The Annunciation at NAZARETH
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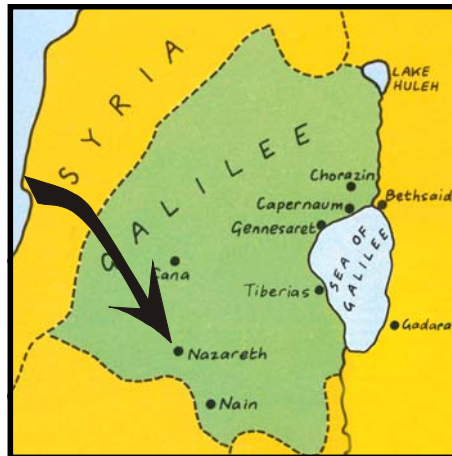# NAZARETH

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Location of the area the Lord Jesus Christ ministered unto and performed miracles: *Nazareth was located in the hills of Galilee.*

The City of the Lord Jesus Christ

"*And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.... And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shall conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus.*" (Luke 1: 26-30)

The previous passage of Holy Scripture is one of the first times that Nazareth was mentioned in the New Testament writings. Its fame arises due to its connection with the history of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in that respect has a hold on the imagination and feelings of people which it shares only with Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

In Biblical times Nazareth was a small agricultural town settled by a few dozen families. The town is not mentioned once in the Old Testament, an insignificant village, too small to be noted in the list of settlements of the Tribe of Zebulon (Joshua 19:10-16). Nazareth is not included in the 45 cities of Galilee that were mentioned by Josephus the historian and its name is missing from the 63 towns of Galilee mentioned in the Talmud. It was not expected to have a prophet, a king, or priest to ever come out of Nazareth. This prompted the response of Nathaniel in John 1:46 "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nazareth was isolated in ancient times because no trade routes ran through the city; therefore it had no economical importance.

Why would the Lord Jesus Christ be identified with the City of Nazareth? The Biblical narrative reveals that St. Joseph and St. Mary lived here after their betrothal, the announcement of the Lord Jesus Christ's birth came to St. Mary here in Nazareth (Luke 1:26). St. Joseph made his living here as a carpenter possibly because it was near Sepphoris, a Hellenistic city being built by Herod Antipas.

The Lord Jesus Christ left Nazareth at age 30 to be baptized by St. John the Baptist (Mark 1:9), and returned to Nazareth before beginning His public ministry (Matthew 4:13) and was violently rejected by the people of His town, and thus He moved on to Capernaum (Luke 4:16-30). There is no mention of Him ever returning back to His home town of Nazareth, but He was always identified with it (Matthew 21:11), having been called a "Nazarene" which comes from the Hebrew root meaning "branch", in accordance with the promises made to David the King, that the Messiah would be a descendant, a branch from the royal line of King David.

Nazareth was right on the Roman Road to Jerusalem and therefore contact with the whole known world could be made from this small village. In the Lord Jesus' time there was a synagogue located there (Luke 4:16), and Jews were living there after the destruction

of the second Temple. Eusebius the Scholar makes mention of a small village called Nazareth in the 4th century A.D. Its first church was built there are during the time of the Emperor Constantine.

The origin of the name Nazareth is still puzzling. In Hebrew the word "Nazir" was a person who was dedicated to a special sacred service through a vow made by the person or by his parents, which could last a lifetime or for a limited period. The early name "Nazarenes" given to early Christians, might have been a derogatory nickname that the people of Judea gave to the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:71, Acts 6:38). Either way, Nazareth became the cradle of Christianity.

At 20-33 AD the beginning of the ministry of the Lord Jesus of Nazareth marks the start of the Common Era. Excavations conducted in the region and remains of pottery prove a continuous settlement during the period 900-600 BCE of Jewish villages and Hellenized Syrians towns. Tzippori, the capital of the Galilee, the largest of these towns was settled until the year 18 BCE. After those years, there was a break in settlement until the year 200 BCE.

The city Nazareth is holy to Christians. Nazareth was the home of St. Mary and St. Joseph before the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the town that inspired the Lord Jesus Christ during the early years of His life until the beginning of His ministry. The main events in the Lord Jesus' life, concerning Nazareth are the Annunciation of His birth (Luke 1:26-38), His childhood and early manhood and the collision with His fellow citizens (Matthew 13:54-58, Luke 4:17-30). From the very first events relating to the life of the Lord Jesus Christ in Nazareth, we learn that the people of His village did not approve of His thinking and behavior.

Persecution of Christians in Nazareth and in general who were jealous in keeping alive the memory of their ancestors was constant from the 1st century. They gathered the oral traditions of the first Church about the Lord Jesus' family, His childhood years and His disciple's life. Persecutions of Christians continued through late second century until the 4th Century.

Throughout the history of Christianity there was a Christian presence in Nazareth. Remains found by archeologists reveal that Christians had constructed a place of worship in Nazareth and at the site of the Annunciation. The town of Nazareth was already a pilgrimage site by the end of the 4th century. Franciscan archaeologists discovered coins and remains of architectural structures pointing to construction of a "public" building, which they identify with a church-synagogue with the sanctity and the remains of the ancient village of Nazareth pointing to first century. ✣

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Can You Translate These Coptic Titles Within This Mighty Arrows?

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