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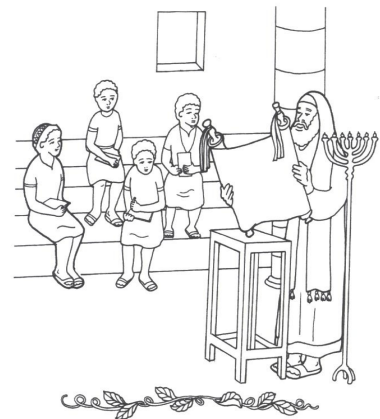
The Early Years

“Bible Notes” – A Summary Study Guide

The town of Nazareth stood on top of a hill covered with thick oak trees. Over the next decade Mary continued her daily duties as wife and mother while Joseph worked in his carpentry business among the dense oak trees of the hilltop village. (In obeying God’s commandment in the Book of Genesis to be fruitful and multiply, and according to Gospels, Mary of Nazareth had four other sons named James, Joses, Simon and Judas, and at least two daughters (see Matthew 13:55-56, Mark 6:3.)

At age six Jesus went to school at the local synagogue with the other boys. As a scribe taught, He perfectly memorized the Scriptures. Jesus grew and became strong in body and spirit. He was filled with wisdom and the love of God was upon Him (see Luke 2:40).

Meanwhile, spontaneous uprisings again erupted throughout the entire Promised Land. In Judea, Herod Archelaus’ troops forced troops loyal to his cousin out of the plains and into the mountains, while a shepherd named Judas led a large number of lawless foot-soldiers and attacked the Roman city of Sepphoris, plundering and setting fire to the city, including the royal palace. Only four miles northeast of Nazareth, rising smoke plumes would have easily been seen from the village heights. Considered of no importance, the village of Nazareth was spared the violence of those days.



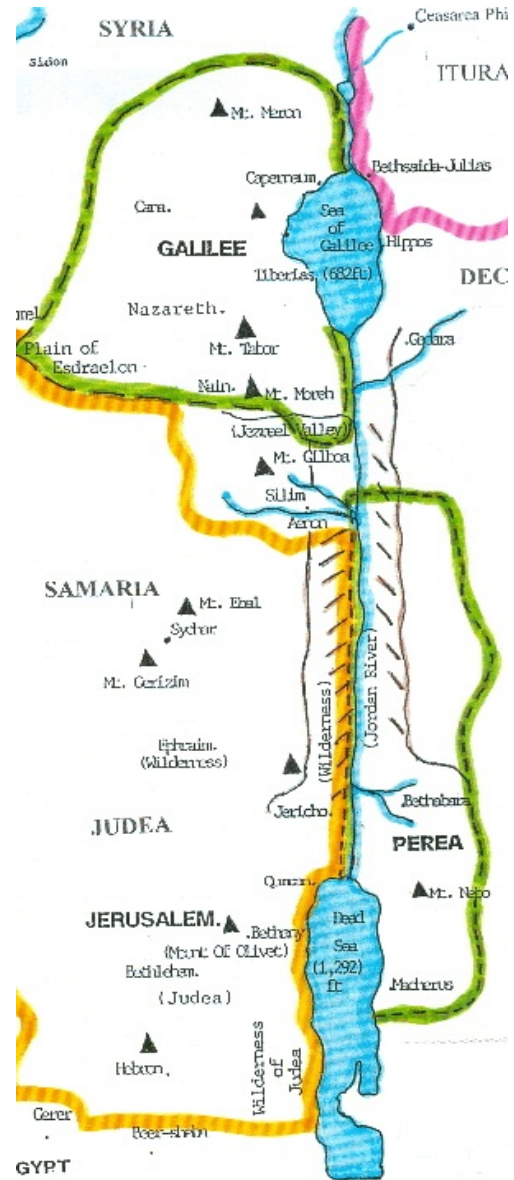
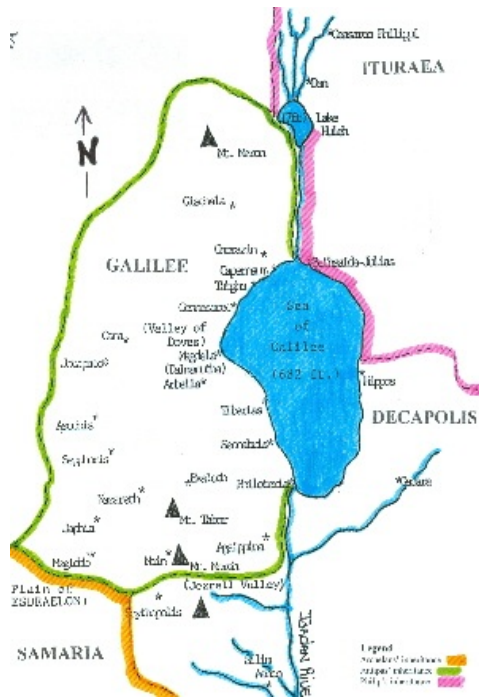
Another bandit band led by Simon, the former slave of Herod the Great, burned the beautiful palace at Jericho where the king had died. He was relentlessly tracked down and beheaded, but the violence continued. As looting, terror and anarchy escalated, Roman legions stationed in Syria with cavalry troops and joined by allied Nabatean soldiers first restored order to Galilee. Then marching through Samaria, they easily entered Jerusalem. A great number of rebels were captured and released, but as a future deterrent, 2,000 were crucified.

After ten years Herod Archelaus was banished by Rome for his cruelty toward the Jewish people. To keep the peace a steady stream of Roman governors or commanders along with their legions were appointed to rule over Jerusalem and Judea.

### Biblical Scripture:

*Gospel of Luke* - Chapter 2.

40. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.



## The Early Years

## [For Advanced Ministries Only]

The inhabitants of Galilee represented a cross-section of all types of backgrounds. About half were Jews, speaking Aramaic, a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew and the rest were mostly a variety of Greek-speaking Gentiles. (At this time, Yeshua ha-Notzri was the Hebrew of “Jesus of Nazareth.”) The racial mixture was well balanced and the people got along under the rule of Herod the Great.

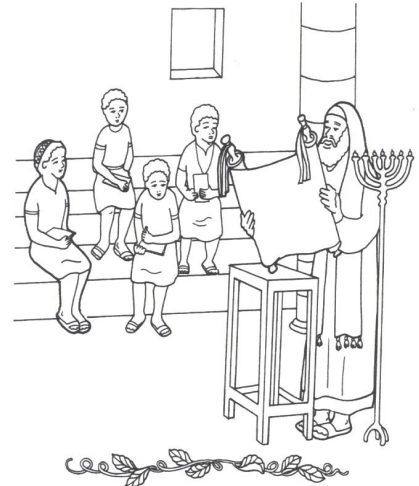
The land, in which the Christ child would grow, even though ruled by Jewish successors of Herod, was a remote eastern outpost of Rome’s Mediterranean Empire. Archelaus reigned as king in Jerusalem, Judea, Idumea and Samaria. His territory also included the Hellenistic cities of Sebaste and the magnificent seaport city of Caesarea. [This port city was vital for supplies and Roman control, and located on the Mediterranean coast (the Great Sea) of the Promised Land some 22 miles south of Mt. Carmel. Because the coast of Canaan had no good natural harbors, Herod the Great began the building of the port in 10 B.C., which lasted over a 23 years and was named after Caesar Augustus.]

Antipas, his younger brother was to be tetrarch of Galilee and Perea whose territories were separated by a portion of the Gentile region of Decapolis. Their half-brother Philip was tetrarch of the mainly Gentile areas north and east of the Sea of Galilee in Iturea.

Spontaneous uprisings occurred throughout the entire country, some due to over taxation. According to Flavius Josephus, in 6 AD, a wild preacher came baptizing in the River Jordan. Immediately after, Josephus wrote about the tax revolt of Judas the Galilean. No doubt driven by the prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Hosea<sup>52</sup> of being the resurrected King David, this self-proclaimed Messiah rose up in Galilee fed up with the continual taxes from affects of Augustus’ decades long census. His false Messianic movement drew away some people after him, who sought a warring savior like King David. But he soon perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. (Acts 5:37) Sadly, these very prophecies of a resurrected King David sitting on the throne of Israel and ruling the entire world, burned deeply within the hearts of all Jewish people, who desperately sought his coming. Any such figure would immediately draw a waiting army prepared to die to bring about the rebirth of the kingdom of Israel.

In Judea, 2,000 of Herod’s seasoned soldiers forced the troops led by Achiab, Herod’s cousin, out of the plain into the hills, while a shepherd named Athronges proclaimed himself king and waged guerrilla warfare. Likewise, one named Judas, leading a large number of lawless foot soldiers, attacked Sepphoris, a city set on a hill, only three to four miles to the northwest of Nazareth, and plundered the city, including the royal palace. The smoke of the burning city could easily be seen from atop the village of Nazareth’s heights.

Another brigade band led by Simon of Peraea, the son of Joseph according to the Jewish historian Josephus, a former slave of Herod the Great. After being declared king or believed Messiah, he burned the beautiful palace at Jericho and plundered it, which the old king had cherished. He also set fire to many other of the old king’s houses throughout the country. Simon also fought for the destruction of the royal residence at Beth-ramatha, about ten miles north of the Dead Sea. To quell Simon’s false Messianic movement, the commander of Herod’s infantry named Grantus joined with Roman forces. After a great and long fight, Simon’s disordered forces were destroyed and the fleeing leader relentlessly tracked down and beheaded. This action would end any claims to being the Messiah of Israel.<sup>50</sup>



<sup>52</sup> Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:23, 37:24; Hosea 3.5.

<sup>50</sup> Psalm 34:20.

But this did not halt the violence. So as looting, terror and anarchy escalated, Roman legions stationed in Syria with cavalry troops and joined by allied Nabatean soldiers, first restored order in Galilee. Then marching through Samaria, they easily entered Jerusalem. A great number of rebels were captured and released, but as a future deterrent, 2,000 were crucified and the climate of the times calmed.

Yet in 6 A.D. after only a ten-year reign, a delegation of Jews and Samaritans charged Archelaus with cruelty toward his subjects. He was soon summoned by the emperor and banished to Gaul, a heathen region known today as Western Europe. Augustus had sentenced Archelaus because he had antagonized an already fragile peace. Samaria, Judea and Idumea were united as one province, Judea, which was put under the rule of a Rome procurator or governor (Prefect.) To keep the peace at Jerusalem, a steady stream of governors along with their legions were appointed to rule over the Jewish capital.

Antipas, though a tyrant brought peace and prosperity to Galilee and Perea. He ruled for almost 43 years before being deposed. After Archelaus' downfall, Antipas took the name "Herod" and eventually rebuilt the leading cities of those two regions, which had been destroyed in the uprisings, including the city of Sepphoris to its former glory making it the great city of Lower Galilee.

Nazareth during those turbulent times had been left alone. It was a village estimated at only 200 to 300 people, was nestled on a hillside. Having no material value, except for the oak trees that surrounded it, Nazareth was spared the destructive violence of the times.

When Jesus was about six years old, he attended school. Classes were held at the synagogue six days a week, except for the holy Sabbath, and each boy was required to go. In the morning Jesus walked to school carrying his lunch of bread and probably a small amount of wine. The teacher, a scribe, greeted the boys dressed in his long, white belted tunic with a tasseled prayer shawl draped over his head. He was quite stern and demanded complete respect from the boys.

The classroom was the same room that their parents used at night. It contained a curtained chest holding the sacred scrolls of the Scriptures. In front of the chest was the menorah, which burned constantly. Students, like their parents, sat upon stone bleachers that lined the sides of the building.

The boys were expected to memorize the scrolls. They had to recite them without missing a single syllable. Singing rhymes made the scrolls easier to remember. The rhymes were also accompanied by the "joy of the dance," usually performed outside, which only the males in Jewish society learned.

The boys also learned to write, which began with mastering the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each student had a wax-covered wooden tablet on which to write with a pointed piece of bone, bronze or wood to be used as a pen. Once the boys mastered the letters and short passages, they were allowed to copy longer lessons on sheets of parchment, using reed pens dipped in black ink.

After school, Jesus and his friends helped their fathers at various chores. In their free time they probably explored the town and nearby countryside. On some afternoons the boys may have gone into the fields to watch the farmers or to talk with the shepherds. The rolling hills and the 40- to 50-foot high cliff that bordered Nazareth was a dangerous playground but offered a spectacular view stretching for miles. Nearby stood the enormous Plain of Esdraelon, where Israel's heroes like Barak, Gideon, Saul and the Maccabees had fought against enemies of the Promised Land. Centuries earlier the conquering armies of Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece had marched there as well. The busy marketplace was the boys' prime spot where they watched the merchants at work.

Jesus the Christ had safely grown from a toddler to a youth boy within the small community of Nazareth. Over the next ten years, he became strong in spirit.