

Sketches of Jewish Social Life - Part 1

by Alfred Edersheim

Alfred Edersheim's sermon explores the rich social and spiritual landscape of Palestine during the time of Jesus, emphasizing its importance in understanding the New Testament.

Scripture: Isaiah 9:1, Matthew 5:14, Matthew 15:28, Luke 17:6, Luke 18:11, Luke 19:4, John 1:46, John 7:52

Topics: "New Testament History", "Jewish Culture"

Description

Alfred Edersheim preaches about the historical and cultural context of the land of Palestine at the time of Jesus Christ, focusing on the significance of understanding the surroundings, people, and events of the New Testament. He emphasizes the importance of realizing the contrast between the teachings of Jesus Christ and the beliefs of His contemporaries, highlighting the unique nature of Christ's life, teachings, and impact. Edersheim also discusses the divisions, prejudices, and religious practices prevalent in different regions of Palestine, particularly in Galilee, shedding light on the social, economic, and religious dynamics of the time.

Transcript

The object of this volume is kindred to that of my previous book on The Temple, its Ministry and Services as they were at the Time of Jesus Christ. In both I have wished to transport the reader into the land of Palestine at the time of our Lord and of His apostles, and to show him, so far as lay within the scope of each book, as it were, the scene on which, and the persons among whom the events recorded in New Testament history had taken place. For I believe, that in measure as we realise its surroundings--so to speak, see and hear for ourselves what passed at the time, enter into its ideas, become familiar with its habits, modes of thinking, its teaching and worship--shall we not only understand many of the expressions and allusions in the New Testament, but also gain fresh evidence of the truth of its history alike from its faithfulness to the picture of society, such as we know it to have been, and from the contrast of its teaching and aims to those of the contemporaries of our Lord.

For, a careful study of the period leaves this conviction on the mind: that--with reverence be it said--Jesus Christ was strictly of His time, and that the New Testament is, in its narratives, language, and allusions, strictly true to the period and circumstances in which its events are laid. But in another, and far more important, aspect there is no similarity between Christ and His period. "Never man"--of that, or any subsequent period--"spake like this man"; never man lived or died as He. Assuredly, if He was the Son of David, He also is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

In my book on The Temple, its Ministry and Services, I endeavoured to carry the reader with me into the Sanctuary, and to make him witness all connected with its institutions, its priesthood, and its solemnities. In this book I have sought to take him into ordinary civil society, and to make him mingle with the men and women of that period, see them in their homes and families, learn their habits and manners, and follow them in their ordinary life--all, as illustrative of New Testament history; at the same time endeavouring to present in a popular form the scenes witnessed.

Another, and perhaps the most important part in its bearing on Christianity, yet remains to be done: to trace the progress of religious thought--as regards the canon of Scripture, the Messiah, the law, sin, and salvation--to describe the character of theological literature, and to show the state of doctrinal belief at the time of our Lord. It is here especially that we should see alike the kinship in form and the almost contrast in substance between what Judaism was at the time of Christ, and the teaching and the kingdom of our Blessed Lord. But this lay quite outside the scope of the present volume, and belongs to a larger work for which this and my previous book may, in a sense, be regarded as forestudies. Accordingly, where civil society touched, as on so many points it does, on the theological and the doctrinal, it was only possible to "sketch" it, leaving the outlines to be filled up. To give a complete representation of the times of our Lord, in all their bearings--to show not only who they were among whom Jesus Christ moved, but what they knew, thought, and believed--and this as the frame, so to speak, in which to set as a picture the life of our Blessed Lord Himself, such must now be the work, to which, with all prayerful reverence and with most earnest study, I shall henceforth set myself.

It seemed needful to state this, in order to explain both the plan of this book and the manner of its treatment. I will only add, that it embodies the results of many years' study, in which I have availed myself of every help within my reach. It might seem affectation, were I to enumerate the names of all the authorities consulted or books read in the course of these studies. Those mentioned in the foot-notes constitute but a very small proportion of them.

Throughout, my constant object has been to illustrate the New Testament history and teaching. Even the "Scripture Index" at the close will show in how many instances this has been attempted. Most earnestly then do I hope, that these pages may be found to cast some additional light on the New Testament, and that they will convey fresh evidence--to my mind of the strongest kind--and in a new direction, of the truth "of those things which are most surely believed among us." And now it only remains at the close of these investigations once more to express my own full and joyous belief in that grand truth to which all leads up--that "CHRIST IS THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH."

Alfred Edersheim.

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Chapter 1

Palestine Eighteen Centuries Ago

Eighteen and a half centuries ago, and the land which now lies desolate--its bare, grey hills looking into ill-tilled or neglected valleys, its timber cut down, its olive- and vine-clad terraces crumbled into dust, its

villages stricken with poverty and squalor, its thoroughfares insecure and deserted, its native population well-nigh gone, and with them its industry, wealth, and strength--presented a scene of beauty, richness, and busy life almost unsurpassed in the then known world.

The Rabbis never weary of its praises, whether their theme be the physical or the moral pre-eminence of Palestine. It happened, so writes one of the oldest Hebrew commentaries, that Rabbi Jonathan was sitting under a fig-tree, surrounded by his students. Of a sudden he noticed how the ripe fruit overhead, bursting for richness, dropped its luscious juice on the ground, while at a little distance the distended udder of a she-goat was no longer able to hold the milk. "Behold," exclaimed the Rabbi, as the two streams mingled, "the literal fulfillment of the promise: 'a land flowing with milk and honey.'" "The land of Israel is not lacking in any product whatever," argued Rabbi Meir, "as it is written (Deu 8:9): 'Thou shalt not lack anything in it.'" Nor were such statements unwarranted; for Palestine combined every variety of climate, from the snows of Hermon and the cool of Lebanon to the genial warmth of the Lake of Galilee and the tropical heat of the Jordan valley.

Accordingly not only the fruit trees, the grain, and garden produce known in our colder latitudes were found in the land, along with those of sunnier climes, but also the rare spices and perfumes of the hottest zones. Similarly, it is said, every kind of fish teemed in its waters, while birds of most gorgeous plumage filled the air with their song. Within such small compass the country must have been unequalled for charm and variety. On the eastern side of Jordan stretched wide plains, upland valleys, park-like forests, and almost boundless corn and pasture lands; on the western side were terraced hills, covered with olives and vines, delicious glens, in which sweet springs murmured, and fairy-like beauty and busy life, as around the Lake of Galilee.

In the distance stretched the wide sea, dotted with spreading sails; here was luxurious richness, as in the ancient possessions of Issachar, Manasseh, and Ephraim; and there, beyond these plains and valleys, the highland scenery of Judah, shelving down through the pasture tracts of the Negev, or South country, into the great and terrible wilderness. And over all, so long as God's blessing lasted, were peace and plenty. Far as the eye could reach, browsed "the cattle on a thousand hills"; the pastures were "clothed with flocks, the valleys also covered over with corn"; and the land, "greatly enriched with the river of God," seemed to "shout for joy," and "also to sing." Such a possession, heaven-given at the first and heaven-guarded throughout, might well kindle the deepest enthusiasm.

"We find," writes one of the most learned Rabbinical commentators, supporting each assertion by a reference to Scripture (R. Bechai), "that thirteen things are in the sole ownership of the Holy One, blessed be His Name! and these are they: the silver, the gold, the priesthood, Israel, the first-born, the altar, the first-fruits, the anointing oil, the tabernacle of meeting, the kingship of the house of David, the sacrifices, the land of Israel, and the eldership." In truth, fair as the land was, its conjunction with higher spiritual blessings gave it its real and highest value. "Only in Palestine does the Shechinah manifest itself," taught the Rabbis. Outside its sacred boundaries no such revelation was possible. It was there that rapt prophets had seen their visions, and psalmists caught strains of heavenly hymns. Palestine was the land that had Jerusalem for its capital, and on its highest hill that temple of snowy marble and glittering gold for a sanctuary, around which clustered such precious memories, hallowed thoughts, and glorious, wide-reaching hopes. There is no religion so strictly local as that of Israel. Heathenism was indeed the worship of national deities, and Judaism that of Jehovah, the God of heaven and earth. But the national deities of the heathen might be transported, and their rites adapted to foreign manners. On the other hand, while Christianity was from the first universal in its character and design, the religious institutions and the

worship of the Pentateuch, and even the prospects opened by the prophets were, so far as they concerned Israel, strictly of Palestine and for Palestine. They are wholly incompatible with the permanent loss of the land. An extra-Palestinian Judaism, without priesthood, altar, temple, sacrifices, tithes, first-fruits, Sabbatical and Jubilee years, must first set aside the Pentateuch, unless, as in Christianity, all these be regarded as blossoms designed to ripen into fruit, as types pointing to, and fulfilled in higher realities. * Outside the land even the people are no longer Israel: in view of the Gentiles they are Jews; in their own view, "the dispersed abroad."

* This is not the place to explain what substitution Rabbinitism proposed for sacrifices, etc. I am well aware that modern Judaism tries to prove by such passages as 1 Sam 15:22; Psa 51:16, 17; Isa 1:11-13; Hosea 6:6, that, in the view of the prophets, sacrifices, and with them all the ritual institutions of the Pentateuch, were of no permanent importance. To the unprejudiced reader it seems difficult to understand how even party-spirit could draw such sweeping conclusions from such premises, or how it could ever be imagined that the prophets had intended by their teaching, not to explain or apply, but to set aside the law so solemnly given on Sinai. However, the device is not new. A solitary voice ventured even in the second century on the suggestion that the sacrificial worship had been intended only by way of accommodation, to preserve Israel from lapsing into heathen rites!

All this the Rabbis could not fail to perceive. Accordingly when, immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, they set themselves to reconstruct their broken commonwealth, it was on a new basis indeed, but still within Palestine. Palestine was the Mount Sinai of Rabbinitism. Here rose the spring of the Halachah, or traditional law, whence it flowed in ever-widening streams; here, for the first centuries, the learning, the influence, and the rule of Judaism centered; and there they would fain have perpetuated it. The first attempts at rivalry by the Babylonian schools of Jewish learning were keenly resented and sharply put down. Only the force of circumstances drove the Rabbis afterwards voluntarily to seek safety and freedom in the ancient seats of their captivity, where, politically unmolested, they could give the final development to their system. It was this desire to preserve the nation and its learning in Palestine which inspired such sentiments as we are about to quote. "The very air of Palestine makes one wise," said the Rabbis. The Scriptural account of the borderland of Paradise, watered by the river Havilah, of which it is said that "the gold of that land is good," was applied to their earthly Eden, and paraphrased to mean, "there is no learning like that of Palestine." It was a saying, that "to live in Palestine was equal to the observance of all the commandments." "He that hath his permanent abode in Palestine," so taught the Talmud, "is sure of the life to come." "Three things," we read in another authority, "are Israel's through suffering: Palestine, traditional lore, and the world to come." Nor did this feeling abate with the desolation of their country. In the third and fourth centuries of our era they still taught, "He that dwelleth in Palestine is without sin."

Centuries of wandering and of changes have not torn the passionate love of this land from the heart of the people. Even superstition becomes here pathetic. If the Talmud (Cheth. iii. a.) had already expressed the principle, "Whoever is buried in the land of Israel, is as if he were buried under the altar," one of the most ancient Hebrew commentaries (Ber. Rabba) goes much farther. From the injunction of Jacob and Joseph, and the desire of the fathers to be buried within the sacred soil, it is argued that those who lay there were to be the first "to walk before the Lord in the land of the living" (Psa 116:9), the first to rise from the dead and to enjoy the days of the Messiah. Not to deprive of their reward the pious, who had not the privilege of residing in Palestine, it was added, that God would make subterranean roads and passages into the Holy Land, and that, when their dust reached it, the Spirit of the Lord would raise them to new life, as it is

written (Eze 37:12-14): "O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel...and shall put My Spirit in you, and ye shall live; and I shall place you in your own land." Almost every prayer and hymn breathes the same love of Palestine. Indeed, it were impossible, by any extracts, to convey the pathos of some of those elegies in which the Synagogue still bewails the loss of Zion, or expresses the pent-up longing for its restoration. Desolate, they cling to its ruins, and believe, hope, and pray--oh, how ardently! in almost every prayer--for the time that shall come, when the land, like Sarah of old, will, at the bidding of the Lord, have youth, beauty, and fruitfulness restored, and in Messiah the King "a horn of salvation shall be raised up" * to the house of David.

* These are words of prayer taken from one of the most ancient fragments of the Jewish liturgy, and repeated, probably for two thousand years, every day by every Jew.

Yet it is most true, as noticed by a recent writer, that no place could have been more completely swept of relics than is Palestine. Where the most solemn transactions have taken place; where, if we only knew it, every footstep might be consecrated, and rocks, and caves, and mountain-tops be devoted to the holiest remembrances--we are almost in absolute ignorance of exact localities. In Jerusalem itself even the features of the soil, the valleys, depressions, and hills have changed, or at least lie buried deep under the accumulated ruins of centuries. It almost seems as if the Lord meant to do with the land what Hezekiah had done with that relic of Moses--the brazen serpent--when he stamped it to pieces, lest its sacred memories should convert it into an occasion for idolatry. The lie of land and water, of mountain and valley, are the same; Hebron, Bethlehem, the Mount of Olives, Nazareth, the Lake of Gennesaret, the land of Galilee, are still there, but all changed in form and appearance, and with no definite spot to which one could with absolute certainty attach the most sacred events. Events, then, not places; spiritual realities, not their outward surroundings, have been given to mankind by the land of Palestine.

"So long as Israel inhabited Palestine," says the Babylonian Talmud, "the country was wide; but now it has become narrow." There is only too much historical truth underlying this somewhat curiously-worded statement. Each successive change left the boundaries of the Holy Land narrowed. Never as yet has it actually reached the extent indicated in the original promise to Abraham (Gen 15:18), and afterwards confirmed to the children of Israel (Exo 23:31). The nearest approach to it was during the reign of King David, when the power of Judah extended as far as the river Euphrates (2 Sam 8:3-14). At present the country to which the name Palestine attaches is smaller than at any previous period. As of old, it still stretches north and south "from Dan to Beersheba"; in the east and west from Salcah (the modern Sulkhad) to "the great sea," the Mediterranean. Its superficial area is about 12,000 square miles, its length from 140 to 180, its breadth in the south about 75, and in the north from 100 to 120 miles. To put it more pictorially, the modern Palestine is about twice as large as Wales; it is smaller than Holland, and about equal in size to Belgium. Moreover, from the highest mountain-peaks a glimpse of almost the whole country may be obtained. So small was the land which the Lord chose as the scene of the most marvellous events that ever happened on earth, and whence He appointed light and life to flow forth into all the world!

When our blessed Saviour trod the soil of Palestine, the country had already undergone many changes. The ancient division of tribes had given way; the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel existed no longer; and the varied foreign domination, and the brief period of absolute national independence, had alike ceased. Yet, with the characteristic tenacity of the East for the past, the names of the ancient tribes still attached to some of the districts formerly occupied by them (comp. Matt 4:13, 15). A comparatively small number of the exiles had returned to Palestine with Ezra and Nehemiah, and the Jewish inhabitants of the country

consisted either of those who had originally been left in the land, or of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The controversy about the ten tribes, which engages so much attention in our days, raged even at the time of our Lord. "Will He go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles?" asked the Jews, when unable to fathom the meaning of Christ's prediction of His departure, using that mysterious vagueness of language in which we generally clothe things which we pretend to, but really do not, know. "The ten tribes are beyond the Euphrates till now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers," writes Josephus, with his usual grandiloquent self-complacency. But where--he informs us as little as any of his other contemporaries. We read in the earliest Jewish authority, the Mishnah (Sanh. x. 3): "The ten tribes shall never return again, as it is written (Deu 29:28), 'And He cast them into another land, as this day.' As 'this day' goeth and does not return again, so they also go and do not return. This is the view of Rabbi Akiba. Rabbi Elieser says, 'As the day becomes dark and has light again, so the ten tribes, to whom darkness has come; but light shall also be restored to them.'"

At the time of Christ's birth Palestine was governed by Herod the Great; that is, it was nominally an independent kingdom, but under the suzerainty of Rome. On the death of Herod--that is, very close upon the opening of the gospel story--a fresh, though only temporary, division of his dominions took place. The events connected with it fully illustrate the parable of our Lord, recorded in Luke 19:12-15, 27. If they do not form its historical groundwork, they were at least so fresh in the memory of Christ's hearers, that their minds must have involuntarily reverted to them.

Herod died, as he had lived, cruel and treacherous. A few days before his end, he had once more altered his will, and nominated Archelaus his successor in the kingdom; Herod Antipas (the Herod of the gospels), tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea; and Philip, tetrarch of Gaulonitis, Trachonitis, Batanaea, and Pania--districts to which, in the sequel, we may have further to refer. As soon after the death of Herod as circumstances would permit, and when he had quelled a rising in Jerusalem, Archelaus hastened to Rome to obtain the emperor's confirmation of his father's will.

He was immediately followed by his brother Herod Antipas, who in a previous testament of Herod had been left what Archelaus now claimed. Nor were the two alone in Rome, They found there already a number of members of Herod's family, each clamorous for something, but all agreed that they would rather have none of their own kindred as king, and that the country should be put under Roman sway; if otherwise, they anyhow preferred Herod Antipas to Archelaus. Each of the brothers had, of course, his own party, intriguing, manoeuvring, and trying to influence the emperor.

Augustus inclined from the first to Archelaus. The formal decision, however, was for a time postponed by a fresh insurrection in Judaea, which was quelled only with difficulty. Meanwhile, a Jewish deputation appeared in Rome, entreating that none of the Herodians might ever be appointed king, on the ground of their infamous deeds, which they related, and that they (the Jews) might be allowed to live according to their own laws, under the suzerainty of Rome. Augustus ultimately decided to carry out the will of Herod the Great, but gave Archelaus the title of ethnarch instead of king, promising him the higher grade if he proved deserving of it (Matt 2:22).

On his return to Judaea, Archelaus (according to the story in the parable) took bloody vengeance on "his citizens that hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us." The reign of Archelaus did not last long. Fresh and stronger complaints came from Judaea. Archelaus was deposed, and Judaea joined to the Roman province of Syria, but with a procurator of its own. The revenues of Archelaus, so long as he reigned, amounted to very considerably over 240,000 pounds a

year; those of his brothers respectively to a third and sixth of that sum.

But his was as nothing compared to the income of Herod the Great, which stood at the enormous sum of about 680,000 pounds; and that afterwards of Agrippa II, which is computed as high as half a million. In thinking of these figures, it is necessary to bear in mind the general cheapness of living in Palestine at the time, which may be gathered from the smallness of the coins in circulation, and from the lowness of the labour market. The smallest coin, a (Jewish) perutah, amounted to only the sixteenth of a penny.

Again, readers of the New Testament will remember that a labourer was wont to receive for a day's work in field or vineyard a denarius (Matt 20:2), or about 8d., while the Good Samaritan paid for the charge of the sick person whom he left in the inn only two denars, or about 1s. 4d (Luke 10:35).

But we are anticipating. Our main object was to explain the division of Palestine in the time of our Lord. Politically speaking, it consisted of Judaea and Samaria, under Roman procurators; Galilee and Peraea (on the other side Jordan), subject to Herod Antipas, the murderer of John the Baptist--"that fox" full of cunning and cruelty, to whom the Lord, when sent by Pilate, would give no answer; and Batanaea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis, under the rule of the tetrarch Philip. It would require too many details to describe accurately those latter provinces. Suffice, that they lay quite to the north-east, and that one of their principal cities was Caesarea Philippi (called after the Roman emperor, and after Philip himself), where Peter made that noble confession, which constituted the rock on which the Church was to be built (Matt 16:16; Mark 8:29). It was the wife of this Philip, the best of all Herod's sons, whom her brother-in-law, Herod Antipas, induced to leave her husband, and for whose sake he beheaded John (Matt 14:3, etc.; Mark 6:17; Luke 3:19). It is well to know that this adulterous and incestuous union brought Herod immediate trouble and misery, and that it ultimately cost him his kingdom, and sent him into life-long banishment.

Such was the political division of Palestine. Commonly it was arranged into Galilee, Samaria, Judaea, and Peraea. It is scarcely necessary to say that the Jews did not regard Samaria as belonging to the Holy Land, but as a strip of foreign country--as the Talmud designates it (Chag. 25 a.), "a Cuthite strip," or "tongue," intervening between Galilee and Judaea. From the gospels we know that the Samaritans were not only ranked with Gentiles and strangers (Matt 10:5; John 4:9,20), but that the very term Samaritan was one of reproach (John 8:48). "There be two manner of nations," says the son of Sirach (Ecclus. 1.25,26), "which my heart abhorreth, and the third is no nation; they that sit upon the mountain of Samaria, and they that dwell among the Philistines, and that foolish people that dwell in Sichern." And Josephus has a story to account for the exclusion of the Samaritans from the Temple, to the effect that in the night of the Passover, when it was the custom to open the Temple gates at midnight, a Samaritan had come and strewn bones in the porches and throughout the Temple to defile the Holy House. Most unlikely as this appears, at least in its details, it shows the feeling of the people. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the Samaritans fully retaliated by bitter hatred and contempt. For, at every period of sore national trial, the Jews had no more determined or relentless enemies than those who claimed to be the only true representatives of Israel's worship and hopes.

Chapter 2

Jews and Gentiles in "The Land"

Coming down from Syria, it would have been difficult to fix the exact spot where, in the view of the Rabbis, "the land" itself began. The boundary lines, though mentioned in four different documents, are not marked

in anything like geographical order, but as ritual questions connected with them came up for theological discussion. For, to the Rabbis the precise limits of Palestine were chiefly interesting so far as they affected the religious obligations or privileges of a district. And in this respect the fact that a city was in heathen possession exercised a decisive influence. Thus the environs of Ascalon, the wall of Caesarea, and that of Acco, were reckoned within the boundaries of Palestine, though the cities themselves were not. Indeed, viewing the question from this point, Palestine was to the Rabbis simply "the land," * all other countries being summed up under the designation of "outside the land." In the Talmud, even the expression "Holy Land," so common among later Jews and Christians, ** does not once occur.

* So mostly; the expression also occurs "the land of Israel."

** The only passage of Scripture in which the term is used is Zech 2:12, or rather 2:16 of the Hebrew original.

It needed not that addition, which might have suggested a comparison with other countries; for to the Rabbinist Palestine was not only holy, but the only holy ground, to the utter exclusion of all other countries, although they marked within its boundaries an ascending scale of ten degrees of sanctity, rising from the bare soil of Palestine to the most holy place in the Temple (Chel. i. 6-9). But "outside the land" everything was darkness and death. The very dust of a heathen country was unclean, and it defiled by contact. It was regarded like a grave, or like the putrescence of death. If a spot of heathen dust had touched an offering, it must at once be burnt. More than that, if by mischance any heathen dust had been brought into Palestine, it did not and could not mingle with that of "the land," but remained to the end what it had been--unclean, defiled, and defiling everything to which it adhered. This will cast light upon the meaning conveyed by the symbolical directions of our Lord to His disciples (Matt 10:14), when He sent them forth to mark out the boundary lines of the true Israel--"the kingdom of heaven," that was at hand: "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet." In other words, they were not only to leave such a city or household, but it was to be considered and treated as if it were heathen, just as in the similar case mentioned in Matthew 18:17. All contact with such must be avoided, all trace of it shaken off, and that, even though, like some of the cities in Palestine that were considered heathen, they were surrounded on every side by what was reckoned as belonging to Israel.

The Mishnah (Shev. vi. 1; Chall. iv. 8) marks, in reference to certain ordinances, "three lands" which might equally be designated as Palestine, but to which different ritual regulations applied. The first comprised, "all which they who came up from Babylon took possession of in the land of Israel and unto Chezib" (about three hours north of Acre); the second, "all that they who came up from Egypt took possession of from Chezib and unto the river (Euphrates) eastward, and unto Amanah" (supposed to be a mountain near Antioch, in Syria); while the third, seemingly indicating certain ideal outlines, was probably intended to mark what "the land" would have been, according to the original promise of God, although it was never possessed to that extent by Israel. * For our present purpose, of course, only the first of these definitions must be applied to "the land." We read in Menachoth vii. 1: "Every offering, ** whether of the congregation or of an individual (public or private), may come from 'the land,' or from 'outside the land, be of the new product (of the year) or of old product, except the omer (the wave-sheaf at the Passover) and the two loaves (at Pentecost), which may only be brought from new product (that of the current year), and from that (which grows) within 'the land.'" To these two, the Mishnah adds in another passage (Chel. i. 6) also the Biccurim, or first-fruits in their fresh state, although inaccurately, since the latter were likewise brought from what is called by the Rabbis Syria, *** which seems to have been regarded as, in a sense, intermediate between "the land" and "outside the land."

* The expressions in the original are so obscure as to render it difficult to form a quite definite judgment. In the text we have followed the views expressed by M. Neubauer.

** Neither of the English words: "sacrifice," "offering," or "gift" quite corresponds to the Hebrew Korban, derived from a verb which in one mood means to be near, and in another to bring near. In the one case it would refer to the offerings themselves, in the other to the offerers, as brought near, the offerings bringing them near to God. The latter seems to me both etymologically and theologically the right explanation. Aberbanel combines both in his definition of Korban.

*** Syria sent Biccurim to Jerusalem, but was not liable to second tithes, nor for the fourth year's product of plants (Lev 19:24).

The term Soria, or Syria, does not include that country alone, but all the lands which, according to the Rabbis, David had subdued, such as Mesopotamia, Syria, Zobah, Achlab, etc. It would be too lengthy to explain in detail the various ordinances in regard to which Soria was assimilated to, and those by which it was distinguished from, Palestine proper. The preponderance of duty and privilege was certainly in favour of Syria, so much so, that if one could have stepped from its soil straight to that of Palestine, or joined fields in the two countries, without the interposition of any Gentile strip, the land and the dust of Syria would have been considered clean, like that of Palestine itself (Ohol. xviii. 7). There was thus around "the land" a sort of inner band, consisting of those countries supposed to have been annexed by King David, and termed Soria. But besides this, there was also what may be called an outer band, towards the Gentile world, consisting of Egypt, Babylon, Ammon and Moab, the countries in which Israel had a special interest, and which were distinguished from the rest, "outside the land," by this, that they were liable to tithes and the Therumoth, or first-fruits in a prepared state. Of course neither of these contributions was actually brought into Palestine, but either employed by them for their sacred purposes, or else redeemed.

Maimonides arranges all countries into three classes, "so far as concerns the precepts connected with the soil"--"the land, Soria, and outside the land"; and he divides the land of Israel into territory possessed before and after the Exile, while he also distinguishes between Egypt, Babylon, Moab, and Ammon, and other lands (Hilch. Ther. i. 6). In popular estimate other distinctions were likewise made. Thus Rabbi Jose of Galilee would have it (Bicc. i. 10), that Biccurim * were not to be brought from the other side of Jordan, "because it was not a land flowing with milk and honey."

* For a full explanation of the distinction between Biccurim and Therumoth see my work on The Temple: Its Ministry and Services as they were at the time of Jesus Christ.

But as the Rabbinical law in this respect differed from the view expressed by Rabbi Jose, his must have been an afterthought, probably intended to account for the fact that they beyond Jordan did not bring their first-fruits to the Temple. Another distinction claimed for the country west of the Jordan curiously reminds us of the fears expressed by the two and a half tribes on their return to their homes, after the first conquest of Palestine under Joshua (Josh 22:24,25), since it declared the land east of Jordan less sacred, on account of the absence of the Temple, of which it had not been worthy. Lastly, Judaea proper claimed pre-eminence over Galilee, as being the centre of Rabbinism. Perhaps it may be well here to state that, notwithstanding strict uniformity on all principal points, Galilee and Judaea had each its own peculiar legal customs and rights, which differed in many particulars one from the other.

What has hitherto been explained from Rabbinical writings gains fresh interest when we bring it to bear on the study of the New Testament. For, we can now understand how those Zealots from Jerusalem, who

would have bent the neck of the Church under the yoke of the law of Moses, sought out in preference the flourishing communities in Syria for the basis of their operations (Acts 15:1). There was a special significance in this, as Syria formed a kind of outer Palestine, holding an intermediate position between it and heathen lands. Again, it results from our inquiries, that, what the Rabbis considered as the land of Israel proper, may be regarded as commencing immediately south of Antioch. Thus the city where the first Gentile Church was formed (Acts 11:20,21); where the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:26); where Paul so long exercised his ministry, and whence he started on his missionary journeys, was, significantly enough, just outside the land of Israel. Immediately beyond it lay the country over which the Rabbis claimed entire sway. Travelling southwards, the first district which one would reach would be what is known from the gospels as "the coasts (or tracts) of Tyre and Sidon." St. Mark describes the district more particularly (Mark 7:24) as "the borders of Tyre and Sidon." These stretched, according to Josephus (Jewish War, iii, 35), at the time of our Lord, from the Mediterranean towards Jordan. It was to these extreme boundary tracts of "the land," that Jesus had withdrawn from the Pharisees, when they were offended at His opposition to their "blind" traditionalism; and there He healed by the word of His power the daughter of the "woman of Canaan," the intensity of whose faith drew from His lips words of precious commendation (Matt 15:28; Mark 7:29). It was chiefly a heathen district where the Saviour spoke the word of healing, and where the woman would not let the Messiah of Israel go without an answer. She herself was a Gentile. Indeed, not only that district, but all around, and farther on, the territory of Philip, was almost entirely heathen. More than that, strange as it may sound, all around the districts inhabited by the Jews the country was, so to speak, fringed by foreign nationalities and by heathen worship, rites, and customs.

Properly to understand the history of the time and the circumstances indicated in the New Testament, a correct view of the state of parties in this respect is necessary. And here we must guard against a not unnatural mistake. If any one had expected to find within the boundaries of "the land" itself one nationality, one language, the same interests, or even one religion publicly professed, he would have been bitterly disappointed. It was not merely for the presence of the Romans and their followers, and of a more or less influential number of foreign settlers, but the Holy Land itself was a country of mixed and hostile races, of divided interests, where close by the side of the narrowest and most punctilious Pharisaism heathen temples rose, and heathen rites and customs openly prevailed. In a general way all this will be readily understood. For, those who returned from Babylon were comparatively few in number, and confessedly did not occupy the land in its former extent. During the troubled period which followed, there was a constant influx of heathen, and unceasing attempts were made to introduce and perpetuate foreign elements. Even the language of Israel had undergone a change. In the course of time the ancient Hebrew had wholly given place to the Aramaean dialect, except in public worship and in the learned academies of theological doctors. Such words and names in the gospels as Raka, Abba, Golgotha, Gabbatha, Akel-Dama, Bartholomaios, Barabbas, Bar-Jesus, and the various verbal quotations, are all Aramaean. It was probably in that language that Paul addressed the infuriated multitude, when standing on the top of the steps leading from the Temple into the fortress Antonia (Acts 21:40; 22:1ff). But along with the Hebraic Aramaean--for so we would designate the language--the Greek had for some time been making its way among the people. The Mishnah itself contains a very large number of Greek and Latin words with Hebraic terminations, showing how deeply Gentile life and customs around had affected even those who hated them most, and, by inference, how thoroughly they must have penetrated Jewish society in general. But besides, it had been long the policy of their rulers systematically to promote all that was Grecian in thought and feeling. It needed the obstinate determinateness, if not the bigotry, of Pharisaism to prevent their success, and this may perhaps partly explain the extreme of their antagonism against all that was Gentile.

A brief notice of the religious state of the outlying districts of the country may place this in a clearer light.

In the far north-east of the land, occupying at least in part the ancient possession of Manasseh, were the provinces belonging to the tetrarch Philip (Luke 3:1). Many spots there (Mark 8:22; Luke 9:10; Matt 16:13) are dear to the Christian memory. After the Exile these districts had been peopled by wild, predatory nomads, like the Bedawin of our days. These lived chiefly in immense caves, where they stored their provisions, and in case of attack defended themselves and their flocks.

Herod the Great and his successors had indeed subdued, and settled among them, a large number of Jewish and Idumaeen colonists--the former brought from Babylon, under the leadership of one Zamaris, and attracted, like the modern German colonists in parts of Russia, by immunity from taxation. But the vast majority of the people were still Syrians and Grecians, rude, barbarous, and heathens. Indeed, there the worship of the old Syrian gods had scarcely given way to the more refined rites of Greece.

It was in this neighbourhood that Peter made that noble confession of faith, on which, as on a rock, the Church is built. But Caesarea Philippi was originally Paneas, the city devoted to Pan; nor does its change of name indicate a more Jewish direction on the part of its inhabitants. Indeed, Herod the Great had built there a temple to Augustus. But further particulars are scarcely necessary, for recent researches have everywhere brought to light relics of the worship of the Phoenician Astarte, of the ancient Syrian god of the sun, and even of the Egyptian Ammon, side by side with that of the well-known Grecian deities.

The same may be said of the refined Damascus, the territory of which formed here the extreme boundary of Palestine. Passing from the eastern to the western bounds of Palestine, we find that in Tyre and Ptolemais Phrygian, Egyptians, Phoenician, and Greek rites contended for the mastery. In the centre of Palestine, notwithstanding the pretence of the Samaritans to be the only true representatives of the religion of Moses, the very name of their capital, Sebaste, for Samaria, showed how thoroughly Grecianised was that province.

Herod had built in Samaria also a magnificent temple to Augustus; and there can be no doubt that, as the Greek language, so Grecian rites and idolatry prevailed. Another outlying district, the Decapolis (Matt 4:25; Mark 5:20, 7:31), was almost entirely Grecian in constitution, language, and worship. It was in fact, a federation of ten heathen cities within the territory of Israel, possessing a government of their own. Little is known of its character; indeed, the cities themselves are not always equally enumerated by different writers.

We name those of most importance to readers of the New Testament. Scythopolis, the ancient Beth-shean (Josh 17:11,16; Judg 1:27; 1 Sam 31:10,12, etc.), was the only one of those cities situated west of the Jordan. It lay about four hours south of Tiberias. Gadara, the capital of Peraea, is known to us from Matthew 8:28; Mark 5:1; Luke 8:26. Lastly, we mention as specially interesting, Pella, the place to which the Christians of Jerusalem fled in obedience to the warning of our Lord (Matt 24:15-20), to escape the doom of the city, when finally beleaguered by the Romans. The situation of Pella has not been satisfactorily ascertained, but probably it lay at no great distance from the ancient Jabesh Gilead.

But to return. From what has been said, it will appear that there remained only Galilee and Judaea proper, in which strictly Jewish views and manners must be sought for. Each of these will be described in detail. For the present it will suffice to remark, that north-eastern or Upper Galilee was in great part inhabited by Gentiles--Phoenicians, Syrians, Arabs, and Greeks (Josephus, Jewish War, iii, 419-427), whence the name "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Matt 4:15). It is strange in how many even of those cities, with which we

are familiar from the New Testament, the heathen element prevailed.

Tiberias, which gave its name to the lake, was at the time of Christ of quite recent origin, having been built by the tetrarch Herod Antipas (the Herod of the gospel history), and named in honour of the Emperor Tiberius. Although endowed by its founder with many privileges, such as houses and lands for its inhabitants, and freedom from taxation--the latter being continued by Vespasian after the Jewish war--Herod had to colonise it by main force, so far as its few Jewish inhabitants were concerned.

For, the site on which the city stood had of old covered a place of burial, and the whole ground was therefore levitically unclean (Josephus, Ant, xviii, 38). However celebrated, therefore, afterwards as the great and final seat of the Jewish Sanhedrim, it was originally chiefly un-Jewish. Gaza had its local deity; Ascalon worshipped Astarte; Joppa was the locality where, at the time when Peter had his vision there, they still showed on the rocks of the shore the marks of the chains, by which Andromeda was said to have been held, when Perseus came to set her free.

Caesarea was an essentially heathen city, though inhabited by many Jews; and one of its most conspicuous ornaments was another temple to Augustus, built on a hill opposite the entrance to the harbour, so as to be visible far out at sea. But what could be expected, when in Jerusalem itself Herod had reared a magnificent theatre and amphitheatre, to which gladiators were brought from all parts of the world, and where games were held, thoroughly anti-Jewish and heathen in their spirit and tendency? (Josephus, Ant., xv, 274).

The favourites and counsellors by whom that monarch surrounded himself were heathens; wherever he or his successors could, they reared heathen temples, and on all occasions they promoted the spread of Grecian views. Yet withal they professed to be Jews; they would not shock Jewish prejudices; indeed, as the building of the Temple, the frequent advocacy at Rome of the cause of Jews when oppressed, and many other facts show, the Herodians would fain have kept on good terms with the national party, or rather used it as their tool.

And so Grecianism spread. Already Greek was spoken and understood by all the educated classes in the country; it was necessary for intercourse with the Roman authorities, with the many civil and military officials, and with strangers; the "superscription" on the coins was in Greek, even though, to humour the Jews, none of the earlier Herods had his own image impressed on them. * Significantly enough, it was Herod Agrippa I, the murderer of St. James, and the would-be murderer of St. Peter, who introduced the un-Jewish practice of images on coins. Thus everywhere the foreign element was advancing. A change or else a struggle was inevitable in the near future.

* The coin mentioned in Matthew 22:20, which bore an "image," as well as a "superscription," must therefore have been either struck in Rome, or else one of the tetrarch Philip, who was the first to introduce the image of Caesar on strictly Jewish coins.

And what of Judaism itself at the period? It was miserably divided, even though no outward separation had taken place. The Pharisees and Sadducees held opposite principles, and hated each other; the Essenes looked down upon them both. Within Pharisaism the schools of Hillel and Shammai contradicted each other on almost every matter. But both united in their unbounded contempt of what they designated as "the country-people"--those who had no traditional learning, and hence were either unable or unwilling to share the discussions, and to bear the burdens of legal ordinances, which constituted the chief matter of traditionalism. There was only one feeling common to all--high and low, rich and poor, learned and

unlettered: it was that of intense hatred of the foreigner. The rude Galileans were as "national" as the most punctilious Pharisees; indeed, in the war against Rome they furnished the most and the bravest soldiers. Everywhere the foreigner was in sight; his were the taxes levied, the soldiery, the courts of ultimate appeal, the government. In Jerusalem they hung over the Temple as a guard in the fortress of Antonia, and even kept in their custody the high-priest's garments, * so that, before officiating in the Temple, he had actually always to apply for them to the procurator or his representative! They were only just more tolerable as being downright heathens than the Herodians, who mingled Judaism with heathenism, and, having sprung from foreign slaves, had arrogated to themselves the kingdom of the Maccabees.

* The practice commenced innocently enough. The high-priest Hyrcanus, who built the Tower of Babel, kept his dress there, and his sons continued the practice. When Herod seized the government, he retained, for reasons readily understood, this custody, in the fortress of Antonia, which he had substituted for the ancient tower. On similar grounds the Romans followed the lead of Herod. Josephus (Ant. xviii, 93) describes "the stone chamber" in which these garments were kept, under seal of the priests, with a light continually burning there. Vitellius, the successor of Pilate, restored to the Jews the custody of the high-priestly garments, when they were kept in a special apartment in the Temple.

Readers of the New Testament know what separation Pharisaical Jews made between themselves and heathens. It will be readily understood, that every contact with heathenism and all aid to its rites should have been forbidden, and that in social intercourse any levitical defilement, arising from the use of what was "common or unclean," was avoided. But Pharisaism went a great deal further than this. Three days before a heathen festival all transactions with Gentiles were forbidden, so as to afford them neither direct nor indirect help towards their rites; and this prohibition extended even to private festivities, such as a birthday, the day of return from a journey, etc.

On heathen festive occasions a pious Jew should avoid, if possible, passing through a heathen city, certainly all dealings in shops that were festively decorated. It was unlawful for Jewish workmen to assist in anything that might be subservient either to heathen worship or heathen rule, including in the latter the erection of court-houses and similar buildings. It need not be explained to what lengths or into what details Pharisaical punctiliousness carried all these ordinances.

From the New Testament we know, that to enter the house of a heathen defiled till the evening (John 18:28), and that all familiar intercourse with Gentiles was forbidden (Acts 10:28). So terrible was the intolerance, that a Jewess was actually forbidden to give help to her heathen neighbour, when about to become a mother (Avod. S. ii. 1)! It was not a new question to St. Paul, when the Corinthians inquired about the lawfulness of meat sold in the shambles or served up at a feast (1 Cor 10:25,27,28).

Evidently he had the Rabbinical law on the subject before his mind, while, on the one hand, he avoided the Pharisaical bondage of the letter, and, on the other, guarded against either injuring one's own conscience, or offending that of an on-looker. For, according to Rabbi Akiba, "Meat which is about to be brought in heathen worship is lawful, but that which comes out from it is forbidden, because it is like the sacrifices of the dead" (Avod. S. ii. 3). But the separation went much beyond what ordinary minds might be prepared for.

Milk drawn from a cow by heathen hands, bread and oil prepared by them, might indeed be sold to strangers, but not used by Israelites. No pious Jew would of course have sat down at the table of a Gentile (Acts 11:3; Gal 2:12). If a heathen were invited to a Jewish house, he might not be left alone in the room,

else every article of food or drink on the table was henceforth to be regarded as unclean. If cooking utensils were bought of them, they had to be purified by fire or by water; knives to be ground anew; spits to be made red-hot before use, etc.

It was not lawful to let either house or field, nor to sell cattle, to a heathen; any article, however distantly connected with heathenism, was to be destroyed. Thus, if a weaving-shuttle had been made of wood grown in a grove devoted to idols, every web of cloth made by it was to be destroyed; nay, if such pieces had been mixed with others, to the manufacture of which no possible objection could have been taken, these all became unclean, and had to be destroyed.

These are only general statements to show the prevalent feeling. It was easy to prove how it pervaded every relationship of life. The heathens, though often tolerant, of course retorted. Circumcision, the Sabbath-rest, the worship of an invisible God, and Jewish abstinence from pork, formed a never-ending theme of merriment to the heathen. Conquerors are not often chary in disguising their contempt for the conquered, especially when the latter presume to look down upon, and to hate them. In view of all this, what an almost incredible truth must it have seemed, when the Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed it among Israel as the object of His coming and kingdom, not to make of the Gentiles Jews, but of both alike children of one Heavenly Father; not to rivet upon the heathen the yoke of the law, but to deliver from it Jew and Gentile, or rather to fulfil its demands for all! The most unexpected and unprepared-for revelation, from the Jewish point of view, was that of the breaking down of the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, the taking away of the enmity of the law, and the nailing it to His cross. There was nothing analogous to it; not a hint of it to be found, either in the teaching or the spirit of the times. Quite the opposite. Assuredly, the most unlike thing to Christ were His times; and the greatest wonder of all--"the mystery hidden from ages and generations"--the foundation of one universal Church.

Chapter 3

In Galilee at the time of our Lord

"If any one wishes to be rich, let him go north; if he wants to be wise, let him come south." Such was the saying, by which Rabbinical pride distinguished between the material wealth of Galilee and the supremacy in traditional lore claimed for the academies of Judaea proper. Alas, it was not long before Judaea lost even this doubtful distinction, and its colleges wandered northwards, ending at last by the Lake of Gennesaret, and in that very city of Tiberias which at one time had been reputed unclean! Assuredly, the history of nations chronicles their judgment; and it is strangely significant, that the authoritative collection of Jewish traditional law, known as the Mishnah, and the so-called Jerusalem Talmud, which is its Palestinian commentary, * should finally have issued from what was originally a heathen city, built upon the site of old forsaken graves.

* There are two Talmuds--the Jerusalem and the Babylonian--to the text of the Mishnah. The Babylonian Talmud is considerably younger than that of Jerusalem, and its traditions far more deeply tinged with superstition and error of every kind. For historical purposes, also, the Jerusalem Talmud is of much greater value and authority than that of the Eastern Schools.

But so long as Jerusalem and Judaea were the centre of Jewish learning, no terms of contempt were too strong to express the supercilious hauteur, with which a regular Rabbinist regarded his northern co-religionists. The slighting speech of Nathanael (John 1:46), "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" reads quite like a common saying of the period; and the rebuke of the Pharisees to Nicodemus

(John 7:52), "Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet," was pointed by the mocking question, "Art thou also of Galilee?" It was not merely self-conscious superiority, such as the "towns-people," as the inhabitants of Jerusalem used to be called throughout Palestine, were said to have commonly displayed towards their "country cousins" and every one else, but offensive contempt, outspoken sometimes with almost incredible rudeness, want of delicacy and charity, but always with much pious self-assertion. The "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men" (Luke 18:11) seems like the natural breath of Rabbinism in the company of the unlettered, and of all who were deemed intellectual or religious inferiors; and the parabolic history of the Pharisee and the publican in the gospel is not told for the special condemnation of that one prayer, but as characteristic of the whole spirit of Pharisaism, even in its approaches to God. "This people who knoweth not the law (that is, the traditional law) are cursed," was the curt summary of the Rabbinical estimate of popular opinion. To so terrible a length did it go that the Pharisees would fain have excluded them, not only from common intercourse, but from witness-bearing, and that they even applied to marriages with them such a passage as Deuteronomy 27:21.

But if these be regarded as extremes, two instances, chosen almost at random--one from religious, the other from ordinary life--will serve to illustrate their reality. A more complete parallel to the Pharisee's prayer could scarcely be imagined than the following. We read in the Talmud (Jer. Ber, iv. 2) that a celebrated Rabbi was wont every day, on leaving the academy, to pray in these terms: "I thank Thee, O Lord my God and God of my fathers, that Thou hast cast my lot among those who frequent the schools and synagogues, and not among those who attend the theatre and the circus. For, both I and they work and watch--I to inherit eternal life, they for their destruction." The other illustration, also taken from a Rabbinical work, is, if possible, even more offensive. It appears that Rabbi Jannai, while travelling by the way, formed acquaintance with a man, whom he thought his equal. Presently his new friend invited him to dinner, and liberally set before him meat and drink. But the suspicions of the Rabbi had been excited. He began to try his host successively by questions upon the text of Scripture, upon the Mishnah, allegorical interpretations, and lastly on Talmudical lore. Alas! on neither of these points could he satisfy the Rabbi. Dinner was over; and Rabbi Jannai, who by that time no doubt had displayed all the hauteur and contempt of a regular Rabbinist towards the unlettered, called upon his host, as customary, to take the cup of thanksgiving, and return thanks. But the latter was sufficiently humiliated to reply, with a mixture of Eastern deference and Jewish modesty, "Let Jannai himself give thanks in his own house." "At any rate," observed the Rabbi, "you can join with me"; and when the latter had agreed to this, Jannai said, "A dog has eaten of the bread of Jannai!"

Impartial history, however, must record a different judgment of the men of Galilee from that pronounced by the Rabbis, and that even wherein they were despised by those leaders in Israel. Some of their peculiarities, indeed, were due to territorial circumstances. The province of Galilee--of which the name might be rendered "circuit," being derived from a verb meaning "to move in a circle"--covered the ancient possession of four tribes: Issachar, Zebulon, Naphtali, and Asher. The name occurs already in the Old Testament (compare Josh 20:7; 1 Kings 9:11; 2 Kings 15:29; 1 Chron 6:76; and especially Isa 9:1). In the time of Christ it stretched northwards to the possessions of Tyre on the one side, and to Syria on the other; on the south it was bounded by Samaria--Mount Carmel on the western, and the district of Scythopolis (in the Decapolis) on the eastern side, being here landmarks; while the Jordan and the Lake of Gennesaret formed the general eastern boundary-line. Thus regarded, it would include names to which such reminiscences attach as "the mountains of Gilboa," where "Israel and Saul fell down slain"; little Hermon, Tabor, Carmel, and that great battle-field of Palestine, the plain of Jezreel. Alike the Talmud and Josephus divide it into Upper and Lower Galilee, between which the Rabbis insert the district of Tiberias, as Middle

Galilee. We are reminded of the history of Zaccheus (Luke 19:4) by the mark which the Rabbis give to distinguish between Upper and Lower Galilee--the former beginning "where sycomores cease to grow." The sycamore, which is a species of fig, must, of course, not be confounded with our sycamore, and was a very delicate evergreen, easily destroyed by cold (Psa 78:47), and growing only in the Jordan valley, or in Lower Galilee up to the sea-coast. The mention of that tree may also help us to fix the locality where Luke 17:6 was spoken by the Saviour. The Rabbis mention Kefar Hananyah, probably the modern Kefr Anan, to the north-west of Safed, as the first place in Upper Galilee. Safed was truly "a city set on an hill"; and as such may have been in view of the Lord, when He spoke the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:14). In the Talmud it is mentioned by the name of Zephath, and spoken of as one of the signal-stations, whence the proclamation of the new moon, made by the Sanhedrim in Jerusalem (see The Temple), and with it the beginning of every month, was telegraphed by fire-signals from hill to hill throughout the land, and far away east of the Jordan, to those of the dispersion.

The mountainous part in the north of Upper Galilee presented magnificent scenery, with bracing air. Here the scene of the Song of Solomon is partly laid (Cant 7:5). But its caves and fastnesses, as well as the marshy ground, covered with reeds, along Lake Merom, gave shelter to robbers, outlaws, and rebel chiefs. Some of the most dangerous characters came from the Galilean highlands. A little farther down, and the scenery changed. South of Lake Merom, where the so-called Jacob's bridge crosses the Jordan, we come upon the great caravan road, which connected Damascus in the east with the great mart of Ptolemais, on the shore of the Mediterranean. What a busy life did this road constantly present in the days of our Lord, and how many trades and occupations did it call into existence! All day long they passed--files of camel, mules, and asses, laden with the riches of the East, destined for the far West, or bringing the luxuries of the West to the far East. Travellers of every description--Jews, Greeks, Romans, dwellers in the East--were seen here. The constant intercourse with foreigners, and the settlement of so many strangers along one of the great highways of the world, must have rendered the narrow-minded bigotry of Judaea well-nigh impossible in Galilee.

We are now in Galilee proper, and a more fertile or beautiful region could scarcely be conceived. It was truly the land where Asher dipped his foot in oil (Deu 33:24). The Rabbis speak of the oil as flowing like a river, and they say that it was easier in Galilee to rear a forest of olive-trees than one child in Judaea! The wine, although not so plentiful as the oil, was generous and rich. Corn grew in abundance, especially in the neighbourhood of Capernaum; flax also was cultivated. The price of living was much lower than in Judaea, where one measure was said to cost as much as five in Galilee. Fruit also grew to perfection; and it was probably a piece of jealousy on the part of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that they would not allow it to be sold at the feasts in the city, lest people should forsooth say, "We have only come up in order to taste fruit from Galilee" (Pes. 8 b). Josephus speaks of the country in perfectly rapturous terms. He counts no fewer than 240 towns and villages, and speaks of the smallest as containing not less than 15,000 inhabitants! This, of course, must be gross exaggeration, as it would make the country more than twice as thickly populated as the densest districts in England or Belgium. Some one has compared Galilee to the manufacturing districts of this country. This comparison, of course, applies only to the fact of its busy life, although various industries were also carried on there--large potteries of different kinds, and dyeworks. From the heights of Galilee the eye would rest on harbours, filled with merchant ships, and on the sea, dotted with white sails. There, by the shore, and also inland, smoked furnaces, where glass was made; along the great road moved the caravans; in field, vineyard, and orchard all was activity. The great road quite traversed Galilee, entering it where the Jordan is crossed by the so-called bridge of Jacob, then touching Capernaum, going down to Nazareth, and passing on to the sea-coast. This was one advantage

that Nazareth had--that it lay on the route of the world's traffic and intercourse. Another peculiarity is strangely unknown to Christian writers. It appears from ancient Rabbinical writings that Nazareth was one of the stations of the priests. All the priests were divided into twenty-four courses, one of which was always on ministry in the Temple. Now, the priests of the course which was to be on duty always gathered in certain towns, whence they went up in company to the Temple; those who were unable to go spending the week in fasting and prayer for their brethren. Nazareth was one of these priestly centres; so that there, with symbolic significance, alike those passed who carried on the traffic of the world, and those who ministered in the Temple.

We have spoken of Nazareth; and a few brief notices of other places in Galilee, mentioned in the New Testament, may be of interest. Along the lake lay, north, Capernaum, a large city; and near it, Chorazin, so celebrated for its grain, that, if it had been closer to Jerusalem, it would have been used for the Temple; also Bethsaida, * the name, "house of fishes," indicating its trade.

* There were two places of that name, one east of the Jordan, Bethsaida Julias, referred to in Luke 9:10; Mark 8:22; the other on the western shore of the Lake of Galilee, the birt

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