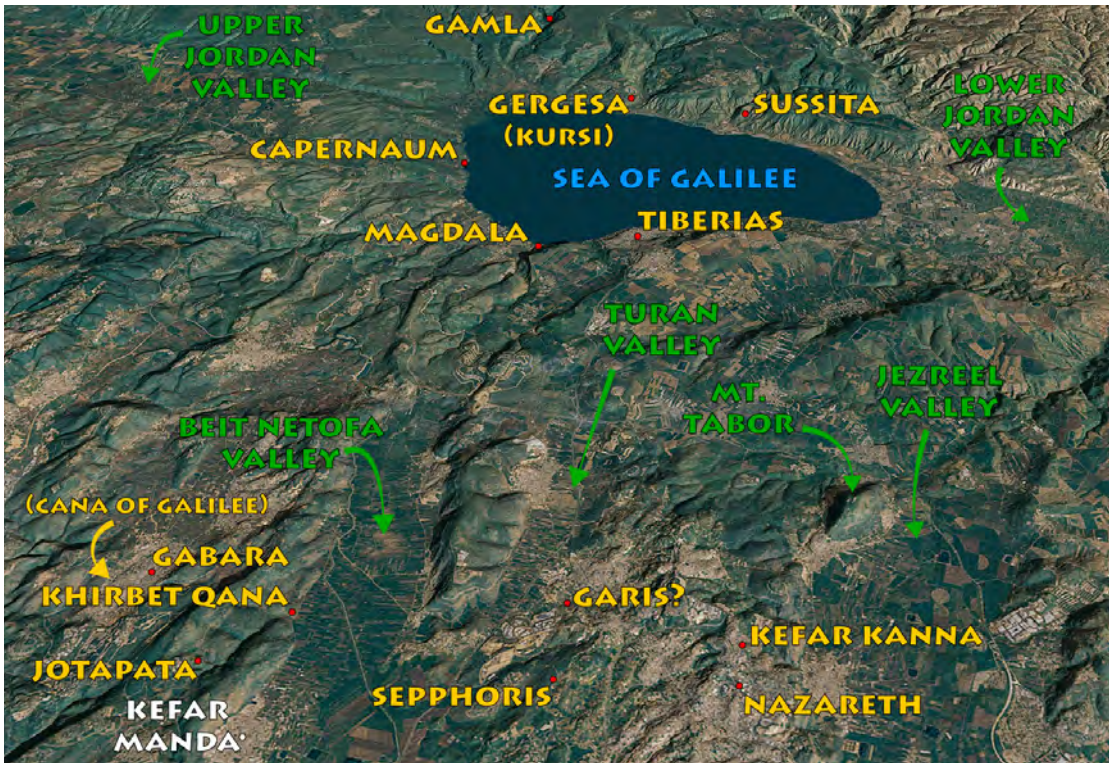




VIEW NORTHEAST: THE ROMAN AMPHITHEATER OF SEPPHORIS LOOKS OUT ACROSS THE WESTERN END OF THE BEIT NETOFA VALLEY TOWARD THE MOUNTAINS OF LOWER GALILEE.

BELOW (VIEW NORTHWEST): THE ROMAN AMPHITHEATER OF SEPPHORIS WITH THE CRUSADER TOWER ABOVE IT (TOP CENTER). THE VIEW FROM THE TOWER OF LOWER GALILEE IS SPECTACULAR (SEE PHOTO ABOVE).





VIEW EAST: THIS MAP ALSO GOES WITH JOTAPATA (PAGE 99) AND NAZARETH (PAGE 127). THE CITIES AROUND JOTAPATA AND SEPPHORIS FIGURE INTO THE CAMPAIGNS OF VESPASIAN IN LOWER GALILEE.

SEPPHORIS (ZIPPORI)

Although the Bible doesn't mention it, Sepphoris was the capital of Galilee in New Testament times. It's only an hour's walk from Nazareth, and as a city, its history and activities would have been well known to the Young Man growing up in Nazareth. I quote George Adam Smith again:

[Jesus] was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. The perfection of His purity and patience was achieved not easily as behind a wide fence which shut the world out, but amid rumour and scandal with every provocation to unlawful curiosity and premature ambition.¹

After the death of his father, Herod the Great, Herod Antipas ruled Galilee and Perea under his Roman conquerors. We remember him for his role in the executions of John the Baptist (Matt. 14:1–12) and Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 23:7–15; see “Holy Week” in *Blessed Pilgrimage*, vol. 3).

After Herod the Great died in 4 BC, Sepphoris was at the center of the rebellion that brought about the destruction of the city by the governor of Syria, Publius Quinctilius Varus.² Herod Antipas rebuilt the city, making it “the ornament of all Galilee.”³

The historian Emil Schürer described the character of Herod Antipas and his purpose in rebuilding Sepphoris after coming to power:

In point of character, Antipas was a genuine son of old Herod—sly, ambitious, and luxurious, only not so able as his father. In regard to his slyness we have unmistakable evidence from the life of Jesus, who, on a memorable occasion, attached to him the designation of “that fox.” It was always necessary to have



SOUTH OF THE THEATER IS A THIRD-CENTURY AD MANSION KNOWN AS THE DIONYSUS HOUSE. THE DINING ROOM FLOOR FEATURES THIS BEAUTIFUL PORTRAIT OF AN UNKNOWN WOMAN CALLED "THE MONA LISA OF GALILEE."

BELOW (VIEW NORTHEAST): THIS COLONNADED STREET DATES TO THE EARLY SECOND CENTURY AD. THE BUILDERS PAVED THE PORTICOES ALONG THE SIDES OF THE STREET WITH MOSAICS. WAGON WHEEL RUTS (CENTER) ATTEST TO ITS USE.



recourse to craft in order to keep the Galileans in order, and to guard the frontiers of Perea against the robber raids of the Arabians. For the defence of Galilee he rebuilt Sepphoris, that had been destroyed by fire by the soldiers of Varus, and surrounded it with strong walls.⁴

Schürer also described what the destruction of Sepphoris meant for its Jewish inhabitants:

[The destruction of Sepphoris] makes a turning-point in its history; from a Jewish town adhering to the national party it now became a town friendly to the Romans, with probably a mixed population.

But its population was—as was shown by its attitude during the great war, AD 66–70—no longer anti-Roman and hence no longer purely Jewish. It is perhaps this change, which is referred to in a passage of the Mishna, in which the “ancient government of Sepphoris” is assumed to have been a purely Jewish one. At its rebuilding by Herod Antipas, Sepphoris seems to have been also raised to the rank of capital of Galilee.⁵

We don't know a lot about the world in which Jesus lived and grew to manhood.⁶ He understood enough about the politicians of His day to call Herod Antipas “that fox,” as Schürer pointed out. When Jesus was warned by certain Pharisees, “Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee” (Luke 13:31), rather than flee, He chose to bear witness of Himself, giving them the following instructions:

Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.

Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish *out of Jerusalem*.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! [Compare Jesus's promise to the Nephites when He appeared to them after His resurrection from the dead: “O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart.” (3 Ne: 10:6)]

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. (Luke 13:32–35)

Elder McConkie wrote the following about these verses:

Jesus had done, was then doing, and would thereafter continue to do his assigned work with calmness and deliberation, unhurried by threats, regardless of plots against his life, but rather with serenity and in the dignity and majesty of his high calling.⁷

The latter-day Apostle also explained the reference to Jerusalem by Jesus:

What pointed irony is this! ‘I shall not be killed by Herod here in Perea, for my work is not yet finished. But I shall go to Jerusalem, that great spiritual capital of the world, that city wherein ye think all religious light is centered. There, enveloped in the light that has become darkness, I shall be slain, not by pagan Herod, but by my own people.’⁸



VIEW WEST: ROMAN-BUILT AQUEDUCTS FILLED SEPPHORIS'S IMPRESSIVE UNDERGROUND RESERVOIR THAT STORED WATER AND REGULATED ITS FLOW INTO THE CITY. THE RESERVOIR WAS REACHED THROUGH SIX VERTICAL SHAFTS.

BELOW: DETAIL OF THE UNDERGROUND RESERVOIR **BELOW (VIEW SOUTH):** THE FIRST OF SIX VERTICAL SHAFTS THAT LED TO THE RESERVOIR BELOW THE CITY. NAZARETH IS ALSO VISIBLE (TOP).





VIEW NORTH: THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN STANDING NEAR THE THEATER (SEE PHOTOS ON PAGE 118), LOOKING TOWARD KEFAR MANDA (CENTER LEFT) AND CANA OF GALILEE (CENTER RIGHT; SUNLIT MOUND ON THE RIGHT EDGE OF THE PHOTO).

BELOW (VIEW NORTHWEST): THE CRUSADER FORTRESS OF SEPPHORIS (TOP LEFT) IS VISIBLE FROM ALL OVER LOWER GALILEE, INCLUDING NAZARETH. THE HEBREW NAME FOR THE CITY IS ZIPPORI ("BIRD") BECAUSE IT SITS ON A HILLTOP LIKE A BIRD.





VIEW NORTHWEST: THE FIFTH-CENTURY AD SYNAGOGUE OF SEPPHORIS, COVERED FOR PROTECTION, WAS BUILT NEAR ROMAN RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS. ANCIENT SOURCES INDICATE THAT SEPPHORIS HAD MORE THAN ONE SYNAGOGUE.

BELOW (VIEW NORTHWEST): THE CRUSADER FORTRESS WAS REFURBISHED AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND SERVED AS A SCHOOL UNTIL 1948. TODAY IT HOUSES A MUSEUM OF SEPPHORIS ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS.





THE MOSAIC FLOOR OF THE SEPPHORIS SYNAGOGUE. SIGNS DESCRIBE THE VARIOUS SCENES, WHICH INCLUDE JEWISH MOTIFS AND BIBLE STORIES ARRANGED IN HORIZONTAL PANELS.

ENDNOTES

- 1 For the full quote and other observations about Jesus, see “Nazareth” on page 127.
- 2 Publius Quinctilius Varus was the governor of Syria from 7–6 BC. For his role in putting down a Jewish rebellion at Sepphoris, see “Jotapata (Yodfat)” on page 99.
- 3 Flavius Josephus, *Twenty Books of the Jewish Antiquities*, in *The Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus the Jewish Historian*, trans. William Whiston (London, 1737), 18:2:1, <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus>.
- 4 Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC–135 AD)*, vol. 1, rev. ed. (London: Edinburgh T. & T. Clark Ltd, 1973), chap. 17, Kindle.
- 5 Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, vol. 2, chap. 23, Kindle.
- 6 We know Jesus lived a mortal life as God for reasons that Alma explained to the people of Gideon: “And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:11–12). These verses apply in part to Christ’s physical mission among God’s children. He experienced the same challenges and more that we experience. How much of His mortal suffering occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane and again on the cross of Calvary is unknown and incomprehensible. We are aware that His suffering in all cases was for us so He would know how to help us in our times of need.
- 7 Bruce R. McConkie, “Jesus to Be Slain in Jerusalem,” in *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965), 1:464–65.
- 8 McConkie, “Jesus Laments over Doomed Jerusalem,” 1:584–85.