



Church History, Cities of the New Testament

Jerusalem

The earliest mention of it is on an Assyrian monument of the eighth century BC placing the designation to the earlier date of 1450 BC. A number of meanings have been attached to its name: City of Peace, City of (the god) Salem, Possession of Peace, or Foundation of Peace.

Its altitude is 2,460 feet above sea level and it is 36 miles from the Mediterranean Sea and 19 miles from the Dead Sea. Archeology dates it back to civilizations other than the Jews taking it back to 3000 BC. Certainly it was occupied by Canaanites in its early history because of a reference of its Governor Abdi-Hiba in the Tell El-Amarna tablets to the Egyptian Pharaoh in 1360 BC.

Its climate is considered to be very healthy. The winters are cold, but the lowest recorded temperature is 25°F. During the summer temperatures gradually rise to about 73°F in August. The hottest weather comes in September when it gets up to over 100°F in the shade. The average rainfall is about 26 inches.

It is shut in by a rough triangle of high mountain ridges. In relation to Jerusalem, this breaks up into five main divisions of hills. These five regions are described by Josephus as distinct regions. The Upper City or Market Place, the southwestern hill. Akra or the Lower City, the southeastern hill. The Temple Hill, the central eastern section. The Bezetha, the newly built part of the city, the northeastern hill. The Northern Quarter of the city, the northwestern hill.

These five divisions have designations and significance today. The Southwestern hill: Known as Zion, also the fortress of David. On this location today is the Tower of David. The Northwestern hill: Today this is the Christian Quarter of Jerusalem and centers around the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The Northeastern hill: The new city has no name in biblical literature. The Central Eastern hill: The site of the Temple. In earlier times it was the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. It is also called Zion and Moriah. The Southeastern hill: Called the City of David, Zion, and Ophel.

The walls of Jerusalem: The present walls go back to Suleiman the Magnificent of 1642 AD. In the present walls there are eight existing gates: On the west wall the Jaffa Gate. On the north wall the Damascus Gate, the Herod's Gate and the New Gate. On the east wall the Gate of the Tribes, the Golden Gate. On the south wall the Dung Gate and the Zion Gate.

The Destructions of Jerusalem as a City

It was conquered by Judah in Judges 1:8. David conquered the city in about 1000 BC after reigning from Hebron for 7-1/2 years. 2 Sam. 5:6-9. It was conquered by Jehoash of Israel about 714 BC. 2 Kings 14:8.

"Then the sons of Judah fought against Jerusalem and captured it and struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire." (Judges 1:8, NASB)

"Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, 'Come, let us face each other.'" (2 Kings 14:8, NASB)

It was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC and again in 586 BC completely. In 321 BC, Ptolemy Soter of Egypt invaded Palestine and captured Jerusalem. It was conquered by Antiochus in 170 BC and spoiled. It was again attacked and spoiled by Antiochus in 168 BC. Parts of the city were destroyed by military action with the Syrians in 163 BC and in 101 BC taken by the Syrians and regarrisoned.



Simon Maccabees captured Akra, a part of the city, in 139 BC and destroyed it by leveling all its hills. Jerusalem was besieged by Antiochus Sidetes in 134 BC and he managed to break down the fortifications that encompassed the city. Jerusalem was conquered by Pompey in 63 BC. He demolished the walls. Herod, the son of Antipater, took Jerusalem by storm after a five month siege in 37 BC.

Jerusalem was conquered by Titus, the Roman general in 70 AD. This took a total of 134 days. In 614 AD, Palestine was conquered by the Persian Chostroes II who destroyed the churches including that of the Holy Sepulcher. It was conquered by the Mohammedians in 637 AD. In 1077 AD a leader of the Seljuk Turks conquered Palestine, drove out the Egyptians and massacred 3,000 people in Jerusalem.

In 1098 AD, the city of Jerusalem was retaken by the Egyptian Arabs. Forty days after the capture of Jerusalem by the Egyptian Arabs, it was taken by the soldiers of the First Crusade, of Latin Rule. In 1187, the city of Jerusalem was conquered by Saladin. In 1219, the walls of Jerusalem were torn down by the command of the Sultan of Damascus.

In 1229, Jerusalem was obtained by Frederick II of Germany by treaty. In 1244, Jerusalem was conquered, rifled, and many people were massacred by the Kharizimian Tartars, a savage horde from Central Asia. Palestine was again conquered, including Jerusalem by the Egyptians and held until 1517 when it was conquered by the Ottoman Turks.

Jerusalem has been under Turkish control during most of its modern history. Jerusalem was placed under the British rule as the Mandate of Palestine in the defeat of the Turkish forces in World War I. In 1948, the British were forced to withdraw and the Jewish state of Israel was formed. In 1949, Jerusalem was internationalized by the United Nations. In June 1967 in the Six Days War, the Jews regained control of the entire city of Jerusalem.

Major events which happened in Jerusalem in the Scripture (New Testament).

This was the city to which the wise men came. This is one of the major cities in which Jesus did his teaching. It was outside of this city that Jesus was crucified. It was within this city that the disciples were to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit in the indwelling of believers and the birth of the Church.

It was in Jerusalem where the church began with 3,000 converts from the preaching of the Gospel. It was totally evangelized by the apostles and disciples of Christ soon after the beginning of the Church. It was the first main area of persecution of Christians. It was the base of sending out missionaries. It was at Jerusalem where Paul was taken into Roman hands and later imprisoned and martyred at Rome. It was in Jerusalem where Christ cleansed the temple twice.

Beersheba

It lies in southern Palestine midway between the tip of the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. It was a favorite residence of Abraham and Isaac. It was named after the digging of a well and making of a compact between Abraham and Abimelech. It was the place to which Elijah fled in the eighth century. It has seven wells there for which it has basic heritage. It is noted in several Scriptures: Gen. 21:31; Gen. 26:23; 1 Chron. 4:28; 1 Sam. 8:2; Amos 5:5; Amos 8:14; Neh. 11:27; Neh. 11:30.

"Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because there the two of them took an oath." (Genesis 21:31, NASB)

""As for those who swear by the guilt of Samaria, Who say, 'As your god lives, O Dan,' And, 'As the way of Beersheba lives,' They will fall and not rise again."" (Amos 8:14, NASB)

Usually it is designated as the southern boundary of Canaan, from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the



south. It has a semiarid to arid climate with average rainfall about 12 inches per year with most coming in the winter months. The principle activity is grazing sheep, goats and camels. Here Esau was robbed of his birthright, and Hagar wandered in the wilderness.

Here in World War II, the Australian forces made such a daring and furious bayonet charge that the German and Turkish forces didn't have time to poison the famous wells, before yielding the town. It is a vital communication city for southern Palestine now. It was a vital point of contention in the armistice discussions between Egypt and Israel in 1940. Israel retained possession of it. The population in 1944 was 5,570. Today, it is about 207,500.

Gaza

One of the most ancient cities of the world, being a Canaanite city even before Abraham. It was the capital of the Philistine nation. These were a type of Greek peoples. Its earliest inhabitants were the Avvim. They were conquered by the invading Philistines or the Caphtorim, out of Caphtor. The Hebrew equivalent for Gaza is Azzah. Deut. 2:23; 1 Kings 4:24; Jer. 25:20.

"And the Avvim, who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorim who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and lived in their place.)" (Deuteronomy 2:23, NASB)

"and all the foreign people, all the kings of the land of Uz, all the kings of the land of the Philistines (even Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and the remnant of Ashdod);" (Jeremiah 25:20, NASB)

It was the city of Samson's valor and defeat. Judges 16:1-3. It was the place of Philip's ministry. Acts. 8:26.

"But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.)" (Acts 8:26, NASB)

In the life of the city, it changed hands many times. The city was under Assyrian control, then Babylonian control, then challenged by Egyptian control, then taken by Persia in 592 BC. It was taken by Alexander the Great in 332 BC, then taken by Roman power, followed by Jewish power, then taken by the Moslems in 634 AD. The city was then taken by the Turks in the 15th century followed by Napoleon in 1799, then Egyptians after World War I, and now within the Gaza Strip whose control is disputed between Hamas, the Palestinian Authority, and Israel.

This was the site for a major military strategy in World War I. General Allenby broke off from the bank of the Suez and made a direct attack on the Turkish forces on the eastern side of the Canal and Red Sea. He was assisted in this move by Col. T.E. Lawrence, who came to be known as "Lawrence of Arabia."

The city experienced many destructions or partial ones in the exploits of its enemies. It was probably destroyed by Sargon in 720 BC when it was captured at the Battle of Raphia. It was decisively dismantled by Alexander the Great in 332 BC when it resisted him. Alexander killed all the men and sold the women and children into slavery. Jonathan Maccabees later forced the city to submit to him. Later it was taken by Alexander Jannaeus who massacred all the inhabitants who had escaped his siege.

The city was reinstated and by the 2nd and 3rd century AD, it had become a center of Greek commerce and culture with heavy pagan influence and a struggling Christian testimony. Christianity gained the supremacy there in about the time of Theodosius. It fell into the hand of the Arabs in 634 AD and became a Moslem city in the days of Saladin, who gained it back from the Crusaders. It now has a population of over 750,000.

Bethany



Its location is about two miles from Jerusalem on the road to Jericho. Its place in the biblical account: Appears as the Judean home of Jesus rather than Jerusalem. Matt. 21:17. It was the home town of Simon the leper. Mark 14:3.

"And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there." (Matthew 21:17, NASB)

"While He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining at the table, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; and she broke the vial and poured it over His head." (Mark 14:3, NASB)

It was the home town of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. John 11:18. Here Lazarus was raised. John 11. Here the feast was held at the home of Simon the leper. Matt. 26:1-13.

"Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off;" (John 11:18, NASB)

From here Christ ascended. Luke 24:50-51. Its social designation was that it was often called the "house of misery" because of the number of invalids who congregated there. Its modern name is Al-Eizariya.

"And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven." (Luke 24:50-51, NASB)

During the first 1,000 years of the Church Age, many churches, monasteries and convents were built there. It is claimed by both Christians and Moslems. The Moslems have built a mosque over the tomb of Lazarus there.

Jericho

Biblical references to the city of Jericho: Joshua 3:16; Num. 22:1; Num. 31:12; Num. 34:15; Num. 35:1; Joshua 2:1-21; Joshua 6:1-7:26; Joshua 18:21; 2 Sam. 10:5; 1 Kings 16:34; Judges 1:16; Judges 3:13; Ezra 2:34; Neh. 7:36; Neh. 3:2; Matt. 20:30; Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35; Luke 19:1.

"the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho." (Joshua 3:16, NASB)

"Now the cities of the tribe of the sons of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho and Beth-hoglah and Emek-keziz," (Joshua 18:21, NASB)

Part of the confusion regarding Jericho is the fact of the different cities by the same name. Archeology has attributed alphabetic designations to the different cities having existed at the ancient site of Jericho. Actually there are three basic sites: The ancient site. The site built by Herod. This site is located on the ancient site and is the modern Jericho.

The cities built on the ancient site and related with the one conquered by Joshua are as follows: It was occupied in the Neolithic times before 4500 BC. During the Chalcolithic Era, several cities stood on this site, 4500 - 3000 BC. Several cities followed on this site: City "A" in 3000 BC. City "B" in 2500 BC and was destroyed in 1700 BC. City "C" belonged to the Hyksos dynasty and was destroyed in 1500 BC. City "D" replaced city "C" and was built in 1500 BC. It was this city that was captured by Joshua.

City "D," which was conquered by Joshua, was a Canaanite stronghold and had a double wall of brick. The outer wall was about six feet thick and 30 feet high. There was an inner space of 12-15 feet. The



inner wall was 12 feet thick. It was a small city covering only about six acres. The remains of the town show the city as the apparent victim of an earthquake perfectly timed as a miracle of God for the need of Joshua and Israel.

The city is situated naturally according to geological and archeological research for an earthquake such as happened in San Francisco in 1906. Anyone rebuilding the city was put under a curse by Joshua. However, a Bethelite did rebuild it. Later Herod built another Jericho at a higher elevation. The current city is built on the ruins of the ancient site.

Samaria

Samaria was purchased by Omri, a king of Israel, from its owner, Shemer. He built the city and named it for the owner. 1 Kings 16:24.

"He bought the hill Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver; and he built on the hill, and named the city which he built Samaria, after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill." (1 Kings 16:24, NASB)

It was the capital of the ten northern tribes, called Israel. It remained for about 200 years. It was the center and seat of idolatry. Ahab built a temple to Baal there. Elijah and Elisha ministered there. It was attacked by the Syrians twice but expelled them both times. It was conquered by Assyria in 722-21 BC.

It was taken by Alexander the Great in 331 BC. It was dismantled by Ptolemy Lagos, then destroyed again 15 years later. It was conquered by John Hyrcanus, the Maccabee. It was later given by Augustus to Herod and named Sebaste. It was the location of Philip's destination in Acts 8:5.

"Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them." (Acts 8:5, NASB)

Its site was excavated by Harvard University from 1908-1910 AD. Archeological explorations have uncovered distinct periods in the city's history, peaks of prosperity, large numbers of cisterns, stout walls, inscribed pottery, and accounts of royal revenue received in the form of oil and wine. It was the burying place of the kings of Israel. It was here that the 70 sons of Ahab were slain by Jehu. 2 Kings 10:1.

"Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. And Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria, to the rulers of Jezreel, the elders, and to the guardians of the children of Ahab, saying," (2 Kings 10:1, NASB)

It was here where Herod killed his wife, Mariamne, and also his sons, (Josephus - Antiquities of the Jews). A Roman colony was settled there by Septimius Severis. It became the seat of a bishopric and was represented at the Council of Nicea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon. Its bishop attended the Synod of Jerusalem in 536 AD.

Bethlehem

The name means the "house of meat." The father or founder of Bethlehem is said to be Salma, the son of Caleb in 1 Chronicles 2:51. It was the place of the burial of Rachael. Gen. 35:19.

"Salma the father of Bethlehem and Hareph the father of Beth-gader." (1 Chronicles 2:51, NASB)

"So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)." (Genesis 35:19, NASB)

This was the chosen resident city of Boaz and Ruth. David was born to Jesse, a Bethlehemite, in 1 Sam. 17:12. Samuel came here to announce the successor of Saul. David's three mighty men secured water for David, which he in turn would not drink, from Bethlehem.

"Now David was the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, whose name was Jesse, and he had



eight sons. And Jesse was old in the days of Saul, advanced in years among men." (1 Samuel 17:12, NASB)

Bethlehem was the birthplace of Christ. Hadrian devastated Bethlehem and set up a sacred grove there to Adonis. Constantine in 330 AD founded a basilica over the cave type stable which still remains. Presently it is one of the most prosperous Christian centers in Israel. The church erected by Constantine is the Church of St. Mary, later known as the Church of the Nativity.

The historical events surrounding Bethlehem since early 600's: It was spared when the Persians overran Palestine in 614 AD. Also, it was spared when Palestine was overrun by the Turks in 636 AD. It welcomed the Crusaders in 1099 AD. It became part of the Latin Bishopric in 1110 AD. It was ruled for a time by the Moslems, then conceded to be a Christian city in 1229 AD with the walls torn down in 1489 AD. In 1834, its small Moslem section was destroyed. It was under Turkish control in World War I, then under British Mandate until 1948, then it was included in Jordan.

Hebron

One of the most important cities of the Scriptures. The name means "league" or "confederacy." It is approximately 20 miles south of Jerusalem and about 3,040 feet above sea level. Its ancient name was Kiriath-arba, more than likely meaning "Four Cities."

It was the burial place of four patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Adam. Abram lived there. Gen. 13:18. From here he rescued Lot. Gen. 14:13. Here his name was changed to Abraham. Gen. 17:5.

"Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD." (Genesis 13:18, NASB)

"Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram." (Genesis 14:13, NASB)

"No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations." (Genesis 17:5, NASB)

He was visited here by the three heavenly messengers with the promise of a son. Gen. 18:1. Sarah died here and Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah for her burial. Gen. 23:17. Isaac and Jacob spent a good part of their lives here. Gen. 35:27; Gen. 37:14.

"Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day." (Genesis 18:1, NASB)

"So Ephron's field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre, the field and cave which was in it, and all the trees which were in the field, that were within all the confines of its border, were deeded over" (Genesis 23:17, NASB)

"Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre of Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned." (Genesis 35:27, NASB)

From here Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brethren. Gen. 37:14. From here Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt. Gen. 46:1. The king of Hebron was one of the five kings defeated by Joshua. Joshua 10:3. Caleb drove the three sons of Anak out from Hebron. Joshua 14:12; Joshua 15:14.

"Then he said to him, "Go now and see about the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock, and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem."



(Genesis 37:14, NASB)

"So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac." (Genesis 46:1, NASB)

"Therefore Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent word to Hoham king of Hebron and to Piram king of Jarmuth and to Japhia king of Lachish and to Debir king of Eglon, saying," (Joshua 10:3, NASB)

""Now then, give me this hill country about which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day that Anakim were there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the LORD will be with me, and I will drive them out as the LORD has spoken."" (Joshua 14:12, NASB)

Here, David was anointed king and reigned for 7-1/2 years until he captured Jerusalem. 2 Sam. 5:5. It became one of the cities of Judah and one of the cities of refuge. Joshua 15:54; Joshua 21:10.

"At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah." (2 Samuel 5:5, NASB)

"and Humtah and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), and Zior; nine cities with their villages." (Joshua 15:54, NASB)

"and they were for the sons of Aaron, one of the families of the Kohathites, of the sons of Levi, for the lot was theirs first." (Joshua 21:10, NASB)

Here Absalom gained his support and opposition to David his father. 2 Sam 15:7. It was apparently taken by the nation of Edom during the Babylonian captivity period. It was colonized again by Jews returning from the captivity. Neh. 11:25.

"Now it came about at the end of forty years that Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go and pay my vow which I have vowed to the LORD, in Hebron." (2 Samuel 15:7, NASB)

"Now as for the villages with their fields, some of the sons of Judah lived in Kiriath-arba and its towns, in Dibon and its towns, and in Jekabzeel and its villages," (Nehemiah 11:25, NASB)

It was recaptured by Simon Maccabaeus from the nation Edom. It was destroyed and burned by the Roman general Vespasian. It was regarded as a holy city by Moslems, Jews, and Christians.

Now the city is not located on the site of ancient Hebron, but east of the old Hebron. Modern Hebron has a population of over 215,000, mostly Moslem and some Jews. Modern Hebron is divided into about seven sections. Two of them are noted for their glass blowers and water-skin makers. Most of the Jews live in a special ghetto and the entire city is rather an unprogressive city with the Moslems being fanatically exclusive.

Bethsaida

The name means "the house of fishing." There are apparently two cities of Bethsaida. One of these is in Galilee and the other is east of the Jordan River. The Bethsaida of Galilee is referred to in John 1:44, John 12:21, Matt. 8:14, and Mark 1:29.

"Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter." (John 1:44, NASB)

"these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."" (John 12:21, NASB)

Several basic things of significance occurred here as per the text. It was the native home of Peter, Andrew, and Philip. John 1:44; John 12:21. Its inhabitants were rebuked by the Lord for their unbelief in



Luke 10:13.

"Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter." (John 1:44, NASB)

"these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."" (John 12:21, NASB)

""Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes." (Luke 10:13, NASB)

The Bethsaida east of the Jordan River was the apparent place of the feeding of the 5,000. Luke 9:10-17. Here, the Lord restored the blind man to sight. Mark 8:22-26.

"When the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done. Taking them with Him, He withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida." (Luke 9:10, NASB)

"And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him. Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?" And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around." Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly. And He sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."" (Mark 8:22-26, NASB)

Nazareth

It is not mentioned in the Old Testament. It lies at the bottom of a basin in lower Galilee, to the west of it the Mediterranean Sea, to the east the valley of Jordan and the plain of Esdraelon where 20 battlegrounds were carved in history. From the rim of the basin you can see 30 miles in three directions. In Scripture it has several factors attached to it.

It was the home of Joseph and Mary. Luke 2:39. It was the place where the angel spoke to Mary of the virgin birth. Luke 1:26-28. It was the town where Joseph, Mary and Jesus settled after returning from Egypt. Matt. 2:19-22.

"When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth." (Luke 2:39, NASB)

"Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."" (Luke 1:26-28, NASB)

"But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead." So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Then after being warned by God in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee," (Matthew 2:19-22, NASB)

Here Jesus grew to manhood. Here he taught in the synagogue. It was a designation or title for Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth. Matt. 13:54; Luke 4:16.

"He came to His hometown and began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished,



and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" (Matthew 13:54, NASB)

"And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read." (Luke 4:16, NASB)

It was held in disrepute because of a couple of general factors. One was the low cultural nature of the people, two was the rude dialect, and three was possibly the lack of religious nature and laxity of morals.

It was a town built of white stone built of limestone rocks. Present Nazareth occupies pretty nearly the same place as the ancient Nazareth. Most of the 77,000 plus inhabitants are mainly Christian.

Christians first settled there, probably in the time of Constantine. During the Crusades, a bishop seat was located there. It was taken by the Moslems in 1183 AD. It was destroyed by Sultan Bibars in 1263 AD. In 1620 AD, the Franciscans, an order of monks, rebuilt the Church of the Annunciation and the town grew again.

It was the scene of the meeting of the French General Junot in 1799 facing the Turks. It was visited by Napoleon after his victory over the Turks. As a city, it suffered damage by an earthquake in 1837 AD. Today there is missionary activity there represented by the Church Missionary Society and of the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society.

Damascus

It has a traceable history of over 3500 years. It has always been a manufacturing city in crafts and woods. It is practically defenseless, bordered on three sides by barren hills and open on the fourth side to the Arabian desert.

Its history can be divided into four or five periods: The Early period: up to about 950 BC. The Aramaean Kingdom: 950-732 BC. The Middle Period: 732-650 BC. Under Islam.

Damascus is mentioned in the life of Abraham in Gen. 14. This indicates it was well established in Abraham's time. Abraham's heir was Eliezer of Damascus. Gen. 15:2.

"Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" (Genesis 15:2, NASB)

In David's time, Damascus was an Aramean (Syrian) city and usually an enemy against David. The Aramean Kingdom was established and headquartered in Damascus. 1 Kings 11:23.

"God also raised up another adversary to him, Rezon the son of Eliada, who had fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah." (1 Kings 11:23, NASB)

One of the kings of Damascus was Ben-hadad. 1 Kings 20:34. The Aramean Kingdom centered in Damascus fell to the Assyrians in 732 BC.

"Ben-hadad said to him, "The cities which my father took from your father I will restore, and you shall make streets for yourself in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria." Ahab said, "And I will let you go with this covenant." So he made a covenant with him and let him go." (1 Kings 20:34, NASB)

In the Persian period, Damascus was a prosperous city. In the Greek period, Damascus lost its position as the chief city of Syria. It too had a history of passing back and forth into several political hands. This includes the Judean, Roman, Nabataeans, etc.

Its record in Scripture in connection with Paul's conversion. Acts 9:1-28; Acts 22:5-11; Acts 26:12-21; 2 Cor. 11:32; Gal. 1:17. Damascus under Islam has now been a Moslem city for over 13 centuries.



"In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me," (2 Corinthians 11:32, NASB)

"nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus." (Galatians 1:17, NASB)