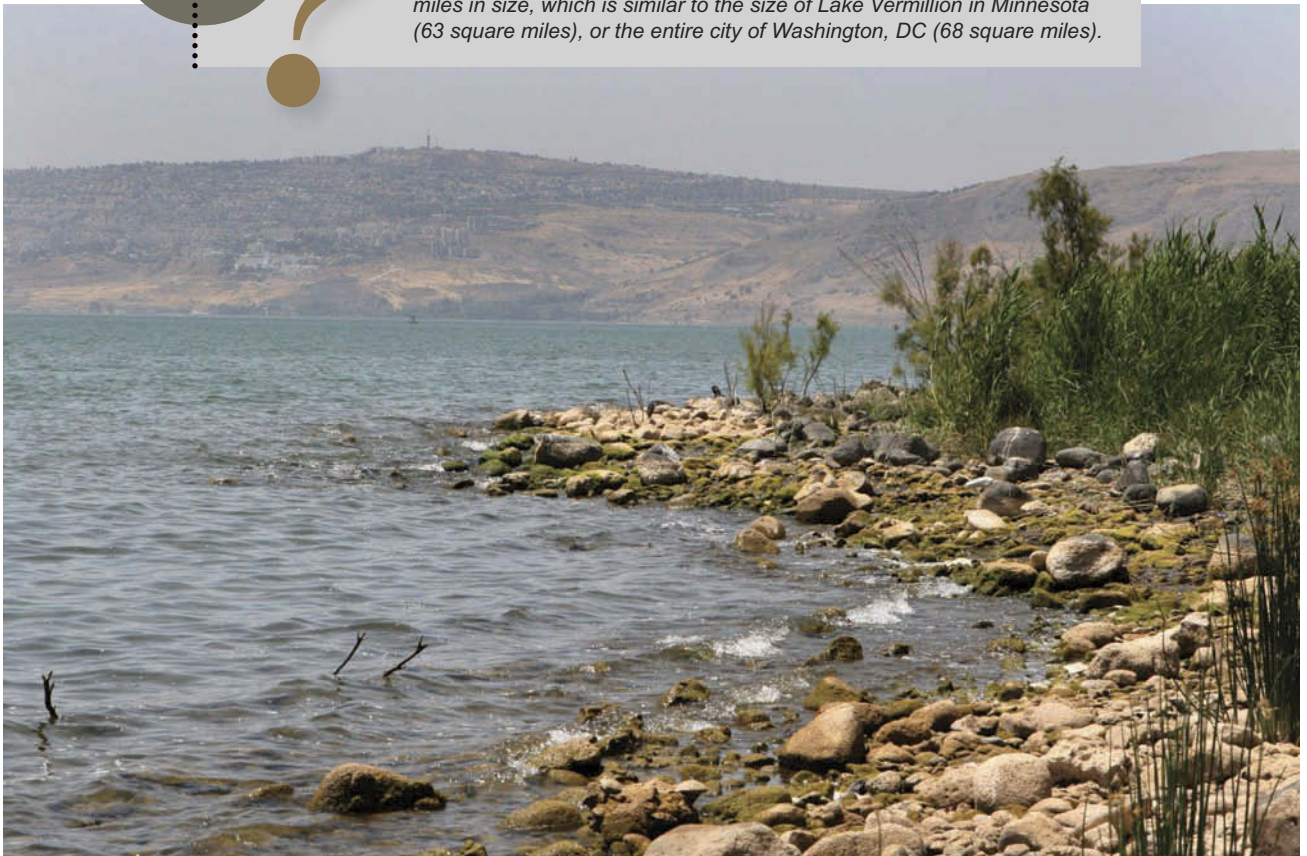
The Golan Heights border the Sea to the northwest.

MANY OF JESUS’ MOST IMPORTANT MOMENTS OCCURRED ON OR AROUND THE SEA OF GALILEE. But many of us don’t know exactly what the Sea of Galilee was like during Jesus’ time, or what it’s like today.

Where it is: Situated in the Northeast corner of Israel, the Sea of Galilee is fed mainly by the Jordan River (which flows through it), as well as by underground springs. Located more than 600 feet below sea level, Galilee is the lowest fresh water lake on the planet.

Did You Know?

The Sea of Galilee is actually a fresh water lake approximately 64 square miles in size, which is similar to the size of Lake Vermillion in Minnesota (63 square miles), or the entire city of Washington, DC (68 square miles).



WHY JESUS PREACHED THERE

The Sea of Galilee was abundant not only with the necessary fresh water for the communities surrounding it, but was also well stocked with fish. This meant that Jesus would have a robust audience no matter where on the Sea he preached. He was able to use fishing as a point of comparison for many of his greatest teachings.

During Jesus' time, the area around Sea of Galilee itself was home to over 5,000 people. At approximately 64 square miles in size, the Sea was almost the same size as our modern-day city of Washington, DC. Because he preached from a boat, Jesus had a captive audience that was unable to swarm him, allowing the Sea to serve as a natural solution to the problem of crowd control.

In addition, the Sea of Galilee made for quick and easy movement if Jesus invoked the ire of those who disliked him while he was evangelizing to the crowds. Preaching from a boat was a natural and easy solution to keeping away from his enemies.

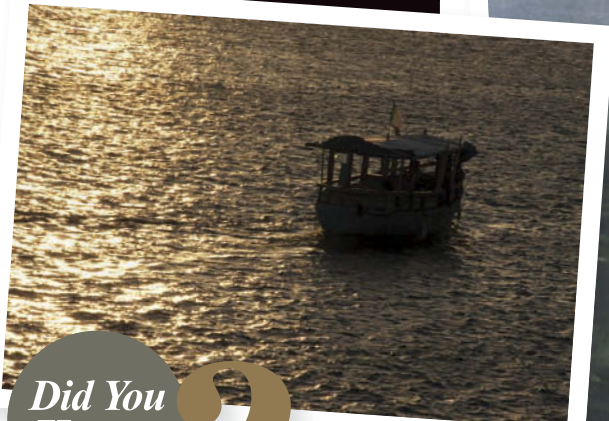


Did You Know?

Herod Antipas (son of Herod the Great), had compared Jesus to John the Baptist, but this was not a flattering comparison when coming from this particular source. Matthew 14:1-12 tells the story of how Herod Antipas delivered John the Baptist's head on a tray to his daughter as a gift, which meant that if he saw Jesus in the same light, Jesus was in grave danger if he was seized.

“Who is this, anyway? Wind and sea at his beck and call!”

Peter walks on water to meet Jesus




Did You Know

When the Sea of Galilee is referenced in the bible, it is referred to as a “sea” except in the Gospel of Luke in which it is called “the lake of Genneseret.” (Luke 5:1)

MIRACLES ON THE SEA

Naturally, Jesus’ extensive time around the Sea of Galilee meant that many of his miracles were performed directly on or around the water. Most notably, he walked on water in front of his disciples. “They were maybe three or four miles out when they saw Jesus walking on the sea, quite near the boat. They were scared senseless, but he reassured them, ‘It’s me. It’s all right. Don’t be afraid.’” (John 6:19-20)

But a deeper exploration of the New Testament goes even further in accounts of Jesus walking on the water. In fact, Jesus was able to give Peter the power to follow suit. Jesus implored him to come to him on the water, so Peter got out of his boat and began to walk on the water. “But when he looked down at the waves churning beneath his feet, he lost his nerve and started to sink. He cried, ‘Master, save me!’ Jesus didn’t hesitate. He reached down and grabbed his hand. Then he said, ‘Faint-hearted, what got into you?’” (Matthew 14:28-31)

This miracle allowed the disciples to not only see that Jesus was the son of God, but also that to succeed in creating their own strength, they would have to have faith in Jesus and trust in his status as the Lord. 



JESUS CALMS THE STORM

Although the Sea of Galilee was a central location to Jesus’ teachings, it wasn’t always tranquil and pleasant. Jesus and his disciples were once caught in a nasty storm as they were crossing from one side to the other side of the Sea. The rest of the passengers were frightened, but Jesus slept in the boat.

Waves poured into the boat, threatening to sink it. And Jesus was in the stern, head on a pillow, sleeping! They roused him, saying, “Teacher, is it nothing to you that we’re going down?”

Awake now, he told the wind to pipe down and said to the sea, “Quiet! Settle down!” The wind ran out of breath; the sea became smooth as glass. Jesus reprimanded the disciples: “Why are you such cowards? Don’t you have any faith at all?”

They were in absolute awe, staggered. “Who is this, anyway?” they asked. “Wind and sea at his beck and call!” (Mark 4: 36-41)

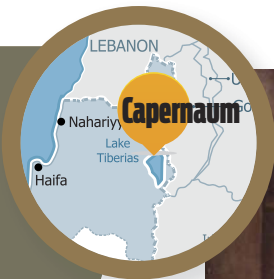
The storms around the Sea of Galilee are still well known to this day. Due to the mountains nearby, it’s common for the Sea’s warm air to collide with the cooler air from the mountains, which creates heavy squalls. In addition, winds can form in the surrounding valleys to create strong air across the Sea, resulting in fierce storms.

Healing Miracles

on the Galilean Shores

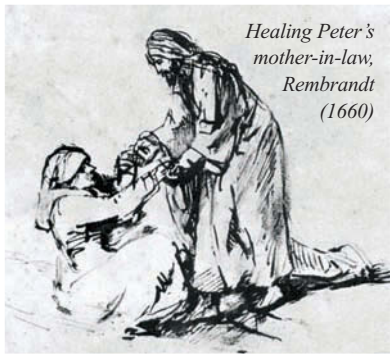
Jesus' work healing the sick is one of his most well-known legacies.

BY GARRETT KIM



JESUS HELPED TO RESTORE THE HEALTH OF HIS FOLLOWERS, and he performed many of his healing miracles at places along the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The gospels cite these healing miracles as proof that Jesus was the Savior and Son of God.

The Synagogue of Capernaum that was built in the 4th century on top of the site where the earlier synagogue that Jesus taught in was located.



Healing Peter's mother-in-law, Rembrandt (1660)

Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-In-Law

Other medical issues were no match for Jesus' healing powers. At one point, Jesus entered Peter's Capernaum house for a visit, but found Peter's mother-in-law on bed rest with a fever. As Jesus touched her hand, the fever left her body and she immediately got out of bed and began to wait on Jesus (Matthew 8:14-17). Waiting on Jesus was her way of expressing gratitude and showing that she was in Jesus' debt from that point forward.

Word of the healing spread quickly yet again, but this time people began bringing their demon-possessed relatives and neighbors to Jesus so he could drive away spirits and heal the sick. Jesus was completely willing to spend time with the ill, and he healed the sick to end their suffering. In turn, they became his devoted followers.

CASTING OUT DEMONS IN CAPERNAUM

Jesus once visited Capernaum on the Sabbath, where the first account of his public teachings took place.

Jesus most likely taught in the "Earlier Synagogue," right at the spot where the Synagogue of Capernaum was later built in 4th century CE. Its remains are a popular Holy Land destination today.

WHAT CAPERNAUM LOOKS LIKE TODAY:

Capernaum is about 10 miles north of Tiberias and is bordered by the Sea of Galilee, or "Lake Tiberias." It is lush with plants, trees and palm trees.

WHAT THE OLD CAPERNAUM SYNAGOGUE LOOKED LIKE:

Remains of the synagogue that Jesus taught in are still present to view today. It was built with black basalt, like Capernaum's surrounding buildings from that time often were. The look of the buildings would have been very different compared to the fourth-century Synagogue of Capernaum, which was built out of white limestone.

Jesus was in the synagogue teaching when a man approached him with what appeared to be anger and resentment, as Mark wrote in 1:24-28:

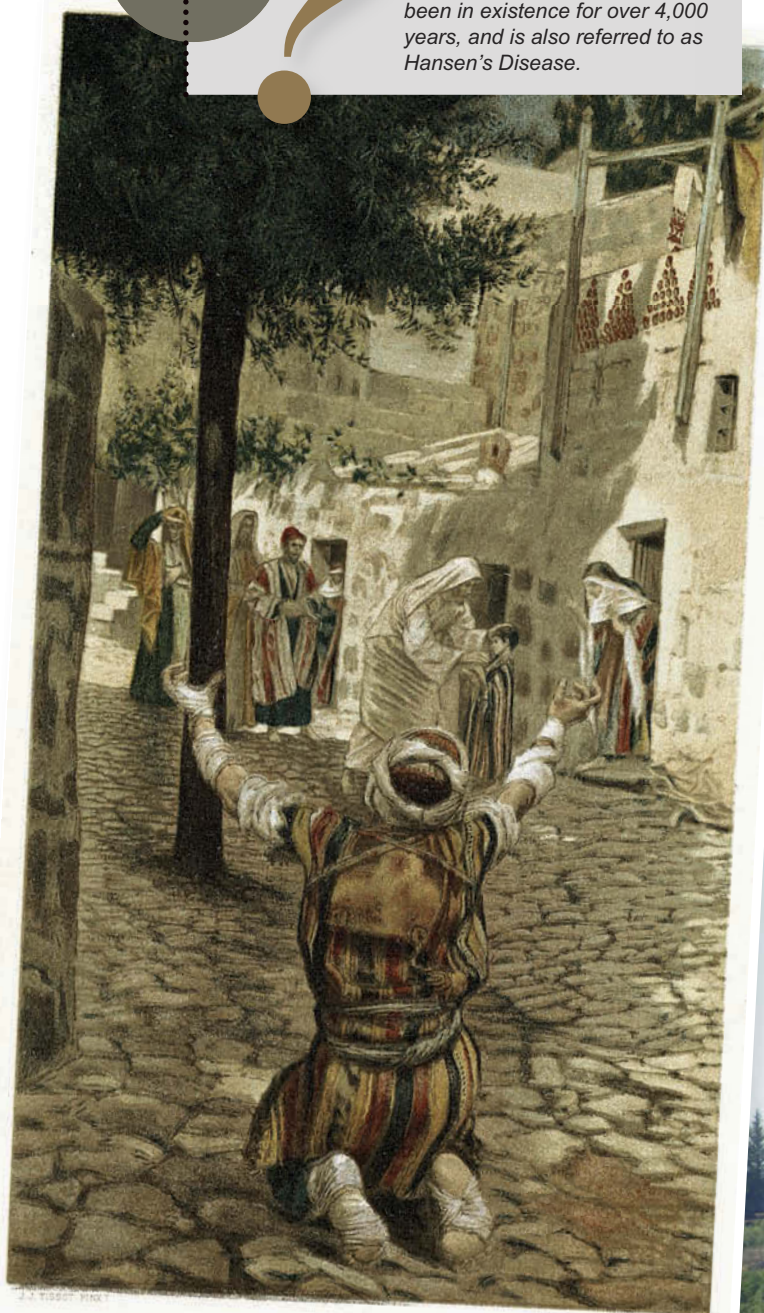
"What business do you have here with us, Jesus? Nazarene! I know what you're up to! You're the Holy One of God, and you've come to destroy us!' Jesus shut him up: 'Quiet! Get out of him!' The afflicting spirit threw the man into spasms, protesting loudly—and got out. Everyone there was incredulous, buzzing with curiosity. 'What's going on here? A new teaching that does what it says? He shuts up defiling, demonic spirits and sends them packing!' News of this traveled fast and was soon all over Galilee."

Was the man possessed by the spirit of Satan, as many believe? Was he having an epileptic seizure as some more modern scholars suggest? No matter what was plaguing the man, the reality is that Jesus cured him just by speaking to the man's spirit.

Needless to say, this news spread quickly throughout town and gave the skeptics a reason to wonder whether Jesus really was capable of performing great miracles. The casting out of demons was a pivotal moments for Jesus because it gave people a reason to follow him and piqued their curiosity of what his other powers might be. ✠

Did You Know?

Leprosy is an infection that has been in existence for over 4,000 years, and is also referred to as Hansen's Disease.



HEALING OF THE LEPERS AT CAPERNAUM

Jesus Cures Leprosy

Right after giving his "Sermon on the Mount"—at what many believe was located at Mount of Beatitudes, located just north of Capernaum—Jesus was met by a man with leprosy. (Matthew 8:1)

Jesus' healing abilities were definitely tested when he came upon a man who had leprosy. Although lepers were traditionally separated from the rest of society, Jesus encountered a leper in a crowd, which was uncommon and therefore shows just how desperate the man must have been to see the great healer if he was willing to show himself in public.

"Then a leper appeared and went to his knees before Jesus, praying, 'Master, if you want to, you can heal my body.' Jesus reached out and touched him, saying, 'I want to. Be clean.' Then and there, all signs of the leprosy were gone. Jesus said, 'Don't talk about this all over town. Just quietly present your healed body to the priest, along with the appropriate expressions of thanks to God. Your cleansed and grateful life, not your words, will bear witness to what I have done.'" (Matthew 8:2-4)

Interestingly, the man didn't ask whether Jesus was capable of healing his leprosy. Through the stories that have traveled from town to town, the leper already knew that Jesus had the power to heal. Instead, he asked about Jesus' willingness to heal.

Note also that Jesus didn't want the man to tell people about his healing, but instead encouraged the man to present himself to his priest. Once the priest determined that the man was cured and clean, he would then be allowed to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem once again.

In addition, the fact that Jesus didn't want the man to tell people what happened is a testament to the belief that he performed miracles not to show off, but for more pure intentions.

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK; BERTHOLD WERNER



In addition to healing, Jesus taught in Capernaum and made quite an impact, according to Luke 21:31-32:

His listeners "were surprised and impressed—his teaching was so forthright, so confident, so authoritative, not the quibbling and quoting they were used to."

RIGHT: Mount of Beatitudes, seen from Capernaum.



ABOVE: Ruins from the ancient synagogue and city by the Synagogue of Capernaum. The dark rocks are black basalt, which is what the buildings in Jesus' time were made of.



Were the 'Demons' Simply Epilepsy?

Some people believe that the demons that Jesus cast out of peoples' bodies weren't demons at all but simply the symptoms of epilepsy. However, although we may never know whether that's true, it is confirmed that the gospel writers seemed to be able to differentiate between standard demons and epilepsy. During several points in the Bible, the gospels refer directly to Jesus healing epilepsy specifically.

For instance, Matthew 17:14-20 (HNV) refers to a man who brought his son to Jesus for healing. "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is epileptic and suffers grievously," the man said. However, later in that same passage, Jesus yells at the illness inside of the boy and "the demon went out of him." No matter what caused the symptoms, however, it is clear that Jesus healed these conditions.



20/20 Focus

At Bethsaida, a town scholars believe was located on the Sea of Galilee's north shore, Jesus healed a blind man.


"Some people brought a sightless man and begged Jesus to give him a healing touch. Taking him by the hand, he led him out of the village. He put spit in the man's eyes, laid hands on him, and asked, 'Do you see anything?' He looked up. 'I see men. They look like walking trees.' So Jesus laid hands on his eyes again. The man looked hard and realized that he had recovered perfect sight, saw everything in bright, twenty-twenty focus." (Mark 8: 23-26)

‘Consider the Lilies of the Field’

**Bask in the blooms that inspired
one of Jesus’ most important lessons.**

DURING HIS FAMOUS “SERMON ON THE MOUNT,” JESUS TOLD HIS LISTENERS NOT TO WORRY ABOUT CLOTHING, and to “consider the lilies of the field.” One translator renders his words this way:

“Walk into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They don’t fuss with their appearance—but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them. If God gives such attention to the wildflowers, most of them never even seen, don’t you think he’ll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you?” (Luke 12:26-29)

And what flowers Jesus and his listeners saw when they walked “into the fields.” Despite modern-day Israel’s small size, it has an incredible diversity of wildlife because of its unique geography. On his walks throughout the country, Jesus would have seen flowers that bloom in both temperate and tropic zones, high and low elevations, lush green areas and desert terrains. 

Anemone coronaria.

PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS, ZACHI EVENOR; WIKIMEDIA COMMONS, MATHKNIGHT AND ZACHI EVENOR; PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK; WIKIMEDIA COMMONS, AVIAD, 2001; PHOTOS BY THINKSTOCK (2)



ABOVE: *Lily candidum*. "Madonna's Lily."
ABOVE MIDDLE: *Chrysanthemum coronarium* (*Glebionis coronaria*).
ABOVE FAR RIGHT: *Ricotia lunaria*
RIGHT: *Anemone coronaria*



PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK



Flourishing urgieana.

Did You Know

There are more than 2,600 plants native to Israel.

Spring in the blooming desert. Arad, Israel.




Birdwatching with Jesus

Greater Flamingo.



“LOOK AT THE BIRDS,” JESUS TOLD THE PEOPLE GATHERED TO LISTEN TO HIM PREACH THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT. “Free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than the birds.” (Matthew 6:26)

Jesus and his followers had plenty of sky-high reminders not to worry and to trust in God’s love. The region where Jesus walked lies in a principal migration route for birds flying between Europe and Africa. 

Green bee-eater.



Don't Worry About Tomorrow

"Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes." (Matthew 6:34)

Streptopelia turtur
(Eurasian Turtle-Dove).



Streptopelia senegalensis (Laughing Dove).



"Stay alert. This is hazardous work I'm assigning you. You're going to be like sheep running through a wolf pack, so don't call attention to yourselves. Be as cunning as a snake, as inoffensive as a dove." (Jesus' instructions to his disciples, Matthew 10:16)



Greater Flamingo.



Short-toed eagle.



*Hirundo rustica,
Barn swallow.*

Birdwatcher's Bliss

Each year, about one billion birds cruise over a region about the size of the state of New Jersey, and that's one of the highest concentrations of migrating bird traffic in the world, according to Dr. Yossi Lesham, director of Israel's International Centre for the Study of Bird Migration. "In one morning, we can see maybe 10,000 eagles. Just in one morning," he told the BBC in 2012.

There are almost 400 bird species native and common to the Israel. To learn more about birdwatching in the region, go to eliatbirding.blogspot.com, a site created by the International Birding and Research Centre.



Pelicans at Hula Lake.

PHOTOS BY THINKSTOCK

FROM TOP LEFT TO BOTTOM: PHOTOS BY THINKSTOCK (2); JACK GUEZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; BOTTOM: DAVID BUI MOVITCH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Lappet-faced vulture.



Israel's national bird, the upupa eops, or hoopoe.



A parakeet near the Israeli coast.

A flock of migrating starlings flying over Netivot, in southern Israel.

"God's glory is on tour in the skies,
God-craft on exhibit across the horizon."
Psalm 19:1





Pearls of Wisdom

A passion for pearls inspires a parable.

BY ERIN MASERCOLA

IN MOST OF HIS PARABLES, JESUS LIKENED ABSTRACT SPIRITUAL CONCEPTS TO COMMON THINGS HE AND HIS LISTENERS SAW ALL THE TIME. But one time he told a story involving something he and listeners would have seen much less often—a “pearl of great price.”

Jesus was trying to explain God’s kingdom to his disciples and they were having a hard time understanding his analogies. He said, “God’s kingdom is like jewel merchant on the hunt for excellent pearls. Finding one that is flawless, he immediately sells everything and buys it.” (Matthew 13:45)

A pearl’s extraordinary value in Jesus’ time might be hard for us today to understand at first glance. A pearl necklace is pretty and special to us, of course, but it is usually made of cultured pearls and therefore somewhat attainable. But our familiar cultured pearls were not produced until the early 20th century.

For thousands of years and during Jesus’ time, pearls happened only naturally. Even a single pearl was very, very valuable. A strand of similar-sized spheres was extremely rare and practically priceless.

The ancient Romans loved pearls, and historians say there was an empire-wide passion for pearls during Jesus’ life. The Romans sailed all the way to India to trade silver and gold for pearls, emeralds, rubies and diamonds. Imperial portraits and mosaics showed off the pearl necklaces and hair ornaments of well-to-do Roman women. In these pictures, pearls were not meant to be just pretty, but tiny, spherical symbols of their empire’s power, wealth and vast reach of the world.

TOP LEFT: In 2008, archeologists working in Jerusalem found this gold, emerald and pearl earring dating back to Jesus’ time. The three pearls (two almost-identical) and the fact that this earring was part of a pair meant that the owner was very wealthy.

LEFT: Portrait of an Egyptian woman with precious pearl earrings. 2nd-century CE.

Did You Know



Selling just one of his mother’s pearl earrings allowed the Roman general Vitellius to pay for an entire military campaign, according to the ancient historian, Suetonius.






Did You Know

Always rare, natural pearls could once be found throughout the world. Today, most natural pearling occurs mostly in the Persian Gulf in a small area off the coast of Bahrain in the Middle East.

Jesus and the vast majority of people in Roman-occupied first-century Palestine were poor, but there were powerful Roman administrators and people who collaborated with them who were obscenely rich.

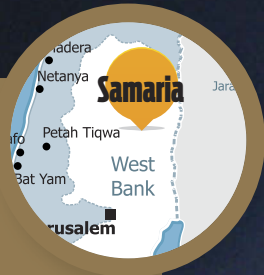
In places like Sepphoris and Jerusalem where the occupiers thrived, pearls of great price probably dangled from a few ears and adorned a few necks. Jesus and his listeners might have seen these jewels as powerful expressions of the gap between rich and poor in his society.

In telling this parable, Jesus turned Roman values and materialistic values upside down. A pearl of great price is available to only a few in power, but God's kingdom is potentially available to everyone—and much more precious and beautiful. 



TOP: Ancient Roman woman with pearls of great price in her hair.

RIGHT: 1st-century pearl and gold pins found excavated from the ancient Roman city of Pompeii.



Stopping In Samaria

Most Galilean Jews hurried through or avoided the region completely on their way to Jerusalem, but Jesus paused to have a drink and spread the good news.

BY TORREY KIM

WHEN JESUS WALKED SOUTH FROM HIS NATIVE GALILEE TO JERUSALEM TO OBSERVE PASSOVER AT THE TEMPLE, he probably chose a route that passed through Samaria, even though most Jews chose a longer route to avoid the region.



21st-century Samaritans worship at Mount Gerizim, a site as sacred to Samaritans as Jerusalem's Temple Mount is to Jews.



Did You Know

21st-century Samaritans were a racially mixed society with both Jewish and pagan ancestry.

Most Jews today celebrate Passover at the seder table. But today's small number of Samaritans celebrate Passover outside on Mount Gerizim. Why outside? Samaritans point to a passage that instructs, "And here is how you are to eat it: Be fully dressed with your sandals on and your stick in hand. Eat in a hurry; it's the Passover of God." (Exodus 12:11)

Jesus was willing to travel directly through Samaria rather than around it (as most Jews did) because of his belief that all people were the same. As Paul later put it, "In Christ's family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal." (Galatians 3:28)

Did You Know



Today, Samaria is commonly called the northern "West Bank." Large parts of Samaria are now under State of Palestine control, and it has been an area of tension between Israelis and Palestinians.

THE HISTORY: When King Solomon died in 975 BC, Israel was split between the North and South. The capital city of the North was Samaria and the Capital of the southern cities was Jerusalem. Tensions were so high between the two regions that most Jews who traveled between Judea and Galilee would avoid the direct route (which cut through Samaria), instead opting for a longer journey through the Jordan River Valley.

Jews in Jesus' time considered Samaritans to be lowly and ignorant because the Samaritans worshiped in a different way than traditional Jewish custom and therefore most folks wanted nothing to do with anyone from Samaria.

Hills in the region Jesus knew as "Samaria."





"I imagine that the first question the priest and Levite asked was: 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' But by the very nature of his concern, the good Samaritan reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'"

—Martin Luther King Jr.,
Strength to Love

LEFT: Jesus told the parable of 'The Good Samaritan.'

THE 'GOOD SAMARITAN'

The term "Good Samaritan" is so ingrained in history that when we hear it, most of us immediately assume that Samaritans were placed on a pedestal during Jesus' time. But the reality is that Samaritans were not held in high esteem until Jesus made it abundantly clear that the people of Samaria were just as worthy of respect as everyone else.

The reason we are so aware of the story of the Good Samaritan is that Jesus used the lesson to demonstrate that Samaritans were not barbaric—and in fact, could be kinder than their Jewish counterparts.

According to the parable Jesus told, a Jewish man was attacked by robbers while traveling, and lay beaten, naked and half dead on the side of the road. Both a priest and a Levite passed the injured man, and crossed to the other side of the road to avoid him instead of helping him.

"A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man's condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn and made him comfortable. In the morning, he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill.'" (Luke 10:29-37)

Jezeel Valley separates the Lower Galilee region from the region Jesus knew as "Samaria."





Jesus heals ten lepers in Samaria.

THE SAMARITAN LEPER

Not only did Jesus hold up this Good Samaritan as an example of how Jews should stop shunning the residents of Samaria, but he also showed his compassion for the Samaritans when he later healed 10 lepers, one of them a Samaritan (Luke 17:16) to show them the universal curative powers of the Lord. Amidst all the excitement it was the Samaritan only who responded with gratitude.

"It happened that as he made his way toward Jerusalem, he crossed over the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered the village, then men, all lepers, met him. They kept their distance but raised their voices, calling out, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!'

Taking a good look at them, he said, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.'

They went, and while still on their way, became clean. One of them, when realized that he was healed, turned around and came back, shouting his gratitude, glorifying God. He kneeled at Jesus' feet, so grateful. He couldn't thank him enough—and he was a Samaritan."

—Luke 17:11-19

The passages clearly reflect Jesus' ministry to "the least among us." Those who need our help the most are often rejected due to social status or longstanding grudges. But the reality is that Jesus believed that these were the people who most benefited from his assistance, and he helped them without regard to social mores.

The fact that Jesus was accepting of the Samaritans is significant as part of the larger story that he was trying to teach his followers—to love one another, no matter what religious beliefs the others had. This was solidified in John's writings, when he said, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." (John 4:20)



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: JAMES TISSOT, BROOKLYN MUSEUM; JAAFAR ASHTIYEH/AFP/GETTYIMAGES

Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well.



“Oh, so you’re a prophet!” (John 4:19)


THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT THE WELL

Jesus did not hesitate to pass directly through Samaria on his journeys to Galilee, and during one such trip, he came upon Jacob’s well and sat there in need of a drink to quench his thirst following his long trek. (John 4:4-5)

A Samaritan woman approached him on her way to get some water. Jesus asked her if he could have a drink from her cup, which stunned her completely. “How come you, a Jew, are asking me, a Samaritan woman for a drink?” she asked. Because not only did Jews traditionally shun the Samaritans, but the woman was also of ill repute, causing many others in Samaria shun her.

After the woman told Jesus that she had no husband, he replied, “That’s nicely put: ‘I have no husband.’ You’ve had five husbands, and the man you’re living with now isn’t even your

husband. You spoke the truth there, sure enough.” After Jesus correctly identified the woman’s situation, she declared him a prophet and he was able to minister to her about his status as the Savior. She spoke to the other Samaritans about him and, based on her word, they listened and believed him, allowing Jesus access to minister to the community of Samaria for two days.

Much like the story of the Good Samaritan, the Woman at the Well is testament to the power of kindness. Because Jesus accepted and welcomed the woman, he was able to spread the Word to the entire community. 

What Happened at Jacob’s Well?

When Jesus spoke with the woman at the well (John 4:12), she asked him, “Are you a better man than our ancestor Jacob, who dug this well and drank from it, he and his sons and livestock, and passed it down to us?” When she asked this, she was essentially telling Jesus that he couldn’t possibly be as giving as Jacob, considering that he owned the well and yet was willing to share it with the community. But in saying “our ancestor Jacob,” she was simultaneously pointing out an important commonality between herself, a Samaritan, and Jesus, a Jew: both were Jacob’s descendants.

Jesus answered by making a distinction between the water Jacob shared and the significance of the water he was willing to give to the people. “Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again and again. Anyone who drinks the water I give will never thirst—not ever. The water I give will be an artisan spring within, gushing fountains of endless life.” (John 4:13-14)

In other words, Jacob’s water might have temporarily quenched the thirst of the Samaritans, but Jesus’ water would take away their spiritual thirst forever.



Back at the village the Samaritan woman told the people, “Come see a man who knew all about the things I did, who knows inside and out. Do you think this could be the Messiah?” (John 4:29)



New Face *in an* Ancient City



Ruins of Herod's palace in Jericho.

Jesus' remarkable impact on Jericho.

BY TORREY KIM

THERE ARE MANY CITIES REFERENCED IN THE BIBLE THAT WERE JUST BECOMING POPULATED DURING JESUS' TIME—but that certainly wasn't the case with Jericho, an ancient city that dates back to 9000 BC and was prominently featured in the Old Testament.

But it was Jesus' experiences in the town that really added significance to its rich and storied history.



Did You Know



Jericho lies in a harsh desert, but is habitable because of an underground spring, known in the Bible as Elisha's spring.



Is Jericho the Oldest Occupied City in the World?

Many historians believe that Jericho is the oldest occupied city in the world, with hunter-gatherers possibly having built a structure there in the mid-9000-BC Century. Due to its proximity to the Jordan River, it was a prime location for fisherman, which attracted settlers over time.

The fall of Jericho was famously discussed in the Old Testament, in which "By faith, the Israelites marched around the walls of Jericho for seven days, and the walls fell flat." (Hebrews 11:30). Although the city did indeed fall during this period (around 1400 BC), it was later rebuilt by Hiel of Bethel (1 Kings 16:34).

The city has gone on to flourish, and currently has a population of over 18,000 residents.



Cleopatra

Did You Know

The indefatigable builder Herod the Great left his mark on the old city. He originally leased it from Cleopatra, who had gotten the occupied city from her lover, Mark Antony. After Antony and Cleopatra killed themselves, Octavian gave Herod free reign over the city, and he built aqueducts, hippodrome and a winter palace.

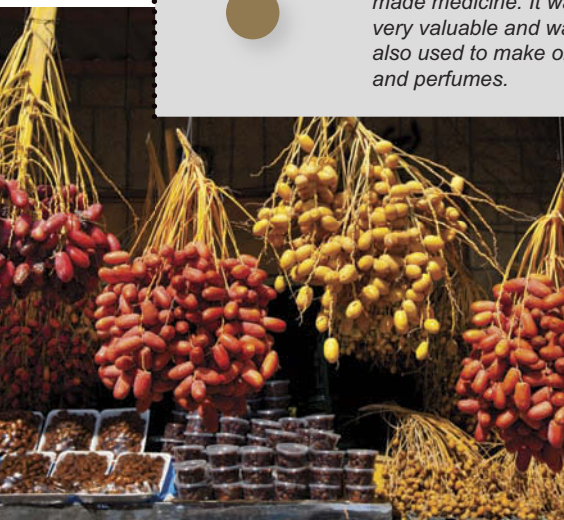
PHOTOS BY THINKSTOCK



Balsam tree

Did You Know

Jericho was known for its balsam trees, which produced a substance from which the Jews made medicine. It was very valuable and was also used to make oils and perfumes.



Fresh dates at a Jericho market.





Two blind men at Jericho.



ONCE WAS BLIND, NOW HE SEES

Jesus also performed several miracles at Jericho, making it one of the most sacred places on his journey. Among those was Bartimaeus, a sightless man who was begging when Jesus came upon him, as Mark described Mark 10:46-52):

‘Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.’

“When he heard that Jesus the Nazarene was passing by, he began to cry out, ‘Son of David, Jesus! Mercy, have mercy on me!’ Many tried to hush him up, but he yelled all the louder, ‘Son of David! Mercy, have mercy on me!’

Jesus stopped in his tracks. ‘Call him over.’

They called him. ‘It’s your lucky day! Get up! He’s calling you to come!’ Throwing off his coat, he was on his feet at once and came to Jesus.

Jesus said, ‘What can I do for you?’

The blind man said, ‘Rabbi, I want to see.’

‘On your way,’ said Jesus. ‘Your faith has saved and healed you.’

In that very instant he recovered his sight and followed Jesus down the road.”

The blind man became Jesus’ follower, but not necessarily only because he regained his sight. In reality, the man must have already chosen to follow Jesus when he threw his cloak aside. After all, that was his only Earthly possession and he gave it up without hesitation to become a follower of the Savior.



JAMES TISSOT, BROOKLYN MUSEUM

THE REDEMPTION OF ZACCHAEUS

Nobody likes getting a visit from the tax collector. But this was never truer than in Jesus' time, when tax collectors were essentially nothing more than common bounty hunters. These locals were recruited by the Romans to collect taxes within their own communities, and they got to keep a percentage of their collections. Therefore, many tax collectors became wealthy by squeezing cash out of their neighbors.

Such was the case with Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector who had gotten extremely rich off of the backs of his fellow Jews, who in turn found him reprehensible. It was most likely not in his nature to join public gatherings due to his neighbors' hatred of him, but his curiosity about Jesus was too strong to avoid a trip into the central part of Jericho, which the Apostle Luke later described (Luke 19:1-10).

Did You Know



In 2005, Israel turned over Jericho's administrative control to Palestine, but it remains a popular tourist destination for Holy Land tours.

'Gone to be the guest of a Sinner'

"He wanted desperately to see Jesus, but the crowd was in his way—he was a short man and couldn't see over the crowd. So he ran on ahead and climbed up in a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus when he came by.

When Jesus got to the tree, he looked up and said, 'Zacchaeus, hurry down. Today is my day to be a guest in your home.' Zacchaeus scrambled out of the tree, hardly believing his good luck, delighted to take Jesus home with him. Everyone who saw the incident was indignant and grumped, 'What business does he have getting cozy with this crook?'

Zacchaeus just stood there, a little stunned. He stammered apologetically, 'Master, I give away half my income to the poor—and if I'm caught cheating, I pay four times the damages.'

Jesus said, 'Today is salvation day in this home! Here he is: Zacchaeus, son of Abraham! For the Son of Man came to find and restore the lost.'" (Luke 19:3-10)



LEFT: *Wadi qelt aqueduct near Jericho.*

BELOW: *Cable cars connecting Jericho to the Greek Orthodox Monastery of the Temptation.*



Several things happened during Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus that were special and even miraculous. First, he knew Zacchaeus' name, even though they had never met before or spoken of one another. In addition, Jesus offered to stay at the home of a sinner, which was not common or respected as part of Jewish tradition. But what happened next was the real miracle: The simple offer of kindness from Jesus prompted Zacchaeus to return the money he cheated out of people four-fold, and to give half of his possessions to the needy. α

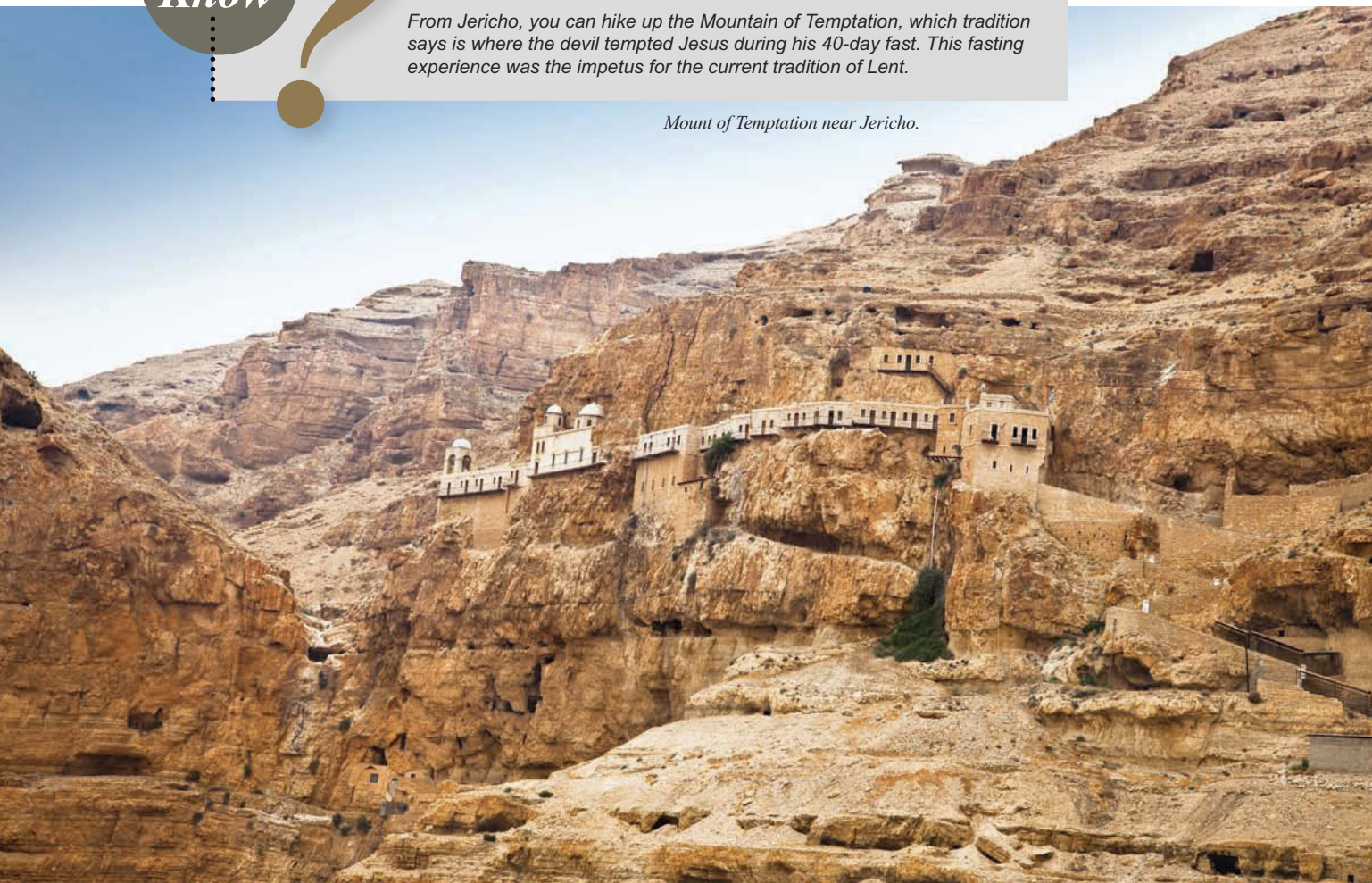
PHOTOS BY THINKSTOCK

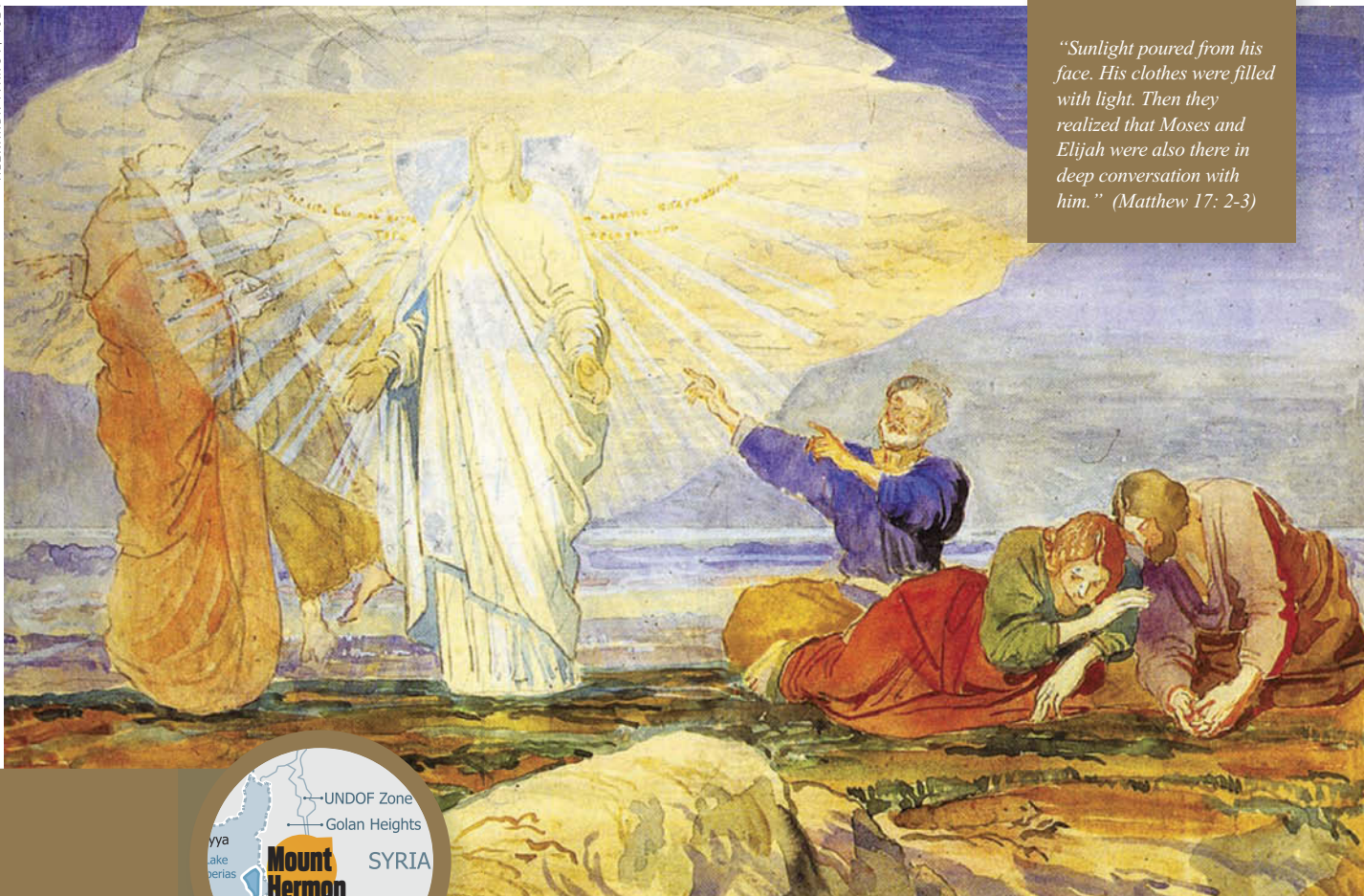
Did You Know



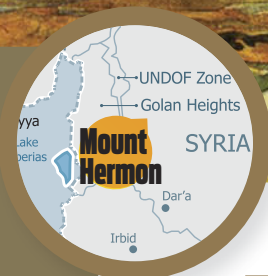
From Jericho, you can hike up the Mountain of Temptation, which tradition says is where the devil tempted Jesus during his 40-day fast. This fasting experience was the impetus for the current tradition of Lent.

Mount of Temptation near Jericho.





"Sunlight poured from his face. His clothes were filled with light. Then they realized that Moses and Elijah were also there in deep conversation with him." (Matthew 17: 2-3)



Miracle on the *Mountain*

But which mountain, archeologists wonder?

BY ERIN MASERCOLA

PUT YOURSELF IN PETER'S SHOES ABOUT 2,000 YEARS AGO. Jesus asks you, James and John to accompany him on a mountain hike. But like many journeys with Jesus, this hike is no ordinary hike.

Once atop the "high mountain," the gospels report, something extraordinary happened. Jesus' "appearance changed from the inside out, right before their eyes. His clothes shimmered, glistening white, whiter than any bleach could make them. Elijah, along with Moses, came into view, in deep conversation with Jesus." (Mark 9:2-4)

A Disciple Remembers

"We saw it with our own eyes: Jesus resplendent with light from God the Father as the voice of Majestic Glory spoke: 'This is my Son, marked by my love, focus of all my delight.' We were there on the holy mountain with him. We heard the voice out of heaven with our very own ears." (2 Peter 1:16-18)

All three of the synoptic gospels describe the Transfiguration, but none of them name the "high mountain" where it happened. Today, scholars are stumped.

Since the third century, tradition has favored Mount Tabor—a smallish, isolated mountain west of the southern end of the Sea of Galilee—as the site of the Transfiguration. Some scholars place the event at Mount Hermon in the Golan Heights.



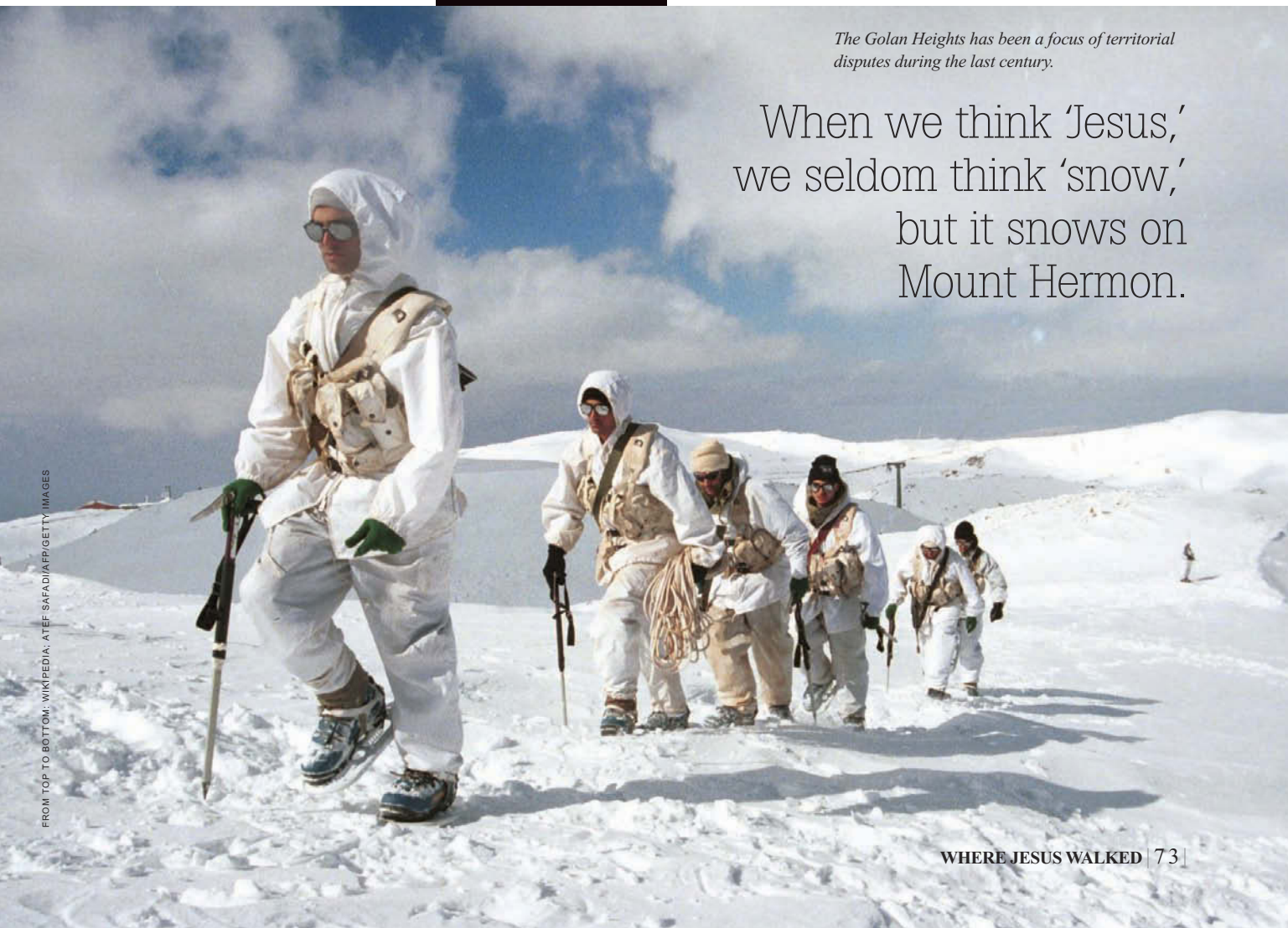
ABOVE: A Franciscan church at the summit of Mount Tabor, traditional site of the Transfiguration.

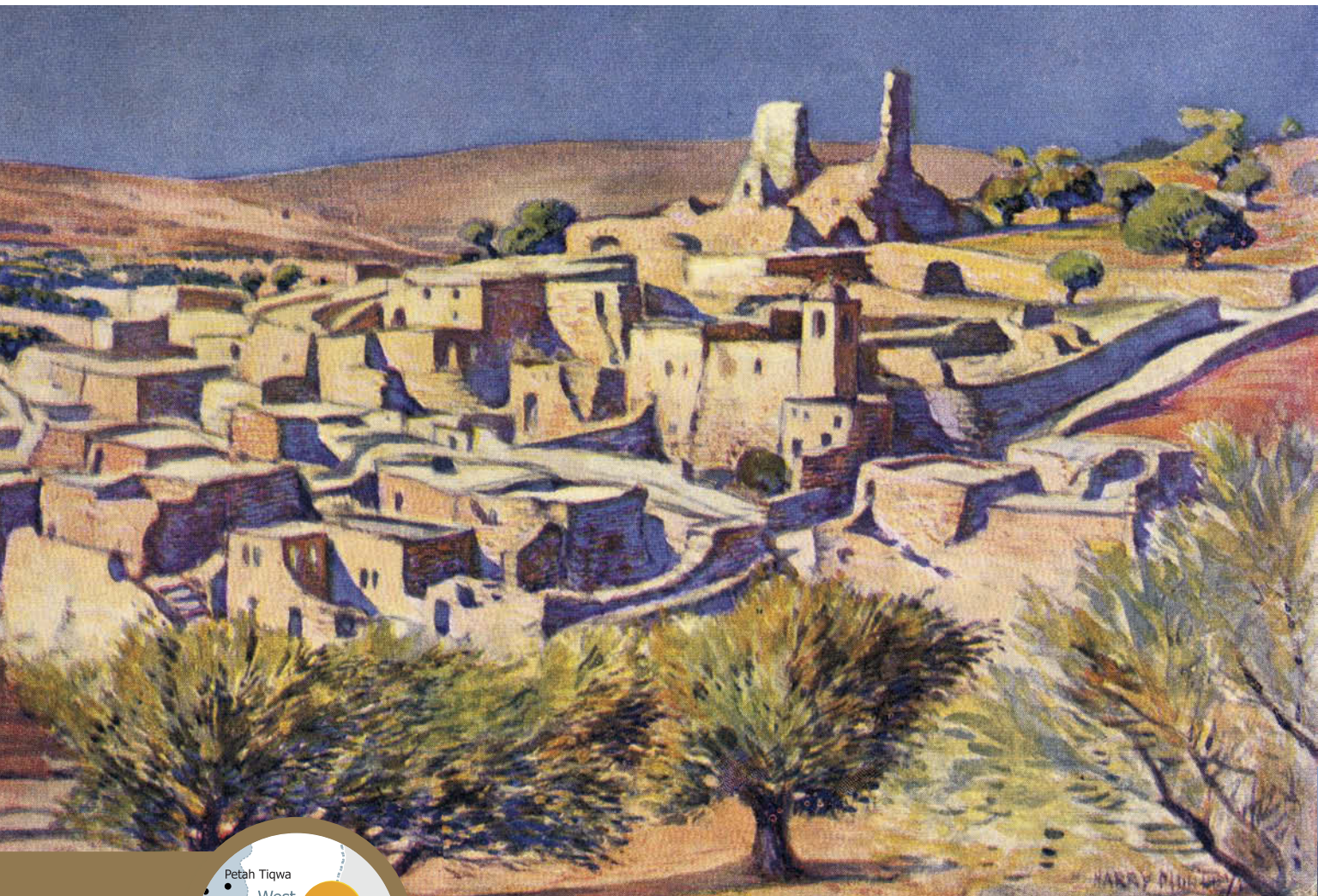
Mystery Mountain Men:

Moses and Elijah were two spiritual leaders associated with mountains. The two spiritual leaders who appeared with Jesus on the mountain had been on other mountains before. Moses encountered God on Mount Horeb and brought the law down to his people. The prophet Elijah also encountered God on Mount Horeb while hiding out there to escape the wicked queen Jezebel. Scholars dispute Mount Horeb's exact location as well.

The Golan Heights has been a focus of territorial disputes during the last century.

When we think 'Jesus,'
we seldom think 'snow,'
but it snows on
Mount Hermon.





Home Away *from* **Home**

The house of Mary and Martha at Bethany.

BY SEAN COOPER

WHEN JESUS TRAVELED TO JERUSALEM, HE COULD COUNT ON A SECOND HOME IN BETHANY AT THE HOUSE OF MARY AND MARTHA.

The village of Bethany was likely located on the south-eastern slope of Mount of Olives approximately 1.5 miles east of Jerusalem, where the West Bank city of al-Eizariya is situated today. There is scholarly debate regarding Bethany's precise location.

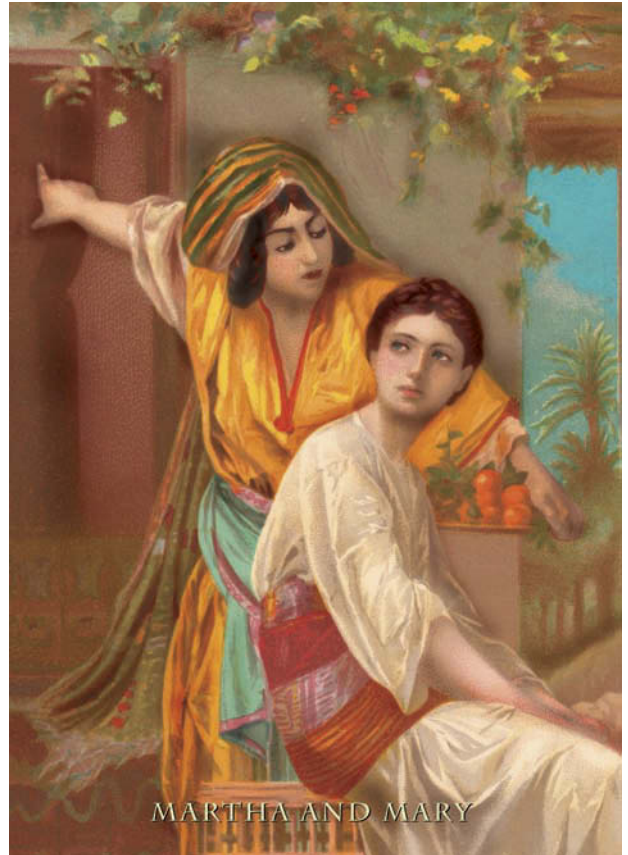
The Gospels of Mark and Matthew, as well as the Temple Scroll (one of the Dead Sea scrolls discovered at Qumran in 1945) suggest that Bethany was a place for the sick. It was out of sight and at a prescribed distance away from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, where folks with leprosy and other diseases were not allowed to go. The gospels mention Bethany as the home of Simon the Leper, where Jesus was a guest.

MARY AND MARTHA

Two sisters who lived in Bethany, Mary and Martha, opened their doors to Jesus and his followers whenever they stopped by, and there is a well-known story about the hardworking Martha feeling slighted by her slacker sister.

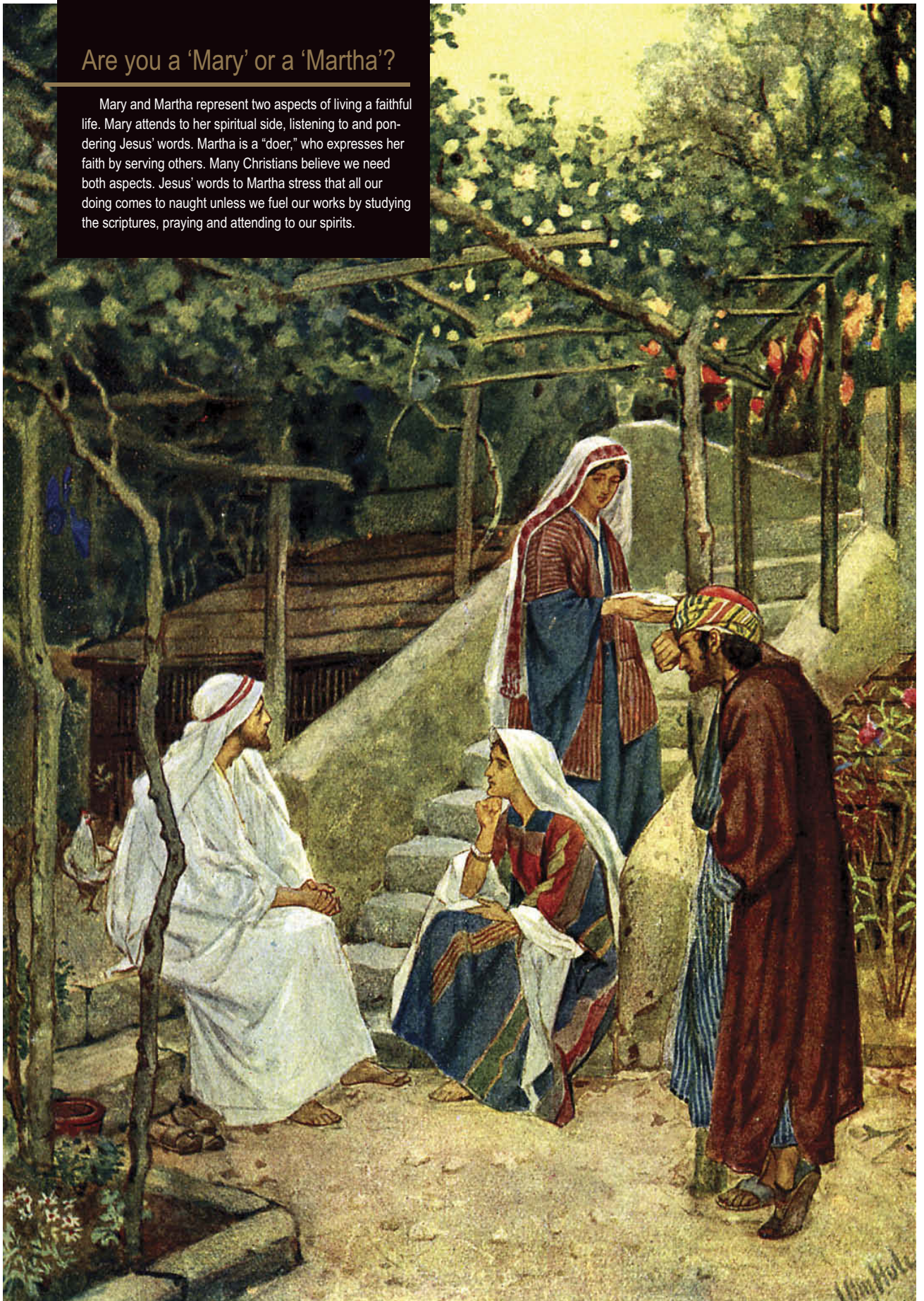
“Martha welcomed [Jesus] and made him feel quite at home. She had a sister, Mary, who sat before the Master, hanging on every word he said. But Martha was pulled away by all she had to do in the kitchen. Later, she stepped in, interrupting them. ‘Master, don’t you care that my sister has abandoned the kitchen to me? Tell her to lend me a hand.’ The Master said, ‘Martha, dear Martha, you’re fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing. One thing only is essential, and Mary has chosen it—it’s the main course, and won’t be taken from her.’” (Luke 10: 38-42)

BELOW: Today a concrete barrier separates Bethany’s traditional location—the West Bank city of al-Eizariya—from the Old City of Jerusalem.



Are you a 'Mary' or a 'Martha'?

Mary and Martha represent two aspects of living a faithful life. Mary attends to her spiritual side, listening to and pondering Jesus' words. Martha is a "doer," who expresses her faith by serving others. Many Christians believe we need both aspects. Jesus' words to Martha stress that all our doing comes to naught unless we fuel our works by studying the scriptures, praying and attending to our spirits.



WHAT WAS A MEAL LIKE IN JESUS' TIME?

For most first-century individuals, breakfast and lunch were small, simple, on-the-go meals. The main meal was supper, which happened around sundown. When guests arrived for supper, it was tradition for the hosts to give them a foot bath.

A table was set up in the middle of the room as the guests sat on couches. The meal was served from a communal central platter, which had the main course and was surrounded by several side dishes. It was important to ensure one's hands were clean, as meals were eaten with fingers on one single plate with no forks or knives. Food was gathered with pieces of bread. Although men and women often shared a single meal, it was the women who were responsible for preparing and serving the food.

Though the gospels mention only a few foods specifically (such as fish and bread), other common foods would have been onions, olives, figs, dates, honey, grapes and wine cut with water. (It was considered immoderate in the first-century to drink straight wine.)



PHOTOS BY THINKSTOCK



WOMAN WASHES JESUS' FEET

Though the gospels differ somewhat on the details, the famous story of the woman who washed Jesus' feet with expensive perfume is associated with Bethany. Three gospels say the incident happened at Bethany, and two gospels mention Simon the Leper's house specifically. Here is how Mark tells it.

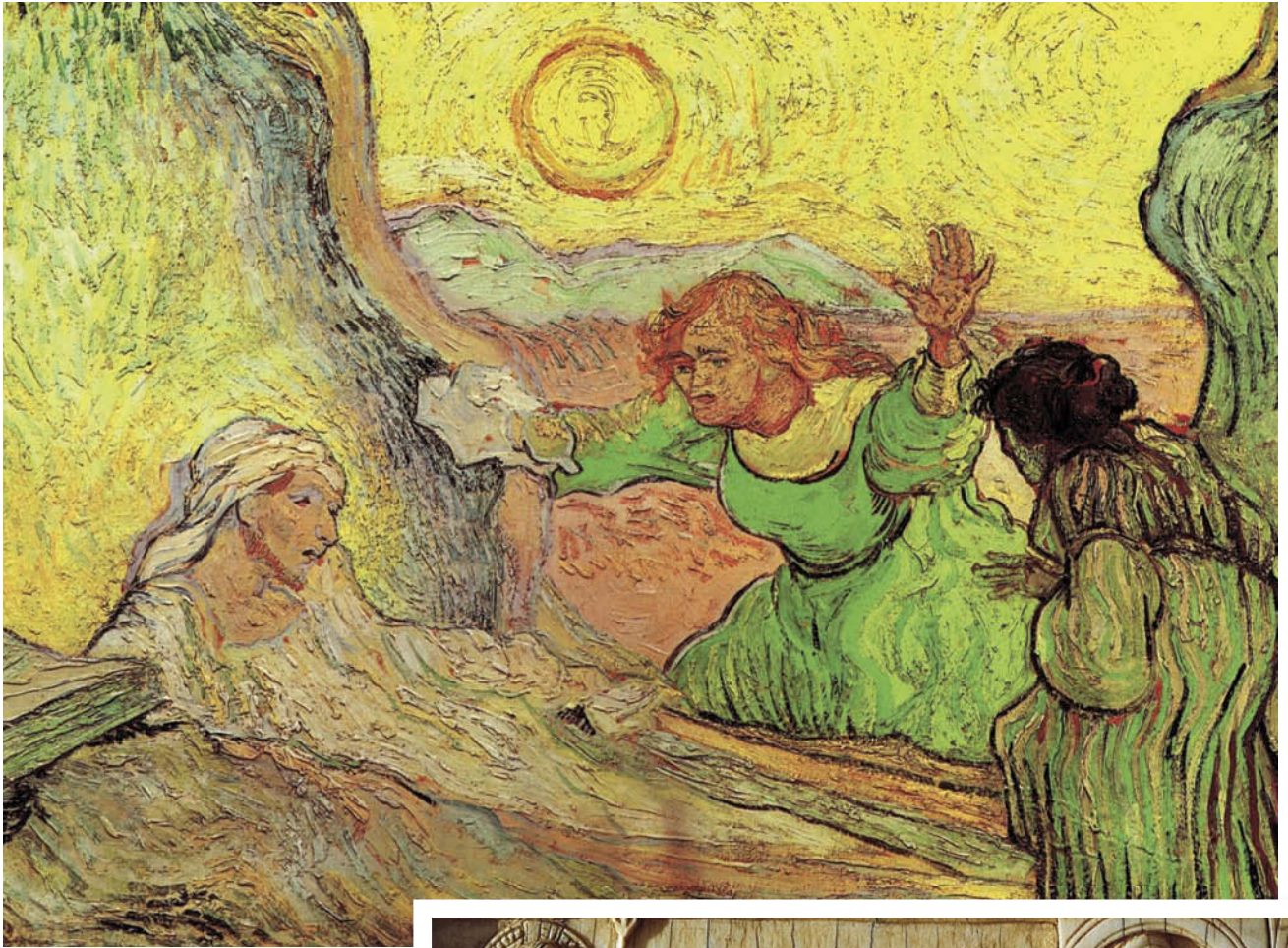
"Jesus was at Bethany, a guest of Simon the Leper. While he was eating dinner, a woman came up carrying a bottle of very expensive perfume. Opening the bottle, she poured it on his head. Some of the guests became furious among themselves. 'That's criminal! A sheer waste! This perfume could have been sold for well over a year's wages and handed out to the poor.' They swelled up in anger, nearly bursting with indignation over her.

But Jesus said, 'Let her alone. Why are you giving her a hard time? She has just done something wonderfully significant for me. You will have the poor with you every day for the rest of your lives. Whenever you feel like it, you can do something for them. Not so with me. She did what she could when she could—she pre-anointed my body for burial. And you can be sure that wherever in the whole world the Message is preached, what she just did is going to be talked about admiringly.'" (Mark 14:3-9)

Did You Know

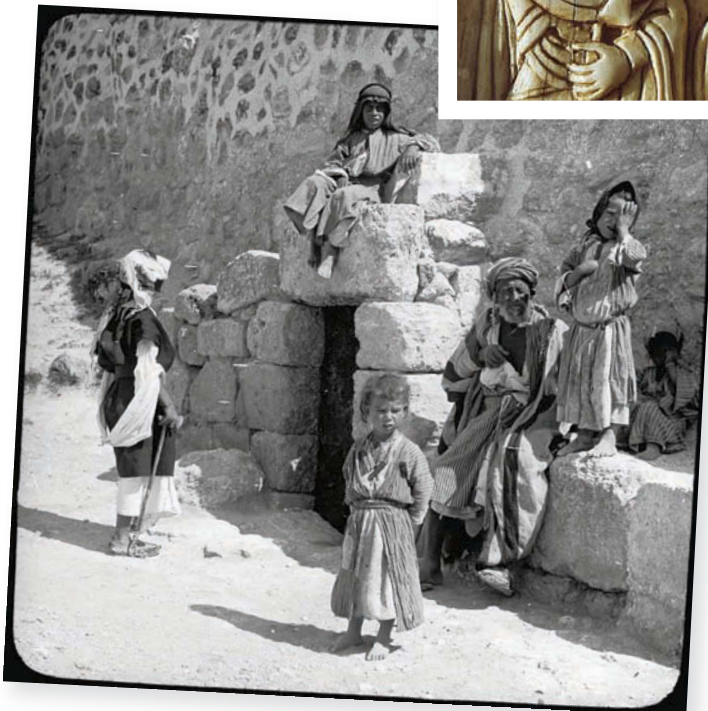


The gospels disagree which woman anointed Jesus' feet. John says it was Mary of Bethany, Luke says it was a woman who'd lived "a sinful life" and the other two gospels neither name nor describe her.




Raising of Lazarus (Vincent Van Gogh, 1890)

*Tomb of Lazarus
in early 1900s.*



THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS

It was at Bethany that Jesus raised Lazarus, brother of Mary and Martha, from the dead shortly after the Resurrection, as recorded in the Gospel of John. 

Why Don't We Hear About Women Disciples?

Discipleship wasn't a role reserved strictly for men. Although the role of women in Jesus' ministry often went unmentioned in the canonical gospels, scholars have concluded that women played a pivotal role as disciples of Jesus and early Christians.

Why so many Marys?

Read the Gospels from any length of time, and it would be easy to be confused by all the Marys.

"Mary" was a very common name in first-century Palestine, scholars point out. One in five women in the region had that name. It was a shortened form of Mariamme, the second wife of Herod the Great and one of the last Hasmonean queens, as well as Miriam, sister to Moses and Aaron.

To complicate matters, the gospel writers (like other ancient writers), weren't always specific about women named Mary or women in general, for that matter.

Marys in the New Testament include:



1. Mary, Mother of Jesus
2. Mary Magdalene, who first saw the resurrected Jesus. Though the medieval church deemed Mary Magdalene a woman of ill repute, there is no basis in the gospels for this label.
3. Mary of Bethany, Martha's sister
4. Mary, mother of disciples James and John



Talk of **10** Towns

Jesus casts out demons in
the Decapolis.

BY ERIN MASERCOLA



Roman ruins at Jerash.

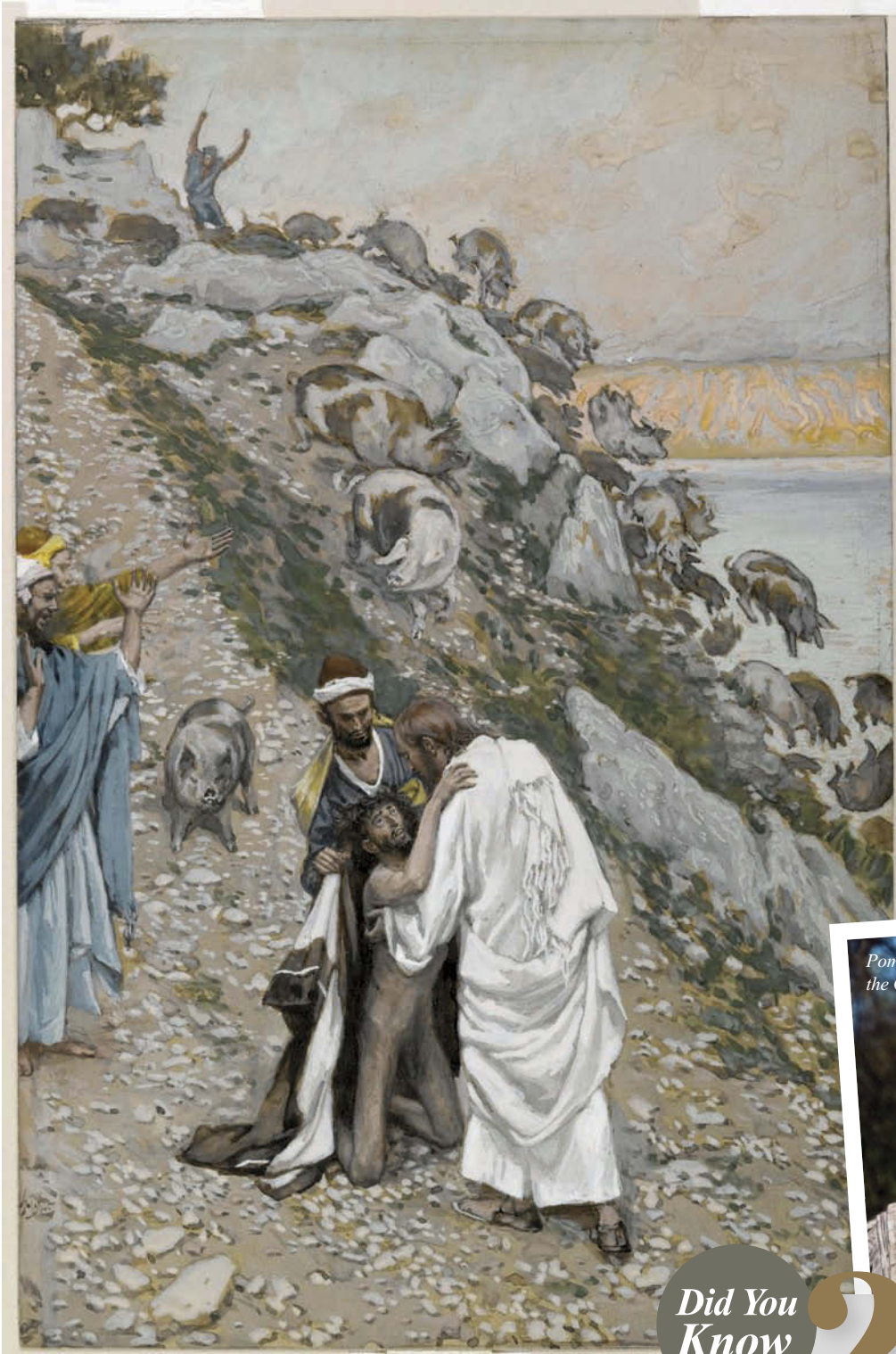


THE GOSPELS TELL US that Jesus didn't just walk to places to preach and perform his miracles. He sometimes traveled in a boat to towns bordering the Sea of Galilee. One such journey took him to "the country of Gerasenes," and there he performed a miracle that brought his message to pagans heavily influenced by Greek and Roman culture.

In Gerasenes, Jesus met a man possessed by demons. The man's demons ask Jesus to cast them into a nearby herd of pigs. The crazed pigs then stampede off a cliff into the sea.

There are several possible locations for "the country of Gerasenes," including Jerash in modern Jordan. But one thing is pretty clear—in healing this man, Jesus had taken his ministry to people very different from the small-town Jews he had spent most of his life with. How do we know this?

1 THERE ARE PIGS IN THIS STORY THAT WERE BEING RAISED FOR FOOD, which means some or most of the region's inhabitants were Gentiles. Observant Jews in Jesus' time did not eat pork, because it was forbidden by Leviticus and Deuteronomy.



2 THE GOSPEL OF MARK REPORTS THAT THE HEALED MAN SPREAD HIS STORY THROUGHOUT THE "TEN TOWNS AREA," a group of towns on the Eastern edge of the Roman empire called the Decapolis. Member towns included Gerasa (Jerash), Philadelphia (Amman) and Damascus.

Most of the Decapolis towns had been founded when Alexander the Great conquered the region in 323 BCE, and they were places where Greek and Semitic cultures came together in a melting pot and sometimes clashed. When the Roman General Pompey the Great blew into the regions in 63 BCE, the people of Decapolis welcomed him with open arms.


The Romans wanted to strengthen their presence on the Eastern borders of their empire, so they built up the towns in the Decapolis, constructing Roman-style streets and temples in the towns, connecting the towns with reliable Roman roads, and minting Roman coins.

Pompey the Great



Did You Know

Many inhabitants of the Decapolis worshipped the Roman emperor as a god. This practice would not have set well with monotheistic Jews in the region.

3 THE HEALED MAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN A GENTILE HIMSELF. When Jesus instructed him to go home to his “own people” and tell them his story, was he asking him to spread the good news to an Roman-emperor-worshipping group of people who held Greek culture and the Roman Empire in high esteem? 

Did You Know?

In some Biblical translations, the demon-possessed man tells Jesus, “My name is Legion.” Some scholars link the “Legion” that possessed the man’s mind to the Roman legions (army units) that occupied first-century Palestine.

“As Jesus was getting into the boat, the demon-delivered man begged to go along, but he wouldn’t let him.

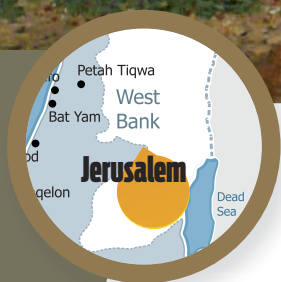
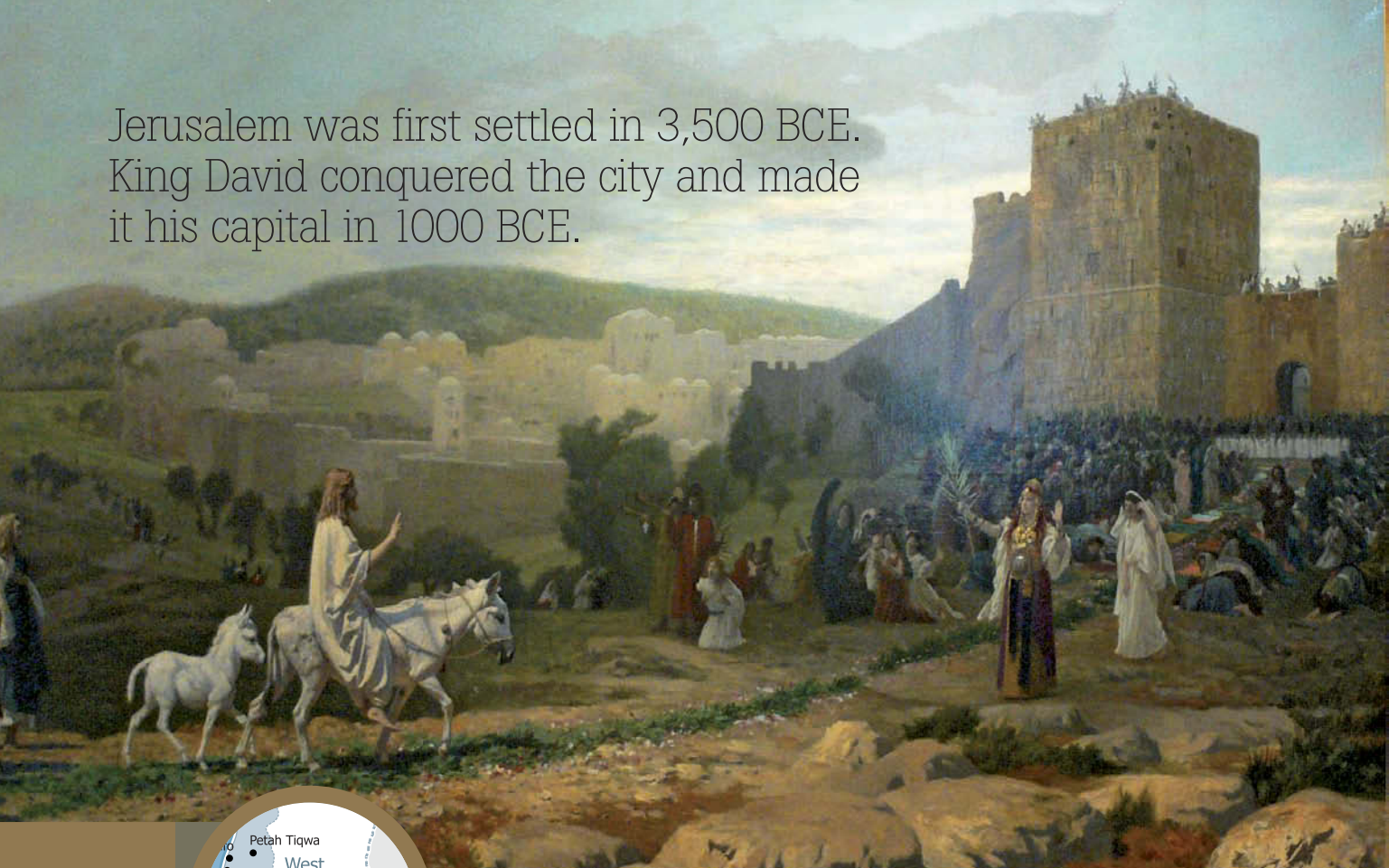
Jesus said, ‘Go home to your own people. Tell them your story—what the Master did, how he had mercy on you.’

The man went back and began to preach in the Ten Towns area about what Jesus had done for him. He was the talk of the town.” *(Mark 5:18-20)*

Roman ruins at Jerash.



Jerusalem was first settled in 3,500 BCE. King David conquered the city and made it his capital in 1000 BCE.



The Ride Into Jerusalem

One remarkable day in the life of a 5,500-year-old city.

BY GARRETT KIM

WHEN THEY NEARED JERUSALEM, HAVING ARRIVED AT BETHPHAGE ON MOUNT OLIVES, JESUS SENT TWO DISCIPLES WITH THESE INSTRUCTIONS: “Go over to the village across from you. You’ll find a donkey tethered there, her colt with her. Untie her and bring them to me. If anyone asks what you’re doing, say, ‘The Master needs them!’ He will send them with you.”

Did You Know



The palm branch as a symbol of victory, nobility, peace in Greco-Roman culture.

During its long history, Jerusalem has been under siege 23 times, attacked 52 times, captured 44 times, and destroyed twice.

Did You Know?

During Jesus's time, the population of Jerusalem was about 40,000.




Did You Know?

The Pharisees believed that a king would rule over the Jewish nation, but did not foresee him as someone who would be sympathetic to the sinners, the needy, and the Gentiles. Therefore, they were not supportive of Jesus.

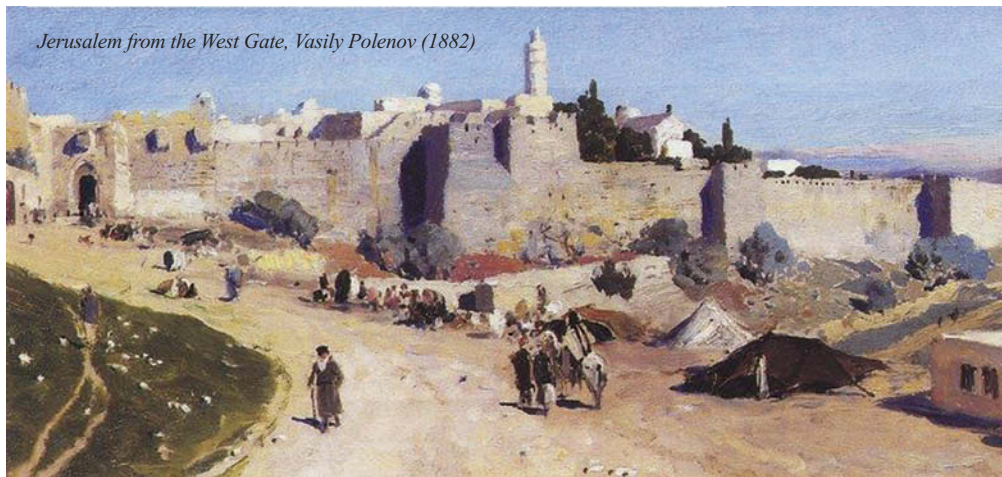
Jerusalem is sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims?

“The disciples went and did exactly what Jesus told them to do. They led the donkey and colt out, laid some of their clothes on them, and Jesus mounted. Nearly all the people in the crowd threw their garments down on the road, giving him a royal welcome. Others cut branches from the trees and threw them down as a welcome mat. Crowds went ahead and crowds followed, all of them calling out, ‘Hosanna to David’s son!’ ‘Blessed is he who comes in God’s name!’ ‘Hosanna in highest heaven!’

As he made his entrance into Jerusalem, the whole city was shaken. Unnerved, people were asking, ‘What’s going on here? Who is this?’

The parade crowd answered, ‘This is the prophet Jesus, the one from Nazareth in Galilee.’” (Matthew 21:1-3, 6-11) 

Jerusalem from the West Gate, Vasily Polenov (1882)





The temple as it would have appeared in Jesus' day, looking out from the Mount of Olives. Smoke rises from burning sacrifices.

Turning the Tables

Jesus wreaks havoc in Jerusalem's most sacred spot.

BY ERIN MASERCOLA



"TEACHER, LOOK AT THAT STONEMWORK! THOSE BUILDINGS!" one disciple marveled as he was walking out of the temple's outer courts with Jesus after a day of teaching there. "You're impressed by this grandiose architecture?" Jesus replied. "There's not a stone in the whole works that is not going to end up in a heap of rubble." (Mark 13:1-2)

Jesus' attitude towards the temple in Jerusalem was complicated. To begin to understand his words and actions in and around the temple during his last Passover week in the city, let's try to imagine ourselves there, right at that spot.

Jerusalem's Western Wall, or "Wailing Wall" is a gigantic remnant of the temple from Jesus' day and is a holy place for many contemporary Jews.



WHAT IT FELT LIKE:

It was very crowded during the Passover festival, thronged with a up to a million Jews who came up from all over Palestine to celebrate. (When the pilgrims went home after the festival, the city would shrink down to its normal population—between 100 and 200 people.) All over the city, people bathed themselves in ritual baths, cleansing themselves to enter the temple grounds.

Though there were always centurions stationed in Jerusalem, the Romans sent in extra reinforcements during festival time to maintain order. Their garrison was in the Antonia Fortress, a huge Herodian tower adjacent to the temple complex. From this bird's-eye view, the soldiers watched the worshippers and kept a sharp eye out for insurgents. When worshippers looked up from some parts of the temple grounds, they could see these human instruments of Roman power and domination above them.



ABOVE: Today, some Jews leave prayer notes among the stones of the old temple.

LEFT: Contemporary Israeli soldier prays at the Western Wall on Tisha Be'av (July 27), a day that marks the destruction of the first temple by the Babylonians in 587 BCE and the ruin of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE.



Temple layout

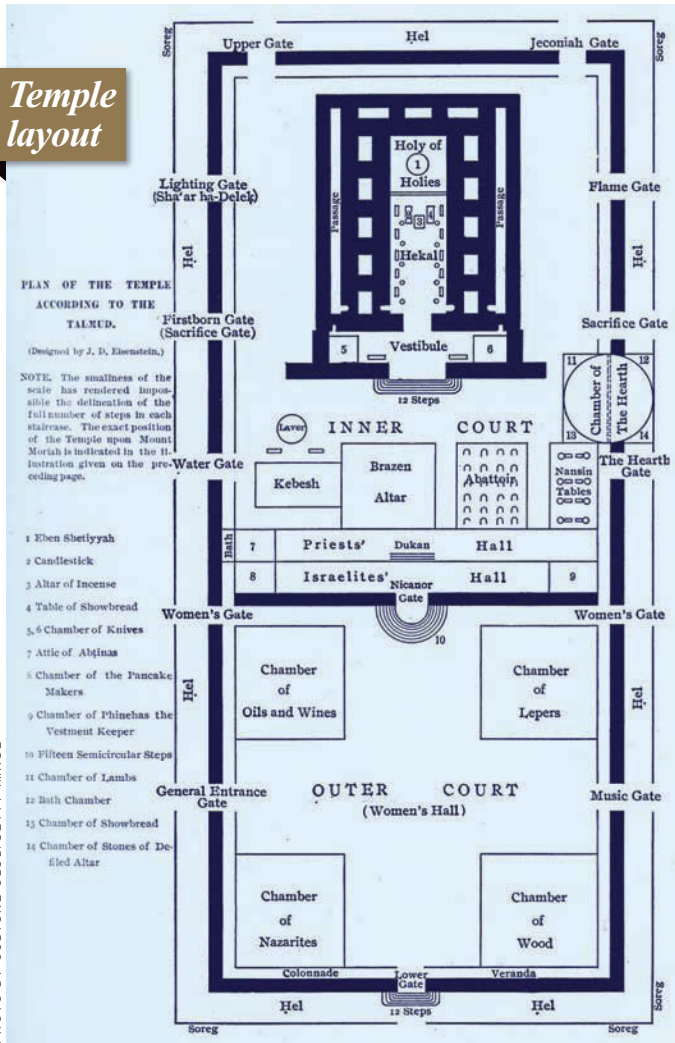


PHOTO BY CULTURE CLUB/GETTY IMAGE

WHAT IT LOOKED LIKE:

The temple complex was atop Mount Moriah and its outermost courtyard was the size of six football fields. From the outermost courtyard to the innermost Holy of Holies, the temple's enormous box-within-box design became grander, more elevated and more exclusive.

1 THE COURT OF THE GENTILES: Anyone who had taken a ritual bath and who wasn't lame or diseased could enter the outermost Court of the Gentiles. It was here travelers could exchange their foreign coins for Hebrew shekels and also purchase animals for sacrifice.

2 THE COURT OF WOMEN: All Jewish men and women who had ritually bathed themselves could proceed to this storage area for wood and oil used in the sacrifices. Gentiles entering this level could be put to death.

3 COURT OF ISRAELITES. Open only to Jewish men, this was as far within as you could go unless you were a priest. Since they were not priests, Jesus and his disciples did not go beyond this court.

4 COURT OF THE PRIESTS. Here at the altar, priests killed each animal sacrifice, sprinkled the blood on each corner of a four-horned pedestal and burned the entrails in an eternal flame fueled with cedar and hyssop.

5 THE HOLY OF HOLIES: Situated at the highest point in Jerusalem and at the place where Abraham almost sacrificed his son, Isaac, this spot was the innermost sanctum. It was decorated with gold plate, as well as purple and red tapestries embroidered with depictions of the heavens. Inside was a vast, empty space that the Jews viewed as a conduit between God and the rest of the temple, city and surrounding land. Only one person—the high priest—entered the Holy of Holies.



Did You Know?

Most Jews at the time believed that animal sacrifice should take place only at the temple in Jerusalem. When the Romans destroyed the temple in 70 AD, Jewish leaders eliminated the ritual and began to put more emphasis on other kinds of observances.

Herod the Great's Greatest Building

One thing you can say about Herod the Great: he knew how to take advantage of a good hill to elevate his own status.

Throughout his reign, he was a master builder who utilized hills to bolster the height and grandeur of his most famous projects—his fort at Masada, his pleasure palace and tomb at Herodium and his massive improvements to the temple in Jerusalem.

Herod the Great had died when Jesus was a boy, but he'd left his marks on the land—ruthless ruler sons like Herod Antipas, as well as enormous buildings, harbors and aqueducts that were engineering marvels for their time and continue to amaze scholars today.

To build the temple walls, Herod's legions of workers quarried and moved enormous stones using cutting-edge, Roman-designed cranes. You can still see the sheer size of these stones when you look at the Western Wall.

Many people despised Herod the Great because he was a puppet ruler for the Roman occupiers and he killed a lot of people—even one of his wives and a few of his sons. Some believe Herod focused on temple improvements partly to overcome his deep-seated inferiority complex. He was not from the traditional line of Jewish kings and he was the son of Jewish converts. Implementing such dramatic improvements may have been an attempt to raise his stature.



ABOVE: *A model of the temple itself. It was said that the white marble and gold blazed so brightly in the sunlight it was almost blinding.*

Did You Know?

The priests got to keep the hides and eat the meat from the animal sacrifices.

Unblemished:

Animals acceptable for sacrifice had to be domesticated, "without spot," and raised solely for sacrifice—no other purpose. Poorer people purchased pigeons for sacrifice, while richer people could afford larger offerings like sheep.

Rabbi raises a shofar at the Western Wall.



Something to Think About:

When Jesus healed the lame, he broke down boundaries, enabling Jews who had been barred even from the Court of Gentiles to enter and worship in the Court of Women or Court of Israelites, depending on their gender.

WHAT IT SOUNDED LIKE:

Music sounded from the temple, including choirs and orchestras of lyres and trumpets (shofars).

HOW IT SMELLED:

During festival times, so many animals were killed for sacrifice that a stench of death hung over the temple, particularly the Court of Israelites. Priests burned myrrh, cinnamon, saffron and frankincense to mask the odor.



The Temple Mount today

Privileged Access:

Herod the Great constructed his own secret tunnel leading from Fort Antonia into the temple.




MIXED FEELINGS

The gospels suggest that Jesus had very mixed feelings about the temple. As a devout Jew, the temple was a sacred place. It was God's house, a place to worship alongside Jews who'd traveled there from all regions of Israel and a place to preach and heal people.

He admired people like the widow who came to the temple to express their love for God and to give all they had.

But some of the culture surrounding the temple went against Jesus' calls for social justice. Although some priests with lowlier jobs were poor, those in the upper echelons lived rich, comfortable lives. Some powerful priests were in league with the Romans, and parts of the gospels suggest that Jesus felt his religion and his people had been co-opted by economic injustice, military domination, dirty politics and religious hypocrisy.

Jesus' prediction that the temple would "end up in a heap of rubble" came true in 70 CE, when Titus destroyed the complex after a Jewish revolt. The Romans destroyed the temple only after a lot of hemming and hawing, sources say, for it was difficult even for them to tear down such a remarkable structure. And today, the Western Wall remnant of that old temple still stands as a landmark and sacred site in contemporary Jerusalem—one of the places where Jesus walked. 



TOP: Romans carrying off precious relics from the Second Temple after they destroyed it in 70 CE (this stone carving is on the Arch of Titus in Rome).

ABOVE: One of the first excavators to unearth Jerusalem's ancient ruins, British officer Charles Warren (1840-1927) found underground tunnels on Temple Mount.

RIGHT: Half-shekel coin, minted in Jerusalem about 30 years after Jesus was crucified.

Turning the Tables: Jesus went straight to the Temple and threw out everyone who had set up shop, buying and selling. He kicked over the tables of loan sharks and the stalls of dove merchants. He quoted the text:

"My house was designated a house of prayer. You have made it a hangout for thieves."

Now there was room for the blind and crippled to get in. They came to Jesus and he healed them."
(Matthew 21:12-24)





The Garden of Gethsemane

Prayer, agony and capture.

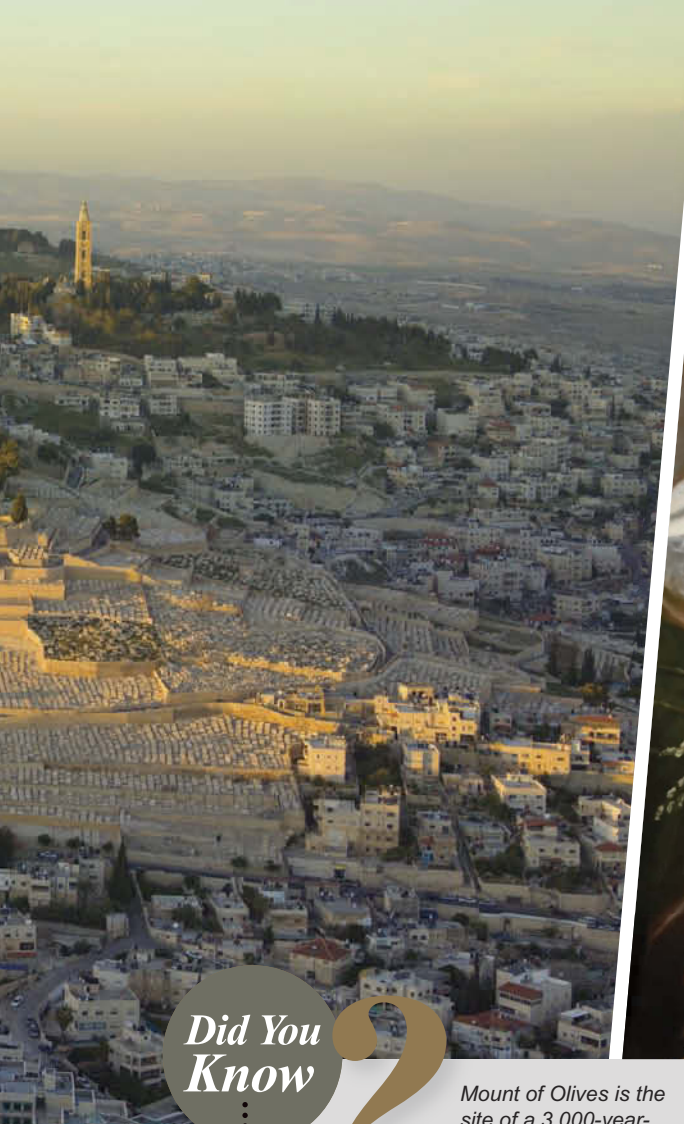
BY WILLIAM BONIN

WHEN JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES HAD FINISHED THE LAST SUPPER, they walked across the Kidron Valley, located on the eastern side of The Old City of Jerusalem, towards the Garden of Gethsemane at the foot of Mount of Olives.

“Jesus told his disciples, ‘Sit here while I pray.’ He took Peter, James, and John with him. He plunged into a sinkhole of dreadful agony. He told them, ‘I feel bad enough right now to die. Stay here and keep vigil with me.’

Going a little ahead, he fell to the ground and prayed for a way out: ‘Papa, Father, you can—can’t you?—get me out of this. Take this cup away from me. But please, not what I want—what do you want?’

He came back and found them sound asleep. He said to Peter, ‘Simon, you went to sleep on me? Can’t you stick it out with me a single hour? Stay alert, be in prayer, so you don’t enter the danger zone without even knowing it. Don’t be naive. Part of you is eager, ready for anything in God; but another part is as lazy as an old dog sleeping by the fire.’” (Mark 14:32-38)



Did You Know



Mount of Olives is the site of a 3,000-year-old Jewish cemetery and 150,000 graves.



Agony in the Garden (El Greco, 1610).



Garden of Gethsemane today.

Kidron Valley today.



Sweat, Like Drops of Blood

The gospel of Luke reports that, as Jesus prayed “Sweat, wrung from him like drops of blood, poured off his face” (22:44). This gospel passage may well be more than just a simile.

Some scholars have theorize that Jesus may have been suffering a very rare condition known as “hematidrosis” in which blood vessels around the sweat glands burst. As the body begins to sweat, droplets of blood also flow out through the sweat glands giving the appearance that a person is literally “sweating blood.”

Hematidrosis occurs only under conditions of extreme stress, which Jesus was certainly experiencing. Jesus already knew in detail all of the upcoming events, including that he was facing one of the most horrible forms of capital punishment ever devised. His body was human, and he would not be spared the intense physical pain of the experience.



Jesus’ capture (top panel) and trial before Pontius Pilate (lower panel).



Did You Know

Gnostic gospels are gospels written in four centuries following Jesus’s time on earth that didn’t make it into the Bible. Some were discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1945, and some have been discovered elsewhere. “Gnostic” comes from the Greek word that means “knowledge.”

Kiss of Judas. (Giotto, 1304).

CAPTURE

After he had found the disciples sleeping for a third time, Jesus said abruptly:

“Time’s up. The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up. Let’s get going. My betrayer has arrived.”

No sooner were the words out of his mouth when Judas, the one out of the Twelve, showed up, and with him a gang of ruffians, sent by the high priests, religion scholars, and leaders, brandishing swords and clubs. The betrayer had worked out a signal with them: ‘The one I kiss, that’s the one—seize him. Make sure he doesn’t get away.’ He went straight to Jesus and said, ‘Rabbi!’ and kissed him. The others then grabbed him and roughed him up.” (Mark 14:42-47)

A “JUDAS KISS”

A “Judas Kiss” is now known as an act of betrayal, which appears to be an act of friendship. For Judas, it was a way to indicate to the mob of soldiers which person in the dark garden that night was actually Jesus.



WIKIPEDIA




*CAPTURE OF JESUS
(Fra Angelico ca. 1437).*

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

DID JUDAS REALLY BETRAY JESUS?

Maybe not ...

Discovered in Egypt in the 1970s and dating back to the third or fourth century, the “Lost Gospel of Judas” portrays Judas as having acted at Jesus’ behest. According to the lost gospel, Jesus believed that it was necessary for him to be freed from his human body and that he preferred that the liberation be done by a friend and not an enemy. 

Jesus heals an ear

“When those with [Jesus] saw what was happening, they said, ‘Master, shall we fight?’ One of them took a swing at the Chief Priest’s servant and cut off his right ear. Jesus said, ‘Let them be. Even in this.’ Then, touching the servant’s ear, he healed him.” (Luke 22:49-51)

A model of the Antonia Fortress. Adjacent to the Temple, and as it appeared in Jesus' time. ...Antonia Fortress, where the Romans held Jesus' trial.



Walking With *the* **Cross**



‘The way of grief.’

BY WILLIAM BONIN

ONCE JESUS HAD BEEN TRIED AND CONVICTED AT THE ANTONIA FORTRESS, he took what might have been the hardest walk of his life—a 600-yard journey to the site of his crucifixion on Golgotha.



Via Dolorosa

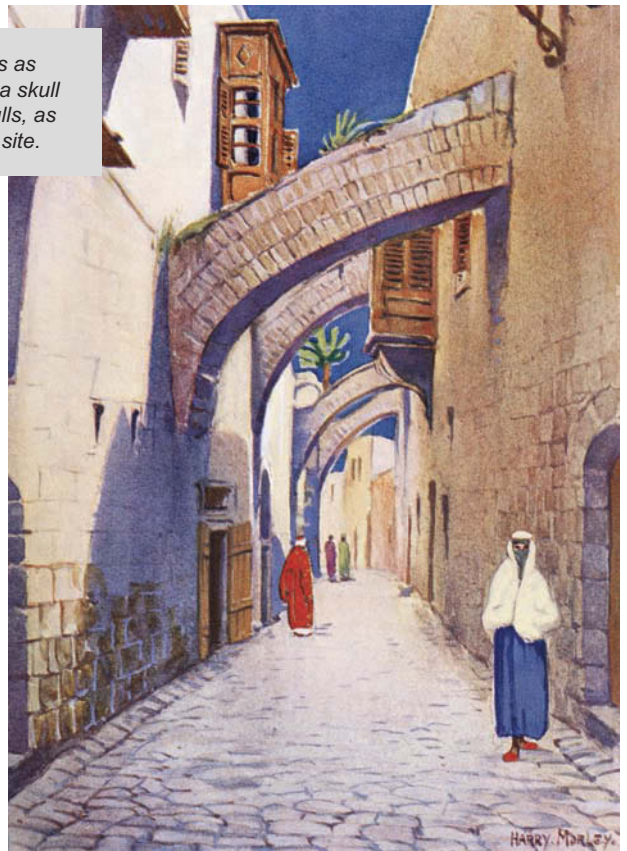
Did You Know?

Golgotha is translated in various bibles as "the place of a skull," indicating either a skull shaped hill, or a place littered with skulls, as this would be common of a crucifixion site.



Church Door on the Via Dolorosa.

Tradition has it that Jesus walked along the "Via Dolorosa" (the "Way of Grief"), now in the Old City of Jerusalem. Today, Christians walk along the Via Dolorosa to experience the Stations of the Cross, sites of the events that occurred along his trek to Golgotha.



HARRY MURLEY

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK; UNIVERSAL HISTORY ARCHIVE/IG VIA GETTY IMAGES; PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK



PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK

Did You Know?

Despite Jesus' crucifixion being one of the few historically undisputed events in his life, the window of time between Jesus' trial and crucifixion receives scant coverage in the Gospels, addressed by no more than a handful of verses.

As he carried his cross, Jesus is believed to have fallen three times, although this is never referred to in the Gospels. As was typical with Crucifixion and certainly seemed to be true in Jesus' case, the pre-departure flogging left the intended victim in a severe pain and a state of shock. While Roman law gave no limit to the number of strikes during the flogging, Jewish law set the number at 39, which was believed to be one blow short of death. Despite these safeguards, it was often the case that the victim died from the beating.

With a cross estimated to weigh between 150 and 300 pounds and having just suffered a severe beating on the heels of a sleepless night, it is easy to see why Jesus would have struggled so. The Gospels do agree that a helper was recruited to carry his cross: As the executioners led Jesus off, "they made Simon, a man from Cyrene who happened to be coming in from the countryside, carry the cross behind Jesus." (Luke 23-26)

“A huge crowd of people followed, along with women weeping and carrying on. At one point Jesus turned to the women and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, don’t cry for me. Cry for yourselves and for your children.” (Like 26:27)

He is also believed to have met his mother and Veronica along Via Dolorosa, but these encounters are not mentioned in the Bible.

Veronica wiped the sweat from Jesus’ face with a piece of cloth. An imprint of Jesus’ face was left on the cloth, which became known as the Veil of Veronica and is a holy relic today. Veronica’s veil should not be confused with the Shroud of Turin, which is said to be an imprint of Jesus’ body after crucifixion.

Upon arriving at Golgotha, Jesus was stripped. A common charitable service was the offering of wine mixed with myrrh, which functioned as a mild sedative and narcotic to ease the victim’s pain and suffering. The soldiers “offered him a mild painkiller (wine mixed with myrrh), but he wouldn’t take it.” (Mark 15:23)

BELOW: *Mixed with wine, myrrh had analgesic properties. Though in pain, Jesus refused it.*



View from the Cross



A punishment for the worst of the worst.

Crucifixion was not a Roman invention—it was introduced to the Romans by the Greeks - but Rome certainly applied its ruthless efficiency in perfecting crucifixion as a practice that would maximize the victim’s pain and suffering. Crucifixion was reserved for the ‘worst of the worst’—slaves, foreigners and the most foul criminals.

Crucifixion began with a warm-up scourging (or, flogging) which, due to the blood loss and pain often left the victim in a state of shock. Crucifixion was too disturbing for decent citizens, so the victim then carried his own cross to the area outside the city walls.




Myrrh tree

Beginning at 9 in the morning, Jesus was nailed to the cross. From noon to 3 p.m., the sky was “extremely dark” (Mark 15: 33). The crucifixion darkness was believed by some Christian writers to be a miracle, while others simply explained that the darkness was an eclipse. However, Jesus’ crucifixion took place during Passover, which begins at the first full moon following the first day of spring. An eclipse during a full moon is an impossibility.

At 3 p.m., “Jesus, with a loud cry, gave his last breath.” (Mark 15:37)

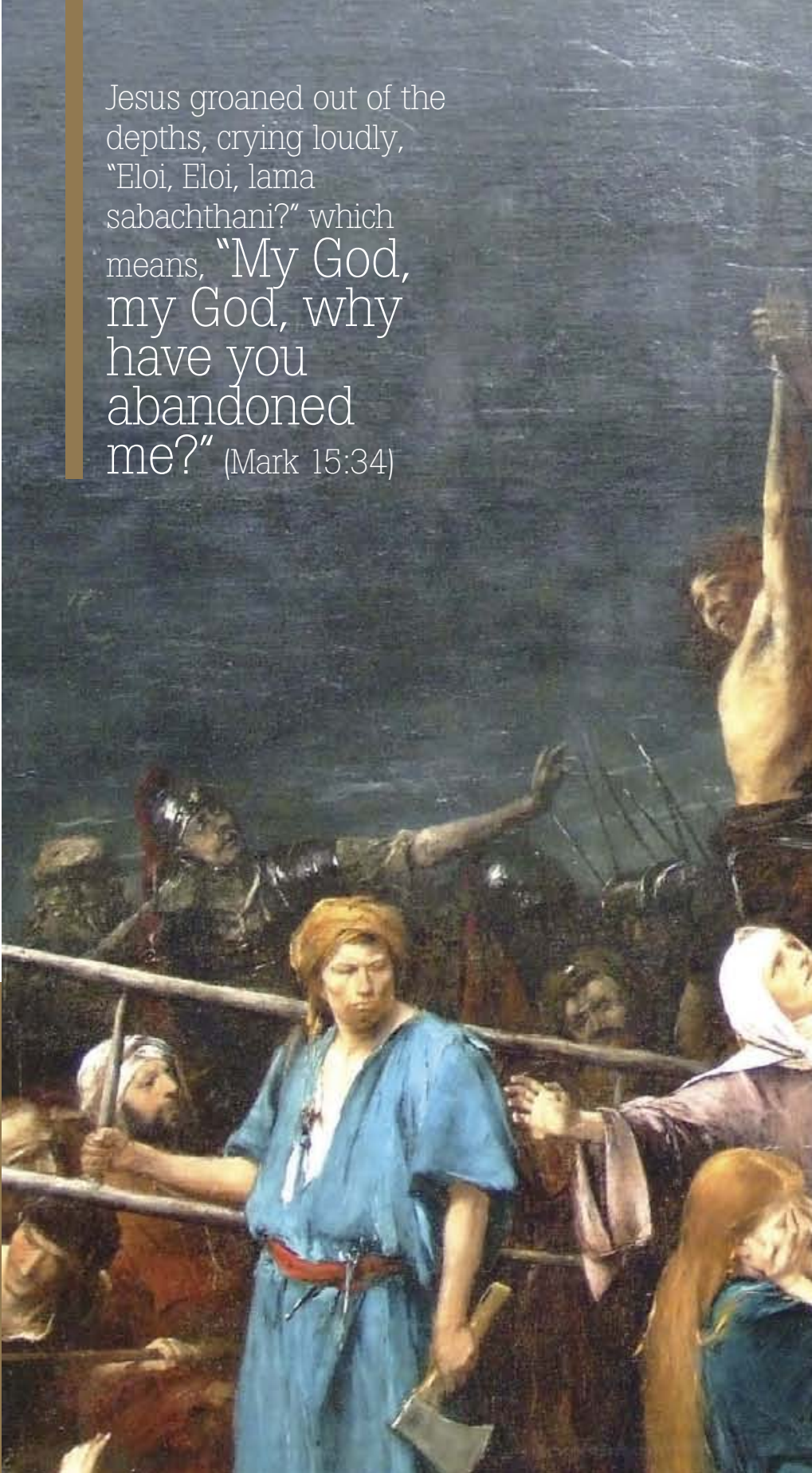
When Jesus died, a variety of events are reported to have occurred. Matthew, Mark and Luke all agree that the moment Jesus died, “the Temple curtain ripped right down the middle.” (Mark 15:38) There was an earthquake and rocks were split in pieces. What’s more, tombs were opened up, “and many bodies of believers asleep in their graves were raised,” the gospel of Matthew adds.

Though the bodies of most crucifixion victims remained unclaimed and left to rot on Golgotha, a wealthy follower of Jesus named Joseph of Arimathea had secured Pontius Pilate’s permission to take Jesus’ body to be buried.

Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus’ body down from the cross, wrapped him in a shroud and “placed him in a tomb that had been cut into the rock, and rolled a large stone across the opening.” (Mark 15: 46) “Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of Jesus, watched the burial,” the gospel adds. 

Crucifixion: A Painful Death

With the full body weight supported only by the arms, the ability to exhale completely was extremely difficult and the victim was able to take only shallow breaths. When the urge to push the body up to take a full breath struck, the pain caused by the nails in the wrists and feet was particularly intense. Eventually, the victim would be too exhausted to continue trying to lift their body and would suffocate. This could go on for a few hours or days, depending on the severity of the scourging. In an effort to speed up the process (or apply mercy) the victim’s legs would be broken, often bringing death within minutes. Victims of crucifixion were often unclaimed but for the few released to relatives, the body was stabbed to ensure the victim was truly dead.



Jesus groaned out of the depths, crying loudly, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” (Mark 15:34)





GOLGATHA

Scripture reveals that Jesus' tomb was built out of a rock, in a garden outside of the crucifixion site (John 19:41).

Many scholars believe that Jesus was buried in The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which is a church that was built in 2 A.D., believed to be where Golgotha was located.

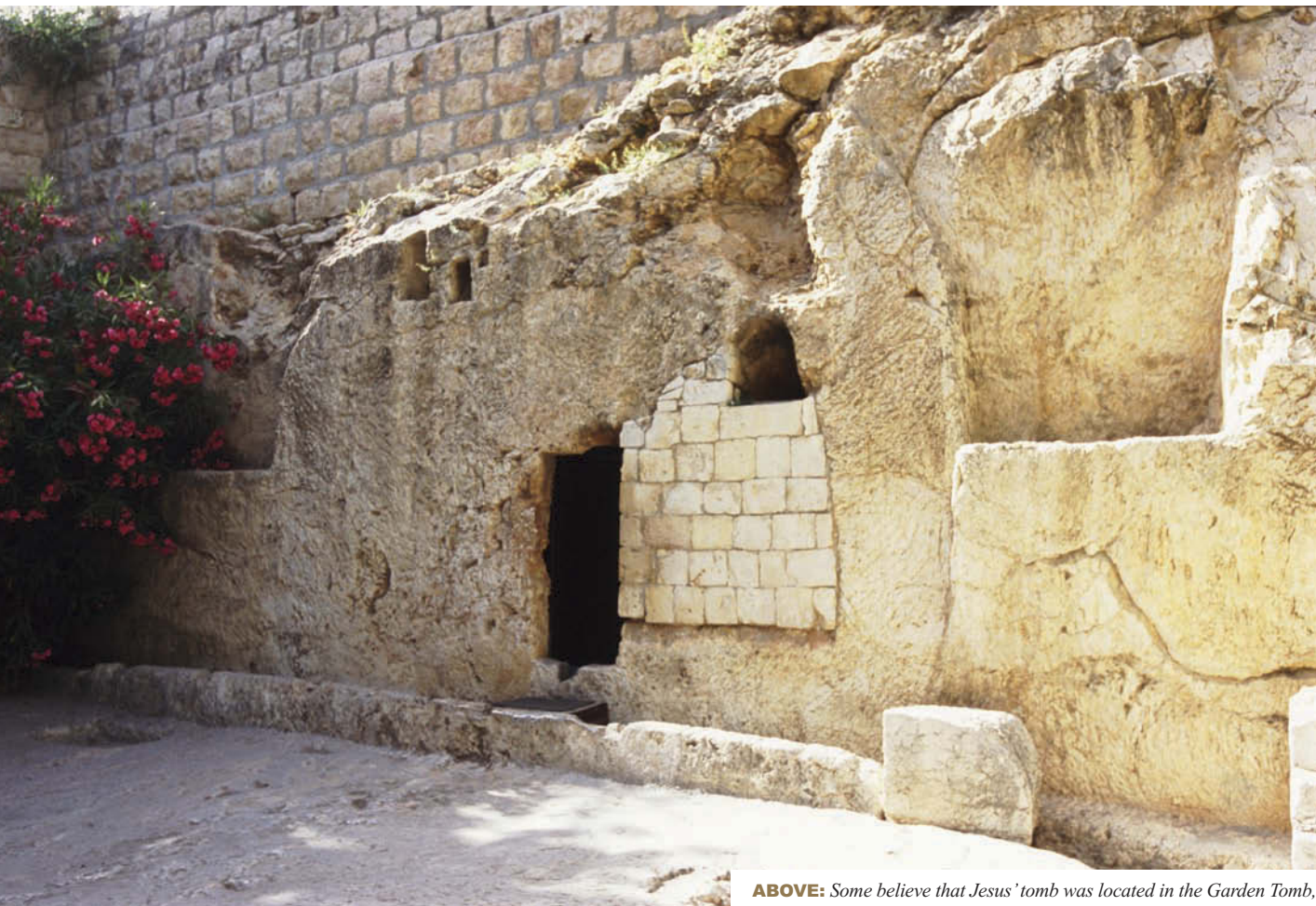
His Last Steps *on Earth*

The resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

BY BREANNA ARMSTRONG

“AFTER HIS DEATH, HE PRESENTED HIMSELF ALIVE TO THEM IN MANY DIFFERENT SETTINGS OVER A PERIOD OF FORTY DAYS. In face-to-face meetings, he talked to them about things concerning the kingdom of God.” (Acts 1:3)

After Jesus rose from the dead, he was on earth for forty days and appeared in several locations, some of them being Jerusalem, Emmaus, Galilee and The Mount of Olives.



SOUTHERN STOCK

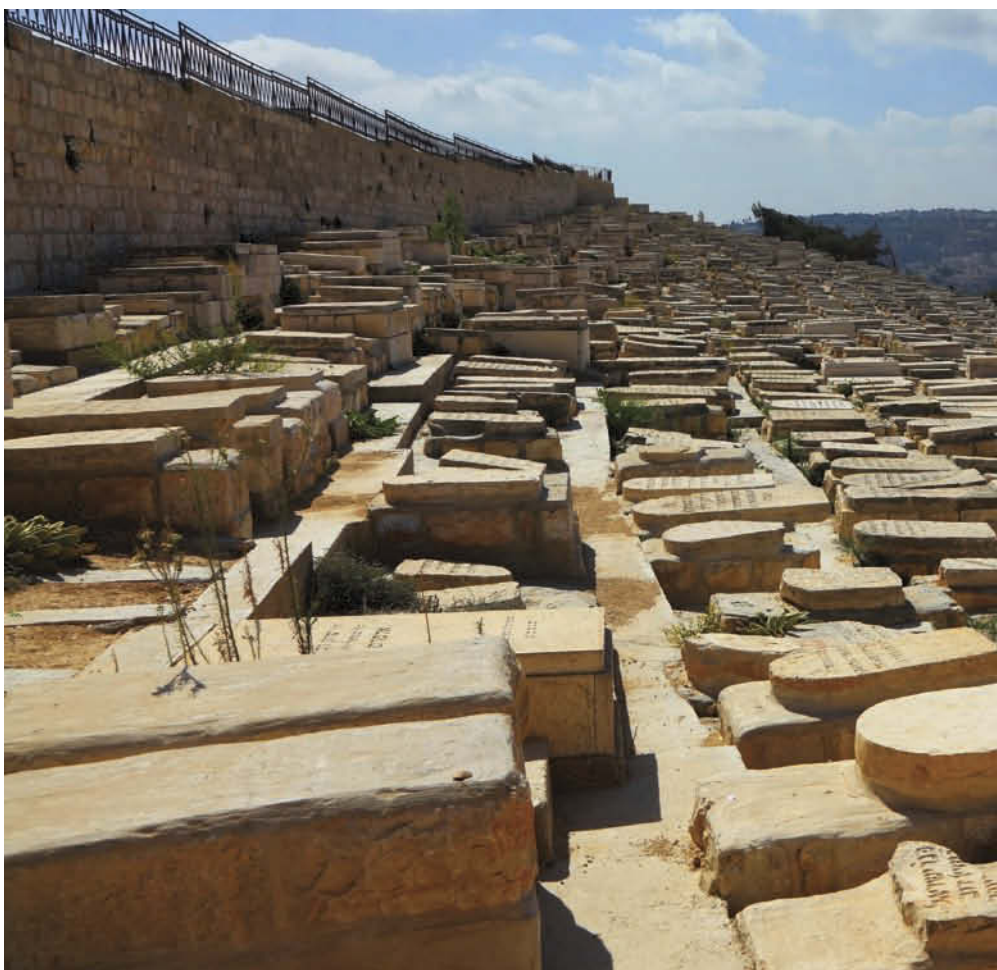
ABOVE: Some believe that Jesus' tomb was located in the Garden Tomb, in Jerusalem, close to the Damascus Gate (pictured here).

GOOD MORNING!

Jesus was in a tomb for three days until his body was found missing. Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” (Matthew 28:1-10) went to visit the tomb only to find it empty. An angel appeared to them to report that Jesus had risen.

“The women, deep in wonder and full of joy, lost no time in leaving the tomb. They ran to tell the disciples. Then Jesus met them, stopping them in their tracks. ‘Good morning!’ he said. They fell to their knees, embraced his feet, and worshiped him. Jesus said, ‘You’re holding on to me for dear life! Don’t be frightened like that. Go tell my brothers that they are to go to Galilee, and that I’ll meet them there.’” (Matt 28:8-10)

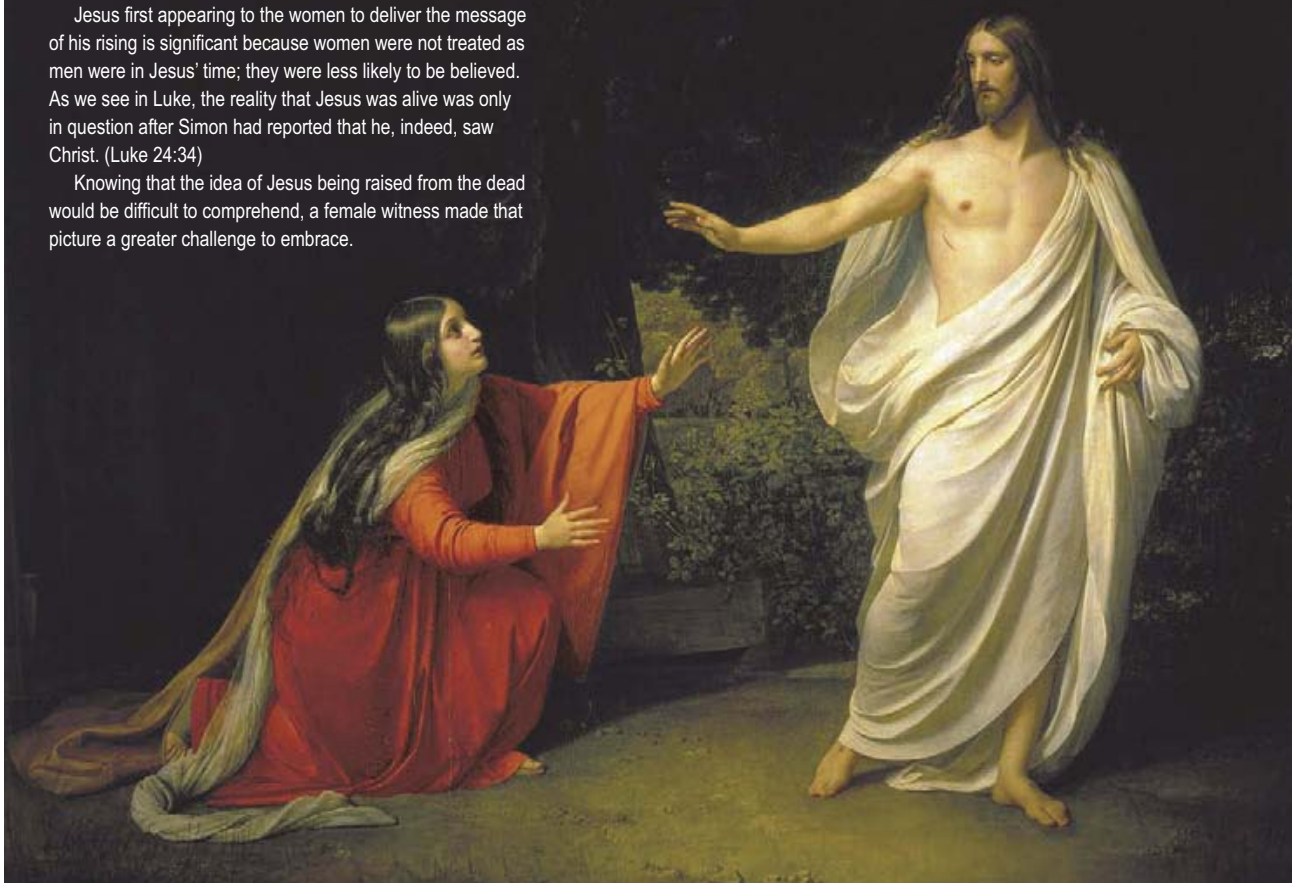
The women left the site of Jesus’ tomb to go tell the disciples, yet the disciples were in disbelief.



The Women Witness

Jesus first appearing to the women to deliver the message of his rising is significant because women were not treated as men were in Jesus' time; they were less likely to be believed. As we see in Luke, the reality that Jesus was alive was only in question after Simon had reported that he, indeed, saw Christ. (Luke 24:34)

Knowing that the idea of Jesus being raised from the dead would be difficult to comprehend, a female witness made that picture a greater challenge to embrace.



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: ALEXANDER ANDREYEVICH IVANOV (1835); PHOTO BY THINKSTOCK

Ancient Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives.



“Rabboni!”

Mary Magdalene spreads the good news. Jesus spoke to her, “Woman, why do you weep? Who are you looking for?”

She, thinking that he was the gardener, said, “Mister, if you took him, tell me where you put him so I can care for him.”

Jesus said, “Mary.”

Turning to face him, she said in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” meaning “Teacher!”

Jesus said, “Don’t cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.’”

Mary Magdalene went, telling the news to the disciples: “I saw the Master!”

And she told them everything he said to her. (John 20:15-18)

Did You Know

In Jewish burial routines, the family of the deceased would mourn the body for seven days by fasting and other mourning rituals. In some instances, this could last for 30 days.

ROAD TO EMMAUS

Jesus was likely buried in Jerusalem and was spotted about seven miles outside of Jerusalem by Cleopas and another follower while they were on their way to Emmaus. They did not recognize him.

“They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. He acted as if he were going on but they pressed him: ‘Stay and have supper with us. It’s nearly evening; the day is done.’ So he went in with them.” (Luke 24:29)

Jesus stayed and broke bread with them, and it was then that the men recognized him before he disappeared. Though scripture describes Jesus’ appearance in Emmaus as being in a different form, Luke writes that Jesus was there on the day of his rise.

Emmaus was located 7 miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was a small town and the road would not have had as many people traveling on it, as a road in Jerusalem would have.



Jesus’ Plan

Before Jesus died, he had said that he would rise on the third day from the dead, according to Luke. Yet, his words seemed to have slipped the disciples’ minds when the women told them of his missing body.

“It is necessary that the Son of Man proceed to an ordeal of suffering, be tried and found guilty by the religious leaders, high priests, and religion scholars, be killed, and on the third day be raised up alive.” (Luke 9:27)



LEFT: *Jesus and Disciples at Emmaus* by Christen Dalsgaard.

The Sea of Galilee, located in Israel.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: MATTHIAS STOM; EDDIE GERALD; SUPERSTOCK



MUSCLE AND BONE

The two men who saw Jesus in Emmaus rushed back to Jerusalem (Luke 24:33) to alert the others, who, again, did not believe what they were saying had any truth, of what they had seen. And while they were discussing what had just happened, Jesus appeared to them.

“Then he said, ‘Look at my hands; look at my feet—it’s really me. Touch me. Look me over from head to toe. A ghost doesn’t have muscle and bone like this.’ As he said this, he showed them his hands and feet. They still couldn’t believe what they were seeing. It was too much; it seemed too good to be true.” (Luke 24:39-41)

Many believe that this room in Jerusalem where they ate the “Last Supper” as well as took refuge after Jesus’ death was the Upper Room. The traditional location of the Upper Room is said to be the site of the Holy Zion Church in Jerusalem. They used the Upper Room for their meetings. (Acts 1:13)

OTHER SIGHTINGS

DOUBTING THOMAS

In John, it explains that one of the disciples were not present when Jesus returned to them after he rose from the dead—Thomas. Thomas was skeptical of Jesus’ return and barked the following statement: “Unless I see the nail holes in his hands, put my finger in the nail holes, and stick my hand in his side, I won’t believe it.” (John 20:25)

Eight days later, Jesus appeared to all of the disciples, including Thomas. This probably took place, again, in Jerusalem because it notes that the doors were still locked in fear of the Jews breaking in. (John 20:26)

BREAKFAST IS READY

Jesus appeared to several disciples again, on the Sea of Tiberius (also referenced as the Sea of Galilee). While they were fishing, Jesus revealed himself to them and miraculously provided a large and plentiful catch.

“Jesus said, ‘Breakfast is ready.’ Not one of the disciples dared ask, ‘Who are you?’ They knew it was the Master. Jesus then took the bread and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus had shown himself alive to the disciples since being raised from the dead.” (John 21:12-14)

WHAT THEY ATE:

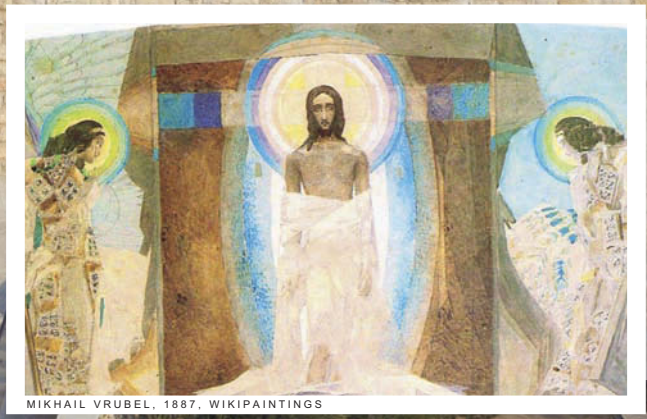
Bread and fish that from the Sea of Tiberius. The fish could have been a whitefish or carp.



Today, the *Tristramella simonis* fish occupies the Sea of Galilee abundantly. This could have been the fish that Jesus ate after that miraculous day with disciples.

The Mount of Olives, Israel, is said to be where Jesus ascended into heaven.






MIKHAIL VRUBEL, 1887, WIKIPAINTINGS

THE ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN

“He then led them out of the city over to Bethany. Raising his hands he blessed them, and while blessing them, took his leave, being carried up to heaven.” (Luke 24:50-51)

Jesus led his disciples outside of Jerusalem by Bethany, which is east of Jerusalem. It is believed that his ascension took place at the Mount of Olives. Jesus’ last steps on earth after his resurrection would have been the trip he made from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives.

“So they left the mountain called Olives and returned to Jerusalem. It was a little over half a mile.” (Acts 1:12) 

Walls of the Old City of Jerusalem.



Walk Where **Jesus Once Walked**

Top places to visit in the Holy Land.

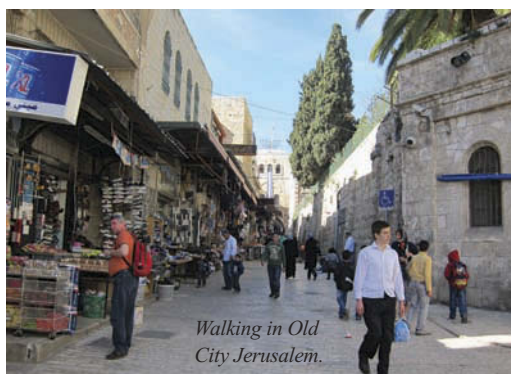
STORY BY BREANNA ARMSTRONG, PHOTOS BY JUDITH ISAACSON

TO GET A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PLACES WHERE JESUS ONCE LIVED, BREATHED, PERFORMED MIRACLES, PREACHED AND WALKED, visit the Holy Land for an experience that you can remember forever.

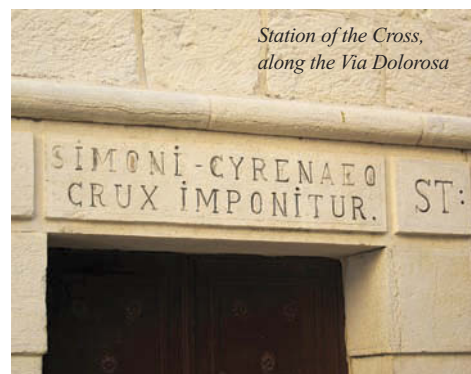
Here are some of the top places to visit:

OLD CITY JERUSALEM

Jerusalem is a prime place to visit for walking the same steps that Jesus once did. One may visit the Mount of Olives, Garden of Gethsemane, Via Dolorosa, the Garden Tomb, the Upper Room and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.



Walking in Old City Jerusalem.



Station of the Cross, along the Via Dolorosa

GALILEE

When visiting Galilee, a sightseer can experience Nazareth, Cana, Capernaum, the Synagogue at Capernaum, Mount of Beatitudes and the Sea of Galilee.



Tourists enjoying a swim in the Sea of Galilee.

GETTY IMAGES NEWS



Enjoy a nice meal at St. Peter's Fish restaurant on the Sea of Galilee.

Best Spot to Visit in Galilee

Judith Isaacson of Jesus Walked Here Tours tells us where the best spots are.

"To fully understand the history and ancient roots of the Holy Land, probably the best place to visit is an archaeology dig. There is nothing quite like seeing artifacts, mosaics, stone walls, ramparts, perhaps treasures, dug up from centuries ago. One ongoing dig is at the Christian fishing village of Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee, where Peter was thought to have been. Life comes alive at the site on a tour with an archaeologist involved in the dig.

Another best spot to visit is a restaurant on the Sea of Galilee at sunset. Grab a table right on the water and order St. Peter's fish, grilled, and a bottle of white wine—Israeli, of course. Sublime."

—Judith Isaacson

Baptisms

Visitors can visit Yardenit, a baptism site located on the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee. It is close to the site where John the Baptist baptized Jesus, and it holds the most baptism ceremonies in Israel today. Recently Qasr El Yahud, the site where Jesus is said to have been baptized, is now open to the public. Guests can choose to be baptized in the waters that Jesus once occupied.

To book a visit and for more information on Holy Land tours, visit www.jesuswalkedheretours.com, or contact Judith Isaacson at trips@jesuswalkedheretours.com.



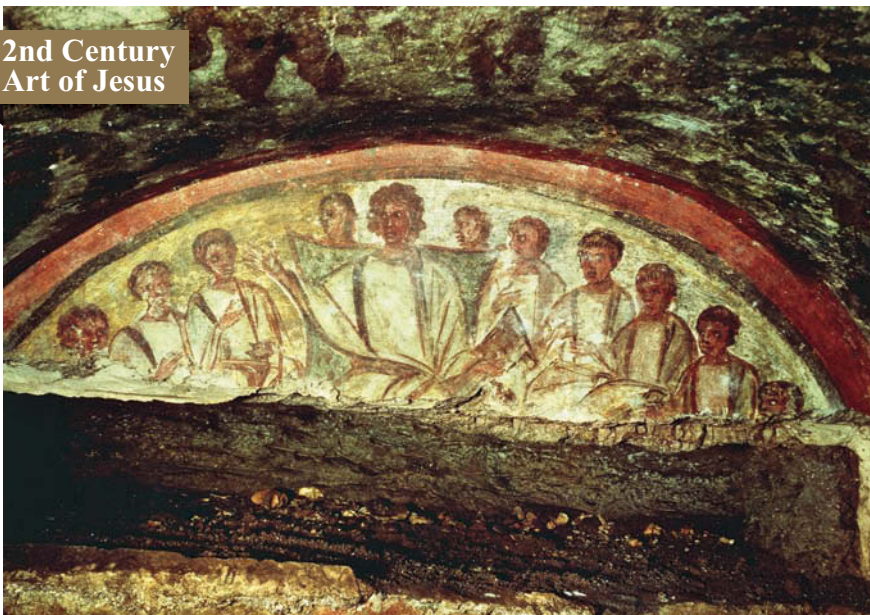
Baptism at Qasr El Yahud, Jordan River.

Jesus in Art


Since Jesus walked on earth, his face is one that has been imagined by artists around the world through the centuries.

BY BREANNA ARMSTRONG

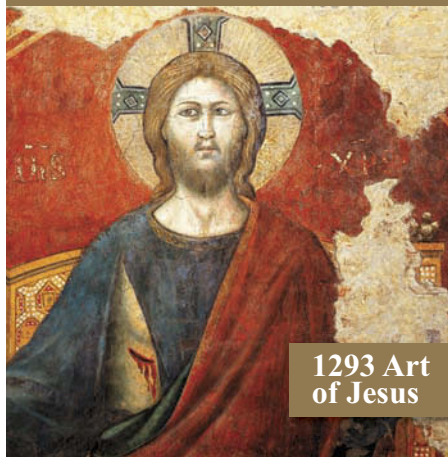
2nd Century Art of Jesus



SOME OF THE EARLIEST PAINTINGS OF JESUS DEPICTED HIM WITHOUT A BEARD. It wasn't until centuries later that images of him took on the thick, full-face beard that is associated with his appearance today.

Here is a look at how Jesus' image has been depicted in history through art. 

1293 Art of Jesus



2nd Century Art of Jesus

Christ and the Apostles, fresco, Catacombs of Domitilla, Rome, Italy, 2nd century. This early picture of Jesus depicts him without a beard.

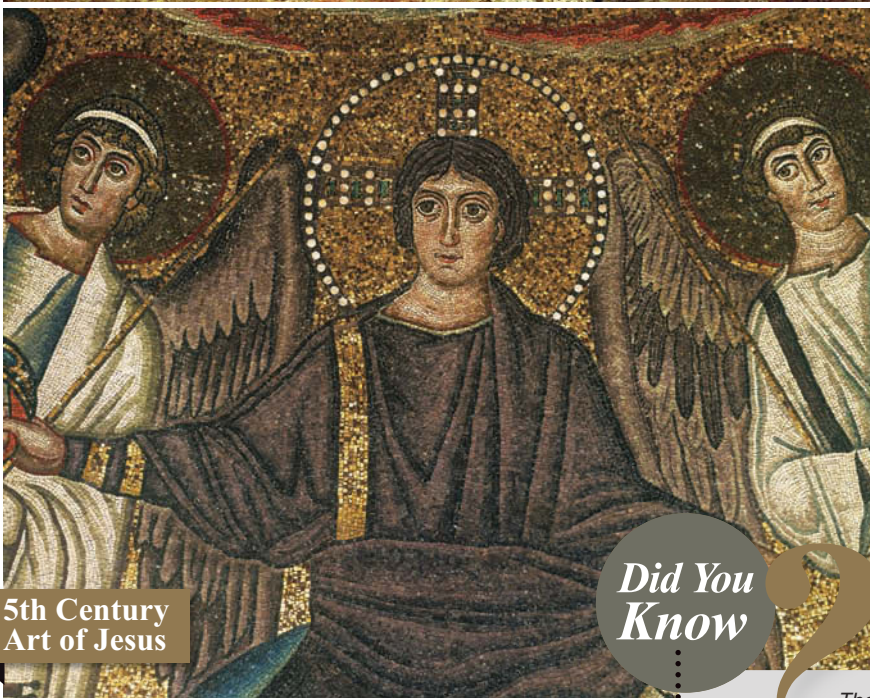
5th Century Art of Jesus

Located in Rome, Basilica of San Vitale's apse mosaic: Christ the Redeemer, dating from 526-47 AD, depicts a beardless Jesus.

1293 Art of Jesus

"The Last Judgment," a fresco by Pietro Cavallini located in the Church of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere in Rome.

5th Century Art of Jesus

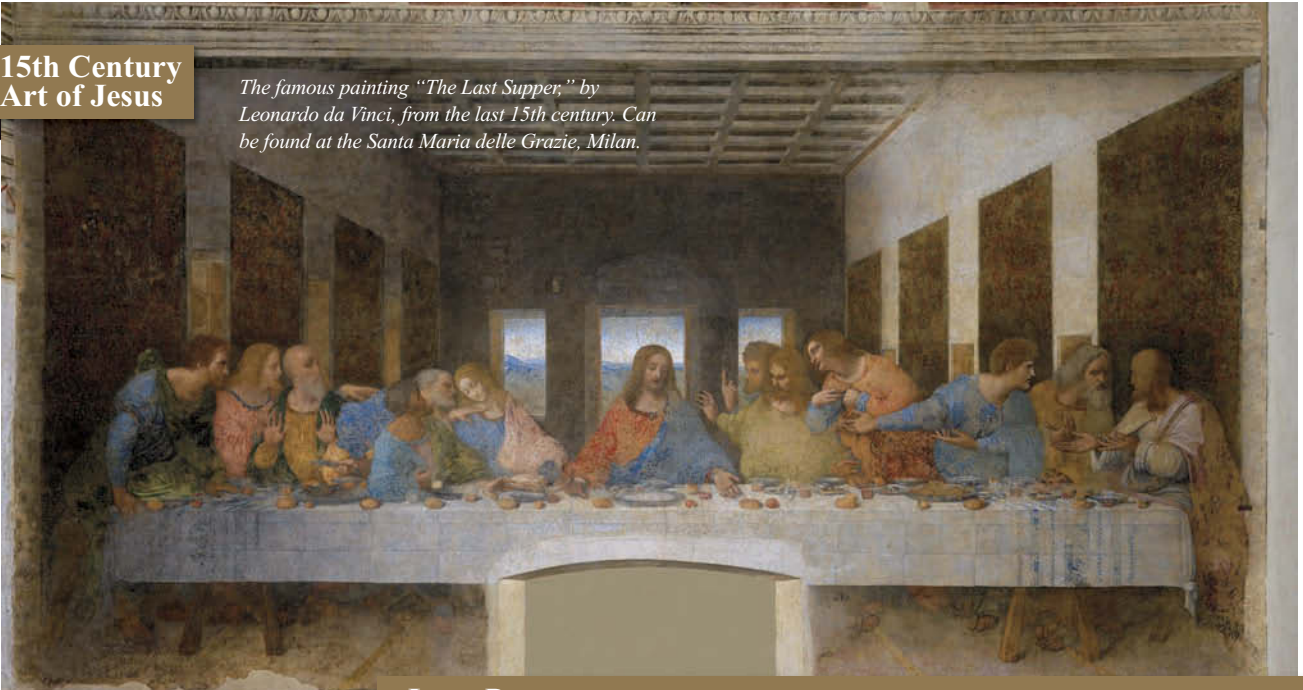


Did You Know

The New Testament does not mention Jesus having a beard.

**15th Century
Art of Jesus**

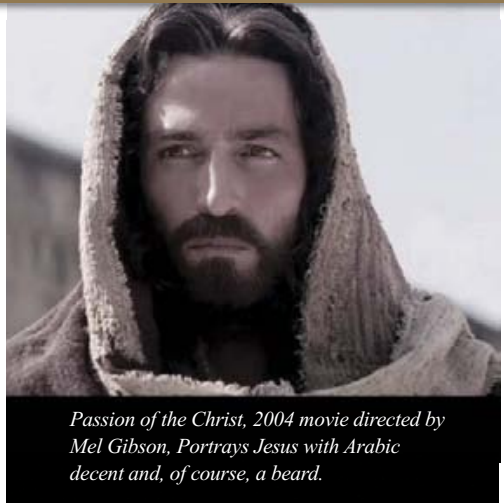
The famous painting "The Last Supper," by Leonardo da Vinci, from the last 15th century. Can be found at the Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan.



Jesus Present



ABOVE: A Chinese illustration of Jesus, Beijing, 1879.



Passion of the Christ, 2004 movie directed by Mel Gibson, Portrays Jesus with Arabic decent and, of course, a beard.



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: DA VINCI; WIKIPEDIA COMMONS; WIKIPAINTINGS; GOOGLE IMAGES (FLICKR); PAUL GAUGUIN 1889; ANDRE DERAIN, 1911

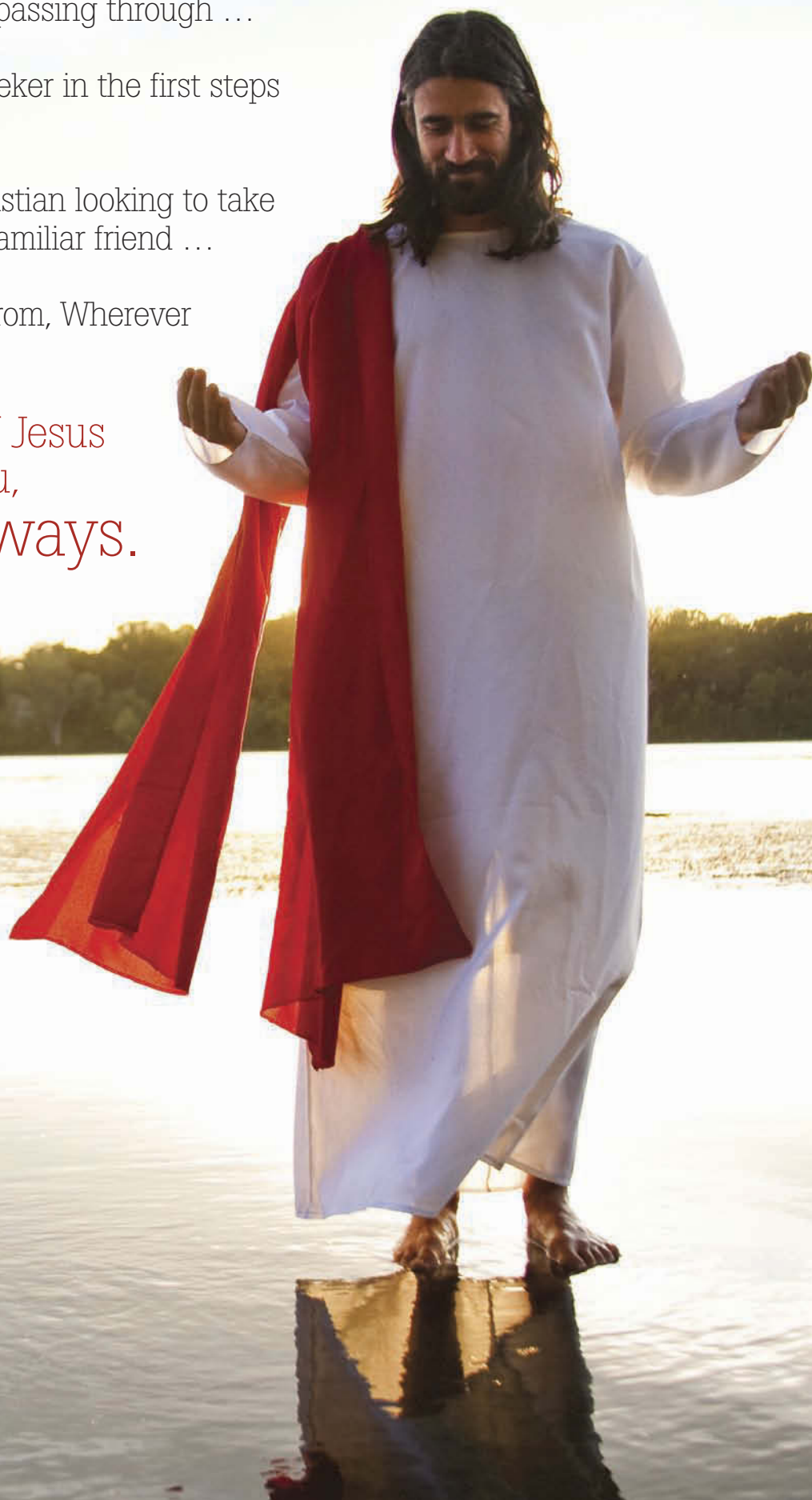
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Words from the *Footprints in the Sand* poem appear courtesy of Margaret Fishback Powers, author of the book *Footprints: The True Story Behind the Poem that Inspired Millions*.



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