1. The Archaeology of Palestine from the Maccabees to the Second Jewish Revolt (167 BC–AD 135)

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It was with considerable amusement that I recently overheard one conference participant say to another, "People are most interested in sex, but aside from that they are most interested in archaeology." The conference was the yearly meeting of ASOR (the American Society for Oriental Research) and both partners in the conversation were archaeologists, so the comment probably overstates the interest in archaeology experienced by the general public. Nevertheless, the remark does capture the fascination that archaeology has for many people. By examining the foundations of buildings, pottery (mostly broken), bones, and even pollen from ancient towns and cities, and drawing on the knowledge of a whole range of experts—including ceramicists, botanists, zoologists, physicists, historians, linguists, anthropologists—archaeologists attempt to reconstruct civilizations long dead. The whole process involves the lively cooperation and interaction of a whole range of people, and can provide interesting insights into such texts as the New Testament (NT), spiced with the entertainment derived from observing the larger-than-life characters that archaeology seems to attract.

Archaeology, of course, deals with artifacts, while NT studies deals with texts. It is important to recognize that the two disciplines form separate endeavors, and illuminate each other more or less by happenstance. Nevertheless, archaeology does have much to offer NT studies, and this chapter will provide a brief survey of some of the discoveries and theories of archaeologists most relevant to the study of the gospels. It begins with two sections that give a general overview of the societies found in Palestine between 167 BC and AD 135. The first section deals with the frequent traumatic changes that overtook such societies, and the second the continuities surviving those changes. It then looks at the regions of Galilee, Judea and Samaria, stopping along the way to comment on some of the significant town and cities.

A. They Were Interesting Times

Archaeologists call them destruction layers. Most civilizations before the Romans usually rebuilt their cities on top of the ruins of a city that had previously occupied the site. Archaeologists are pleased to discover destruction layers as they mark the boundaries between the different layers (or strata) that represent the various time periods that an individual site was occupied. Almost all of the cities of Palestine have several clear destruction layers in the period 167 BC–AD 135.

Historians, on the other hand, describe destruction layers as evidence of wars, or conquests, or revolts. But for those living when they were formed, destruction layers represent times of great trauma associated with the loss of loved ones, loss of dwelling painstakingly built up over years, and the unavoidable witnessing or experiencing torture, wanton murder, rape and other atrocities.

Nor were wars the only disasters that regularly overtook those living in Palestine during this period. Periodic crop failures resulted in famines, occasional earthquakes leveled most dwellings over large areas, and the threat of devastating disease pandemics was ever present.[1] Life was precarious. Indeed it is no surprise that of every 100,000 babies born, only about 45,830 were still alive at age ten, or less than 50 percent. Those who survived to ten years of age had a life expectancy of approximately thirty-five further years (or a total life expectancy of forty-five years), while a mere 5,400 (or 5 percent) of the most hardy and lucky would be alive at age seventy.[2] Life was short, sometimes violent, and marked by frequent losses of those most important in the lives of individuals.

Yet curiously enough, despite all of the uncertainties of life, the period 167 BC–AD 135 enjoyed sufficient stability that it was one of rising prosperity. The late Hellenistic, Roman and early Byzantine periods are marked by increasing population levels and the establishment or expansion of significant cities.[3] Compared to other periods of human history, these were "good times" as well as "interesting times." There are worse things that can happen to a population than to fall into the hands of an exploitative and oppressive government such as the Roman Empire, if that Empire brings relative stability in its train![4]

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[1] In the early Roman period, Palestine suffered from two major famines, the first in 29 BC and the second sometime in 41–54 (the reign of Claudius); there was a major earthquake in 31 BC that killed many people and cattle, and other quakes in 24 BC and AD 19, 30, 33, 37 and 48. See David A. Fiensy, *The Social History of Palestine in the Herodian Period* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), p. 99.

[2] These figures are taken from Bruce Frier, "Roman Life Expectancy: Ulpian's Evidence," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 86 (1982), pp. 213-51.

[3] For example, see figures 102 and 103 in Ze'ev Safrai, *The Economy of Roman Palestine* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 438-39, which graphs the demographic expansion and contraction of Palestine at different time periods.

[4] In this regard it is instructive to consider the evaluation of Herod the Great made by Donald E. Gowan: "Yet, as we attempt to evaluate the man, a more balanced estimate may be that although as a person he was despicable, as Hellenistic kings went he was one of the most

The following table outlines some of the major changes that took place during this time period.

Dates	Ruling Elite	Major personalities and events	Archaeological Period
167–64 BC	Hasmoneans	Under leadership of Mattathias and his sons John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar and Jonathan, a long and bitter war (the Maccabean Revolt) results in establishment of the Hasmonean kingdom	Late Hellenistic
64 BC onwards	Romans	64 BC The Roman general Pompey establishes pro-Roman rulers, and reduces area of Jewish influence to Judea, and Galilee. 37–4 BC Herod the Great, by war and diplomacy is established as "King" over large territory 4 BC–AD 66 Herod's kingdom divided into three: *Judea-Samaria* under Archelaus to AD 6, then under Roman Procurators, including Pilate (26–36). *Galilee-Perea* under Herod Antipas (4 BC–AD 39). *Northern Transjordan* including Decapolis under Philip (4 BC–AD 34). AD 66–70 First Jewish Revolt. AD 132–125 Second Jewish Revolt (the Bar Kokhba revolt).	Early Roman

B. The More Things Change the More they Stay the Same

On the other hand, from the perspective of the majority of the population—those belonging to the families of peasant farmers living in small villages—the conditions of life, though tough, were relatively constant between 167 BC and AD 135. It is estimated that the governing elite and their retainers made

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able of them all. The Jews had done worse before Herod appeared, and would do worse after he died. True, they suffered under heavy taxation to pay for his buildings, but he did provide for the country a badly-needed harbor at Caesarea and made it possible for the Jews to live in relative peace and stability for 30 years. Morton Smith has estimated that some 200 campaigns were fought in Palestine between 232 and 63 BC, so 30 years without a war was a gift of some value." Donald E. Gowan, *Bridge Between the Testaments: A Reappraisal of Judaism from the Exile to the Birth of Christianity* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1976), p. 128.

up only 6 percent of the population during this period, and that fewer than 10 percent of the total population lived in the cities.[5] Later in the first century, as Christianity began to spread, cities became much more important to Christians. Aside from Jerusalem, however, Jesus and his disciples had very little, if anything, to do with cities but were found amongst the rural villages of Galilee, an environment that changed little with the changing of political elites, because the basic realities of life for peasant farmers changed little.

Robert Coote describes the economic facts of life in Palestine where everybody was dependent on the production of grain for bread, the principal food. He writes:

> [E]verybody engaged in the struggle to keep or take as large a share as possible of the annual grain pile. As a rule, if one worked on the land, one's share was small; if one did not work, one's share was often large. The struggle for a share of food brought the residents of palace, town, village, homestead, tent and cave together in the struggle against weather, birds, insects, and human predators, and in political and social interaction rooted in violence, which all abhorred and none evaded.[6]

What is striking about these words is that Coote is describing the basic economics of Palestine at the moment of transition between Canaanites and Israelites, over a millennium earlier than the time of Jesus. But every word is true also of the time of Jesus, and for most of the next millennium as well! The technologies of food production that made life possible for the settlers from the early tribes of Israel in the Judean highlands—plastered cisterns for water, and plastered pits for the storage of grain, terracing, animal-drawn iron-tipped ploughshares, careful selection of crops—all changed very little for the next two millennia.

This is not to say that there had been no changes for peasant farmers between the time of the kings of Israel and Judah and the time of the Roman Empire. Societal changes and technological innovations did make farming slightly more efficient, as did the monetization of the economy and improvements in road and other transport systems. But it is hard to see how the lot of a peasant farmer was improved by any of them, as Gerhard Lenski points out as he traces the impact that technological advances have had on social organization.

Lenski notes the importance to a society of surpluses beyond that needed for survival. In a hunter-gatherer society there is no surplus, and such societies often cannot support the elderly and ill. In such societies there is little to differentiate a leader from the small group that live together. But as technological innovations begin to generate surpluses of food, and weapons and the art of war are unavailable to the majority of the population as they become more expensive and technical, then a ruling elite is able to use force

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[5] These figures are true of most agrarian societies, as is pointed out by Gerhard Lenski, *Power and Privilege* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), pp. 200, 246.

[6] Robert Coote, *Early Israel: A New Horizon* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), p. 10.

to take any surplus for its own purposes. Of course, except in the all too frequent times of war, enough must be left for the peasant farmer to survive. But in all societies up to and including the time of the Roman Empire, peasant farmers were kept at subsistence level only. Any surplus generated was taken from them by the ruling elite who controlled the means to compel obedience to their demands for taxes.[7] Indeed the lot of peasant farmers may have become worse between the times described by Coote and the period 167 BC–AD 135.

It is possible to understand 1 Sam. 8:11-17 to suggest that at the very beginning stages of the Israelite monarchy, the taxes exacted by the king and his retainers may well have comprised only about 10 percent of the rural produce. This, together with the tithe given to the priests (Deut. 14:22-29), would mean that the ruling elites and their retainers would consume about 20 percent of the increase in crops and animals. By the Roman period, this percentage was close to 50 percent.[8] Given that crop yields at the time were of the order of a four or fivefold increase in that which was sown in a good year,[9] once enough seed grain had been set aside to plant crops for the following year, the peasant farmer was left very little to live on. A poor crop, which happened all too frequently, would leave the farmer and his family in desperate straits indeed.

Yet, for all their interest in exacting strict taxation, the interference of the ruling elite in the day-to-day life of the villages in which the peasant farmers lived was minimal. Taxes must be paid, but beyond that, the villages were free to organize themselves.[10] Indeed, at a national level, Roman government itself tended to leave local arrangements in place in their client and conquered territories. Thus, alongside of the Roman government, one could also find many traditional institutions of Jewish government, such as the Sanhedrin, still operating in the time of Jesus (Matt. 26:59 and parallels).

The items that made up a villager's diet also changed little in the millennia between the time described by Coote and the period 167 BC–AD 135. The bulk of a peasant's diet consisted of bread, made palatable by olive oil. It was supplemented by vegetables and some fruits, especially grapes, and only rarely meat or fish. Sheep and goats provided some milk products.[11] Clothing continued to be mainly made from rough woolen cloth. Although some of the more affluent peasants might possess finer clothes that were made

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[7] Lenksi, *Power and Privilege*, pp. 1-296 (*passim*).

[8] Safrai, *Economy*, p. 342; Lenski, *Power*, p. 228. Fiensy, *Social History*, p. 81, mentions that a landowner might demand two-thirds of a crop, or percentages of 50 percent, 33 percent (1/3) or 25 percent. The suggestion that two-thirds of a crop might go to the landowner as rent and other taxes does not appear to be economically viable for the farmer.

[9] See Robert K. McIver, "One Hundred-Fold Yield—Miraculous or Mundane?: Matt. 13.8, 23; Mark 4.8, 20; Luke 8.8," *New Testament Studies* 40 (1994), pp. 606-8, for the evidence supporting crop yields of four to five-fold in first-century Palestine.

[10] Again, this is typical of all societies ruled by elites, as is pointed out by John H. Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), e.g. pp. 118-27, 251-52, 257-58, 273-74.

[11] Oded Borowski, "Eat, Drink and Be Merry: The Mediterranean Diet," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 67 (2004), pp. 96-107.

of linen, multiple changes of clothes made of linen were more typical of the ruling elite and wealthy in society.

In one area, though, there are differences between the time described by Coote and the Roman period: the area of religion and its impact on daily life. The Old Testament period is marked by a constant struggle amongst the ruling elite over religious observance (e.g. 1 Kings 18–19; 2 Kings 9–10, etc). Religious pluralism is also reflected in the archaeological record of villages during the time of the monarchy. Religious practices and beliefs, though, became more homogeneous after the Maccabean revolt, at least in Judea and Galilee.

C. The Villages of Galilee

The origins of the ethnic and religious nature of the first-century Galilean villages may be traced to the time of the Maccabean revolt and subsequent Hasmonean kingdom. This observation demonstrates why the Maccabean revolt makes such a suitable historical starting-point from which to consider first-century Galilee and Judea. The revolt itself was provoked by the decision of the Seleucid ruler Antiochus Epiphanes to insist on the integration of Judea into the wider Seleucid Empire. In the words of 1 Macc. 1:41 (NEB), "The king then issued a decree throughout his empire: his subjects were all to become one people and abandon their own laws and religion." In Judea, Antiochus made it illegal to circumcise children, and set in train a process whereby all those living in the land had to take part in what many Jews would consider to be sacrifices outlawed by the law of Moses.

The beginnings of the resulting revolt are to be found in a dramatic scene, described in 1 Macc. 2:15-28, that took place in the small village of Modein. Antiochus had decreed that altars should be erected in every village, and in the course of time a representative of the king arrived at Modein to ensure that sacrifices were offered on it, and to enrol those who so sacrificed as friends of the king. An elderly priest named Mattathias refused to sacrifice, and went so far as to strike down and kill a citizen of the village who was prepared to do so in his place. He then slew the officers of the king. Thereupon Mattathias and his five sons fled, and formed the leadership of a revolt which had the preservation of their religion as a crucial goal. Many years of bitter fighting ensued which resulted in the deaths of Mattathias in 166 BC, and his sons Judas Maccabeus (i.e. Judas "the hammer") in 161 BC, Jonathan in 143 BC, and Simon in 134 BC. It was the grandson, John Hyrcanus, who was able to negotiate a truce, and then take advantage of the collapse of the Seleucid Empire to establish "Judea [as] the most important military power in the area."[12] A kingdom, let it be said, whose ruling elite had its origins amongst those who were religiously conservative in Judea.

It is the conservative religious motivation of the Maccabean revolt that resulted in a strongly Jewish settlement of Galilee. One of the goals of the

[12] Gowan, *Bridge*, p. 114.

early Hasmonean leaders was the purification of the land, by which they meant that only Jews should be permitted to live in it. This explains why John Hyrcanus forced the Idumeans (who lived in the area between Judea and the desert to the south) to become circumcised, and why he destroyed the Samaritan temple. In this way, the Judaism of those who returned from Babylonian exile—at least as it was understood in the second century BC—came to be the dominant religion and culture of Judea, and indeed of the whole Hasmonean kingdom.

This is important for Galilee because most of the villages still occupied at the time of Jesus were established during the Hasmonean period. True, Galilee had remained settled, if only sparsely, following the destruction of Israel and the widespread deportations by the Assyrians in 722/721 (2 Kings 17:1-6, 24-34), and the destruction of Judah and subsequent deportations of the Babylonians in 587 (2 Kings 24:20–25:26). But these villages tended to fall into disuse. From an archaeological perspective, late Hellenistic is the earliest settlement detectable in the majority of Galilean villages still occupied in the time of Jesus.[13] The population of Galilee from the time of the Hasmoneans onwards is marked archaeologically by increasing finds into the Roman and Byzantine periods. The peak expansion of population occurred in the late Roman and early Byzantine eras,[14] periods later than those considered in this chapter. In other words, the villages of Galilee were all established by those in tune with the religiously conservative policies of the Hasmoneans.

At the time of Jesus this was reflected in the complete absence of many of the otherwise regular features of life in the Greco-Roman world. Of course, villages would not in any case have constructed such Greco-Roman amenities as a theater or a hippodrome. But the villages of early Roman Galilee lack the small idols and other cult objects found elsewhere in the Roman Empire. Indeed, there is a marked boundary between villages which have temples established in the first century BC and those that do not, a boundary that matches that of the geographic region of Galilee.[15]

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[13] This observation tends to make unlikely the argument of Richard Horsley that ". . . most of the Galileans must have been descendants of the northern Israelite tribes." Richard Horsley, *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), p. 173.

[14] See table 2.2, Jonathan Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), p. 33.

[15] In his chapter entitled, "Borders Between Jews and Gentiles in the Galilee," Mordechai Aviam points out that Greco-Roman temples are not found in early Roman Galilee, but are found in neighboring territories. He notes that these temples were largely built in two periods: the first century BC, and the second century AD. He concludes (p. 20): "Determination of the boundaries between Jews and Gentiles is important as it reveals that no mixed communities existed in the rural areas. Unlike cities, where a diversity of beliefs and faiths was very common, small villages were closed societies, especially during periods when deep antagonism existed." See also later discussion of Sepphoris and Tiberius. While it is known pagan temples were built in those cities, it is not usually thought that these date as early as the first century BC/AD. See Mordechai Aviam, *Jews, Pagans and Christians in the Galilee* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004), pp. 9-21

Jonathan Reed identifies four further features as indicators of Jewish religious identity: 1. chalk (i.e. stone) vessels, 2. *miqvaot*, 3. ossuaries, and 4. bone profiles that do not include pork.[16]

The use of the more expensive stone vessels is thought to relate to Jewish purity laws. Plates and storage jars made of stone were probably used because stone cannot become unclean from a religious perspective (see Leviticus 11–15 for laws relating to cleanness and uncleanness), whereas plates and storage jars made of clay (i.e. ceramics) could become unclean. Food served on an unclean plate would become unclean, and because it was not possible to make a ceramic dish clean from a religious perspective, an unclean plate must be discarded. It is thought that several collections of clay pots and other ceramics that appear to have been deliberately damaged (with a small hole placed in jugs, for example), are pottery vessels that have been rendered unusable because they had become unclean. Stone vessels have been found in the early Roman sites from Jerusalem to Galilee. A quarry and workshops have been discovered just outside Jerusalem, and there are at least two further quarries and workshops known from Galilee.[17] Reed is no doubt correct is seeing most of these stone vessels as indicators of the presence of law-observant Jews.

A *miqveh* is a distinctive small pool of water widely found in many Roman 1 archaeological sites. It was used as part of the cleansing ritual for persons who had become unclean (e.g. Lev. 14:9; 15:7, 16-18, 21).[18] A *miqveh*, then, is a feature that represents distinctive Jewish religious practices of the time. Ossuaries are small boxes in which the bones of the dead were collected—something practised by Jews and not others at this time period.[19] The prescription against eating pork is again related to the question of purity—pork was unclean meat (Lev. 11:7), although it is possible that absence of pig bones may be the least useful indicator of the four outlined by Reed.[20]

Reed makes a strong case that these four indicators have been found in all early Roman Galilean villages that have been excavated to date. More

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[16] Reed, *Archaeology*, pp. 43-49.

[17] Yitzhak Magen, *The Stone Vessel Industry in the Second Temple Period* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2002), pp. 1-3, 148-62.

[18] Ronny Reich, "They *Are* Ritual Baths: Immerse Yourself in the Ongoing Sepphoris Miqveh Debate," *Biblical Archaeology Review* (March/April 2002), pp. 50-55.

[19] Steven Fine, "Why Bone Boxes?: Splendor of Herodian Jerusalem Reflected in Burial Practices," *Biblical Archaeology Review* (September/October 2001), pp 39-44, 57.

[20] There are other reasons that might lie behind the absence of pig bones from the archaeological reports. I know of at least one archaeologist who was debating whether or not to publish bone finds precisely because pig bones are well represented among them, although admittedly the site concerned is of a later period. Reed himself, while arguing for the avoidance of pork in a certain place in Sepphoris writes, "Over 450 animal bone fragments have been found in the kitchen area alone, of which only four are possibly pork, statistically considered nil." Reed, *Archaeology*, p. 127. The debate as to the Jewish or otherwise character of Sepphoris will be canvassed later, but it is hard to say that there are no pig bones, when in fact there were some. James F. Strange, in a private communication, and also in James F. Strange, Thomas R. W. Longstaff and Dennis E. Groh, *Excavations at Sepphoris* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), confirms that there is a small percentage of pig bones found in the Sepphoris remains from the early Roman period, a percentage that increases in later periods.

importantly, these four indicators are absent from other villages that have been excavated outside of Galilee. His conclusion that "the term Jews is thoroughly appropriate for the inhabitants of Galilee in the first century, as is the characterization of the Galilee as Jewish,"[21] appears to be inescapable.

Yet, a Jewish Judea and a Jewish Galilee is not the whole picture in first-century Palestine. Between them was a region that most pious Jews would have considered to be dominated by Gentile influences, a state of affairs that goes back to the arrival of the Romans. In the first century BC, a Roman army under the leadership of Pompey arrived in Syria. From there Pompey led his army to Jerusalem to enforce a decision he had made in favor of one of two Hasmoneans vying for the throne. Jerusalem opened her gates to him, but the temple resisted throughout a three-month siege, finally succumbing in 63 BC. From this moment onwards, Rome became the crucial source of patronage for any ruler of any territory in Palestine.

While in the area, Pompey also reorganized the political geography at the expense of the Hasmoneans, considerably diminishing the influence of the kingdom of Judea, and strengthening the Greek cities that had been established in the area. Noteworthy was his establishment of a league of 10 cities, the Decapolis, and the restoration of a number of Greek cities along the plains. Doing so effectively divided the Jewish areas of Judea and Galilee.[22] These "Greek" or Greco-Roman areas eventually came under the control of Herod the Great, but Herod did not change their Greco-Roman character. Furthermore, it will emerge that two of the cities in which Herod did a considerable amount of construction, Sebaste (Samaria) and Caesarea, were largely devoted to the worship of the gods other than Yahweh, and the cities of the Decapolis had always been Greco-Roman. Thus, Judea and Galilee continued to be two "Jewish islands" surrounded by people of other religious faiths and customs. The culture of the Greco-Roman world, while absent in the Galilee in which Jesus grew up and within whose borders spent much of his ministry, was very close at hand.

This, then, is a general overview of the character of the land at the time of Jesus. Many of the crucial villages and cities associated with Jesus have been investigated by archaeologists, and it is to a consideration of some of these that attention will be given for the bulk of the rest of this chapter.

1. Capernaum: A Galilean Village

The town most important to the Galilean ministry of Jesus is Capernaum, a small village on the northern shores of the sea of Galilee, and the place identified as the center of his activities by the gospels (e.g. Matt. 4:13; Mark 2:1).

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[21] Reed, *Archaeology*, p. 55.

[22] Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Holy Land: A Historical Geography from the Persian to the Arab Conquest (536 B.C.–A.D. 640)* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2002), pp. 77-84.

At its greatest extent, during the Byzantine period, the village of Capernaum extended along the lake shore some 800 meters, and inland by some 300 meters, an area of some twenty-four hectares. But archaeological finds dating to the early Roman period, the time that Jesus was living there, are confined to an area of approximately six hectares. This would mean that the village known to Jesus would have had between 600 and 1500 inhabitants.[23]



Figure 1.
First-century Capernaum: Remains from rooms clustered around paved courtyards.
Photograph by the author.

The village already possessed a seawall and paved promenade along the lakeshore at the time of Jesus. This was linked to several piers against which boats could be moored.[24] Behind this promenade, the village consisted almost entirely of single-storied rooms built around courtyards. Often a household would make use of only one room found in a courtyard, so each courtyard could be shared by two or more households. The photograph in figure 1 shows two of these "rooms" or "houses" with small windows made up of long stones opening into a courtyard paved with stones. Although two-storied houses were not uncommon in the first century,[25] the walls of the houses at Capernaum were not thick enough to support a second story. Figure 2 shows a reconstruction drawn by the archaeologists responsible for excavating this part of the site.

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[23] The population estimate is that of Reed, *Archaeology*, p. 153, and close to that of one of the archaeologists who dug the site, Stanislao Loffreda, *Recovering Capharnaum* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1993), p. 18. Cf. the estimate of 1,200-1,500 by Horsley, *Archaeology, History and Sociology*, p. 114.

[24] In Mendel Nun, "Ports of Galilee: Modern Drought Reveals Harbors from Jesus' Time," *Biblical Archaeology Review* (July/August 1999), pp. 19-31, 64, Nun writes that he usually looks for evidence of a harbor by the presence of rocks. But Capernaum was so rocky that he needed to look for an absence of rocks—where the rocks have been removed to make piers. He found several piers linked to a promenade: "Along the shore ran a 2,500-foot-long [760 m.] promenade, or paved avenue, supported by an 8-foot-wide [2.4 m.] seawall" (p. 26). See also the artist's reconstruction showing the piers that form the harbor on pp. 24-25. Nun also notes that the river Jordan exits Lake Galilee at a different place than it did at the time of Jesus, which has resulted in the lake level being raised about 3 feet.

[25] Katharina Ualor, "Domestic Architecture in Roman and Byzantine Galilee and Golan," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66 (2003), pp. 44-58.

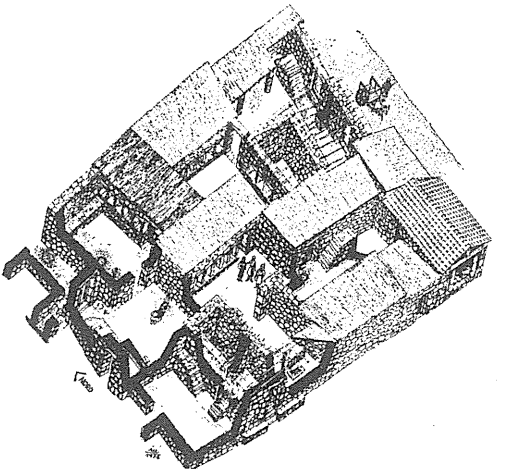


Figure 2.
Reconstruction of part of first-century Capernaum (from Loffreda, Recovering Capharnaum, p. 25). Used by permission of Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem.

What is missing from the reconstruction in figure 3, of course, is people. Two or more families would usually share a courtyard. Many of the two to six rooms (between 4.8 by 3.4 m. to 4.5 by 5.6 m. in size) surrounding the courtyard was used by one complete family, which averaged six people in number.[26] Thus between twelve and thirty-six adults and children are likely to have shared the space of the courtyard, along with their animals.

Today the remains of a large synagogue built using well shaped limestone dominates the site. Over 30,000 coins were found beneath the floor of this synagogue, all dating to the late Roman Period, and confirming other evidence that this synagogue was built late in the fourth century. It is not unlikely that some foundations and a first-century pavement discovered under the floor are all that remain of the synagogue at Capernaum mentioned as part of the gospel accounts of Jesus' activities (e.g. Mark 1:21; John 6:59).[27]

The other large structure from antiquity visible on the site is the foundation of an eight-sided Christian church built in the time of Constantine (d. AD 337), supposedly over the house of Peter in which Jesus stayed while at Capernaum. The archaeologist Stanislao Loffreda makes a case that the first-century room underneath this church was used as a first-century Christian church, which would make it one of the very earliest Christian churches that are known. He further suggests that the church was made out of enlarging a room that actually belonged to Peter's house. Nothing can be known for

[26] Fiensy, *Social History*, pp. 119-33.

[27] John S. Kloppenborg traces some of the debates concerning the existence or otherwise of actual buildings associated with first-century synagogues at such sites as Gamla, Herodium, Masada, Magdala, Jericho, Kiryat Sepher and Capernaum in his article, "The Theodotos Synagogue Inscription and the Problem of First-Century Synagogue Buildings," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus and Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), pp. 236-82, esp. pp. 248-51. Kloppenborg himself argues that not only are these first-century buildings synagogues, but that the Theodotos synagogue inscription should be dated to the first century, and provides evidence of at least one further synagogue in first-century Jerusalem.

certain, of course, but if this room was not part of Peter's house, he lived in one very like it and close by.

Capernaum, then, gives us a very good feel for how Jesus and his first disciples lived. They would have spent some of their nights sitting on the roof of the house, or around a fire in the courtyard. It might be imagined that Jesus took the opportunity to share some of his teachings with them during such occasions.

2. Nazareth

Less is known of Nazareth than Capernaum. Little is said about it in the literary sources. While Jesus spent his childhood and early adulthood there (Matt. 2:23; 4:13; Luke 2:39-40, 51), almost nothing is said about this time of his life in the gospels, and the town is not mentioned in either Josephus or the Talmud.[28] Furthermore, because there have been no less than five major church structures built on the site of ancient Nazareth, there are also far fewer archaeological remains at Nazareth than at Capernaum. Nevertheless, it is possible to gain some picture of what Nazareth might have looked like in the first century.



Figure 3.
Nazareth areas 40 and 41. Note walls defining a courtyard and gate outside of the large cave.
Bagatti, Nazareth, *fig. 28.*
Used by permission of Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem.

Because graves were situated outside of towns and cities at least in law-observant villages in Judea and Galilee—it is possible to estimate the approximate extent of first-century Nazareth from their location. From the graves in the area, it can be determined that the town was less than 400 by 100 meters in extent.[29] Later quarrying has meant that little remains above the

[28] Josephus mentions forty-five towns in Galilee and the Talmud sixty-three. Neither source mentions Nazareth. So Jack Finegan, *The Archeology of the New Testament: The Life of Jesus and the Beginning of the Early Church*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 43; Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), p. 119.

[29] Clemens Kopp, "Beitrage Zur Geschichte Nazareths," *Journal of the Palestinian Oriental Society* 18 (1938), pp. 187-229; Finegan, *Archaeology*, p. 58.

limestone bedrock, although at least three *miqvaot* are known. There are a number of caves, some of which show evidence they were used as homes. Figures 3 and 4 show a photograph and plan of a cave labeled by the archaeologist Bellarmino Bagatti as areas 40 and 41.[30] This large cave, just over two meters high, and measuring about three by six meters, would have formed an ideal dwelling: cool in summer and warm in winter. The bases of some walls outside the cave have survived which appear to have defined a small courtyard in front of the cave, and a gateway. An oven for cooking purposes was found inside the entrance. Other caves in the area were apparently modified to make them suitable for inhabiting as well (e.g. Area 48). It is probably also noteworthy that the contemporary Church of the Annunciation, like all four that had been on the site before it, is built over a cave that was also apparently used as a dwelling place. This cave is reputedly the home of Mary the mother of Jesus, and the place to which the angel came to announce to her that she would bear a child (Luke 1:26-38).

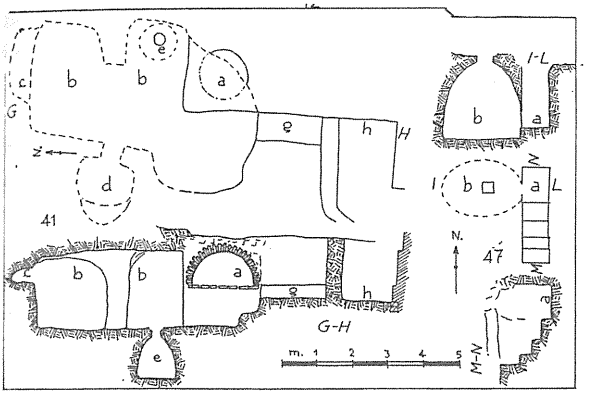


Figure 4. Bagatti fig. 16, giving dimensions of area 41, a roomy cave with an outside courtyard formed by a wall and a door. Archaeological remains indicate that it had been used as a dwelling. Used by permission of Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem.

Other caves were apparently used for storage purposes. One (grotto 37) even has a regular pattern of indentations on the floor which correspond to the type of pattern formed by the bases of amphorae, which were pottery vessels used to store wine. Amphorae had pointed bases rather than flat bases, as the irregular flooring in the first century meant that it was more stable to set them firmly on their pointed base, and lean them against a wall, or other amphorae, than to try and put a flat-bottom vessel on the floor. A wine press was located near this cave. Another wine press has been discovered less than 800 meters from Nazareth, along with terraces and three towers: all the necessary components of a vineyard.[31] The parable of Jesus which begins with a man establishing a vineyard by building a wall and a tower (Mark 12:1-12 and

[30] B. Bagatti, *Excavations in Nazareth*, volume one (Jerusalem: Franciscan Press, 1969), pp. 60-65.

[31] James H. Charlesworth, "Jesus Research and Archaeology: A New Perspective," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus and Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), p. 38.

parallels) could be illustrated by many such vineyards found in first-century Palestine, including one very close to Nazareth itself.

What, then is to be made of this evidence? What was first-century Nazareth like? Despite the best evidence of habitation that survives from first-century Nazareth being found in the caves, it is unlikely that everybody in Nazareth lived in caves. At the very least, the *miqvaot* would have been associated with above-ground dwellings. On the other hand, it also appears unlikely that Nazareth was settled with anything like the density of Capernaum, let alone nearby Sepphoris. Such density would quickly give a population too large for a town as obscure as Nazareth. If Nazareth had been a large town so close to Sepphoris, the sometime capital of Galilee and important to Josephus, as well as the center of much important Rabbinic activity during the compilation of the Mishnah, it must surely have deserved mention. But Nazareth is absent from both Josephus and the Mishnah. Thus, it appears likely that the town of Nazareth consisted of a few scattered dwellings, many of them utilizing existing caves. Figure 6 shows one possible reconstruction of first-century Nazareth.[32]

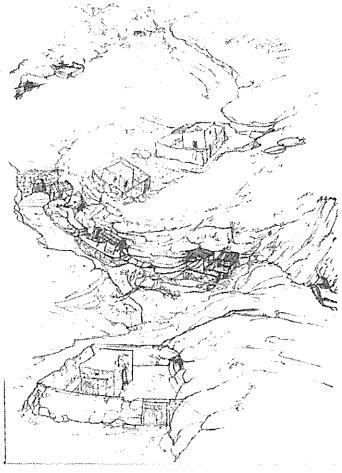


Figure 5.
First-century Nazareth.
Reconstruction by McIver & Collis.

3. Sepphoris

Although not mentioned in the Bible, Sepphoris was almost certainly visited by Jesus and it is most probable that he and his father worked there. Sepphoris

[32] I have presented the arguments for this reconstruction in more detail in "First-century Nazareth," in Bernhard Oestreich, Horst Rolly and Wolfgang Kabus, eds., *Glaube und Zukunftsgestaltung: Festschrift zum hundertjährigen Bestehen der Theologischen Hochschule Friedensau: Aufsätze zu Theologie, Sozialwissenschaften und Musik* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999), pp. 139-59; the reconstruction may be found on p. 155. See John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), plate 3 between pp. 170-1, and the key on p. 37; and Willibald Bösen, *Galiläa: Lebensraum und Wirkungsfeld Jesu* (Basel: Herder, 1998), pp. 105-9 for other possible reconstructions of Nazareth.

was the capital of Galilee for most of the time Jesus lived at Nazareth, and at 6 km. distance, was within easy reach. Destroyed after the death of Herod the Great in the suppression of a short-lived insurrection, and chosen as the new capital of Galilee by Herod's son, Herod Antipas, Sepphoris would thus have been in need of skilled builders such as Jesus and his father Joseph, who are each described as a *tektōn* in separate places in the gospel accounts (τέκτων; Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3). A *tektōn* was somebody skilled with wood and stone, and able to build houses and other structures. The closest modern equivalent would be a builder or carpenter; not, let it be noted, a cabinet-maker or joiner. It is hard to see the small village of Nazareth providing sufficient work for two builders, especially when the large building projects taking place nearby at Sepphoris were in such need of their services.

Sepphoris has been excavated extensively, with at least three teams working on the site in the last few decades. A considerable number of *miqvaot* have been discovered, showing that significant portions of the population of the town were observant Jews. This is supported by the low number of pork bones found. Another prominent feature of the site, though, is definitely Greco-Roman. Dominating part of the city was a Greco-Roman theater, and there is considerable debate as to when the theater was added to the city, although part of it is likely to have been built during the time of Jesus.[33] Perhaps one should not expect a city to have the same social uniformity as one of the local villages. Certainly at a later time the city was both a very active centre of rabbinic Judaism—significant work was done on the Mishnah in the city—as well as a Gentile administrative center, complete with magnificent Greco-Roman mansions decorated with mosaics with cultic themes.[34] Such a mixture of cultures is not unlikely in the first century as well.[35]

The establishment of the cities of Sepphoris and (slightly later) Tiberias had, perforce, a considerable impact on the local economy. The population of these cities (probably between 8,000 and 12,000 inhabitants[36]) provided a market for local produce and other goods, as well as a closer supervision of the collecting of taxes. The population of the Galilee region continued to increase during and after the building of these two large cities.

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[33] Eric M. Meyers, Ehud Netzer and Carol L. Meyers, *Sepphoris* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), p. 33, argue that the Jewish character of the city in the first century, shown by the large number of miqvaoth and the absence of depictions of humans and statues, means that a theater is unlikely to have been built during that time period. On the other hand, James F. Strange, "Six Campaigns at Sepphoris: The University of South Florida Excavations, 1983–1989," in Lee I. Levine, ed., *Galilee in Late Antiquity* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1992), p. 342, argues that the theater was in fact built in two stages, the first stage being already built in the first century. See also Richard A. Batey, "Did Antipas Build the Sepphoris Theatre?" in Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus and Archaeology*, pp. 111-19.

[34] For example R. Talgam, R. and Z. Weiss, *The Mosaics of the House of Dionysus at Sepphoris: Excavated by E. M. Meyers, E. Netzer and C. L. Meyers* (Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2004).

[35] This point has been argued at greater length in Robert K. McIver, "Sepphoris and Jesus: Missing Link or Negative Evidence?" in David Merling, ed., *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shae* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1997), pp. 221-32.

[36] Reed, *Archaeology*, pp. 77-80.

Sepphoris, Capernaum and Nazareth may serve is samples of cities, villages and hamlets from the region of Galilee. These three sites have been discussed with only one passing mention of Herod the Great. However, his imprint is unavoidable in the archaeological remains of Judea and Samaria

D. Herod the Great

Herod must have been an extraordinary individual. He played the game of kings, always a highly lethal game for the losers, and for the most uncertain early stages of his career, during a very turbulent time. Rome was in transition between republic and principate. During Herod's time, power in the east passed in turn from Caesar to Cassius to Anthony to Octavian (Augustus). Several of these were enemies, and Anthony and Octavian were on opposite sides of a civil war. But Herod managed to gain favor with each of them in turn! His big opportunity came when the Parthians installed a Hasmonean as king (Antigonus). Herod went to Rome, and was appointed King over Judea. All he had to do was to take his kingdom by force from Antigonus, which he then set about doing. By 37 BC, Herod was in power. He reigned with total ruthlessness from then until his death in 4 BC.

Herod's reign lasted for over 30 years, and during that time he embarked on many magnificent building projects. As well as the complete rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem, he built an important palace there. He established the port city of Caesarea Maritima, rebuilt Samaria (and called it Sebaste), and constructed magnificent palace fortresses at Masada, Herodium and Machaerus. He built a sumptuous palace at Jericho, and one of the best preserved first-century monumental buildings whose walls have survived nearly intact—the building over the cave of Machpela, the traditional place of the burial of Abraham (Gen. 29:8-9).

E. Jerusalem

The Jerusalem that Jesus visited, and where he eventually met his death, was a city significantly shaped by the architectural achievements of Herod the Great. Herod's palace with its three tall towers dominated the main city gate. The most prominent architectural feature of the city itself was the temple that Herod rebuilt. The so-called second temple was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, but even today the surviving foundations of the temple dominate the old city of Jerusalem.

Josephus describes what must have been a very interesting conversation between Herod the Great and the priests in charge of the temple.[37] Herod explained that he wished to re-build the temple, but met with opposition, because of fears that the job would not be completed. As a measure of good faith, Herod gathered the necessary supplies to rebuild the temple, and trained some of the priests to do the necessary work in places only priests were

[37] Josephus, *Ant.* 15.380-425.

permitted to go. He enlarged the area of the temple mount, and, as well as rebuilding the temple, built a two storied colonnade across the south of the temple mount, the so-called royal portico. Josephus says that "the thickness of each column [of the royal portico] was such that it would take three men with outstretched arms touching one another to envelop it; [and] its height was twenty-seven feet [8 m.]"[38] In fact, archaeologists have discovered some of the columns from this portico, and they are of an impressive size. They also discovered steps from the second temple outside the southern wall, as well as evidence for entry doors. A reconstruction of this area of the temple may be found in figure 6.[39]

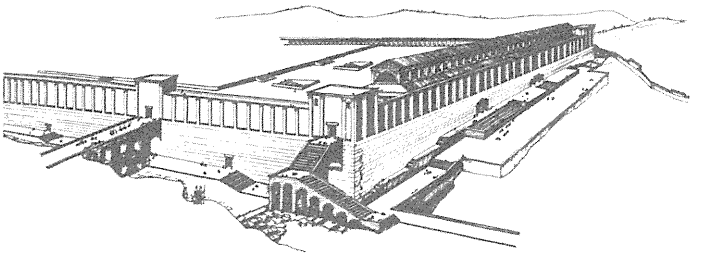


Figure 6. Reconstruction of south-western corner of Herod's Temple Mount [for publication details see n. 39]. Used by permission of the Israel Exploration Society, Jerusalem.

Two disasters occasioned by war have enabled the archaeological reconstruction of much of first-century Jerusalem. The first was the destruction of the city by the Romans in AD 70. The next city was rebuilt over the ruins of the city destroyed in 70, and thus many of the foundations and the bottoms of walls of the earlier city were preserved under a clearly discernible destruction layer. An opportunity for archaeological investigation of parts of Jerusalem arose in 1967. Large parts of the city had been destroyed in bitter fighting between 1948 and 1967, thus allowing access to the various layers of remains from earlier cities long buried. While most of this area has now been rebuilt, several of the finds made by archaeologists have been made accessible to the public. In one of these places, the so-called burnt house, the burnt remains of a female arm were found, as well as a spear propped in a corner.

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[38] Josephus, *Ant.* 15:413.

[39] This reconstruction of the south-west corner of Herod's temple mount is reproduced in several places, e.g., Benjamin Mazar, "Excavations Near the Temple Mount Reveals Splendors of Herodian Jerusalem," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 6, no. 4 (July/August 1980), pp. 56-67 and Y. Yadin, ed., *Jerusalem Revealed* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1975), p. 27; D. F. Payne, "Jerusalem," in J. D. Douglas, ed., *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary: Part 2* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1980), p. 757. See also David Jacobson, "Herod's Roman Temple," *Biblical Archaeology Review* (March/April 2002), pp. 19-27, 60-61 for a more recent color reconstruction of this part of Herod's temple complex, and W. Harold Mare, *The Archaeology of the Jerusalem Area* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), pp. 140-59, for a summary of what is known of the construction techniques used in its building.

Some named weights allowed the identification of the owner of this particular house as belonging to one of the high priestly families, which may well explain why more stone vessels were found in it than pottery vessels (as noted earlier, from a religious perspective stone plates and bowls do not become unclean as can pottery plates and bowls). Many of the more sumptuous excavated houses in Jerusalem also contained a *miqveh*.

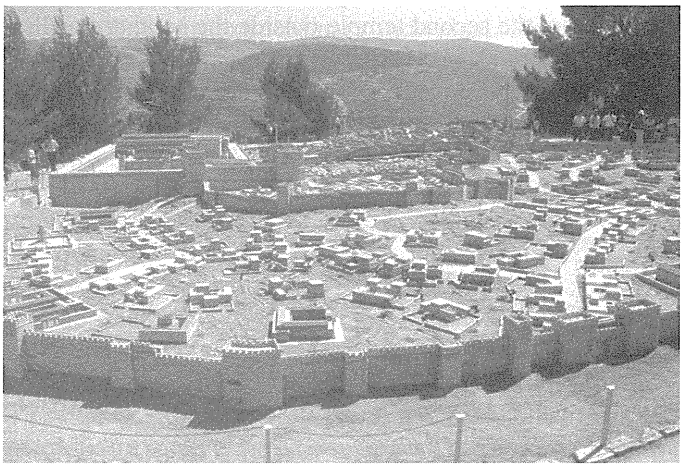


Figure 7. The Holy land Hotel model of Jerusalem just before its destruction in AD 70 by the Romans. Note the way the temple dominates the city. The so-called third wall in the foreground was not built at the time of Jesus. Photograph by the author.

Several other landmarks associated with the gospel accounts of Jesus have been investigated archaeologically, including the Siloam pool. This pool is connected to the Gihon spring by a tunnel that goes back to the time of king Hezekiah (715 to 647/6 BC). The steps of the actual pool have been partially exposed in recent years.[40] The place of the crucifixion of Jesus has occasioned great interest throughout the centuries, and deserves separate consideration.

F. The Place of the Crucifixion

The period of the first Christian Emperor, Constantine the Great (ruled 306–337), marks the emergence of Christian architecture throughout the Mediterranean and Palestine. On a pilgrimage to Palestine, his Christian mother (Empress Helena) naturally was curious to know the place of the crucifixion, and a site was pointed out to her. She thereupon arranged for a church to be built over it. As the workmen were digging the foundations for the new church, they received remarkable confirmation of the correctness of its location when they found the true cross on which Jesus had been crucified,

[40] Hershel Shanks, "The Siloam Pool where Jesus Cured the Blind Man," *Biblical Archaeology Review* (Sept/Oct 2005), pp. 16-23.

or so the story goes. The Constantinian church, inaugurated, but not yet complete in 335, was the first of a number of structures built on the site, culminating in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher which today may be visited in the old city of Jerusalem. The vicissitudes of history have left the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian, Syrian Orthodox and Coptic churches with control over various parts of the building, and visitors find the different sections in various stages of restoration and using various styles of religious iconography. If visiting at the appropriate time of day, visitors may also be treated to several different liturgies all taking place at the one time.

It is no surprise, then, that many find the so-called garden tomb—with its large rolling stone, just to the north of the old city behind a rock formation which has the appearance of a skull[41]—a more congenial place to imagine the burial of Jesus. For all that is uncertain about the location of the actual tomb of Jesus, one thing is certain: the garden tomb is from the wrong time period, and is definitely *not* the tomb of Jesus.[42] The major objection to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher as the location of Golgotha is that it is found within the walls of the old city proves to be groundless. It lies outside of the "second" wall of Jerusalem, the wall that existed at the time of Jesus. When the third wall was completed just before the revolt of 66–70, the bones of the graves found in the area on which the Church of the Holy Sepulcher now stands were moved outside of the new city boundaries.

The various buildings built on the site have damaged much of the crucial archaeological evidence. What survives, though, shows that the place was originally a stone quarry. Empty tombs were also found there. Some remains survived from the temple to Venus that the Emperor Hadrian (117–138) built there. This temple was demolished on the orders of Constantine to make way for the new Christian church.[43] Nothing was found that would contradict the supposition that this was the place where Jesus was crucified and where he was buried, but little more can be said with confidence.

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[41] The Garden tomb is built into a hill now described as Gordon's Calvary. While visiting Jerusalem in 1883–84, Charles G. Gordon accepted an earlier suggestion by Otto Thenius that a rocky outcrop to the north of the old city wall which appeared somewhat like a skull is the most likely place for Golgotha (a photograph of the rocky outcrop as it would have appeared to him which was taken before most of the modern building that has obscured the site, may be found in Shimon Gibson, *Jerusalem in Original Photographs 1850–1920* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003], p. 144).

[42] Investigated in 1974 by Israeli archaeologist, Gabriel Barkay, the style of tomb is that of the First Temple period (eighth or seventh century BC), and thus far too early to be that used for Jesus (Hershel Shanks, *Jerusalem: An Archaeological Biography* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 200). Matt. 28:59-60, Luke 23:53 and John 19:41 all insist that Jesus was buried in a newly excavated, unused tomb, which must therefore date to the first century AD.

[43] Shimon Gibson and Joan E. Taylor, *Beneath the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Jerusalem* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1994), *passim*. See, e.g. the time line on p. xix.

G. The Archaeology of Crucifixion

Curiously enough, although many are known to have been crucified in Palestine during the Roman era, only one surviving skeleton can be identified as belonging to a man who met his death by crucifixion. His bones were amongst those found in some tombs near Mount Scopus, north of Jerusalem. There archaeologists excavated four cave tombs, and from pottery found in them were able to determine that the skeletons that were found dated from between the second century BC and AD 70. Bones from thirty-five individuals were discovered, and their manner of death reveals much about the violent conditions that prevailed in first-century Palestine. Three children appear to have died from starvation, and another child of four died after an arrow penetrated the occipital bone of his skull. A woman in her early twenties died in a fire. A young man of about seventeen years likewise burned to death, but the pattern of charring on his bones suggest that he was deliberately burned to death on a rack. A woman of about sixty died from a massive wound to the head, of the type that would be inflicted by a mace. A woman in her early thirties died in childbirth. We know death resulted from an unsuccessful attempt to give birth because the unborn fetus was discovered still wedged in her pelvis. These are the type of deaths that left evidence on the bones from which inferences can be drawn. The other bones are from individuals who died through illnesses or accidents the nature of which cannot so far be identified. These bones illustrate once more that in first-century Palestine, health was generally poor amongst the populace and that life was often short and brutal.

For Christians, though, the most interesting bones from those found on Mount Scopus are those of a young male of between twenty-four and twenty-eight years called Jehohanan, who was crucified. Those that crucified him apparently had trouble removing the nail through his ankles into the cross, and his feet were cut off from the body to make it easier to free the nail. This much can be inferred from the severed ankle bone with the nail still in place, together with the knot in the wood in which it was embedded. There is also a groove in the lower third of Jehohanan's right radial bone, which was apparently caused by a nail put through the forearm to fix his arms to the cross beam of the cross.[44]

There is some debate as to how to interpret the evidence of the remains of Jehohanan. Although different suggestions have been made, my preference is still for the one published with the original 1973 article reproduced in figure 10.[45]

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[44] The details of the thirty five sets of bones are conveniently gathered by J. H. Charlesworth, in his article, "Jesus and Jehohanan: An Archaeological Note on Crucifixion," *Expository Times* 84 (1972–73), pp. 147-48.

[45] The diagram in figure 10 is taken from Charlesworth, "Jesus and Jehohanan," p. 149. Other suggestions may be found in Vilhelm Møller-Christensen, "Skeletal Remains from Giv'at ha-Mivtar," *Israel Exploration Journal* 26 (1976), p. 36; and Joseph Zias and Eliezer Sekeles, "The Crucified Man from Giv'at ha-Mivtar: A Reappraisal," *Israel Exploration Journal* 35 (1985), p. 27.

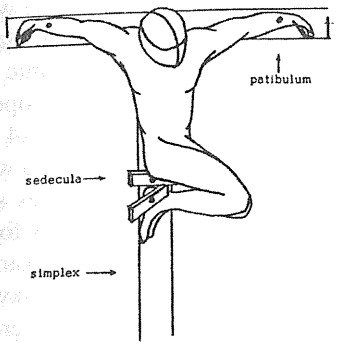


Figure 8.
Reconstruction of method of crucifixion. Reproduced with permission from James H. Charlesworth, "Jesus and Johanan: An Archaeological Note on Crucifixion," ©Expository Times 1972–73, by permission of Sage Publications Ltd..

By the time the victim was finally mounted on the cross, he would usually have been considerably weakened by the pain and loss of blood occasioned by his scourging before crucifixion, and by the violence associated with positioning him on the cross. The blood would attract flies to the naked body of the victim, and with pinned limbs it would be impossible to brush them away. Death, interestingly enough, was most frequently by asphyxiation. It is impossible to breathe properly while hanging from the arms, so the victim would have to push up with the feet to be able to breathe. The nails through the feet made this supremely painful. The victim would attempt to sit on the half seat (*sedecula*), but would slip off, painfully jarring his wounds. Then he would struggle to stand upright, or sit on the half seat, and the process would continue on. Eventually, he would become so weakened that he could not push himself up, and would die from lack of oxygen. This process could take some days if the victim was strong and healthy. If, for some reason, it was wished to hasten death, the legs of the victim could be broken, so that being unable to struggle for breath, the victim would die fairly quickly.[46] The whole procedure was designed to provide the most horrifying death imaginable.

H. The Greco-Roman Cities of Caesarea Maritima, Samaria, Nablus and the Decapolis

Herod, the rebuilder of the magnificent Jewish temple at Jerusalem, also rebuilt or established a number of large Greco-Roman cities, prominent amongst which were the port city of Caesarea Maritima and the inland city of Sebaste (Samaria).

Caesarea has been extensively explored by archaeologists, who have revealed many of the important features of the city which Herod built on the remains of the earlier port of Strato's Tower. Much of the breakwater of Herod's city survives, and has been examined by underwater archaeologists, who discovered the fascinating building technique used in its formation. The

[46] The medical cause of death is explored in the article, by William D. Edwards, Wesley J. Gabel, and Floyd E. Hosmer, "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," *Journal of American Medical Association* 255 (1986), pp. 1455-63.

Romans used a form of concrete built up of layers of lime and sand in which large lumps of rock (aggregate sized 100-300 mm.; or 4-12 in.[47]) were placed. It could be strengthened and made waterproof by the addition of volcanic sand (*pozzolana*) and/or crushed pottery or tiles. Techniques had been developed to form concrete in underwater locations. For Caesarea, five large (7 by 14 by 4 m.) watertight boxes were constructed of imported wood, floated out to where they were to be positioned, and gradually filled with concrete until they sank. Not only was the wood for the barges imported, much of the materials for the concrete used at Caesarea was also imported. The *pozzolana*, for example, was imported from Vesuvius in Italy.[48] The design of the harbor breakwater survived Herod, and lasted till the end of the first century, before being eroded by the sea, whereupon the harbor became unusable in the second century AD.

Three colossal statues stood at the entrance to the harbor, marking the city as a non-Jewish Greco-Roman city, a fact quickly confirmed to somebody arriving by sea by the very large temple dedicated to the goddess Roma and to Caesar Augustus that dominated the foreshore.[49] Sea travelers could also, no doubt, see the large Roman theater that was built further along the seashore. The theater has been restored by modern archaeologists. A notable discovery on a stone re-used in a fourth-century repair of one of the staircases of theater was an inscription that named Pontius Pilate,[50] who previously had only been known from literary sources. The Roman procurators made Caesarea the center of their administration, rather than Jerusalem. The city also possessed a hippodrome / amphitheater which was used to stage chariot races, athletic competitions, gladiatorial games and wild animal fights.[51]

Samaria, which Herod renamed Sebaste in honor of Caesar Augustus (*Sebastos* is the Greek equivalent of Augustus), was another distinctively Greco-Roman city rebuilt by Herod. As well as Roman-style houses with atriums and colonnaded gardens, and a theater, the city was dominated by a magnificent temple which had within it a colossal statue of Augustus, remains of which have been found by archaeologists.

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[47] Modern concrete uses lime, clay, metallic salts, sand and aggregate about 25 mm in diameter.

[48] Christopher Brandon, Stephen Kemp and Martin Grove, "*Pozzola*, lime, and singe-mission barges (area K)," in K. G. Holum, A. Raban and J. Patrick, eds., *Caesarea Papers 2* (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1999), pp. 169-78.

[49] Kenneth G. Holum, "Caesarea's Temple Hill," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 67 (2004), pp. 184-99.

[50] Four lines of Latin text are legible on the stone, and enough survives that it is possible to reconstruct the inscription with some certainty: [CAESARIEN] S (IBUS) TIBERIEVM [PON] TIUSPILATUS [PRAEF]ECTVSIVDA[EA]E, which may be translated: "To the people of Caesarea Tiberieum Pontius Pilate Prefect of Judea." Jack Finegan, *The Archaeology of the New Testament: The Life of Jesus and the Beginning of the Early Church* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 138-39.

[51] Useful aerial photos showing the extent of modern excavations and the restored theatre, as well as the site as it was in 1917 may be found pp. 166-67 of Benjamin Z. Kedar, *The Changing Land Between the Jordan and the Sea: Aerial Photographs from 1917 to the Present* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, 1999).

The original ten cities of the Decapolis established by Pompey consisted of Damascus, Philadelphia, Raphana, Scythopolis, Gadar, Hippus, Dium, Pella, Gerassa and Canatha. Several of these cities have been excavated, and show all the typical features of a Greco-Roman city. Space permits only a brief discussion of Scythopolis and Pella.

By the time of Jesus, the only city of the Decapolis west of the Jordan River, Scythopolis (today called Bet Shean), had become the chief city. The presence of ample supplies of water and a geographic location at key crossroads enabled this city to grow. Excavations have been taking place at Bet Shean periodically since the 1920s, and much of the ancient city, at least its foundations, is visible to the modern visitor. The city had the typical accoutrements of a Greco-Roman city—paved streets flanked by colonnades for shops, a theater, temples to various gods, and, from the second century AD onwards (i.e. just after our time period), a hippodrome.[52]

Pella is not mentioned in the Bible, but is important in early Christian history as the reputed place to which early Christians fled as they escaped Jerusalem just before its destruction by the Romans.[53] The city is located in the foothills of the eastern side of the Jordan valley, 30 km. (18 miles) south of the Sea of Galilee. A reliable spring, winter rains and a warm winter all made the site desirable. It was destroyed by the Hasmoneans, presumably because of its cultic character, but restored by Pompey. Its archaeological investigation reveals that in the first century it was a small city. It continued to grow during the late Roman and Byzantine periods. At all times it had a distinctive Greco-Roman appearance and culture.[54]

The importance of this list of Greco-Roman cities can be readily ascertained by reference to a map. Judea and Galilee were Jewish in their culture. But they were surrounded by Greco-Roman cities, which were also incorporated into the kingdoms controlled by Herod and by his successors. What is remarkable is that these two relatively small geographic areas dominated by Jewish culture should provide so many migrants to other parts of the Roman world. They swelled the numbers of previous Jewish migrants to such an extent that many cities of the eastern Mediterranean, and even

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[52] The street layout, theater and hippodrome are clearly visible in the aerial photograph of Bet Shean on p. 181 of Kedar, *Aerial Photographs*. The aerial photograph in Ariel Lewin, *The Archaeology of Ancient Judea and Palestine* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005), p. 92, while not including the hippodrome, allows a closer inspection of the central part of the site; while those found in Richard Cleave, *The Holy Land Satellite Atlas* (Nicosia: Rohr Productions, 1994), pp. 117-19, gives other panoramic views of the site.

[53] John J. Gunther, "The Fate of the Jerusalem Church: The Flight to Pella," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 29 (1973), pp. 81-94; Gerd Lüdemann, "The Successors of Pre-70 Jerusalem Christianity: A Critical Evaluation of the Pella-Tradition," in E. P. Sanders, ed., *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, Volume One (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 161-73; S. Sowers, "The Circumstances and Recollection of the Pella Flight," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 26 (1970), pp. 305-20.

[54] Robert Houston Smith, "Pella," in Ephraim Stern, ed., *The New Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, volume three (Jerusalem/New York: Israel Exploration Society & Carta/Simon and Schuster, 1993), pp. 1172-80.

Rome itself, developed very large Jewish minorities that remained true to their cultural and religious identity.

I. Manuscript Discoveries

In 1947 some scrolls turned up in the antiquities market at Jerusalem, which upon further investigation turned out to have been discovered in some caves near the ruins at Khirbet Qumran not far from the Dead Sea. The finds came to be known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. The British mandatory government had come to an end on 15 May 1948, after which the country was plunged into civil war. So the archaeological investigations and early work on the scrolls took place under extraordinary circumstances. The caves and nearby ruins were explored by archaeologists, and the documents discovered in them have enriched our understanding of the breadth of ideas circulating in first-century Palestine.[55]

Other document discoveries have been made that are of considerable significance for the study of the gospels and early Christianity. Of great importance are a set of documents found in 1945, buried in jars near Nag Hammadi in Egypt. The Nag Hammadi documents were bound in codices (i.e. books, rather than scrolls), and consist of some fifty-two tractates (short works) dating from the third and fourth centuries, most of which are of great interest to historians of early Christianity. They included such documents as the *Gospel of Truth*, the *Gospel of Thomas*, and the *Gospel of Philip*. The works contain several different viewpoints—which have been loosely described as forms of Gnosticism[56]—viewpoints quite distinctive from those contemporaneously developing into mainstream, catholic Christianity.[57] Other

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[55] There are a number of translations of the Qumran documents available. For example, Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin, 2004); Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translation: The Qumran Texts in English* (Leiden: Brill, 1994). Even the casual reader can gain a "feel" of the Qumran community, its organization and its ideology from reading translations such as these.

[56] There are many different philosophical and religious ideas in the writings which have been described as gnostic, so much so that the usefulness of the term has been challenged by Karen King and Michael Williams. See Karen L. King, in *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge/London: Belknap, 2003), and more specifically in *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 2003), e.g. pp. 155-60, where she argues that the *Gospel of Mary* is not gnostic, because ". . . there was no religion in antiquity called Gnosticism" (p. 155); cf. Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), *passim*. However, the term Gnosticism is not disappearing from academic discourse. For example, it is used freely by Fred Lapham, in *An Introduction to the New Testament Apocrypha* (New York: T. &T. Clark, 2003). The book by Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), provides a very useful summary of ideas shared by many of the groups found within Gnosticism.

[57] By far the best introduction to the Nag Hammadi discoveries is that of James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977). It begins with a brief account of the actual discoveries, followed by an English translation of the documents together with a brief introduction to each. Although the *Gospel of Mary* was not found at Nag Hammadi, a translation of that gospel is also provided in Robinson, ed., *Nag*

important manuscript finds were made amongst the rubbish heaps at Oxyrhynchus. The uniquely dry conditions have preserved literally heaps of papyrus documents and fragments of documents from the Ptolemaic and Roman periods of Egyptian history. As well as literary works and fragments of some very early copies of the NT writings, these documents include such things as tax assessments, court documents, contracts, sales, wills, and private letters, which taken together enable the reconstruction of much of the detail of life as it was lived in what was the third-largest city of Egypt for much of the time period represented in the documents.

J. Archaeology, Jesus and the Twelve

Archaeology uses different data and methodologies than does the interpretation of the NT. Yet despite their dissimilarities, archaeology does in fact have much to offer the study of the gospels. Christianity is a historical religion in the sense that its founder and his earliest followers lived and worked in specific locations. At the very least archaeology has allowed those with even limited imagination to place the events narrated in the gospels in their historical environment. But archaeology provides more important clues to the meaning of the gospel accounts than just a background against which to picture the action of the story. It allows a parallel reconstruction of first-century Palestine that provides significant information by noting what is missing in the gospel accounts. The Galilee revealed by archaeology has two major centers of population: Sepphoris and Tiberias. Sepphoris does not appear in the gospels at all, and Tiberias is only mentioned as a place from which some boats arrived carrying people looking for Jesus (John 6:23). The gospels place Jesus' ministry in the smaller villages of Galilee, not in its large urban centers. The only city that Jesus is recorded as visiting is Jerusalem, and he meets his death there.

That John the Baptist met his death at the hand of Herod Antipas, may alone be sufficient to explain why Jesus may well have wanted to avoid Sepphoris and Tiberias during the time of his ministry. Whatever the reason, he is not recorded as being present in either city. Rather, his ministry is pictured in villages such as Nain, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and in the surrounding countryside. The illustrations in his teachings are drawn from the everyday life of the farmer and fisherman. What is perhaps even more remarkable is that between the time of the earthly ministry of Jesus and the writing of the first documents of the NT, a village-based, Aramaic-speaking[58]

Hammadi Library. One should also perhaps mention the recently published partial manuscript of the *Gospel of Judas,* also discovered somewhere in Egypt, most easily accessed in English in Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, eds., *The Gospel of Judas* (Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2006).

[58] Despite the occasional protest to the contrary (e.g. Stanley E. Porter, "Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee," in Bruce Chilton & Craig A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 123-54), the majority of those who have considered the matter conclude that Galilee was almost entirely Aramaic-

movement made up exclusively of ethnic Jews, had transformed into a largely Greek-speaking, city-based movement in which an increasing number of Gentiles joined Jewish followers of Jesus.

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speaking, with Sepphoris and Tiberias the only possible exceptions. See pp. 122-65 of his book *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) where Mark A. Chancey surveys the currently known inscriptions to determine the extent of the "Use of Greek in Jesus' Galilee." See also Hayim Lapin, "Palestinian Inscriptions and Jewish Ethnicity in Late Antiquity," in Eric M. Meyers, ed., *Galilee Through the Centuries* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), pp. 239-68. Lapin notes that while inscriptions in Galilee are found in Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek, most dedicatory inscriptions are in Aramaic, literary inscriptions (i.e. those quoting the OT) tend to be in Hebrew, while Greek inscriptions are largely confined to cities (p. 245).

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