

## JESUS & THE LAND

Charles R. Page II, *JESUS & THE LAND* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), Page II, Dean of the Jerusalem Center for Biblical Studies, Jerusalem, Israel.

**Galilee:** The United Monarchy split into northern and southern kingdoms following the death of Solomon. Jeroboam I became the king of the northern tribes (in Israel), while Rehoboam I became the king of Judah in the south. As a part of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Galilee fell under the domination of many surrounding powers for the next two centuries. (Charles R. Page II, *JESUS & THE LAND* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 20).

The Northern Kingdom finally fell to the Assyrians, who conquered their country, destroyed their capital city (Samaria), and deported many of the citizens in 722/721 BCE. Through this action by the Assyrians, the Northern Kingdom, in general, and Galilee, in particular, became a Gentile nation. The Jews were minority in Galilee. (Charles R. Page II, *JESUS & THE LAND* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 21).

For the next 130 years the Northern Kingdom was ruled by an outside power, while the Southern Kingdom (Judah) was ruled by the House of David. In 587/586 BCE, Judah fell to Babylonians, and many of the Jewish people from Judah were exiled to Babylon. (Charles R. Page II, *JESUS & THE LAND* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 21).

**Nazareth:** The name *Nazareth* is probably taken from the Hebrew word *netzer*, means “a shoot,” and is taken from a passage found in Isaiah 11:1-2: A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The village was so named Nazareth because the residents considered themselves the *netzer* (*shoot*) from the clan of David, from whom the Messiah would come. (Charles R. Page II, *JESUS & THE LAND* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 34).

The residents of Nazareth were Hasidim, similar theologically to the Essenes. They were isolationists much marrying within the clan/sect, interacting with the outside world only when absolutely necessary. So many concluded that the village of Nazareth was populated by an inward-focused, isolationist people who thought that the Messiah would come from within their clan. They, like the Essenes, thought that they were the sole possessors of the truth of God’s law and will and that all other groups were heretical (Charles R. Page II, *JESUS & THE LAND* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 34).

Nazareth was a very small village during the first century. Its population was approximately 150 persons. Nazareth was located in the hills of Lower Galilee and was not a stop on any major trade route. It was abandoned near the time of the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom (722/721 BCE). Nazareth was so small and insignificant that the Assyrians did not even bother to occupy it (Charles R. Page II, *JESUS & THE LAND* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 36).

Nazareth was uninhabited during the Persian and early Hellenistic times (8<sup>th</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries B.C.). The lack of any Assyrian, Persian, and early Hellenistic ceramic points to a long settlement gap. Most of the inhabitants of Nazareth belonged to the same extended family, the clan of the Nazarene. Since Nazareth was a very small village that was not located on a major trade route and was populated by an ultraconservative Hasidic sect, one can better understand Nathanael’s response to Phillip’s announcement of the arrival of the Messiah: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). (Charles R. Page II, *JESUS & THE LAND* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995) 37-38).

In Matthew 2:19-23 Jesus’ parents made Nazareth their home?????????/// 46

According to Page II,

After the time of testing in the Wilderness of Judea and self-reflection, he made an intentional shift from the rigid fundamentalism of his youth to a more moderate theological position. This shift is demonstrated in his move from Nazareth to Capernaum (Kfar Nahum), a more moderate village closely aligned with theology of the House of Hillel. To move from Nazareth to Capernaum would be something akin to moving from a familiar setting to a place that is almost exactly opposite of all that you have ever known. It might be compared to moving from a small rural community to an urban metropolis, where one would be exposed to things totally alien to one's upbringing and experience. Jesus moved theologically to the left, rejecting the strict teachings of his sect/clan to embrace a more open and inclusive expression of the Jewish faith. Jesus rejects the strict, narrow-minded, religiously biased position of his own sect/clan in favor of the more inclusive, pluralistic position of the Pharisees of Capernaum.

Charles R. Page II, *JESUS & THE LAND* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995),63.

Luke 4:31-37, the story of Jesus' healing in Capernaum on the Sabbath, doesn't condemn Jesus' healing on the Sabbath. It is because the house of Hillel placed greater emphasis on the law of loving one's neighbor than on keeping the strict laws of the Sabbath. Therefore, a person had more value than laws governing one's behavior on the Sabbath. To heal was a greater good than not to heal. This was a fundamental doctrine of the Hillelites and the prevailing attitude among the people of Capernaum.

Page II calls this move of Jesus "major decision" and "traumatic experience," and there would be major consequence of this action.

Charles R. Page II, *JESUS & THE LAND* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995),63.

Why Capernaum? Jesus provably moved here because this was the home of his earliest followers and disciples (Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and the unnamed disciples perhaps John). Capernaum may have been a place where the prevailing theological attitude was more comparable to his own emerging beliefs, understanding, and insights. Furthermore, in Capernaum, he was able to establish an association with a group of men who were already partners in a fishing business and who probably were living together in an insula owned by Simon's mother-in-law (see Mark 1:29; Luke 5:10). Perhaps these men were not only followers of Jesus but also leaders of others.

Charles R. Page II, *JESUS & THE LAND* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995),66.

Capernaum was a village (or small town) located on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The archaeological record indicates that Capernaum had been occupied as early as early as the Middle Bronze Period, but there is also evidence of habitation during the Late Bronze, Persian, and Hellenistic periods. The town was separated into two sections; an upper and a lower area. The wealthy lived in the upper part of the town now occupied by a Greek Orthodox church and monastery. Even today remains of large villas dating to the Roman Period (63 B.C.E.-323 C.E.) are found here. During the time of Jesus we would expect to find Jairus ( the leader of the Capernaum synagogue), the Roman centurion (see Matthew 8 and Luke 7) and, perhaps, Levi the tax collector living in the upper part of the town. The lower city was inhabited by the poor, including Jesus and his disciples, who lived in the home of Simon Peter's mother-in-law. The synagogue was also located here in the lower city. The major industry of the town was fishing. However, agriculture would have been prevalent as well.

Charles R. Page II, *JESUS & THE LAND* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995),67.

## Chapter Three: The Galilean Ministry P. 71.

### Announcement in Nazareth P. 79-

Early in his public ministry, he decided to return to his home village of Nazareth to announce the beginning of his ministry in the local synagogue (Luke 4:16-31). According to Luke, Jesus reads from Isaiah: (Is. 61:1-2)

#### Luke 4:16-19

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." 22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" 23 He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" 24 And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. 25 But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; 26 yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. 27 There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." 28 When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. 30 But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

#### Is. 61:1-2

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,

and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion--  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.

First, people spoke well of Jesus because they thought he was saying to them,  
"Yes, I am the Messiah. Yes, you were right that the Messiah would be a shoot (a *netzer*)  
from our clan. And, yes, God will now establish the kingdom of God, and your will be

prominent in the new order.” Nazareth and the Natzorean sect were the “smallest one” that would become a mighty nation! This was God’s time to “accomplish it quickly” (Is. 60:21-22). Charles R. Page II, *JESUS & THE LAND* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 80.

Jesus quickly denounced this expectation when he said the rest in Luke 4:23-27). Only when Jesus told them that outsiders would be used to initiate the kingdom of God, and not they, did they want to kill him. They had been waiting for years – and their ancestors for decades, even centuries – for God to break into history, and their entire existence was predicated on their being the clan through which God would be revealed to all of the Jewish people. Now Jesus wipes out their hopes and desires by reporting that God would use the liberal Pharisees in Capernaum to initiate the coming kingdom and that Jesus would not allow them to sue him for their own selfish purposes. In short, Jesus would not allow himself to be used by members of his clan and village for their own political and religious agenda. Charles R. Page II, *JESUS & THE LAND* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995),81.

Mark and Luke report that the beginning of Jesus’ ministry there was a miraculous healing in the synagogue in Capernaum on the Sabbath (see Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37). Missing from these accounts is any condemnation of Jesus for violating the Sabbath. How can this be? The answer is; the village of Capernaum was theologically accommodating to the House (or School) of Hillel, the more moderate division of the Pharisees. For the House of Hillel, the laws of loving God and loving one’s neighbor took precedence over all other laws, including restrictions concerning the Sabbath. Charles R. Page II, *Jesus & The Land* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995),82.

In the first century hospitality custom there were five traditional acts, or gifts, of hospitality people were required to offer to a guest in their home, once that person had crossed the threshold into the house. The five acts of hospitality were (1) offering a drink of water; (2) washing the feet of the guest; (3) greeting the guest with a kiss; (4) anointing or washing the head; (5) and offering the guest something to eat. Charles R. Page II, *JESUS & THE LAND* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995),95.

**The danger with growing popularity was** that Jesus attracted increasingly larger crowds, and with these larger crowds would come the possibility of political unrest. His ability to attract large crowds was John’s real threat to Herod Antipas and Rome as well. After John’s arrest and execution, many of his followers, no doubt, turned to Jesus. Luke himself hints at Herod’s desire to stop Jesus before he gained the notoriety of John; “At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to Jesus, ‘Get away from here for Herod wants to kill you’” (Luke 13:31). Charles R. Page II, *JESUS & THE LAND* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995),97.

Jesus’ fear of this talk of revolution was well founded. Neither Herod nor Rome would tolerate either this kind of talk or large gatherings and demonstrations. Jewish historians record several incidents of revolutionary activity during the first century CE, all crushed by Rome. Luke further records examples of men who served as leaders of revolts in the first century CE in the speech of Gamaliel:

“Fellow Israelites, consider carefully what you propose to do to these men. For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and

disappeared. After him Judas the Galilean rose up at the time of the census and got people to follow him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case, I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone.” (Act 5:35-38).

## **THE HOLY WEEK P. 111**

### **Why attacked money changers in the Temple?**

#### **Political situation in time of Jesus’ ministry**

Page informs us;

The people of Judea, and also Galilee and Peraea, hated the Romans for their repressive rule. Many of the common people who did not possess their religious zeal nevertheless supported their effort and hoped that one day the Romans would be driven out.

Zealots were looking for a charismatic figure to help them rally the people to revolt against Rome. Certainly the Zealots saw in Jesus a potential ally, or at the least a popular and charismatic figure around whom they could unite the masses in their revolt against Rome, a revolt in which God would be on their side.

The Romans were as determined to keep the peace and to control the masses as were the Zealots to disrupt the peace and inspire the masses to revolt. Judea had been a cacophony of political unrest since the days just prior to the death of Herod the Great. The situation was so volatile that Rome had instituted direct rule by replacing Herod Archelaus with a series of Roman procurators. Pontius Pilate, who ruled Judea for Rome, had come to Palestine in 26 C.E. Rivkin informs us;

When Pontius Pilate entered on his procuratorship in AD 26 and immediately reconfirmed Caiaphas as high priest, he fell heir to a country that had been wracked by continuous violence...Judea was a battleground. If Pontius Pilate were to make his mark and show himself worthy of advancement in the hierarchy of imperial power, it was essential that he impress the emperor with his ability to maintain law and order in a land which had proven itself to be a seedbed of dissidence, disorder, and violence. Unless, then, Pontius Pilate were shrewd enough to govern this unruly people, his tenure as procurator was bound to be extremely short. Charles R. Page II, JESUS & THE LAND (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995),120-121).

Page II suggests that Jesus found himself caught between these two diametrically opposed forces, which were moving toward a point of confrontation and climax.

### **Jesus’ cleansing of the temple P. 122**

The money changers carried out a legal, necessary, and important function for sacrificial worship in the Temple. Many of the laws found in the Torah require that animals be offered at various occasions as sacrifices for sin, purification, and the birth of a child. Furthermore, it was a custom of the day that no pagan money – that is, money bearing images, a practice considered as idolatrous – could be used in the Temple or its precincts. People who did not have Jewish currency would be required to change “pagan” money before they entered into the Court of the Gentiles. Charles R. Page II, JESUS & THE LAND (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995),122).

Jesus attacked the money changers because the level of corruption involving the various people who received a profit or commission or a kick-back from the sale of animals and the changing of money had made it practically impossible for the poor to carry out the sacrifices required by the Law. So many commissions were built in to the price animals used in sacrifices that the cost had become prohibitive for the poor. Thus the Temple and its sacrificial worship had become inaccessible to the poor. God's house could no longer be thought of as a "house of prayer." Literally and figuratively the Temple had become a den of robbers, and the chief robber was the high priest. Charles R. Page II, JESUS & THE LAND (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995),123-123).

Sadducees controlled the Temple and any business conducted there. They certainly received either a commission on or profit from the items sold or the money exchanged there. Furthermore, they were the party of wealthy, the aristocracy. Josephus emphasizes this point; "The Sadducees are able to persuade none but the rich, and have not the populace obsequious to them, but the Pharisees have the multitude on their side." They also held the power to administer civil law on behalf of the Roman procurators. Charles R. Page II, JESUS & THE LAND (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995),124).