

February 4-10, 2019

Matthew 4; Luke 4-5

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me”

Summary: *Jesus fasts forty days and is tempted—He begins His ministry, calls disciples, and heals the sick.*

Jesus fasts forty days and is tempted by the devil—Jesus announces His divine sonship in Nazareth and is rejected—He casts out a devil in Capernaum, heals Peter’s mother-in-law, and preaches and heals throughout Galilee.

Peter, the fisherman, is called to catch men—Jesus heals a leper—He forgives sins and heals a paralytic—Matthew is called—The sick need a physician—New wine must be put in new bottles.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What is Nazareth like?

Jesus’ youth was spent in Nazareth, an obscure town in the region of Galilee. “Nazareth, a city in Galilee, sacred to Christians as the home of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. According to the new Testament, Jesus’ birth was announced to Mary in Nazareth. Jesus was brought up in the town, and although he did almost all his preaching outside of Nazareth, he was known in his lifetime as “Jesus of Nazareth.” Early Christians were contemptuously called “Nazarenes” by their enemies, and the Hebrew and Arabic terms for Christian are derived from the town’s name.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#)) Today it is a busy city of Arabs and Jews. Its Arab population makes it one of the largest Arab cities in Israel. About twelve hundred feet above sea level and halfway between the Mediterranean and the waters of Galilee, this obscure town became the childhood home of Jesus. Jesus’ upbringing surely included learning the tasks and crafts of his environment.

How did a craftsman become known as a carpenter?

Although western language Bibles refer to Mary’s husband, Joseph, as a carpenter, “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” ([Matthew 13:55](#)), the Greek Bible calls him a craftsman. The industry of Nazareth was, and still is, the regional rock quarry. The scriptural connection to a public reading once a week is corroborated by Luke’s account. “. . . he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.” ([Luke 4:16](#))

On that occasion, the Isaiah text was the scripture of the day. Isaiah had written it approximately seven hundred years previously, and he wrote it in “first person.” As Jesus read the word “anointed,” He was stating that He was the Messiah, which means anointed. The local inhabitants knew Him as the son of Mary and her husband as the “craftsman.” The original language of the New Testament was Greek and, Joseph is a craftsman.

The imagery of one who works with stone is scripturally supported much better than the “western” interpretation of Joseph being a carpenter. Jesus is the Rock of Salvation; He is the stone which the builders rejected. He was rejected at Nazareth and they wanted to stone Him by casting Him to his death over an abandoned quarry covering Him with rocks (the Biblical method of stoning). References to the Rock of Salvation and the stone refer to the Messiah. “O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.” (Psalms 95:1) “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.” (Psalms 118:22) “And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:” (Mark 12:10)

Who is the Rock of Salvation?

A craftsman surely could have included the trade of working in stone. Interestingly, Jehovah, later known as Jesus, is called the “Rock of Salvation.” “The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.” (2 Samuel 22:3) Although it is popular to consider Jesus as a carpenter, He also studied the Law of Moses. In fact, He was considered a rabbi, one schooled in the law. At twelve years of age He was in the temple—with the lawyers—answering and asking questions. Was this an apprentice craftsman or an apprentice lawyer becoming a “son of the law” (*Bar Mitzvah* in Aramaic)? Nowadays, someone schooled in the law is called a lawyer. Jesus was the lawgiver, our advocate with the Father. “For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.” (Isaiah 33:22)

What is a Bar Mitzvah celebration?

When a Jewish lad turns twelve years of age, he has the opportunity to study a section of the Law and the Prophets, a section he will

recite at his Bar Mitzvah. Jews regularly read the Law and the Prophets publicly three times a week (Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturday-Sabbaths). All congregations read the same section on each of those days. Therefore, the boy must choose which day he will read—and then be trained in that particular section throughout his twelfth year. A lawyer (rabbi) has been sufficiently trained to read the appropriate sections at any given time. Jesus apparently had that training. “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.” (Luke 4:16)

Who did Isaiah write the messianic prophecy for?

His reading fulfilled a definite messianic prophecy, and Jesus concluded by testifying that He was the realization of Isaiah’s prediction. “And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written.” (Luke 4:17) “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.” (Isaiah 61-12) “And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” (Luke 4:20-21)

The congregation apparently heard the words but became enraged that he would point himself out as the “Anointed One” (*Messiah* in Hebrew). To them, that kind of blasphemy warranted death. “And all they in the

synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.” (Luke 4:28-29)

What caused the hill to be called the Mount of Precipitation?

Close to forty different churches mark traditional sites of Jesus’ youth. However, the only scripturally supported site is an old Nazareth quarry. This is probably the place where angered Nazarenes would have wanted to ston Jesus for blasphemy. This is known today as the Mount of Jumping or the Mount of Precipitation. Rabbinic interpretations of the ancient Jewish law of stoning indicate that it was required that the victim be thrown over a cliff (the execution). The accuser was responsible to make sure the criminal was dead. If not, the accuser had to take the first stone and crush the victim’s heart. The accuser always had to cast the first stone and then all others threw stones to cover the body (the burial). (Sanhedrin 6:4 - Tractate of the Talmud). Jesus was brought to the edge of the hill, “But he passing through the midst of them went his way.” (Luke 4:30)

When did Jesus become a Bar Mitzvah?

An added thought about Jesus’ youth includes his experience at the Temple. It is suggested that Jesus was there at the age of twelve to become a “Son of the Law.” That expression in Aramaic is “Bar Mitzvah,” which usually happens at the end of the twelfth year, usually at his thirteenth birthday. In some Jewish circles, a boy may become a Bar Mitzvah one year earlier if he has no father. Jesus had no earthly father. Gently, He reminded His parents, “. . . wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” (Luke 2:49) It is the custom to read the scriptures, the Law and the Prophets, three times a week. That occurs on Mondays,

Thursdays and Sabbaths (Saturdays). It takes one year to completely read the entire “Old Testament.” Although they lack a “correlation department” (as the Latter-day Saints have), every congregation reads the same sections on the same day. That is why a lad anticipating his Bar Mitzvah selects a date and practices reading the section appointed for that day.

In Jesus’ day, it seems apparent that the Jews read the scriptures publicly in the synagogue only on the Sabbath day. Since they read only once a week, it stands to reason that it might take three years to read through the entire Law and the Prophets. It is interesting to note that the Savior’s ministry was three years in length. Perhaps He chose that time frame so that He could personally teach his Disciples all of the Law and the Prophets.

What about the anticipated “Latter-day David”

Virtually every Bar Mitzvah celebration is enhanced by singing to the Jewish lad being honored. He is treated as an expected David, one that should come in latter-days, out of obscurity, to reestablish a righteous kingdom. The old David proved himself politically, militarily, and spiritually. In spite of his sinfulness later in his life, Israelis still sing about the old David, King of Israel, awaiting a new Davidic descendant. Latter-day Saints feel that the Davidic prophecies began to be fulfilled when the Davidic kingdom was partially restored in the meridian of time with the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. They do expect the rest of the fulfillment to come later.

In considering the words of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea, the Jewish expectation of a latter-day David seems to include a person similar to the ancient David in addition to the Davidic Messiah, the King of Kings. He may also come out of obscurity. “But they shall serve the

LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.” (Jeremiah 30:9) “And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it.” (Ezekiel 34:24) “Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.” (Hosea 3:5)

If ancient events are any kind of pattern for the future, the latter-day David may be like the ancient David. He probably will prove himself politically, militarily, and spiritually. The people may then want to proclaim him a king. However, he will not likely accept that kingship. Although honored as a prince or a noble person, he will introduce and bear witness of the King of Kings. He came in the meridian of times (Luke 2), and will return in the latter-days.

How did the lake become known as the Sea of Galilee?

The central geographic highlight of the Galilean area is the Sea of Galilee. Small as a lake, it is referred to as a sea because in ancient Hebrew, there were fewer words and the word for body of water was simply, Yam, (pronounced yum). Hence, we have the Yam Hatichon (Mediterranean), Yam HaMelach (the Salt Lake) and Yam Kinneret (Sea of Galilee). Its Hebrew name is Kinneret.

“The Kinneret is a fresh water lake in northeast Israel. It covers an area of 64 square miles; its maximum length (north to south) is 15 miles and its maximum width (east to west) is 10 miles. The surface of the lake is approximately 696 feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea and, at its deepest, the water is about 144 feet deep. The Kinneret is fed by a number of fresh water streams. There are also salty springs at the lake bottom and along its shores. These add to the salt content (salinity) of the water

which is intensified by the high evaporation rate due to the hot climate. The amount of water in the lake varies a great deal with the shift from rainy to drought years. Until the winter of 1973/74 several years of drought had lowered the surface considerably but that exceedingly rainy winter restored it to its average. The river Jordan flows out of the southern end. In 1964 the National Water Carrier was completed to bring sweet water to the more southern sections of Israel; Lake Kinneret is the main reservoir from which the water is taken.

“Because of its abundant water supply, warm climate and surrounding fertile area, Lake Kinneret has attracted man since prehistoric times. The most ancient human remains and artifacts found in Erez Israel come from an area not far from Lake Kinneret's shores. In the Early Bronze Age some of the largest cities of Canaan were situated nearby and the *Via Maris* ("Maritime Route") passed its shores contributing to the wealth of the cities. In fact, Egyptian documents mention the hot springs on the shores of Lake Kinneret and their beneficial effects. In Bible times, Kinneret served as a prominent boundary mark: in the Canaanite era, it was the border of Sidon, king of the Amorites, and after Israel's conquest of the land, it marked the boundary between the territories of Naphtali on its western shores and Manasseh on its eastern shores.

“In the period of the Roman occupation, King Herod received the city of Hippus (Susitha), which bordered on the east of the lake, and Herod's sons, Antipas and Philip, founded the cities of Tiberias and Julias (Bethsaida). (Subsequently the lake also became known as the Sea of Tiberias.) Moreover, it was also during the Roman period that the Lake Kinneret region served as the setting of Jesus' preaching, and later as the center of his apostles' activities. As a result, many churches

were later built on these same shores. The crusaders fought to control the lake area because of its historic connections with Christianity. The New Testament refers to the lake as the Sea of Galilee and the Sea of Gennesareth." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Seeing these as patterns of Jesus' teaching is being "caught in the net" . . . by Him!

What is it like fishing on the Sea of Galilee?

To this very day, fishermen ply their craft on the waters of this beautiful lake. Often, they use two boats. One is larger and has a main mast with a pulley to lift the nets up and out of the water. The other end of the net is connected to a smaller boat. The fish (there are more than twenty varieties in the lake) swim through the nets; only the larger ones are caught and are then plucked out of the net as it is lifted into the larger boat.

Fishermen still prefer to fish at night and during the hours just before dawn. They use lanterns to attract the fish. Imagine fishing all night and catching nothing; then a "perfect" stranger embarks on your boat and tells you to cast the net on the other side. And it changes your life! ". . . they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake . . . And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink." (Luke 5:4-8) Note, this was probably the largest catch they had ever encountered in their professional life, yet they could not quite bring it in. They were also told to "let it go," for now they were to become fishers of men. ". . . Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him." (Matthew 4:19-20)

In a subsequent lesson, we will study the repeat of this event as a chiasmus: the first catch before their training, and three years later, the last catch after their training. The first catch failed; the second catch succeeded.