

Day 4

Monday March 6 2023

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### Korazim

The ruins of Chorazin, one of the three Galilean cities cursed by Jesus, look down on the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. Residents of Chorazin lived within sight of Bethsaida and Capernaum, two of the other cities in what has become known as the “evangelical triangle”, because most of Jesus teachings and miracles occurred there. All three — more likely villages than cities — incurred Jesus’ condemnation (“Woe to you, Chorazin!”) because their people did not accept his teachings and repent (Matthew 11:20-24).

Chorazin (also spelt Korazim) is 3.5 kilometres due north of the Mount of Beatitudes. Jewish writings say its wheat was of exceptional quality. The town expanded considerably after Jews were expelled from Judea in AD 135, but Eusebius around 330 described it as being in ruins, apparently following an earthquake. Life returned over the next 100 years, when the synagogue was rebuilt, until the 8th century. Settlement was resumed in the 13th century and a small population remained until the beginning of the 20th century, when the site was abandoned.

The remains of an elaborate synagogue are a striking feature of the ruins of Chorazin. It was rebuilt in the 3rd or 4th centuries, when the town was thriving. Constructed of local black basaltstone, the synagogue stood on an elevated area in the centre of the town. A broad staircase led to its façade, which faced south towards Jerusalem. It had one large hall, with stone benches around the walls for the community to sit during services. The absence of an upper gallery for women suggests the sexes were not segregated at the time it was built.

An unusual find in the ruins of the synagogue was the Seat of Moses, carved out of a single basalt block, from which the Torah would have been read. On its back was an inscription in Aramaic. The original seat is in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem but a copy remains in the ruins at Chorazim.

### Nazareth Village & Lunch

Nazareth Village - Step into the life Jesus knew! : Return to the Past. Many people travel to Israel with an expectation to experience the Scriptures come alive - to feel the real sense of being in the Bible land. For many, it is a lifetime dream, while for some, a personal pilgrimage. There is always something new and interesting to share, especially the luxury of living in the past. True, Israel is a modern country with all the contemporary amenities, yet deep within each, one sees glimpses of the Biblical era in the terrain, desert areas and vegetation during the drive from place to place and so there is rarely any disappointment. Bible stories come alive, simply at the mention of places.

The name Nazareth stirs evocative pictures in the mind and the illustrated Bible stories come alive imaginatively - Shepherds tending flocks, a donkey with some fresh bread on its back, activity in a village with its residents going about their daily chores, stone dwellings, children on the street, young women at the village well having tête-à-tête and guards at the watch tower keeping watch.

Nazareth is one of the 'must-see' places in every visit-Israel itinerary. It is a bustling city with a population of approximately 70,000 people. For nearly 2,000 years hundreds of thousands of pilgrims have found their way to the setting that molded the Man who changed the course of history. This is where the birth of Jesus was announced to his mother, Mary, where he grew up and spent most of his boyhood. It is in Galilee, where you still see those landscapes, the backdrop of Jesus' parables and words of encouragement come alive. Where the Bible comes alive.

Nazareth Village is a project that attempts to reconstruct life in the first century and is located on the last remaining tract of virgin farmland, just 500 meters away from where Jesus grew up - almost right in the centre of town. It brings to life the Galilean village scenes, recreating Nazareth as it was 2,000 years ago - a Jewish village under Roman occupation. The project has been in operation for a few years now and is a nonprofit organization, supported by people from around the world. It is a result of 15 years of archaeological, architectural and academic research led by the University of the Holy Land.

Once inside the main entrance the tour begins. A guide leads you through the ancient doors of Nazareth, stepping back in time through four rooms with a detailed introduction to life as it was 2,000 years ago. You will learn of the trade, how the land was made ready for the crops and the produce was transported to the market place and most significantly, what it was like for the Jewish people to live under the Roman rule, including an explanation of the crucifixion. There are some poignant and interesting tidbits of what Jesus' boyhood life was like in the tiny village Nazareth once was.

Step through ancient doorways into another time and place. Whatever the season you visit the Nazareth Village, there is some significant element of the annual cycle of life as is represented in the Scriptures. In spring there wafts the smell of ripening grain. In winter you will experience the plowing of wheat in full swing. In summer, when we visited, figs were heavy on the trees and there were some olives, too.

As we walked into the village, we were met by a farmer going about his business with a donkey carrying a load on its back and a shepherd tending the sheep. These are people clad in biblical costumes and perform other activities relative of the ancient times.

One notices that most of the residents in this tiny village made their living from the soil. Interestingly, the Hebrew name of Nazareth is derived from an agricultural root. It comes from the word, 'netzer' meaning 'shoot' (mentioned in the book of the Prophet Isaiah chapter 11 verse 1), referring to an offshoot of an olive tree. The tour simply sprung to life as we learned of how olives were picked and crushed to produce oil at the ancient Olive Press. Olive oil was used to light the lamps in people's homes, cooking, soothing their skin and also, so importantly, in anointing the kings of the Old Testament. One of the most exciting archaeological discoveries at Nazareth Village was a wine press hewn out of the bedrock that our Guide stood upon as she narrated the tour. Such small presses were common features in the Hellenistic and Early Roman Period. But the location of this wine press - only 500 meters from the original village of Nazareth - makes it very significant.

There was an opportunity to understand the role of women in the ancient household. The Jewish texts are full of references. In a reconstructed home, we watched as the lady weaver plied her art. Work begins with wool, after the shearing of the sheep. Then comes the cleaning, dyeing and finally the spinning. It was easy to imagine Mary, mother of Jesus, at this task. You can try your hand at it - trust me it isn't as easy as it looks! Baking traditional flat bread over an open fire and drawing of water from the well are two other traditional occupations of women in those times.

Visiting Joseph's carpentry shop was an experience. Joseph demonstrates his skill in a manner that would help one imagine the trade in those days. One of the most moving sites is the synagogue. You will most naturally, be told of the story of Jesus in the Nazareth synagogue where "he stood to read" from the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah. Sitting on the steps of the synagogue gives one an experience akin to what Jesus and his contemporaries may have had whilst gathering in a council hall at the time where important decisions were made. A ritual immersion bath located near the synagogue is under construction

Nazareth Village offers visitors a true to life 'tent' experience too. There is biblical lentil stew, fruit and vegetables grown from the hillsides and warm flat pita bread baked right in front of you.

### Capernaum

A fish-market and frontier post beside the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum became Jesus' home town and the scene of many of his miracles. It was also the home of the first disciples Jesus called — the fishermen Peter, Andrew, James and John, and the tax collector Matthew (who as Levi collected taxes in the customs office). In this town:

- 1) Jesus worshipped and taught in the synagogue — where his teaching made a deep impression on the local people because, unlike the scribes, he taught with authority. (Mark 1:21-22)
- 2) In the same synagogue, Jesus promised the Eucharist in his "I am the bread of life" discourse: "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." (John 6:22-59)
- 3) Jesus and healed many people of illness or possession by the devil, including Peter's mother-in-law and the daughter of Jairus, the leader of the synagogue.
- 4) Jesus pronounced a curse on the town, along with Bethsaida and Chorazin, because so many of its inhabitants refused to believe in him.

Capernaum later fell into ruin. A 3rd-century report called the town "despicable, it numbers only seven houses of poor fishermen". It was later resettled but again fell into disrepair. The ruins lay undiscovered until 1838, when a visiting scholar gave this description: "The whole place is desolate and mournful."

Today an ultra-modern Catholic church, perched on eight sturdy pillars, hovers protectively over an excavation site. It is believed to have been the site of Peter's house, where Jesus would have lodged. Archaeologists believe the house was in a small complex grouped around irregular courtyards. Drystone basalt walls would have supported a roof of tree branches covered with straw and earth — a fairly flimsy

construction easily breached to lower a paralyzed man on a mat, as described in Mark 2:1-12. Excavations show that one room in this interlinked complex had been singled out since the middle of the 1st century. Graffiti scratched on its plaster walls referred to Jesus as Lord and Christ (in Greek). It is suggested that this room was venerated for religious gatherings as a house church. If so, it would have been the first such example in the Christian world.

In 5th century an octagonal church was built around this venerated room. The present church, dedicated in 1990, repeats the octagonal shape. Near the church, a partly reconstructed synagogue is believed to have been built on the foundations of the synagogue in which Jesus taught. Erected in the 4th or 5th centuries, this impressive structure with ornately carved decorations is the largest synagogue discovered in Israel. Its white limestone, carted from a distant quarry, contrasts with the local black basalt of the synagogue Christ knew. That original synagogue was built by a Roman centurion, the same centurion who had his servant healed after a declaration of faith that amazed Jesus (Luke 7:1-10). A short distance away, by the Sea of Galilee, can be seen the red domes and white walls of a Greek Orthodox church, built in 1931 and dedicated to the Twelve Apostles.

**PETER'S HOUSE:** Not only did Jesus make Capernaum his home, but it appears from scripture that some of the other disciples may have moved there. Located prominently in the ruins of Capernaum today is an excavation known as The House of Peter. Underneath the modern church at this site are fifth and fourth-century churches, all built over the remains of a first-century dwelling/church. Archaeologists did not find in this dwelling the usual domestic utensils, but rather inscriptions and markings from early Christian pilgrims. They assume that it was an early Christian meeting place and place of pilgrimage from the first century. The House of Peter is mentioned in all four Gospels: *"Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John"* (Mk. 1:29 NKJV). We know also from this passage that Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, who was also apparently living there. Interestingly, the house is located just a stone's throw from the synagogue.

**THE SYNAGOGUE:** Situated prominently in ancient Capernaum is the white stone synagogue, much of it still standing. This present structure has been dated to the fourth century A.D. However, underneath the synagogue is a black basalt foundation of an earlier structure. Some feel this foundation belongs to the synagogue in Jesus' time. Jesus must have regularly attended and even ministered in this synagogue. We have several accounts of this in scripture. In Mark 1:21-27, we see Jesus teaching and later casting out an evil spirit there. In John 6:51-69, we see Jesus declaring in this synagogue that man must eat his flesh and drink his blood to have life. Great dissension was aroused concerning this statement. Apparently, many of his disciples forsook him at the time because they did not understand the true meaning.

### **Eremos Cave (Beatitudes)**

Yeshua taught his Talmidim (disciples) the Sermon on the Mount in the Eremos Cave (and not on the mountaintop traditional site). This will be a most moving experience. This is the only cave on the Galilean plain and is thought to be the deserted place where Jesus would occasionally withdraw to be alone, pray and renew his spirit. (Mark 1:35) It is also considered to be the authentic site of the

Beatitudes rather than the traditional site on the Mount of Beatitudes. Scholars and archaeologists both agree that this was a location where Jesus would have been able to be heard by up to five thousand people at a time.

We walk up a short but very steep hill to visit the Eremos Cave, an isolated, off the tourist path site where an octagonal Byzantine church, no longer standing, was built in the 5th century. A rock with the Beatitudes engraved into it marks the Eremos Cave as a holy place for Jesus, the occasional hermit. *Eremos* is a Greek word which means isolation and is the root for our English word "hermit."

Overlooking the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, it offers an enchanting vista of the northern part of the lake and across to the cliffs of the Golan Heights on the other side. Within sight are the scenes of many of the events of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, including the town of Capernaum 3km away, where he made his home. Just below is Sower's Cove, where it is believed Jesus taught the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-9) from a boat moored in the bay.

The spacious slope of the Mount of Beatitudes (also known as Mount Eremos, a Greek word meaning solitary or uninhabited) would have provided ample space for a large crowd to gather to hear Jesus. The 4th-century pilgrim Egeria records a tradition that may go back to the Jewish-Christians of Capernaum. She tells of a cave in the hillside at the Seven Springs, near Tabgha, "upon which the Lord ascended when he taught the Beatitudes".

Archaeologist Bargil Pixner says: "The terrace above this still existing cave, called Mughara Ayub, must be considered the traditional place of the Sermon on the Mount. The hillcrest of Eremos indeed offers a magnificent view over the entire lake and the surrounding villages. The cragginess of this hill meant it was left uncultivated and enabled Jesus to gather large crowds around him without causing damage to the farmers."

### **Tabgha (loaves and fishes)**

Tranquil Tabgha, on the north-western shore of the Sea of Galilee, is best known for Christ's miraculous multiplication of loaves and fish to feed a multitude. But it is also remembered for Jesus' third appearance to his disciples after his Resurrection, when he tested and commissioned St Peter as leader of his Church.

Two churches commemorate these events, and pilgrims find the place a serene location for meditation, prayer and study. Tabgha is at the foot of the Mount of Beatitudes, about 3km south-west of Capernaum. The name is an Arab mispronunciation of the Greek Heptapegon (meaning "seven springs"). Several warm sulphurous springs enter the lake here, attracting fish especially in winter. This was a favorite spot for fishermen from nearby Capernaum, and its beach was familiar to Jesus and his disciples. It is easy to imagine Jesus speaking from a boat in one of the little bays, with crowds sitting around on the shore.

Feeding followed beheading = According to chapter 14 of Matthew's Gospel, the miraculous feeding came after Jesus learnt that Herod Antipas had beheaded his cousin, John the Baptist. Jesus "withdrew in a boat . . . to a deserted place by himself". Crowds followed and he had compassion on them, curing their sick. In the evening he told the multitude — 5000 men, plus

women and children — to sit on the grass. Then he took five loaves and two fish, “looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves . . . and the disciples gave them to the crowds”. After they had eaten, the leftovers filled 12 baskets.

The modern Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes at Tabgha stands on the site of a 4th-century church, displaying Byzantine mosaic decorations that are among the most elegantly executed in the Holy Land. The whole floor depicts flora and fauna of the area in vibrant colors — peacocks, cranes, cormorants, herons, doves, geese, ducks, a flamingo and a swan, as well as snakes, lotus flowers and oleanders. But the best-known mosaic, on the floor near the altar, refers to the miracle the church commemorates. It shows a basket of loaves flanked by two Galilee mullet. Beneath the altar is the rock on which it is believed Jesus placed the loaves and fish when he blessed them.

In June 2015 fire destroyed much of the Benedictine monastery attached to the church. Two youths from Jewish settler outposts were charged with arson.